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Views and Opinions.

(Continued from page 338.)

Brain and Soul.

I SAID last week that some of the comments on Sir Arthur Keith's address were so confused as almost to defy argument unless one devoted a volume to clearing up a paragraph. For one example we may take the following from Sir Oliver Lodge:—

If the brain is the mind and one is destroyed, then the other goes too. If the brain is only an instrument, and one smashes the instrument—as one might break a violin—the music is not killed. The real thing behind the scenes is still there, only the instrument cannot manifest it. Beyond our ken it still goes on, which is very different from saying that it goes out of existence.

To get a deliverance of this kind from one who stands forth as a representative of modern science, is enough to make one despair of human intelligence. What is one to make of the expression, "If the brain is the mind"? One might as reasonably, or as intelligibly say, "if the candle is the flame," or "if the flame is the heat." The correct statement is obviously "If the mental phenomena are the function of brain action." That does give us at least an intelligible sentence. We do not say, "If H₂O. is wetness," for the simple reason that H₂O. is not wetness, it is the chemical combination that creates it, H. & O. providing only the condition for its appearance. The real difficulty of dealing with such expressions is that of making them intelligible. And that is where the religious advocate has an advantage over his opponent; for he has only to repeat customary nonsense in the customary way to secure the established reaction in its favour.

* * *

Ghostly Music.

Does Sir Oliver really wish us to believe that if we smash the violin—every violin—that violin music exists apart from the instrument? If so, and if music can exist apart from the known conditions for its existence, why is it not the same with other noises? After all, the chief difference between music and other noises is that one is rhythmically pleasing

and the others are not. Are we, then, to assume that all noises go on existing somewhere apart from the conditions necessary here for their existence? If we are not to assume that, what is the value of the analogy? Are we to take it that music is an entity, a separate thing which flows through an instrument as water flows through a pipe? Can music exist in the absence of vibratory phenomena? It looks as though Sir Oliver has taken the phrase "the music of the spheres" too literally, and has converted a poetic phrase into a scientific verity—although even here the poet never thought of the music without the spheres. Sir Oliver appears to want no other condition for the existence of music—but music. It may, of course, be quite as reasonable to believe in the existence of music without instruments as it is to believe in the existence of souls without bodies, and I agree that to the man who can believe in the one there seems little reason why he should stumble at the other. Like Voltaire, I can believe in ninety-nine of the hundred paces that St. Denis is said to have walked with his head under his arm. It is the first one that presents the difficulty. Get me past that one and I can manage the rest myself.

Sir Oliver believes that the brain is only an instrument acting at the command of the real man who is hidden in some obscure part of the organism, and who at death removes to some other, more spacious abode. That is the primitive theory over again; it is the "double" of the savage doing duty in an alleged scientific dress. The savage had some excuse for his ghostly personage inhabiting the bodies he saw before him. The justification lay in his unavoidable ignorance. There is no such excuse for a man of Sir Oliver Lodge's attainments. The knowledge is there; the facts are common property. It is only the clinging to a number of inherited superstitions that prevents the full recognition of their significance.

* * *

The Ghost of Common Sense.

Let us follow this instrument theory a little further—it is one of which Sir Oliver is very fond. There is a music of the violin, the flute, the cornet, the drum, etc. And it is the music of the violin, the drum, the flute, or the cornet, precisely and wholly because of each of these instruments. Smash all violins, and how are we to get the music of that instrument? There may be some "music" in general such as Sir Oliver assumes, but I do not think he will say that the music of a particular instrument can exist in the absence of the instrument. On the face of it, then, the music of the violin is gone, absolutely and irretrievably, once the instrument is smashed. And with it goes Sir Oliver's theory that music may exist apart from some instrument as the condition of its being.

To drop the metaphor and come to the main thing.

The question at issue is the survival of the individual—not some individual in the abstract, but the individual as we know him. Analogous to Sir Oliver's music, existing without an instrument, is the clotted rubbish which is so fashionable nowadays of a "life force," or a "vital power," or "a creative urge," or some other piece of verbal moonshine, by means of which so many writers hide from themselves in the first place their mental confusion, and then persuade the public that it is being given a profound philosophy. Now let us grant these instrument mongers the existence of a sea of life existing apart from all organisms, but which uses an organism as the instrument for its manifestation. I am putting the theory as plainly as possible, although, because it is put plainly, I should not be surprised if some of its champions decline to own it unless it is re clothed in verbal moonshine and clouded in mental confusion. But it will not be denied that individuals vary. I am not like you, and you are not like me. We may each be a portion of this unindividuated "life force"; my organism and your organism, may be merely the instruments through which this "life force" expresses itself, but the indisputable fact is that the tune played by the instruments is never in any two instances exactly the same. And the music varies exactly as the instrument varies. Every change in the instrument causes a change in the expression of the "life force." So far there is no dispute and no ground for dispute. And the fact that emerges is that the life force is individuated into Sir Oliver Lodge, or Sir Arthur Keith, or into some commonplace Smith or Robinson, so long as the conditioning instrument—the organism—exists, but no longer.

But the organism is destroyed. The conditioning instrument disappears. What then becomes of its special manifestations as Smith or Robinson? Even granting the quite grotesque hypothesis of a "life force," every Smith and Robinson, so soon as the individuating mechanism dies, sinks back into a world of unindividuated life. There is no survival of the individual, there is only an assumed survival of some assumed impersonal force. Granting the instrument theory, there is no more justification for saying that an individual survives, as an individual, the destruction of the body, than there is for saying that a violin solo can exist, as such, in the absence of anything in the shape of a violin. Or why stop at a piece of music and a violin. Why not say that the rat-a-tat of a drum exists somewhere after the instrument is destroyed? Why not assert that if I beat a sheet of iron with a hammer, the iron is but an instrument, and the clang, clang, of the concussion does not die. "The real thing behind the scenes is still there." One statement appears to me to be quite as reasonable as the other. The savage theory, that in addition to the man we know there is another little man sitting inside directing operations, dies hard; for Sir Oliver's theory, in spite of its more scientific dress, is still the primitive theory in all its essentials.

* * *

Useless Experience.

When all is said and done, it is so delightfully meaningless and so charmingly useless. This chunk of life force is assumed to take possession of an organism, or fashions for itself an instrument; and so instead of remaining part of a general stock of force, becomes a particularized and individualised lump known as John Smith. What for? To gain experience, to develop, to achieve manhood, etc. How? Consider, the body in which this experience is gained, on the instrument theory, determines the ex-

perience. It is the eye which determines what shall be seen; the ear which determines what shall be heard; the brain which determines the quality and nature of the thought. But the brain, the eye, the ear, is gone. The "spirit" is released. Does it in its new state possess eyes and ears, and a brain similar to what it had before death? If it does, then must the next world be similar to this one, and there is no gain in the change. Is the other world to which the released spirit goes different from this one? If that is the case, will someone be good enough to tell us what is the use of experience in a world entirely different from that in which the experience has been gained? One does not take a lesson in aviation in order to get ready to swim the channel. Experience to be of use must fit us for something, must be of some benefit when we have acquired it. Will some believer in a future life be good enough to tell us what is the use of experience gained here in a world which is different from this one?

But that is not all. Untroubled by the knowledge of things that we have, the primitive believer—ancient and modern—can talk of another life where impossible conditions prevail, and can talk of the beauty of mothers meeting their children, or husbands meeting their wives, of families being reunited, etc., etc. Such language is quite meaningless to-day to anyone who reflects on what he hears. For what has been said of the physical organs and their environment applies equally to all human qualities. Family life and family affection are obviously based on sex differentiation, on procreation, on birth and death. But hypothetically, the world to which we are going is a world in which sex is without significance, where procreation is unknown, where birth and death do not exist. The feelings which cluster round race, or country, can have no play there in the absence of the conditions which call these feelings into being. Does anyone imagine that you can destroy the present conditions of human feeling and affection without destroying the feelings themselves? What can be the meaning of husband and wife, of parent and child, where the family as such does not exist, or is replaced by groups of one-time men and women? What becomes of the feelings of loyalty, of love of country, of pride of race, where such things have no existence and no meaning? It is all so interestingly foolish that it would be decidedly amusing, if this superstition of another world had not done so much to cover the world with injustice and cruelty. What could be more fantastically inconsequential than the exhortation to prepare ourselves for existence in some future state by the cultivation of virtues which can have no meaning and no application there?

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be concluded.)

At Westminster Abbey.

THOMAS HARDY.

This day a Nation's tribute, finely wrought,
Is offered here :—the just and modest toll
Of gratitude to one immortal soul
That sets its seal upon our life and thought :
Alas! that nobler feelings should be fraught
With sacerdotal zeal and savage plan
To flaunt the genius—and despise the Man—
Impaling him upon the faith he fought :
But Life can wait; and Worth shall know its day
When pompous superstition that hath shed
Its favours for its glory is forgot,
Or just a memory : but the mighty dead—
And mightier ones, rejected—live away,
Their spirits wed with the immortal lot!

WM J. LAMB.

Potted Piety.

"Rough work, iconoclasm, but the only way to get at truth."—*O. W. Holmes.*

"The best way to domesticate a tiger is to convert it into a hearthrug."—*J. K. Sykes.*

"Reason is a rebel unto faith."—*Sir T. Browne.*

MACAULAY, the famous historian, noting the clamour of the clergy at this time of the year, said: "Exeter Hall sends forth its annual bray." Exeter Hall is no longer with us, or, rather, it has been "converted" to better things; but the May meetings still remind us that some pious English people take their pleasures sadly. One of the most venerable of these functions is the annual assembly of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, which, this year, was held at the City Temple, once the "spiritual home" of the renowned Joseph Parker and other Free Church leaders.

The Chairman, the Rev. Francis Wrigley, was sensational in his speech. Like the fat boy in *The Pickwick Papers*, he tried to make his hearers' flesh creep. Addressing an audience of Congregationalists, he made a plea for a condensed edition of the Christian Bible. The "Authorized Version," which has recently received so excellent a press notice from Mr. Stanley Baldwin, the Conservative leader, does not please Mr. Wrigley at all. Nor does the "Revised Edition of 1881" come up to the required standard demanded by the eminent Free Church minister. Mr. Wrigley wants "a new edition, preferably a much shorter edition," and this "potted" version of "God's Word" must be on lines furnished by "the science of historical criticism."

This, as our American cousins would say, is a "tall order." Something serious must have happened to make the Chairman of the Congregational Union talk in this pessimistic strain. Legend has it that old Queen Victoria declared that "the Bible was the source of England's greatness." If this be so, Mr. Wrigley's suggestion actually suggests the ruination of the Christian Creed, and the downfall of the British Empire. Even the fat boy could not have made his hearers' flesh creep more successfully.

"We must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us," as Hamlet says. Mr. Wrigley's anxiety is based on reality, and he has admitted the soft impeachment with unusual and commendable frankness. To him Freethought is the arch-enemy, and it is, in Mr. Wrigley's opinion, far better to fight such transcendently wicked opponents instead of ignoring them. Most clergymen prefer the method of the ostrich. Burying their heads in the sand, they declare that they see nothing. But Mr. Wrigley has a sense of humour, and he realizes that the more the ostrich buries his head the more he exposes the other end of his body.

Listen to Mr. Wrigley's words:—

The old view of the Bible has played havoc with the faith of the younger generation, and it is a task of urgency that the young people should be able to meet and answer the cheap sneer of the street-corner orator and the crude criticism of the Freethought Press.

It is the cry of the young person that has touched Mr. Wrigley's emotions. It is the concern of the Christian pastor for his tender sheep, who are suffering like

"An infant crying in the night
An infant crying for the light
And with no language but a cry"

that has stirred Mr. Wrigley to action so drastic as the suggested mutilation of the Christian Bible.

That is what it all comes to. Despite the polite camouflage of shortening the so-called sacred volume "on lines furnished by the science of historical criticism," the process is neither more nor less than cutting out all objectionable passages. The Christian Bible is out of date, and out of harmony with modern ideas. It is full of ancient ignorance from cover to cover. From the first error in "Genesis" to the final absurdity in the "Book of Revelation," much of the writing is amazing to modern readers. In many places in the "Old Testament," the pages are filled with records of the scuffles of savages, whose arrows are "drunk with blood," to adapt its own charming phraseology. There are also far too many passages which can no longer be read in the presence of a mixed congregation. As for the "New Testament," the moral perceptions of to-day are shocked beyond expression at the awful doctrine that countless millions of mankind will suffer eternal punishment. The clergy know that their Bible is full of errors, and that, in sober truth, there is neither history nor science worth troubling with in the fetish-book, but they are seeking to camouflage the volume so as to retain the respect of their congregation, and thus safeguard their own salaries.

Mr. Wrigley's suggestion of mutilating the Christian Bible is not a paltry matter, even if the process is described, flamboyantly, as scientific. Presumably, the work would be attempted by men with some pretensions to culture and scholarship. What are they to leave out? Biblical chronology is legendary nonsense. Only grossly ignorant, or mentally feeble, persons can believe that the universe was "created" six thousand years ago, that "Adam," "Noah," and "Methuselah" lived nearly a thousand years apiece; and that one very tough old patriarch, Melchisadech, had neither beginning nor ending of days. Perhaps he is drawing his old-age pension at the present time. Philology gives no countenance to the bad language used by the building operatives employed upon the Tower of Babel, nor to the fiction of the tongues of flame at Pentecost. The many mistakes of Moses would strain the accommodating credulity of the Christians of Carolina, U.S.A., to breaking point. In sober truth, if all the fairy-tales of ancient ignorance, enshrined in the Christian Bible, are eliminated, there is precious little left to form a book. From the page describing "Adam" and "Eve" starting life at full age, until the Second Person of the Undivided Trinity ascends into the ether like an aeroplane, the sacred volume is but a Salmagundi of unrestrained Oriental imagination. Even the over-praised devotional psalms are disfigured by curses which sound very odd to modern ears. Indeed, the proposed mutilation is not a small matter, for it means the beginning of the end of the Christian Religion.

The force that is ousting this fetish-book is Freethought. Not the kid-glove scepticism of the scholarly contributors to the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, but the popular propaganda of the Secularists. There are not very many of these apostles of Freedom, but they speak the language of the ordinary citizen, and they utter the plain truth as they see it. Mr. Wrigley thinks very seriously of this propaganda, and he is right. For it was by means of an appeal to the people that all the great popular movements began to sweep the world.

MIMNERMUS.

To live wisely is to live fully, to live with all your faculties, to live all the time, to feel deeply and variously, and always—up to a given age—to find the day a trifle too short for the day's doings.—*Arnold Bennett.*

Debited to Christianity.

THREE HUNDRED years ago the discovery of the circulation of the blood by Harvey was made known by the publication of his book, *De Motu Cordis*. Medical science before that time—and since—contained many weird conceptions, but Harvey's discovery stands amid the ocean of fantastic ideas as a green oasis in a desert of sand. For a dozen years or so before the publication of his book he had been teaching the truth concerning the action of the heart to his students, and there can be no doubt that the impetus given to scientific investigation by his method is beyond calculation.

The celebration of his tercentenary this month is being done with a good deal of pomp and ceremony. Medical scientists from many countries have come to take part in it, and Royal patronage is a prominent feature of the proceedings. The newspapers have boomed the occasion, and facile scribes have told the public all about it. But so far I have not noticed a reference to the fact that Michael Servetus, the philosopher, who lived a century and a half before Harvey, and who suffered death at the stake, by the hand of Calvin, for his Freethinking views, stated the facts of the circulation of the blood in his book, *Christianismi Restitutio*. Servetus was seeking to prove the existence of an indwelling spirit in the human body, and he devoted a large amount of space to describing the function of the heart, the seat of the vital spirit. He puts it thus. "It is a fine attenuated spirit, elaborated by the power of heat, of a crimson colour and fiery potency—the lucid vapour as it were of the blood, substantially composed of water, air, and fire; for it is engendered, as said, by the mingling of the inspired air with the more subtle portion of the blood, which the right ventricle of the heart communicates to the left. This communication, however, does not take place through the septum, partition or midwall of the heart, as commonly believed, but by another admirable contrivance, the blood being transmitted from the pulmonary artery to the pulmonary vein, by a lengthened passage through the lungs, in the course of which, it is elaborated and becomes of a crimson colour. Mingled with the inspired air in this passage, and freed from fuliginous vapours by the act of expiration, the mixture being now complete in every respect, and the blood become fit dwelling-place of the vital spirit, it is finally attracted by the diastole, and reaches the left ventricle of the heart." "In possession of a fact in physiology of the very first moment," says Sir William Osler, in his lecture on "Michael Servetus," "Servetus described it with extraordinary clearness and accuracy." He goes on to say that "the discovery of Servetus remained unrecognized until the attention of Wotton was called to it by Charles Bennard, a St. Bartholomew's Hospital surgeon. Meanwhile it had been rediscovered, and among the many vagaries with which the history of the circulation of the blood is marked, not the least is the attempt to rob Servetus of his credit."

Why Servetus did not get the credit of it is easily explained. About a thousand copies of the book, after a deal of difficulty, were printed and baled up for distribution to various centres. But the emissaries of Calvin were on the alert, and it is fairly certain that the only copies read were those used to impeach Servetus. The discovery, which, one hundred and fifty years later, was to open up a fruitful field of enquiry in medical science, was smothered at its birth by the action of men inspired by the Christian faith. It was one of the lesser crimes of Christianity. It may be idle to speculate on what might have been had not the Christian spirit attained to power in the

days of Servetus, but it is certain that a limping humanity would have been helped greatly along the road had a few copies of *Christianismi Restitutio* missed the clutches of Calvin and his crew. As it was, "medical science" did not warrant the name for long after, and Christianity, for the moment triumphant, went on its way, darkening the counsels of men and polluting the very source of all humane feeling.

H. B. DODDS.

The Superiority of Religion.

THERE are, of course, many admirable people, intelligent, generally well-informed and unmistakably lovers of mankind, amongst the religious of most denominations. It would be absurd to deny that every, or almost every reform movement contains a contingent, sometimes a very hard-working contingent of pious souls who pray as well as work.

It would be very easy to show the direct opposition of religious organizations to practically every reform which was not of actual benefit to the churches themselves. History teems with incidents in the perpetual war between religion and progress. Every step in the emancipation of mankind has been either obstructed or prevented by prejudices engendered by transcendental creeds.

The object of the present enquiry is to consider how far religious people can be expected to co-operate with other reformers for what ought to be called common ends. We refer to religious people, not to their religious beliefs. If reformers have not yet found out that religion is altogether useless for the purposes of secular reforms, we must wait until their individual experience confirms the verdict of history.

It is perhaps remotely conceivable that believing a lie in good faith, or in other words deceiving oneself, may not stand in the way of enlightenment in matters not directly concerned with the subject of such illusions. But untruth, qualify it how you will, cannot possibly be an asset to general enlightenment, even if it often prove an aid to personal money-making. It so happens, however, the misstatements of religion are mainly on the origin and nature of the very things reformers are out to move or remove.

Behind the differences of terminology there exists a genuine difference in the respective points of view of the materialist and the religionist. This was more obvious, no doubt, in the case of the orthodox pietists, who believed in miracle and direct intervention (it is ridiculous to pretend that this class no longer exists, it is probably still the most numerous section of the existing religionists), but the cleavage is still great between those who claim a divine origin and an eternal personal destiny, on the one hand, and on the other, those who are evolutionists in practice as well as in theory.

The theory of every kind of theist is that there exists in the universe some sort of external "influence toward good," of which the materialist, seeing only a constant series of adaptations, is completely ignorant. If only there were "that far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves" whether it wants to or not, then the religionists would be right, and it would be far more important to find out all about this "event" and its "divine" instigator, and how to make the "far-off" affair come quickly nearer.

As man gets nearer to the theory that he is actually fighting the forces of nature, putting them in their proper place, a place subordinate to man's needs and man's happiness, the acceleration of man's adaptation to a hitherto inimical environment becomes markedly real. Wise men to-day hesitate to pro-

nounce impossible the conquest of natural obstacles to life, health, and transit, which a short time ago no reasonable man would dream of overcoming.

Discoveries have been made by theists, but they have always fenced round the future with warnings against further enlightenment. They have made distinctions unknown to science between the legitimate and the illegitimate directions research might take. They have warned us off the "soul." They have always been ready to "justify the ways of God to man," and you cannot even begin to look for a human remedy to some divine act which you think justifiable. "The Mystery of Pain," for instance, like many other problems of life, can never be solved by justifying it. If you can justify a divine author of it you dare not tamper with His purpose.

The worst of the pietist is his air of superiority. We study a problem, and according to our lights we invent, or support, what we think is a solution. The pietist who opposes us acts after his kind. But the religionist who joins us, while animated with all our own zeal, sees in the most ordinary invention of man a divine command. We are obviously wrong unless we are working with God. Well, there are some reforms which experience proves to be at least as evil as the original ground of discontent. It is the human way to travel through error to right. It is an aggravation of the evil to find ourselves faced not only with old abuses, but with the evil remedies as well. A directory of "Reform Societies" is littered with lists of these enemies of mankind.

If our own educated classes would habituate themselves to a little frankness and plain speech! The greatest need of the day is that the truth should be more frequently told as to the origins and functions of religions. The deference paid to religion by well-informed men is a scandal in itself, but its consequences are exceedingly grave. There is no difference at all between toadying to wealth, and giving lip-service to those whose only claim to respect is that they are eminent in their work of public deception.

We actually find ourselves in an atmosphere where the proved facts of science, the demonstrable truths of causation, are either looked on with suspicion, or at best are treated as unimportant. A very charitable priest of my acquaintance professes to believe in what he calls the "main facts of evolution," and is never weary of talking such insulting nonsense as "After all is said and done, all these things are as Saint Paul said, temporal, while the higher things, the things not seen, are eternal." Religion is always the "higher" truth, the "eternal" ethics, the "superior" wisdom.

The only way to cure this is by a persistent untiring policy of uttering inconvenient truths by way of exposing the falsity of religion. In a sense the Freethinker is the best apologist for religion. He knows what profound discoveries have been made during the last century which are inconsistent with any theory of theism, and he knows that in the absence of such knowledge it was possible for brave pioneers like Paine and Voltaire to call themselves deists. To-day we start our own investigations, freed for ever from confusions of dualism. We owe it to the scientists of the immediate past that we do not make our children imagine that there is something in the claims of religion to be a sort of superior science. We need the spirit of Wordsworth's lines:—

Never may from our souls one truth depart;
That an accursed thing it is to gaze
On prosperous tyrants with a dazzled eye.

Forget thy weakness upon which is built,
O wretched man, the throne of tyranny.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

N.S.S. Conference.

EXECUTIVE'S ANNUAL REPORT.

BY THE PRESIDENT.

IF a record of plain straightforward work, faithfully pursued and successfully carried out, makes dull reading, then this year's report of the Executive of the National Secular Society will be pronounced uninteresting. No occurrence of a spectacular nature has transpired, there has been no call to arms to resist a legal or other unusual attack upon our work; we are, in the perhaps fortunate position of the ideal country which is said to be happy when it is without a history.

On the other hand, if we seek an estimate of the influence of the Society in the extent to which the ideas for which we stand and for which we have always fought are gaining a hold on the public mind, then we may truthfully say that a more encouraging outlook was never placed before an Annual Conference. We have witnessed during the past year such theological outbreaks as the controversy over Bishop Barnes' attack on the Eucharist, one of the oldest of the principal doctrines of historic Christianity, which has been roundly denounced by highly-placed ecclesiastics as a survival of pure savagery. There has been constant controversy in the public press over the relations between the general theory of evolution and religious teachings; the secularization of Sunday has gone on at a more rapid rate than ever; public men are becoming more courageous in their criticisms of Christianity, and more are avowing themselves as unbelievers in religious doctrines, while church and chapel join in a lachrymose chorus over the unmistakable falling off of worshippers.

All this expresses the truth that the spade work done by the National Secular Society during the past two generations has borne, and is bearing, good results. We are not merely spreading abroad truths about religious teaching which the Churches have striven their utmost to suppress, but in virtue of the healthier and more liberal atmosphere created, we have made it possible for them to manifest greater intellectual frankness than they might have done otherwise. The main work of this Society, indeed, the main work of the Freethought Movement as a whole, is largely that of permeation, and it must always be a false standard by which to judge the progress made if we count only our actual membership, or even the number of publicly professing Freethinkers. The true test of our work is to be found in the larger and more liberal views that obtain in the world around us, particularly within the Churches themselves. Many of our unconfessed converts are to be found within the Churches, even within the pulpit; and if the authorship of the views expressed is not acknowledged, or if these same liberal views are avowed by many of the so-called advanced members of the preaching profession, it is not difficult to trace their real origin.

In presenting its Annual Report and Balance Sheet to this Conference, the Executive thinks it is advisable to point out that the Statement of Income and Expenditure is that of the Executive only, and not of the Society as a whole. Each Branch of the Society controls its own funds, and issues its own Balance Sheet direct to its members. The Executive is concerned only with such sums as pass through its hands.

It is pleasing to be able to say that the financial statement here given is the most satisfactory ever presented to an Annual Conference. More has

been expended on propaganda that has ever before been so spent, and there remains a larger balance standing to the Society's credit than it has yet been able to show. Satisfactory as this is, the Executive feels it necessary to point out the desirability of there being established a closer agreement between the income from subscriptions and donations and expenditure. It is not to be expected that these two items will balance, but they should come nearer to balancing than is the case at present.

The favourable state of the Society's exchequer is due entirely to the legacies it has received during the past year. From the estate of the late Mr. H. Tucker, of Plymouth (an old, earnest and much respected member of the National Secular Society), the sum of £500 was received. £1,000 was also received as a first payment from the estate of Mr. Martland, of Garstang. The Society is one of the residuary legatees here, and when the estate is finally wound up it is expected that another £2,500 will be paid over. It may also be said that notices of several other wills in which this Society figures have been received.

In view of the larger financial resources of the Society, actual and anticipatory, the Executive has in view an extension of its propagandist activities, and a resolution which appears on the Agenda of the Conference indicates one way in which this may be done.

Another pleasing feature of the year that has passed has been the gratifying success of the *Freethinker* Endowment Trust. In just over two years, the Editor, your President, succeeded in establishing a Trust Fund for the purpose of meeting those recurring losses which are inseparable from genuine propagandist journalism. No such ambitious, but statesmanlike scheme has ever before been devised, and certainly nothing approaching the amount has ever been raised in a similar short time for such a purpose. Everyone concerned with it deserves the heartiest congratulations.

This is not, strictly, part of the business of the Conference. The *Freethinker* is an independent publication, and is entirely responsible for its own losses. It has always met these as it could and how it could, and the task has been one full of anxiety and difficulty. But the *Freethinker* has always stood as the representative of the National Secular Society; it has given its columns and its services liberally and ungrudgingly, and without asking for or receiving payment. It is certain that without it this Society would not be where it is, nor would it be in the favourable situation in which it finds itself. It is felt, therefore, that what has been said on an outside, although a related, topic will not be thought out of place.

At the last Conference it was intimated by Miss Vance that, while accepting the post again, her resignation might be expected at an early date. This intended resignation was due entirely to reasons of ill-health and advancing years, and it was heard with the deepest regret by all present. Miss Vance has spent over forty-five years of her life in the National Secular Society, and had held the office of Secretary for thirty-five years. She has shown herself to be indefatigable and resourceful in all that concerned the Society's welfare, and her length of service had placed her on terms of intimacy with a large number of its members. It was felt that it would be no light task to find a successor.

The Executive, however, desires to place on record in its Annual Report, as it has already done in its minutes, its sense of the many years' valuable work Miss Vance has given the Society during some of the most trying times in its history. Only those behind

the scenes can fully appreciate the tact, judgment, and ability to deal with all sorts of situations and characters that is required to make the office of General Secretary a success. It is fitting that they who can speak with authority should say this much.

The resignation of Miss Vance took effect on September 1, 1927. In virtue of its powers of co-option, the Executive at once appointed her as one of its members. The Society will thus continue to have the benefit of her experience, and there is little doubt but that the action of the Executive will be endorsed and approved by this Conference, or that the new Executive will fail to follow the example set by its predecessor.

The question of a retiring allowance for Miss Vance was also remitted to the Executive, and in consultation with the Board of the Secular Society, Limited, of which body she was also Secretary, the matter was arranged to the satisfaction of all the parties involved.

The Executive also desires to place on record its thanks to Miss K. B. Kough, for the many years' service she has given to the Society. Ever since Miss Vance suffered the disaster of loss of sight, Miss Kough has given her help in the Secretarial office ungrudgingly and without payment of any kind. Without her, the situation would have been impossible.

The Executive appointed as successor in the Secretarial office, Mr. F. Mann, of Glasgow. Mr. Mann is young and enthusiastic, he possesses both energy and ability, and it is hoped he will have a lengthy and honourable career in connexion with the Society. The Executive's appointment will come before the Conference for ratification.

During the past year the Society has suffered a loss by the death of Mr. J. T. Lloyd. Mr. Lloyd has been connected with the Movement for twenty-five years, and during that time, by his ability and his transparent sincerity, on the platform and in the press, had won hosts of friends and admirers. He stood as one of the few clergymen who, when they found the creed in which they had been trained untrue, said so and came out from the Church to preach the truth discovered. In giving up a lucrative post as minister of a large South African Church, Mr. Lloyd won and deserved the respect of all who admire intellectual sincerity. For several years Mr. Lloyd's failing health prevented his appearing on the lecture platform, but his pen remained active in the *Freethinker* until he was taken seriously ill at the beginning of December. He died on February 1, and was buried at Paddington Cemetery on February 7. There was a large gathering of personal friends and members of the Society, and your President delivered an address as representing the Executive.

Birmingham Freethinkers have also sustained a heavy loss in the death of its President, Mr. Clifford Williams, at a comparatively early age. Mr. Williams was a very familiar figure at these Conferences, and a much appreciated speaker at its public meetings. In his own city he was a frequent speaker on the Society's platform, and was very active in lecturing and debating wherever there was an opportunity to carry the gospel of Freethought. He was of an ardent and enthusiastic nature, and his sterling character won him the admiration of large numbers who differed from him in opinions. He had the good fortune of having his endeavours in the interests of Freethought warmly seconded by his wife. She will have the most sincere sympathy of all Freethinkers with her in her bereavement. Mr. Cohen attended the funeral of Mr. Williams and delivered an address in the chapel attached to the cemetery.

(Continued on page 362.)

Freethought Flashes.

It does not surprise me to find that when Christianity is taken to savages they embrace it gladly. I'm always surprised if they do not, and can only attribute the fact to attachment to local superstitions. Otherwise there is very much in Christianity with which a savage would feel quite at home. And with a change of words only he could replace the imported doctrine with the home-made article.

Nature gives us back what we take to her. In a fog the artist catches an inspiration. The inartistic catches a cold.

In all directions the practice of war of necessity involves a relapse to a low standard of ethics, even if it does not negative all that is usually covered by the term. In civil life it is considered wrong to lie; in war lying is one of the first things necessary. One must lie to the enemy about one's strength, or one's aims, or one's movements. Starving a man to induce consent is of all things the most villainous to the civil conscience. In war one may legitimately starve a whole nation to bring about surrender. In civil life the exercise of private judgment is taken as one of the marks of a developed civic life; it is the first thing forbidden to those who engage in war. Slandering one's neighbour is a properly detested offence in civil life; in war, organizations are created for no other purpose than that of slandering the enemy. Force in civil life is admittedly of no value as an index of right; in war it is the only argument of any weight. So one might go right through the list of civic virtues. In nearly every case we are moving on a lower level, doing collectively what each of us would be ashamed to do individually. Small wonder that every war leaves a nation—whether it be victor or vanquished—in a poorer state than it found it.

No man who can defend his opinions in argument is ever afraid of having them discussed, and no man who knows them to be true is ever seriously disturbed because another believes them to be false.

It very largely rests with ourselves whether we make the milestone of each year a tombstone to mark buried hopes and frustrated endeavours, or a monument recording work accomplished.

Hundreds of thousands of temples, synagogues, mosques, conventicles, and places of worship scattered through the ages; hundreds of thousands of men and women devoted to religious services and saddled upon human society for support, an incalculable amount of human energy spent in the service of religion, and for all this not a single verifiable truth contributed to the stock of human knowledge, not a single idea that could not have been produced without its aid, and has not been realized without its assistance. Is there a more monumental instance of human folly than this?

More lives have been made miserable in attempting to follow "good" men than by imitating bad ones. From the bad ones most are safe, but who can protect youth against the oppressive weight of the good?

I have no greater objection to the religious liar than I have to any other kind of liar. My grouch against him is that he is so lacking in either originality or humour. And these are the only two qualities that make a lie tolerable.

Acid Drops.

Nicely framed in a page of notes on fashion and women's clothes, is a reply to Sir Arthur Keith, by Phyllis Mégroz, in the *Morning Post*. With Voltaire, we wholly disapprove of what she says, but will defend her right to say it. Here is a sample:—

The issue which has recently been raised in the controversy between Sir Arthur Keith and Sir Oliver Lodge is, perhaps, too large to be decided by reason alone.

She must not be surprised if the frivolous-minded suggest tossing a coin to decide it, as she appears to think that reason is inadequate, and her argument will go with the majority, who could easily be convinced in theory that sun rays can be extracted from cucumbers.

The Oxford Cricket Movement aims at giving the same opportunities to children of elementary schools to play games as are possessed by the children of preparatory and secondary schools. The principle of the Oxford scheme has now been adopted by other counties. Many public schools have lent playing-fields to boys of the elementary schools. We suggest that the greatest benefit would be obtained from the scheme if the playing-fields were available an extra fifty-two days in the year, namely on Sundays.

Apropos of the "soul," immortality, and other nice things that worry those anxious to deal with two worlds at a time, a reader of a daily paper volunteers some information. The brain, he declares, is the keyboard of the body, and the spirit acts on it—more easily as the child grows and the brain develops. Listening to the discord produced by Sabbatarian fanatics, and other Christian by-products, we are urged to ask, which is responsible? Is the key-board defective, or the performing spirit? Perhaps the true answer is that the "keyboard" has never had a chance to grow and develop.

Nobody, declares the Rev. Gordon James, supposes that the Scripture reference to "the Devil" refers to a being with horns and tail. Nobody? There are millions of Christians in the world who do, such as the Salvationists, and the semi-illiterates of the Roman and Greek Churches, as well as nearly every convert in non-European countries. Those who wrote the Scriptures believed in such a Devil, and so did Jesus. What Mr. James should have said was, that no educated modern person with any intelligence supposes there is a devil with horns and tail, even though Jesus and the God-inspired prophets and disciples thought so.

We like the sound of this from a teachers' paper:—

Drum and trumpet history does not stand just where it did. No doubt the pomp and circumstance will always appeal to some, but more and more readers are taking an interest in records of the common round and daily task. The great events have their place, but we have discovered that the little incidents have importance too; so much so that mere men are becoming more fascinating than majestic monarchs.

Does this foreshadow an increased disregard of solemn priests strutting in full war paint, and of the gaudy pomp of Christian ceremonial?

In a notice of Lord Beaverbrook's articles, the Rt. Hon. Charles A. McCurdy, K.C., in the *Referee*, gives a black eye to the industry of our medicine-men during the war. Where they could see the "uplift," glory, and magnificence of the Bedlam known as war, the writer states . . . "If there was any fraternization anywhere during the war, it appeared to have been entirely limited to the trenches." "Yus, give's a light mate; hungry? 'ave a Maconochie I found."

It is an awful thing for a nation to become "pagan." But seemingly the children do not lose by the change.

The chairman of the N.S.P.C.C. states that 1,256 children had to be removed from their homes in 1898-9. But the figures have dwindled to 467 in 1926-7. This, he thinks, is a sure sign of progress. Another sign, we suggest, is that the average Christian home to-day provides a more endurable life for children than it did in the very Christian age of Victoria.

The world, says Lord Balfour, has been governed exclusively by the old far too long. M'yes; and particularly has it been governed far too long by the ancient ideas, fancies and superstitions of a Palestine race of nomadic shepherds.

Sir J. Forbes Robertson thinks the union of the Church and Stage is a very beautiful thing. He will find the parsons are not so keen on the union or the beauty if the actors' society start to agitate for Sunday opening of all theatres.

Bryncethin, a mining hamlet near Bridgend (Glamorgan) is suffering from a religious revival of the Evan Roberts type. The nerve specialists, local practitioners, and mental hospitals had better prepare for business.

On the principle that if you cannot fight against the current go with the stream, a reverend gent refuses to blame people for spending Sunday out of doors after working indoors all the week. He graciously tells them to enjoy the beautiful countryside, but will they please remember that the parson has his living to get—or as he puts it, remember not to neglect their worship.

Have animals souls? The Secretary of the New Church Evidence Society thinks not, and quotes Swedenborg as saying that the lower animals have not the same nature as man, because they have not the spiritual qualities of free will and rationality. This settles it then. But that will be a sad blow to fervent dog-lovers, who, we feel sure, will never be happy in Heaven unless they have a doggy pal about them. For their sake, then, let us all hope that Swedenborg is wrong! or contrariwise, that human souls lose in Heaven the affection and feelings they have on earth.

Good Christian men rejoice! There is no housing problem in the County of Surrey, and particularly in the diocese of Guildford. For it is proposed to spend £250,000 on a new cathedral. When Christian people purpose using thousands of pounds on a new shed for God, is not that proof that the needs of man in the housing line are fully satisfied? And the Lord's name be pra-a-ised!

The Wesleyan Church was forced to introduce secular amusement—or shall we say tolerate it?—in order to retain the younger clients. This move, though expedient, appears to have proved a mixed blessing. Bolton Wesleyan Synod seems to think so. For it has passed a resolution deploring the fact that there is a large section of the Wesleyan fraternity who hold their responsibilities as Church people very lightly, and devote an altogether disproportionate amount of time and energy to the recreational side of church life. This is a very sad state of affairs. What these recreational addicts need is the fear of God put into them. How would it do to resuscitate a little hell-fire doctrine? A few lively sermons on these lines might awaken the dormant consciences of recreational Wesleyans.

The Rev. H. C. Carter has started an "answers to correspondents" column in a religious weekly. He is out to supply religious truth to the perplexed. Truth, he says, "is a mountain range to the summit of which we can never get in this life." That is probably true of ordinary truth, but as the reverend gentleman is concerned with religious truth, we think he should have said: "Religious truth is a pond from which the seeker can always bail out what he wants."

Mr. Carter's first question is, how can one be sure that one has the actual words of Jesus? Mr. Carter replies that the New Testament is only a translation into Greek. There is scarcely a single saying which is not given by the Gospels slightly differently. That we have many of the words of Jesus recorded with substantial accuracy, he says, is probable with a probability that amounts to practical certainty. But we cannot, he adds, say the probability is equally great in all cases. "Most likely there have been wrong insertions, additions and distortions." So much for the practical certainty!

To the editress of the Christ-like *Woman's Magazine* (an R.T.S. publication), a reader writes:—

You often suggest that we should try to be of service to others. But isn't it a fact that people don't appreciate such efforts, and one seldom gets thanks for one's pains?

The editress replies that with the best intentions in the world, one sometimes does the wrong thing, and only hinders where one hoped to help. The Bible, she says, stresses service to others as a duty. And when one seems to be misunderstood or unappreciated, it is a comforting thought that such work is service rendered to "our Lord." We agree that is a very comforting thought. It has consoled many a pious busy-body when his or her officious interference has received the rebuff it deserved. The best service many Christians can render is, not to poke their noses into other people's affairs.

"The Padre," of *Methodist Times*, volunteers some enlightenment on the question of Sunday games. They are not sinful, he says. The alternatives to Sunday games are of two sorts, better and worse. The better way, of course, is to spend Sunday in worship and Christian service. But, he asks, supposing a person happens neither to worship nor to serve? How is his time to be spent? Though there are, says "The Padre," better occupations than games on Sunday, there undoubtedly are worse. Methodists must therefore face this fact, and also the fact that some people if denied the one will pursue the other. It was his experience with the Army in France that led him to this conclusion. We suggest he might have arrived at it many years ago, if he had not had his intelligence dulled by Methodist prejudices, and had read the *Freethinker*.

Still, he is not at all anxious to recommend Sunday games to the non-worshipper. For he sees, through the eyes of his profession, that the Church will suffer if church-goers follow the example set by the games players. "A generation will arise destitute of reverence for Sunday." And that, of course, would be regrettable. So the poor padre is between the devil and the deep sea. He is candid enough to acknowledge that if no opportunity for wholesome recreation is available on Sunday, many people will discover less wholesome amusement. But he is afraid to advocate Sunday games and to encourage facilities for their being played, lest the Church shall suffer. That is a very sad position for an honest parson. Meanwhile, not worried by the professional misgivings of the parson, and knowing that Sabbatarian prohibitions have produced nothing but evil, we hope Sunday games will continue to flourish and multiply, to the physical, mental and moral benefit of the nation.

A THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK.

If the "Freethinker" has helped you to emancipation, see that it helps your Christian friends in the same way.

National Secular Society.

THE FUNDS of the National Secular Society are now legally controlled by Trust Deed, and those who wish to benefit the Society by gift or bequest may do so with complete confidence that any money so received will be properly administered and expended.

The following form of bequest is sufficient for anyone who desires to benefit the Society by will:—

I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society, and I direct that a receipt signed by two of the trustees of the said Society shall be a good discharge to my executors for the said legacy.

Any information concerning the Trust Deed and its administration may be had on application.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—A. Hiley, £2; H. R. (New Zealand), 9s.

T. W. HAUGHTON.—Thanks for letter. We are giving the matter our attention.

L. LAWSON.—As you know the address of the Society you name, it would be the proper plan to write the Secretary if you wish to know anything of the way in which it manages its affairs. If your questions are legitimate ones we expect they will receive attention.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

We publish, this week, the Annual Report of the National Secular Society, leaving the report of the business meetings till our next issue. Meanwhile it is pleasing to be able to say that the Conference was one of the most successful held within recent years. There was a good representation of the Branches, in addition to private members at the morning and afternoon business meetings. The gratification expressed at the present position of the Society was marked, and the good feeling manifested was one of the most delightful features of a very full day. We may have more to say in connexion with some of the resolutions next week.

In the evening the Picton Hall was well filled, in spite of the sudden burst of summer weather, which

with the holiday feeling about, must have offered an irresistible call to many, and a strong temptation to all. The President took the chair at 7 p.m. prompt, and for two hours the speeches of the different speakers held interested attention. On Monday a number of delegates and friends paid a visit to the delightful old city of Chester, and after luncheon rambled about seeing what was to be seen, gathering together on the banks of the Dee for general conversation. Mr. Cohen and Mr. Mann accompanied the party, leaving in the late afternoon for London.

All that remains to be said now is to voice the appreciation of those who attended the Conference at the efforts made by the Liverpool friends to make visitors feel completely at home. A special word is due to our friend, Mr. McKelvie, who had charge of the Chester excursion. Everything went well, including the weather. Many will look forward to their reunion in some other city next year.

The following appeared in the *Daily Sketch*:—

SIR,—In an editorial article in the *Daily Sketch*, of May 18, it is stated that:—

There is a rough-and-ready popular idea that a man is entitled to do what he likes with his own money, but the law, even as it stands, does not acknowledge any such right. If, for example, a man left a fortune to an organization whose avowed object was the undermining of Christianity, his will would probably be upset on the ground that it was contrary to public policy.

The general principle enunciated is good law, but the illustration is not.

The decision of the House of Lords, in 1917, in *re Bowman and Others v. The Secular Society, Limited*, settled this point. The case was carried right up to the House of Lords, and the verdict of each court was against the statement you make. In the present state of the law, legacies to organizations having for their purpose the undermining of Christianity are quite valid, and legally enforceable. Many legacies have, as a matter of fact, been received by Freethinking Societies during recent years.

FREDERICK MANN,
Secretary, Secular Society, Limited.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti has been invited to open an address to the Walthamstow Labour League, on "Christianity and the Labour Movement," and will do so on Tuesday evening, June 5, in the William Morris Hall, Somers Road, Walthamstow. The lecture will commence at 8.15 p.m. Admission will be free.

May we take the present opportunity of again reminding friends of the service that may be done this paper by friends taking spare copies for distribution in their holiday wanderings. Parcels of the *Freethinker* may be had for distribution. All that need be done is to send along name and address saying how many copies can be used.

In *Questions for Catholics* (Watts & Co. 2s. 6d.) Dr. F. H. Haywards puts some dreadful posers to Catholics in general, and Mr. Chesterton in particular, to answer. A good many of them deal with Bible difficulties, and the author must be very optimistic if he imagines Catholics are going to reply to them in detail these days. They are far too wary. Still, here in handy form, is excellent ammunition with which to bombard the enemy. The Church ought to canonize the hero who can supply real answers to the hundred or more conundrums Dr. Hayward gives in his book.

"I was half way through my life," says Dr. Hayward, "before I noticed that *Jesus was on permanently bad terms with his mother and relatives*. He has hardly one civil word for them . . . I cannot discover one single passage in which *Jesus treats his mother with affection or respect* . . ." Now then, Mr. Chesterton, where are we now with our "Mother of God" and our adoration of the Holy Virgin? Do hurry up and reply please.

Executive's Annual Report.

(Continued from page 358.)

Another deeply regretted death of the year is that of Mr. Vincent Hands. Mr. Hands was an occasional, but always welcome, contributor to the *Freethinker*, and his articles evidenced a vivacity and keenness of judgment that promised well for the future. He had, however, been for several years fighting tuberculosis, and, in spite of sanatorium treatment, succumbed. He was bright and courageous to the end, and faced death with rare cheerfulness and great courage. A young man, in the early thirties, his death robbed the movement of one who might have been of great use.

Turning to the general work of the Society, it is pleasing to be able to report that the activity of the Branches continues, and with general success. In London, the South London, West London, North London, Bethnal Green, and West Ham Branches may be particularly noted, and there has been a new Branch started at Fulham. Out of London, the Manchester Branch reports a very successful season; Liverpool is active both indoors and in the open air, and has the help of several good local speakers. The new branch at Chester-le-Street is very enthusiastic, and is carrying on the work in many surrounding towns. Thanks to its very energetic committee, it looks like making itself a real centre for the district. Newcastle-on-Tyne still suffers from the handicap of lack of a suitable hall for winter meetings, but carries on during the summer months with its out-door work. The Birmingham Branch, after regaining the use of the Council Schools, from which it was so unjustly excluded for many years, is now making an appeal to a wider public, and with considerable success. A number of special meetings were organized by the Executive at Fulham, Birmingham, Plymouth, Liverpool, and London, and good audiences was the general rule. One striking feature of these meetings—in fact, of the meetings as a whole—has been the large proportion of young men and women who were present, and who appeared to be taking an eager interest in the lectures. This is a feature which augurs well for the future of our Movement.

A considerable number of new members have been admitted during the year. Judging from past experience, some of these will drop away, but the majority will remain, and in any case, the fact and influence of the association with the N.S.S. is there. It must be expected that only the finer types of character will remain year by year in close working association with a Society such as ours, but so long as we have managed to give them a wider and a more reasonable view of life than they previously possessed, we shall have done our work.

In this respect a good deal more might be done than is being done in outlying districts, and in towns where Freethinkers are more or less isolated. Parcels of literature for distribution will gladly be sent by the Society; and a great deal has been distributed in this way. During the summer months speakers could be sent to hold outdoor meetings—all that is required for the latter purpose being one or two friends on the spot who are willing to look after the necessary arrangements. The General Secretary will always be pleased to answer enquiries, or to give information that may help. But from one end of the country to the other there are endless opportunities for work for all who have the will to do it, while the rapid disintegration of organized religion has caused men and women, particularly the younger generation, to be more receptive to our views.

It is unfortunate that this decay of organized religion has not been accompanied by a corresponding diminution of general superstition. It would be wrong to say that this is stronger than ever, but the loss of authority by the Churches, which had hitherto preserved the authorized superstition by damning unauthorized ones, has enabled the latter to express themselves with greater freedom. The vogue of such superstitions as faith-healing, spiritualism, the traffic in charms, the belief in signs and omens shown in all classes of society, the readiness with which almost any form of superstition receives financial support, all serve to prove that in weakening the authority of the Established Churches, we are really only at the beginning of our work. There is small gain if we can only get people to "give up the errors of the Church of Rome in order to embrace those of the Church of England." Our aim is the rationalizing of life, and the accomplishment of this will tax our efforts to the utmost.

It is on the cards that before this Conference again meets, the country will have to face the issue of a general election. The National Secular Society takes no part in political movement, however many keen political and social workers may be among its members. But there are some things in which this Society is interested, and which should be borne in mind when Freethinkers are called upon for their votes. There is the question of the rating of church property. It should not be overlooked that the freedom of churches and chapels from taxation makes the burden heavier for the whole of the community and is, indeed, a disguised or indirect form of endowment. There is no reason whatever why churches should not be subjected to the same rates and taxes as are hospitals, lecture halls and educational establishments. There exists considerable public ignorance on this matter, and questions at election times might well have an educational effect.

The blasphemy laws, is, of course, a question that should never be lost sight of. Questions should be asked candidates in public, and a public answer should be insisted on.

More urgent at the moment is the question of Secular Education. The Churches, established and disestablished, are in practical agreement here to get as much from the State in the direction of religious teaching in the schools as is possible. At the moment sectarian rivalry and jealousy prevents their getting all that the government is quite prepared to give them if they can only agree upon a plan. The degree to which the claims of the general public to fair treatment is ignored by this bargaining between the Churches, the Chapels and the government is an example of the extent to which social life is still dominated by Church organization. But it has been clearly announced that if the sects can agree upon a plan of definite religious instruction in the public schools, the government will give facilities for that measure passing into law. And, once this agreement is reached, we shall find it much more difficult to achieve our object of confining the instruction given in State schools to secular subjects, much more difficult than it is now.

Meanwhile greater care should be taken to withdraw children from religious instruction. No reason need be given for this; a simple request is enough, and no school in receipt of the government grant dare refuse the request. Something also might be done by parents who are agreed in their objection to the teaching of religion in schools, getting together and adopting concerted action in the matter. Parents might even adopt the plan of sending their children to school after the religious instruction has been given. So long as the child is there in time for the

calling of the second register, no legal objection can be raised. The State is concerned only with the time given to secular instruction. Religious instruction is permissive, but not compulsory. It is a topic with which the government inspectors do not concern themselves.

In these matters, and others, it is time that Freethinkers became more insistent upon their rights as citizens. A good example of what comes from their not doing so is seen in the development of broadcasting.

When broadcasting began, and it was known there were to be Sunday entertainments, there were protests from a number of the clergy who were afraid of the effects on their already attenuated audiences. So it was suggested to the B.B.C. that there should be a few minutes' address given every Sunday by some selected minister of religion. This was allowed, and the first step having been taken, the rest was comparatively easy. The time given to religion was enlarged, until every Sunday there was a full-sized service; then a week-day service was instituted, and care was taken that on Sunday, while the religious service was on, there should be no alternative programme to which those who did not wish to listen to pulpit banalities might listen.

From the outset the *Freethinker* protested against this abuse of a public monopoly. Here was an institution—at present it is a chartered corporation—which is given a complete monopoly of a scientific invention. The charter is granted by a government which, in courts of law and in parliament, professes to hold the scales absolutely level between Christians and non-Christians, between the religious and the non-religious. Yet a new body is set up, and the public, if they would use this scientific invention, must pay the cost of a licence, while the Company deliberately announces that it is its purpose to prevent the decay of Christianity and to help in its dissemination among the people. It also says that for several hours on Sunday, if you will not listen to a religious service, then you shall not listen at all! And this in a country which labours under the curious delusion that it is not priest-ridden!

Now all this would have been difficult to accomplish—it might have been made impossible—if from the very outset Freethinkers all over the country had been more insistent on their rights as citizens. If from the first move made by the clergy, protests had poured in from Freethinkers, we have every reason for believing that the B.B.C. would have been very hesitant in letting them get the hold on broadcasting they have obtained. But the Churches organized their forces—they were already organized, as a matter of fact—all that was necessary was to give the marching orders. From the first the *Freethinker* called attention to the injustice of permitting the B.B.C. to be used for sectarian propaganda, but it was difficult to get Freethinkers to pay attention till the Churches had obtained a strong influence over the B.B.C., and as they all expressed satisfaction with what was done, and others remained silent, the corporation evidently formed the impression that it was supplying a public need, although the fact that less than ten per cent. of the population attend Church, might have made them slow to believe that the other ninety per cent. were rabidly anxious to get a Church service delivered at their doors.

It may be of interest to note that some time ago your President was one of a deputation which waited upon the B.B.C. for the purpose of protesting against the use made of the wireless by the Churches,

and to ask that there might be established an alternative programme during the time the prayers and sermons, and advertisements of missionary societies were being sent out. There was a very full and frank talk, and it is just possible that in the future this plan may be tried. But the whole situation illustrates the evil of Freethinkers sitting down quietly to the impertinent aggression of organized Christian bodies. Sufferance has been the badge of our tribe for so long that many have come to regard it as part of the natural and irremovable order. It is time that in this as well as in other directions Freethinkers made their presence felt.

Reference has been made to the relatively rapid disintegration of organized superstition. Unfortunately, one exception has to be made to this. There can be little doubt that the oldest, the most retrogressive, and the most dangerous of the Christian Churches has been gaining ground of late years. It has, so far as one can judge, increased the number of its adherents, and it has certainly gained in influence. It would also be interesting to know to what extent it has increased its property holdings in this country. The legislation of late years has given it a better standing with regard to the schools, and the leaders of the Roman Church in England make no secret of the fact that they are hoping to get Catholic schools, run by Roman Catholics, and permeated by Roman Catholic teaching, supported by the State. Politically, the Roman Church is well organized, and its battalions vote with greater unanimity at the orders of their religious leaders than is the case with other religious bodies. This alone represents a great temptation to opportunist politicians, and it may be from this quarter that the danger will materialize. Many years ago Charles Bradlaugh said that the ultimate fight would be between Roman Catholicism and Freethought, and events certainly lend colour to the truth of that prediction.

It need only be added that whatever gains may be made by any religion, or by any Church, they are at the expense of other religions and other Churches. The growth of a particular form of superstition in civilized society is at the expense of another form; against Freethought in such circumstances religion is powerless. For it is not the attacks of an individual or an organization that religion has so much to fear, as it is the spirit of modern science and modern civilization. It is because Freethought has for the past century made it its chief task to bring to bear upon inherited and established religious ideas that it has brought about an astonishing revolution in religious belief. Without wealth or social power, it has caused the most powerfully organized religion the world has ever known to disown one of its teachings after another. It has effected a material change of attitude towards such subjects as education, civil rights, the position of women, the treatment of crime and criminals, the rights of the people, the whole people, to the enjoyment of the comforts that the labours of past generations have helped to produce; to the rights of free publication, free speech, free thought, marriage, divorce, control of the population, and the duty of criticizing every institution in terms of its capacity to minister to the secular welfare of the people. Our criticism of religion is preliminary to the shaping of a better social life for all. Much has been done in this direction, but much remains to be done. And in the inspiration received from the work already accomplished we can press forward with renewed courage to the work of creating a society which shall be governed by reason and justice.

More Ju-Ju Journalism.

(Continued from page 317.)

BO-PEEP AND BLATCHFORD.

THE thoughtful and aspiring student of my unique journalistic course has already been given examples of the Sobstuff and the Psychic Modes at present in vogue in Fleet Street, but these by no means exhaust the possibilities of Ju-Ju Journalism. There are almost as many different styles as there are creeds. Yet each type has one fundamental idea in common—a belief in some Ju-Ju or Fetish, and an appeal always to the emotion and never to the intellect.

This week, my hearties, we will essay something a little more advanced than the ditherings of Messrs. Douglas and Doyle—a little, but not much. Easy does it!

Lesson Number Three is an example of Reverent Agnosticism or Cheerful Christianity, whichever you prefer. Into this category falls the hail-fellow-well-met attitude of the Rev. Dick Sheppard, "Woodbine Willie," etc. Then there's the bright, earnest let's-get-together-and-talk-it-over style of Miss Maude Royden and the Rev. R. J. Campbell, and the bless your pretty legs ladies, there's-life-in-the-old-dog-yet style of Robert Blatchford.

All very bright and matey you'll agree—the sort of spurious cordiality announced over the door of Tin Tabernacles as BRIGHT GOSPEL MEETINGS HEARTY WEL-COME TO ALL.

Right! Sharpen your pencils, get out your notebooks and let's see what we can do.

The leading exponent of the "cheerful but reverent" style is undoubtedly Robert Blatchford. Many years ago this amiable old gentleman wrote a book called *God and My Neighbour*, that shocked many Christians. It was anathematized in the pulpit, and Mr. Blatchford was called terrible names by the clergy. There was nothing particularly remarkable about the book. It contained several hackneyed Freethought criticisms of Christianity, and was mostly a catalogue of the obvious, yet undoubtedly it caused a great stir.

The years have rolled on however—and the fiery iconoclast "Nunquam" now writes amiable articles in the Capitalist Press he once loathed, and cultivates a "Reverent Agnosticism" towards every belief from Mormonism to Spiritualism. He has seen the error of his ways, which is as it should be, and everything in Mr. Blatchford's garden is lovely.

Following, therefore, my original plan of using as simple an example as possible, we will see how the Blatchford school would treat the familiar nursery rhyme "Little Bo-Peep," according to Ju-Ju Journalism. We must have headlines, of course—and a photograph of the distinguished author.

"DON'T WORRY GIRLS—YOU'RE ALL RIGHT!"

"SHEEP STRAY—BUT THEY ALWAYS COME BACK."

Says Robert Catchword the Veteran Journalist.

DEAR ME! Bless my soul! There is such a sad-to-and a pother because Little Bo-Peep has lost her sheep. Sitting in my Sussex garden in the cool of the evening, with the scent of roses perfuming the gentle breeze like an orison, the lisp of the waves on the beach like a benison, I communed with myself on the unfathomable mystery of life. The great golden sun sinking slowly in the West dyed the sky with its crimson and amber glow, and I reflected on the ninety-three million miles of space its rays had to travel 'ere tipping my rosebuds with gold.

A star peeped out, and I thought of the wonders of Science, which has taught us that, travelling at the rate of 75,000 miles a second, the light of our nearest star would take over a hundred years to reach us. Yet there are billions and billions of stars. In the outermost nebulae, say our clever astronomers, there are stars of such magnitude, that it would take 1,000,000,000,000,000 years for their light to reach us.

Musing thus, in my sad and wistful fashion—for such thoughts fill even a mere Infidel with reverence for the Great First Cause—I was told by one whom I hold dear that Little Bo-Peep had lost her sheep—and didn't know

where to find 'em. "Bless my soul!" said I like the old fogey that I am. "Little Bo-Peep has always lost her sheep—and always will."

I remember when I was in the Army, in the days when Tommy Atkins was "Tommy this—and Tommy that, and Tommy git outside," as Kipling says, we had a sergeant-major named Peep, who had a very pretty daughter. Rest his soul. He is dead now. Killed in the Bungwallah Rising of '98. *It was for England!* Let that be his epitaph.

But, as I was saying, this daughter, Miss Peep, was in charge of the regimental mascot—a fat-tailed sheep from Angora, and it strayed. I was only a rough lance-jack—unpaid—at the time, and I remember my embarrassment as she sobbed out her grief on my shoulder.

Ay di mi! Eheu fugaces! How Time's everflowing stream rolls on. Bear with these reminiscences of fogeydom, my children. I loved her dearly in the long ago.

"Leave Aloysius alone," said I (that was the sheep's name), "And he'll come home, carrying his tail behind him!" And bless me! so he did, much to the joy of the Regiment. It's a way Sheep have—they always return to the fold.

Bless you little Bo-Peep. Dry your pretty eyes, powder your pretty nose. All is not lost. I may be an old fogey, but I place my hand on my heart, and declare that the Modern Bo-Peep is not a whit worse than her mother or her grandmother. What if her skirts are short? Why should she hide her pretty ankles and shapely legs?

What if her sheep stray? So did her mother's and grandmother's. God bless my soul—and I say it in all reverence—am not I a black sheep? Didn't I stray when I was young? Hot-headed, impetuous, burning with indignation against which I believed was tyranny and superstition, I kicked over the traces. I was called an Infidel—and gloried in the name.

What happened? I was left alone—severely alone, and now, here I am in my Sussex garden—carrying my tail behind me. I'm a sadder sheep perhaps, a wiser sheep maybe, but I am still able to take an interest in both silk stockings and stars, and the wondrous panorama unfolded before us by the Great First Cause.

Humbly, nay reverently, I sit, back in the fold, with a smile of kindly tolerance for impetuous Youth, and a never ceasing awe for the majesty of the Heavens.

As I write, Sirius winks at me with a green and friendly eye across 28,300,000,000 billion miles of space. Dry up your eyes Bo-Peep! An express train travelling at the rate of sixty miles an hour would take 491,000,000,000 years to reach the Pleiades—so why worry about sheep? They'll come home, even as I have come home—"at eventide."

[Don't miss Mr. Catchword Next Sunday, on "Is the Shingle Sinful?"]

* * *

Then we have the cheery cheerfulness of the Rev. Studdert Kennedy, familiarly known as "Woodbine Willie," who sprang into prominence during the war with his *Rough Rhymes of a Padre*. The Rev. "Dick" Sheppard, of St. Martin's, is another exponent of this muscular Christian type of Ju-Ju Man. Disdaining the orthodox dog collar, they present the Lamb of God in yet another role—a cross between a guards subaltern, a gymnasium instructor and a two-fisted he-man. None of your "Gentle Jesus Meek and Mild" stuff for these pepful padres. They know that line won't go down well with ex-servicemen, accordingly their articles are breezy, slangy, and just suited to the mentality of the Man-in-the-Street.

We will take the tragic fate of Humpty Dumpty as an example. Headlines please, Mr. Printer.

HUMPTY DUMPTY DUDS.

CHRIST HAS NO USE FOR "EGG MEN."

"PUT A JERK IN IT," SAYS JESUS.

By "Gold Flake" Georgie.

WHAT HO you chaps! Let's get together shall we? I know we Padres are considered a mouldy lot by many fellows, they think sky-pilots are a lot of sanctimonious

humbugs, with their collars back to front, but, believe me, we're not all like that.

I admit that in the past there has been, as it were, "a great gulf fixed" between the padre and the ordinary bloke. *But the Great War altered all that!* We suffered together lads, padre and private, on the blood-soaked fields of Flanders, and I say solemnly, with due regard to the gravity of my statement, that it was not until I went over the top and faced the leaden death of Jerry's bullets, that *I really knew what Christianity meant!* As I said in my little book *Wretched Rhymes of a Parson*, published at the time:—

Mud and blood and shrieking shell,
Guts all glistening on the sod.
Death that spat with flames of hell,
While I blasphemed—denied my God!

The Blonde Beast yonder in the trench,
Like maddened beasts towards us sprang,
Thro' poison gas and noisome stench,
But somewhere there a Tommy sang—

"Abide with me fast falls the eventide."
Forward I went, and Hell itself I braved
I saw that I—not Christ—had lied.
My soul was saved! My soul was saved!

I make no apologies, you chaps, for quoting that. We all know, we that faced the music "over there," how near Christ was to us in the trenches. It makes my blood boil to hear some folk travesty the Man of Galilee. You know as well as I do, that I'm not alluding to the namby pamby Christ "dished out" in Sunday schools before the Great Holocaust. I'm sick of the school-girl notion, that the Man Who whipped the money changers out of the Temple, that lashed the Pharisees with stinging scorpions of speech, was a sleekly combed, milk and watery muff, a gentle meek and mild sort of Saviour.

We met Him in Flanders—you and I lads, and know differently. I pity the poor ignorant fools who say there is no God; pity them from the bottom of my heart. There were no Atheists "over there." We were too close to realities! Why, I remember the case of Sergeant X—a fine soldier, but a notorious infidel, who scoffed loudly at religion, and who undoubtedly upset the faith of many young "swaddies."

I was with him when the stretcher bearers brought him back after a surprise raid. I could see he was done for. He was riddled with shrapnel. I did what I could for the poor devil, and his last words, as they carried him to the dressing station, were: "My God, padre. Its hell!"

You see—even the so-called Atheist acknowledged his Maker and the existence of eternal punishment. That proves conclusively that an Atheist doesn't exist! But the War is over now lads. We're back to Civil life.

Old General Humpty Dumpty has had a great fall—gone is his brass hat and uniform. All the King's Regs. won't make him a General again. Neither will you, my lucky lads; unless by God's inscrutable decree, you don khaki again. Are you like General Humpty? Because you've exchanged khaki for multi, have you—like him—gone to pieces?

Christ wants no Humpty Dumptys. He has no use for "egg men"—no use for those who found their faith on the battlefield, and lost it in "civvy" life. Don't be Dumpties blokes! Remember General Dumpty's sad fate. "All the King's horses and all the King's Men couldn't put Dumpty together again!" His faith was not strong. He wobbled on the wall—between War and Peace—hence the pieces! The Man with the Egg Shell Soul is a Bad Egg! N.B.G., as we used to say "over there."

Christ, your C.O., is always on parade, you chaps. Don't wobble and dither like Humpty Dumpty. "Put a jerk in it!" That's Jesus Christ's command. Stand to attention, and show how "old sweats" can appear on parade—a credit to their commanding officer, Field Marshal Christ of the *Calvary Corps!* Cheerio you chaps!

[Another Cheery Tonic-Talk by "Gold Flake"
Georgie Next week.]

* * *

You see the idea? Ju-Ju Journalism, like the young man in Jack Hassall's famous poster, is "So Simple" when you know how. As the old showman said "You get 'em comin' an' goin'—sideways, forwards and backwards." Next week I hope to initiate you still further in this fascinating course. GO TO IT. EARN WHILE YOU LEARN.

GWYN EVANS.

(To be continued.)

The Christian Unity Anthem.

AMALGAMATED WITH THE "FROTH BLOWERS."

COME, foes of confusion, and shun all illusion,
And join in collusion, and sing all with me:
For the world will be righted when we are united,
And Canaan is sighted far over the sea.

So the more we are together, together, together,
And the more we are together the merrier we'll be:
For your friends are my friends, and my friends are
your friends,
And the more we are together, the merrier we'll be.

Come every defendant of creed, and attendant,
Come every dependant who feels in the lurch:
Come every lukewarmist of sect Nonconformist,
Come every enormist of Chapel or Church.

For the more we are together, etc.

We thought we were many, but soon won't be any,
Like the cats of Kilkenny who fought 'til they died:
For we've wriggled and wrought so, and scrambled and
scraught so,
And nought will be left that we brought but our pride.
So the more we are together, etc.

Each sect was another intended to smother
The creed of a brother with dutiful might;
Some virtuous winkling was all out for sprinkling,
But now we've an inkling that everyone's right!

So the more we are together, etc.

With brave elocution we damned Evolution,
And each institution that stood in our way:
But we're giving up slaying, we find it's not paying,
And we want to go maying together to-day.

So the more we are together, etc.

We groaned and we grunted, we preached and we
stunted,
For the Church was not wanted in Wales in my youth:
Now the titheing extorting of holy abortion
Is joined to the portion of Justice and Truth.

For the more we are together, etc.

What Chapel doth savour of "fluence" or favour,
And who ever gave her a bit "on the nod"?
That people should tease us, who're working for Jesus,
With taxes that ease us, is rotten—by God!

Then the more we are together, etc.

In this grand revival we'll nobble each rival,
We're out for survival, and pray for the hour
When peers from the Chapel with Privilege will grapple,
For like Sancho on Dapple we're riding to Power!

Then the more we are together, together, together,
And the more we are together the merrier we'll be;
For your friends are my friends, and my friends are
your friends,
And the more we are together the merrier we'll be.

WM. J. LAMB.

Every act must have its own relation to the future. Every act must be either innocent or beneficent or hurtful in its ultimate tendencies and result. Or, if we like to put it in another form, every act must be according to the harmony of Nature or at variance with that harmony.—*The Duke of Argyll.*

Correspondence.

ATTILA AS "THE DESTROYER."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—At the risk of forfeiting the esteem of our friend Mr. Steinberger, which is very far from my wish, I am still unconvinced that Attila was moved by a belated outburst of generosity to spare Rome from destruction; although my friend puts the case for that view as forcibly as it could well be put.

Mr. Steinberger says: "The idea that the Pope could move him [Attila] 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."

The fact is we do not know what the Pope did say to Attila—there is no record of it. The warning came from Attila's own counsellors. Hodgkins in his *Italy and her Invaders*, a work of real research, and the standard work on the subject, says:—

The remembrance of Alaric, cut off by a mysterious death, immediately after his capture of Rome, was present in the mind of Attila, and was frequently insisted upon by his counsellors, who seem to have had a foreboding that only while he lived would they be great and prosperous. (Vol. 2, p. 156.)

And again: "He [Attila] was already predisposed to moderation by the counsels of his ministers. The awe of Rome was upon him and upon them, and he was forced incessantly to ponder the question, 'What if I conquer like Alaric, to die like him?'" (Vol. 2, p. 161.) If that does not convince my friend, then we must agree to differ; amicably for my part, and I hope so on the part of Mr. Steinberger. W. MANN.

AGE OF THE EARTH.

SIR,—In his article on "Evolution and God," in your last issue, Mr. W. Mann quotes Professor Haldane to the effect that the extended time which science now gives to the origin of life "will have a devastating effect upon religious beliefs"; and that Christians, Jews, Mohammedans and Buddhists believe that this "most important event has occurred within the last few thousand years." This illustrates how Buddhism is still so misunderstood as to be linked with the theistic religions, even by some who might be expected to know better.

Buddhists have always accepted, as the time of the beginning of animal, if not of human, life on the earth, the computation of the Hindu philosophers, namely, 4,320,000 years. This was long ridiculed as extravagant guess-work even by scientific authorities; but, guess or not, it comes remarkably near the estimate of Sir Arthur Keith for the appearance of mammals as 4,500,000 years. Sir Arthur Holmes (*Age of the Earth*, p. 19) places the age of the solar system between 2,500 and 5,000 million years. The Buddhists place it at 4,320 million years, and the age of our own particular "chakkavala"—"island universe," or stellar system—at 311,040,000,000 years. All this may be fanciful and conjectural, but it serves to show that there is nothing in common between Buddhism and the childish religions of the Christians and the Semites.

It is also believed that the human race, and civilization, are immensely older than even modern science is prepared to admit. Dr. Holmes conjectures that "man has probably over a million years of history behind him," and Sir Arthur Keith "gives man the respectable antiquity of about one million years." This is more in accordance with Buddhist thought. It is also thought that the world, and the human race, may continue to exist for an incalculable period of time yet to come. When will it be understood that Buddhism stands apart from all forms of theism, and that there is nothing either in its method or teaching that can by any possibility conflict with modern science?

E. J. IAMEL.

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.

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INDOOR.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. B. A. Le Maine—"Deity."

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Outside Municipal College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. F. Mann—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.

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OUTDOOR.

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