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Views and Opinions.

Ancient and Modern.

INSPIRED by the fact that a play of Shakespeare presented in modern dress, and expressed in modern English still has its force, a writer in the *Christian World* enquires what would happen if Jesus Christ were also presented as a modern, speaking to men in current language? And he assumes that the fact that Jesus has not the power over people that Christians would like him to have, is due to his being presented to them as an Eastern. But the two cases are not at all analogous. Shakespeare was dealing with enduring qualities of human nature, and the traditional dress and mode of speech are of quite subordinate importance. The anguish of Lear is no more peculiar to a character who is supposed to have lived some centuries ago, than that of Goriot is peculiar to a particular phase of French society. It is the human qualities of Portia, or of Hamlet or of Lear, that links the men of all ages and of all countries to them. But in the case of Jesus we are not dealing with a human character at all. We cannot feel with him, because, on the Christian hypothesis we are not like him. It is not the fact that Christ is presented as an Eastern that explains the divergence between Christianity and modern thought. In all human relationships, those of parent, friend, citizen, or child, the fact of country or colour counts for but little. Had the claims of Jesus been based upon the broad grounds of humanity, his colour, or country, or age would have mattered as little as does the fact that Socrates was a Greek or Marcus Aurelius a Roman. It is the element of the supernatural that is fatal. You cannot be a god without paying the price of one. The penalty of such is, finally, disintegration.

Fact and Fiction.

There have, of course, been several attempts to put the New Testament story into current English, but the attempts have been limited in their scope,

and have met with much opposition from religious people who felt that such attempts robbed the story, of its proper "atmosphere." And, so far, I agree with the protesters. Take, for example, the story of the birth of Jesus as told in the New Testament, and then imagine it as told in modern language by a modern man with a modern outlook. It would run thus:—

A man named Joseph was engaged to a young woman named Mary, but before they were married he discovered that she was about to become a mother. And, being a man of kindly disposition and deeply in love with the girl, he shrank from making her condition public, and was strongly inclined to hush the matter up. Torn thus between his love for Mary, and his fear of outraging the conventions, he went to bed and had a curious dream, one that must have been reminiscent of some of the religious legends he had heard or read. He dreamed that an angel appeared to him and informed him that Mary had committed no fault, that the child was miraculously conceived, without the co-operation of any human being. Eager to grasp at anything that would enable him to marry the woman he loved, Joseph pretended to accept the vision as an expression of literal truth, and trusted to the superstition of those around him to accept the story.

Now this way of telling the story is the way in which a modern might relate it. I do not think there is a word to which anyone could object on the score of coarseness or offensiveness. Taking the New Testament story as having any basis in fact it is a simple and rational way of dealing with it. But if the story was read in that way, what basis would it give for religious belief? None at all. Any reader would recognize it as either the story of a tragedy repeated many thousands of times in the course of the world's history, or as the mere handing down of one of the world's myths.

* * *

A Primitive Salvation Army.

Put the New Testament into a completely modern dress, and the consequence would be complete disbelief. Take away the gradually developed specialized language in which the Bible is written, a language that was never a language of the people in the sense of its being either a written or a spoken one for any other purpose than that of religion, and the real nature of the narrative would be plain to everyone. Let anyone sit down and imagine what the scenes pictured in the New Testament would appear like to a modern coming into contact with them for the first time in their actual happening, and he will get a far better idea of the nature of genuine Christianity, and of the character of the primitive believers, than he could possibly acquire from any course of theological study. Educated men are to-day surprised at the extravagance of revival meetings when

carried on by a quite ignorant body of men and women, and yet this gives us as near a picture as one can get of what a body of primitive Christians was like. Instead of the New Testament reading of Jesus coming into contact with a man possessed of devils, read it, as a modern would write it, of a poor epileptic or lunatic coming into contact with a wandering religious preacher who tried to cast out the devils by intoning an incantation, and you have the actual happening divested of the special terminology which prevents so many realizing what is before them. The truth of this is seen in the fact that when a Freethinker does try to express biblical statements in current language, he is accused of irreverence, if not of blasphemy. To see religion as it is is one of the surest ways of ending it.

* * *

Forced Culture.

We may see the subject from a slightly different angle if we consider the talk that goes on of securing a suitable "atmosphere" if religious beliefs are to be kept in being. This bulks very largely in all questions of religious training from the child in the school to the adult attending Church. Catholics argue, in relation to the schools, that a lesson in religion, given as something quite apart from the rest of the educational course, is not enough. They say it divorces religion from the rest of life, and in time begets indifference, if not positive unbelief. Thoughtful Christians of all denominations agree with this, although they see the impossibility, in existing circumstances, of getting the whole of education permeated with religion in State-supported schools. With adults, the creation of an artificial atmosphere favourable to religion is even more marked. The parson must have a distinctive dress, which has all the attractiveness and authority of a uniform to the commonplace mind, and marks him as someone set aside for a special work. One is exhorted that in attending church one must cultivate a specially "reverent" frame of mind, and ordinary language is taboo in the offering up of prayers. A religious service must have its own particular "lingo," and in a thousand and one ways the policy of separating religion from the general current of life is carried out. There is a general agreement in both theory and practice that to carry the same mental habits into religion that are in use in other directions is fatal to the "spiritual" life. You must get ready to believe or belief will not come.

* * *

Perpetuating the Savage.

Now why should there be this great anxiety to shut religion off from the current of everyday life? Why cannot we use in the matter of prayer exactly the same kind of language we use when asking help or favours from a human being? It is quite plain that at one time people must have done so; why do they not continue to do so? Well, it is all a question of environment. It is one of the plainest of truths that all religious beliefs exist as a mental attitude towards the world in which man finds himself. His belief in spirits, or gods, or ghosts, or supernatural agencies sums up his theories of the forces around him. The primitive theory of disease, the belief that the forces of nature are under the control of certain superior beings, who may modify their operation to meet human needs, is as much a theory of things as is the generally accepted theory of evolution. At this stage no special atmosphere, no peculiar form of words is required, because the social and intellectual condi-

tions supply all that is necessary to keep religion alive. There is no need to specially guard the individual against the influences which tend to undermine religious belief, because such influences are either non-existent or so weak as to be negligible. No one questions religion, and there is no marking off the religious from the secular life. It is a change in the general environment, the development of social life, the growth of exact knowledge that creates the necessity for the inauguration of a new policy. Ideas if they are to live must somehow or other find an environment in which they can exist. If a natural one is not available an artificial one must be provided. And all the special paraphernalia of religion, the special dress, the peculiar language, the stereotyped form of address, the maintenance of archaic customs, are all so many efforts to create an environment which shall be favourable to the persistence of modes of thinking and types of mentality that belong to the infancy of the race, or at least to an earlier period than that in which we happen to be living. And it is only by surrounding the individual with an environment suitable to such outworn ideas that religion can take on even a semblance of reality. It is clear that if religious beliefs sprang from the knowledge and the life of to-day, if they received support from present day life, there would be no need to dwell upon the need for "atmosphere," and no need to create peculiar forms of expression for religion. They would derive their strength from the life around them. That they cannot do this is one of the strongest evidences of their fundamental falsity.

You cannot, then, present Jesus Christ in modern dress any more than you can present the medicine-man of a savage tribe in modern dress. Give us Jesus in modern dress, and you have a wandering religious preacher, filled with a number of crude and ignorant beliefs about man and the world. Publish the Bible with its ideas expressed in their exact equivalents in everyday language, and in the course of a generation it would be accepted for what it really is. Divest religion of the gloss that is placed on it by modern apologists and it would cease to exist with civilized people. It would soon be ignored in theory, as it is so generally set aside in practice.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Mother Earth.

KNOW this of life: the calm and brown old earth
Mates with the sun, the fierce enduring sun—
And from that bridal emanates the birth
Of all and every one.

This also learn: that here we are not guests,
Nor are we slaves beneath unpyting feet;
We safely hide beneath the quiet breasts
Of Mother Earth so sweet.

The blushing rose is ranked with sparkling gem;
The lark is one with morning's maiden vow;
Bright stars and moon compose the diadem
That rests on her pure brow.

For Nature knows not either great or small,
The microcosm of a grain to cherish:
Nor rich, nor poor, nor any rank at all,
Beyond that warning fierce: "Fight on!—or
perish!"

Whate'er betide, one creed of hope and trust
Our faltering hearts in equipoise will keep—
Give Time the soul, while for our tired dust
Earth makes a bed for Sleep!

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

"Robert the Devil."

"For proud and fiery, and swift and bold,
Wine of life from heart of gold,
The blood of his heathen manhood rolled
Full billowed through his veins."

James Thomson.

THE Pioneer Press has rare eyes for a good book and also a good bargain. Both qualifications are present in the offer of Buchanan's *Complete Poetical Works*, in two volumes, as new, for less than half the published price. For Buchanan is better worth reading than many of the versifiers of the day, who have little to say, and say that little so badly in the most expensive form.

A generation since, Robert Buchanan bulked largely in the literary arena. Poet, dramatist, novelist, critic, and essayist, he was successful in so many directions. Living by his pen, he never forgot his high aims, and he always put good work into what he did. Once, perhaps, in one of his striking articles, he quoted the biting lines from Alfred de Musset: "The dead young poet whom the man survives." This line, so sad and pregnant, would apply to many writers who have started on their careers full of enthusiasm, but who have outlived their early ideals. But Buchanan was not of this kind, and "Robert the devil" he remained to the Orthodoxy of his time.

Buchanan had fighting blood in his veins. Cradled in poverty, he fought his way at the pen's point to an enviable position in the literary world. Much of his tenacity he owed to his father, who was a Chartist and a militant Freethinker in the far-off days when it was dangerous to hold advanced views. Young Buchanan came to London from the North, and commenced that lengthy struggle with fortune in which he was ultimately victorious, although his early privations left a deep impress on his sensitive nature.

The privations were real, very different to the assumed melancholia of Byron and so many other curled, perfumed darlings. Once, whilst waiting in a publisher's office, Buchanan fainted for want of food. His bosom friend, David Gray, actually died from a life of misery almost amounting to starvation. The times were, indeed, "out of joint." David Christie Murray has told us that, in those days, when pressman had not ceased to be pariahs, in a group of well-known journalists, himself included, each admitted having, at one time or the other, to sleep in the open air, or at "The Hotel of the Beautiful Star," as he wittily phrased it. Henry Murray recounted that once he was compelled to share a room with another journalist, and, when money was short, they had only one suit of clothes between them. Since the other man was the bigger, and that suit was his, it was a case of David in Saul's armour.

Buchanan had a good conceit of himself. One publisher said: "I can't stand that young fellow. He talked to me as if he were Almighty God and I an insect." Notwithstanding the defect of his qualities, Buchanan won the fight unaided. A literary Ishmael, every man's hand was against him. This desperate position has its advantages. Buchanan kept his sword sharp, and he always struck hard. His appearance in the literary arena meant real fighting, so unlike the exhibition bouts of Chesterton and Wells and other kid-gloved poseurs. When Buchanan attacked Orthodoxy it was in no half-hearted fashion. He threw himself against the personality of Christ, and penned in "The Wandering Jew," the most tremendous indictment of Jesus in the whole range of English literature. In the dialectical encounter which followed, Buchanan held his own bravely, and his opponents left the arena hurriedly, lest a worse fate befell them.

A thorough humanitarian, Buchanan's objections to the Christian Religion were as much ethical as intellectual. He often got some very startling effects in his writings by this union of intellect and emotion. Recall his biting sonnet to "Our Father in Heaven":—

"Oh! Thou art pitiless! They call thee Light,
Law, justice, love, but Thou art pitiless.
What thing of earth is precious in Thy sight.
But weary waiting on and soul's distress?
Where dost Thou come with glorious hands to bless
The good man dies cold for lack of Thee?
Where bringest Thou garlands for our happiness?
Whom dost Thou send but Death to set us free?
Blood runs like wine, foul spirits sit and rule,
The weak are crushed in every street and lane.
He who is generous becomes the fool
Of all the world, and gives his life in vain.
Wert Thou as good as Thou art beautiful
Thou could'st not bear to look upon such pain."

This propagandist poetry annoyed Christians exceedingly. They saw quite clearly that the underlying ethical appeal would be a more dangerous weapon in his hands than any more scholarly test. Here is another example of his mocking attitude:—

"Oh, what have sickly children done to share
Thy cup of sorrows? Yet their dull, sad pain
Makes the earth awful; on the tomb's dark stair
Moan idiots, with no glimmer in the brain;
No shrill priest with his hangman's cord can beat
Thy mercy into these: ah nay! ah nay!
The angels Thou hast sent to haunt the street
Are hunger, and distortion, and decay.
Lord that madst man, and sendest him foes so fleet,
Who shall judge Thee upon Thy judgment day?"

So one might quote columns of invective. Buchanan never wavered, and he was as outspoken in his later works as in his earlier verse. The judgment of Christ in "The Wandering Jew" is as impassioned, and more lengthy, than Swinburne's "Lines before a Crucifix": it finishes with the lines:—

"With all the woes of earth upon thy head,
Uplift thy cross, and go. Thy doom is said."

Buchanan always rated his poems more highly than any of his other work, and it gave him unalloyed pleasure when Lecky, the historian, praised his "City of Dream," in his speech at a Royal Academy banquet. Certainly, Buchanan's vivid personality came out in his poems more clearly than in his prose. He had a very keen sense of the joy of life. His passion for nature, his enjoyment of existence, was at the very root of his objection to the asceticism and neuroticism in the Christian superstition. He voiced this passion and this joy in most melodious language. Within his limits he was an unmistakable poet, and he blew all things to melody through the golden trumpet of his genius.

It is highly significant that only your Freethinking poets write with real conviction and intensity of the claims of humanity. They elect to hew granite, and not to fritter their lives in carving cherry stones. Listen, for a moment, to Buchanan's passionate outburst: "God in Piccadilly":—

"Poisonous paint on us, under the gas
Smiling like spectres, we gather bereaven,
Leprosy's taint on us, ghost-like we pass,
Watched by the eyes of yon pitiless heaven!
Let the stars stare at us! God, too, may glare at us
Out of the void where He hideth so well—
Sisters of midnight, He damned us in making us,
Cast us like carrion to men, then forsaking us,
Smiles from His throne on these markets of Hell."

These poems were written by Buchanan in the intervals between strenuous bouts of drama and novel writing, and journalism. Writing for a living is a very different matter to the polite dilettantism of the leisured classes. After all, Robert Buchanan never prostituted his pen, and hundreds of pages of his writing, both in prose and verse, showed that he had

a real passion for liberty. He was a humanitarian in a genuine sense, and his mind was preoccupied with noble and lofty thoughts, which he sought to translate into action. His life work was produced under bitter and hard conditions, but it is to his everlasting credit that he carried on the high traditions of the civilized world in the face of real hardship and fierce opposition which would have unnerved most men.

Buchanan's finest work is to be found in "The City of Dream," a beautiful poem, but some of his shorter poems were very popular with reciters, notably "Phil Blood's Leap" and "Fra Giacomo." As a novelist, Buchanan had a great vogue, and was numbered among the "best sellers." All his stories are readable, but he reached high-water mark with his *Shadow of the Sword*, and *God and the Man*, two powerfully written books with a Titanic background, such as Victor Hugo loved to portray.

Buchanan lived for some years at Southend-on-Sea in a fine house, formerly occupied by Edwin Arnold, the author of *The Light of Asia*. His hospitality was only bounded by his income. Henry Murray went to spend a week-end and stayed two years. Whenever he mooted the subject of his departure the bard would not hear of it, and made plans for the coming week. During this period the two men collaborated and wrote a novel and a play together. Adulation is not a trait of Henry Murray, but his testimony to Buchanan's sterling qualities is striking. He was, he says: "the best man I have ever known, the bravest, the most honest, the most cordial, the most kindly, the wisest in counsel, the readiest in help."

At Buchanan's house he met Herbert Spencer, Hall Caine, John Coleman, and George R. Sims.

The good things Sims said at Buchanan's supper table were endless, but one deserves immortality. Murray spoke of writing a work on the population question, and got quite enthusiastic. "A capital idea," retorted Sims, "why not call it 'Murray's Guide to the Incontinent.'"

"Where are the snows of yesteryear?" Recently a popular journalist wrote that Buchanan was "all but forgotten," and recalled the day that Russell Lowell died when Buchanan expressed contempt for the author of *The Biglow Papers*. Yet Buchanan had reason for his contempt. Years before, he journeyed to America to see Walt Whitman, for whom he had an unbounded admiration. At a dinner of American authors, at which Lowell was present, Buchanan asked for Whitman's address, and Lowell described Whitman as "a New York tough," an insult Buchanan never forgot. The British writer did meet Whitman, and recorded his meeting in an article of singular merit; but after that he had no room for Lowell in his "scheme of things."

This brave-hearted Pagan was buried at Southend-on-Sea, in the loveliest month of the year, whilst the fragrance of the June roses was in the air. The lilacs were still lingering and waving their white and purple plumes, the laburnums dropping their golden chains, the may perfuming the ways, and the thrushes singing in the tree tops. The poet lies there always, within sound of the sea he loved so well. As the queen of the months returns, my thoughts go to the grave of one of the most romantic and striking personalities, who, to use the beautiful lines of Shakespeare carved upon his tomb:—

"After life's fitful fever, sleeps well."

MIMNERMUS.

There is no such convincing propaganda as the propaganda of deed.—Mrs. W. L. Courtney.

It is only nobility of character, will, and mind that can make us really free.—Ibsen.

The Nemesis of Nations.

WHEN Robert Blatchford was introducing the question of "Determinism" to an admiring world, he stressed the contention that man was not responsible for his actions, all being under the control of immutable law. And when the fallacy underlying his gospel was pointed out he went on his way repeating it and emphasizing it with an easy disregard for the writers then and before his time, who had seen and avoided the snag he bumped into. From one of the best of Benn's sixpenny series of books it appears that the acceptance of the same fallacy was the primary cause of the downfall of Greek and Roman civilizations. Mr. George Singer, in *Religion and Science*, relates that when the idea that the actions of mankind followed a law immutable was formulated among them, the Roman people took up an attitude of "eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die," and under its influence let slip their hold on ethical principles and tobogganed down into the abyss of despair and decay. Blatchford certainly did not uphold either despair or decay; he was, on his own showing, clearing the way for a creed that was to renew the youth of the world, but nevertheless, he was entertaining a fallacy that went far to paralyse his efforts. It had been pointed out long before his time, and was presented with great force by a contemporary, whose power of accurate thinking was of much higher calibre than his own. But *Nunquam* was at that time in the position of Mahomet, when the great Arab was proclaiming that he alone was the prophet of the one God. There was only one way of salvation for the people of England, and Blatchford was its exponent. He was not alone in his misapprehension of that particular phase of scientific thought. What Mr. Singer terms "the tyranny of determinism" has driven many scientists to ignore the problem *Nunquam* crashed on, and the ignoring of it is very often accompanied by abuse of the determinist position by way of justification of the lack of mental courage or acumen in dealing with it.

The position in ancient Greece and Rome was not exactly parallel with that of modern times. Then, a new theory, presented with all the power of a recognized personal scientific authority, was put to the world, whereas in our day the backing of the naturalist position was accumulative; coming from all quarters and permeating the whole of the scientific world. Many minds were influenced by the new thought and its implications necessarily more quickly perceived. In Rome that response would be absent and it may have seemed that the fact of man being dominated by natural law would annihilate human responsibility. Fuller knowledge and consideration would, of course, have shown that the fact of responsibility is really based on the very fact that is supposed to have put it out of existence. As long as man can be influenced by the actions of his fellows, responsibility will operate in society; it would be non-existent if the contentions of the indeterminist were true. But man's actions are not based on a recognition of abstruse scientific factors, at least, not consciously. He is, as yet, too near his animal ancestors for that, and Rome was no exception to the rule. There was a more potent factor of decay at work than the alleged outcome of a scientific doctrine. That was the institution of slavery.

Roughly speaking, it was the principal factor in the destruction of most of the old empires and civilizations; Babylon, Greece, Rome and the rest. Babylon rose to dizzy heights of endeavour; her buildings surpassed any that had appeared on earth, and her mental accomplishments had an enduring quality. But the structure of her society was riddled by an

institution that ever spells decay; was based on it, and although her destiny was slow in unravelling it was nevertheless sure. Babylon went down to the dust, weakened, above all else, by the softness engendered by living on the enforced labour of slaves. She destroyed the liberty of others and in so doing lost her own. The Athenian society trod the same path; differing only in so far that while Babylon suffered under a single despot, the Greeks maintained a collective tyranny. The democratic state of Athens even outdid the Babylonian despotism in excess of wrong as far as the enslaved portion of the populace was concerned, which at one time outnumbered the free citizens. And they were in constant danger of having their freedom filched from them. Solon's reform movement was devoted mainly to relieving the free citizens who were in danger of being enslaved for debt—it is significant that in the records of human enslavement the banker or his equivalent is always in evidence—the only spasm of wisdom in the life of the Christian Christ was shown in his driving the money changers from the temple—they are always present, whether it be in the shape of an Irish gombeen man or in one of the many variations between him and the international banker—but with the “slaves by nature,” he had no concern. Neither did he condemn the traffic in slaves; he took that for granted, as did St. Paul in later days. The Christian, equally with the Pagan, saw no reason, either in utility, or morally, for touching the cancerous growth, and Greece, with increasing momentum, moved towards her downfall.

Rome took half a century to conquer the world. Previous to their imperial adventure they served an apprenticeship to Mars in trying to conquer each other. And, as to-day, the spoils went to the victors. Slave merchants followed the armies and bid for the prisoners of war when put up to auction. As Rome widened her boundaries the slave trade increased. Rome was the slave mart of the world. There was a nice discrimination in regard to the merchandise. Cicero complains that the slaves whom Cæsar brought home from Britain were illiterate, and the buyer was protected in every way against fraudulent declarations about slave qualifications. The slave atmosphere infected the body social and, as in Athens, the penalty for default in paying a debt was enslavement. Soon the freemen were outnumbered by the slaves. Gibbon estimated that at one time Rome possessed six millions of slaves. So saturated was the society of Rome with slavery that not only did slaves perform almost every service the community needed, but they, the more fortunate ones, owned slaves themselves. The noble Roman who had contributed so largely to the world's betterment, became a drone in a hive of servile labourers, and when the barbarians came down on the fold he lacked ability to even conduct the defence. That was left to the slaves. Parasitism, over a long period, carries a penalty from which there is no escape, and Rome, enfeebled by luxurious living, by the economic chaos involved in the dissolution of her society into groups of slaves and slave-owners, followed Greece on the downward path. And, again like Greece, the form of government did not matter. The Republic was no better than the Empire; political liberty does not necessarily mean economic freedom, and personal degradation went on under Roman democracy as it had done under both Greek and Roman autocracy. The great achievements of both countries in the way of what roughly may be called “social science,” failed to stay the dry rot while the basis of the whole structure was slave labour. When the evangel of Christ took hold of men and dominated the situation the position of the servile was not improved one jot.

There were certainly isolated protests against the status of the majority of Rome's citizens by pagan statesmen, but there was no recognition of the moral atrocity of slavery in Christendom for long enough after the Christian era was ushered in. The denunciation of it came along with Freethought. The wrong interpretation of a scientific idea may easily lead people astray, but a more fruitful cause of demoralization is to be found in the play of his primitive emotions, unregulated by his reason and encouraged by his superstitions. H. B. DODDS.

“Healthateria.”

WE are sometimes inclined to regard the falling off in church and chapel attendance as a matter of satisfaction. But we are not assured that this is due to intelligent disbelief in, and a general decline of, superstition. It is true that fewer people attend the superstition-shops of the regular Christian sects. But we are apt to overlook the number of freak cults that are springing up in all directions, many of them being imported from the United States, a country remarkable for the diversity of its fakes and its manifold forms of graft. These buzzards prey upon the multitudes who have escaped from the claws of the larger vultures.

The other day I had put into my hand a bill announcing free lectures on “Healthateria,” by an American lady claiming to be a preceptress of “Super-Science,” scientist, Christian psychologist, and Esoteric World Teacher. She has a peripatetic School of Cosmic (I had nearly omitted the “s” from that word) Science, Super-Psychology, Metaphysics, Divine Healing, Vocational Guidance, and Inspirational Development, where students are invited to learn (at a price) to solve the mysteries and secret teachings of Ancient Egypt, Greece, Persia, Chaldea, Assyria, Arabia and India; and, since the Bible is an “occult book,” to interpret the mysteries hidden therein.

When appeal is made to mysteries, secret teachings, esotericism, occultism, and the like, it is a sure and certain sign of the charlatan. Nevertheless, as a matter of curiosity (and having nothing better to do at the moment), I decided to go and hear what the Esoteric World Teacher had to say.

The proceedings were opened by an American gentleman with a Charlie Chaplin moustache and a twang that cut like a knife. Then the High Priestess herself entered, arrayed in a white and purple, Orientalish get-up. “Healthateria,” despite its suggestion of something new, turned out to be no more than a rehash of stale ideas. The lady's aim was, she said, to inculcate healing in the Master Jesus' way, and as his apostles did. We have still the power, but have allowed it to fall into disuse. She proclaimed the possibility, to-day, of “miracles of healing.” “If miracles have ceased, what have we to expect from the Christian religion? Practically nothing.” (“Hear, hear!” from a member of the audience, who was glared at with indignation!) “Anyone who goes to a physician has no faith in the Divine Power.” “Anyone who takes medicine when ill, is not a Christian.” And so forth. It was an ill-digested mixture of Christian Science, Theosophy, and mysticism ancient and modern. There was the usual ignorant misinterpretation of “law,” as laid down by a god, which Nature “obeys” in all its processes and phenomena. All but man, who disobeys and suffers in consequence.

It was entirely a plea for prayer instead of physie. The lady claimed to have cured many things by the

"vibratory power of thought" from a distance. For example, a patient who had burst an artery was healed by this means. The hæmorrhage ceased instantly. One hesitates to accuse a lady of lying, but I simply didn't believe that statement. One might as well try to cure a burst water-pipe by similar means. If it were possible, there would be no more use for plumbers than for doctors!

I was more interested, however, in studying the audience than in listening to the lady's discourse. I had heard all that clap-trap before. It was a large audience, including a good many men, all mostly of the poorer sort. After a while, a number left the hall. But those who remained followed the speaker with rapt attention. Few of them were able to check her statements—or misstatements. No doubt it all sounded very wonderful to them.

Now, there is nothing more, or less, reprehensible in all this than there is in the customary hocus-pocus of the churches. But it is more dangerous, not only in raising false hopes among many who may be suffering from actual disease, but in inducing them to reject the service of the medical and surgical knowledge to which alone we owe our present mastery over disease. This is not perfect, we know; but it certainly has lessened the incidence of most diseases, practically abolished some, and doubled the average duration and expectation of life. Prayers and incantations and mystic posturing have proved, as a matter of human experience, manifest failures. Europe was decimated by disease in "the ages of faith." But that audience would know nothing of this, any more than it had knowledge of ancient Egypt, or of modern India, where preventable disease is horribly rife, thanks to the opposition of superstition, priestly imposture and mysticism to medical science.

Auto-suggestion—for this is what it practically amounts to—can undoubtedly cure disorders of a nervous origin, or which are the outcome of hysteria. The last may often counterfeit organic disease in such a way as to baffle even the skilled physician. It is just here that Christian Science, and the mental healing practised by this lady, score. But whilst we hear all about the cures, we never learn anything of the failures, and little of the subsequent history of the cases treated. Where there is really organic disease present, then these quackeries become a danger both to the individual and to the community.

This lady, incidentally, is holding classes in "Super-science Cookery," which my wife is attending, whether as a critic or a student I do not yet know. But it does not matter so long as my food does not presently begin to assume a super-scientific flavour. If so, then I am afraid there will be trouble!

My reason for writing on this matter is to call the attention of Freethinkers to these freak cults which are in competition with conventional religion, and are even more insidious in fostering forms of superstition very difficult to eradicate.

E. J. LAMEL.

"We may well imagine that lions and porpoises have a more masculine assurance that God is on their side than ever visits the breast of antelope or jelly fish."
George Santayana ("The Life of Reason").

When man has come to the Turnstiles of Night all the creeds in the world seem to him wonderfully alike and colourless.—Rudyard Kipling.

Life is measured by thought and action, not by time.
Lubbock.

Freethought Flashes.

The common excuse for remaining silent in the face of what one believes to be untrue, because one "respects" the opinion of others, shows either inability to think clearly or indicates a carelessness that is almost criminal. It is as though one stood quietly by while a counterfeiter passed bad coins on another person. It would be no excuse to say that we respected the right of the counterfeiter to do what he is doing. The law calls this kind of thing, not respecting, but "abetting," or an accessory before the act. Silence in the face of falsity is not an act of respect, it is abetting, helping the utterer of false moral coin to pass it into circulation.

The Lord struck Ananias dead for telling a lie. Then, in his wisdom, he made the punishment less drastic—for fear of decimating his followers.

Man detects the blunders of God and corrects them. His next step is to praise God for having made them.

I do not think it is a question to-day of whether man can get along without God. That is being answered in the affirmative by an increasing number of men and women. The question that is of real importance—to the clergy—is whether God can get along without man. If we may trust the Mohammedan religion, Balaam's ass is in heaven. There is no other religion which makes mention of the presence of another. Only one Ass has managed to get to heaven. Perhaps that helps to explain the number of the pious on earth.

The extension of the franchise gives to every voter the privilege of voting for a candidate selected by someone else.

It is very advisable that some people should not live alone. Evil communications corrupt good manners.

In the interests of true Christianity so long as we have churches, training colleges are a necessity. Think of the number of really intelligent men who might thoughtlessly stray into the ministry were it otherwise.

When people object to jokes about religion on the grounds of irreverence, the proper reply is that the objection is irrelevant. There can be good jokes about religion and bad ones, and an objection can properly be raised that a joke is objectionable because it is bad. But what has irreverence to do with it? A man may joke about his wife or his mother without being accused of irreverence. The man who believes in God in the same genuine fashion in which he believes in his wife or his mother, can well afford to joke about it. If he has no genuine belief in God it is another matter. A joke in that case is apt to make him see himself as he really is.

A knowledge of what other men have written will not prevent a writer repeating their blunders, but it will prevent his thinking the mistakes to be his own.

The only good thing about getting money is that it may help us to forget all about it.

Religious Agnosticism is the only instance in which incapacity has been raised to the level of a philosophy. It is equal to a bankrupt placing an overdraft among his list of assets.

Most writers are under an obligation to their readers for discovering profundities in their works of which they, the authors, had no conception. A creative reader is as important to fame as a creative writer. Genius is nearly always a joint stock concern.

Acid Drops.

The Wesleyan Central Hall, at Stepney, runs a children's cinema, and on Good Friday there was shown, for the benefit of the youngsters, the story of the Crucifixion. We haven't the least doubt but the children would have better enjoyed a Wild West picture or knockabout story, and we are sure there would have been far more truth in it. It is a pity that these exploiters of children can't let them alone, or that public opinion is not sufficiently educated to show its disapproval of this exploitation of childish ignorance.

On Good Friday several villages in East Kent were able to enjoy the spectacle of forty young men, marching arm in arm and bawling with full lung-power: "Christ the Lord has risen to-day." This gang of rowdy fanatics were trying to manifest how effectively the peace of God in one's heart incites one to disturb the peace of other people. This is a Christian country. That is why rowdy Christians are permitted to make a public nuisance of themselves, but rowdy persons made noisy by beer are soon suppressed by the police.

"The Padre," in the *Methodist Times*, thinks that those who can't believe in Jesus might retain some of those outward and visible forms of reverence which the world's widespread use has sanctioned. If he were a disbeliever, he says, he thinks he would retain the capital letter in writing of "Him who Christians call God and Master." He adds: "if such persons omit no opportunity of indicating that in their view Jesus is just like the rest of us, what chance will they stand of ever coming to discern His distinctiveness?" We suppose it is rather a waste of time to point out to a padre that to ask the unbeliever to use outward and visible forms of reverence in regard to something he has no reverence for, is to encourage the unbeliever to act the hypocrite. If it is any consolation to "The Padre," we hereby declare that we have already discerned the "distinctiveness" of Jesus, in the same way as we have discerned the distinctiveness of Jack Who climbed the Beanstalk, and Who thereby placed Himself far above the mob of ordinary mortals.

A pious scribe has been visiting Hastings. He noticed that though the attractive guide books mentioned various amusements under the heading of Sunday, nothing was mentioned about the various Church services. These, he thinks, are more important than band concerts. No doubt. But the Corporation is wiser than he. They obviously desire visitors to get a good impression of Hastings and to enjoy their stay in the town. But what a cool cheek the scribe has in expecting the town to advertise the Churches, when the fact is well-known that the Churches, if they had their way, would prohibit all Sunday amusement in the town. Our pious friend ends his article on the following lugubrious note: "There is no lack of song and dance and play in resorts like Hastings. Far too often churches have become theatres." Brethren, let us weep, for the people are being made happy!

According to a New Jersey newspaper, there is a great deal of stinginess about many Christians. It is, according to that paper, the exception, rather than the rule, for Christians to be generous. The same thing is often said, in different words, by parsons who find buttons in the plate or "in their bags," instead of more negotiable forms of wealth. In this case, the funds of Montclair Church, New Jersey, have been analysed. There are 408 families represented in the membership of the church. Of these, there are 145 families whose aggregate contributions to the finances of the church are exactly Nil. There are 431 motor-cars owned by church members. The average contribution per family is ten cents (5d.) per week. "The price of a soda is enough for the Lord," is how the parson puts it. Perhaps he is right. But how many "sodas" a week does the Lord want?

Four years before his assassination Lincoln was opposed by the whole forces of religion in the States. Even in his own home-city, Springfield, seventeen out of its twenty ministers fought against him. The Rev. Peter Cartwright, Methodist Circuit Rider, had never ceased his attack, on the grounds of "infidelism and even atheism." Lincoln was charged with denying the inspiration of the Bible, dismissing miracles as obviously against God's law, and declaring that Jesus was a bastard. By the way, it is not on record that Lincoln ever repudiated these accusations. There is the famous, and authentic, story of the deputation of pastors to the White House, when the chief spokesman proclaimed that he had come with a message from God. Lincoln drawled, "Well I'm glad to get news so direct."

Even when Lincoln lay dead from that murderous shot in the theatre, there were many pastors who saw the hand of God in the punishment of the theatre-goer. Mr. Lloyd Lewis, in *Plain Talk*, gives chapter and verse for many pulpit "consolations," if not actual congratulations that God had destroyed the infidel Lincoln. "The sharp crack of a pistol," said a New York pastor, "and from the unseen comes the voice, 'Be still and know that I am God.'" The Rev. A. S. Hunt, another New York sky-pilot, suggested that "Providence has permitted this calamity so that a sterner hand might rule in our national affairs." All this nonsense about a sterner hand was the parsons' way of saying they were glad Lincoln was out of the way in favour of their friend Andrew Johnson. "God had no further use for Lincoln," said Rev. C. B. Crane, "At this time God had use for Andrew Johnson instead." Several other preachers expressed the pious view that God had intervened in favour of "our God-given president," as Johnson was called by many. Mr. Lewis's conclusion is justified by the evidence he cites: "History has been lenient, that is to say silent, with the preachers of Lincoln's time."

While the world is groaning under the cost of sustaining white and red armies, it seems particularly silly to pay out huge sums to maintain a lot of useless chaplains. In the British army, one takes the "establishment" for granted. But how did the American Army chaplains get on to the pay-roll of the national treasury? The Constitution of U.S.A. positively forbids any religious test for any government position. It would seem then that a Freethought "chaplain" would be as logical as, say, an Episcopalian. The question has been raised in Congress. It has been pointed out that there is no law permitting the appointment of army chaplains. General Sherman long ago, in a letter which has become historical, said, "The whole system is a farce and is meant to be so. If Congress wanted the army to have the influence of religion it would allow the commanding officer to hire and pay for a minister like surgeons." And in a land where there is supposed to be no official recognition of religion, a man, to be appointed a chaplain must be certified by one of the orthodox denominations. Thus does religion dig itself in, even in a State which professes not to "recognize" religion.

In two of the American States Bills have recently been carried to legalize Bible teaching in the public schools. These States are Idaho and Florida. In seven other States, last year, a similar Bill was introduced, but fortunately defeated. There is widespread evidence of a concerted attempt, on the part of the churches, to get religion on to the rates. Getting the Bible into the hotels is at any rate at the expense of the Gideon Society. But getting it into the schools is a fraudulent misappropriation of public money. All the old arguments used by the late Dr. Clifford and others in England are used here, especially the pretence that the Bible "is a great monument of literature." But a Florida parson takes the biscuit for his "argument" that Moses "was the most scientific hygienist the world has ever known." The people of Florida will wake up if their children begin putting into activity some of this "scientific hygienism" of the old Mosaic law.

The U.B.H.S. is the Union for Biblical and Homiletic Study, organized by Wesleyans for local preachers. In this connexion a writer warns the Union's students against taking for granted that reading is necessarily a blessing. The writer adds:—

To gather thoughts is not to think; men versed in the thoughts of others become shallow in their own . . . The constant dumping of miscellaneous material into the mind is breaking down the powers of assimilation, and leaving some of our brothers mental wrecks. Books, rightly chosen, can never be over-valued . . . The U.B.H.S. suggests a literature leading to preaching power. It gives exclusive attention to technical studies which relate to the Bible and equip for the pulpit.

As the writer says: "To gather thoughts is not to think," especially when the U.B.H.S. directs the gathering.

The Foreign Missionary General Committee of the Wesleyan Mission Society is faced with a debt of £25,000, carried over from the 1927 accounts. To safeguard this year's accounts from a similar deficit, "a gross increase of £25,000 on last year's income it vitally needed." Suggestions have been made that the committee should reduce its expenditure in the current year. But as the expenditure for 1928 was sanctioned in 1927, any reduction is declared to be impossible. The committee is appealing to its beloved mugs to make good the deficit and to supply the gross increase. Apparently the committee is none too optimistic of this being done, and so it has recommended a reduction, for each field, in the estimates for 1929 expenditure.

A cycling member of the N.S.S. has again voiced his protest against the religious service at the annual celebration, to be held in May, at the Meriden Memorial to cyclists killed in the war. The following appeared in the April 13 issue of *Cycling*:—

There is, I note, to be a commemorative service at Meriden this year. If a religious service is again to be the chief feature, despite emphatic protests against it last year, I should like to congratulate the Conservators upon their kindly, courteous, and sporting consideration for the conscientious scruples of Roman Catholics, Jews, and Atheists, whom the usual religious service compels to stay away from the celebration.

Again I would point out that the Meriden celebration could quite simply be made acceptable to cyclists of all religions, of all sects, and of no religion, and thus ensure that the commemoration should be truly representative.—D.P.S.

Our cycling readers could add considerable weight to the protest by sending to *Cycling* (15 Rosebery Avenue, E.C.1) a postcard supporting the protest. That would be a useful reminder to Christians that there are other people in the world besides Christians, other people whose scruples and opinions need to be considered.

Commenting on the "Royal Oak" affair, the *Methodist Recorder* remarks: "Nothing is so discouraging to the average Englishman as the sense of powerlessness consequent upon arbitrary restriction of his freedom of action or speech." The Freethinkers of England must be mote than average Englishmen. They don't find arbitrary restriction of freedom of action and speech discouraging, but bracing and exasperating. They regard such restriction as an incentive to working for its removal.

Of the twelve members elected to the Holsworthy Urban District Council, eight (including a rev. gent.) were Wesleyans. Evidently Holsworthy children will get little chance to enjoy wholesome recreation in the locality on Sundays while this pious gang governs local affairs.

The editor of the *Methodist Times* believes in putting first things first. He says: "The call to Methodism is for money and for prayer and for faith and for vision and for love. May God give us the love that will give them all." And Heaven alone knows what will happen to the Wesleyan Mission Society, with its 1927 debt of £25,000 for which the editor is begging, if God omits to supply sufficient love to make forthcoming number one item in the editor's list.

Henceforth a religious oath will not be required in the Turkish courts of law. People will affirm "on their honour." In the English courts, where medieval notions still flourish, Christians and semi-Christians will continue to tell just as much truth as is convenient, with the aid of a kiss on a fetish book and a "s'welp me Gawd." This mental and physical insanitary practice will disappear as the nation gains more enlightenment; but its rapid or slow disappearance will depend on the amount of work Freethinkers will do in educating public opinion.

Apropos of the film, "Ben Hur," a parson says: "to enjoy the pictures you must leave your critical outfit at home." This should not be very difficult to the average church-goer. He is required to do that every time he attends divine worship. If he exercised his critical faculty in church, he would soon cease to want to go there.

In *Radio Times*, a writer says: "So far we are all rather in the dark as to what broadcasting can do." At all events, we are not in the dark as to the worst broadcasting can do. Have we not had the broadcast Sunday service?

The following piece of information is from the pen of a Methodist parson:—

The post-war years have witnessed the removal of many layers of cotton-wool from the bandaged figure of truth, which now begins to look more itself and less like a first-aided casualty.

We feel sure he will not mind our adding that most of the cotton-wool was put there by Christians, especially professional ones. So far, we have not noticed they have done much in the way of removal. Indeed, many of them are trying to add a few more layers. They call the process "reformulation," or "reinterpretation," or "progressive revelation."

It seems we were all in error in praising the German airmen who recently flew the Atlantic. It had nothing to do with pluck or endurance, or skill. The success of the flight came through one of them carrying as a mascot a four-leaved shamrock that was given him by an Irish comrade. The donor of the shamrock said it brought him through the war safely and enabled him to recover from five operations. It was an act of great friendship for him to give it to the German. So it seems that any of us may fly the Atlantic—so long as we have the proper kind of mascot with us.

Now this kind of thing is written down by our daily papers, and these seriously consider themselves civilized. It proves the truth of what we have always said, namely, that savages are as plentiful here as anywhere in Europe, and that proficiency in mechanical directions is no proof of civilization. Elsewhere in this issue Mr. Cutner asks whether we have crippled the Roman Catholic Church? The fondness of so-called educated people for mascots, their belief in lucky days, etc., makes one wonder whether we have managed to tame the savage in anyone. Perhaps we have only changed its form.

Chuck it, Caradoc!

Nor by faggots, nor by rack,
The pincers or the block,
Can our bigots now lit back,
My dear Caradoc.
But by uninstructed sneer,
Foolish taunt and empty jeer,
In their supercilious pride,
Judging what they never tried,
Is this not a new edition
Of the ancient Inquisition—
Eh, Caradoc?

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Those Subscribers who receive their copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN WRAPPER will please take it that a renewal of their subscription is due. They will also oblige, if they do not want us to continue sending the paper, by notifying us to that effect.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—R. H. S., 2s. 9d.; P. Gribbon, 2s. 6d.

A. W. COLEMAN.—The N.S.S. has not requested the B.B.C. to permit one of its speakers to broadcast an address. We do not see that any good would be done by such a request, which would certainly be met with a refusal.

W. A. BULLOCKE AND "JOHN'S GRANDPA."—Thanks for copies of letters. They are what one has come to expect from the B.B.C., but we are glad to see that our readers are keeping up the bombardment. We should not wonder if the Directors awaken to the discovery that the population of Britain is not exclusively Christian.

H. MAY.—We also should like to see the *Freethinker* reduced in price, but at present the only chance of this being done is for circulation to be increased to a point which would warrant our doing so. We cannot increase losses in the present circumstances.

J. ALMOND. Letter sent as requested. The advice is first cousin to Artemus Ward's "If a fly walks on you, thank God it isn't an elephant."

H. J. BAILEY.—The letter is the latest form of "doggerly" adopted by the Church-ridden B.B.C.

H. R. HOLDUP.—A very excellent letter. Thanks for copy.

L. ROGERS.—It is curious the way in which Christian feeling and the use of the rod as an instrument of education have run together. And yet when one reflects that Christianity is saturated with the conception of arbitrary power and force, and motivated by fear, the conjunction of the two things is not so surprising after all.

J. PIPER.—We note your resolution of protest sent to the B.B.C. from your Sunday evening meeting, and agree that all Branches of the N.S.S. should do the same.

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Sugar Plums.

The votes of the Branches gave a majority of four in favour of Liverpool for the Conference of the National Secular Society for 1928. We hope that every Branch will see that it is represented at this gathering, and there will also be a good number of ordinary members present. If possible, an excursion will be arranged for the Whit-Monday, about which we may say more later.

Those who intend visiting Liverpool for the Conference should lose no time in making known what accommodation they will require. It is not always possible to fix visitors up when notice is held back until the last moment. Letters should be addressed to the General Secretary, Mr. F. Mann, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

It will interest some of our readers to know that a substantial quantity of Mr. Cohen's *Materialism Restated* has just been ordered by a Japanese firm. We trust it will do as good work in the far East as it appears to be doing here. Certainly there is no topic that needed re-stating more.

Some More Medical Views on Birth Control (Cecil Palmer, 7s. 6d.) contains the views of eleven doctors, three of whom are women, on the subject of Birth Con-

trol. We cordially commend the work as one containing a calm and reasoned expression of opinion, and a very human one, free from entanglement with any economic theory. One thing that is brought out quite clearly is the extent to which religious prejudice obstructs the calm discussion of what, no matter what view we take, is of first-rate importance, and which needs the most careful consideration. In its inception the question found religious prejudice the chief obstacle in the way, and this remains true to-day. So much for those time-serving politicians who imagine they can leave religion out of consideration. We cordially commend the work to all interested in the subject.

The Popery Menace.

OVER twenty years ago, when I was new to the movement, I was solemnly assured that Christianity was as dead as a door nail. The educated man no longer believed in it; he perhaps felt there was some truth in the idea of a God, but genuine orthodox Christianity, with its miracles, virgin birth, atonement and resurrection, were relics of the past and thrown overboard by everybody who had an elementary education. At dozens of Freethought lectures this was repeated more or less, and we Rationalists congratulated ourselves on having wiped out the enemy once for all.

Well, a good deal of water has flown in the Thames since then, and very often I find the same fairy tale told at our meetings with the same cocksureness now. It is astonishing how firmly we believe it—among ourselves. Somehow or other, when I get out into the world the rosy hue of our invincible optimism strikes me as a little paler. I don't find the average man or woman ready to admit there's no truth in the grand old story. Indeed, it is generally the other way about. They claim that it is *we* who are giving up our certainty in the truth of Rationalism. It is *we* who are going back to find the truth in Christ, and not merely the Christ of the churches, but of the one living church which gradually is resuming her old power in the government of the world.

Now, here is the real issue between us: Have we, in the Freethought movement, dealt the death blow to Roman Catholicism? Have the hundreds of thousands of books and pamphlets poured out from our presses and bought by the general public, caused the Roman Catholic Church any serious diminution in the ranks of her own faithful, or stopped her funds in any way? Are her priests preaching with less assurance or her public men trying to hide their conviction that truth can only be found in the bosom of the Holy Roman Catholic Church? Now, whether we like to admit it or not, I, for one, cannot see that Roman Catholicism, taking it as a world-wide organization is much weaker now than, say, twenty years ago. On the contrary, it seems to be in a far stronger position. Its adherents can be found everywhere in our public life. Its journalists and "scientists" are voicing its holy claims from the house-tops. They fill our national newspapers with long articles, and editors seem frightened to allow any reply. The Roman Catholics have their own widely circulated newspapers with thousands of devoted readers. And—I am sorry to say it—most Catholics in controversy make mincemeat of their Protestant opponents.

During the nineteenth century there were many more or less obscure Protestant parsons who devoted a great deal of their time to exposing, as they delighted in calling it, Popery. They were ready to debate the question in public or in the press, and they made the fullest use of everything which could be brought up to discredit the "Whore of Babylon," as God's Own Church was so often politely termed

by members of other branches. Their works and printed debates make delightful reading. It is astonishing how much study and learning were devoted to bolster up either side, and it must be confessed that the Protestants could put up a good case. Nowadays, one can only treat with contempt the unlucky Protestant who comes forward hoping to defeat a trained Jesuit by asking what Paul said in Corinthians according to the authorized version, or whether the rock with which Peter and his name were so closely allied meant the Roman Catholic Church, complete with its huge organization or merely Jesus meek and mild? But while we Freethinkers can smile at both sides devoting their brains and talents to such hopeless drivel, the fact remains that millions of our brothers believe with all their soul in some kind of Christian religion, and look upon us as belonging to the damned, and that, mark you, in this year of grace 1928. What are we doing about it?

A lady sends me every week a copy of the *Universe*. I read it with sheer amazement. Here is a world of the crudest beliefs, of infantile credulity and superstition, not, let me impress upon you, the heritage of just the illiterate, but the boast of eminent men and women in every walk of life.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton, for example, does not exactly belong to the ignorant peasant class. He is a highly trained journalist and author with an entrée into any newspaper in the world. Editors nearly fall over each other in their anxiety to get an article from his pen. A new book of his is reviewed by great critics in both hemispheres, and he is one of the first Englishmen who would be put forward as a sturdy example of sound common sense.

Now, Mr. Chesterton is not content—like, let us say, Mr. Compton Mackenzie—to be a believing Catholic and leave it at that. He glories in it. He alludes in almost every page he writes to it. He wants the world to share his views. He pours scorn on the unbeliever and the Protestant. He calls himself a Freethinker, and with that quite possibly claims the Roman Catholic Church as a Freethought Church. And he defends his Church in the way only a great journalist and controversialist can. In the old Protestant attack he sees nothing but lies. History, when quoted by Protestants (and those who are not Protestants) is simply trumped-up hate for the Church. "The Church," he says, "is hated as nothing else is hated, simply because it is, in the exact sense of the popular phrase, like nothing on earth. . . . In nine cases out of ten, the Church simply stood for sanity and social balance against heretics who were sometimes very like lunatics."

You get in this very short extract the essence of Chestertonism, and the Protestant appeal to Paul in Thessalonians is utterly futile in reply. I can go further and declare that most of Mr. Chesterton's readers cannot reply to him. It is the Freethinker alone who can, with his knowledge of the history of religions, prove Mr. Chesterton a veritable baby in controversy. It is the Freethinker who can, not with difficulty, but as easily as reciting a multiplication table, prove that, far from the Holy Roman Catholic Church being "like nothing on earth," it is merely a rehash of old Pagan and sun-myth stories, and that nothing even the silliest lunatic that ever appeared among heretics could say, is within a hundred miles as silly as a Church which declares that one of its priests by chanting some Latin bunkum can change a piece of bread into a living God. There are thousands of Freethinkers ready to put that, at least, to a practical test, but Mr. Chesterton, who can bray with the loudest in his own articles, quietens down to very small fry when

face to face with real issues in front of his own followers. He comforts himself, however, with the knowledge that very few of the latter ever see the *Freethinker*, and that the replies by Canon this Dean that simply dare not show unbelief in any shape or form—which is why the dear editor permits them to appear against the doughty Catholic champion. And our one consolation is that Mr. Chesterton is never such an awful bore as when writing on religion.

Then there is Mr. Hillaire Belloc, whose method of attacking the dreadful heretic is simplicity itself. You tell me, he says in effect, that we Roman Catholics are responsible for the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. Well, I've looked into the question from the point of view of a thoroughly impartial historian, and I say you are utterly wrong. The few Huguenots who were in France at that time were a nuisance, politically, and were "asking for it." When they got it, they exaggerated the numbers killed by twenty or forty times to discredit the Holy Church, which had, as a Church, nothing to do with it. It was purely a political fracas, and if you examine history impartially you will rarely find the Church as a Church to blame. It is always men, as men. The Inquisition has been enormously exaggerated. Gibbon was a liar and ignorant. I, as a historian, declare it, and so on. History has, according to Mr. Belloc, been deliberately perverted to discredit the Church, and so all one has to do is simply to deny what most of us have taken to be facts without dispute. This kind of thing is not confined to Mr. Belloc. Roman Catholics write books, and Roman Catholic reviewers, in the interest of the Church, review them. Thus one reviewer, in our leading literary paper, took, as beyond the shadow of a doubt the statement from a popish writer, that it was in the interests of infidels and heretics that the Inquisition was established. These dreadful people would have been lynched by a horrified populace if the Inquisition had not stepped in and saved them. As for the punishments inflicted by the Inquisition they were mere nothings, etc., etc. Fortunately the Editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* allowed Dr. G. G. Coulton to reply, and if the reader wants to see how the ignorant insolence of a Catholic was thoroughly humbled by a great scholar, let him read the correspondence which appeared some months ago in that fine paper. And even in the current number as I write, a Jesuit coolly takes for granted that his reviewer believes the Massacre of St. Bartholomew was not sanctioned by the Pope. Fortunately for the truth, the reviewer gives the fullest authority for his belief that it was. Everywhere this awful menace of popery—the bolstering up with lies and fury, the most reactionary religion that ever appeared on this earth—is raising its ugly head. And behind it is a powerful organization armed to the teeth with the strongest weapons known to mankind—unlimited funds, an appeal to fear, credulity and superstition, and the sentimental advocacy of women. What are we as practical Freethinkers to do? First and foremost and always, it is to make Freethinkers—and to do that there are many ways, the best of which must be found out by the individual Freethinker himself. But he must be ready to attack, and his powder must always be dry. He must know the Roman Catholic case, and he must quote authorities. I say here as clearly as I can, that the Freethought movement, as a movement, is making little headway against Roman Catholicism, and the people who tell us that the fight is won, simply don't understand the question at all. It is bound to be a long and bitter fight, but we must win.

H. CUTNER.

Religion and Fanaticism.

IF there is one thing more than another which has characterized Christianity, as most other religions, it is fanaticism. What is this curious creature with such a terrible name? The dictionary defines fanaticism as "extravagant or frenzied zeal; wild enthusiasm," and a fanatic as "one who is intemperately zealous or wildly extravagant, especially on religious subjects." Enthusiasm and zeal are excellent qualities in themselves, but when carried to excess and beyond the bounds of reason they cross the border line between virtue and vice. And there is nothing more liable than religion to turn an ordinary, otherwise sane and tolerant person into a raving, insane and intolerant fanatic or lunatic, according to choice.

Now, while the Church is always grasping credit for everything good or moral that happens in this world, it is seldom ready to admit anything in the opposite direction, anything that tends in any way to detract from that semi-human, semi-divine perfection which we all know is the direct result of living a truly religious life, of which, it may be added, there are a million and one widely varying definitions. Consequently, it was not surprising to find the Bishop of Durham, in an article in the *Sunday Express* on "Religious Fanatics," trying to make out a case that religion does not hold the sole rights of fanaticism. Even his lordship cannot achieve the impossible by freeing religion of all blame in this respect, and so he resorts to the age-old, but not very convincing, retort, "you're another." In opening his case he boldly alludes to the "common supposition that fanaticism is the peculiar characteristic of religion," and to the fact that, "no criticism of religion is more frequent, and hardly any more effective, than that which alleges its tendency to transform its professors from normal, reasonable folk into irrational and unreasoning fanatics," but he adds later: "It is by no means certain, however, that religion ought to be credited with a monopoly of this frantic temper."

The Bishop then discusses the fanaticism existent in the realm of science, as displayed by advocates of certain methods of investigation, and that found in the world of politics, and he confesses that he can see no difference between these aspects and fanaticism manifested in connexion with religion. There is "not a pin to choose between the zealots of science and the zealots of religion," he states. "The disturbance of divine service in Darwen and the breaking up of political meetings in the East of London exhibit the same temper."

To the Bishop all flowers may smell alike, but that in no way affects the fact that different flowers produce different reactions in our olfactory nerves. Undoubtedly the dubious attribute of fanaticism is found in many walks of life, but in none does it reveal itself to such disadvantage as in the realm of religious thought. To see two Christians of differing ideas and ideals disputing heatedly on the subject of the "Prince of Peace" is a sight fit indeed for the very gods themselves. It is a pity there are no gods to see this pitiable sight, for it is assuredly wasted on men and animals, who but rarely can appreciate the full humour of the situation. It is an indisputable fact that there is no other subject or topic which calls forth from the depths of human nature more hatred and venom and fanaticism than religion. What subject is the most often banned in domestic and social circles because of the deadly consequences of its discussion? Religion. What topic causes the most ill-feeling and provokes the worst quarrels between in-

dividuals, bodies, and nations? Religion. What is most calculated to turn the stream of pleasant conversation, than which there is no greater enjoyment, into raging torrents of angry words, and even to send the disputants snarling at each other's throats? Religion. And this, mind you, is among believers themselves, and not because of the disturbing element of unbelief. Oh no, these dramas have for their characters believers in different versions of the divine truth. Even in a verbal conflict between a good, honest-to-God Christian and a wicked, wretched, everything-that-is-bad Atheist, it is more often than not the Christian, filled with "divine truth" and the egotistical faith in *one* God and *one* way of life, who exhibits the worst qualities, who first turns on the tap of vituperation, who in the holy name of the "God of Love" curses the wicked infidel up hill and down dale, who would, if he could, rend from limb to limb the audacious person who dares to ridicule, or even to cast doubt upon, the one and only God and the one and only "truth." The Atheist, secure in his knowledge of the untenability of the Christian's position, can afford to be generous and smile gently at his opponent's frenzied attempts to defend God Almighty, the all-powerful and all-knowing. He has no need to descend to such depths as the man of religion to keep his end up, and if he has a sense of humour he can enjoy the process of watching the theological tangles of absurdity and nonsense into which it is all too easy to wander when trying to uphold a faith that would just collapse in a heap if it were not bolstered up so carefully. The situation improves when two fervent Christians come to verbal grips. Is there any sight more pathetic than to see two otherwise decent average men lashing themselves into fanatical frenzies over questions as to whether two and two make seven or only five?

The scientific and the political fanaticism of which the "Fighting Bishop" (as he has been styled) writes approach nowhere near the religious brand in intensity of passion and hatred. Moreover, they have more excuse. It is easier to forgive excess of enthusiasm over vital points of statesmanship or government or the management or mismanagement of one's country's affairs, and over what are termed indispensable methods of scientific investigation, and incidentally of progress, than it is to overlook the same offence in connexion with the inanities usually at the base of all religious controversy. Religion, with its domineering and egotistical faiths and fallacies, breeds intolerance. Intolerance in its turn engenders fanaticism. Religious fanaticism cultivates and reveals the worst traits in human nature, and these, mark you, are exercised in defence and in propagation of the alleged cause of humanity, love, and brotherhood!

But let us return to seek more of the pearls of wisdom that the Bishop casts before such swine as we. "The truth," he tells us, "would seem to be that the roots of fanaticism lie too deep in human nature for any training, whether of science or of religion, to penetrate, and that the process of eradicating this baleful temper is much more difficult, gradual, and uncertain than has hitherto been perceived or recognized. The general conditions which foster fanaticism are apparent enough. Political excitement and social disturbance tend to create a widely diffused feeling of uncertainty, and to trouble men's minds with undefined fears . . . Plague, famine, and general wretchedness provide the soil in which the rankest absurdities can flourish . . ."

(To be concluded.)

R. H. S. STANDFAST.

The Shadow Show.

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

OMAR KHAYYAM.

THIS WEEK'S NEWS REEL.

The Press to-day is laden, with the case of Reverend Hayden and a pretty village maiden, rather indiscreetly! But you really mustn't laugh, it is not a theme for chaff—see my other paragraph, summing it up neatly.

In the precincts of St. Paul's, there have been some further brawls—mainly what a sailor calls—well think it out yourself! Collard of the Royal Oak, feels so sorry that he spoke, harshly to the other bloke, now upon the shelf.

Masefield wrote the other day, a new Mumbo-Jumbo play, and at Whitsuntide, they say, it will be performed. Though the subject's sacred—very, Randall Cantuar is merry, for it's staged at Canterbury—now that John's reformed!!

LATE EXTRA.

Pius the Pope now fears—"Scarce can keep back his tears," "Cries out to Heaven," my dears, about Mexico. Papists are shot, they say, tortured three times a day, where once the scene was gay—now all is woe!

Priests have no liberty, they have to bend the knee, not to the Trinity, but to the State! Hurried and hunted, they are not allowed to prey, mere words cannot convey, horrors so great! Rome's feeling rightly shocked; see how their God is mocked; truly their Faith is rocked, to its foundation. Torture and terror there, Fleet Street just doesn't care, but let the Press beware Eternal Damnation!

"Ne'er were such methods seen," so says the Pope, I ween, he's trying hard to screen from modern men, when first in Mexico the doughty Pizarro, first landed long ago, what happened then!

Did Holy Rome forbear and heed the Indian's prayer? Rack, rope, and stake were there, by Pope's decrees. Murders in Mexico? What started long ago—that's what I want to know—Atrocities?

With Holy Zeal they slew, tortured and pillaged too, as Christians always do—when they attack. Though you bewail your lot, dear Pius is it not, a case where a dirty pot—calls a kettle black?

THE PAST PANORAMA.

April 22 is the Feast Day of Saint Epipodius, blessim. I haven't the slightest idea who he was, but a man with a name like that deserves mention. In case he may be forgotten among the thousands of other saints in the calendar let us sing a hymn in his honour this April day. Boy, hand me the office lyre:—

A saintly young man Epipodius, had a voice he considered melodious,
And the Emperor Nero, humoured our hero, to sing in the arena commodious.
But the crowd thought his singing was odious,
And the lions resented the new turn presented—
So quickly exit Epipodius.

On April 22, in the year 1370, Charles V of France began the erection of the Bastille against the English. For four hundred years that grim fortress became the symbol of ruthless tyranny, injustice and intrigue until, on the 14th of July, 1789, the people rose in wrath and razed that infamous citadel to the ground forever. Yet to-day we still have our Bastilles to storm in the name of Freedom. In Rome the greatest fortress of tyranny still rears its ugly head. Must we wait another four hundred years until it falls?

Danon in his fearless journal *L'ami du Peuple* paved the way to the Revolution. So also does the gallant *Freethinker* lead the van of the attack on the Bastille of the Vatican—and elsewhere.

To-day let us spare a kindly thought for a forgotten martyr in our cause. Little is known of his life, but what is, deserves to be recorded in letters of gold. On this

date, in 1692, Edward Bishop was imprisoned with grievous penalties for daring to doubt witchcraft. Truly a courageous deed in Christian England of the not-so-long-ago.

Henry Fielding was born on this day in 1707. He, at least, is sure of immortality. *Tom Jones* will be read when the morbid maunderings of our modern best-sellers are forgotten. With his narrative genius, gusto towards life, and robust good humour, Fielding was the forerunner of Dumas and Dickens, and dealt many shrewd blows at the shams and hypocrisies of his time.

THE PARSON AND THE PUBLICAN.

They're very interested here at Little Ditchington, in the case of the Rev. O. E. Hayden. My friend 'Arry 'Awke, that unregenerate Freethinker—and Freedrinker of whom I have told you before, has some very decided views on the matter. He was impressed by the evidence of George May, the village baker, at the Church Enquiry into the Vicar of Aveling's alleged misconduct.

According to the report, May said, "I like him as a knockabout sort of man."

'Arry was particularly pleased with the expression, and lifting his tankard he trolled out the following song to the delight of us all at the "Goat and Compasses."

"T' knockabout Parson 'as shocked the old wimmin,
That tittle and tattle at arternoon teas,
Fill 'em up 'earty, keep your ale mugs a-brimmin'
And dang the old geezers—we'll booze as we please.

"T' knockabout Parson—more power to 'is elbow—
'E's lifted it often an 'earty I'll swear—
Sez most of it's lies, the scandal they tell bo',
So knock it back 'earty, we fellers don't care!

"T' Butcher an' Baker 'ave said t' ould Vicar,
As bin seen quite a lot with the pretty school ma'rm.
Well wot if 'e as lads, jest mop up your likker,
'E's a knockabout bloke an' 'e's doing' no 'arm.

"T' Squoire's mortal vexed and likewise t' Bishop,
At what the old wimmin says 'as occurred,
That 'e drinks 'onest beer, and frequents a Fish-shop—
'E's partial to Chips—or so I 'ave 'eard.

"But fill 'em up 'earty, and dang the old geezers,
Our knockabout parson is one o' the best,
'E's fond of a publican—the same way as Jesus,
So 'ere's to our parson an' dang all the rest!"

OUR DUSTBIN—RUBBISH MAY BE SHOT HERE.

"Religion is the basis of true education."
Free Church Council.

"I do not consider I have ever done any good work."—*Mr. G. K. Chesterton.*

"The gospel quickens the mind as well as the heart of believers."—*Principal Griffith Jones.*

"I think in our parishes two of the greatest means of helping on Christian Fellowship have been the dance and the whist drive."—*Bishop of Ipswich.*

"The law of the land is built on the commandments of God."—*Governor Al. Smith.*

"Christ has a spiritual flair which satisfies allied to modern knowledge."—*Bishop Barnes.*

"There is a personal devil and a literal hell."
Rev. W. R. Lewis (Abertillery).

SO INTERESTING.

A traffic policeman at the corner of Ludgate Hill and New Bridge Street, saw a dear old lady beckon to him as she emerged from the Free Church Memorial Hall in Farringdon Street. He held up a dozen motor-cars, six buses, a dray, and two taxis to get to her side. It was rather impatiently that he asked what she wanted, for it was the rush hour for traffic. "Oh, officer," said the old lady with a sweet smile, putting her hand on his arm, "I want to tell you that your number is the number of my favourite hymn."

GWYN EVANS.

Gospel Truth.

(Matthew xiv, 14-21.)

SEE the first Salvation Army,
Marching on, five thousand strong;*
Hear their leader, General Jesus,
Loudly calling: "Come along."

Now the Holy Ghost, or Spirit,
O'er them spreads its healing wings;
Faith the pass-word is to share in
All the blessings that it brings.

Having laved in holy unction,
Comes a wonderful surprise;
Cripples cast away their crutches;
Blind ones ope' their sightless eyes.

Deaf, and those possessed of devils,
Hear, speak, pray, exalt, and sing:
"Israel now shall be delivered;
Jesus truly, is our King."

Now it came to pass that evening,
They were tired and hungry too;
All that could be found to feed them,
Were five loaves and fishes two.

Jesus cut and cooked the fishes;
Pulverized and blest the bread;
Sent his henchmen round with pinches,
Till they all were amply fed.

When this *sumptuous banquet* ended,
On them fell a joyful lull;
And when gathered were the leavings,
Lo, there were twelve baskets full.

EPILOGUE.

When one contemplates the worldwide
Suff'ring, sorrow, want, and pain;
Is not one constrained to ask why
Jesus does not come again?

S. PULMAN.

* Women and children not included.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—You "do not know what a great first cause means." (*Freethinker*, April 8.) But I do (although I do not think there ever was one). Probably Blatchford knows too. Your attempt to prove the meaninglessness of the phrase is itself meaningless. A cause is a different thing from an effect. I cause this letter, but I am not the letter. "I'm not arguing with you, I'm telling you."

You say Blatchford and the agnostics "talk as though the word God stood for a definite concept." It is just because it does *not* stand for one definite concept that the agnostic position has a defence. No reasonable man can be sure there are no gods when he notices how many different kinds of being are called gods. You may feel sure there are no dragons, but remain agnostic about saurians in general.

The objections I have to the agnostics are (1) that they have added a second ugly Greek word to English when we already had skeptic meaning the same; (2) that they so often prefix "reverent"; (3) that they keep their skepticism for gods, and have as touching and childlike a faith in Laws of Nature, etc., as you Atheists have.

"How can a man know that he knows nothing about a subject of which he knows nothing?" If he cannot know even that, then the word agnostic seems exactly the right word for him. (I would prefer know-nothing, if it had not been annexed by a former U.S.O.N.A. political party.)

Your phrase, "there is nothing to be agnostical about,"

really only means, "there is nothing which I could be agnostic about"; just as "there is nothing to arbitrate about," always means, "there is nothing which I would consent to submit to arbitration."

The universe is more wonderful because it is large. Wonderful=causing wonder. Things unfamiliar in some obvious way, such as size, *do* cause it.

"To a scientific conception of evolution there is no such thing as a beginning." I am glad my conceptions are not scientific then. I usually pass as an evolutionist. Christians attack me for believing a daddy-long-legs is my distant cousin; but evolution without a beginning (or anything else without a beginning) strikes me as a contradiction in terms, a meaningless concatenation of words. Picture a stick with only one end!

Also the present "established laws of nature" are evidently only temporary, for if they go on unchanged they will produce one huge cold star, and a uniform temperature of -150 degrees C. The possible extension backward of that process is not infinite. We are a clock running down, and no automatic re-winder yet shown to exist.

"Why may not the universe be a complex of non-conscious forces?" How do you know there *are* any non-conscious forces? Personal wills exist. I *am* one. Probably so are you. But how do you know there is any other kind? I don't. You seem to think men change their opinions by "outgrowing" them, not by observation and argument. Perhaps you are like that. If so, you have much to outgrow yet. I pointed out a fortnight ago that you had not outgrown the absurd taboo called Decency. And you are no nearer outgrowing the illusion that observed uniformities are universal and eternal.

C. HARPUR.

ATTILA AS "THE DESTROYER."

SIR,—Mr. Mann, in his splendid article on "The Borgias," in the *Freethinker* of the 8th inst, holds Attila up as the synonym for the "Destroyer." I am quite sure Mr. Mann would be the last to be unjust to a pagan whom Christians have given a bad name. The history of Attila can only be gleaned from scrappy writings of contemporary visitors such as the Byzantine Greek Ambassador to Attila's "Court," and the description given by one of these of the life led by Attila gives one the impression that Attila was as good as any of his contemporary rulers, if not better.

War is ever a beastly, savage business even in these days, and in Attila's day there was no need to paint it in lighter colours. At the same time one historical fact will give your readers an idea as to Attila's real character. He appeared before Rome with his irresistible forces and Rome lay at his mercy. The Pope came out of Rome to plead, and Attila yielded and denied himself the pleasure or the profit of taking Rome, and his hosts left Rome untouched. We must bear in mind that Attila was not a Christian and, of course, the Pope could not have used a religious influence. To Attila the Pope was simply an old man. Now, it is open for any of us to question whether, under similar circumstances, the good Christian Emperor, William II, would have had the gumption to act like Attila did. The last great war and its vicious savagery seems to answer that question in the negative. The hosts facing each other were Christians, vast numbers of them of the same creed. But Attila will still be held up as the synonym for "destroyer," whilst William II will die in the odour of sanctity.

M. STEINBERGER.

Obituary.

MR. CLIFFORD WILLIAMS.

BIRMINGHAM Freethinkers have suffered a heavy loss in the death of their President, Mr. Clifford Williams, one of the most active workers in the local Branch. Mr. Williams has for some years been its most prominent local speaker, and in addition to delivering many lectures at the regular meetings, had been very active in carrying on discussions with local clergymen, delivering lectures to clubs and associations in the suburbs of the city. He

was a ready speaker, pleasant, forceful and well-informed, and had the valuable quality of carrying on discussions with the maximum of good humour and good feeling. He was a welcome speaker on the platform of the Annual Conference, which will greatly miss his presence. In all his Freethought work he was very ably seconded by his wife, who filled for several years the office of Treasurer of the Branch, and was very successful in raising funds for the Society.

Mr. Williams had been in bad health for just on a year, and for the last few months became rapidly worse, but very few expected the end to be so near as it was. This came on April 10, and the interment took place at Yardly Cemetery on Monday, April 16. It had been his desire that when the end came Mr. Cohen should be asked to conduct the funeral service, and at the request of the Executive of the N.S.S. he did so. There was a very large gathering of personal and business friends, and many members of the Society present. An unusually large number of floral wreaths were sent, and there could be no mistaking the high esteem in which Mr. Williams was held. He was a man of ability and character, and his death at the early age of fifty is deeply to be regretted. Mr. Cohen's tribute to him was well deserved, and was listened to by those present—many of whom had never before witnessed a Secular ceremony—with evident appreciation.

Mr. Williams leaves behind him a widow and three children. We offer these, on behalf of all in the Freethought Party who knew him, the most sincere and deepest sympathy in their bereavement. The world has been richer by his life.

The National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON
APRIL 12, 1928.

The President, Mr. Cohen, in the chair.

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

Minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed. Apologies for unavoidable absence were received from Messrs. Clifton and Wood.

The following resolution was passed: "That this Executive expresses profound regret at the death of Mr. Clifford Williams, President of the Birmingham Branch, and desires to place on record its appreciation of the many valuable services which Mr. Williams rendered to the cause of Secularism, and extends to Mr. Williams's widow and family its most sincere sympathy."

New members were received for the Parent Society, and for the following Branches: Fulham and Chelsea, Manchester, Plymouth, and West London. Correspondence was received and dealt with.

The draft of the Society's Annual Financial Statement was considered and approved.

By a majority of the votes of the Branches, it was decided that the Annual Conference should be held in Liverpool. The arrangements for Mr. Whitehead's "mission" were considered and approved. Messrs. Rosetti and Quinton were elected members of the Conference Agenda Committee. It was decided that the Executive should meet on May 3.

FRED MANN,
General Secretary.

Society News.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

THE importance of Mr. George Saville's subject, *i.e.*, the teaching of sex-knowledge to children, made one regret the smallness of the audience last Sunday. Agreement as to the necessity was practically unanimous, but in the present state of ignorance, it was pointed out how difficult it would be to impart such knowledge, especially in view of the opposition from the parents. To-night, Mr. Laston and Mr. Ebury debate "Would Socialism Benefit the working classes."—K.B.K.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8): 11.15, Mr. H. Snell, M.P.—"Has Man Failed?"

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Debate—"Would Socialism Benefit the Working Classes?" *Affir.*: Mr. Leonard Ebury. *Neg.*: Mr. A. E. H. Laston.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Station): 7.15, Mr. R. B. Kerr—"Is Birth Control Necessary?"

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): Free Sunday Lectures. 7.0, Susan Laurence, M.P.—"Bolshevism as a Theory of Government."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, Right Hon. J. M. Robertson—"Prayer."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (34 George Street, Manchester Square, W.1): 7.30, Mr. E. C. Botting.

OUTDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. F. Mann—"The Catholic Crisis in Mexico." (Clapham Old Town): Wednesday, at 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury. (Cooks Road, Kennington): Thursday, at 8.0, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12 noon, Mr. James Hart—A Lecture; 3.0, Mr. F. Mann, *Gen. Sec. N.S.S.*—"Chicago's Day of Prayer," and Mr. Hyatt—A Lecture; 6.30, Messrs. Campbell-Everden and Le Maine. Freethought lectures every Wednesday and Friday at 7.30. Various lecturers, including Messrs. Campbell-Everden, Darby, Hart and Le Maine.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S. (78a Front Street): 7.0, Mr. T. Brown—"Ruskin as a Social Reformer."—Chairman: W. Raine. (Miners' Welfare Hall, West Pelton): Monday, April 23 at 7.0, Mr. Jno. T. Brighton—"Faith Healing and Reason." Chairman: Mr. T. Brown.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, Albion Street): 6.0, Annual General Meeting. All interested are cordially invited to attend.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street): 7.30, Discussion. Important Committee Meeting afterwards.

OUTDOOR.

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

A STUDIOUS woman, not young, seeks bed-sitting-room in private house of one or two ladies. South of England (not London). Moderate terms. Full particulars to—G.D., The Freethinker, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

YOUNG MAN, 20, clerical, urgently requires position, anything.—WILLIAMS, 9 St. Anne's Terrace, Aigburth, Liverpool.

UNWANTED CHILDREN

In a Civilized Community there should be no UNWANTED Children.

For List of Birth-Control Requisites send 1½d. stamp to:—**J. R. HOLMES, East Hannay, Wantage, Berks.**
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