

The
FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN · COHEN · · · EDITOR · 1881-1915 · G · W · FOOTE

VOL. XLVIII.—No. 15

SUNDAY, APRIL 8, 1928

PRICE THREEPENCE

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Views and Opinions.

Robert Blatchford on God.

SOME twenty-five years ago, Mr. Robert Blatchford became aware of some very old Freethinking criticisms of the belief in God, and issued his discovery in book form. The book created a stir. His position as editor of a then popular Labour paper, and the unusual sight of a Labour leader in this country having the honesty to say what he thought about Christianity, brought the book into the hands of many who would never have read a Freethought paper, and so did much good. Quite recently, Mr. Blatchford informed the world that he had withdrawn the book from circulation, because it was much in advance of the time; and now in the columns of *T.P.'s Weekly*, he enlightens readers on "The Great First Cause: The Religion of an Agnostic." I do not think that anything Mr. Blatchford writes will disturb Christians. If the article had that tendency, I expect it would never have been permitted to appear. The way in which Mr. Blatchford expresses himself will, in all probability, lead Christians to be more assured of their own superiority, and feel a great deal of sympathy with him in his unfortunate position.

I am not going, here, to criticize his "Great First Cause." I do not know what it means; Mr. Blatchford does not know what it means; no one knows what it means. A first cause is a contradiction in terms, it is an unthinkable proposition, a meaningless concatenation of words. A cause is only a cause in relation to an effect. An effect is only an effect in relation to a cause. A cause is not one thing and an effect another; a cause is the name for the combination of factors which constitute the effect. An effect is the cause in combination; a cause is the effect separated into its constituent parts. How then can there be a "Great First Cause"? It is great nonsense. As Mr. Blatchford used to say in his unregenerate days: "I am not arguing with him, I am a telling of him."

A Philosophy of Incapacity.

What I am really interested in is Mr. Blatchford's statement of Agnosticism. And I am interested in

that because all my life I have been trying to discover what there is to be religiously agnostical about. Hitherto, no one has been able to tell me what religious agnosticism is, or to give any justification for it. Mr. Blatchford explains that to the question, "Is there a God behind nature?" the Agnostic replies he does not know, and for fear of being identified with a very unpopular person he adds, "He is not an Atheist. He does not say there is no God. He would regard such a statement as absurd and impertinent." That settles the Atheist, although before he takes his ignominious exit he might remark that Mr. Blatchford talks as though the word "God," by itself, stood for some very definite conception. But, of course, it does not. There is a Christian God, there is a Jewish God, there is a Mohammedan God, and there is the God of the Fiji Islander. I wonder whether Mr. Blatchford means that it is absurd to deny that any of these monstrosities exist? I do not think so. I think, in fact, that he has himself denied their existence. The word God, standing without qualification, means nothing at all. And the proper reply to a man who asks baldly, "Do you believe in God?" is not to lower one's voice and to say in a humble and deferential manner, "I do not know, and it would be impertinent to assume knowledge on so profound and lofty a subject," but to ask him what the devil he is talking about. It seems to me that if Mr. Blatchford knows that he does not know anything about a particular subject or person, he must at least know something about that subject or person to the extent that they exist. If he does not know that, then there is nothing to be agnostical about. He must content himself with an avowal of incapacity. And the religious Agnostic is the only person I know who has raised incapacity to the level of a philosophy, and given us a vacancy as providing the foremost of stands. And I would put to Mr. Blatchford a little conundrum with which he may interest himself when he is wandering in his garden during the summer that may arrive. How can a man know that he knows nothing about a subject of which he knows nothing? A correct answer will be more profitable than solving a crossword puzzle.

* * *

Bait for Groundlings.

Mr. Blatchford explains that he reached his Agnosticism through Astronomy. The Christian Fathers, he says, did not know the size of the earth or the vastness of the universe. They did not know we were millions of miles from the sun, that there were millions of suns, that it took thousands of years for a ray of light to reach us from some of these suns, etc., etc. There is a great deal of this in Mr. Blatchford's article, and it is interesting as a revelation of mental outlook.

But I confess that if I believed in God (that is, in some personal being who created the universe) these things would leave me quite cold. They would have no influence on my belief because they have no reasonable relation to it. And, frankly, I get just a little tired of these attempts to mystify people by dwelling upon the amazing number of the stars, the size of the universe, etc. A man who has industriously acquired a mass of information of this kind, and then seeks to gain a reputation for wisdom on the strength of it, impresses me as does a vulgar person who flaunts his money as a means of impressing others with his importance. The universe is not *more* wonderful because it is large. Scientifically, size is nothing. A mountain is not more wonderful than a pebble. A star a million miles away is not more surprising than a bundle of carrots in my back garden. There is nothing more wonderful in Ford turning out a hundred thousand cars a year than there is in a man making one a week. The wonder is in the car, not in the number of them. If there is a God who could create a single atom, the marvel is not added to by making a sun. All this piling up of numbers and sizes as a means of disproving the existence of God is fundamentally as great an appeal to ignorance as is the appeal for belief on the ground of the wonders and adaptations of natural phenomena. It is foolish piling up the size of nature as a means of disproving the existence of a God. The reasonableness of the belief in God does not decrease as the universe expands and increase as it contracts. There is little fundamental difference between the appeal to man's sense of wonder and the appeal to his ignorance. It is impressive to all without knowledge and with small thinking capacity. The Christian Fathers were not wrong in their belief in God because they believed the world to be smaller than it is. The belief was wrong because the inferences they drew from observed facts were false. Prove God in an atom and I, for one, will not question his existence in the universe at large.

* * *

God and Evolution.

Mr. Blatchford says that evolution had nothing to do with his disbelief in God, and that I can readily believe, because he appears to suffer from the common fault of not being able to *think* evolution. There are dozens of little books written about evolution which will give the main facts in the development of the earth and of man in a very brief compass. But you may learn these by heart, and be as far off realizing the essential meaning of evolution as though you had never opened their pages. Take a passage from Mr. Blatchford's article:—

Man has not descended from the ape, he has descended through the ape, leaving the ape behind. Evolution did not begin with the ape, it did not begin with the amœba, it began with the origin of life.

Mr. Blatchford may be surprised to learn that evolution is really a much more comprehensive thing than is the story of life on this planet. That is only one of its phases. He may be still more surprised to learn that to a scientific conception of evolution there is no such thing as a beginning. In science there is no such thing as an absolute beginning. A beginning is an arbitrary break which we make in nature, a pencil mark which we make on a continuous rope, the strands of which are forever forming different patterns. To those who understand it, evolution is a process without any beginning that we can even think of, a continuous process which we break into parts in order to figure them in our imagination.

I do not want to carefully dissect such a sentence as, "Man has not descended from the ape, he has descended through the ape, leaving the ape behind." It would be too cruel. All I need ask Mr. Blatchford is, what *man* has descended in this way? If there is any intelligibility in his statement it implies that individual man has descended in this way. And that is manifestly not true. The ape-man lived and died an ape-man. The savage lived and died a savage. The barbarian lived and died a barbarian. Man did not leave the ape, or the barbarian, or the savage behind him; he died with them. It is the race of men that has developed. Man as an individual passes away; what he leaves behind him constitutes all we have in mind when we speak of culture or civilization. Mr. Blatchford is not alone in thus misunderstanding evolution, but that does not make his error the less. It is about time that a modern Sir Thomas Browne compiled another book of "Vulgar Errors."

* * *

Not so Advanced.

The truth is that, mentally, Mr. Blatchford has never outgrown his belief in deity. His revolt was against the Christian conception, motivated by his keen sympathy with suffering and his desire for social improvement. But he has never understood the philosophy of Atheism, and has never appreciated the scientific case against belief in God. His article is studded with capital letters when God is in question, and "He" figures largely. How does Mr. Blatchford know there is a "He" to bother about? Why may not the universe be a complex of non-conscious forces? And one does not venerate a natural force. Veneration must be applied to a person. All Mr. Blatchford says about not knowing where God is, or what God is, had been said centuries before by the very Christian Fathers to whom he refers. They were not quite so stupid as to claim they knew all about God, or could give a postal address for him. But neither were they stupid enough to say that they knew nothing about God, and yet worship him, or approach him with reverence. They would have said, with the natural logic of sincere belief, that if they could not say that an intelligent person created and ruled the universe, there was no ground for belief. When they talked about "He," they meant "He." They did not mean something of which they know nothing, claim they could know nothing, and then try to make a philosophy out of a sheer vacuity. There are some who prefer the term Agnosticism because they imagine it protects from the odium attaching to the more straight-forward word Atheism. But I do not think that is the case with Mr. Blatchford. All the same, he strikes me as one who has never outgrown the mental attitude of a believer in God, who discusses the question without ever realizing the necessity of considering the nature of the causes that brought the gods into existence, and who certainly has no conception of the reasons why careful thinkers have rejected the belief as an idle superstition.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Epitaph for Thomas Hardy.

(1840-1928.)

Dust to the dust he loved so well—
The loam of Wessex broad and free;
His gift, the sad undying spell
Of perfect artistry—
Cynic and sage at last he knows
The secret urge behind the rose!

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

"Putting it Across."

"So long as there are endowed churches, the Christian creed will be preached, defended, adapted, and believed by a multitude, including numerous priests of the High Church type of intelligence."

Rt. Hon. J. M. Robertson.

"The key to modern political history is emancipation."—*Dean Inge.*

SOME time ago, the inimitable Bishop of London, speaking at the Mansion House in aid of the East London Church Fund, dwelt at length on the poverty of the Anglican clergy, and, in an outburst of emotion, described these unhappy workers in the Lord's Vineyard as belonging to "a rotten profession." This plain speaking upset some of the bishop's supporters, for it was one of those sharp and final judgments which pull one up short, and leave a feeling of disillusion if not disaster. I know a Vegetarian who assured me that he felt like this after being chased out of a five-acre field by an enraged bull in Surrey. So King George the Fourth must have felt when he heard Beau Brummel say: "Who's your fat friend?" It is like getting a punch on the nose from your bride during the honeymoon.

The bishop has something of the politician in his nature, and he explained later, with suspicious fluency, that he was thinking only of the financial point of view, and was not, at that particular moment, concerned with other aspects of the case, however serious.

The plaint of clerical poverty is, however, largely a matter of heated rhetoric. The Bishop of London himself is a bachelor with an income of £10,000 yearly, together with Fulham Palace and a cosy town house nearer Mayfair. This "stipend" is sufficient to keep forty working-class families in comparative comfort. Neither do the bishop's lawn-sleeved colleagues, like King Nebuchadnezzar, eat grass. The Bench of Bishops (forty in number) receive between them £180,700 yearly, with emoluments in the shape of palaces and palatial residences. Even the full war-paint of an Anglican bishop costs £200, a sum sufficient to clothe all the twelve disciples. Nor do the clergy sleep on the Embankment, or under railway-arches. Within the very narrow confines of the City of London (excluding the County Council area) £50,000 is spent each year on ministering to the spiritual needs of a small population of caretakers, policemen and their families, and Jewish people. The latter, who form a large proportion of the total, never trouble the pew-openers. The Church of England has also property in the City of London alone worth over £2,000,000, and increasing in value. As an index of the work done, the summary of confirmations for one year numbered 152. Nor is this all, for the Church authorities have earmarked nineteen City churches as being derelict, and have been trying to sell them in order to use the money elsewhere.

These figures relate to a part of London. It will be seen that the clergy are as keen as mustard, and their business sense would not disgrace a pawnbroker. The clerical profession is as simple as company-promoting, and twice as easy. The clergy are not nearer the poverty line than millions of their countrymen, and it is ridiculous to pretend otherwise. In so many parishes the parson with his big and expensive vicarage plays the sedulous ape to the bishop in a palace too large for him and for the times. The late Judge Rentoul stated that at the annual banquets given to the clergy at the Mansion House, London, seventy-four bottles of champagne were drunk, costing about £40. He added that he actually saw those figures, and he was told that the

amount was every year about the same. It is ironic that this same Mansion House should have been the scene of the Bishop of London's piteous plaint of the poverty of the clergy.

From a purely financial point of view the Church of England cannot fairly be described as "rotten." There is nothing more solid than its mining royalties, tithe rent charges, Queen Anne's Bounty, and other gilt-edged resources of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. It is, however, "a rotten profession," when judged by intellectual standards. The bishops and 25,000 clergy of the Anglican Church subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, and these articles make the most curious reading in the twentieth century. They include the belief that a spirit can be at the same time a father and also a son, and, in addition, proceed from itself as a ghost. They include the belief that Adam was the first man, and that the first woman was made from one of his ribs, and that this unique couple ate forbidden fruit, in consequence of which countless generations are damned to everlasting torture. They include also the belief that the Roman Catholic Religion is a vain invention of man; that the Protestant Bible is the "Word of God"; and that the present tenant of Buckingham Palace is the head of the Church of Christ, "as by law established."

To these articles of faith, among many others, every Church of England clergyman subscribes. We know that numbers of them do not believe in them, or observe them; that they are simply taking money by false pretences. Their real reasons for remaining in the Church are "purple, palaces, patronage, profit, and power," as a former cheerful dean of St. Paul's Cathedral happily expressed it. The right to appoint clergymen to benefices is sold for money in the open market, as if it were so much coal or a quack medicine. Parliament, be it noted, makes the religion, and the dear landlords appoint its professors, or barter the sacred appointment to the highest bidder. Is it not "a sorry trade"?

The ecclesiastical canons are still in force, except they conflict with the laws of the land, and the Law Courts have decided that they are binding on the clergy, of whom there are 25,000 in this country. The first dozen canons are aimed at Nonconformists, and all but one ends with a curse, a distinguishing mark of vertebrate Christianity. If you deny the royal supremacy in Church affairs you are cursed. If you deny that the Anglican Church teaches the pure, unadulterated doctrine of Christ you are cursed. If you even say that the Prayer Book is out of harmony with the Holy Bible you are cursed. And so on, and so forth, in the true spirit of Christian charity. But that the law of the land overrides these canons, everybody who refused to attend Church should be cursed, and the names read out in churches.

It is a grievous and a bitter thing that boys and girls, silly women, and ignorant people, should be taught, in carefully calculated language, such mischievous nonsense, that millions of their fellow countrymen are outcast. It is alien to the spirit of the age, it is an affront to the spirit of Democracy. For no one can be a loyal Churchman without renouncing his mental and moral freedom, and placing his civil loyalty and duty at the mercy of a priest. Parsons claim to be sacred persons, "sons of God." Unless a man accepts them and their dogmas, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. That is Church teaching for the working-class masses, tempered with polite reservations for the moneyed classes. Is it not "a rotten profession"?

A re-reading of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, and the ecclesiastical canons, shows where the old-time theologians were wrong. They

imagined, in the depths of their ignorance, that they knew the world and human nature. They did not realize that they had merely passed laws, and that this legislation might be repealed by a later generation. Such, for example, as the disestablishment and disendowment of a State Church, which is nearer realization than pale young curates imagine.

MIMNERMUS.

The Borgias.

THERE are names of men that stand out in the pages of history, and have become synonyms for great qualities either for good or evil. Thus Julius Cæsar stands as the embodiment of ancient Rome at its greatest. He was "The noblest Roman of them all," and the greatest of Emperors, Pagan or Christian: Against whose name we may put that of Attila, as "the Destroyer." The name of Machiavelli stands, in popular estimation, for political treachery, as does that of Voltaire for the embodiment of wit and satire, or, to the pious, as the scoffer. The terribly appropriate name of Torquemada stands for the sternest and most relentless religious bigotry and cruelty. But for all round, unredeemed wickedness, the name of Borgia stands unsurpassed, and, considering the position he held, unrivalled. It stands supreme in that bad eminence.

To describe Rodrigo Borgia—who became Pope, under the name of Alexander VI—"as the Genius of Evil," says John Addington, the historian of the Renaissance, "is justifiable."¹ And notes, with justice: "the profound horror with which the name of Alexander VI strikes a modern ear." (p. 321.) The same may be said of his son Cæsar Borgia, who, the same historian, further on, describes as: "this young hell-cat." (p. 334.)

When discoursing in St. Peters at Rome, Alexander VI must have appeared—to those who were aware of his private life—as a figure of "Satan rebuking Sin," and his prayer, addressed to the powers of darkness: "Evil be thou my Good." We cannot help calling to mind Milton's picture, in *Paradise Lost*, of Satan enthroned in Hell:—

High on a throne of royal state, which far
Outshone the wealth of Ormuz and of Ind,
Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold,
Satan exalted sat, by merit rais'd
To that bad eminence.

Nor is the connexion far-fetched: "The moral sense of the Italians expressed itself after Alexander's death in the legend of a devil, who had carried off his soul. Burchard, Giustiniani, Sanudo, and others mention this incident with apparent belief,"² says Symonds, and quotes from a letter, dated September 22, 1503, written by the Marquis of Mantua to his wife, that the Pope, during his last illness, spoke the following words "with great feeling": "I will come; it is but right; wait yet a little while." And those who knew his secret, explained that he had bargained with the Devil for the Papacy at the price of his soul, that he should reign as Pope for twelve years, which he did, with the addition of four days. The four days being, no doubt, thrown in, like overweight to a good customer. The same letter says: "Some attest they saw seven devils in the room at the moment that he breathed his last."³ That is how the "Holy

Father" was regarded by his flock; not as God's representative upon earth, but the representative of the Devil.

Many lives of the Borgias have been written, and many desperate attempts have been made, by Catholic writers, to apply the whitewash, but without success. Those who wish to know the truth about this brood of scorpions should read *The Borgias*, by Professor Giuseppe Portigliotti, translated from the Italian by Bernard Miall, and just published by Allen and Unwin (12s. 6d.).

Signor Portigliotti is familiar with all the records, memoirs, and letters of the time he is writing of, and at the end of each chapter he gives voluminous notes and references for all the statements he makes. There are also fourteen fine illustrations, comprising the principle characters in the book.

The ancestry of Rodrigo Borgia (Alexander VI) is very uncertain and confused, so much so that our historian, after some attempt to unravel the genealogy, gives it up, with the remark that from the "shadowy figures" involved it is: "impossible to determine the original seed of that amazing morbid efflorescence which, with the advent of Alexander VI, suddenly developed and inundated Rome in the latter part of the fifteenth century." Suffice it to say that we are on firm ground in recognizing Rodrigo Borgia, and his brother Pier Luigi as nephews of Pope Calixtus III, a Spaniard, who ascended the Papal throne in 1455, at the age of sixty-six. The new Pope lavished princely revenues upon his three nephews—for he had another nephew, Giovanni, by another sister of his—Rodrigo, who was only twenty-five years of age, and Giovanni were immediately made Cardinals, but Pier Luigi was to be made a king, so he was created Gonfalonier of the Church, then Prefect of Rome, and then Duke of Spoleto. Rodrigo was also appointed Vice-Chancellor of the Church, the highest office after that of the Pope, and the most profitable. In this office he made vast sums of money by unscrupulous means, dispensing licences and benefits in his uncle's name, and when he feared that his uncle might refuse his signature he did not scruple to commit forgery.

However, this fairy uncle did not last long, dying in 1458, after only three years of office. Pier Luigi, Rodrigo's brother, dying shortly after and bequeathing his immense fortune to Rodrigo, who was now "stupendously wealthy, his magnificence cast all the other cardinals into the shade." He continued in office under the new Pope, Pius II. Of a handsome presence, and a facile and ingratiating eloquence, he surrendered himself completely to a life of sensual pleasure. Says Portigliotti:—

The young Cardinal, whose liberty of conduct was in nowise restricted by his priestly vestments and his preferment to the Curia, was already notorious for excessive sensuality. In Valencia, where he lived until his twenty-fourth year, his frequent intrigues had won him the reputation of "an irresistible conqueror"; a reputation which he consolidated in Rome, where he showed that he was truly worthy of the heraldic bull which figures on his escutcheon. Exceptionally sensual by nature, he made no attempt to curb his impulses. On several occasions Pius II rebuked his licentious habits in vague phrases, in full Consistorium; and when he saw verbal complaints were insufficient he sent him—as we shall see—a very emphatic "admonition," which was equally without effect, for he contrived, no less than before, to disgrace the purple with which he was invested and the great hierarchical post which he occupied in the Church. It was after this that he began to contract the unions—some of them ephemeral, some of long duration—which made him the father of ten children. (Portigliotti: *The Borgias*. pp. 17-18.)

¹ J. A. Symonds. *Renaissance in Italy*. Age of the Despots. 1901. (p. 322.)

² *Ibid.* (p. 338.)

³ *Ibid.* (p. 338.)

As no Catholic priest, or cardinal, is allowed to marry, these ten children were of course illegitimate. Rodrigo was Vice-Chancellor under five Pontiffs, from 1457 to 1492, and when Innocent VIII died in that year, Rodrigo was in his sixtieth year, and thought the time had come to enter the lists for the Papal Tiara. By means of his wealth he bought the votes of a majority of the Cardinals and became Pope Alexander VI. Says our historian: "The man who thus made his way to the Apostolic See had indeed the sharp teeth and the ravenous appetite of the wolf. He straightway fell upon his prey, the Church, rending it body and soul." (p. 19.) With the result, that: "The universal conscience of Christianity is revolted by those unnameable delights, orgies of blood and festivals of lust, which were enjoyed in the plenitude of his green and vigorous old age by this versatile diplomatist and subtle priest, who controlled the councils of kings, and who chaunted the sacramental service for a listening world on Easter Day in Rome." (J. A. Symonds. *Renaissance in Italy*. p. 322.) W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

Pumpkin Center's Passion Play.

AN EASTER TRAGEDY.

EASTER is with us.

If I had not been reminded of the fact by our ovarious confectioners, and glorified drapers' catalogues that call themselves newspapers, the dear Vicar has made sure of my not forgetting Passion Week.

In my letter-box this morning I found a leaflet announcing that the Little Ditchington Church Choir were about to perform a Sacred Morality Play on Easter Week.

Living as I do, on the outskirts of Little Ditchington, which has a population of some three hundred worthy folk, I am naturally thrilled at the news. We have had no excitement in our village since Varmer Gorble's billy-goat ran amok and invaded our only pub, "The Goat and Compasses," creating considerable havoc and an outburst of regrettable profanity from my friend 'Arry 'Awke.

Whether Varmer Gorble's goat resented the atrociously painted pub sign as a libel on his species, or whether he was mathematically inclined and wanted to borrow a pair of compasses to demonstrate the *pous capricorum*, I don't know.

My friend 'Arry 'Awke, who is a Freethinker—and a Freedrinker incidentally—mumbled something remarkably like it when the animal smashed a quart mug-full over his corduroys.

That goat certainly got his!

But to return to our Easter Eggs.

I am reminded of 'Arry not only because he is a Freethinker with a profound contempt for churches and a fearless fashion of expressing his dislike, but because I tremble to think what effect this Morality Play at Easter will have on him.

'Arry is a man wise in the love of woodcraft, versed in the ways of the wild. He has the sardonic humour of W. W. Jacob's Bob Pretty, and because of his attitude towards religion, most of the poaching and petty crime is laid at 'Arry's door.

But that is a typical Christian attitude that worries 'Arry not at all. Both he and myself are naturally ostracized by the good folk of Little Ditchington, owing to our regrettable habit of leaving copies of the *Freethinker* at the local pub, or discussing church affairs with more candour than cant.

But this threat of an Easter Morality Play hangs heavily over my head. I'm worried about 'Arry when I recall the sad story of Big Bill Bulligan—another "bad man of the village."

Big Bill belonged to the cow town of Pumpkin Center, Arizona—a far cry from Little Ditchington.

I sincerely hope, however, that our Vicar's play will

not prove such a disastrous fiasco as that rough Western town experienced one Easter.

This is the story as told to me by an American friend who was present: The Sheriff of the Cow Town of Pumpkin Center was a tough guy and a terror to evil doers. He was Chief of the Morality Bureau, an ardent Prohibitionist and a pillar of the local Episcopal church.

When, therefore, after his return from a trip to Europe, he announced that he was going to clean up Pumpkin Center and make it a God-fearing, righteous and a hundred per cent. efficient and sober town, his words were listened to with the respect due to a man who can pip the ace of hearts at forty paces.

"See here!" announced Sheriff Green, "When I was in Yurruup I stopped at a place called Ober Amergau—and I'll tell the world those guys have got the goods! What the citizens of this hyer burg need is a Passion Play. Uplift! That's what, and darn me if Pumpkin Center's version won't make Ober Amergau look like ten cents."

The Sheriff's proposal was received with acclamation—especially among the ladies. There was a good deal of unpleasantness and nasty back chat among the members of the Dorcas Society as to whom should have the honour of playing The Virgin.

Eventually, however, Sheriff Green settled all differences by nominating his daughter Sadie. He enforced his remarks with a couple of six-shooters and what he said—went.

That being settled, the question of the chief figure in the Passion Play arose, and there was a good deal of argument. Some suggested Sheriff Green, but that good man promptly vetoed the suggestion.

"The guy that plays Christ has gotta have a beard, folk—I ain't figgering on raising one in a fortnight that'll amount to a row of beans. We don't want no theatrical properties in this Passion Play. Them whiskers have to be honest to God whiskers or nix."

It was discovered to the chagrin of the committee that few people in Pumpkin Center had the requisite facial adornment to do justice to the star role of the production.

Old Man Schultz of the delicatessen store had a luxurious beard—but, as the Sheriff pointed out, he was too blamed old, so he was cast for the role of Zacharias.

The Passion Play project was held up for days through this unexpected snag, then the Sheriff came to a momentous decision.

The only man in Pumpkin Center who could possibly fill the role of Christ adequately was Big Bill Bulligan.

Unfortunately, Big Bill was the village bad man—a tough from Toughville. He had a magnificent auburn beard, and was a fine upstanding man withal. But Sheriff Green was not to be daunted. At the head of a posse of men they rounded up Big Bill at his favourite sport of shooting up Casey's saloon.

When the big cowboy had calmed down a little, the Sheriff explained his object.

"You've got one chance before we lynch yuh!" he announced.

"Quit drinking and take part in our Passion Play, thus saving your dogasted soul—or it's you for the necktie party!"

Now Big Bill was no fool and the idea tickled him.

"Sheriff, you've slobbered a canful. I aint no actor—but put me wise to this Passion stuff and I'm your man!" he added with a sidelong glance at Sadie, who was a good looking girl.

"Nix on that sheikh stuff," said the Sheriff, "for the next fortnight you cut out the booze, come to Bible class and do as you're told."

Strangely enough, in the days that followed, Big Bill forsook all his old ways. He quit drinking and swearing and became a model citizen.

Some put it down to religion and the signal honour of playing the part of Christ, others guessed it was playing opposite to Sadie Green, who, as I mentioned, was by way of being a peach. However—there was no doubt about it. Outwardly, Big Bill was a reformed man, and the prospects for the Passion Play at Easter Week were rosy.

The fame of Pumpkin Center's great project spread

far and wide, and when the great day dawned the people flocked into town from miles around.

The play was to be performed in a natural amphitheatre, back of old Doc. Wheeler's ranch, and long before it was scheduled to start every seat was packed.

Big Bill, clad in a long white robe, with his beard carefully combed, and his hair parted in the middle, was very quiet and subdued before the show.

Obviously the grandeur and magnitude of his role was weighing on him.

Unfortunately, as some poet says, just when everything in the garden seems lovely you tread on the rake and Fate cops you a wallop on the bozo.

The sun shone gaily in a turquoise sky, even the birds seemed to be hushed into reverent silence that Easter morning of Pumpkin Center's Passion Play. The audience sang hymns before the rise of the curtain, folk had come from places as far off as Topaz City, Paris (Ariz.) and even Boobville, and Sheriff Green was loudly acclaimed for his uplifting and moral idea.

Unfortunately, however, Big Bill had a no account friend named Alkali Ike. He'd been over the border cattle rustling, when the Passion Play project had been mooted, and on his return to Casey's saloon, he learned for the first time of the extraordinary reformation of Big Bill Bulligan.

"Hot ziggity dam!" swore Alkali Ike, "If that ain't the centipede's spats and the alligator's gaiters. Big Bill's got religion!"

He called for drinks all round for his band of rough-necks, oiled up his six-shooters and purchased several crates of produce from Casey.

"Say bo. We're gonna lamp this Passion Play," he announced, and at the head of a dozen cowboys of his own calibre they rode for Doc. Wheeler's ranch.

The play had already started, and Alkali Ike nearly fell off his horse as he saw Big Bill in a white nightgown, lying on a kind of camp bed, with Miss Anabel Meecher, the school mar'm, breaking a pot of Pompeian Face Cream on his bare feet and then wiping it with her hair.

Dog my cats!" gasped Alkali Ike, "they're plumb crazy!"

"Ssh! Ssh! whispered a lot of folk round the arena.

Old Ike nearly bust himself holding in his laughter then he turned to his henchmen.

"When I says go—let 'em have it!" he whispered.

With that, they each armed themselves with ammunition in the shape of tomatoes, prickly pears and eggs—then waited for the signal.

Meanwhile, Big Bill brought tears to the eyes of the women in the audience by the beautiful and reverent way he acted, and when the play speeded up, and they saw him dragged through the crowd on to execution they sobbed hysterically. At last came the final tableau. Big Bill was revealed patiently hanging on the cross between the two thieves, played by Cy. Briggs the shoe store clerk, and old Paddy Maloney the ice man.

This was too much for Alkali Ike.

The sight of his old side-kick and sparring partner hanging there in a white nightdress with a crown of cactus leaves round his head, nearly sent him crazy.

"Let him have it!" he roared, and then with a whoop he flung half a dozen ripe, squashy tomatoes.

Big Bill, arms outstretched, smiled a patient, forgiving smile that infuriated Ike.

"By Gosh!" he roared, "I'll larn him to pull that stuff!"

He pulled out his six-shooter and pumped in a hail of bullets all round Big Bill—about two inches away from his extremities, making him do a double shuffle Charleston to dodge them. Big Bill squirmed on the cross, for the bullets were unpleasantly close, but he gritted his teeth and determined he wasn't going to spoil the Passion Play.

His lips were just forming to mumble his piece, "Forgive them for they know not"—when Zunk! A raw, messy, and distinctly ancient Easter egg caught him full on the mouth, effectually stopping the lines. That evil smelling egg was the last straw.

Shaking his head savagely to remove some of the

sticky putrescence, Big Bill spoke. His voice quivered with a desperate effort to keep his self-control.

"Ladies an' gentlemen!" said Big Bill Bulligan, "I shall endeavour to maintain this Christ-like attitude till the end of this hyer act—when I shall die—but"—here his voice rang out like thunder, and the look in his eyes was murderous—"I shall rise again, not in three days, but pronto! I'm the original blood sweating Behemoth of holy writ, and I shall descend among the audience, and God help the *dogdasted son of a flatulent sea cook who flung that egg!*"

* * *

Yes, I hope sincerely, that no such contretemps will mar Little Ditchington's Morality Play this Easter! I must warn my friend 'Arry.

GWYN EVANS.

Acid Drops.

All the cinemas in London (we are writing this paragraph on Tuesday) will be opened on Good Friday, and a special religious performance will be staged at the Albert Hall by a well-known comedian, Pastor Jeffreys. A tank 12 ft. by 8 ft. has been constructed, and it will be filled with warm water to a depth of three feet. A troupe of 1,000 performers known as "Four Square Gospel Elimites" have been engaged—men and women—and these will be dressed in white robes and lower themselves into the water. The press agent announces that many successful performances have been held in different parts of the provinces, and this one has been specially arranged for London. Following the example of cinema proprietors, a number of seats have been reserved for clergymen of all denominations. There is a note to the effect that the originators of this washing game were six Belfast shop assistants, and that all the performers believe in the Bible "from cover to cover." Jumping into three feet of warm water does not seem a very daring or exciting performance, but we may take it that the prospect of a number of ladies clad only in nightgowns entering and leaving the water will have an attraction for the "ministers of all denominations."

One of our judges remarked, during a recent trial, that the earnings of a burglar did not amount to more than an average of 14s. 6d. per week. This is a scandalously low rate of pay and something ought to be done about it. But why should men go in for so risky and ill-paid an occupation when one could set up as a faith-healer, or a missionary, or an evangelist? Any of those working at these trades earn a much higher salary than does a burglar. And it is a much easier trade, both to learn and to practise.

The Rev. "Dick" Sheppard, whose nonsense suits the nonsense of the religiously inclined wireless listeners, has had another bequest. This time, it is £20,000 from an American merchant banker. This sort of thing ought to be discouraged. It will incite among parsons an ungodly eagerness to occupy the broadcast pulpit. We hope the Rev. "Dick" will bear in mind the Biblical injunction against the laying up of treasure, and will judiciously distribute his bequest among the various missionary societies. They do such a lot of good, you know. Besides, that would be a Christ-like way of disposing of the money.

April 15 is to be a day of Thanksgiving and Prayer for Sunday—the Christian Sunday. The Alliance for the Defence of Sunday hath ordained it, with the cordial approval of the Anglican Archbishops and the Presidents of the Free Churches. The special business to be transacted is, "to implore God's guidance and help with regard to the observance and preservation of this Institution (to wit, the Christian Sabbath) to which the people of Great Britain owe such immeasurable benefits." Sabbath desecrators had better be careful after this. There is no knowing what the wrathful Christian joss will do to them, now that he has been implored to assist the Sabbath observers to prevent sinfulness on

Sunday. He may cause all sorts of accidents to happen to them, as he did to Sabbath breakers in Biblical days. The Sunday defenders believe that what God did then he can do to-day. In their view the Christian God never changes. He has an infinite capacity for, and an unlimited ingenuity in, visiting his righteous wrath upon the ungodly.

The Girls Friendly Society has organized a "retreat" for its members at All Saints Home, London, W. The *English Churchman* objects to these Popish notions. These retreats, it says, which are ostensibly for "the deepening of spiritual life," in ritualistic hands are used to bring girls to the confessional. Our contemporary warns its Evangelical readers against the sending of girls to such retreats. For our part, we think the danger of such places lies in another direction. The religious fanatics responsible for organizing the retreats inculcate in the girls a dangerously morbid religious outlook, which may ultimately land the girls, or some of them, in an asylum.

The *Daily Mirror* wonders when the bishops and "other moralists" will cease lecturing the modern woman. The answer is—"never!" The self-appointed critics lecture her because they study an Oriental book which has a low opinion of women. Having accepted this low opinion, quite naturally the high-minded critics are anxious to give it an airing; hence the lectures, and diatribes, and fatuous counsel. If they must lecture, says the *Mirror*, when will they give her advice that she can use and apply to the economic and social conditions under which she is nowadays compelled to live? Surely, it adds, it is all very unhelpful? Of course it is. Our contemporary must be remarkably innocent if imagines that women—or men—have ever received any advice of the least practical value for solving the problems of everyday life, from clerics. Even women—the last to let go of the priest's skirts—are beginning to realize that.

Whilst Bishops are busy over the prayer book, Spiritualists are ringing up Red Indians who talk like English journalists, and an aeroplane is trying to catch a bear, we read that street accidents in London have increased nearly two and a half times from 1917 to 1926, the respective totals being 19,586 and 48,153. As this is a practical problem we must assume that it is beyond the power of Bishops who are too busy with the next world.

Magistrates at Coalville (Leicestershire) granted applications to open picture theatres for performances on Good Friday, on the understanding that suitable pictures and appropriate music would be given. Apart from the element of humour in the selection of music, there was one feature that puts paid to the hypocritical opposition of churches and chapels; the police stated, in reply to the Bench, that they favoured such applications as these performances had the effect of taking young people off the streets.

To an incredulous world, a newspaper reporter gave the information that babies are no respecters of churches. This is hard to believe, and, at "Mothering Sunday" the Rev. Edward Neep in the church of St. George the Martyr had to shout to make himself heard above the babel. We hope that our reverend friends will see in this the inborn religious craving of human beings; others may see that the church is a nursery for the young and the old.

Pasteur L. de Saint-Andre recently gave a glowing account of Protestantism in France, at a Free Church Assembly in Bridlington. French Protestants numbered one million. France was not really a home of scepticism, he said. But he was obliged to admit that there is a growing force threatening the existence of Christianity in France, and will soon threaten it in every country. This is "the new Paganism"—organized Paganism, systematic anti-Christianism:—

So far, a large part of French workmen have been in common with many middle-class people, anti-Catholic for political reasons. Now they are anti-Christian. Round Paris, for instance, new towns are growing up . . . ; their development outpaces the organization of parishes, either Roman Catholic or Protestant. This huge area, where live two or three million workmen, is aptly called "the red area," because of the political and religious opinions of the inhabitants; and there, as in the industrial towns of Northern or Central France—Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing, Saint Etienne, Lyon, Le Creusot—a systematic anti-Christian training is given to the people. Roman Catholics or Protestants are considered by the majority as the worst enemies of humanity. And it is sad to say that a small number of masters in the Government schools hold these ideas and try to destroy Christian faith in the souls of children in their care.

Against the new danger, said the reverend gentleman, Roman Catholicism can do but little. Protestantism can do more. But, it appears, the Protestant Church is short of money and short of clergy. The shortage of clergy, he explained, was due to the war. So many clergy and divinity students (forced to serve as combatant soldiers, owing to compulsory service in France) were killed. That is his explanation; though we suspect "the new paganism" has affected the supply. Judging by his account of things, we should say that if France is not really "a home of scepticism," it very soon will be. And that which is worrying the clergy in France is troubling the clergy in every country in Europe. Everywhere can be noted a growing scepticism about religious beliefs and religious teaching; a growing disinclination of the masses to accept the pastor or priest at his own valuation as a specially endowed guide to the affairs of life. That is the Freethinker's opportunity. He has not now, as formerly, to fight so strenuously to overcome prejudice in order to secure a hearing. To-day, there are thousands of intelligent men and women who would be quite willing to read Freethought literature, if they but knew it existed. To make its existence known is the job we offer to our readers. Every one can do something towards that end. If each did what he or she could, the circulation of the *Freethinker* could be doubled in a twelve-month.

It is quite common when people part for each to give the other something by way of remembrance. So when the Rev. W. R. Lewis, of Abertillery, received a call from the Lord he desired to give his congregation something by which they would recall his gracious preaching. He did it. Certain people, he remarked, did not believe in a personal devil or in hell. But they were wrong. There was a personal devil and a literal hell, and he hoped that whatever they thought about him in future years they would remember that. That is what we call a really good farewell gift for the holiday season.

Good Christian souls in Leeds will be much disturbed on Good Friday. For the magistrates have granted permission to Cinema proprietors to open on that day, and at the anniversary of the time when our Lord was on the Cross, thousands of men and women in the City of Leeds will be watching the exploits of Cowboy and Crook. Worse than that, they will be enjoying themselves. That is the real tragedy of the situation.

Dr. T. R. Glover is keeping up Lent by having a quarrel with himself and his followers. In an article where almost every other sentence is a question, he writes: "Who of us lives the life of Christ? Think of our beggarly misrenderings of his teachings as to the negation of self; think of our starveling virtues, our petty escapes from sin, our easy satisfactions." The learned doctor should be sent down in his form for generalizing. What would happen to society if every man, on the domestic side alone, imitated Christ? With everyone with nowhere to lay his head, what should we do with the income tax collector? But to ask these questions is to follow Dr. Glover in his thirst for information, for who but a professional theologian has any use for the word "sin"? A vocabulary containing the

word is a sign that those who use it have not grown up. Whether they are incapable of growing up is another question.

In the Great War 287 officers and men in the British Army were shot, and in nearly every case the offence was cowardice or desertion in the face of the enemy. In the *Observer*, Capt. D. H. King, M.P., is reported as having said, "After three years' experience during the war, I can count on the fingers of my two hands the men whom I believe to be without fear." We accept and pass on the conundrum to the Bishop of London, who during the war served two gods—the additional one being Mars.

It is surprising what a little faith religious folk have in their God. Such mundane things as the cinema and the motor-car are supposed to be competing with him on Sunday. In seven days he made the world; he cannot help the Free Church Council in such competitive trifles turned out by Mr. Henry Ford and Hollywood.

Two Cambridge undergraduates have been given an audience by the Pope. They presented a petition for the canonization of Blessed John Fisher and Blessed Thomas More. At least and at last higher education justifies itself and will assure those who are mesmerized by words, that the destiny of culture is in safe keeping, and practical good will have been accomplished by the Congregation of Rites, which is dealing with both processes for canonization.

The Lion of the Fascist and the Lamb of Rome do not appear to be enjoying that tranquility expected when thinking has been made an offence. The Pope has been taking to task the Catholic Centre Party of Italy, and protests against the Fascist monopoly in the education of youth. There is, however, a similarity in the views of both Fascist and Catholic, for they both believe in catching the raw material when young. It would almost look like a revival of the jealousy of the Jesuits for Machiavelli, who used the same methods in politics as the priests did in religion.

Lord Dewar has the mind of a gross materialist, for he went to a spiritualist meeting and thought that he could learn the names of the winners of the Grand National and the Lincoln Handicap. He has not sufficient reverence to become an adept and he is probably not "psychic."

There is a new menace to Sunday. The *Methodist Times* is deeply alarmed about it. Our godly friend has heard that the Auto-Cycle Union intends to promote motor-cycle races on the Sabbath, and to demand money for witnessing them. The *Methodist Times* solemnly warns the A.C.U. that the Christian Churches will not tolerate that. "The Auto-Cycle Union will find themselves up against a stronger force than they imagine, if they persist with this scheme. They had better drop it before they have gone too far to draw back." Note the pretty arrogance of the warning. The A.C.U. should tell those who threaten them to go to Halifax, and that they do not intend to be dictated to about the way in which they spend their seventh-day leisure.

Canon Brook-Jackson, rector of Streatham, declares that the devil has no more cunning way of securing a long lease of life for any evil thing than by getting the Christian Church and Christian people to give it their sanction. What is it, he asks, that kept slavery alive so long, but that Christian men had solemnly declared it to be a Divine institution? What is it that keeps alive so many social evils of to-day but the fact that professing Christians are mixed up with them? If only professed Christians would shake their hands clear of all connivance with such things, they would not last, says the Canon. If only Christian people would do this, that, and the other, the Canon says, social evils could be removed. But the trouble is that they don't. The cause

of this is that Christians have a God-inspired book which enables them to find justification for social evils. It is their religion that makes the mischief—their religion which teaches them to be guided by the Bible instead of by reason and experience. We are quite prepared to believe the cunning of the devil is in that.

The Rev. J. Ernest James, of Melbourne, has received a "call" to become pastor of Kensington Chapel. Mr. James is supposed to be a great preacher and a "church filler." Judging by his first sermon in his new pastorate, we fancy he is a highly original thinker, too. He told his audience that Sunday was not what it used to be; many young folk did not feel the necessity for worship, and frankly confessed that it answered no need in their lives. Such problems, he said, are to be found wherever one goes. There is nothing gained by bemoaning the fact. The only thing to do is "to meet such problems with brave and blithe hearts." Since the home-grown pastor said all this long ago, was there any need to import an Australian to say it over again? But perhaps the leaders of Kensington Chapel think the home-grown pulpiteer is lacking in the "brave and blithe" philosophy that teaches the despondents to accept gladly what is admitted cannot be altered.

The British Empire is beginning to totter towards its final fall. Yarmouth Council is to permit refreshment stalls on the beach to open on Sundays during the summer. Alas, that an Empire should collapse through its holiday-spending people drinking ginger beer and eating buns on the Sabbath!

The Rev. A. D. Belden thinks Christians wobble between two ideas of God. The rev. gent. imagines there are only two Christian ideas of God! Why, there are as many ideas as there are Christians. Each Christian builds a God in his own image.

Mr. F. E. Baily (in the *Daily Mirror*) says that doctors have quite lost the confidence of women over maternity work. Women, he declares, know that if the doctors liked, child-birth could be painless. The force of feminine public opinion will soon compel doctors to make it so:—

For the explanation of the present medical attitude, one need only go back to Victorianism and the Book of Genesis. There is written: "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children," and the Victorians believed it, and doctors let it go at that.

Mr. Bailey asked "the most enlightened doctor I know" why. He replied: "Probably it is due to religion. Actually, a woman need never know she's having a child." A well-known medico has criticized Mr. Baily's statements. He declares that many women object to the use of chloroform if they think it would prejudice the health of the child. Well, we believe it has yet to be clearly demonstrated that the child can be prejudiced thus. And in this connexion it is worth while asking whether the prejudicial effects from "twilight sleep" methods are greater than those which the pain and agony of the mother might give rise to when no chloroform is used.

Professor Gaetano Salvemini, in the course of an article in the *Daily Express*, strikes a blow at another popular belief. He says:—

Anyone who observes the many imposing religious ceremonies that take place in Italy, even in the smallest villages, is easily led to believe that the religious feeling of the Italian people is very intense. This is a delusion. Anyone who nowadays attempted to make a religious speech, as people do in Hyde Park, would be sent to a lunatic asylum. The Italian people has no active share in religious life. The religious ceremonies are a monopoly of the clergy, and are conducted in a language which the people no longer understands.

If that view be correct, Mussolini may have a better chance than would appear likely in any contest he may have with the Papacy. But there is still the European battle-ground outside Italy on which the Vatican may fight its principal battles.

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.

J. ALMOND.—We are pleased to see that the stream of protests against the utilization of the B.B.C. machinery for religious addresses, and the exclusion of all contrary opinions, is being kept up. We flatter ourselves that we have managed to make the plea that nearly everyone is pleased with the religious service too ridiculous to be used in the future. We have not the slightest expectation that the other side will be heard, but it is something if we make the bigotry clear and unmistakable.

F. S. HOUGHTON.—Thanks for letter. We hope to see something done in the direction indicated in the near future.

F. FLETCHER.—Glad to hear from an old friend. Letter crowded out of this issue; will appear next week.

J. M. STUART YOUNG.—A very favourable notice of "What Does it Matter?" appeared in the *Freethinker* some weeks ago. We quite endorse the good opinion formed by the writer of the article. We saw the article you name. But the man who can embrace Roman Catholicism and then protest against slavery of the mind, rouses suspicion of either his gravity or his sanity.

A. E. ARNOLD.—You did well to present the B.B.C. with a reasoned statement of your objections. It would have been well also if the B.B.C. had managed something in the nature of a reasonable reply. But to claim that they are acting fairly because the majority who have written like a religious service, is to quite miss the point at issue. In the stating of opinions so that those who hear may judge, there is no such thing as majority or minority. It is a question of allowing both sides of a case to be heard.

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

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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.

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

The Annual Conference of the National Secular Society will take place on Whit-Sunday, May 27. Two Branches (Chester-le-Street and Liverpool) are nominated, voting papers are in the hands of the Branches, and these must be back in the hands of the Secretary by April 11. Both the Branches are very active, and we must leave it to those concerned to decide upon the respective geographical and other merits in giving their votes. But we hope that each Branch will send in its vote in good time.

Branches should also bear in mind that all resolutions for the Conference Agenda should also be in the

hands of the Secretary by April 12. Resolutions may also be sent in by individual members, and those who have useful suggestions to make for the work of the Society should take advantage of getting their ideas discussed before a general meeting of the Society.

Chester-le-Street Branch has a very energetic Secretary in Mr. J. T. Brighton, who, in addition to Branch activities, figures largely in lectures and debates in the district. We are glad to hear of a successful debate conducted by him with a Spiritualist at Hetton. The hall was quite filled, and we are informed that Mr. Brighton conducted his case very ably. During the forthcoming summer months we understand that Mr. Brighton intends doing what he can to carry Free-thought round the district. There should be half a dozen new Branches started in Durham and Northumberland. There are, we know, quite enough Freethinkers to give all of them a good membership.

Pity the troubles of a poor editor! A little while ago we received some very short articles from Ireland, with a postal order for 2s. 9d. in payment for some copies of the *Freethinker*. We repeatedly ask for all orders for papers and books to be addressed to our business manager, as we have quite enough on our hands, and it would be no surprise if when orders come direct to us they are sometimes delayed or even mislaid. But in this case the order was passed on and the things ordered sent. We also returned the articles with the comment that, while the matter was good enough, the style was not up to *Freethinker* standard. We may have been quite wrong in our judgment of the articles, but we have to decide, and we do the best we can. Contributors just have to put up with our very defective judgment. But we fancy we have given dire offence, because we have just received a letter in which this gentleman says I must have meant the articles were not "down" to the *Freethinker* standard, and as he has not received the copies of the paper, indicates his suspicion that we have just pocketed the 2s. 9d. We can only urge in defence that we get very little for our work, and that times are hard. Every little helps—and regular readers are quite aware that pocketing money belonging to other people is a very old habit of ours. But as we have been discovered, we have ordered copies of the paper to again be sent on. Honesty is, perhaps, the best policy; and the safest policy for an editor would be to print all he gets—that is, if he has no thought for the future of his paper.

A Belfast friend writes informing us that he has been trying to get some letters into the Belfast papers protesting against the action of the B.B.C. with regard to religion. He has not met with any success. We are not surprised, but some good is done if editors are made aware that others besides Christians exist. If all Freethinkers followed the example of our friend, in all probability more attention would be paid Freethinkers by the general press. They are inclined to take the boycott too tamely.

The last of the Socials organized for the present season by the West Ham Branch came off very successfully on Saturday last. The Branch is very fortunate in having a committee and a body of members that work together very happily, with the result that it is able to carry out its propagandist and other work with commendable success. These Socials have the effect of cementing the relationship of the younger people to the movement and so make for future successes.

"In former days I used to have Mass said in the Chapel at Les Ilettes by a poor devil of a Curé, who used to say in his cups: 'Don't let's speak ill of sinners; we live by 'em, we priests, unworthy as we are!' You must agree, sir, this prayer-monger held sound maxims of government."

Anatole France ("The Gods are Athirst").

The Origin of Spiritualism.

(Continued from page 213.)

IN dreams, the dissociated ideas have complete sway. They may be likened, these stored up ideas and impressions, to a gathering of school boys free from all control. They have their fling. Much of the talk about the subliminal self is so much babble. Psychics, pseudo-scientists and other quacks have filled shelves with bilge of a hundred varieties on the marvels of the subconscious mind. Hear, for instance, F. W. M. Myers, one-time archbishop of the avatars, the high pontiff whose inspired utterances are quoted with reverence by nearly all the spiritualists of to-day:—

The "conscious self," of each of us, as we call it—the empirical, the supraliminal self, as I should prefer to say—does not comprise the whole of the consciousness or of the faculty within us. There exists a more comprehensive consciousness, a pro-founder faculty, which, for the most part, remains potential only, so far as regards the life of earth, but from which the consciousness and the faculty of earth life are mere selections. And I conceive also that no self of which we can have cognizance is in reality more than a fragment of a larger self, revealed in a fashion at once shifting and limited, through an organism not so framed as to afford it full manifestation.—(F. W. H. Myers: *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*.)

Then listen to the words of Sir William Barrett, F.R.S.:—

The organism of an oyster, for instance, constitutes a threshold which shuts it out from the greater part of our sensible world; in like manner the physical organism of man forms a threshold which separates him from the larger and transcendental world of which he forms a part. But this threshold is not immovable. Occasionally in rapture, in dream, and in hypnotic trance it is shifted, and the human spirit temporarily moves in "worlds not realized" by sense. In the clairvoyance of deep hypnotic sleep, and in somnambulism, the threshold is still further shifted and a higher intelligence emerges, with a clearness and power proportional to the most complete cessation of the functions and consciousness of our ordinary waking life.—(Sir W. F. Barrett: *On the Threshold of the Unseen*.)

And Gustave Geley:—

That which is most important in the individual psychism is subconscious. The foundation of the Self, its characteristic qualities, are subconscious. All the innate capacities are subconscious; likewise the higher faculties—intuition, talents, genius, artistic or creative inspiration. These faculties are cryptoid in their origin, cryptoid in their manifestations, the greater part of which escape from the will, from the normal and regular direction of the individual, and show their existence only by bringing to light intermittent and apparently spontaneous results. This subconscious psychic activity, powerful in itself, is reinforced by a still more potent and infallible memory, which leaves the feeble and limited conscious memory far behind. By the side of the subconscious, the conscious seems but a restricted, limited and truncated psychism; and even this psychism in its more important manifestations is conditioned by that cryptoid portion of the Self which is its foundation. In a word, everything happens as though the conscious were but a part, and that the smaller part, of the Self; a part, moreover, entirely conditioned by the more important part which remains cryptoid in the ordinary circumstances of normal life.—(Gustave Geley: *From the Unconscious to the Conscious*, translation by Stanley De Brath.)

There are yards of similar talk in scores of books by leaders of the psychic world. I have no space for further quotation, nor is there the remotest need.

What precisely does it all mean? The essence of the whole thing can be written in fifty words.

It amounts to this: the waking thoughts of an Anatole France, when his critical faculties are fully active are not worth a twopenny damn; his valuable ideas being conceived in his sleep. Of course, all this is the merest nonsense. Subconsciousness *per se* is inexistent. What psychics mean by the term is the garbage heap of the cerebellum, the mental ash-pit into which the intellect throws all the lumber for which it has no immediate use. The only point is that every sense impression makes its own track in the nervous system and makes in the cortical areas some histological modification. The indelibility or the evanescence of the registration depends upon the depth and puissance of the originating cause, or the frequency of its repetition, or both. Such is memory. As civilization advances, and coincidentally as the child develops into an adult, the number of impressions, sensory and otherwise, inherited, experienced and associated, becomes well nigh unimaginable. In the mass of mankind this farrago of impressions, ideas and images, forms an amorphous miscellany, a heterogenous collection of useless junk. Out of this ruck and welter of second-hand jumble sales, a nucleated section of rubber-stamped ideas forms. This represents the intellect. It represents further, what is commonly called consciousness, inasmuch as its functioning at any one precise time is limited. The rest of the impressions passing through the cerebrum in states of varied dissociation make up the drivelling mass of nonsense which the psychics term the unconscious or subliminal self. Occasionally, through fortuitous histological impression, a particle of the litter disintegrates itself from the mass, looms up on its own, and is hailed as a marvel of mnemonics. It is nothing but this when one suddenly remembers some little incident in one's childhood days, apparently long since forgotten.

The intellect, therefore, depends entirely on the extent of these cortical associations. Genius, which is a concentrated form of intellect,¹¹ is neither more nor less than the power of making infinite associations. It is really the extension of consciousness to the limit of one's powers, and the temporary overcoming of all clogging or retarding influences; it is really a display of mentality beyond normalcy—what is popularly termed normal is in reality greatly retarded or affected by mental prepossessions and inertia. The popular idea that genius is the miraculous working of subconsciousness is mere nonsense. The tales of writers and artists sitting down in an apparently trance-like state and feverishly committing their ideas to paper have in the bulk been invented by indulgent and reverential biographers, or given to the world by envious college professors as a means of covering up their own colossal shortcomings. No man ever wrote automatically anything worth reading.

The bulk of these delusions are the result of the industrious gathering of all the visions, hallucinations and illusions to which, at one time and another, many men of genius have been subjected. Now a careful study of the works of any genius subject to hallucinations will reveal the fact that it is precisely at moments of dissociation that he has written his bits of nonsense. The wise man when suffering

¹¹ Genius can only refer to intellect. The idea, as promulgated in the illustrated press, that boxers, cricketers, lawn-tennis players, golfers, actors, are, so far as their respective professions are concerned, so many geniuses is empty twaddle. If by virtue of his supremacy in the ring Jack Dempsey was a genius, then by a similar process of reasoning, any orang-outang, as Dempsey's physical superior, is a genius, too.

from toothache or stomach-ache, when in love with a newly discovered beauty, when filled with murderous feelings towards his more successful rival in professional or amatory adventure, will put away his pen and spend his time at a theatre or bordello. Neglect of this sane precaution leads inevitably to bad workmanship, to serious flaws. There is, as an instance, evidence that Walt Whitman was at times subject to visions—it is at such times that his verse degenerates into what is little removed from sheer rubbish. Not the causes of genius are these bursts of seeming madness, of illusion, of mortal malformities; but the flaws in it.

GEORGE R. SCOTT.

(To be concluded.)

Drama and Dramatists.

It has been our pleasure and privilege to write to the best of our ability on "The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali." We do not know if any of our notes have been the means of getting any readers to examine Patanjali for themselves, as we are well aware that not a little of the so-called wisdom of the East is pure nonsense, and rightly suspected by those who have paid for the experience of being imposed upon. But Patanjali will bear criticism and analysis, and, with a few reservations, find acceptance with those who, for the supernatural, have no use. One aphorism gives a key to self-knowledge, "The series of dynamic mind-images is beginningless, because Desire is everlasting." In another quarter of the globe Spinoza comes to the same point, with a somewhat Western distinction: "I had recognized that the acquisition of wealth, sensual pleasure, or fame, is only a hindrance, so long as they are sought as ends not as means." And, watching the progress of clarity from Patanjali and Spinoza to our own day, a little gem was picked up in this paper. "We have never seen," states the writer, "that money gave sufficient compensation for one to spend one's life in getting it." With some individuals, imagination and desire lead them in a witches' dance of exhaustion; with others, these taskmasters are politely shown the door and locked out, or put under restraint.

In watching the play "From Morn to Midnight," at the Gate Theatre Studio, there was the impression given that the author, Georg Kaiser, was completely at home in the world of illusion; he had the subject at his finger-tips. In seven scenes wherein no word was superfluous, he has vividly traced the progression of a bank cashier's break-away from the robot life he was leading. Forty fathoms deep he goes without one flicker of hope. By "what is" in the means at his command, and the perfect technique of Peter Godfrey, he unfortunately does not indicate what ought to be—and we do not expect this from a dramatist. If he makes the specator think, that is the only crumb of comfort to be had from this play.

The dramatist's characters have no names; this is significant, but society as we find it, has a bent that way, and there may be many crimes in the history of the world, but the denial of the growth of individuality is not one of the least. There is a sudden decision of the bank cashier to abscond with sixty thousand marks, and follow the lady with a wrist like polished ivory. His interview with her after the theft is the first stage of disillusion; she is not compliant with his demands. His subsequent soliloquy in a field deep in snow is almost as heartrending as the wounded cries of King Lear. For a brief time, he returns home, and the devil of satire is biting throughout his stay; one faint gleam—one happy phrase, "the magic of familiar things"—but as he knows that the hue and cry is raised against him, he leaves. At the cycle races he is a satiric chorus to the regulated sport; in the cabaret he has nothing but the bubbles of illusion bursting in his face, and there is the intermittent begging by the Salvation Army lass. The seventh and last scene is in a Salvation Army Hall. After the usual browbeating of the audience by the woman with the drum, and frenzied shrieks to come to the penitent form, the

cashier is brought in by a Salvation lass, and he looks around him with an air of amusement.

A rather mixed batch is brought up to the penitent form, and, the cashier, prompted by the Salvation lass: "Speak, I'm with you. I'll stand by you," begins his speech, and, having found that the money can buy nothing worth having, he throws it all among the audience to be torn and trampled under foot. This, however, does not work according to plan—there is a scrimmage, fighting, and shouting among the "soldiers," and the paper money is all collected and the crowd disappear, with the exception of the woman who brought him to the hall. She finally departs to tell the police to get the reward. The cashier is left alone in the hall with the drum, deceived at the eleventh hour, and when the police appears he shoots himself.

This play is not by any means a light diet for an invalid; it is an amplification of everything that is wrong in the world. According to the translator, Mr. Ashley Dukes, it was first performed in Berlin, in 1916, but it is not dated on that account, as the stupid truths, like the poor, are still with us. It is the other side of "the sharp swords and glittering prizes" picture, and money as the be all and end all of life is awaiting the executioner's axe in the same way that the "rewards and punishment" theory in the other world has broken down.

As usual, this production, in the hands of Peter Godfrey is on that high level of perfection that is now expected of him; with the minimum of material he is a master of his art. There is a genuine intensity and enthusiasm in all the caste that will satisfy the most critical audience, and the presentation of the Salvation Army Hall scene is memorable, ironic, and, in the twentieth century, may be documented for posterity as the art of lifting a man up by banging a drum. This is treading the path of occultism, which will also bring one to the joke of self-denial at other people's expense. Also, as a survival of incantation "Glory Glory Hallelujah," full of sound and fury, signifying nothing, should be put on a gramophone record and buried in the foundation of the next big building. This, when discovered in a thousand years' time, would show posterity that the savage was in our midst, although paint and feathers had been abandoned.

"From Morn to Midnight" has not the saving grace of "Peer Gynt"; it is bleak, cheerless, stark naked, painful truth, and in places very sad, but, on taking into account the period when it was written and first performed, there are abundant reasons why "the magic of familiar things" is the one sweet note that could not prevail over others. There is no harmony in the bear garden of Mars.

WILLIAM REPTON.

GREEK GODS NOT PURE NATURE SPIRITS.

It is true that the Greeks of all periods remembered that their supreme deity, Zeus, had been in the "Aryan" period the sky god, or the divine sky pure and simple; but already in the Homeric poems he is presented as much more than this. Even Poseidon, who has more of the elemental character than the others, is more than a water god, being also a builder of cities and an upholder of tribal and intertribal organizations. As for the others . . . they have in the earlier period no discoverable nature connexion, nor can we discover the elemental source from which they may be supposed to have developed. There is no reason for believing that Apollo was originally a sun god or that Artemis was a moon goddess; the sun and moon are later intruders into their cult and their myth. It was the misfortune of nineteenth century scholarship, dominated partly by the dogmas of Max Müller, that the study of the classic religions was wasted in striving to interpret each one of the personalities of the polytheism as a personification of some department of nature, sky, dawn, night, thunder and lightning or wind. They ignored the possibility that the Hellenes both before and after they entered Greece and spread over Greek lands may have adopted many divinities as full-blown, personal Theoi, whose origin was neither known or inquired into.

Lewis R. Farnell, D.Litt.

American Notes.

REFORMATION BY PRAYER.

So desperate has become the state of Chicago's municipal morals, that the Churches of that city have decided to call God in to effect the cure which Mr. W. T. Stead and others have regarded as hopeless. Between ourselves, this wicked city is nothing like being as wicked as it suits the churches to pretend it is. Be that as it may, a Sunday has been set aside, God is to be bombarded with prayers, and in a few weeks' time we ought to be looking for results. The main points to which God's attention is to be drawn, in addition to the worst crime of all, namely: abstention from church-going, are the following: Ballot-box violation, bomb-throwing, hundreds of gambling joints and vice-dens, and thousands of places selling intoxicants. It is hardly fair to trouble God about Ballot-boxes. They are quite unknown in the Kingdom of Heaven. What the Americans call gambling is perfectly legal in most Christian countries, and as Jesus was known as a "wine-bibber," it is unlikely that he will worry about a few beer-drinkers in Chicago.

Meantime a Chicago professor (Norman Richardson) told the Chicago Church Federation that he has "undertaken the task of surveying the moral standards of 5,000 boys and girls in schools, both religious and public." The word "surveying" is an interesting one in this connexion. It sounds like a mixture of Peeping Tom and Mr. Pecksniff.

SOFT HEADED OR SOFT HEARTED?

The Congregationalists have complained that clergymen are the favourite victims of swindlers. The "business manager" of the Congregationalists has sent questionnaires to all the clergy of that sect. The replies are said to be "heart-rending," and it would seem as if the lay public have small chances of being robbed, the swindlers evidently putting in full time with the clergy. I am inclined to think these stories are mostly true. There must be a number of clergy like Billy Sunday, of course. His house was once broken into, and the burglar swears that Billy robbed him of twenty dollars! But take the clergy as a whole, they would seem to be so lacking in ordinary common sense, and to possess so big a fund of incredible incredulity, in addition to having very often "charitable" funds to dispose of, that they are the natural prey of sharp-witted frauds. One of the evils of piety is that a great deal of money is administered by people quite unfitted for such work, apart from the fact that such funds account for an appreciable proportion of church-membership. Rice-Christians are not all Chinamen!

ONE OF GOD'S PUZZLES.

Sabbath-breaking used to be a grave sin against God. To read what Woodbine Willie says about it, God still thinks this offence a far greater crime than murder. The Rev. R. J. Snell has just returned from a visit to Alaska. He lived at Diomed Island, owned by the U.S.A. This is a small island near the coast of the great Diomed territory owned by Russia. Mr. Snell was greatly perplexed when in the winter months the connecting channel was frozen over, and, owing to the two territories using a different calendar, you could avoid Sunday altogether at the cost of a very short walk. Of course, if you were extraordinarily religious, or fond of two days' rest every week, you could have two Sundays every six days. How can God manage to do any moral book-keeping in a place like that? It reminds me of a question I put to a priest at Naples, after seeing the "liquidification" of the blood of Saint Januarius on the Saint's birthday. I am still wondering how the dead Saint learnt that the Gregorian calendar had made it necessary for him to "liquify" eleven days earlier.

IN THE AIR.

Billy Sunday's latest exploit is to go up in an airplane and preach at an altitude closely resembling that of the famous spot where the devil once took Christ. Of course we heard it all by Radio, but a fool can talk

just as foolishly in a Radio Studio as he can in a balloon. As it happened, a particularly fine concert was being relayed at the same time, and even the pious preferred to wait until the Sabbath for their sermon.

"WHAT THE BIBLE MEANS TO ME."

The Unitarian Laymen's League of Boston have issued an interesting "Modernist" answer to the Fundamentalists, and as such it has a claim to the attention of Bible worshippers. The Unitarians of U.S.A. are on the whole a body of rationalists. Many of their leaders occupy an intellectual attitude indistinguishable from that of Mr. Chapman Cohen and Mr. John M. Robertson. Some of them have been logical enough to throw overboard the word Unitarian, which still stands for Christianity, however diluted or disguised. They call themselves "Modernists," "Liberals," "Humanists," or even "Experimentalists" . . . anything, apparently, except Atheists, Secularists, or plain Freethinkers. *What the Bible Means to Me*, apparently an official publication, illustrates our difficulty in understanding where the Unitarians really stand to-day. It is quite clear that they want to dissociate themselves from Fundamentalism. They do not, for instance, "believe in the Bible as the infallible and inerrant word of God." But was a manifesto to that effect needed? Everybody knows that fundamentalism is inconsistent with scholarship, and we did not expect to see "modernists," in a work dated 1927, differing from these primitives only in phrase, and not always in that. "It IS a Sacred Book"; "It IS a Holy Book"; says this work (with capitals as quoted); while we still see all the old appeals to "Faith," "Everlasting Righteousness," "Kingdom of God," "The All-Father," and the "Universal Spirit." Ruskin once derided those who worship capital letters, and claimed that the spirit of honesty meant much more than the HOLY GHOST. Unitarians must choose between the language of superstition and the sense of science. Nobody will realize that you have discarded your old follies if you describe your new wisdom in the same old terms. Can we indeed believe that we are not still in the presence of the crude old superstition, with its insistence on "The Word of God Is Science and the Bible" . . . "And science to-day is revealing to us a new world of Spirit" . . . and, of course, behind science is "The Unseen World," and "The Everliving Word of God." What more could the Fundamentalists say?

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Blessing the Nets.

IN the present year of grace, I gather from the illustrated press, a very interesting ceremony has been performed at Norham-on-Tweed. This was no other than blessing the nets of the salmon-fishermen.

Doubtless that is the main reason for the prime reputation that Tweed salmon has acquired in the fish-market. I am told that Tweed salmon can more than hold their own in the open market. Unscientific people have often wondered why this should be. It seemed strange that because a river, famous in history, happened to flow near the Borders of England and Scotland there should be any special virtue in its funny produce. Now we know.

The clergyman of the Parish has blessed the nets.

Speaking of the excellent quality of Tweed salmon, I remember a song, the chorus of which, sung with a lilt, effectively placed the Northern fish far ahead of their competitors:—

"Sawmon, Sawmon, ye talk o' cod, gae 'wa' man,
Tatties tilt, and dover tilt, and vinegar and a' man,
Of a' the ither fish that soom, a' wadna gie a straw man,
Gae east, gae west, gae north, gae south, there's naught
like Berwick sawmon."

One may gather from this that the Borderer, in spite of his Doric, or perhaps because of it, is nowise shy in "boosting" his exports.

And, to think, that all this is the direct result of the Norham clergyman taking the precaution of informing

his maker of the special needs of the case. Other fisheries please copy.

The North of England people and the moss-troopers on the Borders like to think they are the proteges of the Almighty. It gives them "a guid conceit o' theirsels." When other districts are merely trusting to their poor human skill, backed up by merely human endeavour, the Tweedside fisherman is in league with Omnipotence. He has the skill too, doubtless, the romantic river, the historical associations. And the Lord at his elbow to boot. No wonder Tweed delicacies are in demand at all the great emporiums.

This commercial supremacy comes unquestionably from a close study of the Holy Scriptures. The Bible has been called the "Secret of England's greatness." It is no secret to the Tweed fishermen.

These hard-headed men have only to turn to the last chapter of St. John, where they will find a warrant for their proceedings in 1928. In that chapter there is a wonderful account of the value of joggling the elbow of Omniscience. The Lord of big and little fishes himself took a hand at landing one of the most famous "catches" ever recorded by a voracious fisherman.

Took a hand, did I say! Nothing of the sort! He simply had to issue instructions. There they were, those poor salmon-fishers, toiling all night, with Simon Peter stripped to the nude, with what result? Everybody knows the result. The answer has re-echoed through the centuries to the complete discomfiture of budding Isaak Waltons.

Nothing. Not even a bite.

Then the value of early piety and unquestioning faith was made manifest. Said the Lord, "Cast the net on the right side of the ships and ye shall find." And, behold, it was so. They nobbled 153 handsome fish. They could hardly draw in the net. The poor fellows had been fishing on the *wrong* side all the time.

However, they lugged them ashore and had a very pleasant breakfast. Not only were there a miraculous draught of fishes, but there was a miraculous fire to cook them, with bread on toast. Simon Peter enjoyed himself immensely.

Simon remembered that other occasion, when Jesus walked upon the sea with no visible means of support. Simon tried to do the same, but his floating capacity was limited. He also thought of the time when the two sardines swelled wondrously into an appetising meal for 5,000 healthy appetites. Simon recalled these incidents in his post-prandial speech.

Perhaps Simon shared to some extent Mark Twain's views on his Master's pedestrian exercise on the sea of Tiberias. Twain's remark, you remember, was characteristic. He wanted to cross by boat, but was asked an extortionate figure. "What," said he, "you ask me that amount for taking me across the lake? No wonder Jesus walked."

ALAN TYNDAL.

At Eastertide.

YES. It is finished! And two thousand years
The cry re-echoing have mourned the loss
When Man was crucified—and cursed the Cross;
And sealed the verdict with his blood and tears:
Yes. It is finished! All that most endears—
Love, and the holiest ties accounted dross;
And pious lies and murders wear the gloss
Of things divine.

Dispel thy groundless fears;
He is not risen. Then let Hope arise,
And look to Man for what the gods denied;
There is no being watches from the skies—
For good or ill; and all the creeds have lied:
Know, and rejoice, as each foul claim is shed,
The life of Man comes when his gods are dead!

WM. J. LAMB.

Let us have faith that right makes might; and in that
faith let us dare to do our duty as we understand it.

Lincoln.

Correspondence.

LENTEN REFLECTIONS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—What a charge will be brought, in the day of reckoning, against the great Church for having throughout the ages "preached up" a doctrine to terrorize the people's mind with all the horrors of the damned, and into such a state of mind that, to them, this world became utterly unbearable, and had to be got through and got over as quickly as possible—as the only way to escape from the agony of living was the chance of dying—and thus attain everlasting peace. What a terrible superstition, what a distorted view of the responsibility of life.

Thank goodness that through progress of reason and thought the world is at last shaking off these hideous shackles, and is emerging into the glorious light of self-emancipation, and is full of sympathy for those still in their bonds, still priding themselves on their being "correct" in their Lenten fasts, who still give up sugar during Lent, and brag about it at that, and still bow before a shrine at an unearthly hour in a gloomy church on a rainy cold Spring morning, possibly because the "smart people" do it. A shrine—ah yes—when shall we wake up, and clear away the numberless wayside crosses—which so disfigure this fair land of ours—and not only crosses, but crosses whereon hangs a human form realistic in the horror and agony of the worst of deaths, that of crucifixion? Attempt to beautify England—with these golgothas along the wayside—what a misnomer.

Why do people fast in Lent? Is it because they consider it primarily as a religious act. No, they fast because it is the proper thing to do.

How many women would go to church at all if to do so went out of fashion—if none of the "smart set" went? How many?—not 75 per cent. of those that go now. What a game it is, and to pay for playing it at that!

FREDERICK G. G. PORTER.

GREAT SCOTT!

"The falsity that proceeds from ignorance does not offend me, but the soppery of it."—Montaigne.

SIR,—An article in your issue of April 1, by George R. Scott, begins and ends with sour contempt of the intellects of shop-keepers, cloth manufacturers and Rotarians. One instance of this kind might be passed over, if only on the score that it helped the writer to fill his space, but the like can be found in most of Mr. Scott's writings over the last twelve months—mechanics, factory hands, Bradford manufacturers, school-teachers and politicians being sometimes included. The "cortical associations" of these classes are lacking the correct marcel wave to appreciate Nietzsche and his diatribes, upon whom and which, Mr. Scott models himself and his style. These long-eared ones are all "morons" if not worse.

It might mollify Mr. Scott to hear that the Editor of *The Rotary Wheel* wrote an article in that journal a few months ago, recommending Nietzsche to his readers. This fact does not exonerate the other classes, but we must excuse them if they make good cloth and machinery, especially those who are readers of the *Free-thinker*. They are playing their parts as well as they can. An orchestra is not made up solely of big drums. Hazlitt held a different opinion of business men to that of Mr. Scott, but Hazlitt's feet kept him earth-bound. The vision of literary eagles must be different: it sounds to sense.

H. IRVING.

Society News.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

MR. BRAINE'S lecture on "Woman Adrift" evoked a great deal of criticism and a certain amount of amusement. We were glad to see the room well filled, and old friends present who had not paid us a visit for some time. Mr. Cutner took the chair. There is no meeting to-day, Easter Sunday, but on the 18th, Mr. George

Saville will open a discussion on the question: "Should Children be Taught Sex-Knowledge?" We hope for a good attendance.—K.B.K.

MANCHESTER BRANCH.

THE eleventh Annual Meeting of the Branch was held at Milton Hall, Pendleton, on Saturday last.

Reports were presented by the President, Secretary, Literature Secretary, and Auditor. The Reports indicated a session of unusual activity of open-air propaganda, debates, and lectures to other Societies. Apart from these the Society held ten indoor meetings, all of which were addressed by prominent Freethinkers, and were highly successful. The accounts showed a total expenditure of over £117, and the Balance Sheet showed a deficit of £1 10s. 2d. Considering that the session commenced with a deficit of about £10 this was considered satisfactory.

Mr. A. C. Rosetti was re-elected President, and enters on his second year of office in that capacity. The following were elected Vice-Presidents: Messrs. Bayford, Black, Cohen, Crompton, Mapp and Monks.

The new Executive Committee consists of Messrs. Bayford, Seferian, Cohen, Collins, Miss Milson, Mrs. Rosetti and W. R. Francis. Mr. Monks was re-elected Secretary, and Mr. T. F. Greenall, Literature Secretary. A Social Committee was also elected to arrange Rambles, etc., during the Summer months.

The President congratulated the Officers and Executive on a useful years' work, and expressed the hope that with united efforts the ensuing year would be even more successful.

Delegates were elected for the Annual Conference and resolutions passed.

There must be hundreds of unattached Freethinkers and sympathizers in Manchester and district, and an appeal is made to them to join forces with the Society. The Secretary's address is 10 Alresford Road, Pendleton, near Manchester, to whom communications should be sent.

The Meeting was followed by a Social Evening, Whist Drive and Dance, which was well attended and was greatly enjoyed by all present. Our thanks are due to Mr. Little and our Liverpool friends for the musical items, and to Mr. Seferian for an exhibition of conjuring and card tricks.—F.E.M.

The National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON
MARCH 27, 1928.

The President, Mr. Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Mrs. Quinton, Miss Kough, Miss Vance, Messrs. Clifton, Moss, Neate, Rosetti, Wood, and the Secretary.

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

New members were received from Birmingham, Fulham and Chelsea, Glasgow, Manchester, and South London Branches, and for the Parent Society.

Correspondence was dealt with, including letters from the Cosmos Centre, The William Morris Socialist Institute, the Presbyterian Historical Society, and Branches of the Society.

The Executive considered the arrangements for the Annual Conference. Arrangements for Mr. Whitehead's "Mission" were reported. It was decided to call a special meeting of the Executive on April 12.

The meeting then closed.

FRED MANN,
General Secretary.

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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.—No Meeting.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.—No Meeting.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Station): 7.15, Mr. J. H. Van Bienc—"Haeckel."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.—No Meeting.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (34 George Street, Manchester Square, W.1): 7.30, Mr. Hanson—"The Resurrection Myth."

OUTDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. S. Hanson. (Clapham Old Town): Wednesday, at 8 p.m.—Mr. L. Ebury. (Cooks Road, Kennington): Thursday, at 8 p.m.—Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12 noon, Mr. James Hart—A lecture; 3.30, Messrs. Hyatt and Burgess; 6.30, Messrs. Campbell-Everden and Le Maine. Freethought lectures every Wednesday and Friday at 7.30. Various Lecturers.

COUNTRY. INDOOR.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Socialist Club, Arcade, Pilgrim Street): 3.0, Members' Meeting.

OUTDOOR.

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

SOME PIONEER PRESS PUBLICATIONS:

THE LIFE-WORSHIP OF RICHARD JEFFERIES. By A. F. THORN. Portrait. 3d., postage 1d.

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THE CASE AGAINST THEISM. By GEORGE WHITEHEAD. A Reasonable View of God. Cloth Bound, 2s. 6d., postage 2½d.

THE COMING OF THE SUPERMAN. By GEORGE WHITEHEAD. 2d., postage ½d.

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