

RELIGION IN MEXICO.

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

Views and Opinions.

Religion in Mexico.

I SHOULD have written earlier on the subject of the troubles in Mexico, but have been waiting to see what would come out of the much advertised enquiry set on foot by the *Daily Express*. According to an article which appeared in that paper for April 9, quite a number of letters had been received complaining of the concerted silence of the English Press on the "persecutions" in Mexico. The phrasing of the letters were such as led the editor to assume there was a "certain measure of organization" about this epistolary bombardment, and those of us who know how the churches work up this kind of thing can well believe this to be the case. Whether any of the other papers have been similarly bombarded I do not know, but it is likely. The culminating letter came from the Hon. Evans Morgan, a recent convert to the Roman Church (by marriage) and private chaplain to the Pope. He asked the *Express* to make the matter public, and there was all the promise of a successful stunt about it. Accordingly the editor sent the following cablegram to his New York Correspondent, Mr. J. W. T. Mason:—

"Proceed immediately to Mexico. Investigate fully alleged atrocities against Roman Catholics. Do not cable until out of Mexico, so as to avoid chance alteration or deletion. Attitude of *Daily Express* entirely unbiassed. Only desire to publish absolute truth."

I reprint this cablegram because of a message sent home while Mr. Mason was in Mexico. This ran as follows:—

"Situation here fully bears out your belief. There is a big story."

Now this is rather curious. According to the cable of instructions, which we were led to assume was Mr. Mason's sole instructions, no belief in any "atrocities" was expressed. What then is the belief which Mr. Mason says is confirmed by the situation? It looks as though there were other unpublished instructions, and if so it may be that the in-

vestigations were carried out with that belief in mind. The assurance to its own correspondent that the attitude of the *Express* was unbiassed is also curious. But that may only be a warning to the the correspondent that in this instance the news was to be unbiassed, instead of following the usual plan where questions of religion are concerned.

* * *

Much Ado about Nothing.

Mr. Mason was in Mexico a fortnight. He then returned to New York and cabled to his employers, and the cables were duly published. I must confess to some disappointment at these. So far as one can see, with the exception of having spoken to President Calles, one or two Mexican bishops, and a few other people, he might have just as well sent his cables from Mexico. They quite lack the quality of authoritativeness, and leave the reader in the air. A fortnight, in any case, does not seem a great while to study the situation, and there is no indication that any attempt was made to study it. He had an interview with President Calles, who gave the official view of what was the matter. He also obtained the views of leading Roman Catholics. These, together with talks with a few other people, appear to be the extent of the examination, and all that is said might have been gathered from the Roman Catholic papers which received their reports from the people that Mr. Mason interviewed, and from an interview with the Mexican political representatives in New York or London. On the whole, Mr. Mason's enquiry leaves us much where we were, and no light whatever has been thrown upon the underlying causes at work. We are still left to our own devices to find out what actually is going on, and to collect the material that will enable one to form a reasoned judgment.

* * *

Church and State.

Perhaps the first thing that one ought to bear in mind is the fact that Mexico is aiming at the complete disestablishment of religion, and a complete secularization of the State. And I am quite willing to believe that in the endeavour to do this the methods employed are not always kid-gloved ones. We are dealing with Mexico, and South American politics are not exactly of the rose-water kind. I am not defending these methods, or apologizing for them, but how people behave in a special situation must surely be judged in the light of the way in which they behave on other and general occasions. The Church complains that democratic methods are not being adopted, and that something in the nature of an autocracy exists. Both statements may be true, and the same thing might be said of Italy, or of Russia, or of Spain. But the Church is not com-

plaining of Spain, and not very much of Italy, and is not worrying over-much about Russia, where it is the Greek Church that has lost most. Moreover, one must bear in mind that any attempt to secularize the State would meet with the opposition of the Roman Church, and any law which tried to place it under the control of the civil power would be violently resisted. It must also be remembered that the Church has never surrendered its claim to temporal sovereignty, and with regard to modern ideas of political and social liberty, Pope Leo XIII declared formally and authoritatively that:—

Although, in the extraordinary conditions of these times the Church usually acquiesces in certain modern liberties, she does so not preferring them in themselves, but as judging it is expedient to permit them till, in better days, she can assert her own liberty.

This, being interpreted, clearly means that the Church will only submit to modern notions of liberty when it must, but will welcome any opportunity of reverting to what it considers a more Catholic condition of things. A predecessor of Pope Leo, Pius IX (1864), in a famous "Syllabus" in which a number of "errors" were condemned, named the following as things that must not be believed by Catholics:—

That the control of public schools in which the youth of a Christian State is educated can and must be attributed to the civil authority . . . That it is left to the freedom of each individual to embrace and profess that religion which, by the guidance of the light of reason, he deems to be the true one . . . That it is the business of the civil authority to determine what are the rights of the Church and the limits within which it may exercise those rights . . . That ecclesiastical authority should not exercise its power without the permission and consent of the civil government . . . That the Catholic Church has no power to use force, neither has it any temporal power, either direct or indirect . . . That the Church is to be separated from the State, and the State from the Church.

Very much more might be cited, to the same effect, but there is enough here to make plain the position of the Church; and, so far as I am aware, these teachings have never been withdrawn by the Church. According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia* they are still binding upon the conscience of all Roman Catholics.

* * *

An Impudent Claim.

The next thing we have to bear in mind is that we are dealing with Mexico, and the South American States are not notorious for their peaceful methods of conducting their political affairs. It is not to be expected otherwise. Ever since the Spanish Christians swooped down on South America and wiped out two civilizations in the name of Christianity, that country has been under Christian, Roman Catholic influences. Until quite recently that influence was practically unquestioned. This left the country, so far as certain aspects of civilization are concerned, certainly with regard to religious toleration, on a different level from that attained by the more advanced of European States. It would therefore be idle to expect that in a political upheaval, particularly when it is the disestablishment of religion that is concerned, these changes should be accompanied with the humdrum quietness of an English municipal election. Nor can we expect that the most intolerant Church the world has ever known, a Church which denies the right of the State to control its own schools, or to say on what terms religious organizations shall exist, which has consistently asserted the superiority of the Church over the State, will hesitate

to use whatever means lies within its power to gain its own ends. The claim that the civil power has no right to determine the conditions on which a church shall exercise its powers, or say what are its rights, is one that no civilized State can admit for a moment. What a Church has the moral right to demand is that it shall not be subjected to special and punitive regulations; that it shall exist on the same terms, subject to the same restrictions, and enjoying the same privileges that apply to all other organizations. What these conditions are it is obviously the right of the State to determine. If they are irksome, or unjust, there are always legitimate methods of securing alterations. And these conditions are entirely the concern of the country itself. But to argue that because a State imposes regulations which are not agreeable to a Church, that the Church is justified in fomenting armed rebellion, is clearly indefensible. There is not a government in the world that would admit the claim. And the manner in which a government deals with armed resistance is determined by the habits and traditions of the people involved. Mexico, we repeat, is not England. In England the Church would make no such claim—openly.

* * *

The Lesson of History.

It is quite clear that the Mexican government is attempting to do what every country in Europe has had to do sooner or later—that is, to place limits on the power and arrogance and greed of the Roman Church. Those who have studied the very informative and authoritative volumes issued by Mr. G. C. Coulton, will have in mind the way in which he describes how the growing wealth of the Church, its rapacity and control of the land, grew to such an extent that it threatened the well-being of medieval Europe. The priests were the greatest land-owners of the middle ages, they owned the largest number of slaves or serfs, they were the most rigorous in exacting their "rights," they were most resistant to reforms, threatening with their spiritual thunders, when not with armed force, all who encroached on their wealth or power; and the charity which masked this wholesale spoliation was, as Mr. Coulton says, "produced not by the monk's but by the peasant's toil; and often they amounted to far less than the tithes which the monks drew, in that very parish, from the peasant's own sheaves." History has repeated itself in Mexico. According to President Calles, the Mexicans own about one third of the wealth of their own country; and of this third, sixty per cent. is owned by the Roman Catholic Church. The clergy have thus a monopoly of most of the wealth of Mexicans. They act as mine-owners, large land-owners, and bankers. They must oppose any genuine reform, because it would mean a curtailment of their privileges and a limitation of their money-making opportunities. There is thus, quite apart from any question as to the way in which President Calles' government is going to work to secure its ends, sound truth expressed when the President said to Mr. Mason:—

Our situation is not that of Western Europe. We are trying to catch up with Western Europe standards, and we ask for patience and sympathy in the midst of our national evolution. Every modern Western European nation has had the same experience with reactionary religious elements as we are now having. We are doing only what they have done. They are fortunate in having their struggle over, while we are still in the midst of ours.

Students of European history will not deny the truth of this. All over the civilized world, wherever the Roman Church has been able to work its will, a

development of national life has involved a curtailing of Church power, and a strict opposition to its claims. The Church has never, it must again be emphasized, withdrawn its claim to temporal supremacy. Its aim was, and continues to be, that of making the Church superior to the State. If it consents to another arrangement, it is only for the time being. As Pope Leo XIII said, it submits, waiting for the time when it can establish itself as it would wish. Unfortunately, the Roman Church knows how to wait.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be continued.)

A Bishop and Big Business.

"What gasconading rascals those saints must have been if they first boasted these exploits or invented these miracles!"—*Charlotte Bronte.*

"A good laugh is a mighty good thing."
Herman Melville.

A SCHOOLBOY, doing his best, wrote: "Wild animals are to be found in *theological* gardens." Indeed, there are few stranger creatures than the so-called "saints" of the Christian Religion. Protestants are supposed to be averse from saints, because they smack of Romanism. But, like so many other things connected with Protestantism, this is far more accurate in theory than in fact. For there is one saint who is treated with something approaching respect in this Protestant country. Saint George's alleged portrait is on the gold coinage, and on some of the banknotes. Or, rather, there is a design of a man in armour, mounted on a racehorse, apparently killing a militant cockroach with a large carving-knife. This humorous design is supposed to represent Saint George and the Dragon, and the man is presumed to be the patron saint of our "tight little island."

The inclusion, during recent years, of the harmless, necessary Union Jack among the holy symbols of the religion of the Prince of Peace has led to a renewed interest in the personality of Saint George. It was, indeed, fondly hoped that, by the help of the three Christian gods and a daily newspaper, many otherwise decent citizens might be persuaded to observe Saint George's Day by wearing roses. The suggestion fell flat, but it may prove of interest to many to be informed who Saint George was.

It is with regret that one finds that the saint's biography is distressing, and quite unsuited for family reading. Historians, who so seldom agree, unite in disclosing the pitiable story of a misspent life. From the highest to the lowest, from the great historian, Edward Gibbon, to the popular Professor William Smith, they describe the saint as being no better than he should have been. Even Emerson, one of the most urbane of writers, can find few redeeming traits in the saintly sinner's character. Hear what the cultured American critic has to say:—

George of Cappodocia, born at Epephania, in Cilicia, was a low parasite, who got a lucrative contract to supply the army with bacon. A rogue and informer, he got rich, and was forced to run from justice. He saved his money, embraced Arianism, collected a library, and got promoted by a faction to the episcopal throne of Alexandria. When Julian came, A.D. 361, George was dragged to prison. The prison was burst open by the mob, and George was lynched as he deserved. And this precious knave became in good time Saint George of England, patron of chivalry, emblem of victory and civility, and the pride of the best blood of the modern world.

Is it not "too deep for tears"? There is something very distressing in the idea of a Christian bishop being "jerked to Jesus." If the saint had died of delirium tremens we might still have remembered, prayerfully, that even ecclesiastics are, in the last analysis, but human beings. This lynching, however, is a dreadful business, far too reminiscent of a Chamber of Horrors.

A lemon-hearted cynic might liken the story of the patron saint of England to a purple page from the earlier books of the Holy Bible, or the Newgate Calendar, to which it bears such a marked resemblance. Some theological writers, realizing the ethical drawbacks of this particular saint's career, have made desperate attempts to whitewash the life of the holy man. They have succeeded, after silent meditation among the tombs, in deceiving themselves that old George was not George, but another man of the same name. Criticism, sharp as Shylock's knife, cuts their nebulous nonsense to pieces. The tutelary saint of England, like so many Biblical heroes, was a blackguard, and there is an end of it.

Saint George is not an English saint, and he never did anything for England. The chief exploit that we connect him with, the slaying of the dragon, is the one incident that is confessed, even by his warmest supporters, to be a mere solar myth. This part of the story is just another version of Apollo and the Python, Bellerophon and the Chimera, Perseus and the Sea-Monster. Even the alternative and less disreputable George, who is said to have suffered martyrdom under the Emperor Diocletian, was a ridiculous figure, like so many of the Christian saints. This Saint George was, we are told, killed no less than three times, coming to life again on two of the occasions. Among the trifling things that happened to him were that he was roasted, beaten with iron rods, decapitated, and then exposed to wild animals. Coming to life again, he was set on a wooden horse, and a fire kindled under him. Sixty nails were driven into his head, and he was sawn in four pieces. These were thrown into boiling pitch. Again he came to life, and he was finally despatched on a wheel spiked with swords.

The alleged lives of the so-called Christian saints are filled with similar gross exaggerations, beside which *Alice in Wonderland* seems a work of sober history. Some Christians pretend that such yarns are edifying, but of what real value is this imaginative nonsense in the twentieth century? So far from recommending any citizen to honour such a saint, we suggest it would be a kindness to strew the poppy of oblivion over the story of such a creature. Saint George is a disappointment, and one of the most ridiculous shams from which ever a great nation sought to extract exalting sentiment. So far as this particular saint is concerned there is nothing to celebrate.

In *Alice in Wonderland* there is a chapter of the Mad Tea Party, and a tale that the Dormouse told about the Three Little Girls who lived in a Well, which was a Treacle Well. The Dormouse said that the Three Little Girls lived on treacle. "They couldn't have done that, you know," said Alice, "they'd have been ill." Said the Dormouse: "So they were, very ill." In my youth children used to laugh at such stories as the "Mad Tea Party." In my age I find that grown-up persons speak of the lives of the saints with something of reverence.

MIMNERMUS.

There is a choice in books as in friends, and the mind sinks or rises to the level of its habitual society.

Lowell.

Cæsar and Lucrezia Borgia.

SOME Catholic apologists, anxious to lighten the burden of infamy from the character of Rodrigo Borgia, who became Pope under the name of Alexander VI, have attributed his crimes to the influence or instigation of his illegitimate son Cæsar Borgia (Duke Valentino), and said that the Pope lived in terror of this son of his, and dared to refuse him nothing. But Prof. Portigliotti emphatically denies this. He says:—

The fact is, on the contrary, that there was between the two, an identity of aim and a community of amoral propensities and criminal tendencies which made them a perfect and deplorable pair. We do not deny that the son—as we have indeed already shown—resorted on occasion to threats in order to bend his father to his will; but if we observe them in all their criminal actions, whether within or without their family circle, we shall find the directing influence and the forced acquiescence now in the one and now in the other of the pair. Apart from passing clouds, we see the two of them in conjunction ordering the ambushes, the political betrayals, the poisonings, and the massacres; and when Valentino could not achieve his purpose, the refined astuteness of Alexander VI was ready to clear the field for him and speed him to the goal. There is not a trace to be seen in the pair of the opposition and animosity which so many papal fathers exhibited in their relations with their sons. (Portigliotti: *The Borgias*. p. 217.)

Cæsar Borgia, described as "Vigorous, bold, handsome," loved to display his strength to the Roman populace. At a public bull-fight, says a contemporary witness, he "slew seven savage bulls . . . and of one he cut off the head at the first blow, which appeared a great thing to all Rome."¹ Notwithstanding his haughty, callous and cruel nature, he could, when it suited his purpose, be exquisitely courteous and refined. The Hon. John Collier has depicted this side of his character in his well-known painting, "A glass of wine with Cæsar Borgia," where Cæsar Borgia is depicted as a handsome man, with an ingratiating smile, in the act of handing a glass of the deadly wine to his guest across the table, while the sombre figure of the Pope bends over his plate, and the beautiful Lucrezia stands between her father and her brother, regarding the doomed man with a somewhat disdainful stare.

Of what this monster was capable may be judged from the fact that he murdered his own brother, the Duke of Gandia, because he stood in the way of his schemes. "The murder of the Duke of Gandia," says Symonds, "is related with great circumstantiality and with surprising sang-froid by Burchard, the Pope's Master of the Ceremonies." Whether he murdered him "out of jealousy of his brother, too dreadful to describe, or, as is more probable, because he wished to take the first place in the Borgia family, we do not exactly know."² He hired assassins to murder his sister Lucrezia's second husband, the Prince of Bisceglie. They stabbed and left him for dead, in a pool of blood, near the steps of St. Peter's. He regained consciousness, however, and managed to stagger into the Vatican, where he was nursed by his wife and his sister. A month later Cæsar paid a visit, and when leaving, made the sinister remark: "What cannot be done at noon-day may be brought about in the evening." And "When the prince was on the point of recovery, he burst into his chamber, drove out the wife and sister, called in the common executioner, and caused his unfortunate brother-in-law to be strangled . . . He slew

Peroto, Alexander's favourite, while the unhappy man clung to his patron for protection, and was wrapped within the pontifical mantle. The blood of the favourite flowed over the face of the Pope."³

At another time, says Symonds:—

"He [Cæsar Borgia] turned out some prisoners sentenced to death in a courtyard of the palace, arrayed himself in fantastic clothes, and amused the papal party by shooting the unlucky criminals. They ran round and round the courtyard, crouching to avoid his arrows. He showed his skill by hitting each where he thought fit; the Pope and Lucrezia looked on applaudingly. Other scenes, not of bloodshed, but of grovelling sensuality, devised for the entertainment of his father and his sister, though described by the dry pen of Burchard, can scarcely be transferred to these pages. (J. A. Symonds: *The Renaissance in Italy*. p. 334.)

Cæsar and his father the Pope made treaties, and pledged their word, only to lure their victims into their power and then poison or strangle them; sometimes, as Portigliotti records, after foully outraging them. "By devious paths, which were full of ambushes and strewn with corpses, the two Borgias had succeeded in seizing a realm of considerable dimensions in the heart of Italy, almost entirely to the detriment of the patrimony of the Christ." "The two, whether separate or together, did not forget, in the midst of their work of consolidation, the possible menace of the dethroned princes. One by one the depths of the Tiber, or the turn of the cord, or the white poison, disposed of them. Those who contrived to escape lived in hiding, trembling for their own fate."⁴

The tale of their crimes—those that are known—is perfectly frightful, and, as the historian Ranke points out:—

There was but one place on earth where such deeds were possible—that, namely, where unlimited temporal power was united to the highest spiritual authority; where the laws, civil and ecclesiastical, were held in one and the same hand. This place was occupied by Cæsar Borgia. Even depravity may have its perfection. The hundred of the Popes have often distinguished themselves in the career of evil, but none attained to the eminence of Cæsar Borgia. He may be called a virtuoso in crime. (Ranke: *History of the Popes*. 1896. Vol. I, p. 38.)

Machiavelli has praised the ability of Cæsar, a praise that has led historians astray, and lends an indulgence to his ferocity and criminality to which he is not entitled. Says Portigliotti: "Behind him another man was labouring for him assiduously; a man of greater largeness of purpose, greater ability of manœuvre, and greater wealth of resource; skilled in diplomatic negotiation, and a master of subtle intrigue—Alexander VI. Precisely because he did not inherit any of his father's personal gifts, his new kingdom, as we have seen, crashed in a moment, in irreparable catastrophe."⁵ Upon the death of the Pope, his father, all Cæsar's schemes collapsed like a house of cards.

About the beautiful Lucrezia there has raged a heated controversy; some regarding her almost as a saint, others as an object of pity. Pastor, the Catholic historian, who observes that unfortunately we have no authentic portrait of Lucrezia, except the medals struck at Ferrara during her stay there, rather amusingly says that it is quite evident from the charming and maidenly features depicted, that she could not have been guilty of the crimes with

¹ Portigliotti: *The Borgias*. (p. 190.)

² Symonds: *The Renaissance in Italy*. (p. 333.)

³ Ranke: *History of the Popes*. (Vol. I, pp. 37-38.)

⁴ Portigliotti: *The Borgias*. (pp. 183-4.)

⁵ Portigliotti: *The Borgias*. (p. 212.)

which she is charged! If this criterion was adopted in any court of law, a great many women criminals would escape scot free. But if the picture "La Schiavona," painted by Titian, and now in the collection of Sir Francis Cook, at Richmond, is an authentic portrait of Lucrezia, as Portigliotti contends, then Pastor's plea falls to the ground, for it portrays the face and figure of a remarkably handsome woman.

Signor Portigliotti devotes a chapter to a consideration of "The Mystery of the 'Roman Infante,'" the boy who suddenly appears in the bosom of the Borgia family in 1501, at the age of three. About this child the Pope issued two Bulls, one a public document, recognizing him as a son of Cæsar, the other reserved, in which he claimed the paternity for himself. The historian gives good reasons for believing that this child was the result of incestuous intercourse between the Pope and Lucrezia, in which Cæsar her brother also participated. Such was the official representative of God on earth; Rodrigo Borgia, Pope Alexander VI.

W. MANN.

The Gentle Art of Ju-Ju Journalism.

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"ALWAYS I WANTED TO WRITE—to express the hidden urge that was within me. Since I took your course I have stormed the portals of Parnassus. After the very first lesson my poem in vers libre "Lines to an Ashbin on a Wet Sunday in Balham," was taken by the Editor of *The Haberdasher's Herald and Calico Winder's Gazette*. It is too, too marvellous. Already my dream villa at Capri grows more real and I seem to see the roseate dawn of the Cote d'Azur!"

"THEY LAUGHED," writes Mr. Jas. Miggs of "The Larches," Gas Works Road, Chorlton-cum-Buzzard, 'they laughed when I filled up the coupon. But when I started to write a sudden hush fell on my friends. They were 'silent as a peak in Darwin,' as the immortal Swan of Avon puts it. They were simply dumb with amazement at my mastery of words, which you taught me in one lesson."

"MY HUSBAND WAS FURIOUS at first," writes Mrs. Whiffingham Gumberley, "when he saw the Hispano Suiza limousine outside our door, and found me trying on my new Koliuski furs and Paquin gown in the bedroom. He suspected the worst, but I calmed his fears. 'No Harry,' I said with a smile, 'I have not found another soul mate. A week ago I arranged a little surprise for you and enrolled in the Slick Course of Journalism. I bought these clothes and the car with my very own money, having sold a lyric to Mr. B. B. Hochrane, 'Do Lobsters Get the Chilblains in the Winter Time?' I wrote it after my very first lesson.' I enclose my husband's coupon. He is anxious to enrol also and sends a specimen article for criticism, 'The Psychic Urge of the Egocentric Subliminal.' He has already submitted it to our Parish Magazine, but the dear Vicar thought it savoured a little too much of Sacerdotalism. He'd be pleased to know where to place it."

Very well then. I think the case is proved. Fleet Street for Finance. Advertisements differing very little

from the above appear in all the best literary journals, and I don't see why the *Freethinker* shouldn't institute a course in journalism. I have decided, therefore, to go one further than the many Correspondence Schools and teach you, absolutely free, how to make money by your pen. You need fill no coupons—send no fee. Right here and now I will disclose the secret of How it is Done. Furthermore, I will guarantee that if you study my examples and turn to any of our best known journals you will find the articles printed therein differ little in form or substance from my simple lessons.

I call my course "Ju-Ju Journalism." All you need is a smattering of faith in God or Christ or Mrs. Eddy, or any other Ju-Ju, a Dictionary of Quotations, "alliteration's artful aid," and a well-filled fountain pen. Are you ready? Let's go!

One of the best known and most influential journalists in Fleet Street is Mr. James Douglas, Editor of the *Sunday Express*. His uplifting and inspiring articles are read by millions weekly. He has the knack of taking a topical or trite subject, hanging headlines round it, and the result is a "palpitating human document" that brings tears to the eyes of the groundlings and is honoured by quotation from the pulpit.

We will analyse the methods of this powerful writer and masterly castigator of modern follies.

Take the well known nursery rhyme, "Hey Diddle Diddle, the Cat and the Fiddle," etc. A commonplace subject, you say. But wait. In the hands of a Ju-Ju Journalist see what happens.

Our first essentials are Headlines and Holiness. Sprinkle profusely with alliterations and exclamation marks, add a few coined words—the cruder the better, add a photograph of the author and (inset) a cow. Serve up hot and strong and we get this sort of thing:—

BLASTING BRITAIN'S BABIES!

DIDDLE, DELIRIUM AND THE DISH.

By James Muglas.

Hey Diddle Diddle! There you have it in its naked nudity. The first line of this brimstone ballad of Beelzebub that is blasting and blighting the souls of British babies. Hey diddle diddle! We are deafened by its discord. Our nerves are lacerated by the lancet of its lewd lubricity. Are we alive to this menace in our midst? This barbaric boom of the tom-tom played by the Djinn of Jazz is noisome in our nurseries, a peril to our perambulators.

Oh for the Age of Faith! Oh that our sick souls were swept by the balmy breezes, the simple songs of Doctor Isaac Watts. To-day the Innocence of our infants is imperilled by the insidious influence of "Hey Diddle Diddle" and kindred songs. I recall the sweet "Hymns for Infants," by saintly Dr. Watts. Simple and soulful were they as we lisped them at the knee of a godly Nannie in the days before mothers shocked us with the shortness of their shingle and their skimpy skirts. Compare the following pious hymn and its lovely moral lesson, with the ribald raucous cacaphony of the crapulous cretins who foisted "Hey Diddle Diddle" on our cradles.

Nailed up on the cross, behold,
How his tender limbs are torn,
For a royal crown of gold
They have made him one of thorn
See, the blood is falling fast
From his forehead and his side.
Hark! He now has breathed his last!
With a mighty groan he died.

Thus wrote Dr. Watts. You sense the difference? Where is the sacredness of our suffering Saviour symbolized in this ribald rhyme of "Hey Diddle Diddle"? Why should we choke our children with the moral menace of this mad moon and crazy cow? Dr. Watts wrote, "Twinkle, twinkle, little star, how I wonder what you are?" That instilled a sense of reverence in the wee brains of our bairns.

What does this crass crudery of cacophony do? It tells a deliberate lie. How can we cultivate a sense of reverence for the heavenly bodies when we make a figure of fun of them?

"The cow jumped over the moon." It is Blasphemy for Beginners! This abandoned bovine quadruped

mocked the moon. Even the little dog—friend of man throughout the ages—laughed to see such sport. God help us! This noxious nonsense is permeating our nurseries. This maniacal miasma is creeping insidiously into our cradles! It is an example of the looseness and libidinousness of our modern morality when it cynically suggests that there is discord even on our domestic dresser.

"The dish ran away with the spoon." God save us! It is the Morality of the Monkey House! It is the Evil of Evolution rampant!! Darwin and his Hell-instructed theory of our descent from apes has brought us to the brink of Bolshevism!! Notice the cynicism. This abandoned dish, this philandering platter, running away with a spoon—while the little canine's cynical cacachinations applaud "such sport." Verily we are doomed to disaster when such slimy, sordid sewage is crooned over our cradles. Even our pets are demoralized.

The cat, poor gentle pussy, plays some devilish jazz tune on the fiddle. The cow charlestons in some corybantic and indecent dance, the dog laughs, the dish and spoon go cocktail drinking to some hideous den of vice in the West End—and our innocent children are expected to applaud. Nay, they are actually taught to sing this abandoned litany. It is blighting and blasting the Babies of Britain! Unless this ribald rhyme is ruthlessly rooted out of our nurseries, unless this vile viper of vice is crushed underfoot, our Empire will hurtle to Hell, and the Devil will delight in the damnation of our dear ones.

(Mr. Muglas writes in the *Daily Excess* every Wednesday. Order Now.)

* * *

You see how it is done? Study this practical course carefully and you will yet ride in your Rolls Royce. Having mastered the "Heart throb style," I hope next week to give you Lesson II, in which you will soon learn to emulate such distinguished authors as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Mr. G. K. Chesterton, Mr. Robert Blatchford, and others.

GWYN EVANS.

(To be continued.)

GREECE THE SOURCE OF THE HISTORICAL SPIRIT.

One of the intellectual characteristics of our age is the spread of the historical spirit. "Vere scire est per causas scire" (true knowledge is knowledge of causes) is the watchword of every serious student. A phenomenon, natural or political, is best understood through its history. We regard the world as a sequence of cause and effect, and since Turgot clearly formulated a law of progress in 1750, it is a widespread belief that though history never repeats itself, the panorama of human life upon this planet reveals a spectacle of improvement. Such ideas were only fitfully present to the minds of the Greek historians. They had no firm conception of a continuous law of progress or of an iron chain of causality. They thought that the caprices of Fortune or Chance had a large share in moulding the destinies of men, that history went round in cycles, and that since situations repeated themselves, the study of the past afforded valuable instruction to statesmen.

Yet the debt which historiography owes to the Greeks is incalculable . . .

The idea that history should be accurate and fair, that it should be serious, disengaged from myths and trivialities, that it should deal with the life of the state, and be helpful in enabling political needs to be better understood, and political work to be more intelligently undertaken—all these conceptions were familiar to Thucydides, and have gone to the making of our modern schools of history. Let us not accept the opinion that this national view of historiography was inevitable. For many centuries the Greek idea was lost; and the measure of that loss will be present to the mind of anyone who compares even the best monastic chronicles of the Middle Ages with a page of Thucydides or Polybius. But with the recovery of Greek learning at the Renaissance, history was recalled to the ancient models.

H. A. L. Fisher, LL.D., F.R.S.

Freethought Flashes.

Could the King of England be an Atheist? Not if he were honest. His religion is selected for him, and it goes with the situation. But there is nothing to prevent his being a dishonest Atheist—that is, there is nothing in the Constitution to prevent him being an Atheist, but keeping it to himself. That is the beauty of all this legislation in the interests of religion. It never troubles the liar a jot. It only affects the man with a leaning towards honesty of speech and behaviour. It gives the liar a pat on the back and the truthful man a clout on the ear.

After the King comes the Prime Minister. Here too an honest Atheist, in the present state of affairs, is impossible. From one end of the country to the other the united forces of the Churches would be arrayed against him, no matter what his capacity, or admitted honesty. Again, a dishonest Atheist might succeed. Even in the case of an ordinary M.P., a confession of Atheism would damn him in nearly every constituency in the country, and would leave him but a "sporting chance" in the remainder. The prevalence of and preference for, such twilight terms as Agnosticism or Rationalism, to that of plain uncompromising Atheism are illustrations to the point. They are chosen, in most cases, not because they more clearly express the intellectual convictions of those who use them, but because they do not rouse the religious resentment that Atheism does. Thought is free theoretically; it remains to make it so practically.

Custom has sometimes a curious appropriateness about it. For example, doctors write their prescriptions in a dead language.

There appears to be only one body of priests that have an adequate apology for their existence. This is the Jewish priesthood. For with the Jews the priesthood is hereditary. The son of every priest is a priest, and so it goes on *ad infinitum*. We have, therefore, no more moral right to reproach a Jewish priest for being what he is, than we have to reproach a man for having inherited a disease. But the Christian priest is what he is of malice aforethought. He chooses his occupation, much as a man might deliberately adopt the profession of a pick-pocket or burglar. The only way in which he can blame his ancestors is for their not having endowed him with sufficient moral nerve or intellectual strength to select something better.

A question asked of every man who enters the army, or a prison, is "What is your Religion?" It is strange that this is never asked when a man joins a community of artists, scientists, or men of letters. Where the higher intelligence rules religious beliefs appear to be out of place.

To some minds—to most, one might say—there is no sentence more difficult to pronounce than "I do not know." Some explanation must be given and accepted, even though it is no more than a phrase. A contentment to seek for knowledge, but to remain silent till it is forthcoming, is one of the rarest of human qualities.

The majority of people do not place any great value upon truth. What they value most is ease, and whether what they value is a lie or a truth troubles them but little. It is only the few who have fought for the world's truths. The vast majority have fought hard to keep in existence the world's convicted lies. The history of progress would be far different from what it is were this otherwise.

Acid Drops.

A letter appears in a recent issue of the *Belfast Evening Telegraph* from C.J.K., in which he says:—

The sectarian schools in Ireland have created a spirit of bigotry and strife, and have kept the people at each other's throats, instead of pulling together for the common good, and all because one section preaches fiddledee and the other fiddledum.

This is well said, but unfortunately it is this dispute between the disciples of the two absurdities that has been Ireland's stumbling block. We had hoped that with a completely united Ireland, the two religious bodies would have had their religious influence weakened. Unfortunately, Ireland is still divided. The root of the distrust between the two sections is religious, and when each says the other is not to be trusted we cordially endorse the statement—in both cases. From all we can gather the Roman Church is as strong as ever in the South, and is rapidly acquiring wealth. And in the North, Protestant bigotry is as keen as ever.

In *Radio Times*, Victor France, the novelist, suggests to the B.B.C. that there should be less broadcasting. The B.B.C., he thinks, would send up the demand for broadcasting by regulating the supply. We invite the Corporation to experiment by suppressing the religious portion of the programme.

The editor of *Radio Times* invites the listeners to speak their minds. He has not always much space for printing listener's letters, but he welcomes letters from those who have a grievance to air. Since the B.B.C. has received hundreds of letters from Freethinkers opposing the B.B.C. policy of allowing only Christian views of religion to be heard, and condemning its refusal to provide an alternative Sunday programme, we presume lack of space is the editor's only reason why none of those letters are permitted to appear.

Mr. Arthur Black, General Secretary of the Ragged School Union, has been investigating the conditions of Church attendance in two London working-class areas. He declares that the Sunday school in such areas is facing accumulating difficulties, such as have not existed for two or three generations. The attitude and habit of the adult population is increasingly against it. The "spiritual opportunity" of Sunday is wasted by the vast majority of men and women. In one district, Mr. Black estimates that the proportion attending morning and evening religious services works out at about five per cent.—about one-third the number of forty years ago. The Sunday school figures show that about half those on the day school attendance-roll attend Sunday school more or less regularly. The proportion, however, is less among elder scholars. At eleven or twelve the boys and girls begin to drop off, unless Sunday school offers some strong attractions. "The pull of the open-air, especially if there is a park or open space at hand—and, in the evening, of the cinema, is very seductive to lads and girls entering their teens, whose home conditions are cramped and often squalid."

Obviously, that instinctive craving for religion, about which the pious and secular press tell us so much, recedes into the background when the instinctive craving for play in the open air, and for amusement in cinemas, asserts itself. That is a very sad state of affairs. And we think Mr. Black will agree that the only remedy is to close all open spaces and cinemas on Sunday, in the hope that bored children will drift into the churches and Sunday schools.

According to Mr. Black, there are "powerful anti-Christian agencies endlessly engaged in the nefarious task of spreading pernicious teaching by literature, pictures, entertainments—there are low public houses and betting-dens." And meeting their challenge there are but struggling Churches and Missions ineffectively worked because shorthanded and short of cash.

Christian forces are making no headway. It is becoming, says Mr. Black, less easy to secure the regular services of educated Church members to act as Sunday School teachers. Evidently our daily papers will have to start another religious campaign. Mr. Black's report appears to indicate that the last effort was not productive of much.

Sir Robert Baden-Powell tells his Scouts that the history of the Empire has been made by British adventurers and explorers, the Scouts of the nation, for hundreds of years past up to the present time. This may be true of one portion of the Empire's history. But what about the other kind of pioneers, the adventurers and explorers in the mental realm, many of them Freethinkers? These have made British history as much as have the land discoverers and annexors; and their achievements have been of untold benefit, not only to the Empire but to the world. The mental pioneers are as much "Scouts of the nation" as their brothers the terrestrial pioneers. If Sir Robert were not too busy extolling physical bravery and glorifying the primitive, he might remember that. We should like to see him teach his Scouts to honour the brave, not only of the physical realm but of the mental. At present, one weak point of the Scout movement is its lop-sided stress on the primitive and the physical. We invite Sir Robert to redress the balance by encouraging his elder Scouts, Rovers, and Scout-masters to take an interest in the mental pioneers of the Empire, their history and achievements.

Mr. Henry Brabrook, of the Religious Tract Society, states that 100,000 copies of a sixpenny Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* have already been sold, and that a second 100,000 is being printed. This is in connexion with the Bunyan tercentenary. The huge sale would appear to indicate that there was a large number of persons interested in the book and in religion. We doubt it. We suggest that the books were bought by a limited number of pious people and by Church organizations, and were given away to the non-religious. If that is the fact, two-thirds of the books were never read by the persons to whom they were presented—the non-pious—and eventually "progressed" towards the dust-bin.

Apropos of the extension of the franchise, the *Sunday School Chronicle* thinks that "the soundness of democracy is secured only if voters add to experience knowledge, and to knowledge insight." It approves of continued general education of both adolescents and adults as means to this end. But, of course, something more is needed. "Whatever may be accomplished by primary, secondary, university, and adult education towards inspiring and directing a fine civic-mindedness, the prime business of religious education is to foster that clearthinking love of God and neighbour apart from which either apathy or perversity makes shipwreck of all politics." In brief, religion's job is to make democracy safe. Any student of Christian history knows how that has been done. Religion has taught men to accept without question the dominance of "divinely appointed" kings, bishops and priests. It has certainly made democracy safe—safe for kings and priests. We shall want a lot of convincing that democracy has ever been benefited thereby. Nor has it been benefited much by "love of God and neighbour," since this has invariably led men's thought away from social matters, and centered it upon saving their own souls and upon officious interest in their neighbour's soul. Again, social problems require clear thinking for their solving. We don't quite see how democracy can acquire the power of clear thinking by receiving a religious education, which teaches men to solve problems merely by reference to what a race of ancient shepherds, and a half-witted peasant, thought nineteen hundred years ago.

The Pope has the power to loose and bind. He may send your soul to either heaven or hell. But there is one thing that appears to be beyond him. He cannot overcome the fashion in woman's dress. For some time

the Vatican has been fulminating against the immodesty of short skirts. One cannot expect the ordinary priest to see a woman's legs without being seriously disturbed, and good Christians in Church when they see such sights cannot give their attention to their prayers. But the appeals issued, even the threats to exclude women who show their legs from Church, have met with no results. Short skirts are still worn, and everyone is made aware of the religiously disturbing fact that women have the lower part of their bodies bifurcated. So it is now announced that nothing further will be done, and the Pope will leave it to time and changing fashions to restore longer skirts. That is really a set back for the Church.

"He speaketh with his feet," was the title of a recently advertised sermon. We do not know about *speaking* with one's feet, but a great many of the sermons we have read, and nearly all we have listened to sent over the wireless, would give one the impression that all the thinking in them had been done with the feet instead of with the head.

In 1920, Dean Inge wrote of "the lazy miner who extorts his thousand a year from the householder of England, and the bricklayer who battens on the rates, and does about two and a half hours of honest work in the day." On April 11, 1928, the Dean states in the *Evening Standard*, that "it is not fair or true to say that I dislike the British working man." The Dean's Christian training fits him for silly positions of this kind, and daily journalism will assist him, as it is founded on the assumption that what was read yesterday is forgotten to-day. We hold no brief for the working man, but anyone, in weighing up the profession of Dean Inge against a ton of coal or a house to live in, would prefer the two last to a sermon in St. Pauls. And that would be without enquiring too deeply into the sources of income for the black army that has never been known to go on strike.

The Department of Labour, Washington, has refused to allow Captain Noel E. Odell, a member of the Mount Everest Expedition, to enter America, that country of liberty. Some technical reason is given, and as the gallant Captain specializes in geology, we are at liberty to presume that his exclusion may be a kind of cautionary measure to preserve intact the bland innocence of fundamentalists.

We are convinced that it is a congenital gift that enables clergymen in their profession to write and speak nonsense that would not even be tolerated in a mental four-ale bar. Specimen herewith from the weekly press pulpit of the *Morning Post*—author, the Rev. L. B. Ashby:—

What a joy for a parson to have a congregation in which there were many Thomases, and how pleased Jesus would be about it! But one suspects that there are so many who love Jesus of Nazareth, as they know Him, just as much as Thomas did, but who stand back looking perhaps wistfully at His Church, in which they imagine that there is no room for them because they are not "orthodox."

And if you look at this frontways, sideways, or upside down, you must remember that a man passes through a college before he can produce it.

It is not necessary to read the works of any writer before an opinion may be expressed, and the article of the *Outline* on George Santayana is no exception to this rule. It is a neat string of carefully selected quotations from the works of this well known author, and the opening paragraph gives it a nice "churchy" atmosphere. Writes the stringer: "He (Santayana) has been called the Unbelieving Believer." We might add that he could also be called a White Nigger.

The Bradford Trades Council recently declined to join hands with the Free Church Council to "celebrate" Industrial Sunday. It is quite refreshing to find a Labour group that has the moral courage to tell the

Churches to do their own work in their own way. The customary method in this country is for Labour men, when in office as Councillors, etc., to permit themselves to be dragged at the heels of a religious procession. The first great need for any movement, but particularly a labour movement, is to acquire the quality of self-respect. A movement or a man who has not that will never count for much.

According to the Countess of Warwick, there is now another Rupert in the field against the Churches. It is none other than our dear delightful friend the "Weather." The Countess gives an instance where a clergyman blamed the fine weather for the dearth of attendance at church on Sunday, and she paraphrases the situation as follows: "I was going to Communion, but it snowed, so I played billiards." We admire her wit, but later on in her article, when she states that the Church is so greatly in need of humanity, the assertion, for want of clarity may be classified as follows: (1) sarcastic; (2) reproachful; (3) true; (4) overlooks the fact that humanity may not need the Church; (5) that humanity without religion is better than religion without humanity—and so on, if you like to play on words with words.

There are complaints that British painters do not show enough imagination. British preachers re-adjust matters—to the Glory of God and the Church.

The population of Hampstead Heath on Easter Monday is estimated to have been half a million. This is a further proof that the English are instinctively religious. The half a million, though enjoying secular amusements, were really celebrating the resurrection of their Saviour.

Because tourists have gone into his church to eat their lunches, the rector of St. Anne's, Ralipole, Weymouth, has locked the church doors. This is a very curious action. Lunches ought to be ever so much more nourishing when eaten where the spirit of God can permeate them. We invite the rector to look at the matter in this light.

Bishop Alma White, of the Pillar of Fire type of Christianity, is over here to ask Britons some very important questions she thinks they will be enormously interested in. These turn largely on whether a Roman Catholic is a fit man to become President of America. We don't suppose there is a very large number of persons interested in her questions. But there are plenty of Christians and semi-Christians interested in a woman who has achieved some measure of notoriety and who can spout pious and fanatic clap-trap.

About a month ago a letter appeared from an Edinburgh Missionary Society, stating that Bibles, value £500, were being sent to China, and asking for contributions of an equal sum for more Bibles. A reader of a weekly contemporary suggests: Would it not be more Christianlike if this money were spent on starving miners in our own land? "Christianity could be practised more at home." This reader hasn't got things quite right. It wouldn't be more Christianlike to spend the money in England, it would be more commonsense like. It is not Christianity that needs practising at home, but merely ordinary intelligence—which is not bred in Christian churches.

A reader of a weekly paper writes:—

Last year 200 children were killed and 9,000 injured in the streets of the Metropolitan area. It requires but little logic to see the connexion between these appalling fatalities and the absence of playing fields. It also requires little logic to see that it is useless providing playing-fields if the Churches are to keep them closed on the one day, Sunday, when the children are most free to run about. By way of a start towards preventing street fatalities to children, let the municipal authorities open all the existing playing fields on Sunday for wholesome recreation.

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.

T. E. THOMAS.—"Hesus" is probably another form of the Egyptian Hes, or Man-hes, a son of Ra and Bast. We will try to find room for your communication. Thanks.

J. DIXON.—Pleased to hear you have joined the N.S.S. We may meet you at the Liverpool Conference. You did well to stick to your guns, but even when no public notice is taken, some good is done by the protest being lodged.

S. COLLINSON.—Mr. Cohen hopes to issue another volume of his *Essays in Freethinking* early in the autumn. Pleased to know that you consider the second series even better than the first. You will be interested to learn that that seems to be the general opinion.

L. MANNING.—We see no reason whatever for discouragement, but many causes for pleasure at what has been accomplished. The right way to go to work is to view the state of affairs as they are to-day, and as they were a generation ago. Religion to-day is very largely on the defensive, and there is ten times the open unbelief there was when we first started work. If we have had anything to do with bringing about that state of affairs, we are content with what we have done. Only a fool could have expected very much more.

E. W. FLINT (N.Z.).—Delighted to know that you appreciate so much *Theism and Atheism*, and *A Grammar of Freethought*. You are doing a useful work in attending to local believers, and in making themselves prominent Freethinkers, they will do something to counteract the influence the Churches seek to exert over public men. The strength of the Churches is partly built on the silence of such as ought to speak out.

J. R. STEELE.—We think it very unlikely that anyone would be so foolish as to attempt a charge of blasphemy in such circumstances.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

To-day (May 6) Mr. Chapman Cohen will speak in the Oliver Goldsmith Schools, Peckham Road, S.E., at 7 p.m., on "Religion and the Child." Admission is free.

Next week we shall publish the Agenda for the N.S.S. Conference at Liverpool, on Whit-Sunday. The Conference will sit morning and afternoon, which will be business sessions; and in the evening there will be a public demonstration in the Picton Hall, which will be addressed by various speakers. The full list of the delegates should be in the hands of the General Secretary

without delay, and we hope to see every Branch represented. There will be a lunch provided for members, friends and delegates at the Washington Hotel, at one o'clock, the price of which will be 3s. 6d. Applications for tickets for this function should also be made early.

Arrangements are also in progress for an excursion on Whit-Monday. If this is possible full details will be announced next week.

There is certain to be a goodly number of members from the Lancashire Branches, and the Manchester Branch has in view the hiring of a charabanc to Liverpool and back. A party of fourteen could be arranged at a cost of 5s. per head. Those who wish to join the party must write to the Secretary of the Branch, Mr. F. E. Monks, 10 Alresford Road, Pendleton. Failing the charabanc trip, arrangements could be made for the whole of the party to make the journey together by train.

Mr. F. Mann will be visiting Failsworth to-day (May 6) and will give two lectures in the Secular School, Pole Lane, Failsworth. In the afternoon, at 2.45, his subject will be, "The Origins of Modern Thought," and at 6.30, "Secularism and Human Behaviour." We hope to hear of a good muster of Manchester friends at these meetings.

The West Ham Branch commences its outdoor work to-day (May 6). It will hold its meetings outside Municipal College, Romford Road, every Sunday evening at 7. Mr. George Whitehead will lead off, and will speak from the same position each evening from Monday to Thursday, May 7 to 10. East London Freethinkers will please note.

We are all interested in the beginnings of things—that is, all who have any claim to a scientific interest in affairs—because evolution has emphasized the all-importance of the historical aspect of things as a condition of understanding. And the series of little books issued by Mr. Gerald Howe under the general title of *The Beginnings of Things*, has added a useful essay by Miss Evelyn Sharp, on "Here We Go Round" (2s. 6d.) This series of books is Pan-Egyptian in object, but the interest of this work, as with most of the others in the series, does not depend upon that. Miss Sharp is quite plain that in its conscious beginnings the dance is a form of primitive magic—a conclusion with which hardly any anthropologist will disagree. As she says:—

The dances of primitive man are generally mimetic. He has not learnt to express himself in any other way, and he is therefore driven to do in pantomime the things he wishes brought about. In some savage tribes, the women dance while the men are on the war-path, imitating the acts of war they suppose their warriors to be committing; and among many instances of mimetic dancing in order to promote the growth of crops by imitation magic, Sir James Frazer mentions the old Mexican festival at which the women danced with their hair loose, shaking and tossing it in order that the tassels of the maize might grow in similar profusion; while in some countries of Europe, dancing and leaping high in the air are still practised, as in Franche Comté, where dancing during the Carnival is popularly supposed to make the hemp grow tall. The Spanish Basques of Guipuzcoa perform a Wine-Skin Dance, in which the dancers strike with their hoes alternately the ground and two distended wine-skins placed on the backs of two other men, clearly with the idea of imitating the process of tending the vines in order to stimulate Nature to fulfil the ultimate function of the vine.

Miss Sharp allows for the growth of a fondness for dancing as embodying a pleasing and rhythmical physical movement, and we think that some allowance ought to have been made for the traces of dancing found in the animal world. Rhythmical movements, mainly, it would appear, connected with sexual attraction, have been noted with the peacock and the bird of paradise; and those who remember Spencer's wonderful chapter

on Rhythm will be ready to find this as the basis on which the superstructure of magic is reared.

It will interest those who have been writing to the B.B.C. on the subject of its policy of turning itself into an agency for the propagation of Christianity, and carefully excluding anything of an anti-Christian nature, to learn that on April 25, Mr. Cohen in company with Mr. J. P. Gilmour, Mr. E. Syers, Mr. G. J. Finch, and Mr. C. A. Watts, paid an arranged visit to the Savoy Hill establishment and had a full and frank conversation with some of the representatives of the Broadcasting Corporation. Among other things the question of providing an alternative programme on Sundays was discussed. We are not at liberty to say more at the moment, although we should not be surprised if something eventually did come from it. Meanwhile, we can assure those of our readers who for the past two years have been sending in their protests to the B.B.C., that they have not written quite in vain, and we hope that all of our readers who have not already done so, will write and voice their opinions on the subject.

Mr. Robins Millar's play at the Duke of York's, "Thunder in the Air," has not produced the thunder from clerical pop-guns that a similar play would have done twenty years ago. The world does move, and the religious world is beginning to realize that the best way to recommend a book to a large number of people is to get a bishop to condemn it. And Mr. Millar's play would have been condemned in days when theologians were more stupid—and more honest. The theme of "Thunder in the Air" is human survival after death, and Mr. Millar blasphemously assumes that the dead survive only in the minds of those who knew them, a "rational doctrine," as the *Observer* says. The dead man is Ronnie Vexted, and we see as many Ronnies as there are characters who knew him: he is not visible to the little maid who never knew him, and it is not merely implied that survival is only in memory—it is plainly stated. The play, which has been heartily praised by the critics, is wholly atheistic, and faces the question of a future life from the standpoint of views frequently expressed in the *Freethinker*.

A Remarkable Forecast.

THE Gospels declare that both plainly and in parables, Jesus foretold the coming of the Messiah, and also claimed to be this personage. Clearly, the only way to decide the authenticity of the Messianic parables is by comparing them with the plain Messianic teaching, and thus to detect in each case if the entire parable or any part of it is contrary to the proper standard. Now the Messianic views of Jesus are the most lucidly and copiously expressed in the Forecast which he gave of the occurrences between his departure for heaven and his return to earth, and of the circumstances attending the latter event. This Forecast is preserved by the three Synoptists; and far the greater part of it occurs near the end of their respective works, being found in the thirteenth chapter of Mark, the twenty-fourth of Matthew, and the twenty-first of Luke. The original account was no doubt one of the literary fragments cited dependently or independently by the Synoptists; and like much of their material it had probably received from others, before it certainly received from them, a number of spurious additions and fallacious modifications. The above authorities say that Jesus made the Forecast in reply to certain questions about the future put to him very shortly before his end. Mark assigns these queries to Peter, James, John, and Andrew, whilst Matthew refers them simply to "the disciples"; but they both agree in giving the Mount of Olives as the locality of the incident. Luke makes the querists an indefinite "many," and places the scene in the propinquity of the temple.

According to all the three accounts, Jesus began by predicting false Christs, wars, earthquakes, and famines; after which he foretold the persecution of his followers. These predictions, being derived partly from the common stock of prophets, and partly from the obvious trend of existing circumstances, would be very easy to make, and are therefore probably authentic; whilst any details suspiciously precise may safely be referred to the instruction of later experience. Next, according to Mark and Matthew, Jesus predicted that "the abomination of desolation," who, as Mark has it, should "stand where he ought not," or, as Matthew says, should be "standing in the holy place," would cause an unequalled "tribulation" throughout Judæa; and he bid his hearers "flee unto the mountains" upon sight of that terrible intruder. Although this prediction clearly concerns the sacrilege of Antichrist in the temple, and relates to certain visions of the prophet Daniel, as Jesus himself declares in Matthew's account; yet, nevertheless, Mark in his own person obviously applies it to the fall of Jerusalem, and Matthew follows Mark in this false interpretation, even going so far as to credit Jesus with one of Mark's assertions in a revised form. As regards Luke, he suppresses all reference to "the abomination of desolation," and makes Jesus connect the prescribed flight with the investment of "Jerusalem" by "armies" destined to destroy it. Since there was a belief that the coming of the Antichrist would closely precede the advent of the Christ, the above prediction as cited by Mark is truly Messianic and admissibly historical. But this would not have been the case had it originally possessed the signification which Mark and Matthew deduce from it; and which Luke puts into it. For, to reutter, with or without supplementary details a traditional prophecy about Antichrist was then extremely natural and facile for any Messianic enthusiast, whereas to predict the siege and destruction of Jerusalem would, in view of the actual circumstances and prospective conditions, have exceeded the capacity of any observer flourishing at that day. After predicting the troubles in Judæa, which, according to Mark and Matthew were described as unequalled "tribulation," and according to Luke as "great distress," Jesus predicted a series of cosmical disasters heralding the Messiah's advent. Mark's account implies, and Matthew's affirms, that these appalling signs were destined to follow close upon the "tribulation." But Luke, evidently desiring to conceal the failure of the prophecy, makes Jesus separate the "great distress" from the terrific portents by an indefinite period specified as "the times of the Gentiles." In all the records, however, Jesus declares that at the end of those indications the Son of Man shall arrive on a cloud "with power and great glory"; whilst in the reports of Mark and Matthew he adds that the Son of Man will then dispatch angels to assemble "his elect" from every part of the earth. At this point the three evangelists give a parable wherein Jesus says that just as the springing leafage of the fig tree betokens the approach of summer, even so the occurrence one after another of the things foretold will signify first the oncoming and then the imminence of the great event. After which, as they all agree, he made the solemn declaration: "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, until all these things shall be accomplished. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away."

This assertion is confirmed and explained by another, which there are strong reasons for believing to have stood originally in the same discourse, although it now stands in one of earlier date. Here I should observe that as regards the contents of the

Forecast, Matthew and Luke have much more than Mark, and that each of the two excludes certain parts which the other inserts; whilst Matthew himself has some passages which connect naturally with the Forecast, although he gives them a different connexion. Of these, far the most important example occurs in his tenth chapter. There when describing how Jesus sent forth his twelve apostles on a missionary tour, he makes him foretell that they would get into trouble with the civil and the religious authorities, and that dissensions of a tragic nature would arise on his account. Then he says that Jesus gave them the following advice and the following promise: "But when they persecute you in this city, flee unto the next: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come."

Mark and Luke also relate this dispatch of the apostles, but they do not connect therewith either the warnings, the advice, or the promise. Strange to say, however, they give the warnings in their reports of the Forecast, but without giving the advice and the promise. Matthew in his report of the Forecast has a reference to the warnings, but none whatever to the advice and the promise. Anyone who compares the passages in question will observe that the warnings recorded by Mark and Luke in their accounts of the Forecast are in close agreement with those recorded by Matthew in his account of the Dispatch; whereas the reference which Matthew has to the same warnings in his report of the Forecast has only a vague and summary relation to what is said about them in the corresponding reports of Mark and Luke. The truth is that the conjoined warnings, advice, and promise are not agreeable to the circumstances under which Matthew says that they were uttered. Jesus, then in Galilee, was sending his apostles on a particular errand. There was no question of their abiding where they were unless driven thence by persecution, for their task was to evangelize far and wide in Jewish districts. Besides this they escaped untoward incidents and returned with success. Finally, they left Jesus at their going away, and found him at their coming back; but in the meanwhile the Son of Man had not arrived. On the other hand, the said warnings, advice, and promise suit admirably to the circumstances existing at the time of the Forecast. Then, Jesus was hourly expecting his decease, and desired that after this event his apostles should proclaim his return as the triumphant Messiah. But, foreseeing that in the course of their mission they would meet with persecution, he instructed them how to behave under it, and consoled them by the promise of his speedy re-appearance. The phrase "this city" which violates the context in the address when Matthew introduces it would be perfectly appropriate in the Forecast, Jerusalem being the place intended. Hitherto I have spoken as though Matthew himself had made the transference, thus contradicting some earlier source; but as his work bears traces of having passed through the hands of more than one editor, it is possible that the whole passage reporting the warnings, the advice and the promise stood formerly in his report of the Forecast at the point where the warnings are assigned to it by Mark and Luke in their reports. If this were so, then the reason of the change was probably as follows: some editor, who disliked, yet feared to suppress, the falsified prediction, "Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come," removed it and its preceding context from the discourse where they originally belonged, and put them into the address where they now appear. The transfer of the predic-

tion to a less striking occasion would tend to withdraw it from undesirable prominence; and this tendency would be increased by the simultaneous removal of the context with the prediction itself. In view of the above conclusions, I shall refer to the passage under notice as the transferred charge. But the case is not only one of transference but of substitution. For, if verses 16 to 23 of Matthew's tenth chapter followed originally upon the eighth verse of his twenty-fourth chapter, then verses 9 to 14 which follow that verse at present were inserted to stop the gap occasioned by the removal of their predecessors. Verses 9 and 10 of the Forecast refer in a vague, yet exaggerated way, to the persecution and the treachery which are clearly defined in the Transferred Charge. Another trace of that part is verse 13, which occurs both here and there; and which is preserved also in Mark's report of the Forecast. Verses 12 and 14 contain allusions which suggest a comparatively long existence of the church; whilst the last of these two makes a statement which is contradictory to the belief of the church's lord. For the rest, if Jesus spake the Charge when dispatching his apostles on the aforesaid errand, then, both he and they lived to see his promise falsified; whilst if the Charge originally formed part of the Forecast, the apostles alone survived to witness the falsification. Thus the prophecy is one of such an objectionable character that no Christian would ever dream of inventing it, and most Christians would soon have reason to desire its suppression. Hence it bears strong evidence of being genuine.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

(To be concluded.)

This "God" Business.

It seems very difficult to get the average man to realize that when the parsons talk about God, it is exactly the same as when the cobbler talks about leather. Many a layman believes and pays. Many a professional priest disbelieves—and receives. Imagine a soap-maker admitting that his soap is useless or harmful. The only case of that sort I have met with was an unintentionally frank advertisement of a patent medicine, which definitely admitted that "Nothing is quite as good as this particular nostrum."

Religion is obviously a good thing—for the paid teacher. Probably not even the salary of an archbishop could tempt anybody to practise it, or any intelligent person to believe it. It is easier to preach and teach. Leo Tolstoy was able to practise his impossible religion—but he had the good sense first to make sure that his wife didn't.

The intelligent layman has worried his head for centuries to find out why so essentially unintelligent a thing as Christianity could be believed in by apparently intelligent people. Modern American laymen seem to have discovered some of the truth. Mr. Bruce Barton, the pioneer (?) in this field, has been described as "the bishop of dividend-paying religion." Mr. Barton, no doubt, is a prominent worker in this field, but Judas Iscariot, an earlier dividend-hunter, was by no means the first who found how profitable religion can be made.

Recently in the *New York World*, Mr. F. F. French, a well-known advertiser, said:—

"The best example of a Sales Talker was Jesus Christ. He said, 'Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' What he meant was, keep knocking until the door is opened, and if it isn't opened pretty soon, kick down the door."

No wonder President Coolidge, an eminent Christian layman, says:—

"Our country has long been under the imputation of putting too much emphasis on material things. If America is advancing economically it is because of the deep religious convictions of its people."

Naturally the parsons are going to encourage the layman in what is, after all, a sort of mutual help for the

twin doctrine. Business ought to be religious, because religion is good business. The priests, of course, can hardly give up Jesus. Surely he was the Rev. Jesus Christ, not a mere salesman, but a parson, like themselves. But all the rest can go. "Moses," said the Rev. J. W. Ham, in his "Sermon to Real Estate Men," "Moses was a real estate man. He saw wonderful possibilities in Canaan. Quicker returns would come by developing Canaan than by fooling around in the deserts of Egypt."

There is actually a Methodist episcopal church in Little Rock, where the pastor GUARANTEES "grit and gold" to all who attend that church regularly all this year.

A parson of a very different calibre, Rev. C. E. Wagner, in the current issue of *Plain Talk*, satirizes this cult of a "business God," in virile language, rising at times to genuine and admirable "blasphemy." He imagines a new "Mr. Christ," a "Wall Street Mr. Christ," a multi-millionaire choosing for his disciples Mr. Henry Ford, Mr. J. P. Morgan, and their like. This Jesus would describe his "father in heaven" as "My God, the world's biggest business person," to whom Jesus would address a new "Lord's Prayer," as follows:—

"Our Father, which art the head of all business, hallowed be business. Let business prosper on earth as it does in heaven. Give us this day larger profits than yesterday. Lead us past all our competitors in sales." And so on.

This frank admixture of business and religion may be expressed a bit more crudely now than formerly, but it is inherent in the whole idea of God and prayer. There is no real difference between praying God to restore me to health so that I can get on with my work, and praying the same God to bring customers to my shop. The whole of the religious literature of the world bears witness to the prevalence of "prayers for prosperity." Are they so very easy to distinguish from Mr. Wagner's clever and well-meant satirical "New Lord's Prayer"? Why is it more dignified, more appropriate, more logical to pray that God will let our army cut our foes into bloody rags than it is to pray for a heavier purse? It may sound a little quaint to call the deity a Wall Street business man. Is there any other excuse save familiarity, which blinds us to the equal nonsense of saying "He is a God of war." If Moses is properly called a great law-giver, perhaps he was a good "estate agent" too. Jesus cannot be called a smart salesman, without offending Mr. Wagner's excellent sense of fitness. But at Mr. Wagner's church, they sing Methodist hymns replete with descriptions of Jesus, and of his attributes, which leaves "Bishop" Barton far behind in banal, lurid, and profit-mongering titles which nothing except antiquity can excuse or explain.

This "God business" IS a business! It always has been. It eternally appeals, not to truth or beauty, but to sordid personal gain. It is all very well to pretend sometimes that all the gospel appeals were towards the elevation of our character. Not so did the really Christian ages regard them. The Catholics, the Salvationists, and the vast majority of Christians to-day pray for and believe in the individual monetary value of religion. If they have sufficient sense to see that this value is not forthcoming, they join the crowds of the "indifferent."

Religion has been truly called by a decidedly "business" name of "hell fire insurance." Mr. Barton has added little except vulgarity to the old "What shall it profit a man" idea, as the test of religion and its value. If we can forget Christ altogether, and forget what the Christian world has always meant by "save his soul alive ho," we can then imagine a beautiful moral meaning deducible from the old words. But it is absolutely opposed to the universal teaching of the Bible in all lands to find anything but cold calculation of selfish interest in seeking the salvation of our "soul." Our ancestors and most contemporary Christians are agreed that these words meant that it was good business to avoid small gains here at the expense of great and eternal profit hereafter.

The tendency to-day to adapt "business" terminology to the purposes of religion, is a revival rather than an innovation. A pious Christian of ancient days talked

of "holding commerce" with deity during his life-time, and of going "to his last account" at death. Prior to 1914, it was only an impious German merchant who would dare to begin a ledger without making the very first entry "Gott mit uns," or as one might say, God in Account with us. Habitual use of the telephone and radio led a Presbyterian recently to adopt the habit of prefacing his prayers with the words: "Listen God! Andrew MacSloperly o' Wick speaking."

There remains one aspect of the "business" metaphor which would prove highly satisfactory to all lovers of commonsense and common honesty. What do we find wise business men thinking about in their old age? Why not finish the "business" of religion, by letting (? making) religion RETIRE from business? We need not go quite so far as George Jacob Holyoake proposed. Half-pay for a worn-out religion would be an orgy of generosity. I should suggest either a crematorium or an asylum.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

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.

Churchill's chucked his Bombshell and is pleased about his Budget. Motorists won't pay the Tax they'll simply have to trudge it! Mr. Philip Snowden tried to scarify the House, depicting poor John Citizen and his never ending grouse. An Aussie's done it once again—he's flown across the Pole and they're arguing still at Huddersfield about that wretched goal. Lord Terrington's in England and the Proceedings will be slow, *but they've opened the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tusso!*

Duveen has bought a Gainsborough for seventy thousand quid—its subsequent disposal has been discreetly hid. The Increase of Dope and Smuggling has quite alarmed the League, while Joyful Jix discloses yet another "Red Intrigue." H. G. Wells' *New Religion* is being published soon, and a German Savant's flying in a rocket to the Moon. King Willow's reign has started while everyone applauds. *But they've opened the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussauds!*

The Free Church Council moans about the Sabbath's sad decay, for "Boys and Girls won't go to Church," they chunter in dismay. They'd sooner play at tennis, instead of going to Chapel, and Eve—as ever—gets the blame, since she bit Adam's apple! Her silk stockings they find shocking, a delusion and a snare, invented by the Devil, to catch us unaware. Her lipstick, rouge, and shingle are all condemned as well, as wicked lures and sinful to drag us down to Hell. But, despite Non-conformist outcry and "unco' guid" to—do—*They've opened the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tusso!*

Bishop Barnes, Dean Inge, still Fearless, hold Popery at Bay, and deplore such superstition—but still they draw their Pay, for teaching wine and biscuits become the flesh of Jesus, and hand it out without a grin to poor believing geezers. An Earthquake shook the Balkans, and thousands prayed in fear to their Loving Heavenly Father, but he didn't seem to hear. His Churches crashed about them, while His trusting children kneeled and—the heap of dead and dying His Gracious Love Revealed. The blame was put on Sinful Man, the Glory was the Lord's—*but they've opened the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussards!*

THE PAST PANORAMA.

To-day, May 6, is rich in Saints. No less than four Holy Men commemorate their Feast Day this blithe-some morning. Pause, therefore, my hearties and amid your cares and troubles, tune in to the wavelength of Blessed St. John of the Latin Gate, St. Eadbert of Lindisfaine, St. John Damascene, and St. Henry II, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, who was born on this date in A.D. 972. Adjust your cat's whiskers I say, and by means of the Heavenly Radio of Prayer, take

your pick of these pious blokes, and put it to 'em straight, that you expect them to do their stuff and intercede on your behalf, as all good Saints should. Maybe you'll touch lucky. You can try anyway.

You will doubtless be interested to learn also, that on this day in 1527, Rome was taken by the Germans—and such was the damnable sacrilege of the invaders, that they actually had the temerity to imprison the Vicar of Christ upon Earth—Pope Clement VII. The world still shudders at the impious horror of the act. Indeed, Germany's defeat in the Great War is actually attributed to that blasphemous deed.

To-day also celebrates the birthday of "The Sea Green Incorruptible," for on May 6, 1758, was born Maximilian Robespierre, the French Revolutionist, who, despite the libels of his traducers, stands out as a great man and a champion of Liberty, even against the blood-red background of Thermidor and the Terror.

The thrilling news of Captain Wilkin's epoch making flight across the Arctic, reminds me that to-day was born, in 1856, Commander Robert Peary—the first man to discover the North Pole. His marvellous exploit is still memorable, though the glamour of the Frozen North and its mystery is fading in these days of rapid aerial conquest.

On this day also in 1902, died Bret Harte, the American poet and novelist, famous for his stories of the "Great Wild West." He will be remembered best for his *Luck of Roaring Camp*, and his *Heathen Chinee*. A good fellow, Bret Harte, who never fully gained the recognition he deserved. He was a Freethinker, and had some of Mark Twain's fierce hatred of the shams and hypocrisy of organized Religion.

He differed from another novelist, who died on this day, in 1907. Ian McLaren, the Scottish minister, who wrote *Beside the Bonny Brier Bush*, and other pretty-pretty stories eulogized by the kailyard school of Non-conformists on the *British Weekly*.

On May 6, 1910, the whole Empire was plunged into mourning by the sudden death of His Majesty King Edward VII—who goes down into history bearing the honoured title of The Peacemaker.

WHEN I FLOORED DATAS.

Talking of anniversaries, I remember how recently I had the unique experience of catching out Datas the famous "Memory Man" of the Music Halls. You have probably seen or heard of his sensational act. He is "a walking encyclopædia, a living almanac, a vocal dictionary of dates."

For over twenty years he has been answering promptly from the stage such questions as: When did Gladstone make his maiden speech? When was Aristotle born? When was Crippen hanged? What won the Derby in 1841?

To any questions of this type he will give a correct and unhesitating reply. It is quite an astonishing performance—and Datas himself confesses he doesn't quite know *how* he remembers the thousands of facts he has amassed in his world tours.

Personally, I grew a trifle bored with this performance. It was not his fault. When I was present, most members of the audience had an insatiable lust either to know the birthdays of obscure Royal Personages, or the winners of the Lincoln Handicap for the past twenty years. The Memory Man answered them all promptly and correctly, and then—to infuse a little variety into the turn I demanded: "When was the celebrated paper the *Freethinker* established?"

Datas was obviously taken aback. Instead of the usual glib, "Am I right sir?" he coughed, then said: "Not of historic importance, sir. The *Daily Mail* was established on January 15, 180—" and forthwith covered his lapse with a string of dates about Northcliffe's famous venture.

Not of historic importance! Obviously poor Datas had never heard of the *Freethinker*—but it got a free ad. that night!

No wonder Datas confessed recently in the *Strand* magazine: "From the first to the last I went before them as an uneducated man sir, and as far as education goes, in the ordinary sense of the word, as such I still appear before 'em."

THE SHOWMAN.

Correspondence.

ATTILA AS "THE DESTROYER."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In reply to the friendly criticism of Mr. Steinberger, as to the justice—or injustice—of the popular idea of Attila as "The Destroyer," I might reply that I was not dealing with the question as to whether the description was just or unjust. I merely stated that he stood in the popular estimation as "The Destroyer," which is quite true. He does, and we must leave it at that.

But as our friend has raised the question of the justice of the description, we may as well look into it. With all the goodwill to be just to a pagan with which Mr. Steinberger credits me, and indeed, which my previous writings would show, I cannot but acquiesce in the popular verdict.

In his campaign (441 A.D.) against the Eastern Empire, which extended five hundred miles from the Euxine to the Adriatic, he utterly destroyed seventy cities, and depopulated the provinces by the numbers he carried away to captivity. In his campaign against the West, ten years later, he repeated this barbarity upon the principal of the fifty flourishing cities of Italy! Gibbon, who is our authority for the above, says: "It is a saying worthy of the ferocious pride of Attila, that the grass never grew on the spot where his horse had trod." For my part, I believe he would have rejoiced in the title of "The Destroyer," and resented any attempt to deprive him of it.

As for his exceptional sparing of Rome from loot and destruction; this is claimed as a great victory for the Pope, who came out to meet the barbarian. In the Vatican may be seen the painting of Raphael, who represents Leo the Pope as riding quickly towards the terror-stricken Attila, warning him to retreat, while St. Peter and St. Paul hover in the air above Leo, brandishing flaming swords. But as Raphael lived a thousand years after the event, this piece of evidence is not of much value.

I don't think Attila was much impressed by the Pope. What did weigh with him was the knowledge of the fact that Alaric died very shortly after his capture of Rome, and he was forced, says Hodgkin, in his *Italy and her Invaders*, "incessantly to ponder the question, 'What if I conquer like Alaric to die like him?'" For Attila was very superstitious, always on the look out for omens and portents. He was in the habit of examining the entrails of a slaughtered sheep, for omens, before a battle. Moreover, he had just sustained a heavy defeat at the battle of Chalons, with enormous slaughter, which caused him to turn aside into Italy; his army demoralized by defeat and the climate and unaccustomed luxuries of Italy, and already laden with plunder, were no doubt the deciding factors, and not any native generosity, that decided him to spare Rome. As Villari observes, in his *Barbarian Invasions of Italy*: "No one knows what the Pope said to Attila." Probably he dwelt upon the fate of Alaric, the very thing that Attila was superstitiously brooding over.

W. MANN.

THE POPEERY MENACE.

SIR,—Nothing Mr. Cutner has written pleases me more than his recent frank contribution, "The Popery Menace." His frankness was a tonic, and remains a challenge. In the ranks of the Army of Freethought, we all like to think that the battle is nearly won, and that it needs only one or two more actions to put the legions of God to flight and leave the blood-stained Plains of Life in peace under the unchallenged banner of Secularism. We do think these things and we love to write in the same vein—I've done it myself. But, as Mr. Cutner says, the opposing hosts show no sign whatever of fleeing; if they lose ground on the left wing they advance on the right, and on the whole their position seems as strong, if not stronger, now than years ago. Let us by all means be optimistic, but at the same time let us beware of deluding ourselves that all is over bar the shouting. It is far from being all over. Again, to quote Mr. Cutner, "it is bound to be a hard and

bitter fight, but we must win." Of course, we must win. We are outnumbered, our weapons (if more deadly) are not so efficacious as those of our opponents, our gun-fire, although devastating, tends to go too high and waste itself over the heads of the enemy. But we must win. We ought to win. We are going to win. Up and at 'em, brothers of the "damned." Gird on your armour of Liberty, take up your trusty sword of Truth, and fight. Fight for Humanity, Freedom, Victory. Fight, and be damned to you!

R. H. S. STANDFAST.

THE PAINS OF CHILDBIRTH.

SIR,—I think we can adopt a simpler explanation of the pangs of childbirth than any offered by astronomical data. The late Elie Machnikoff held very strongly that if girls were impregnated and bore children at puberty, the confinements were (and are) in every case painless. This means that, as in animals, the immature woman should develop into the mature, to put it crudely, while carrying. When pregnancy occurs at puberty, the nervous system, glandular system, and above all the skeleton, adjust for the coming event, and the baby adjusts too.

I cannot find any medical data, but I am fairly satisfied that with late marriages the tendency is to overcarry, and with a foetus growing from six to eight ounces weekly, a fortnight's delay may be serious. The younger the subject the more easily muscular mechanisms such as parturition can be set in action.

No doubt the human animal will and can adjust itself to late marriages and late childbearing.

The problem, of course, arises from such matters being settled by priests and Christians ignorant of physiology, or indeed of life itself.

It is a bit harsh for Mr. Wm. Clark to state that no medical man has thought over this problem. We are thinking over it, and generally. Certainly not by stargazing.

QUERULOUS.

Society News.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH.

TO-DAY (May 6) marks the close of our indoor programme, when Mr. J. Lamel will deliver an address on "Tibet and the Tibetans." Mr. Lamel is a well known and very welcome speaker to Liverpool audiences, and this lecture should prove of special interest, as the lecturer, who has spent several years in the far East, intends going thoroughly into the religion of Tibet, showing how closely it resembles Roman Catholicism. It is urged that *all* local saints will make a special effort to attend this lecture, and if possible to bring a friend. The lecture is timed to start at 7 p.m. instead of the usual 7.30.—A.J.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH.

ON Sunday, April 29, there was witnessed, at 30 Brixton Road, the unusual spectacle of two Atheists debating on the subject, "Freewill or Determinism?" the Rev. Father Vincent McNabb, O.P., having assumed the temporary role of a Freethinker for the occasion, in order to deprive Mr. F. P. Corrigan, the Branch President, of the opportunity of scoring points at the expense of the Christian God.

It was rather disappointing to find that the "Freewill," so ably defended by Father McNabb, bore but a nebulous likeness to its earlier virile self, and it would appear that his opponent was quite justified when he pointed out that in this respect it bore a remarkable resemblance to the previously-mentioned deity. Father McNabb proved himself an extremely subtle disputant, and the manner in which God was adroitly shelved—for the occasion—might have disconcerted a less experienced debater than Mr. Corrigan, who clearly presented his case on scientific grounds.

The debate proved to be very interesting and orderly; the courtesy displayed by the learned Father, particularly in curtailing his allotted time for speaking, being

reciprocated by his opponent; and Father McNabb is certainly to be congratulated upon his courage. Mr. F. Mann presided, and all present seemed to enjoy themselves.

Will local friends and members please note that this concludes our indoor meetings for the season, and that our meetings in Brockwell Park will begin on Sunday, May 6.—A.H.

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.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): Free Sunday Lectures. 7.0, Chapman Cohen—"The Priest and the Child."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"In France during the Elections."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (34 George Street, Manchester Square, W.1): 7.30, A Lecture.

OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6.0, Mr. Leonard Ebury—A Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan; (Brockwell Park): 6.0, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Wednesday, May 9 (Clapham Old Town): 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury. Thursday, May 10 (Cooks Road, Kennington): 8.0, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Municipal College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. G. Whitehead. Monday to Thursday, at 7.45 p.m. Mr. G. Whitehead.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12 noon, Mr. James Hart—A Lecture; 3.30, Messrs. Hyatt and Le Maine; 6.30, Messrs. Campbell-Everden, Hart and others. (Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith): 3.0, Messrs. Campbell-Everden and Hart. Freethought lectures every Wednesday and Friday, at 7.30, in Hyde Park at 7.30. Various lecturers, including Messrs. Campbell-Everden, Darby, Hart and Le Maine.

COUNTRY. INDOOR.

PAISLWORTH SECULAR SCHOOLS (Manchester), Mr. F. Mann (General Secretary, National Secular Society): 2.45, "The Origins of Modern Thought"; 6.30, "Secularism and Human Behaviour."

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