

MORE ABOUT BLASPHEMY.

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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>More About Blasphemy.—The Editor</i> - - -	177
<i>An Easter Egg for Christians.—Mimnermus</i> - - -	178
<i>Spring Gods.—Harold Scudder</i> - - -	180
<i>The Origin of Spiritualism.—George R. Scoll</i> - - -	181
<i>Jesuitism's Big Push.—Keridon</i> - - -	186
<i>"Why These Churches?"—S. Howarth.</i> - - -	186
<i>The Shadow Show.—Gwyn Evans</i> - - -	187
<i>Negro and Other Spirituals.—Wm. J. Lamb</i> - - -	188
<i>In Praise of Women.—William Repton</i> - - -	189

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

Views and Opinions.

More About Blasphemy.

COPIES of Canadian papers to hand record the bringing forward in the House of Commons of a proposition for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws in the Dominion. It was brought in by the labour member for Winnipeg, and backed by two ex-clergymen, and was defeated. I am not surprised at that. In the Colonies, religious opinion is generally in a more backward state than it is with us. The Sterry case of last year, which served as the actuating motive for the introduction of the resolution, could hardly have arisen here, as the prosecution would have been doubtful of getting a verdict. And a public and a public press which could endorse that absurd prosecution could hardly be expected to look with favour upon the abolition of the blasphemy laws. It is a curious thing that in both Canada and Australia Christians appear to be much nearer the seventeenth century than they are here. How long they will remain comparatively impervious to one of the currents of civilized life remains to be seen.

The *Toronto Telegram* rejoices that the proposal above-named was defeated, because, while no one is compelled to believe in God, no one is permitted to go into public places and jeer and jibe at those who do. I have considerable sympathy with this view, if God is to be saved; for never yet has the world seen a God that could survive a good laugh. Real things do, but shams of all sorts shrivel very quickly. The *Globe*, which claims to be one of the leading papers in Canada, supports those who voted down the resolution, and publishes a leading article which is worth noting, because it sets forth in a quite plain, although crude, manner the arguments generally put forward for the maintenance of these laws for the preservation of deity. Here is the case as set forth by the *Globe* :—

There must be a limit to freedom of speech as there is to freedom of action. No man may act as he pleases if his deeds bring him into conflict with the rights of others. To permit every man to do what

he deems right in his own eyes would precipitate chaos and anarchy in the world in a day and overturn the existing order of things. No decent man will permit filthy talk or obscene language in the presence of his wife and children, however much of a stickler he may be for free speech. If the arm of the law could not protect him he would probably invoke the arm of flesh. Will he be more particular in his defence of the moral rights of his home and family than he will be in upholding the sanctity of things spiritual and Divine that are the foundation of all morality and stable human government?

I quite agree that there must be a limit to freedom of speech, if indulgence in that freedom infringes on the equal rights of others. Freedom in society does not mean the absence of restrictions, but their imposition. It is only because certain limits are set to what each may do, that everyone may have genuine freedom of movement and possession. The absence of regulation does not procure freedom, it spells complete anarchy. But the blasphemy laws, whether in the British Empire or in America, nowhere secure equal freedom of speech, even in matters of religion. Consider the way in which the extreme Protestant speaks of some of the Roman Catholic doctrines. But whoever heard of a Protestant being prosecuted for blasphemy here or in the States? Whoever heard of a Christian being prosecuted for having called Mohammed an imposter, or for outraging the feelings of Buddhists or Jews? Such a case has never occurred and cannot occur, for the blasphemy law applies only to attacks on special forms of Christianity. No religion other than Christianity is protected by law, as a religion, in any part of the British Empire. The *Globe* would do well to make sure of its facts. But perhaps, writing for a Christian audience, this is not necessary.

* * *

A Slimy Pretext.

I like the jumbling together of a man's feelings towards one who makes use of filthy and obscene language before his wife and children, and one who attacks religious beliefs. It is such a characteristically Christian move, and supplies, should anyone need it, such indubitable evidence of the inevitably degrading influence of Christian belief. Of course, the *Globe* might reply that a sincere believer does actually feel towards the man who speaks scornfully of his God, much as he would feel towards one who used obscene language to his young children. But that is only restating the fault by way of an attempt at justification. A man who went round assaulting all people with red hair would not be excused if he said he did so because red-haired folk angered him. He would be told that this is one of the instances in which he must restrain his feelings, and if he cannot, or will

not, then it is he who must be put under restraint and not the ones with the fiery polls. The evil of indecent language is plain, and denied by none. But there is no agreement, and certainly no proof, that my attack on things "spiritual and divine"—that is, on the belief in God, or the soul, or angels, or devils, or inspiration—of necessity makes any one even feel the worse. My unbelief may make certain undeveloped intelligences feel angry, but so might my opinions on protection, or emigration, or the private ownership of land. But in these cases the educative influence of the law is in the direction of toleration. It does not say that if you feel angry or outraged it will step in and lock up the offending party. It says that it will protect the other man against you. And that states a vital distinction between laws about religion and laws about other things. A blasphemy law places a premium upon bigotry, and offers a direct encouragement to intolerance. It does not say to the intolerant, "You must be more tolerant," it says, "Display your intolerance, and the law will find justification for it."

* * *

Piety and Patriotism.

Canada happens to be a country in which there is a strong and well organized Roman Catholic population, and I am quite sure that the feelings of many Catholics are daily outraged by the sight of so many Protestants who look down upon their Church, and who feel the salvation of the souls of their children to be jeopardized by Protestant influence. Why should they not have the protection of the law against these Protestants who attack "the sanctity of things spiritual and divine," which they believe lie at the root of "all morality and stable human government"? And if the law says to the Catholic that he must restrain himself and learn to bear with equanimity opinions which strike at the root of the Church to which he belongs, why cannot the Protestant be treated in the same way? I am quite sure that the feelings of the Roman Catholic towards his Church are quite as intense as those of a Protestant towards his specific beliefs. And when the *Globe* says that "to permit the deity to be caricatured and His Word blasphemed and made mock of strikes a blow at Empire stability that Canada will not tolerate," one can only murmur, Poor Canada! Poor Empire! To so plainly rest the Empire upon such an unmistakable basis of primitive belief and practice, is about the strongest indictment of the British Empire I have yet come across.

* * *

The Game of Mrs. Partington.

One of the speakers, in the course of the discussion in the Canadian House of Commons, said that he could go to many theological colleges in Canada and find there substantially the same teachings for which Sterry was imprisoned. On which the *Globe* declares:—

If it is true that the theological chairs of our universities are filled with men who are destroying the foundations of Christianity, then it is high time that the laity of every Church awoke to the fact and demanded a house-cleaning of the institutions their money goes to support. If these things are being taught in theological seminaries the laymen should be cognizant of the fact before it is too late. The time for the hush-hush policy is gone.

But every theological teacher whose knowledge of modern thought goes in the last degree outside the divinity of the text-books of a century ago, must know that the doctrines he teaches are called in question by men whose authority to do so is beyond

dispute. They know also that some of the things that Christians accepted a century ago without question, are now rejected by every one outside the ranks of the Tennessees and the Salvation Army. What are theological teachers to do? I note that the *Globe* calls on the laity to act. But the laity are less likely to act than are the heads of theological colleges. Nay, it is because of the pressure of the laity—the educated laity—that ministers of religion and teachers in theological colleges are forced to modify their teachings. They know that to teach Christianity in all its early nineteenth century crudity and repulsiveness is to make sure that an increasing number of worshippers and students will reject it altogether. They are doing the best they can in a difficult position. They cannot to-day be moderately honest and keep to "pure" Christianity. Blasphemy laws or no blasphemy laws, the impact of scientific knowledge on coagulated savage superstitions will go on. The most the *Globe* and similar manifestations of medievalism can do is, by forcing the timid to profess conformity with things they know to be false, to compel them to be a little more hypocritical than they otherwise would be.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

An Easter Egg for Christians.

"The cynic is a useful person in a world where there is so much hypocrisy. There is a good deal of false coin in circulation, and the cynic does good service by ringing it on the counter."—Dean Inge.

EASTER is the chief festival of the Christian Faith. In this country, where religion is not permitted to unduly interfere with business, Holy Week used to be a close season for theatres and allied amusements. All this is now altered save by ardent churchgoers, who are in a distinct minority. Nonconformists pay but little heed to the ecclesiastical festival, and ordinary folks none at all. To the average citizen Easter means a Bank Holiday, with its excursions and their attendant opportunities of visiting the country and the seaside.

The man who helped to make this great transformation deserves our tribute. John Lubbock founded a holiday, which has grown to be a holiday period. It was a notable achievement. He was a scientist, too, possessing more degrees and honours than any of his contemporaries, with great learning which stretched from prehistoric man to political economy. He knew the world of books and also the book of the world. A great scholar, his memory is kept fresh because he left behind him a people's holiday.

The idea did not come to him suddenly, as the fall of an apple on Newton's head is said to have caused him to ponder on the law of gravitation. It came to Lubbock at the Working Men's College, where the great scientist tried to help his less fortunate brothers. They had been talking of leisure in one of the discussions. In that fertile mind the germ of an idea took root. One might have expected a scholar to prescribe compulsory lectures, or classes for acquiring knowledge. What saved him from pedantry was his intense love of nature, and he wanted that most beautiful book of Nature to be opened to all. He had himself learned much from that infinite volume.

Then the practical side of his mind came to his assistance. He was a banker, and he knew as much of business as he did of the lives of ants and wasps. On Bank Holidays the banks have to be closed, bills had to be payable the next day. So the scientist and the business man, walking hand-in-hand, gave us the Bank Holidays Act of nearly sixty years since.

Honours were showered upon him, and they made him Lord Avebury in 1900, but Lubbock it was and Lubbock it will be. He loved life, this genial scientist, and the good he did is reflected in the freer life of the people of this country. It is a monument more lasting than the pomp and pageantry of princes.

This secularization of a "holy" week has been accomplished without trouble. The revolution has been a silent one, and it is a good example of the innate paganism of masses of the English people. Indeed, priestcraft never had a safe seat on English shoulders in the ages of Faith. Now there may be an amused tolerance, but the indifference is very marked.

At the other end of Europe things are very different. The Easter festivities at Jerusalem show a complete contrast to British stolidity. The Greek Church celebration of the "Holy Fire" is, perhaps, the most striking act of devotion in all Christendom. It is the belief among Christians that at a certain moment on Easter Eve fire descends from Heaven to the Holy Sepulchre, where it is received by the Patriarch and passed by means of a lighted taper to the assembled worshippers.

Vast masses of Oriental Christians swarm to Jerusalem from all parts, and fight their way into the Church to attend this rite. Under Turkish rule, a large force of Mohammedan soldiers, with fixed bayonets, tried to keep the Christian peace, but in spite of the efforts of these armed soldiers, hundreds of worshippers have at different times lost their lives in the mad scramble to light torches, candles, and tapers from the "Holy Fire."

Travellers have told us that the dense, heaving rabble looks more like a revolutionary mob than a religious congregation, and the arrival of the grey-bearded Patriarch on the shoulders of four stalwart soldiers, literally hacking their way through the crowd, suggests a superintendent of police, rather than that of an ecclesiastic about to conduct Christian worship. As the Patriarch enters the central shrine, a small flicker of light appears through a round hole in the wall. Torches and candles are lighted, and a furious rush is made for the door in order to carry the lighted torches and tapers home to burn before the household ikon.

This child-like credulity is passing strange in grown men, yet it is by no means confined to this remote part of the earth. To study it is to essay an inquiry into the psychology of a crowd, and an amazingly ignorant one at that. Let there be no mistake on this point. Ignorance is the mother of superstition all over the world. This mob of open-mouthed worshippers at Jerusalem, deceived by a gross piece of priestly jugglery, can neither read nor write. So far as knowledge goes, a fourteen years' old boy in an English elementary school is a pedant compared to any of these Orientals. Even the priestly jugglers are ignorant folks, and only educated in the patter of their dirty profession.

Nor is this all the sorry story. The priests of the Roman Catholic Church are as bad as the priests of the Greek Church. There is as much dishonesty in the alleged liquefaction of the blood of "Saint Januarius," at Naples, as in the fraud of the "Holy Fire," at Jerusalem. The alleged fragments of the cross of Christ scattered in Roman Catholic Churches throughout Europe suggest that this instrument of torture was as tall as Nelson's column. Similarly, the portions of the crown of thorns shows that that piece of headwear must have been as large as Kennington Oval. The Greek and the Roman Catholic Churches are as much alike as Cinderella's ugly sisters.

Roman Catholics are mainly ignorant folks. They are not allowed to read any books or publications criticizing their religion. They are told that by doing so they are in danger of eternal damnation, and, remember, the Catholic Church has never damped one spark of hell. Even colporteurs of Protestant Bible Societies are ill-treated in Roman Catholic countries, for a zealous Papist will no more read a Protestant version of the Christian Bible than he would read the awful utterances of Robert Ingersoll. No Roman Catholic may even become a Freemason, because priests object to all secret societies other than their own. If a Catholic young man reads the *Freethinker*, or attends a Freethought lecture, he sins more grievously than if he broke open a bank and murdered the cashier.

It is the ignorant credulity of pious folks that blinds their eyes to facts. The Christian legends are poured into their ears from earliest childhood, and the "old, old story" has a familiar ring even when half believed. But the unblushing fraud of the "Holy Fire," being in an unfamiliar setting, should make the most bigoted believer rub his eyes. And one thing must be evident to every candid reader. The Christian Religion itself is based upon similar ugly things, for Christianity is based upon miracles. It is on the truth or falsehood of miracles that the very personality of Jesus must stand or fall. According to the Gospels, it was by miracles that he attested his divine mission. It was by miracles that he is said to have won his first following. It was by miracles that he proclaimed himself "the Son of God," and without ignorant credulity, the Christian Religion would have long since died out. It is not a creed of "love" and "brotherhood" which fascinated ignorant millions through centuries, and caused them to fill the priests' coffers with overflowing gold.

The two most important Christian bodies, the Roman Catholic and the Greek Churches, know this, and affirm that their own tricks are a continuation of the Gospel miracles. They tell us that the "cures" at Lourdes, the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius, and the "Holy Fire," at Jerusalem, are the latest links in a great chain that extends back to the exciting times of Noah's Ark and the talking snake in Eden. Thus it will be seen that the great Christian Churches encourage Superstition. It is the purpose of Freethinkers to dispel that ignorance, and set Humanity free from the tyranny of the priests.

MIMNERMUS.

The Theophagite.

I MAY be rather dense;
I may be just a clod;
But I make no pretence
A biscuit is my God.

Maybe my mind is muddy,
Because I cannot tell
Why wine becomes all bloody
When rings the Sanctus bell.

A biscuit and some wine,
They say, becomes their God;
A mystery divine,
They say—two words for "cod"!

The Christian makes his Saviour,
But, mark you, how he treats Him—
What curious behaviour!—
When made the Christian eats Him.

BAVARD SIMMONS.

Spring Gods.

ON the 17th February of the present year there was a debate in the British House of Commons on the proposal to observe Easter on a fixed, instead of a movable date. It was pointed out that railway administrations, educational authorities, the fishing industry, and the Chambers of Commerce were all favourable to the change. Sir H. Slesser moved the rejection of the Bill on the ground that the matter was one for religious authority to decide upon, and that the interests that had been mentioned in its support were of a purely secular character. This attitude was supported by other members.

Upon this view, the country is to continue suffering the inconvenience of a changeable Easter until it suits the religious bodies to alter it. This is an unwarrantable arrogation of authority: an attempt by the Church to dominate the life of the State.

The present method of determining Easter was ordained by the Council of Nice, in the year 325, when it was decided that Easter should be celebrated on the Sunday that immediately follows the full moon occurring on or next after the day of the vernal equinox. This was to differentiate from the Jewish date of celebrating the Passover. Both methods are dependant upon the Spring equinox. As Easter Day thus shifts about according to the changes of the moon, it cannot be considered the anniversary of the day when Christ rose from the dead. It is, in fact, nothing but the feast to the Spring vegetation god, and existed in various forms long before Christianity, and long before the Jewish Passover. The word Easter is derived from *Eostre* or *Ostara*, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring, part of the old Teutonic mythology.

Such seasonal worship is very widely spread, taking somewhat different forms according to the varying seasons of growth and harvest in divers countries, and also according to the stage of culture reached by the peoples. For instance, among the Hebrews, one can trace the influence of the pastoral stage as well as that of the agricultural stage. The Feast of Maccoth (Easter) takes place at the beginning of the summer half-year, the commencement of the corn harvest; and the ceremonial offering is that of a sheaf of barley, this being the first grain to ripen. It is also called the feast of unleavened bread—the harvest is only just beginning, and there has not been time for leavening, so this symbolism may be read.

At the same period the Feast of the Passover was held. This was a Festival of thanksgiving for cattle, and the offering thus took the form of the male firstlings of each kind. Later, by the principles of substitution the Paschal Lamb was made the symbolic sacrifice, and still later there was substituted the god himself.

During the seven weeks after the Easter, the various other crops had ripened, and then was celebrated the harvest festival or Pentecost, or Feast of Weeks, "seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to corn." (Dent. xvi. 9.) This was celebrated by leavened wheaten bread, wheat being the last grain to ripen.

Thus, the account in Acts of the pentecostal gift of tongues is only an attempt to etherialize an ancient feast of propitiation to the vegetation god. Similarly, the account of the institution of the Passover by the slaying of the first-born of Egypt is an ingenious endeavour to clothe with Judaism a feast borrowed from the Egyptians.

There was, in truth, some necessity for adaptation, as the Egyptian god Osiris was an inundation god,

presiding over the flooding of the Nile, then, as now, the prime source of Egypt's fertility; whereas the Israelites were largely pastoral and dependent more upon rain than flood. Every year the divine Osiris was buried in the form of seed, but later, after visitation by the vivifying waters, he rose again as the life-sustaining plant, his only begotten son Horus.

The Babylonian Tammuz was also an inundation god, whom many of the Jews in their captivity learned to worship, provoking Ezekiel to complain of his beholding in the Lord's house women weeping for Tammuz. (Ezekiel viii. 14.) This was the same god as was worshipped by the Greeks under the title of Adonis—the Lord. The tears of women seem to have been an essential part of his worship; probably this was an attempt to produce rain by suggestive magic, just as peasants in parts of Germany and Austria think that they can make the crops grow tall by leaping high in the fields. This was a festival of midsummer, when Palestine and Babylonia were subject to long droughts.

The great spring festival of Greece was that of Dionysos, the twice-born god, born once of his mother and once of his father's thigh, the "Divine Young Man." During the days of his celebration at Athens—the Dionysia—his image was accompanied by the holy Bull, a perfect specimen of his kind, the very model of strength and of procreation. The Bull was slain and eaten by the worshippers so that they might be imbued with his powers; thus they became whole through sacrifice. The hide was then stuffed, and the stuffed animal was yoked to a plough, symbolizing that the Bull lived again in the renewed powers of the communicants, who had no misgivings about Resurrection.

Among a forest people the festivals take the form of Queen of the May and Jack-in-the-Green, and the ceremonies survive after the meaning of them has been forgotten and the forests have disappeared. In Greece the part of Jack-in-the-Green was played by Apollo, but this god, like all other gods, changes his character in the course of time. As knowledge of natural conditions increases the animistic conception of the world tends to disappear, the number of gods and spirits is reduced, and peoples tend to transfer their worship from dryads and undines to the sun, the moon, stars, and even to pantheism.

But always their view of gods is blatantly egotistic. When they can do things themselves they drop the gods to whom they formerly prayed for the things. A person suffering from rheumatism will decline the Bible in favour of a bottle of aspirin. More faith is pinned to barrages, dams, and seed-selection than to the resurrection of Osiris.

The Easter festival was instituted as a mode of propitiating the gods. The date and nature of the ceremony were determined by climatic and cultural conditions. Now that these climatic conditions are understood and the culture has in other respects made enormous advance, why should the whole course of business and pleasure be upset because 1600 years ago some jealous zealots thought the best way to fix the days of taboo was by reference to the movements of the sun and moon? And why should the festivals of England be determined by the agricultural operations in Palestine? The matter is not one of religion at all, but of meteorology and common sense.

HAROLD SCUDDER.

Half-knowledge and ignorance make nearly all the troubles of the world.—Prof. J. E. C. De Montmorency.

"Beware of an ox before, of a mule behind, and of a monk on every side."—Spanish Proverb.

The Origin of Spiritualism.

THE animal called man is not nearly so wonderful a being as he thinks himself to be. Architecturally and physiologically, in comparison with a lion, or a tiger, or even a St. Bernard dog, he makes a tolerably poor show. It is in point of fact only on the cerebral plane that his unmatched and peacocky egoism is in any way justifiable, and even here, with an inconsiderable number of exceptions, his much-bragged superiority is inordinately exaggerated. Apart from the knack displayed by himself, and to an infinitely greater degree, by his womenkind, of carrying fancy clothes; apart from his conformity through fear to certain moral laws; apart from other forms of ornamentation fortuitously or concubinally obtained; mankind, as it is partly the object of this work to prove, in the overwhelming main, flourishes a degree of intelligence which barely transcends that paraded by a mastiff or an educated elephant.

The widely disseminated idea that man alone possesses reason, while the actions of lower forms of animal life are governed solely by instinct, is largely false. The error, universal though it be, is due to the habit of dubbing every sign of intelligence in an animal as instinct, and every sign of intelligence in man as reason. That all cerebral convolutions are to a very big extent, and most assuredly up to a certain point automatic, I have no wish to deny, but it is absurd to say that automata is confined to animals. With a minority of exceptions, man is equally automatic. To fully understand this it is necessary to look into the way in which thoughts arise.

Every thought is the result, direct or indirect, of one or more sensory impressions. These sensory impressions may be conscious or unconscious, they may produce feeling or they may be automatic. Each peripheral irritation is conveyed along nerve tracks to the cortex, and through the incidence of constant repetition along more or less well worn tracks the sensory impressions stamp their individuality on certain cortical areas. In this way registrations are grouped and associated. It is as though the human body were studded with millions of push buttons, all communicating with one central chamber, the brain.

In primitive forms of life, such as the amoeba, there is no such thing as the brain, the whole animal is responsive to certain forms of stimuli, but the result is nothing more than the most rudimentary reflex action. Ascending the scale we get worms, snakes, fishes, as having nucleated neural termini, which may be considered as forms of incipient cerebral structure. By constantly ascending steps we have, as evidenced in different forms of life, the development of brainal organism culminating in man.

Mental capacity is nothing more than the totality of associations acquired through repeated sensory impressions, and registered in the cortical regions. This applies to the dog or the cow as it does to man; it explains why the born man-idiot never can have the intelligence of a monkey; it explains why the new-born baby is infinitely less endowed with knowledge than is the newly-hatched chicken.

The assurance of psychologists notwithstanding, the cerebration of the average man or woman is in the main and apart from reflex or automatic movements neither more nor less than a collection of stereotyped items of knowledge punctuated generously with delusions and errors. True enough, into the welter of illusion a certain amount of reason has percolated, as is evidenced by man's avoidance of

danger, by his selfishness. These particular forms of knowledge, so universal as to be deemed by popular vote instincts, which he holds most tenaciously through the ages, in common with all the higher animals, lead to actions which have become automatic in every living specimen above the level of an idiot. But automatic thought is not of necessity instinctive.¹ All that is instinctive is hereditary. Thus the pecking of a newly-hatched chicken, the suckling of a baby; the inclination to sleep. But in man, at any rate, very little else is instinctive, and in consequence that precise portion of mentality that is hereditary is precious small. For mentality in the huge main is an acquirement. It depends for its development on environmental conditions. And for this very reason so far as the bulk of the population of any country is concerned, cerebration is rubber stamped.

The bulk of man's actions, such for example as walking, using the hands, the mechanical motions of eating, long before maturity is reached become purely automatic, devoid of conscious thought, and in consequence are difficult to separate from instincts. They are common to all allied species of animal life. Equally automatic, but in addition instinctive, is the pecking of a newly-hatched chicken; the suckling of a baby; the waddling of a duck; the vindictiveness of turkeys, the curiosity of cows. But the singing of birds is not instinctive any more than is the singing of children: it is in anything beyond a rudimentary caterwauling, to be acquired. It is this embryonic form of singing that is inherited as being common to all; the higher manifestations of the art varying in degree, are not hereditary.

It may be argued by those who are inclined to combat the law of evolution,² that if my thesis is true every specimen of mankind would act and think *precisely* as do his fellow men. But before noisy and immoderate laughter is indulged in by critical and antagonistic readers, let us go a little more deeply into the evolution of mentality itself.

Granted absolute equality of conditions governing sensory impressions, this duplication of mentality would be true. And to a big extent it is true. There is not, however, even in the most primitive civilizations, any *absolute* equality. Invariably there are a few individuals who, through abnormal physiological or pathological modifications of sensory stimuli depart from the normal. And the definiteness and variety of these departures are coincident with the extension of intelligence; provided they are, through repetition or universality, sufficiently well worn to form the nuclei for the genesis of new associations, or the amplification or restriction of the old ones.

In lower forms of life stimuli is equally perceptible over the whole sensory surface. The development of specific and highly susceptible sensory regions or organs results naturally enough in lower sensibility in other portions of the body. In brute creation this development reaches its highest

¹ Education can and does develop automatic or unconscious actions, such as eating, writing, reading, which to the average grown man are barely distinguishable from instincts. But a moment's reflection will show how far, in reality, are they removed from instincts. It is not the act of reading, but the capacity for its development that is instinctive.

² It will be noted that I speak of the law and not the theory of evolution. It seems to me that the time for this has come. If anything in this world is a proven fact it is evolution. And this, despite the ideas of religious disclaimers, despite the fact that in a number of States in America the teaching of evolution is prohibited, despite the fact that English newspapers whilst ridiculing the Tennessee trial, forget that the teaching of the book of Genesis forms part of every English school curriculum.

form in the primates, and there can be no doubt whatever that the mental ascendancy of the anthropoid ape over the dog or the elephant is due to the increased sensory stimuli resulting from the use of the arms and the erect posture of the body. An increase in peripheral areas is bound to add to the sensory stimuli, in turn leading to increased association of ideas: the origin of all reason. The evolution of brain is coincident with physical evolution: it is directly traceable from the merely simulative form of the æomba to man himself. Now in apes the varieties of sensory stimuli are restricted within very precise and definite limits. In consequence, their mentality keeps pretty well at one level. The same thing applies, and in a greater degree, to dogs, cats, elephants, horses and other animals.

There seems little doubt that between the highest form of ape and the most primitive type of man is a jump so big as to imply the existence at some time or another of an intermediate primate. Of what this may have been we have no precise information. But at any rate in addition to all the forms of sensory stimuli available to an anthropoid ape,³ man even in his savage state has the boon of language, and in his higher states the additional mode of thought communication afforded by writing. Huxley long ago propounded the theory, as Cuvier had done before him, that in articulate speech lies the one real distinctive characteristic of man. Born devoid of articulative powers and divorced from the society of any but the similarly afflicted, he would never reach any higher degree of mentality than an ourang. It is this gift of language that makes all the difference. For whereas the animal can only inherit a limited collection of instincts extended, if at all, with phenomenal slowness, man in his modern edition has lost the bulk of the instincts available to the ape and other animals, and in their place has for the bare grasping, a huge mass of knowledge which in its availability and ease of accession is barely removed from the instinctive. Without these facilities of communication of associated ideas leading towards increased and new associations, it is a matter of tolerable certainty that man would never progress beyond the primitive state depending entirely on sensory stimuli peripherally conveyed. The truth of this is abundantly evident if one compares the mental states of an English baby with that of a savage. If there is any manifest difference at all, the savage will show a quicker and more acute response to stimuli resulting in reflex action. Were the two of them brought up together by a cannibal mother, it is supremely doubtful if mentality would be any more marked in the one than in the other: it is more than probable that the white child would develop anthropophagy.

It is precisely here that environment steps in, and to a very considerable degree overcomes heredity. For although environment cannot create, it can decide which of a collection of rival and possibly antagonistic instincts on the one hand, and capacities for development on the other shall dominate. In our own civilization it decides such points as a man's choice of a wife, of his religion, of his politics. It is in this way, for instance, that the non-possession of an extra shirt may develop, as in numerous cases it has done in this country, a snorting socialist; that the gaining of a comfortable sinecure may induce the negation of the very principles which have led to its realization.

GEORGE R. SCOTT.

(To be continued.)

³ Professor Yerkes has demonstrated by experiments with chimpanzees, that although apes do not possess any language in the actual meaning of the term, they can be taught its rudiments.

Acid Drops.

Someone with an excrescence at the top of his spinal column, which he mistakes for a brain, writes in the *North Eastern Daily Gazette*, explaining that the reason why the Labour candidate did not get in for Middlesborough is that the other candidates suspended their meetings on Sunday, while the Labour candidate continued to hold them. He thinks the defeat was brought about by "divine influence." All we can say is this was unconstitutional, if not illegal. God is not on the voting list, and there is a limit to what the law allows in the direction of influencing votes. We wonder whether Mr. Macdonald would raise the question in the House?

The Rev. A. D. Belden, of Whitefield's Tabernacle, objects to singing "There is a fountain filled with blood," because, he says, the words are "too revolting for modern taste." Of course the words are revolting, but they are not more revolting than the idea they illustrate. We wonder when these parsons will be honest enough to denounce the whole idea that lies behind the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, instead of merely toning it down so as to save their faces and retain their posts. We expect that will arrive when they cease to be parsons.

By the way, we may note that the Congregational Hymn Book omits the lines:—

Whatever, Lord, we lend to thee
Repaid a thousandfold will be.

Perhaps in these days of artificial silk, rubber, and oil booms, it suggests too much of the stock market.

Apropos of the huge newspaper trusts, a reader of a weekly contemporary says:—

It must not be assumed that people who buy papers agree with the views put forward by the respective papers. If one discounts the people who buy the papers for sporting news, general news, pictures, competitions, or insurances, one has very few left who buy them for the political views put forward. Thinking for oneself is not yet a thing of the past.

We are not so sure about that. Nine out of ten newspaper readers one encounters merely parrotize the opinions expressed by their favourite paper. Besides, a huge newspaper trust allows only certain opinions to appear. And this means that the unwary reader has only a limited amount of opinions to form a judgment on. A horse wearing blinkers can see, but only in the direction his master wishes him to go. In this world of newspaper trusts the mass of the people have only a limited field in which to do their thinking.

Mr. Robert Lynd (of the *Daily News*) fancies that the future of serious controversy at the B.B.C. depends largely on the extent to which ordinary men and women are anxious to listen to the other side. "Probably more people are willing to listen to the other side to-day than at any other time in history." It would have been interesting if Mr. Lynd had mentioned what he thought were the causes of the state of affairs. One thing is certain, the Christian Churches have not brought about this wholesome change. Who ever heard of a sectarian Church exhorting and encouraging Christian men and women to investigate contrary opinions?

Some genius has passed on the information that this particular leap year compels the parsons to preach on fifty-three Sundays instead of fifty-two, and to take a like increased number of collections. We knew leap year gave the ladies a privilege that might (or might not be) a benefit to the sex. But it had not occurred to us that leap year could benefit also the neuter sex—the priests. It will enable the various companies engaged in spreading superstition to show slightly increased balance sheets for the present year of grace. Well, well, it's an ill wind . . .

A weekly journal says: "Nature abhors a vacuum and punishes stagnation, while minds left fallow become filled with silliness. Any debate in any session of Parliament will furnish proof of these truths!" There is no need to go to Westminster for the proof. One can find it in any town on entering the local churches and chapels and Salvation barracks. And some cynics might suggest the buying of a popular daily or weekly paper.

The *Toronto Telegram* is very indignant at the Rev. Salem G. Bland, who, in the columns of the *Daily Star* said:—

It is quite beyond question that the knowledge of Jesus was limited. He grew in wisdom. He did not know when the end of the world, or of the age, would be. He was mistaken about the fig-tree. He was often surprised and asked questions that showed He did not know something He wished to know.

Now the *Telegram* does not say that Mr. Bland is wrong in saying this about Jesus, but it says he ought not to tell such things to children as part of the Sunday school lesson. As a matter of fact everyone knows that the knowledge of the Jesus of the New Testament has very marked limitations. But while it is quite right and proper to say these things to adults, it is not right and proper to say them to children. And we cite the *Toronto* paper because it is the common attitude of Christians all over this country. That is, current Christian ethical teaching has it that you may fitly tell lies to children because they will not tell you that you are a liar. But you must tell the truth to adults because they will call you a liar if you do not. Or to put the matter quite plainly, the rule of the mass of Christian teachers is that lies about religion are quite admissible so long as they will not be known as such.

A Nottingham parson is trying to see what can be done to fill his Church by way of having a kind of a discussion in the pulpit. There are two pulpits in the Church. From one the parson outlines his subject, and from the other a selected person asks questions. We may be quite sure that the one permitted to question the parson will be quite "safe." If real business was meant we could find the parson a questioner who would give him quite a busy half-hour. But with so much sham, a sham discussion will not matter very much.

Mr. A. G. Gardiner says he doesn't know the remedy for the menace underlying the trustification of the Press. A reader of a weekly journal suggests that the remedy lies in the hands of the public. People should support only independent journals with an open forum for the free expression of opinion. This would soon defeat the sinister effort to dragoon opinion for reactionary purposes. That reader wants introducing to the *Freethinker*, the foremost exponent of the free expression of opinion.

Broadcasting, we learn, played an important part in the recent anti-opium week held in Shanghai. On the other hand, in England broadcasting plays an important part in encouraging indulgence in that dope sometimes called "the opium of the people." Perhaps this need occasion no surprise; the Anglican Church and the B.B.C. are both government departments; and it is in the nature of one government department to support another.

In regard to our suggestion that readers should continue their bombardment of the B.B.C., we suggest that their activities need not stop at that. Naturally, any notice of this agitation is not permitted to escape to the pages of the Corporation's official organ, the *Radio Times*. Therefore much useful work could be done by writing letters to the other wireless journals. Some of such letters would no doubt be printed, and so would not only influence the opinion of other wireless users, but also show the B.B.C. that Freethought opinion is not to be kept hidden.

The Rev. Walker H. Armstrong tells (in the *Methodist Times*) how he engaged in argument with a casually met Christian Scientist. The latter gave several instances of persons being won over from Agnosticism and Materialism through the appeal of Christian Science. Mr. Armstrong says this was very interesting, and he had no reason to doubt his opponent's statements in this respect. In fact, "I can conceive such conversions as being very probable." Quite so. Agnostics and Materialists are so very easily induced to accept that quaint conglomeration of nonsense known as Christian Science. Freethinking prepares them for it.

All is not well with American Churches. Some have not made a single convert during the year. A Dr. Fenn, of Princeton, New Jersey, has diagnosed in medical terms the ailments afflicting the Churches. They suffer, says he, from fatty degeneration of the heart (wealth, luxury and ease), pernicious anaemia (lack of blood in theology and the fight with sin), cerebrospinal meningitis (destruction of backbone and brain centre), cancer (unbelief in the supernatural), and neuritis (super-sensitiveness to criticism and ridicule). With all these diseases, the Churches would seem stricken unto death. We suggest painless extinction would be an act of mercy for things so unhappily afflicted. What's the starting price on that noble horse "Revival of Religion"?

In the *Western Gazette* has appeared a series of articles dealing with the "casual wards" of the West. Referring to Yeovil, the writer who visited the casual wards there, says: "On the door of every cell in this miserable place is hung a text of some description. Mine was 'God is Love.'" He was thunderstruck at such a thing put in such a place. "It was such a mockery, under the circumstances, of all Christ's teaching." One of the *Guardians* supplies the texts. We don't see where the mockery comes in. The orthodox Christian view is that the outcasts of the social world are such because of their "sin." That being so, the quite proper thing to do is to put up texts inciting the outcasts to better thought. After all, if the Master came again he would visit the casual wards and say to the inmates no more than that which the texts declare.

In the *Radio Times* a writer says:—

Radio should neglect no opportunity of adopting the suggestions of the "highbrow." We should be inclined to favour rather than to suspect him, for he is half way to Paradise, which is peopled with those mild creatures whose admiration is only for the "safe" and "sound" and "tried" and "accepted" things of life.

In place of "highbrow" the writer might well have substituted "Freethinker." For Freethinkers in every department of thought and life have pointed the way to new things. The unsafe thought of the Freethinker of one generation becomes the accepted opinion of the next generation. If the B.B.C. desires not to be grouped with the "mild creatures," we suggest it should try the experiment of allowing an unfettered expression of the Freethought case on the wireless. There are plenty of listeners with minds open enough to appreciate what would be to them a new thing.

A reader of the *Wireless World* thinks that the one weak point of the Sunday wireless programme is the blank from 6 to 8 p.m. We fear he will have to put up with it. The Churches will tolerate no competition in their business hours. Another reader says that though it is definitely unsuitable to give dance music on Sunday (he doesn't say why) it is just as wrong to give continuous "sacred and religious" items, afternoon and evening. Why, he asks, must the whole of Sunday be given up to this kind of programme? The answer to this—though the B.B.C. never gives it—is that the B.B.C. and the Churches have come to a perfectly pleasant arrangement for the chief party concerned. The same reader says that though the Corporation is adamant about the Church Service taking place at 8 p.m. instead of 6.30, it might at least refrain from giving

programmes that are practically Church Services in the afternoon. He wants lively tuneful pieces instead of dirges. He fails to see why there should be anything detrimental to Sunday in the music from "The Arcadians" and "The Maid of the Mountains." There isn't. But the clerics think that such music is detrimental to the Church and its work of saddening the Sabbath.

There are a number of people in this country, not yet in asylums, who believe the British people to be the lost tribes of Israel. Mr. Horatio Bottomley was also assured of the truth that God had specially designed the British Empire to carry out his design. But Mr. Baldwin has topped all cranks at a single bound. For that gentleman told an Albert Hall meeting that the failure of Great Britain to do something or the other would "shake the very fabric of the universe." We had no idea that the universe rested on any such easily destroyed foundation.

With reference to the recent Church disturbance at Darwin, "Philo" writes to the editor of the *Blackburn Advertiser*, pointing out that "outsiders" joined in the discussion only when the proceedings of the vicar and his opponents became a disgrace to a civilized community. The editor retorts that he discourages discussion on the matter in his paper because religious discussions give rise to so much bitterness, and also because, to devout people, opinions about religion are of no consequence whatever, it is a question of faith. The editor's comments are worthy of a little attention.

A contemporary says that the Salvation Army gave invaluable help during the Thames floods disasters. Quantities of food and goods ordered by the Army have been paid for out of the Lord Mayor's Fund. What may be understood from this is that the "Army" acted merely as a distributing agency of other people's alms. It may be safely assumed that of those who gave, numbers were non-Christians (indifferent to religion). But these two facts will not hinder the Salvation H.Q. from advertising to the effect that it was the Salvation Army which "gave" food, etc., to flood victims.

Working men and women, affirms Sir Philip Gibbs, are nobler and wiser and of wider charity than their politicians. He might as well have made the statement more comprehensive by adding "and their self-appointed pastors, lecturers, critics, and exhorters."

Asks Dean Inge: "What would happen if we could X-ray consciences?" We should say the result might be deuced awkward for the Church. If all the consciences of Church of England priests were X-rayed, a considerable number of their owners would be found suffering from suppression. Another large batch would be discovered camouflaging beliefs which, to their better judgment, were intellectually repulsive.

Edith How Martyn (in the *Daily News*) says:—

In England to-day, the physical, mental, and psychical needs of children are the subject of careful scientific study and affectionate consideration as never before.

This is one of the unfortunate results of the nation having become infected with materialistic views and pagan ideals. A revival of the Christian religion would no doubt alter this for the better.

We hear a good deal about the divine spark in which animals do not share with man, says Dr. A. Shadwell; but what about the infernal spark in which also animals do not share? Ay, what about it? Dr. Shadwell should ask God why the explosive spark was put there. Man would have been much happier without it, and its absence would have saved God both the labour of organizing an infernal torture chamber, and the

necessity for sending a bit of himself to be painfully butchered to redeem mankind.

Dr. T. R. Glover dilates on "the old coarse Gospel" (Wesley), and asks: "And yet who has ever found a better one?" We reply, no one with coarse taste. Dr. Glover also enquires: "Can you improve on God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me?" We shouldn't care to improve anything like that. What we would rather improve is the type of intelligence that accepts as fact so very puerile a notion.

The *Nottingham Evening News* has a rather curious sense of what is meant by history. Under the heading of "Historical Notes," it publishes in a recent issue, from the pen of a Mr. H. Walker, an account of an old inn, and proceeds to say that it was from this inn that some people carried Thomas Paine and hanged him on the arm of a tree on February 12, 1793. The mob was exasperated by his *Rights of Man*. And in a later issue the following is printed from Godfrey's *History of Lenton*. This is sufficiently curious to justify reprinting:—

On Tuesday last (12 February) the infamous Thomas Paine (one of the rag-a-muffin Convention of Paris) was apprehended and lodged in the Peveril Gaol at Lenton, near this town; he was brought to trial the same day, and after a fair and impartial examination (his crimes being so big with infamy he could not plead!) he was found guilty of treason, against the King who had formally spared his life, and against the constitution of this country, in endeavouring, by his seditious writings, to overwhelm us in destruction, and our Sovereign King, whom all good Englishmen revere.

He was sentenced to be hanged on the arm of a tree, near the above village, which was accordingly done, amidst a great concourse of people; he was left hanging on the tree for a considerable time, after which the company retired to the Coffee for refreshment; soon after they were informed that Paineites had laid a plan to convey the remains of their champion away from the tree, which the Loyalists, being aware of, fell on, routed, and put to flight the whole gang of them.

In the evening his body was cut down and burnt to ashes in a bonfire, after which the major part of them retired to the Coffee House, where the company gave repeated toasts to the health and long life of George the Third, our Gracious King, Queen Charlotte, the Royal Family, Lord Middleton, and many other gentlemen in the neighbourhood.

Of course the whole thing is a hoax, and it is a pity the editor did not indicate the facts. In 1793, Paine was in France, a member of the Convention, and he did not die till 1809. And there are his letters written to Jefferson and other eminent Americans until just before his death in 1808. We do not know Godfrey's *History of Lenton*, but as Paine was burned and hanged in effigy in quite a number of English towns, it is quite probable that it is one of these instances which Mr. Walker ignorantly mistook for a burning of the man. There were, of course, many good Christians who would like to have burned or hanged Paine, but it did not happen. All they could do was to lie about him, and they did this with a vigour which no doubt brought them their due reward in heaven.

According to the Belfast papers, Belfast, with a population of over 400,000, has only twenty-four Atheists, and no Agnostics, or any other of the twilight groups of Freethinkers. We are rather doubtful about these figures, and could, as a matter of fact, hunt out more than twenty-four among our own readers and correspondents. But if it were true, what a terribly benighted place Belfast must be. We fancy that Belfast, being what it is, the home of a peculiarly narrow and bigoted form of Christian belief, unbelievers are not in a hurry to avow themselves.

Unless something be done, says Lord Onslow, most of the world's rare wild animals will soon be extinct. The wild animals which are not rare, namely, the Salvationists and the Lord's Dayers, may safely be left to preserve themselves.

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.—Miss V. Murray, £1.

H. BLACK.—Correct. Quite a good book, and an unusually keen psychological study.

W. L. E.—Much obliged for papers, which we forgot in the rush.

T. HOPPERTON.—Thanks for cutting. See "Acid Drops." We do not see much hope for Democracy or for anything else so long as such types of mind are prevalent. If votes depended on intelligence, we wonder what proportion of the population would qualify for the franchise.

CINE CERE.—How can one expect a better type in the Church? More money may get a better supply, but the quality must steadily deteriorate in view of the relations of religion to scientific thought.

F. HOBDAY.—Next week. Thanks.

A. L. BRAINE.—We have dealt with the Hon. Stephen Coleridge's religious outbreaks before. If God wished to do anything one would imagine he would be able to do it without calling for Stephen Coleridge's assistance.

H. GRAY.—We have dealt with the point more than once, and the sermon you send does not appear to call for a special reply. The best reply to the statement that the existence of God is a fundamental truth is that believers are still trying to get people to believe it. Things that are fundamental and self-evident manage to get themselves established. Whereas the longer people reason about God, the less certain they become.

B. SIMMONS.—Yes, Draper's *Conflict between Science and Religion* IS "A wonderful two shillings worth." But it is not likely to be reprinted at that price.

M. LAWRENCE.—Sorry we missed you on Sunday. You should have made yourself known.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

To-day (March 18) Mr. Cohen will lecture, afternoon and evening, in the Co-operative Hall, Plymouth. The meetings have been well advertised and good meetings are expected.

It does not always rain at Manchester, and on Sunday last it varied in the direction of a very heavy snowstorm, which began just about the time that folk would be setting out for the afternoon lecture. A consequence of this was that the afternoon meeting was not quite so large as usual, but in the evening the hall was well filled. Mr. Turner took the chair in the afternoon, and Mr. Rosetti in the evening. Both spoke well of the season's work, and as a result of an appeal for new members about half a dozen were enrolled. There was also, we believe, a good sale of literature.

The financial year of the National Secular Society ends on March 31, and it is advisable that all membership fees, including the capitation fees from Branches should be in by that date. Perhaps those members who have not yet sent their subscriptions, due on January 1, will take the hint and remit without delay.

The Executive has arranged two Thursday evening lectures, in the Town Hall, Fulham. The first will be taken by Mr. Cohen, and the second by Mr. George Whitehead. Mr. Cohen's subject will be "Some things that Christians Ought to Know." We hope that Free-thinkers living in West London will do their best to make the meetings known among their friends. There are small slips advertising the meetings, and those who can circulate these will oblige by sending their names and addresses to the Secretary, Mr. F. Mann, at the N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

The Executive has also arranged a special lecture at the Stratford Town Hall, on Sunday, March 25. Mr. Cohen will be the lecturer, and will speak on "The Priest and the Child."

We are asked to announce that to-day (March 18) Mr. S. Cohen, of Manchester, will speak for the Liverpool Branch, at 18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street, on "What is the Value of Freethought?" The meeting will commence at 7.30 prompt.

We desire to call special attention to *The Case for Secular Education* advertised on the back page of this issue. It is a careful statement of the case for the abolition of religious teaching in State-supported schools, and has been drawn up by Mr. Harry Snell, M.P., at the request of the Secular Education League. Every reader of this paper should secure a copy and lend it to a friend, or better still, buy two copies—one for himself and one for a friend. It should also lead to an access of new members to the League. There is no telling how or when the question may become one of political urgency, and it is well to be prepared.

Notices to Branches of the N.S.S. asking for nominations for the place of the Annual Conference have been issued, and it is requested that answers should be sent back to the N.S.S. offices as soon as possible.

The Secular Society, Limited is issuing a pamphlet by Mr. George Whitehead, on *Religion and Women*. It is the first of three psycho-analytic studies of religion. The pamphlet will be ready in the course of two or three weeks, and will be sold at the price of six pence.

Jesuitism's Big Push.

THERE can now be no questioning about the reality of the widespread and determined Jesuistic activities within both the Roman and the English Churches. And it is foolish, if not worse, to pretend not to see it. Indeed, the Jesuits themselves hail this welcome indifference on the part of the public, and mean to take the fullest possible advantage of it. The tragic apathy is due to the common fact that the sense of liberty and freedom is not felt and enjoyed as a blessing except when the pinch of oppression and persecution is an actual experience. If the fires of Smithfield were now alight, how sweet it would be to get them extinguished.

It is needless to observe that Jesuitism does not employ a brass band to herald its presence and activities or parade the streets with flags and banners to proclaim its designs. It works mole-like underground without noise or bustle; and if it does carry on its operations above the surface it resorts to all sorts of camouflage to disguise its doings and ward off suspicion.

Its objective is to capture for *Romanism*, whether within the Church of Rome or within the Church of England (it is all the same) the power behind the throne which controls the destinies of mankind. Its proximate end, as a necessary stepping stone to achieve this final goal, is to capture the press with a view to creating a public opinion favourable and sympathetic to Roman Catholicism. So, strenuous but unobtrusive efforts are everywhere made to get hold of the ownership of important publications. This gives the protagonists control over the policy of the paper through having the right of selecting editor and staff sympathetic with their aim. These captures, be it observed, are not announced from the house tops, and that it has a policy of propaganda at all, is kept well out of sight.

I was made to animadvert upon this sad situation by a question addressed to me a few weeks ago by several readers of this journal. The question was: "What do you now think of the publication called *Outline*?" This query was undoubtedly due to the highly favourable opinion I formed of it, as was mentioned in the *Literary Guide*, when it first appeared.

But soon, indeed very soon, I had painful reason to change my opinion. For it became quite evident that the championship of science and rationalism was a piece of palpable camouflage; in every case it ended either like a squib, a puff of smoke, or in a complete *volle face*.

But when it undertook to lionize Chesterton and Belloc, two notorious and unscrupulous papists, who use their time and talent to white-wash the history of Catholicism and to extenuate the villainies of its black record, I could stand it no longer and forthwith cancelled the order to supply me the paper.

I was indeed asked to draw attention to its real character in this journal. I had, however, no intention of complying with this request, until I read in the current issue of the *Literary Guide*, the treatment accorded to Mr. Robert Arch's pertinent and restrained letter by the editor of *Outline*. That illuminating snub confirms the opinion in a manner that leaves no possible room for doubt—that the publication in question is another of the flank movements of Jesuitism now in active progress throughout Christendom.

KERIDON.

To love truth for truth's sake is the principal part of human perfection in this world, and the seed-plot of all other virtues.—*Locke*.

"Why these Churches?"

THOUGHTFUL men, accustomed to doing their own thinking, have long been asking themselves the question, "Why these Churches?"

To-day, the same question is beginning to agitate the minds of an ever-increasing number of people, whose questioning is doubtless prompted by the rather remarkable, and thoroughly pitiful, lack of substantial achievement shown as the result of almost two thousand years of Christianity.

Personally, I absolutely fail to see any necessity at all for the continued existence of Churches, since Organized Religion is a farce based on ignorance, and the reasons for its existence mere pretences, excuses rather than reasons.

Let us examine the position, and endeavour to discover upon what the Church bases its claim to exist.

One of the greatest attractions which the Church possesses for the mass of people is that it can tell them something about God. Or so they imagine—which vain belief the Church deliberately fosters. The second great attraction is that the Church will tell them that Jesus came on earth, and by his death redeemed the world from Sin. People like to be told, with all the authority of the Church behind the proclamation, that their sins have been redeemed. It is so very comforting.

Thus we see that the fundamental reasons (or excuses) for the existence of the Church are, that the Church alone knows, and can tell, who or what God is, allied to the preaching of Christ Crucified, the latter including, naturally, the doctrine of the Redemption.

Concerning the former, no intelligent being will deny that the claim of the Church is manifestly absurd. Parsons do not know any more about God than the people to whom they preach.

Yet we hear from them such phrases as, "God is a Spirit"—"God is the Father"—and similar empty vapourings.

God is this and God is that, and all the time the plain truth is, they do not know who, what or where God is. In short, they know nothing whatever about God. Why not be honest about it, and drop all this pretence?

Still, I suppose even parsons must live.

As to the second point, regarding the Church's teaching of the Crucifixion and the purpose and meaning thereof, the less said, the better.

It is perfectly ridiculous to assert that the death of one man (for man *only* Christ assuredly was) can redeem the world from sin.

Christ himself, supposing he ever actually existed (which I am not prepared to deny), may have imagined, and declared, that he was dying to save the world, but have not many other men, under the stress of deeply religious mania, imagined similar things?

In any event, we are not concerned here with what Christ thought. The best we can say of him is, that he had the courage to live up to his ideals: yet surely that is no more than the duty of every man.

A word relating to Sunday Schools. Here the teaching regarding Christ's coming on earth is so given that the only inference young, unformed minds can draw is, that all goodness and virtue came into the world with Christ.

To tell Sunday School pupils that there were upright, honourable, virtuous-living men and women before Christ was born, would be to make them wonder. To add that there are to-day many honest, righteous people who are not Christians, would be to give the game away, and to knock away yet one more excuse for the existence of Churches and Sunday Schools.

One question in conclusion. Where can you find a more ignorant, unintelligent person than the average Sunday School class teacher?

S. HOWARTH.

Ah! for the summons of a challenge cry
Which sets to swinging fast the bell that tolls
The high and leaping cliimes of sympathy
Within the true cathedral of our souls.

Galsworthy.

The Shadow Show.

"For in and out, above, about, below,
'Tis nothing but a magic shadow show,
Played in a box, whose candle is the sun,
Round which we phantom figures come—and go."

OMAR KHAYYAM.

THIS WEEK'S NEWS REEL.

The Reverend Robert Horton is a-tearing of his hair, because the modern flapper hasn't any use for prayer. He says the Church of Jesus Christ seems in a dreadful mess—in a treble column article in *Beaverbrook's Express*. He deploras the modern tendency to motor on a Sunday and the woeful lack of reverence paid to sainted Mrs. Grundy . . . Yet he thinks it's only temporary and we'll reach the Promised Land—*now that Science and Religion are walking hand in hand!*

Since the conjuror Houdini shuffled off this mortal coil, he's sent a Spirit Message to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The table-turning mediums that Houdini said were spooft, are naturally delighted now his spirit's "under proof!" They echo, like the Carpenter, "Oh don't you think it grand—*now that Science and Religion are walking hand in hand!*"

The Gloomy Dean's disgusted with the brawling at his church, the Darwen Vicar's been and gone and left 'em in the lurch. They're trying to smash the atom at Shenectady, U.S.A., but the Nonconformist meenisters are grousing at their pay. The Chaplains of the R.A.F. are now allowed to fly, drop tracts with bombs, on heathen as they're piloting the sky. And so we'll build Jerusalem in England's pleasant land *now that Science and Religion are walking hand in hand!*

THE PAST PANORAMA.

One of the advantages of a panorama is that the scenes can be moved backwards and forwards at will, passing the lighted proscenium for a brief while ere being rolled up into the darkness again. And so this Shadow Show of ours, ladies and gentlemen, while showing you topical scenes may flash back to give you a glimpse of past successes—or mayhap failures.

See what variegated figures have come and gone on History's panorama, illumined by the "candle of the sun."

The anniversaries of March 11 are a queer blend of harlequinade and tragedy.

To-day is the feast of St. Constantine of Scotland, also of St. Sophronius and St. Eulogius. Very "phantom figures" indeed that need not detain us long.

Perhaps some devout Scotsman on this day observes the feast of St. Constantine who was, I believe, a pious Heilander.

Maybe, in a lowly shrine in Aberdeen he adores the saint's holy relic—a battered saxpence—banged during the Saint's missionary tour to the heathen Southerners in London a thousand years ago. Stranger things have happened. Once, when I lived in Jerusalem, a wily Syrian dragoman offered to show me, at a price, a piece of the rope with which Judas hanged himself in the Potter's field.

I am almost sorry I did not close with it now that Madame Tussauds is to rise, Phoenix-like, from the ashes—it would be a distinct acquisition to the Chamber of Horrors. On this day too, was born Tasso the poet, and two wretched old women Margaret and Phillipa Flower were burnt at the stake for witchcraft and to the glory of God at Lincoln two hundred years ago to-day.

SAINT NELLY.—I prefer to linger over the next anniversary.

On March 11, 1682, was founded Chelsea Hospital.

"Old soldiers," the song informs us, "never die, they only fade away." But though sweet Nell of Old Drury might have sung that song with gusto had she known it, her kind heart would have seen to it that the "old sweats" faded away gracefully with beer and baccy

in the evenings of their days. Legend has it that the Chelsea Pensioners owe their comforts to Nell Gwyn, and it is more than likely that she persuaded the easy-going Charles to look after those broken in their country's wars.

I prefer anyway to celebrate to-day as the feast day of St. Nelly, who had more real humanity and unselfishness despite her frailty, than a dozen perverted ascetics canonized by the Church.

It is a solemn thought that this date also, in 1703, saw the first daily paper, *The Courant*, published in England.

It was the forerunner of our modern newspapers which have proved such an unestimable boon to democracy.

Have they not given us Standard Bread, Zinovieff Letters, and Pip, Squeak and Wilfred? Greater than all these—have they not made dying a pleasure—removed the Sting of death and robbed the grave of Victory by Free Insurance?

It is but a step before the *Daily Excess*, with the connivance of Mr. Sage, delivers pious Christians to their Heavenly Mansions in plain vans—or even guarantees fire insurance for those unfortunates who are doomed to sit on an eternal hot-plate!

HAVE WE EVOLVED?

It's a mad world my masters. Christians are still tender on the subject of apes—but judging from the antics of some of Jehovah's ju-ju men, the average orang-outang would hate to be classed as a relative of the human race. A gorilla has dignity at least. In Portmadoc, North Wales, the advertisement hoardings beneath the town hall are hinged, and it is one man's duty on Saturday night to close them with their faces to the wall in case chapel-goers might forget their duty to the Almighty by reading announcements on Sunday of such carnal delights as cattle sales and whist drives.

THE DUSTBIN.

Weekly papers have a habit of recording the utterances of celebrities or notorieties under some such generic heading as "Sayings of the Week." A better title for many of the remarks quoted would be "RUBBISH SHOT HERE, so here goes for the dustbin:—"

"Science now affirms religion is necessary. The materialistic conception has entirely broken down."

Dr. R. F. Horton.

"I received a letter from a prominent rationalist saying he knew spiritualism to be false because he had not received a certain message. One cannot command conditions, I told him, one makes more progress upon one's knees."—*Sir A. Conan Doyle.*

"The British Nation is getting better at wearing Fancy Dress. It was fun seeing Mr. Churchill in a Roman toga and my father as Cardinal Wolsey."

Lady Elcanor Smith

"The Prince of Wales, wearing turned-up trousers, has appalled Savile Row. They lack essential dignity."

Weekly Dispatch.

"Agnosticism served a useful purpose in clearing away some of the ivy that clung to religion, so that its beauty could be better seen."—*Sir Oliver Lodge.*

NOT SO GREEN.

The Christian Evidence lecturer who recently tackled a young reporter, under the impression that he was connected with the *Methodist Recorder*, and discovered he was a contributor to the *Freethinker*, reminds me of the story of a man who was colour-blind: Seeing a green object shining on the floor, he picked it up carefully—and found it was a red hot coal!

GWYN EVANS.

Negro and Other Spirituals.

"Compared with these Italian thrills are tame,
The tickled ears no heartfelt raptures raise;
Nae unison hae they wi' our Creator's praise!"

Burns.

GREAT is Diana of the Ephesians! But greater still is the art of the hymnologist. Next to the sacred volume, I was fondly taught that the greatest gift of the gods was the Calvinistic Methodist hymn book. I refer to my early days, when the orthodox was a greater power in the land, and wielded a stronger influence in the church. He was a highly commended youth who learned chapters and hymns.

The sacred poets had a very wide realm in which their talents might roam at will; and like the gentleman who said he knew nothing about Art, but could speak well on the subject, by virtue of having the whole field to himself, so these men were similarly, and fortunately, placed—at least when dealing with the beyond. I may add, that the boldness developed in the treatment of celestial matters frequently served them none too badly in other spheres. You can push your convictions far and back them with much holy rot when you feel assured there is none, or every few, to dispute them. The dear old hymns of peace and love, like many a comic song—and some of the hymns are comic enough to one with a divine sense of humour—have caught on by being wedded to catchy and sometimes immortal music. Some profane poet may remark that the sacred writer is the more fortunate party in many instances.

In an Eisteddfod prize essay, dealing with the Berwyn bards, we are told—and the writer quotes from Tennyson—that a hymn is a very difficult thing to write. The demands of modesty, reverence, dignity, simplicity, etc., are such that special faculties—and I presume knowledge and training—are required. Regard for truth, proportion and consistency, are certainly essentials. Presuming upon the "Crossing the Bar" of the famous poet being a hymn, we may remark that we, from our brief experience, cannot appreciate the lines:—

I hope to see my pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.

But, perhaps, he was a special pilot; and such, so far as we are able to judge, are not always the best.

Before dealing with Negro Spirituals, let us consider some of the literary gems of the superior coloured brother in Christ. Here follows a verse of a popular hymn, sung with gusto in English, and also in the Welsh translation:—

Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high:
Hide me, O, my Saviour hide,
'Til the storm of Life be past;
Safe into the haven guide,
O, receive my soul at last!

The loved one, having specially requested the lover of the soul to receive him into His bosom, apparently being a safe shelter from the rolling waters and the tempest, the lover of the soul is suddenly brought out of hiding to guide him into the haven; also to receive him at the same time. And, to receive his soul at last, when in the second line he is already safe and sound in the almighty and all-sufficient bosom. Such a jumble of metaphor and statement is out of place anywhere but in a famous hymn.

Or, let us take another sample of the sacred muse:—

Rock of Ages cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.

Having found himself safely wedged in the holy cleft, we find the versatile transgressor with nothing in his hand, conveniently clinging to the cross. The acrobatic performance of the sinner concealed in the cleft bespeak an ability which, if put to other uses, would afford him a monetary return that writing the best poetry or prose for the profane would never do. But where Faith rules, it would seem to be a case of:—

Come with me; no questions asked.

One map therefore look for a sparing measure of

license with the productions of the sacred bards of the sunny South. Ignorance of the spiritual outpourings can scarce be excused, seeing that the hymns are shot forth, volume after volume, by Southern publishing firms. Set to the melodious music of the U.S.A. cotton fields and the compound, no doubt the cherubin and seraphim sit up and listen. The merits have the seal of many of the most prominent men in American public life. Good old Bryan is gone, no doubt, where he will hear it to his soul's content. However, there remain enough fundamentalist flats on earth to encourage the demand that the southern masters of the Art are eminently able to supply. These worthy purveyors of the sacred muse are often dignified with the title of Professor; so, among a distinguished host, we find the names of Professors Patton, Perry, Showalter, Mosley and Eagle.

The measures chosen are usually appropriate, the style bold and sweeping; unfettered by the insipid modesty that spells death to the creative mind. Observe how such scientific scientific scum as Darwin, Huxley and the like are swept into the gutter; no doubt to the delight of the enraptured Negro congregations. Pegasus has evidently had his oats—and is off at a gallop:—

Take all your science you old monkey man;
Deny, if you will, the old creation plan;
Just follow the Devil, for he loveth the crook;
But give me the blessed old Book!

To the credit of the holy Calvarites let it be said, there is nothing sordid in them. They do not crave the Editor's favour by paring or padding. They do not solicit; the glad eye is unknown to them.

No mercenary bard his homage pays!

So, thus:—

Lord I care not for riches—
Neither silver nor gold.

also:—

Here to earthly fortune I
Have for ever said good-bye.

For the gems of Negro Spirituals, I am indebted to a contribution by Mr. Clay Fulks in the *American Mercury*; for the rest, I gratefully acknowledge my debt to my early upbringing in the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist heresy, and the outpourings of the evangelicals in general.

One of our native hymnsters declaims on the superiority of Faith over worldly riches; without, however, going the whole poetical hog. More precious is it than the wealth of Peru; it will be his anchor in the port of death; and will keep him secure in the day of God's vengeance.

But another poet—a lady—makes a clean sweep of things, thus:—

No more the world and all its playthings
Can gratify my affections now.

But, there is no need for the reader to run away with the idea of a wild and furious life amid all the temptations and moral filth of a great city. The lady led a sober, innocent enough existence in a quiet country place, in an atmosphere calculated to maintain a belief in the godlessness and misery of an outside world; and though a sop was given to Cerberus by admitting, under pressure, the fun his jolly pups enjoyed, still the pleasures were but fleeting. We had not even arrived at the vanities of bobbed, bingled, and shingled hair, silk stockings and short frocks; nor yet the inanities usually dignified as amusements, and criminal necessities like baths and modern conveniences in private houses had not occurred to the holy-minded Welsh jerry-builder. However, dearly beloved brethren in Christ, she died young.

Having seen the negro coal-trimmers driving to the ship in their private motor cars, I can understand that such luxuries would prove a source of inspiration to the bard in a country where so much respect is paid to the dollar. "In God we trust" is inscribed on the U.S.A. silver coins; and the wag has added—"All others must pay cash." The vice of the skinflint has been nobly condemned by Prof. Lethal A. Ellis in—"Is there a Dollar-mark on your Soul?"

Some will live in great want and need
Thinking only of gain and greed,
And cheating both the young and old:
They have heard the orphan's cry,
With a frown they've passed them by—
For they had that Dollar mark on their Soul!

So far have we proceeded on our way; but have not yet reached the select heights of the hymnologist's Parnassus. His flight is swift and bold, and only the spiritually trained eye can follow him.

WM. J. LAMB.

(To be continued.)

In Praise of Women.

ALTHOUGH history does not consistently show women in the light of conquerors and bridge-builders, as giants of intellect and directors of the destiny of the human race, they have been, to man's joy and sorrow, tragically interwoven into the great symphony of life. Leonardo da Vinci, in his portrait of Madonna Lisa, on which it is said that the artist worked for four years, paid his tribute to woman as a mystery; and as a work of art, which allows the onlooker to bring to it his imagination, it moved Pater to write of it, "All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and moulded there, in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the mysticism of the middle age, with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias." Remy de Gourmont, viewing woman from another angle, gives us the difference between a stylist and a realist; nearer, somewhat, to our veneration are his words, "The first song book was woman's memory, and it is the same with the first collection of tales, the first bundle of documents." Meredith, perhaps writing from experience, describes her as "impulsive, without will, readily able to lie," and if there is such diversity of opinion among the greater lights, there is more among the lesser, but perhaps there is more depth in the expression than we imagine when we say she will have the last word.

The enterprising firm, Messrs. Gerald Howe, Ltd., are publishing a series of Representative Women to dispel the idea that women never before in the world's history have been able to show the smallest portion of their worth, and with that spirit of controversy that we admire, they seek to prove "to the adorable adepts of our night clubs, that there is a standard up to which they should at any rate attempt to live." Let the publishers take heart; the world of women is bigger than all the night clubs put together, for night clubs are only a touch of powder on the nose of civilization, and just as important.

Mr. Richard Church, in this series, has carefully covered the life of * "Mary Shelley"; his prose is vigorous, provocative, stimulating, clear cut, and compels attention to the story of Godwin's daughter in her relations as wife to Shelley. There is just the suspicion that she is made as a frame to a picture, but we see her intimately, and her devotion to a genius was given in a whole-hearted manner from their first meeting in 1814 and never withdrawn. In July of that year the Quixotic poet sets off for the Continent in pursuit of happiness with two women, Mary and her step-sister Claire Clairmont. There are endless troubles, litigation, struggles with ill-health, discomfort, and trials that would have strained the loyalty of any not cast in the mould of Mary. There are glimpses of real happiness, and she retained the sovereignty of the poet's heart, although he had inclinations to share it with others who did not have any depth of sympathy with him. In this life, we are introduced to Byron, Countess Guiccoli, Keats, Leigh Hunt, Trelawny, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft—all in a varied degree flouters of the convention of their period—yet in a way forming the nucleus of new ideas of political liberty and

lending light to a period when a woman was condemned to death for attempting to steal butter, and girls nine years of age were taken to work in coalpits, with a complacent Christianity looking on.

There is a mention of Shelley's mood of callousness towards his ministering angel, but, in a preface to the first 1839 edition of his poems, we find that she can, with generosity as boundless as the skies, write of him when many years had elapsed: "No account of these events has ever been given at all approaching reality in their details, either as regards himself or others; nor shall I further allude to them than to remark that the errors of action committed by a man as noble and generous as Shelley, may, as far as he only is concerned, be fearlessly avowed by those who loved him, in the firm conviction that, were they judged impartially, his character would stand in fairer and brighter light than that of any contemporary." Shelley was drowned in 1822; these words were written by Mary Shelley some sixteen years later, and her love for him was still undiminished. Swinburne described him as an archangel winged and weaponed for angel's work; there was not a little courage therefore for one whose name was frailty to risk all in an alliance with he who set out to reform the world. That the world, greedy to strike at the heart of one who dared to disturb its slumber was denied the privilege by an accident in the Bay of Spezzia, is one of a number of compensations in the lives of those who do not come into the world to conform to it. That he should find in Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin a faithful companion is a mystery, only partly illuminated by the fact that woman, tied up by convention herself, loves the romantic, the strange, and the extraordinary. She paid up to the hilt for her choice, and only prigs would dare to sit in judgment on the private life of an individual loving grief a little, sensitive, but never for one moment in doubt as to Shelley's immortality.

Mr. Richard Church has done his work well; the life is useful for dating many of Shelley's works, and we wish the publishers every success in their efforts to prove that woman is neither the fool that she appears to be according to the daily newspapers, nor the sensation monger of picture newspapers, nor the plaster saint of emotion exploiters, but rather a being whom all men like to think of as better than themselves.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Correspondence.

AN INTERESTING EXPERIENCE AND A GREAT SILENCE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Some months ago I inserted in a local paper of considerable circulation the following advertisement:—

Would any clergyman, minister or priest who thinks that Christianity can be defended on grounds of reason, care to converse with a Rationalist? Courtesy guaranteed and expected.

I had no reply. After some month or two I chanced to be in a railway carriage with a gentleman in clerical attire; a Presbyterian, as I afterwards learned. I mentioned the matter to him. He was exceedingly pleasant and affable, and said that perhaps no clergyman, minister or priest had seen my advertisement, or that, if it had been, it was, perhaps, regarded as an invitation issued by someone seeking mere dialectical or technical argumentative victory. He gave me his address and suggested that I should call on him; I gave him a leaflet bearing my name and address. After waiting a week or two, thinking that the "challenger" should receive a rather more explicit and hearty acceptance of his challenge, I called at the gentleman's residence. He was out, and I put my card in his letter-box. I heard nothing from him.

I then typed out eight copies of my advertisement and sent them to four Anglican clergymen, one Roman Catholic priest, one Baptist minister, one Unitarian and one Wesleyan. I received no reply.

I have some recollection of a text "*Be ready always*

* *Representative Women: Mary Shelley*, by Richard Church. Gerald Howe, Ltd., 23 Soho Square, W.1. Price 3s. 6d. net.

to give to him that asketh of you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear"; the meekness and fear are conspicuous by their presence, the readiness by its absence.

It is hard to explain the great silence. It can hardly, now, proceed from no clergyman, minister or priest having seen my invitation, though it may proceed from none of those who have seen it thinking that "Christianity can be defended on grounds of reason." That they fear a profitless disputation with a contentious bigot who would talk them down and not listen to what they had to say, who would continuously repeat a string of Freethought "preachy-preachy," and smother discussion with words is, of course, possible. But, to guard against this, I enclosed to each of them a copy of my leaflets, and these are written in a tone most conciliatory and with deep appreciation of the strivings towards the wider sympathies and noble sentiments so often mixed up with theology.

I cannot believe that all clerics are real humbugs. Such a belief is not consistent with what we know of human nature.

Can any of your readers suggest an explanation that will stand the test of examination or, better still, will any one repeat my experiment and then give us the benefit of his impression on the results?

ROBERT HARDING.

Society News.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

AN interesting and amusing discussion on "Socialism," between Mrs. Ivy Elstob and Mr. H. Cutner, was followed keenly by the audience, the Chairman finding it necessary to limit the time allowed for speeches, so many were eager to participate. Mr. Cutner, who upheld the Anti-Socialist position was strongly backed up by Mr. Palmer, but it was evident that the majority were in favour of Mrs. Elstob's presentation of the subject. We hope to have the subject further debated next session, the opponents having expressed themselves as both willing and eager to continue. We had a very good audience and an improved collection.

We hope for a good attendance next Sunday, when Mr. R. A. M. Kearney, B.A., will address us on the Douglas Credit proposals, a subject which has not yet been discussed at the North London Sunday Evening Debates. The lecturer is eminently qualified to deal with this rather difficult proposition.—K.B.K.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH.

THE lecture given by Mr. Sherman, of Liverpool, to the Birmingham Branch proved very successful. His subject, "Some Future Fights for Freethought," provided material for keen discussion, in which several of the audience took part. It was Mr. Sherwin's first visit to the Birmingham Branch, and many members expressed their appreciation of his address.—D.M.C.

MANCHESTER BRANCH.

A DEBATE took place on Wednesday evening, March 7, at the Castner Kellner Institute, Runcorn, between Mr. F. E. Monks (Hon. Sec., Manchester Branch) and Mr. Coppin (Barrister) of Runcorn. The subject for debate was, "Should Capital Punishment be Abolished?" Mr. Monks opened the affirmative side and put forward a very strong case for the abolition of the death penalty. Mr. Coppin defended capital punishment on the grounds of the protection of society, and that the country was not yet ripe for the abolition of the death penalty. After the disputants had concluded, several members of the audience engaged in the discussion, and it was apparant that a very keen interest had been taken in following the progress of the debate. The audience was asked to vote on the subject, which resulted as follows:—

For the abolition of capital punishment	41
Against " " " "	56

There were, however, a large number of persons present who refrained from voting.—A.C.R.

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.

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8): 11.15, Miss Adela Coit—"Elmer Rice's 'Adding Machine.'"

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road): 7.30, Mr. R. A. M. Kearney, B.A.—"The Way to end Poverty by the Douglas Credit Proposals."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Station): 7.15, Mr. E. C. Saphin—"The Solar Element in Christianity." Lantern lecture.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): Free Sunday Lectures. 7.0, Eldon Moore (The Eugenics Society)—"Race Culture or Race Suicide."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, F. J. Gould—"The Human Church."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (34 George Street, Manchester Square, W.1): 7.30, Miss Ettie Rout—"Practical Birth Control." Thursday, March 22—Mr. George Quinn.

OUTDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury—A Lecture. Meetings every Wednesday at 8 p.m., at Clapham Old Town. March 21. Mr. Corrigan.

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.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S. (78a Front Street): 7.0, Mr. Jno. T. Brighton—"Germs and Diseases." Chairman: Mr. R. Robinson.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, Albion Street): 6.30, Miss Jean Lambie—"The Germ Theory, Orthodox and Nature Cure."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30—Harry Snell, M.P.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street): 7.30, Mr. S. Cohen (Manchester)—"What is the Value of Freethought?" Important Committee Meeting after lecture.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Courtenay Street): Mr. Chapman Cohen (President, N.S.S.) will give two lectures. Subjects: 3 p.m., "The Meaning of Evolution"; 7 p.m., "Do the Dead Live?" Admission free. Reserved seats, 1s. Questions and discussion.

OUTDOOR.

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

POSITION wanted by out of work member of N.S.S. in Manchester or district (clerical) age 32. Reply Box XYZ, "Freethinker," 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

WANTED—A copy of "The Rise, Fall and Decline of Roman Religion."—Offers to V.F.S., "Freethinker," 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

UNWANTED CHILDREN

In a Civilized Community there should be no UNWANTED Children.

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Our Ladies' Spring Fashions and latest Patterns are now ready. Amongst other things ultra up-to-date, you will find styles, prices and materials for the latest craze—3-Piece Jumper Suits. Get your patterns NOW, if you want garments for wear at Easter.

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