

The
FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

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

VOL. XLVIII.—No. 21

SUNDAY, MAY 20, 1928

PRICE THREEPENCE

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

Views and Opinions.

George Bernard Shaw and the Clergy.

SEVERAL weeks ago I wrote an article on the not very original topic of the attitude of those clergymen who remain in the Church while repudiating many of its historic doctrines. In the *Outline* for May 12, Mr. G. B. Shaw takes up the same question, and writes what he evidently intends to be a defence of the clergy. "On the face of it," he says, "Dean Inge and Bishop Barnes are the most intellectually honest men of note in the Church to-day." Obviously, on the face of it, they are nothing of the kind. They may be acting with perfect honesty, and I am the last to assume that anyone with whom I disagree must, therefore, be intellectually dishonest. And if the action of Bishop Barnes and Dean Inge was followed by their resigning their positions as priests in the Church, then there would be offered incontestable evidence of their complete intellectual sincerity. But they have done nothing of the kind. They remain in the Church; they enjoy whatever distinction their association with it may bring, and outsiders, to say nothing of those who belong to the Church, are justified in asking what is the explanation of it all. Let it be remembered that thousands of other people, some of them in the pulpit, have been placed in the same position, have been faced with the same problem. They found themselves without genuine belief in the historic doctrines they had been taught. And when they saw this they came out, some quietly, some publicly, but they felt that association with a Church in which they had ceased to believe was no longer compatible with complete intellectual sincerity. Were all these people wrong in their view of what was their duty in relation to the Church? Is one justified in remaining connected with a Society or a Church, and while professing to be true to its teaching, endeavour to give those teachings an entirely different interpretation? That is the real issue raised by the action of men like Barnes and Inge, and to that issue Mr. Shaw never pays the slightest attention.

What is the Church?

What Mr. Shaw does is to give an interpretation of the function of the Church of England which is demonstrably wrong. He says:—

The Church of England is neither a suburban political party club, nor a contrivance for keeping putrescent superstitions in cold storage; it is a human society for ministering to the spiritual needs of the whole English people. These needs differ very widely in intellectual rank.

Usually Mr. Shaw does say quite clearly and unmistakably what he means. But is this clear? It looks as though theology cannot but contaminate all who touch it. Observe the snag "the spiritual needs of the whole English people." Spiritual needs here is a very comprehensive phrase, and may mean almost anything. It may cover Buddhists, Jews, Mohammedans, and even Atheists. Does Mr. Shaw wish us to believe that all these people can honestly find a place in the Church of England? I am not asking whether they may not admire the efforts of the Church to keep men's aspirations after higher things alive (assuming that it really is aiming at and does this), I am asking simply, can this mass of discordances honestly remain in the Church, without believing in its specific teaching? I agree with those who say they cannot.

And it is simply not true that the Church of England is a human society for satisfying certain nebulous spiritual needs. The Church is a religious organization, established for the purpose of teaching certain doctrines, upon the belief in which it says man's spiritual welfare depends. The Church of England does not differ from the Roman Church, or the Nonconformist Churches, or from a number of smaller Societies, because it is aiming at satisfying the spiritual needs of English men and women and they are not, but on the ground of believing that these spiritual needs should be satisfied only by belief in certain doctrines. The difference between the Church and other organizations is essentially a doctrinal one. They differ in belief, not in aspiration.

* * *

Nebulous Religion.

It takes all sorts to make a really Catholic Church, says Mr. Shaw, "In such a Church there must be ministers for the average mass, for the rudimentary minority of simpletons, and for the highly evolved minority called the Intelligentsia." Quite true, as a mere statement, so long as we regard a Catholic Church as one which should include people who believe in anything, everything, and nothing. But was there ever a Church that understood the word "Catholic" in such an utterly useless sense? The Church did not call itself Catholic because it aimed at including men of all beliefs and those of no beliefs at all. And the Roman Catholic has never failed to

recognize that different classes of people require different types of preachers. But it never mistook, as Mr. Shaw appears to mistake, different methods of presenting the same teaching, and the presentation of a different teaching altogether. What the Church—every Church—has aimed at is a communion of believers in a certain number of stated beliefs, not a communion of people who wished to satisfy some unnamed and quite nebulous "spiritual needs."

Mr. Shaw warns us that if we say to men like Barnes and Inge:—

"Put off your orders and abandon the Church to the fools, bigots and liars (I borrow this classification from the Dean) who believe, or pretend to believe what mentally competent and ordinarily instructed persons cannot possibly believe nowadays without trifling with their own minds and the plain meaning of the texts," we reduce the Church to the level of the Fundamentalists of Idaho, and incidentally reduce ourselves to absurdity.

But the issue is not whether acting in this or that way reduces the Church to an absurdity, but whether the Church is an absurdity in an educated age, or to educated men and women. Mr. Shaw appears to be taking up just the position that many parsons take up, namely, that as the Bible *must* be right, if we find our reading of it to be in conflict with facts, then we must re-read it so as to make the Bible and facts harmonize. The plain truth is that it is the Fundamentalists of Idaho who actually represent genuine Christianity, and if Jesus and his disciples were here to-day, they would find themselves in a much more congenial atmosphere with the Idaho farmers and their beliefs, than they would with Messrs. Barnes and Inge.

* * *

The Clash of Absurdities.

It is scandalous, says Mr. Shaw, to compel a clergyman to subscribe to the obsolete political compromises of Queen Elizabeth before ordaining him, and he thinks it would be far more sensible to let the British Association revise the morning and evening services, "than to persevere in the convention that God retired from business early in the seventeenth century, after fussing about with the Church from the divorce of Catherine of Aragon until then, and then left everything settled and unalterable thenceforth to all eternity." Quite absurd. But what would you? The whole theory of revelation is absurd. The convention of decking out a representative of the primitive medicine-man and magic worker is absurd. The theory that these men, once ordained, have some special influence with God in producing fine weather, or getting the crops to grow, or giving us victory in battle, is absurd. The theory of their being called to their job by our national "Ju-Ju" is absurd. And, after all, these things are not more absurd than the implied belief of these reforming parsons, that God gives man a special revelation in one age, gets thousands burned, or imprisoned, or tortured, to get them to believe it, and then, at a later date, gives them another revelation which completely contradicts the previous one. Of course the position is absurd. And Mr. Shaw adds another absurdity to the general collection, by his refraining from saying that if these men do not believe in the teachings of the Church, they should get out of it and spend their time in a better way.

* * *

Mr. Shaw in Church.

Mr. Shaw would like the clergy to be able to do as he does when he attends a cathedral service. "I take what is valid for me, and let the rest pass by me to those for whom it is valid." Certainly, and

no one would raise any objection to his doing so. If he goes to a cathedral he is at perfect liberty to go there to admire the parsonic millinery, to listen to the organ, to hear how the choir sings, to study stained glass, or for any other conceivable purpose—even that of getting out of the rain or taking a nap. But Mr. Shaw's position is not quite that of Bishop Barnes and Dean Inge. He did not solemnly take up a post which involved belief in a certain number of things. He is not being paid for teaching these things. His being in a cathedral does not proclaim to the outside world that he believes these things. But if Mr. Shaw takes up a position in a church which leads people to believe that he holds certain things to be true, while he does not believe them to be true, it is hardly an adequate defence to say, "I believe these things, but in a sense different from that in which other people take them, and if my repeating the verbal formulas leads them to misunderstand what my actual beliefs are, that is not my affair." I think that in that case most men and women would say that it is really his affair, if he values his reputation for honesty; and when a man uses words in one sense, knowing that his hearers will understand them in another, the world has rather a harsh name for that species of conduct. And in this matter the world is justified in its judgment.

* * *

A Strange Ethic.

Now I have not the slightest doubt but that Dean Inge and Bishop Barnes justify themselves, to themselves, much in the same way that Mr. Shaw sets out to justify them. They would say they are turning the Church to better uses, when the question of honesty really turns on whether they are putting the Church to its proper use. They would also say they are interpreting Christian articles of belief in a manner more in agreement with modern knowledge, when the question is whether the interpretation which past generations of Christians have put upon them is correct or not. When a man takes out naturalization papers in this country, he is not expected to use his presence here as a means of serving the country he has formally renounced; and it would be a poor defence to say that in striving to help his country conquer this one he is serving the best interests of the English people. I am quite ready to believe that neither Dean Inge nor Bishop Barnes say anything in which they do not believe. But I am always left wondering whether they say all they do believe, and all they know. If they do, then they represent a puzzle that I am quite unable to solve. When they are belabouring the Fundamentalists of Idaho, these men, with others, are quite ready to point out that their opponents are swallowing the magical and primitive doctrines of savages. But they do not know, apparently, that the beliefs they retain have exactly the same origin, and no higher warranty. I cannot understand the puzzle. Bishop Barnes has explained that it was only when he found himself before a congregation with hardly any religious belief that he expressed his own doubts. And the confessions of other clergymen point to the conclusion that it is not really a question of educating the lay mind on religion, but of teaching orthodoxy so long as it is safe to do so, and thus gain the reputation of a pioneer without experiencing the trouble of becoming one.

Finally, there is one consideration that I really am surprised Mr. Shaw should have passed unnoticed. This is the existence of a class ethic and class way of looking at things. Every social group, while adhering, in broad lines, to the code of ethics generally current, has modifications in connexion

with their own group. Thus to a gambler a gambling debt takes precedence of a debt to a grocer or a butcher, although the one has done service and the other has not. A lawyer will do or not do things in connexion with his practice that he would face quite differently in ordinary life. Doctors, actors, financiers, all have their own special ethical code in dealing with affairs. The parson, too, has his. The sense of intellectual rectitude which may govern him when dealing with secular matters becomes modified when dealing with religion. The carelessness of the pulpit in the matter of truthfulness is notorious. Its readiness to suppress the truth when it is inimical to religion is likewise well known. It is the interests of the Church, the necessity to preserve religious faith that counts. No one expects from the pulpit, where religion is concerned, the same sense of honesty that is manifested in ordinary life. And, to be quite plain, no one gets it.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Queen was in Her Parlour.

"O couldst thou speak,
That I might hear thee call great Cæsar ass."

Shakespeare.

"He was not an intellectual Croesus, but his pockets were full of sixpences."—*Disraeli.*

MANY years ago Charles Bradlaugh wrote a slashing article on Royalty, entitled "The Impeachment of the House of Brunswick." It was a devastating piece of criticism worthy of the great Tribune of the People. The book made a lasting impression on me when I read it, and, curiously, a reading of Mr. Lytton Strachey's *Queen Victoria* (Chatto and Windus) recalled the impression made by the earlier volume.

There is really no association between the two books. Bradlaugh wrote like a lawyer, marshalling his facts with cold precision. Mr. Strachey is a brilliant journalist, with a keen eye for a telling phrase, and a turn for the picturesque. Yet the present-day journalist's mischievous humour is as deadly as Bradlaugh's impeachment in exposing the futility of Royalty. Few people, reading Mr. Strachey's purple pages, could restrain laughing, not only at the persons portrayed, as at the medieval institution of a royal caste, which still cumbers the British Constitution.

Recalling the junketings of two Jubilees, it is amusing to find that such a reversal of popular judgment has taken place as to permit edition after edition to be issued of Mr. Strachey's critical biography. For he writes with that urbane insolence which is the delight of our French neighbours, and which makes his book as attractive reading as a novel from the pen of a "best seller."

Mr. Strachey scatters his fun with a most liberal hand. Writing of Queen Victoria's infancy, he says:—

The child was extremely fat and bore a remarkable resemblance to her grandfather (George the Third). "It is the image of the late King!" exclaimed the Duchess. "It is King George in Petticoats," echoed the surrounding ladies as the little creature waddled with difficulty from one to the other.

Victoria's succession to the British throne is described as the opening of a new era. She succeeded William the Fourth, who is limned as:—

A bursting, bubbling old gentleman, with quarter-deck gestures, round, rolling eyes, and a head like a pineapple.

Such is Mr. Strachey's highly-coloured portrait of the original of the grimy statue that guards the city

end of London Bridge. "Silly Billy," however, did not devote himself altogether to high naval affairs at the Admiralty. He found much time to make love to the handsome actress, Mrs. Jordan, and the contemporary caricaturists loved to portray the King walking out with the fair, but frail actress, wheeling a perambulator full of children. On the side of the pram these abandoned artists drew the Royal Arms of England, with a smiling lion and unicorn.

"Silly Billy," however, gets off more lightly than little Victoria's uncles, who are described as "nasty old men, debauched and selfish, pig-headed and ridiculous." Mr. Strachey ought to be grateful that he is living in England at the present day and not in Paris in the reign of Louis Phillipe. One artist was actually "run-in" for drawing that monarch with a head like a pear. In the court-house he explained the position to the presiding judge: "If Nature makes our beloved King's head like a pear, what is a poor truthful artist to do?"

The old Duchess of Kent was ever assiduous that her daughter, Victoria, should grow up into a Christian queen, and no one can deny that she succeeded admirably in so training her. The old queen was Christian, but she was also narrow-minded, opinionated, and a perfect daughter of Mrs. Grundy. She nagged her eldest son, Edward, for attending race-meetings, and treated him like a naughty schoolboy until he was over fifty years of age. The marvel is, not that Edward became a man-about-town, but that he survived his Spartan upbringing with a modicum of reason.

Victoria was married to Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, who was a high-minded man placed in a difficult position. He designed workmen's cottages, a model of which still exists in Kennington Park, London. He conceived the idea of International Exhibitions in order to promote friendship among the nations. The first was held in Hyde Park in 1851, and the building was afterwards transplanted to Sydenham, and is well known as the Crystal Palace. At Balmoral, the royal couple built a castle after their own Teutonic ideas, and the German Prince, after being sculptured in full Highland costume, designed "Balmoral" and "Victoria" tartans with which to decorate the walls and floors.

By the kindly decree of Providence, Albert the Good did not live to see his eldest son called as a prominent witness in a notorious divorce case, but the Evangelical queen was greatly perturbed. She wrote to Mr. Delane, editor of the *Times*, asking him if he would "frequently write articles pointing out the immense danger and evil of the wretched frivolity and levity of the views and lives of the Higher Classes." A courtier to the finger-tips, Mr. Delane did write one solitary article five years later upon that subject, but, apparently, too late to achieve the desired purpose of reforming the British Aristocracy. Mr. Strachey's sighs are almost lyrical:—

Ah! If only the Higher Classes would learn to live as she lived in the domestic sobriety of her sanctuary at Balmoral!

During the Victorian era the majority of people "wallowed in the pathetic." Funerals were as popular as weddings. And the queen's love of gloom was as pronounced as that of the meanest of her subjects. She had a chance of expressing this feeling when the Prince Consort died of typhoid fever, and she seized it with both hands. For forty years a picture of her husband, taken after death, and framed with immortelles, hung over the bed of her widowhood. The dead prince's room was kept exactly as he left it last, and servants were actually employed in laying out his clothes as if he were still

alive. To the outside world the royal grief was expressed in marble and metal in Kensington Gardens, in a weird design somewhat resembling a dinner cruet. It was a fitting apotheosis of a period without parallel in English history.

No wonder Mr. Strachey pokes sly fun at such strange happenings. What is even more astonishing is the snobbishness of that era. That Privy Councillors, statesmen, generals, admirals, and otherwise rational human beings, should have worshipped such a woman, and conducted themselves as flunkies in her presence, is really surprising. To his lasting credit, Gladstone did not grovel so much as the others. He incurred the Royal displeasure: "I do not like Mr. Gladstone. He talks to me as if I were a public meeting." The astute Disraeli "out Heroded Herod" and laid the flattery on with a trowel. He was not English, however, and he was gratifying an ambition in the face of enormous odds.

Perhaps we had better not be too ready to sneer at Queen Victoria, but reserve these marks of affection for some of the Victorians. She was a woman of quite commonplace mind and ordinary accomplishments, and she was worshipped as a goddess. Small wonder if the burning of so much incense got to her head. But the Victorians, with bright exceptions, were self-complacent folks, half-educated, but deeming themselves the proud heirs of all the ages. And now their boasted age is a synonym for a narrow and conventional view of life, and justly regarded as the last kick of Feudalism.

MIMNERMUS.

How to Treat Gods Courteously

I USED to worship God till about 1879. After ceasing that slave-attitude, sincere though it was, I began criticizing the God-doctrine, and, for nearly fifty years, have subjected it to what are called, in the science of chemistry, "tests." But, being immensely interested in the preparation of youth for life and citizenship, I have very often pondered the question: How will educators treat the Gods when the God-doctrine is no longer seriously held? On the present occasion, my reply to the question will be immediate and simple. Instead of conducting the trembling reader, by the aid of a learned torch, through a gloomy labyrinth of argument on pedagogy (I wish the wretched word "pedagogy" could be abolished!), I will at once offer an illustration, such as might be addressed to either adulthood or youth.

* * *

"We can't let the place stay like this," said one of the twin-brothers to his twin. "If a pack of wolves arrive in fury next winter; or worse still, if a band of foeman from the northern hills burst upon us, woe be to the men, women, and children of Thebes! Can the place be properly called a city if it has no wall round it for defence?"

The twins—strong, lissom, almost naked, and wearing thin mantles—had got their health and wit from fresh air, and sunlight, and the fruits of the earth which the air and sun ripen. And so, the tale ran that they were sons of the Sky-God. As they stood on a hill, they looked into the vale where the houses of the city—some of stone, many of wood—stretched in a long, straggling line. Beyond were mountains, where shepherds tended flocks of goats and sheep; and here and there clumps of olive-trees spread their grey-green leaves. As they glanced to their left westwards, the brothers could see the rocks of Parnassus, where dwelt ladies of the song, and dance, and drama, and poetry, and story, and knowledge of the starry vault. And since, to men and

women, song and science are as great a need as bread and drink, these ladies—the Nine Muses, or Musical Beings—were said to be daughters of the Sky-God. One of the twins, Amphion, was a special comrade to the Nine Ladies, as you might guess from the joy with which he sang lays while he played his lyre. This lyre had three or four (or was it seven?) strings of gut, stretched tight in a frame made of two goat's horns, and a cross-piece between the horns, and a sounding hollow made of tortoise-shell. To such an instrument the Greeks chanted their lyrics, or lyre-songs. And, in a later day, the Freethinking poets, Burns and Shelley, were lyric singers. But go we back to the hill near Thebes!

"The place ought to have a wall round it," said the other twin, named Zethus. "But, while I am quite ready to hew out blocks from the rock, and carry the stones from the quarry, I must honestly say I have not the skill for planning the wall, the battlements and the towers."

"Well, dear boy," replied the man of the lyre, "that is just where I come in. I don't feel I have the right knack and grip for the stone-getting, but I feel able to set the stones in order. So you do the physical side, and I will do the thinking side, and our twin powers will co-operate for a successful building."

And 'twas done. Stout Zethus brought his huge blocks from the mountain cliff, and piled them in heaps outside the city of Thebes; and thus he laid what folk of big words call the Materialist Basis. Then stepped up the Music-man, and, as Amphion played his lyre, and sang his song, all in orderly (or Kosmic, as the Greeks said) measure and rhythm, the stones moved into right lines, and courses, and good balance, and the wall of Thebes rose high and massive, and the towers thereof were proud. What Physical Energy began, the Mind-Music completed. And so, good listeners all to my story, it is the energy and mind of Man, and not (as our fathers thought) of Sky-Gods, or earth Gods, that construct homes, cities and commonwealths. Thus were walls erected to shield folk from wild beasts or wild humans; but times change, and manners change, and ideas change, and the cry of war and of cruelty changes to the chorus of world peace.

How did Thebes first arise? A seafarer—combative, sturdy and quick-witted—came all the way from Phœnicia, in search of his sister, Europa, who had been carried off by the Sky-God. Or shall we rather say, in human terms, that certain values of civilization crossed the sea from Phœnicia into the rather uncultivated region of Europe? And the traveller, Kadmos or Cadmus, did carry values. He killed a dragon; and that is another way of saying that he met all sorts of natural difficulties of swamp, forest, and beasts. On the spot where he performed this feat he erected a little fort, around which grew up this very city of Thebes that so badly required a wall. Cadmus had brought from Phœnicia the secret of the alphabet, and gave the Greeks the sixteen letters—"alpha," "beta," and the rest; and so introduced mind-order, and expression of order in the writing of thought and logic. He also introduced the material order, in that splendid earth-working which we call counter-work, or culture, otherwise agriculture. Modern literature and modern agriculture would very much astonish the Gods of Greece and the Muses of Parnassus.

Of course, when one dragon was smashed, others appeared, in the shape of wars, disputes, tumults, plagues and disasters. But humanity in Thebes (as everywhere else) wrestled with Nature and misfortune, and established custom, law, order, decency,

and goodwill. So remarkable were the results that, here again, men gave to the Gods above the credit that was really due to our race below; for it takes man a long time to know himself. In Thebes, people talked of a lady who protected them from misery and tragedy, and whom they entitled "Saviour," or Soteira. Her usual name was Themis, and she was regarded as the wife of the Sky-God. As a matter of fact, it is not Themis who reveals law and order from the sky; it is humanity which, by patient study, expresses the law and order of its own observation of the sky, and calls the expression "astronomy." And, without law and order in seed-sowing and harvest and ploughing, could the earth be tilled and crops grown? Hence, the lady Themis was represented as holding in her hand the Horn of Plenty (Cornucopia), brimming with wheat-ears and fruit. Sometimes, she was seen, in the artist's carving, as a serious dame, clasping the scales of that justice which is one of humanity's most glorious creations, and which gives a rallying-cry to the slaves and oppressed all over our globe. Poets say (but they speak for the Best in the heart of man) that Themis was a friend to all who were oppressed, and to all homeless aliens. And thus, long before Jesus of Bethlehem was thought of, the citizens of Thebes had evolved the ideal of a Saviour, and quite finely embodied it in the form of a woman. Happy were her daughters three, and their names were Justice, Order and Peace. These bright girls worked for a living—Justice watching over the City-state; Order ensuring fair dealing between man and man; and Peace (otherwise *Ircne*) creating merry humour and fellowship. As the measurement of time progressed in the simple science of Greece, the three girls not only presided over the order and progress of Spring season, Summer season, and Autumn season; they took interest in the small divisions known as Hours (marked then by sun-dials and water clocks). They even dubbed themselves the Rosy Hours, and danced gleefully in token of man's triumph, if only in passing moments, over his tears and his griefs. At dawn they yoked the horses to the chariot of the Sun-God; at evening, they unyoked the steeds and stabled them; and they also acted as the Fates, ruling the Past, the Present, and the Future. But shall we not rather read, in these legends, the secret of man's unconquerable courage amid all the pains and convulsions of his evolution past and present, and in face of the tasks of the future? Shall we not recognize how human courage valiantly dances on the road of sorrow and obstacle, and blazes into hope at every sunrise, and, at every starlit evening, goes to rest in calm preparation for the duties of the morning? A painting on a Greek vase depicted the Sky-God, Zeus, taking counsel with his wise wife, Themis. So poets feign; but, in truth, man takes counsel with his own heart, and wins wisdom from experience; and the true Themis is the wisdom-winning through fire and labour.

Years passed, and the poets fetched other gods from the Sky-land. One of these heavenly visitors was Christ of Bethlehem, healer and consoler; crucified Pioneer; prophet rising victoriously from the sepulchre. Here, as in a romantic mirror, you see humanity acquiring the art of medicine and sympathy with suffering, and emerging, unbeaten and serene, from countless agonies and desolations.

* * *

Such a method deals courteously with the departed Gods. It is the historical method. But the dull and deadly tribe of theologians—one of the most hopeless trade unions in the history of human thought—has conspired to rob us of the interpretation of the old

myths and parables; and, instead of helping us to a natural understanding of the Gods as imaginative figures in man's early visions of Nature, has turned the Gods into shocking dummies in a mechanical creed; and Christ is transmuted into a repulsive tyrant prescribing a Faith—"which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly."

Well, the dull and deadly tribe will vanish for want of offspring; and, in the year ???? (I will not raise a discussion by naming the exact date) the schools of civilization will impart lessons such as I have just sketched, with complete courtesy to the Gods.

F. J. GOULD.

A Parson's Grouch.

THOSE who have had the misfortune to attend any kind of evangelical service must have been bored stiff by the sight of the grinning minister greeting individual members of his congregation. The oily insincerity, the unctuous messiness of his pawing the adults, and greasily petting the young, would sicken a sensible savage. It must be a hell upon earth to the parson himself, but one seldom gets his point of view. He cannot afford to be frank.

For once the curtain is drawn. Dr. Lloyd C. Douglas, a famous Congregational minister, after twenty-five years endurance, "blows the gaff" on all the ghastly hypocrisy of it. The bleat of this disgruntled sheep is far more severe than the roaring of a jungle lion. Naturally Dr. Douglas "has in mind the constructive purpose of setting the churches on the right path" . . . but he gives them hell in the process. After all, the *Freethinker* has exactly the same aim as Dr. Douglas, and is not half so abusive.

Dr. Douglas pours out his soul in the *Atlantic Monthly*, and does not mince his mouthings, although claiming that they "have not been conceived in petulance and brought forth in irascibility." He hates the "noise" of the ordinary (congregational) church, he detests the "handshakings," he loathes the gossip and scandal-mongering, he despises the "snappy usher," he grumbles at the parson "romping about fussing with his holy properties," he scorns the "excited deacon scurrying down the aisle." Jesus said, "I will give you rest," but, according to this critic, the churches are "as restless as the Grand Central Station."

Having exhausted his ammunition in attacking what is merely the etiquette or ritual of church behaviour, Dr. Douglas fetches out a new artillery of weapons to fight more important aspects of church life. There is scarcely a function of the church organization he ignores or praises. The churches are mechanical, meddlesome and money-grubbing. They have become mere machines for the collection of funds:—

The minister is a tax collector, sitting at the receipt of custom. So much of his interest is required by this business that the main function of his office is seriously neglected. He is aware of it, but does not know how to remedy it. Moreover, he observes that the conditions are growing steadily worse. Every year there is installed new machinery to be kept in motion, sometimes because it seems to make a noise significant of progress. Let him protest, and he is an obstructionist. The chieftains of the denominations, being a bit remote from local problems and local sentiment, do not yet realize that they are laying low the goose that lays the golden egg, and speeding the arrival of the day when a general revolt against the complicated mechanism of ecclesiastical bodies will seriously cripple them.

Dr. Douglas does not exaggerate the banal stupidity of the manner in which ministers meddle with matters far beyond their understanding. The clergy as citizens have rights and duties like other citizens, but in so far as their training, experience, and creed are an influence on their political views, they are obviously less fitted to advise citizens how to vote than the average citizen is to advise the clergy how to get to heaven. Dr. Douglas shows how this blended incapacity and meddlesomeness makes the ministry an easy auxiliary to "the

inquisitorial machinery of bossism." He makes the definite unqualified accusation (which most of our readers will confirm from experience) that

the average preacher, whose experience of industrial problems is restricted to what he reads, knows just about enough economics to speak its academic dialect. He lacks enough practical knowledge of shop problems to make his counsel not only valueless but dangerous.

In fact Dr. Douglas thinks militancy is the damnation of religion. "A militant church," he says, "is as absurd as a blistering twilight."

It remains to be said that there is a good deal of absolute nonsense about the elderly minister's indictment. Of course he establishes his case: the ministry deserve all that he says about them. The unfortunate thing (from every point of view) is that churches are essentially meddling and all the rest of it. No church has ever been founded on the doctrine, "judge not." Every church has a credal test, or a book, or a tradition, by which it condemns. In ancient days the priests wielded power either directly, or through their influence over kings and rulers. Dr. Douglas must be blind indeed if he does not see that the clergy of to-day are continuing the old tradition. They still condemn and judge, but nowadays their ghastly creeds of persecution, bigotry and superstition require countenance and force from the hordes of ignorant voters who can do much more than the old monarchs could do, in interference with customs, habits and morals.

Dr. Douglas is silent about the direct corruption which enables rich swindlers to maintain ministers and churches to teach doctrines and undertake agitations favourable to their methods of corruption. Instances leap to the eye. Every politician in America smirched with public scandal is notably pious and famous for the patronage of favoured parsons.

"Quietism" never has been and never will be a popular religion. The "twilight" phrase used by Dr. Douglas invites the ridicule of the religious and the irreligious. If anybody wants a "quiet church" in which to meditate and be free from meddling ministers he must choose an empty church, or the free open spaces outside. A beautiful old building, like some of our famous abbeys, or a tiny little cloister looking on to a garden, or any kind of place or space that Dr. Douglas would approve, must take its proper place as one of the many means by which quiet, thoughtful, artistic or imaginative people seek outlet and stimulus for the poetic side of their nature. Such a church must not claim supernatural or other superiority to cinemas, whist parties, concerts, bowling-greens, books, plays, or museums.

Dr. Douglas lays absurd stress on "the feeling of reverence from a holy place," which holy place is going to inspire mankind to all kinds of fine things—some day. This is to reverse the logical way: the plaque on the house says, "Here Milton was born, or "Here was written the greatest of all books." Dr. Douglas would reverse the process, and create an atmosphere by building a church (open only at twilight) where noble and beautiful things are to be born.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Acid Drops.

A county court judge said, the other day, that it was time the oath was abolished. In his opinion it did no good, because if people were going to lie they would lie, oath or no oath. We have been saying the same thing for years, but the fondness of religious people for magic is too strong for the advice to be acted upon. And the oath is a survival of pure magic. It is based upon the belief that if the man who takes the oath does not tell the truth, God will punish him on the spot for taking his name in vain. That lies at the root of all trials by ordeal. In the New Testament, it will be remembered, Ananias was struck dead for telling a lie. But if every Christian in court who told a lie was served in the same way, the busiest people about the courts would be undertakers—and the Churches would have smaller congregations than ever.

We know, of course, that the House of Commons has prayers every day, but we are rather surprised at a statement made by Sir Thomas Inskip, that about 250 members take part in these prayers every day. Perhaps it only means that this number is present when the prayers are said. Sir Thomas piously says that "we hope and believe" the prayers are heard and answered by "Infinite Wisdom." We fancy the Infinite Wisdom must be hard put to it to know just what to do with some gatherings of the House, and if the result is directly due to an influx of Infinite Wisdom, one wonders whether it would not be better to have tried with just ordinary common sense and given "Infinite Wisdom" a rest. We should have imagined that the amount of wisdom displayed by the House of Commons hardly calls for an interposition of Providence to explain its existence.

The Rev. Gordon James congratulates the *Daily Express* on printing Emil Ludwig's *Life of Christ*. He infers from this that "it is obvious that religion is still making a strong appeal to the popular mind." The *Express*, he adds, knows what it is doing. Verily so, brother, verily so. There is money to be made in pandering to a certain section of the populace. But that does not warrant the inference you make.

In the *Evening Standard* Lord Beaverbrook has made some disclosures concerning political cross-purposes in this country during the war. Of the diaries published by Lord Beaverbrook, the *Morning Post* remarked: "They reveal once more, with a terrible, if accidental, clarity the danger from which we escaped by the mercy of an inscrutable Providence. That, in the circumstances, we won the war—if, indeed, the war was won—always seemed to us surprising; in the light of these diaries we might call it a miracle." The *English Churchman* fervently exclaim at this: "Lest we forget!" Once more one is reminded that God's (or Providence's) ways are not our ways. With omnipotency at his elbow, God could quite easily have ensured that "cross-purposes" would not have arisen. Had he done that, one may assume that the war would have been "won" a year or two earlier, and a few million lives saved. That would have been a miracle millions of sorrowing relatives would not have objected to. Providence preferred to wait and work a different miracle. The ways of Providence may be inscrutable, but they don't exhibit much fatherly love or earthly humaneness. "Lest we forget!"

Continuing his agitation against the religious service at the annual commemoration at the cyclists' memorial, "D.P.S." reminds cyclists that the memorial was subscribed to by wheelfolk other than Christians. He also gets in another hard knock with the following:—

I contend that the majority of cyclists are not hankering after any kind of "religious flavour" at the commemoration. The majority of those who attend do so in a spirit of cycling comradeship, and because they believe the annual commemoration is an official affair, organized to bring together a representative gathering of wheelfolk to pay homage to the dead. This correspondence will have dispelled that illusion. The organizers of the religiously flavoured commemoration are simply exploiting this spirit of cycling comradeship. Then they turn to the Conservators [of the Memorial] and declare there is a big demand for the religious flavour!

Mr. J. L. Dawson, Methodist local preacher, and now a town councillor at Huddersfield, urges (in *Methodist Times*) his religious friends to enter municipal life. The reasons he gives are interesting. Moral responsibilities of local bodies, he says, are growing, and more men and women are required as councillors who know that "purity is to have religion thoroughly." Next, the greatest work and the hardest to-day for a young Methodist is the protection of Sunday. "Parks, tennis-courts, amusements of all kinds, now lie under the control of local bodies, and it is here that, in a practical way, those who love Sunday for all it gives to mankind,

can retain in some small measure the blessing and joy received." Therefore, the best service to the nation, says Mr. Dawson, would be the entering into public life of "young Christian men and women with high ideals." How noble that sounds! The Methodist who becomes a councillor chiefly to interfere with other persons' liberty to enjoy Sunday as they may think fit, is glorified as a man or woman with high ideals! Mr. Dawson, you will note, does not exhort his pious pals to give unselfish service to their town. He urges them to become councillors in order that they may exploit municipal authority in the interests of puritan prejudices, and that they may give full rein to pious busy-body interference. What an altruistic mob these Methodists are.

This is the latest version of the story of the miserable unbeliever. "H.M.," the incredibly happy note-taker of the *Methodist Recorder*, is responsible for it:—

In the Park was a well-dressed and courteous man, who (not on a platform) was expressing his secularist views. Christianity, said he, was exploded; and so on. A quiet man . . . suddenly said, in a Scottish accent, "I've heard all that, and I have not been a believer, but for twenty-five years I have been trying to find the secret of happiness. And one thing I can't get over is, that the people who have Christian faith are happy people." He spoke with a sort of pathetic envy of the happy Christians he knew. There are hundreds of men like that who go to the Park, listen to the destroyers, and go away sorrowful.

"Ring down the curtain (sob), I can't sing to-night!" A lump of pathetic envy bubbles in our throat.

The Rev. Douglas Morley, on being asked to put the relationship of Boy Scouts and Wesleyan Church from the Church point of view, said that Scouts should put the religious aim of the movement first. That was a reasonable request, he thought, for it coincided with the Scout promise of homage and service to God. Boys should be taught to value a definite church attachment, and should take a living interest in church life, and should realize that religious life was at best just as important as their other scouting activities. He liked, he said, to think of Scoutmasters as assistant ministers. A Scoutmaster who had no interest in anything else at his church except his Scout company, was not much good as a Scoutmaster. We hope the reverend gent., in saying all this has not been indiscreet. The Scout Headquarters, which is supported by all kinds of Christians, and by many people indifferent to religion, may not agree with the Wesleyan Church exploiting the movement as a means for producing the perfect Wesleyan and nothing else.

We seem to be getting on, or at least we are changing a great deal. After damming up hill and down dale all and sundry for going out pleasure-seeking on Sunday instead of going to church, some of the clergy are driven to follow people on their junketings, and take the hocus-pocus to them. Thus at the York and District Motor Club races, on Sunday May 6, the Rev. H. T. Gedge, of York Minster, invited the members to join in a service held on the track, near the score board. There were prayers, hymns, etc., and the parson explained that he had the approval of the vicar of the parish in carrying out the service as he was doing. He explained that cycling and motoring were quite excellent things, and he had no objection so long as people did not neglect the worship of God. All of which, being interpreted, meant that, if the Church cannot get a monopoly of Sunday trade it is willing to take a part of it, on the ground that half a loaf is better than none at all. But, shades of Puritanism! A parson conducting a service on a racing track on Sunday!

Mr. Ben Turner states that it was blasphemy to the Almighty to turn lads and lasses out to start work at six o'clock in the morning. The Christian pastors and masters can do this sort of thing much better, Mr. Turner, and your aspirations for better social conditions gain nothing by invoking a name. Have a look at social history a hundred years ago, and see how the

Lord's appointed fed his sheep, and leave medieval speech to those who are medieval minded—and more power to your elbow in the fight for better conditions.

The Bishop of Blackburn does not agree with those who say they do not go to church because they can worship God better in the fields and lanes. We are one with the Bishop in believing that this is an excuse for staying away, not the reason for abstention. The excuse is usually made by those who lack the moral courage to say plainly that they do not want to worship, and do not believe in going to church to listen to things being said by a parson that are said a great deal better in books. But the professionalism of the Bishop declares itself in the remark that it requires the communion of a Church to get into the presence of God. The Church provides "an aid to intimate fellowship with God," such as is "not provided anywhere else." We are still in the region of "sacred" places, stones, and other objects, and yet some people are offended when we say that these bishops move on the intellectual level of savages! What else is one to say with truth?

Someone sends us a copy of the *Shaft of Light*, which hails from that land of religious cranks, the United States. This particular effort seems opposed to the Christian Church, and also to Christianity. But as it rejects one God in favour of another that it calls the Omnipotent One, and declares that the Constitution of the United States is "inspired by the Omnipotent One," it seems only dethroning one stupidity in order to establish another. And to those who like variations in foolishness the journal will probably make a strong appeal.

Bishop Henson is very dubious about the state of the country. He says that some of the things that make for an increase in crime are the effects of the war, diminution of religious agencies in the country, secularization of education and social life, shortage of clergy, and the non-observance of the Lord's Day. In the main, this only means that the Bishop's business is undergoing a slump. There are, of course, some very bad effects from the war, but we would remind Dr. Henson that during the war the *Freethinker* was the only paper in Britain which persistently pointed out the moral and mental evils that were bound to follow the war, while the Bishops and the rest of the clergy were preaching the "moral uplift" experienced, picturing our huge army as made up entirely of natural born gentlemen, who improved in courtesy and behaviour as the war continued. Even now, there is not a bishop nor a paper in the country that dare print the truth concerning the demoralization that occurred during the war, both to civilians and to those in the army.

For the other part of the Bishop's lament, we say emphatically, that bad as things are, they are infinitely better than they were before secularization of life and education set in, before there was such a shortage of clergy, and before people had learned to spend their Sundays in a civilized manner, instead of behaving like a crowd of savages oppressed by an inherited taboo. But Dr. Henson is a bishop. Being a bishop he can only reckon national improvement in terms of the strength of his particular form of stupidity. That appears to be about all there is in his complaint. And there is no improvement likely short of another very long and devastating war which would reduce civilized life and thought to a much lower level than it is at present. And when that war occurs, we prophecy we shall have the bishops blessing battle flags and battle trappings, and talking about the great "moral uplift" the whole nation is experiencing.

Some one is advertising, through the *Daily News*, for an assistant on the staff of some—unnamed—paper, for an assistant editor who has had "experimental knowledge" of being born again. We wonder what kind of a test applicants will be put through. At a venture we should say that for a man with that kind of experience it is a pity he was ever born at all.

The Nottingham Watch Committee have given their gracious consent to the appearance of the "King of Kings" film, but have stipulated no smoking is to be permitted while this film is being shown, and no one must enter during its performance. We wonder the Committee did not stipulate that prayers should be said before and after the performance. But we wonder how long it will be before some of the cinema proprietors have the courage to tell these committees of religious cranks and busybodying stupidities in office to go to the devil. We are quite sure that these ridiculous stipulations would be set aside by a higher court if the matter were put to the test. And there is enough money now in the film industry to fight the matter, if only a little moral courage and a small sense of independence existed.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has just purchased a picture painted under "psychic influence." Of course, he says it is the most remarkable picture he has ever seen. Anything labelled "psychic" always is for him. And the next picture that is done under psychic influence will be still more remarkable. This particular picture is by Captain W. Longstaffe, who recently painted a picture called "Menin Gate at Midnight." The present one "symbolizes" the spirits of the dead filing past their own gravestones. We can understand the idea, but where does the "psychic influence" come in? We have seen and read of some curious cases of religious delusion, but none "curiouser" than that of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Mrs. Fergusson, of Gedling, Notts, committed suicide after she had been informed that the body of her husband had been found in the Trent. Mrs. Fergusson had received a letter from her husband telling her that he was about to commit suicide, owing to financial troubles; but she was a Spiritualist, and the spirits had told her he was not dead. When she had the news that he was, she committed suicide by inhaling gas. But we do not think we ought to blame the spirits for misleading Mrs. Fergusson. Spirits are not agreed upon the kind of place they are living in, the way in which they communicate with each other, the kind of food they live on, or the way they move about, and as they can so easily make mistakes in these matters, they may easily be at sea concerning such a matter as to whether a particular person is alive or dead. And anyone who has had to do with spirit communications knows that the communicants are seldom over-burdened with intelligence.

Speaking of Sir James Barrie, a writer in a daily paper declares that Barrie's influence for the happiness of children has been profound. The childhood of the Victorian Age, he says, was a dismal business. Youth was repressed, and discipline was rigid. But nowadays the child is better understood, and this new attitude is largely due to writers like Barrie, who have helped parents to appreciate the mind and sentiment of the young. We may be wrong, but we believe the improvement is due largely to educational pioneers who fought against the traditional Christian attitude towards, and the orthodox Christian method of treating, the child.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget proposes that rates on buildings devoted to production by manual labour shall be cut down to a quarter of the present amount, and that the money lost to the local authorities in this manner shall be made up out of the national taxation. Why not make up the deficiency by rating buildings devoted to non-productive labour—buildings used for storing a God in? Then, there is a few millions could be gleaned by an entertainment tax on the Christians' Sunday amusement, and also on baptisms and confirmations. And a tax on the Church liveries called surplices and vestments would be helpful.

An empire is usually acquired by force and maintained by force. In light of this, the ordinary man may be pardoned if he senses an incongruity in Christian

priests manifesting interest in Empire Day, while teaching the pacifist doctrines of Jesus. The incongruity does not trouble the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, or Dr. Norman Maclean and Dr. J. H. Miller, who have together issued a manifesto respecting Empire Day and "its claims upon the Churches." These gentlemen invite the clergy and ministers, both home and abroad, to make special reference in "all our churches" to "our own people overseas," and to offer prayers for Britons in all lands, that "we of the British race may bear a Christian witness." Special prayers, special sermons, and special services constitute the suggested programme.

It would, of course, be wrong to suggest that the parsons were trying to exploit national sentiment for the benefit of the clerical business. The writers of the manifesto clearly state what they wish to achieve. They desire that the character of Britons overseas shall be formed on the teachings of Christ. They are anxious about this because on it depends the "realizing of brotherhood," and the "securing of peace on earth." At this point we invite the reader to forget all he knows about various bloodthirsty and bitter conflicts that history records as happening between Christian people of different sects and denominations, whose characters were formed by Christian teaching. He must forget, too, the recent Prayer Book squabble. He will then have no difficulty in believing that the brotherhood of man and peace on earth will be realized by Christian teaching, and especially by the average Empire Day sermon.

The "Toc H" Council has declared against the appointment of Unitarian ministers as Toc H. padres. A Methodist journal, after expressing its sorrow that the decision had to be, says that Toc H is not simply an organization for the promotion of social service tinged with Christian ideals. It is, as pointed out by its founder, a brotherhood "rooted and grounded in the faith of the Incarnation." If Unitarian ministers are admitted as padres, the faith of Toc H in the Divinity of Christ will immediately be called in question. Of course it would be. Unitarians ought to know by this time that it is very difficult—nay, almost impossible—to render social service unless one has the right "tinge." One must "abandon all rank" when entering a Toc H temple. But even if that is done, it is not sufficient. One must take care his "tinge" is of the right hue—otherwise, brotherhood is "off." Besides, there are still grave doubts as to whether a Unitarian is really a respectable person.

Addressing the Rev. M. E. Aubrey, of the Baptist Union, a weekly paper says:—

When more clergymen reach the conclusion to which you have arrived, that modern youth is splendid, then will the Church succeed in grasping the young. Why should they be blamed for preferring healthy outdoor games to uninteresting church-going? It is the superior attitude of so many spiritual leaders which alienates the youth of the country, but now that some are beginning to realize this truth there is hope for all.

We fear the "hope for all" will not materialize. Modern youth cannot be caught by belated compliments. The young people are doing their own thinking nowadays, and are not at all hankering after officious advice from self-appointed "spiritual leaders." Such leaders started to go out of fashion when the masses could no longer be kept ignorant.

To a pious gathering, a Burmese missionary, Mr. Maung Ba, told a story of one of the worst air-raids in London. A mother and her little girl were taking cover in a basement, and the child said, "Mother, may I pray?" "Yes," said the mother, terrified by the thought of bombs that might fall at any moment, "of course you may, if you know a prayer." The child knelt down and prayed, "For what we are about to receive, O Lord, make us truly thankful." A timely and appropriate prayer was that, with the true note in it of Christian gratitude to the Author of all things.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—Mrs. Luckens, 55.

T. RAWTON.—We do not say that in the case of a conflict between duty to one's country and obedience to the Pope, that every Roman Catholic would place the latter first. But we do say that every Roman Catholic would be expected to do so. When Rome pronounces, her sheep-like followers are expected to obey. Other Churches would like to be able to say the same, and to be in the same position, but the circumstances that gave them birth puts a theoretical limit to their power in that direction.

S.S. (Manchester).—Mr. Cohen has far too much on hand to write out a lengthy account of the executions by the Catholic Church of heretics and others. Any history of the Inquisition, or almost any history of the Reformation will provide you with the material you require.

J. J. BRIGHTON.—Lecture Notices are useless for the forthcoming issue of the paper that do not reach us by first post on Tuesday morning. Yours did not reach us till Wednesday.

T. W. HAUGHTON.—We are glad to have your appreciation of our articles on Mexico and the Roman Church. As you say, living in Ireland, you come into close contact with the Roman Church, and are able to estimate what it would be capable of where its power is greater. Many years ago Bradlaugh said that the last great battle would be fought between Roman Catholicism and Freethought, and the Church of Rome is far more likely to swallow up the other Christian bodies than they are to absorb it.

W. A. ELVIDGE.—We have to take the writers of most scientific books as we get them. There are not many who will so state their case as to leave religious implications severely alone. There is usually an attempt to find room for religious imaginings. What the critical reader has to do is to separate the scientific statement from the religious musings and fantasies.

J. G. BARTRAM.—Hope your open-air season will be successful. If we can help in any way please let us know.

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.

Arrangements for the Liverpool Whit-Sunday N.S.S. Conference are now complete, although some of the Branches have not yet sent in the names of their delegates. We hope they will attend to this without delay, as every Branch ought to be represented. The business meetings of the Conference will be held in the Washington Hotel, Lime Street. The President and other officials of the Society will meet delegates and members there at 7 o'clock on the Saturday evening.

The business meetings of the Conference will be held in the Washington Hotel, at 10.30 and 2.30, on Sunday,

May 27. In the evening there will be a public meeting at the Picton Hall, which will be addressed by the President, Mr. G. Whitehead, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, Mr. F. Mann, and others. The chair will be taken at 7 p.m. Admission will be free, but there will be a number of reserved seats at 1s. each. These can be obtained from Mr. A. Jackson, 7 Kirk Street, Bootle, Lancashire.

On the Monday, provided a sufficient number of delegates and friends signify their intention of joining, there will be an excursion to Chester. This will include a trip down the river, dinner and tea, at an inclusive cost of 9s. 3d. Those who intend joining must let it be known in advance. Letters should be addressed to either the General Secretary, or to Mr. A. Jackson.

The General Secretary will be pleased to hear as soon as possible from any who have not already written as to what accommodation is required while in Liverpool. Full particulars as to what is needed, and for how long, should be sent, so as to prevent disappointment.

Sir Arthur Keith has created another "sensation" by declaring that there is no scientific warranty whatever for the belief in a future life. His great offence is that of speaking in quite plain and unmistakable language concerning his disbelief—which is, in this country, terribly bad form. Imagine a scientific man having the temerity to speak thus:—

Every fact known to medical men compels the inference that, mind, spirit, soul are the manifestations of a living brain, just as the flame is the manifest spirit of a burning candle. At the moment of extinction, both flame and spirit cease to have a separate existence. However much this mode of explaining man's mentality may run counter to long and deeply cherished beliefs, medical men cannot think otherwise if they are to believe the evidence of their senses.

That is too bad! The orthodox way is to say these things in very ambiguous language, and to accompany them with expressions of regret, of the great sorrow it will bring to many sensitive minds, etc., etc. But to speak thus plainly, well, one might just as well follow the *Freethinker*—which has been saying this for nearly fifty years—and have done with it.

Sir Arthur Keith's speech, with some of the clerical comments on it, are too interesting to dismiss with a paragraph or two, and Mr. Cohen will deal with the subject at length next week. But we may say at once, that for hopeless confusion and childish incompetence the comments that have appeared hitherto, eclipse even those made on the same gentleman's British Association address on Darwinism. In most cases the confusion is so great that it would require a volume to disentangle a paragraph.

Mr. J. Clayton, of Burnley, is holding open-air meetings on Freethought in the Lancashire towns within easy distance of his own, and will be glad to hear from any Freethinkers who can help in the local arrangements. His address is 48 Athol Street, Burnley.

Taking Manchester as a centre there are a number of towns within a twenty-mile circle, which offer splendid opportunities for open-air Freethought meetings during the summer months. All that is required is for someone—or a few someones—to get to work and let the General Secretary know what help they are prepared to give any speaker in conducting such meetings. If that is done the Society will see to the rest, but we hope this hint will be taken and acted on. There should be at least a score of such meetings going on every week between now and the end of September. The time is favourable for Freethought propaganda, and we should make the most of it.

Durham and Northumberland are also good fields for similar work, and what we have said about Lancashire applies also to these two counties. All we want at headquarters, is information from those on the spot as to what are the possibilities.

Mr. A. E. Roberts, a newcomer to the London open-air platform, is lecturing twice to-day (May 20). He will speak in Victoria Park, at 3.15, and in Regent's Park, at 6 p.m. We hope that Freethinkers who can make it convenient to attend these meetings will do their best to see that Mr. Roberts has good audiences. We hear very good accounts of him as a public speaker.

Mr. G. Whitehead will be at Liverpool for the week preceding the Annual Conference. The meetings will commence on May 19, and continue until the day previous to the Conference, which is held on May 27; details will be found in the Lecture Notices. Local members are asked to help to make these meetings known. Small bills advertising the meetings may be obtained for distribution from the Secretary of the Liverpool Branch, Mr. A. Jackson, 7 Kirk Street, Bootle, Lancs., to whom application should be made.

The Newcastle-upon-Tyne Branch will hold meetings each Sunday evening, at 7 p.m., beginning May 20, at Town Moor, near North Road Entrance. Literature will be on sale at the meetings, and it is hoped that local "saints" will do all they can to make these meetings widely known. An attractive little handbill has been issued, and Secularists willing to aid in the distribution of these should apply to the local Secretary, Mr. J. G. Bartram, 107 Morley Street, Heaton, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Mr. George Whitehead does not shirk difficulties in *Spiritualism Explained* (Watts & Co. 3s.). His book is "intended to be an explanation of spiritualism rather than a criticism of its claims," and it is packed with both. The author has read widely, and his knowledge of the New Psychology has enabled him to interpret a good deal of the phenomena of Spiritualism which cannot be classed as fraudulent.

The two chapters on "Multiple Personality" and "Telepathy" are excellent, and should prove a great help to many who cannot see how it is possible for Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, or Mr. Robert Blatchford to be mistaken. And Mr. Whitehead does not mince matters when dealing with these and other "authorities." He takes a delight in reproducing such gems as this one from Dr. J. H. Hyslop: "Any man who does not accept the existence of discarnate spirits and the proof of it, is either ignorant or a moral coward. I give him short shrift, and do not propose any longer to argue with him on the supposition that he knows anything about the subject." What a jolly person Dr. Hyslop must be to know!

Baldwin and the Bible.

A FRIEND of mine remarked the other evening, when we were surveying the statesmanlike countenance of the Prime Minister, that what he liked about Mr. Baldwin was his intense love of country. He was sound on that matter, whatever faults he may have manifested when dealing with, say, the coal situation. And considering that my friends, most of them, are engaged in coal production, that was a generous estimate of the politician who, at the behest of the Cunliffe Committee and other interested people, has reduced them to little better than coolie status. If love of country is expressed in that fashion, one can only thank the gods there is no hate about. The political atmosphere is not exactly conducive to the growth of the finer virtues, and to a politician, love of country is more often a synonym for hatred of the foreigner or the other party, than a desire for the welfare of his countrymen, more especially if miners and such-like lowly folk form the bulk of the nation. The faith of the people in politicians and statesmen—Ingersol's definition of the terms seldom applies, for the best of statesmen have a good deal of the politician in them—is a thing

to wonder at. If progress is to be attained by reasoned consideration of social problems and the political mind is to be the means thereby, the date of the millennium will have to be computed by geologist's time. Mr. Stanley Baldwin, in addressing one of the May meetings of the parsons, gave us the measure of the politician's mental vision, the sort of thing that guides the destiny of Britain. He repeated the old assertion that the Bible is somehow the foundation of England's greatness, and the equally old and fallacious statement that the literary style of the Authorized Version is the source and mainstay of English literature. That is not a mere Tory pronouncement. J. H. Thomas might have said the same thing if, by some means or other, he had been pushed in that direction; Lloyd George would probably have given it a romantic setting—pictured the Biblical message coming, dawn-like, over the tops of the Welsh mountains, but they all would have backed the statement that England owes all to the Bible creed, and probably, given favourable surroundings, sung a hymn to support it.

The Prime Minister likened the Authorized Version to a high explosive, quickening the minds of the faithful and confounding the unbelievers. There has been some books to which a statement of that kind could be truthfully applied, such as Darwin's *Origin of Species*, which gave new life to scientific thought, and ramified fruitfully throughout the intellectual world, or, still further back in time, Paine's *Rights of Man* and *Age of Reason*, both of them being a shattering force in the domain of error and stimulating where before had been sloth and retrogression. But none of these things could be said of the Authorized Version of the Bible, which was but a rehash, or rather, a word for word copy, over-much of the ground, of the Bibles gone before, and which, in Scotland especially, had to be thrust on the people by legal enactment.

It is commonly assumed that some forty odd scholars were shut up with the original version of the Bible, and in a remarkably short time produced an incomparable piece of literature—the *Daily News'* leader described it as "undoubtedly the greatest literature in the world"—which gave the lead to literary men and scholars generally. It has been pointed out before that it is in the preface to the Authorized Version where the literary language of the age will be found, but that does not include the whole truth. It was the style of the compilers of the Bible and nothing more. Many men lived before 1611, whose artistry in the use of the English tongue was such as put Englishmen beyond the need of relying on the Authorized Version for inspiration. Philip Sydney, for instance; Hooker—my only acquaintance with Hooker was, and is, through a page of his *Holy Living* picked up in the street. If Baldwin, or the Archbishop who enthused after the Premier, could write such forthright English as some of the disputatious theologians, many of the travellers and dramatists I would approach them with some amount of reverence, despite their professions. There were great Englishmen living and great English being spoken and written before we were blessed with "the source of England's greatness." The style of the present-day Bible was the style of the Geneva Bible and the Bishop's Bible and the others, some half dozen in all, that preceded it. And it should be remembered that whole tracts of it is wholly desolate, barren of anything approaching the nature of good taste. The fact that not one Englishman in a thousand has succeeded in reading more than that which the parson led him over on a Sunday morning before the sermon is a good indication of its value as an intellectual tonic.

Mr. Baldwin gave us a glimpse of his soul, so to speak; what the Archbishop called "a revelation of the springs of personality," in his peroration. If, he said, he did not think that the Kingdom of God would reign over all the Earth—forgetting for the moment that he wasn't electioneering, he put the date of the final rounding up of the nations at "maybe," a million years hence—he would drop all hope and quit work that very morning. Go to the devil, in fact, which covers a low enough estimate of humanity, but which is common among hundred per cent. Christians. It is the fear of hell that keeps them straight, comparatively so, for Baldwin described his co-religionists as a set of fratching units intent on inflicting injury to any head that showed up in the fog which envelopes Christian civilization. And "nothing but the light that comes from that Book can dispell that fog." The Bible as a light bringer is no new conception. Christians will boast of its penetrating power at the very moment they are deploring the density of the fog. This claim that Christianity is a power of good in the development of Western civilization can only be made by those who overlook the most salient facts in history. The Christian nations have just come out of a spasm of blood thirstiness, or rather the more active phase of it, for the spirit that animated them during the war still rears its head in all their deliberations. The predatory nature of them is not one whit less than that prevalent in the Crusading days, and the indifference to general suffering, is, in reality, still as bad. The old hostility to new thought is still a Christian characteristic; the Biblical influence still operates for evil in social institutions and society. In the dramatic world the anti-progressive force is Christianity; there is no development in the theatre but what comes up against a feeling engendered by the laughter-hating spirit of religion. From the beginning to the end of education, from the elementary schools up to the "homes of lost causes," the retarding force is that motivated by the established religion. And so it has been ever since Christianity found itself in power. That which John Davidson termed the dull evolution of degeneration has accompanied it throughout, and no more striking example of the process could be conceived than the spectacle of a Baldwin and an Archbishop boosting up its superiority.

H. B. DODDS.

How I Became a Freethinker.

I WAS one of a large family. Father, Church of England. Mother, Wesleyan. Like a former writer on this topic, I must have been born a Freethinker, for long before I was seven, I electrified the tea-table, during a favourite discussion of Hell and Damnation, by saying: "Well, if God puts people in a big fire and burns them for ever, he's a bad man, and I don't love him." My mother replied: "Now you are sure to go into that big fire yourself, for saying such a wicked thing," and I, being a "wayward lamb," thought, "Yes, and so I will!"

My eldest brother usually took me to a church at Handsworth, Birmingham, on a Sunday evening. I had not the faintest idea what for, and was too far back to see anything—it was in the days when children took the back pews only—but my attention was riveted on the gentleman who kept a cane for the naughty ones. Him I feared if I did not worship. Even now I remember how I jumped when one of the boys received a cut, and oh how relieved I was when I found myself outside the gates unscathed. One very stuffy evening I was taken to old Aston Church, and a lady fainted and was carried out. My impression of Christian pity was that they would open one of those awful stone graves and

pop her in. I made a vow I'd never faint in church, which vow I have kept.

When seven, we moved to London, where I duly went to Church and Sunday school. Chumming up to another scholar of the same age, we discussed our beliefs, etc., so that at about thirteen my creed was: "I believe in God the Father, maker of heaven and earth—the resurrection of the dead and life everlasting." The rest was discarded. Somewhere soon after this I was invited to my friend's house one Sunday, and her father showed me the celebrated copy of the *Freethinker* that landed poor Mr. Foote in prison. Then he read out of the Apocrypha how "fried fish kept the devil out of the house," and also the tale of the "peeping at the lady on her way to the bath," and that rubbish, he said, "is part of your holy book, the same as the part you believe." When I told my mother, she said, "he is a bad, wicked man, sure to go to Hell, and you too, if you take any notice of what he says." However, the friendship went on, and my friend told me about her father taking her to "The Hall of Science," and how "people there said the world was millions of years old, that there never was a flood, and that the bones of animals had been dug up after being buried for æons, and this showed the Bible was wrong. My father also mentioned about Darwin, and remarked, 'he says we all come from monkeys, and he may be right. I can almost believe him when I look at some humans.'" I pondered these things in my heart and determined to see what that "silly man" had to say about it when I grew up. A sermon that I listened to also set me on the quest for more knowledge. It was on the theme that God had written two books, the Bible and the Book of Nature. I concluded I had read enough of the former, and would like to study the latter. After getting into hot water, overhauling my father's library, mostly Latin and Greek and the Poets, all I gathered was two halves of a very dry old manual of Natural History, a lesson book called *Commerce*, with funny little woodcuts, but it told where rice, sago, sugar, rum, etc., come from, with a fair amount of detail; also a minute book on Geology. There was more religion than science in it, but it took me a little further.

At fifteen I was duly confirmed and unwillingly learnt the Catechism, but gave up communicating when seventeen. By this time we had moved to Wood Green, where I joined the Free Library, and by twenty had read Darwin, Huxley, etc., and was wading through Herbert Spencer's *System*, much to the horror of my maiden aunt. For a few months I was stenographer at an Electrical Works. In the room over my office, a young girl wound armatures for the lamps, etc., and I chummed up to her. We had debates on various subjects, and one day, in the heat of an argument over the existence of God, a man named Blanchard brought up a big armature out of the works to test on her machine. "Hallo," he said, "what are you two arguing about?" I said: "It seems to me there must be a God or ruling intelligence to keep the planets moving round the sun, and the solar system round something else, etc." He said: "I suppose if you had found them all standing still you would have wanted to know who stopped them." God went out of my cosmos that night never to return.

Moving to Leyton I met Mimmermus, who reintroduced the *Freethinker* (such a fine literary paper I found it), and what with this and lectures by Mr. Foote and Mr. Cohen at Stratford Town Hall, I was soon reading and leaving *Freethinkers* in the train, and more than once had the secret joy of seeing the soulful eyes of a sorrowful curate looking reproachfully at me. Mimmermus, his brother-in-law and I often held a debating society in a third class compartment on the G.E.R., going up to the City. The other poor passengers used to hold back and give us room. I am afraid some of them hardly appreciated our efforts, but still I hope a little seed was sown.

HILDA M. COPE.

Die when I may, I want it said of me, by those who know me best, that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower when I thought a flower would grow.

Lincoln.

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.

Hark! how the *Herald* angels sing—now Carol's had to quit. It's a case of bag and baggage, and he's simply forced to flit. Jix won't have alien plotters, so he's sending Carol home, but what of alien plotters who propagand for Rome? The many thousand Medicine-Men disseminating dope—they'll never be deported; there's not the slightest hope!

An M.P. has demanded, "Who is this Bernard Shaw?" because G.B.S. had ventured to criticize the law. Dear Jix, who upholds Dora, was playful—save the mark!—says he won't object to Guardsmen kissing Nursemaids in the Park. A Ju-Ju Nonconformist says he wants a shorter Bible, to stop the Wicked Atheist persisting in his libel, by scoffing and blaspheming at the deeds of Great Jehovah, and making pointed references to Jephtha, Lot, and Jonah! It's not a shorter Fetish Book that Christians need, I wot, but a breath of clear, cold, common-sense to make 'em scrap the lot!

Sir Austen welcomes Kellog's plan and War will be Outlawed. (I've heard this sort of tale before, it leaves me rather bored.) On Friday last the K.C.B.'s all knelt before their Joss, and a noble Lord has been howled down. No wonder *Banbury's Cross*! Sir Alfred Mond will be a Peer and wear a coronet, there's a Revival of Religion, but I haven't seen it yet!

Herr Ludwig's latest serial in *Beaverbrook's Express*, has made a Sheikh of Jesus and scored a huge success. The flappers eat this Sheikh stuff—like every movie fan; next to Rudolph Valentino they love "The Son of Mau."

Thus wags the world, my masters; Wise Omar, long ago, saw we were Phantom Figures upon Life's Shadow Show. Priest, Prophet, King, *et omnes*, but Shadows are they all. Lef's Rat and Drink, be Merry, before the curtains fall.

THE PAST PANORAMA.

May 20th. Here they are for you. Three more jolly saints to add to your collection. To-day is the Feast Day of St. Ivo, Bishop of Chartres; St. Bernardine of Sienna; and St. Ethelbert, King of the East Angles.

I hope, my dear ones, you that have followed The Shadow Show from its beginning, are duly grateful to me for giving you the correct Saints of the Day so consistently. There are plenty more to come. I want you to cut out the names very carefully, keep them by you until the list is complete, then take your paints or crayons and colour them neatly, and send them when complete, addressed to Uncle Pius, the Vatican, Rome, Italy, and ask him why the devil you haven't had a prize!

I'm afraid I can't tell you much about the above little lot, except St. Ethelbert. He was Ethelred the Unready's wife's brother's son. A rum lot all these Ethel chaps were. There was Ethelwolf, Ethelbald, Ethelred the Unsteady, who was drowned in a butt of Malmsey—or was it someone else? Anyway, there was Ethelbaum the Uneasy, who died from a surfeit of lampreys, and of course St. Ethelbert whose feast day we commemorate, I hope, to-day.

He was King of the East Angles, and was always at war with St. Isocles of the West Angles. They quarrelled I'm told, because they both claimed to be equal, but it's all so long ago that I'm a bit hazy about it. However, on this date, in 1495, Charles of France, having conquered Italy, started back on his triumphant return to France after a brilliantly successful campaign.

A few years later on, this date in 1506, died Christopher Columbus at Valladolid. The man who had discovered America, opened the portals of a new and fabu-

lously wealthy continent, died in comparative poverty, little noticed and mourned by few. His body in death was destined to be as unresting as he himself had been in life. It was first buried in a Franciscan monastery—then it was removed to Seville and thence again across the Atlantic to San Domingo. In 1798, the explorer's bones were again exhumed and taken to Havana, and reposed in the cathedral there until lately. When, however, in 1898, Spain lost the remainder of her American colonies, the remains of the great navigator were brought back to Granada, where the first great hopes were realized.

On the whole, this date is singularly poor as the anniversary of the birth of great men. Mainly they have died on the 20th of May. One great man stands out among the ruck of small fry. John Stuart Mill was born on this date, in 1806. Though his system of political economy is rather outworn now, J. S. Mill did a tremendous amount of pioneer work in his time in the realms of the "dismal science."

Edward VII was buried eighteen years ago to-day. An event within the memory of most of us. The funeral procession in which nine kings walked, and thirty royal persons attended, was an indication of the pomp and circumstance that surrounds the passing of Royalty; but what I recall most vividly was Cæsar, the late king's favourite terrier, a poignant mourner that walked behind the gun-carriage, and humanized what the pomp obscured—the passing of a kindly Englishman and sportsman.

OLD SONGS RE-STRUNG.

I see that the *Daily Herald*, in a long leading article, has attacked Dean Inge for his recent speech at Oxford, in which he indulged in his usual cheap gibe at the workers. Bernard Shaw in the *Outline*, however, defends both the Dean and that Fearless Thinker, Bishop Barnes, in reply to questions as to why they stay in the Church. Something must be done about this. Do you remember the popular old tune, "Villikins and His Dinah"? Then try this new version on your harmonium this Pleasant Sunday Afternoon:—

My name rhymes with Byng and neyer with Bingel
I'm a Christian, of course—with a Platonic tinge,
I hate common people and unseemly brawls
That misguided prelates conduct at St. Paul's.

Chorus.

They've nicknamed me Gloomy—the ignorant mob.
They don't understand how I still hold my job,
Tho' "Rank Superstition" my whole soul appals,
I still shall continue as Dean of St. Paul's.

I view with dismay Democracy's growth
To allow 'em to marry and breed I am loath,
For tho' Our Dear Saviour has died for us all,
Politically I don't agree with St. Paul.

I'm well versed in Darwin and likewise Einstein,
But touching this matter of Wafers and Wine,
Don't misunderstand me, good Christians I pray,
I administer both in a *Relative* way.

If I tell all good Christians it's the Blood of the Lamb
My Private Opinion doesn't matter a Damn!
For tho' I am gaitered and aproned withal
I do not in *all* things agree with St. Paul!

You may call it the Flesh of Our Lord if you wish
I reserve my opinion—and hand out the dish,
For if I did not, then look out for squalls,
I'd lose a fat screw as Dean of St. Paul's!

For tho' I earn pounds in the popular Press,
By columns of Gloom saying the World's in a Mess,
I sneer at my readers, yet my bluff no one calls,
And I still continue as Dean of St. Paul's!

THE SHOWMAN.

Laugh, for the time is brief, a thread the length of a span.

Laugh, and be proud to belong to the old proud pageant of man.—*John Mansfield.*

Freethought Flashes.

Most people when they speak of the force of evidence have in mind only the attractiveness of certain conclusions. The evidence is good because the conclusion is desirable.

It is to the credit of the Christian Church that the one thing it has never forgotten to preach is the gospel of truth, love, and brotherhood. It may have commenced its career with forging numbers of documents, and continued by tampering with the writings of such classical works as suited its purposes; it may have made itself notorious among the pagans for the hatred with which its followers assailed each other, and for the lies they told about each other; it may have made torture a settled and customary feature of legal procedure; it may have substituted miracles for medicine and relic worship for sanitation; it may have blazed its way across the world over the bodies of tortured and murdered Jews and heretics; it may have done its utmost to suppress liberty of thought and speech wherever it has planted itself; it may have threatened the security of the family with its obscene doctrine of celibacy; it may have made whole districts desolate in its attempts to weed out heresy; it may have given to war a religious sanction, and to intolerance a religious justification; it may have slandered unbelievers living and dead; all these things it may have done, and done consistently and persistently, but let us be just. It has never ceased to preach the gospel of truth, love, and brotherhood.

"Thou shalt honour thy father and thy mother," says the Bible. It might have done more good to have said, "Thou shalt distrust thy father and thy mother, because it is from our parents that we get the superstitions and views of life which are so often false." Falsities would not be nearly so difficult to discard did they not come to us with all the tender associations of loving parents.

It was a great mistake of the deity to make the world first and man afterwards. Had he reversed the process, and given man a seat on the Executive, a great many obvious blunders might have been prevented.

The drama is the most primitive form of art, and always requires the minimum of intellectual effort for its appreciation. In the early ages man used it to induce the occurrence of anything he desired and which seemed beyond his normal power to secure. To-day the child early evinces the same power of mimicry and dramatization. And in such abnormal states as dissociation we have the dramatic power of the individual increased—or should we say restored?—to its primitive strength. One reason, perhaps the chief reason, why people can be taught through the drama more easily than by any other method is that comprehension calls for less intellectual effort. There is less need for a background of understanding of many things other than those that are immediately before the eye.

Progress is the dream of the few. And yet it is never solidly realized till its fruits become the property of the many.

Does death end all? Do not bother. Let us be content, when we look round the world, that it puts an end to some individuals here.

A political leader may always do as he pleases—so long as he pleases those he "does."

Correspondence.

ATTILA AS "THE DESTROYER."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Permit me to reply to Mr. W. Mann's letter in the *Freethinker* of the 6th inst., under the above heading. I am one of his admirers, and always enjoy his contributions in the *Freethinker*. I do not regret having provoked him writing that letter, which is in itself a fine contribution. The facts quoted by Mr. Mann are quite familiar to me, and still I maintain that there is room for the supposition that Attila was as good, if not better, than any of his contemporaries. I admit all the savagery and wanton destruction of his campaigns, although even Gibbon's authority for it may have been exaggerated. But then, what wars were ever conducted anywhere without all the beastly savagery? We have only to read of the doings of a real gentlemen like Drake, who, if he could not obtain water or provisions, attacked and wiped out and utterly destroyed towns and villages. But I need not go so far back as Drake in our history to prove savagery. Our present-day punitive expeditions generally wind up with the utter destruction of towns and villages if we are resisted, and I am quite sure neither our officers nor Tommies are brutes, and individually are as kind and considerate as the rest of us.

There is not a scrap of Hun record in existence; all we know of Attila is from contemporaries and enemies of the hated Hun. What Attila said, whether he actually boasted that grass never grew where his horse trod, comes from the same tainted source. But even if we accept this boast as true, it only amounts to the usual war paint of the warrior. Warriors always like to appear as terrible fellows. That he carried off his vanquished victims as slaves cannot be held up as a brutal wrong in an age when that was the usual thing to do. Julius Cæsar did it not so very long before him.

I did not mention, in my first letter, that he spared Paris in the same way as he spared Rome. The Christian recorder of the event naturally attributes it to the intervention of a saint, and, of course, the Pope of Rome must have claimed the victory over Attila as a virtue or power of his calling. But as Attila was a barbarian, commonsense assures us that none of their saints or hocus pocus can have influenced him. I have no doubt Attila was not free from the superstitions of his age, but he can only have been influenced by the superstitions he believed in. The idea that the Pope could move him by dwelling on the death of Alaric after he conquered Rome seems to me childish. If a priest of the Huns or a friend of Attila could be substituted for the Pope there would be some sense in it, but that a great and mighty warrior, who, like Alexander or Hannibal, roamed irresistibly over enormous areas, should listen to a yarn by an emissary of Rome (which lay at his mercy), and allow himself to be tricked by so simple a hodge, seems to me far fetched.

The fact remains that he spared Rome as he once spared Paris. I must confess that these facts stand out and cannot so easily be explained away. No one knows what the Pope said to him, and all the rest are either wilful distortions of Attila's magnanimity or the usual Christian boasts. To appreciate Attila's magnanimity in sparing Paris and Rome, we have only to ask ourselves whether any other victorious general or leader of men, from earliest history to the present age, has done a like action. Is there in the whole depressing record of the Crusades, or in any other campaign, a single instance of it?

If Attila had really been the wild beast he is credited to have been, why on earth should he have spared Paris and Rome after all the efforts he made to take them? They were his goal, and no petty or childish motive can satisfactorily explain his action in turning away from his helpless prey after having it in his clutches.

M. STEINBERGER.

AN ATHEIST PRIEST.

SIR,—In your issue of the 12th February last, there was an article by W. Mann, on "An Atheist Priest," re-

ferring to a Curé, by the name of Jean Meslier, who compiled a Testament sometime about the year 1729 or thereabouts. In the course of the article, Mr. Mann states that as far as he knows, there has never been an English translation of this work, and that there is no copy of same in the British Museum. I thought it might interest Mr. Mann, also your readers, when I say there was an English translation made by Anne Knopf, in New York, in the year 1878. I picked up a second-hand copy of this book in New York some years ago, and was vastly impressed by the cold logic displayed by that priest, and it seems a pity there is not more known about the work in question. I defy anyone to read it and remain shackled by the Christian fetish.

I wish to thank you and your many contributors for pleasure given, and trust you will have long life and health to continue fighting the cause of mental emancipation.

SAM BOWMAN.

Emerson, Man., Canada.

CONVERTING THE JEWS.

SIR,—I think the following extract from the *Manchester Guardian*, for May 8, deserving of inclusion in your paper:—

COSTLY CONVERSION.

In the Ulster Chancery Court, Belfast, yesterday, Mr. Justice Wilson, who was invited to decide certain points in charitable bequests, was asked how much it cost to convert a Jew to Christianity. Mr. Justice Wilson said it had been held that the conversion of every Jew to Christianity cost £37,000!

Will any of the subscribers to the Society for Promotion of Christianity Amongst the Jews (with head office in London) now apply for a Winding-up Order?

H. BLACK.

Society News.

MR. WHITEHEAD IN WEST HAM.

MR. WHITEHEAD'S "mission" in West Ham was most successful. A splendid meeting was held on Sunday, May 13. The audience appeared to be much interested; there were many questions, and a considerable quantity of literature was sold. From Monday onwards the colder weather naturally interfered with the attendance at the meetings, but at no time were the audiences other than good in point of numbers. The interest of the people was sustained throughout the week, and perhaps it is a pity that Mr. Whitehead was never extended by the opposition. There may be intellectual defenders of the faith in West Ham, or there may not be; Mr. Whitehead certainly did not meet any during his week's "mission."—G.S.

WEST LONDON BRANCH.

Much appreciation is shown to our propaganda, judging by the large crowds that attend our meetings, and are waiting for the lecturers around the platform before the scheduled time. The weather was certainly in our favour, and good progress is the result of our meetings. Several ministers of religion were in debate with our speakers, which, of course, shows an upward grade towards Secularism. The two meetings held at Ravenscourt Park showed a great deal of interest in that locality, and Mr. Campbell-Everden and Mr. Hart deserve every praise.

Members of the West London Branch are reminded that their subscriptions are now due, and that the treasurer would be pleased to issue new membership cards to all who will communicate with him at the Branch office, 26, Edgware Road, Marble Arch, W.1.—B. A. Le M.

YOU WANT ONE.



N.S.S. BADGE.—A single Pansy flower, size as shown; artistic and neat design in enamel and silver. This emblem has been the silent means of introducing many kindred spirits. Brooch or Stud Fastening. Price 9d., post free.—From THE GENERAL SECRETARY, N.S.S., 62, Farringdon St., E.C.4.

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 PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.): 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"Religion and the Common Man."

OUTDOOR.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (Walham Green Church, North End Road): 8.0, Tuesday and Saturday. Various speakers.

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

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. W. Sandford; (Brockwell Park): 6.0, Mr. W. Sandford. Wednesday, May 23 (Clapham Old Town): 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury. Thursday, May 24 (Cooks Road, Kennington): 8.0, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Outside Municipal College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—A Lecture.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12 noon, Mr. James Hart—A Lecture. 3.30 p.m., Messrs. Hyatt and Le Maine. 6.30 p.m., Messrs. Campbell-Everden and Maurice Maubrey. Freethought meetings every Wednesday and Friday at 7.30 p.m. Lecturers—Messrs. Campbell-Everden, Hart, Darby, Le Maine and others.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith): 3.0, Mr. Campbell-Everden—A Lecture.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. George Whitehead's "Mission." Saturday, May 19, at Islington Square; Sunday, May 20, at Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths; Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, at Islington Square; Thursday, at High Park Street. Each meeting at 8 p.m.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Moor, near North Road Entrance): 7.0, Messrs. Brighton and Brown.

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

BOOKS FOR SALE.—The library of the late J. Fothergill, Secretary of the South Shields Branch, in large or small lots. A good collection of Freethought works, with others by Gibbon, Laing, Fielding; Oracle Encyclopedia (five vols.), history of Greece, good collection of poets, etc. Many in cheap editions, all to be sold at half price or less. So far as possible will be made up into 2s. 6d. or 5s. parcels, postage extra. Section lists sent. Address: Mrs. J. FOTHERGILL, 2 Hut, Madras Street, South Shields, Co. Durham.

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