

THE ARROGANCE OF SUPERSTITION.

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Views and Opinions.

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The Arrogance of Superstition.

LAST week I tried to show that the theory of the brain being an "instrument" which is used by an entity, mind, soul, or spirit for its manifestation is one of those misleading analogies which, though it may be used by men with a scientific reputation, appeals essentially to the unscientific mind. One might just as reasonably speak of a drum as being the instrument used by a bang for its manifestation, and argue that the destruction of the drum does not of necessity destroy the bang. Even if the analogy were admitted, it is useless to the believer in personal survival. For on the theory of the organism being an instrument only, it is quite plain that it is an individualizing instrument. The only reason why Smith differs from Brown, on this theory, is that the organism—the instrument—of Brown differs from that of Smith. And when the organism is destroyed the individuality of each goes with it.

In the large number of papers I have seen criticizing Sir Arthur Keith's statement that the mind of man is to the brain what the flame is to the candle, the commonest charge brought against him is that of dogmatism. "Undiluted dogmatism" is the expression used by the *Christian World*. That is very curious. To say that two things which when found are never seen apart, one of which varies with every variation of the other, are connected in terms of causation is "undiluted dogmatism"; to assert in the complete absence of evidence, and in face of the impossibility of thinking of one existing apart from the other, that one is dependent on the other is not dogmatism, but reasonable and religious. I grant the religious, freely. The *Manchester Guardian* says there is no reason why we should accept the position of Sir Oliver Lodge, and no reason why we should accept that of Sir Arthur Keith, and asks pathetically "Will they not agree to let the matter rest unproven?" That is very ingenuous. Usually when a statement is unproven, and inconceivable, we let it alone—all of us that have any claim to common sense. But what does letting it alone mean here? It means that the scientist is to remain silent because he is not able to show two

things separately, which he says cannot exist apart, while the other man is to go on maintaining large and costly systems of religion, to give the ministers of these religions a position of privilege and power in virtue of their having knowledge, which it is plain they have not, endow them from the public purse, and protect their beliefs by law. That is what is meant by letting the matter rest. The plain truth is that you cannot afford to leave religion alone. It interferes too much with life—with education, with marriage, with the family, and a score of other things. I admit that if it is true it ought to do so, but if it is not true, then it is one of the most gigantic and one of the most disastrous illusions that has ever oppressed the human mind.

* * *

Wanted—A Miracle.

The Dean of Manchester, Mr. Hewlett Johnson, offers a contribution to the controversy that is worth a passing word. Other Christians are to-day mainly engaged in trying to prove that a study of human nature provides grounds for the belief in survival. Dean Johnson draws a distinction between the doctrine of immortality and the doctrine of the resurrection. The former, he says, is based upon the belief that "some element resides in us which is immune from death." But he does not find himself bound, as a Christian, to accept that view. He agrees with certain "able and far-sighted" thinkers that "we cannot divide man's psycho-physical organism into two parts, body and soul; one destined to perish, the other unassailable by death," and he agrees that death is as real as is suggested by Sir Arthur Keith. But,

the doctrine of the resurrection does not depend upon any quality of immortality in human nature as such. Upon what, then, does it depend? It depends upon an act of God. The doctrine of resurrection is a *religious* doctrine. A Christian believes in it because he believes in God, and because his belief in God is fundamentally affected by the goodness which emerged into the world with Jesus Christ.

That, from the scientific point of view, looks like throwing up the sponge. There is nothing in human nature, as such, that would lead to the belief in survival. But you can believe in resurrection if you first of all believe in God, although what it is that survives, how it survives, and why it should survive, is not clear. I quite agree that if one can believe in a God, one might just as well go on believing in a number of other things. One's mental digestion is not likely to be strained by anything that comes after that. It is a miracle, and one does not argue with a miracle. And if one is not able to find the proof of immortality in the existence of a God, there are other Christians who will be ready to prove there must be a God because the qualities of human nature argue

the indestructable character of the human spirit, and how could this be so unless God existed? You must believe in God because man is immortal; you must believe in immortality because there is a God. It would be a pity to break such a delightfully circular trip by asking the travellers to alight at logical junction.

* * *

Noise from Noyes.

The *Sunday Times*, for some undiscoverable reason, handed over the task of criticizing Sir Arthur Keith to Mr. Alfred Noyes. I think Mr. Noyes dabbles in literature of a kind, and it is nice to get him on this subject, because he is so delightfully "cocky" and writes in such unbroken ignorance of the whole topic. Mr. Noyes will not mind my writing thus, because he says "the time has come for plain speaking," and "it is not right that the respect of the man in the street for a nobler authority should be invoked on behalf of an arrogant sciolism." I assume that Mr. Noyes had in mind the meaning of the last word when he selected it. If, he says, "Sir Arthur Keith were an agnostic and simply said he knew nothing about it, he might be worthy of the respect that is now paid to all true men of science." Quite so, the religious world is always ready to respect those scientific men who hide what they know about the nature of religion, and decline to speak against it. But, confound him (Sir Arthur Keith), he has "stepped out of his own field in order to attack the keystones of a great religious faith which is utterly beyond the domain of science." But why, Mr. Noyes, why? In what sense is this belief, or any other belief beyond the domain of science? Mr. Noyes has many things to learn, and one of these is that beliefs are as much within the range of science as problems in chemistry or physics. Besides, if Mr. Noyes deigns to pay some attention to the subject, instead of merely writing about it, he will discover, evidently to his surprise, that this particular "keystone of a great religious faith," has been made the subject of a scientific study, right from its beginnings in the delusions of the savage mind through to its existing stage. Scientifically, there is no greater room for doubt about this belief than there is about the existence of witches.

It is quite pleasing to hear from Mr. Noyes that the theory of man's animal origin is not now in question. But Mr. Noyes appears to be under the quite childish impression that, this being accepted, it leaves every other question where it was. Even at the risk of giving another blow to the "keystone" I must point out that this is not so. Man's evolution from the animal world covers his mental and moral, and "spiritual" qualities as well as his physical structure. I can assure him that this is the case, even though he may think Science is getting impertinently curious in holding it to be so. And being so, it follows that there is really no point at which we can say that just here mind, or spirit, or soul was introduced into the organism so that man might be marked off from the rest of the animal world. If the beginnings of the developed muscular system of man had its commencement in the earliest random gropings of the lowest forms of animal life, it is equally clear that the highest forms of mental life must be sought in the same direction. There is really no point at which this "soul" could be introduced. There is no room for it in the economy of nature. I suspect that Mr. Noyes' difficulty in realizing this is due to his taking the highest form of mental life and comparing it with the gropings of the primitive colonial animals. Which is about as reasonable as compar-

ing a locomotive of the Flying Scot class with a pan of boiling water. And yet without the one we should never have had the other; nor is there any doubt in the minds of most scientists that if we are ever to understand the nature and the development of intelligence, it can only be by working on this assumption.

* * *

Science and Religion.

Mr. Noyes is wroth with a scientific man touching upon religion—only when he says he does not believe it, of course—because "science and religion deal with entirely different subjects." I can assure him that this is the case. How could it be! We all live in the same world, we all have the same questions facing us, and the essence of science does not lie in the subject with which it deals, but in the method it uses in its investigation. This may be news to Mr. Noyes, but, again let me assure him that it is so. It is not a matter of argument, but a statement of fact. Now religion sets out to deal with man, and with the world in which he lives, as well as another world to which it says he is going. If Mr. Noyes turns to the records of religions he will find this to be true. For ages religion has told man all about himself, explained the nature of his diseases, and how he might protect himself from the malignant agencies around him. It also told him about the world in which he was living, how it came into being, what forces governed it, what were the causes of the things happening around him. It told him, too, of another world to which he was going, how he might get ready for it, and undertook to guide him through this world and to place him comfortably in the next one—for a consideration.

Now science also deals with all these things—there are no others it can deal with, and it came into collision with religion because, in every instance, it found the facts did not agree with the religious explanation. The conflict arose, not in confusing two things that were fundamentally distinct, but in two rival interpretations of the same thing. Science took hold of the religious stories of man's origin and nature and found they were wrong—proved they were wrong. Then it took hold of the account which religion gave about the world and proved that was wrong. Of course, champions of religion did not easily submit. They opposed, they persecuted, they lied, they slandered, they declaimed against men of science attacking the "keystones of a great religious faith." But in the end they gave way, and discovered that it had all been a mistake. Lastly, science took hold of the accounts which religion gave about the next world. There were no material facts to handle, but there were mental ones. It was obviously a belief, and the task which science set itself was to trace the history of this belief in a soul which roosted in the body but escaped to another roost when the body died. The idea was traced back and back, until it was run to earth in the ignorance of the primitive savage. This was the only basis of fact the belief could produce. The savage was interrogated, and it was soon found out that here again was a mistaken interpretation of familiar things. Dreams, fits, echoes, etc., all built up the belief that there was a "double" in the body which could survive it, because it got out of it during sleep and would do so at death. When this point was reached there was really nothing left to talk about, so far as genuine scientific enquirers were concerned. The delusion had been traced to its origin, and there was an end of it.

Religion had to make a stand here. If this went, everything went. "We have given you this world," it cried to science, "for God's sake leave

us the other. It is of no use to you, but it is invaluable to us. Let us talk about this unknown world as the 'Great Reality,' and if you do not believe in it, please, please, behave agreeably and keep your mouth shut." It is the pathetic cry of a dying industry. Mr. Noyes stands forth as one of its champions. If you believe in it, he says, you may talk about it as much as you please. If you do not, then it is your duty to remain quiet, and by playing the hypocrite help to keep religion alive. Take this world, he says, but leave religion the great Unknown. For a "child and the profoundest philosopher may enter that realm on equal terms." Quite so! Where knowledge is neither existent nor possible, the fool and the philosopher are on an equality. The distinction is that the fool fancies speech in such circumstances makes him a philosopher; the philosopher knows it is the happy hunting ground of fools and endeavours only to explain their mental processes. Naturally the fool does not like it.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Last Crusade.

"The only hope for the future of society lies in the absolute extermination of Christianity."—G. W. Foote.

"A Christian resembles a tram-car, for he can only run along prescribed lines. And trams are now an out-of-date form of locomotion."—J. K. Sykes.

ILLNESS is a period of enforced leisure, and, to a bookworm like myself, any literature is welcome at such a time. Indeed, my taste in literature is omnivorous, and works of reference have no terrors. Even an A.B.C. Railway Guide will start me on imaginative journeys to alluring towns and delightful villages. A gazetteer opens magic casements to lands anything but forlorn. A dictionary is to me a source of pleasure, especially if it contains illustrative quotations from the best authors. One of my favourite works of reference, however, is the Annual Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, which has been published regularly for considerably over a hundred years. Although not by any means a centenarian, I have known this publication for a more years than I care to remember. When I was a small boy with the ambition to become a real pirate and sail under the Jolly Roger, the thrilling and hair-breadth adventures of the brave Bible Society colporteurs filled me with envy and despair. It was to me, in those far-off Victorian days, what the alleged and dyed desperadoes of Hollywood are to the very young frequenters of cinema theatres to-day. Now I am old, and have parted with much of my hair and many of my illusions, my dear old Christian colporteurs are still hard at it, telling the tale, pocketing the pesetas, and other coins, at the peril of their lives and their sacred stock-in-trade.

Such a subject as the conversion of the world to Christianity almost compels a poor artist to dip his brush in crimson lake. Even the austere accountant who compiles the figures for the huge annual report of about two hundred pages, gets almost romantic in describing the adventures of the colporteurs. This is how he does it in an old issue, and he and his pen-pushing predecessors have done it in much the same grandiloquent way for scores of years. I blush with pleasure to transcribe the flamboyant language and the purple passage:—

They (the colporteurs) win their way among Russian immigrants in Canada, among throngs of devotees at idol-festivals in India, among coal-miners and school-boys in Japan. One man rides with camels across the deserts of Central Asia. Another wades through swamps reeking with

miasma in South America. Another ventures in a frail canoe down tropical rivers infested with alligators.

Is it not romantic? No one would pause, churlishly, to ask why Japanese schoolboys should be as risky companions as alligators or bug-eaten camels. Of this quarrelsome kind was the Western American who complained because the whisky as it splashed burned no hole in his shirt-front.

These modern Christian crusaders are as resourceful as they are courageous. In France, for instance, they meet men of philosophic opinions with a distressing habit of allowing their views to influence their action, so unlike the more stolid English people. The report shows that the champions of the Faith do sometimes combine the wisdom of the serpent with the docility of the dove. To quote the religious faith of Mr. Lloyd George, for instance, often serves as a decisive argument to disarm the simple-minded sceptic. The naughty Frenchman who admires the writings of Anatole France, and other lively authors, is crushed by the news that Mr. Lloyd George is a hard-boiled Baptist. After this encounter, one fancies the son of Satan buys a large family Bible for madame, his spouse, and a cheap one for each of the children, while he turns to the *Petit Journal pour Rire* for consolation in the hour of defeat and discomfort.

Unfortunately, all the people of the world are not nearly so polite as our gallant French neighbours. In Burma, benighted Buddhists sometimes revile the colporteurs "with words too coarse for translation." It is "too deep for tears," but the crusaders still have to endure much at the hands of the followers of Satan. Some terrible Italians deserve a place in Mme. Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors, for they actually described the work of the British and Foreign Bible Society as "a bottega, a money-making concern." It is to be hoped that Signor Mussolini never hears of this breach of international courtesy, or the Inquisition will be revived in all its terrors as in the Ages of Faith.

Doubtless, those infernal eaters of macaroni lacked all religious instinct, or, perhaps, they had seen a copy of the annual report of the Bible Society's work. It contains columns of figures and pages of statistics calculated to turn a sceptic's hair white and curl it afterwards. Although the Church of Christ is still suffering from shell-shock resulting from the world-war, the receipts run into hundreds of thousands of pounds. Of this sum the translators, printers, and bookbinders get the lion's share, but it is pleasant to note that the brave colporteurs do not risk their lives for a possible crown of glory in another world, but get a cash payment in this vale of tears.

The British and Foreign Bible Society is but one of many similar institutions which have enormous incomes. Hardly a week passes but one or the other of these organizations receive legacies, and collections are made constantly all over the country. Facts such as these should make Secularists pause and reflect that Freethought propaganda has to make headway, not only against gross ignorance, but against a most heavily endowed superstition. In fighting the Christian religion Freethinkers are opposing an enemy entrenched behind mountains of money-bags. In money lies the power of the clergy and their fetish-book, and it is well to remember, as Shakespeare reminds us, that gold can break as well as knit religions.

A scrutiny of the financial accounts of these Bible Societies shows that a solid proportion of their income results from investments of money left as legacies many years ago. Indeed, this present-day

activity is largely due to the dead hands of departed Christians. Whether Chinese Presbyterians read the gospel message in the vernacular is an open question, but it is a fact that men are paid to produce and to distribute them. Whether illiterate bandits of Eastern Europe regard "God's Word" as a mascot against the police is equally open to doubt, but the printing, binding and circulation of Christian Bibles is a vested interest. Whilst the world-war was in being sufficient Bibles were despatched to the troops to build a garden-city, but such propaganda never prevented the soldiers from cutting each other's throats. It is one thing to print and bind bibles, but it is quite another to make Fiji Islanders rejoice in reading of the exploits of Noah's Ark, or the story of Jonah and the Whale. Besides, the activity of the "dead hand" is not always so pleasant nor so profitable. It reminds me of the story of the small Spiritualist just bereaved of his large, masterful wife. He was walking blithely along the street when a loose slate whirled down and hit him a severe blow on his head. "Crikey," he murmured when he came to, "Jane must have reached heaven after all!"

MIMNERMUS.

Buddhism in England.

THE efforts of Christian missions in the East are producing effects other than their promoters intend. So far from being detrimental to the religions against which they are directed, they appear to be waking up at least one of these to renewed activity.

Buddhism was the first religion in the world to engage in missionary activity. It was enormously successful until corrupted by Hindu theism, and it fell finally a victim to persecution, first by the Brahmin priests and then by the Mohammedans. Thus it practically ceased to exist in India proper. In a very debased form it took root afterwards in Tibet, Mongolia, China and Japan.

But the earlier Buddhism continued to flourish in Ceylon, Burma and Siam, and, as the centuries slid by, it went to sleep. For a long time it seemed as though Buddhism was played out, suffering from senile decay, moribund and destined to debase. But the aggressive policy of the Christians galvanized it into renewed life and activity. Thus there are in Ceylon to-day several flourishing Buddhist schools and colleges; and a newspaper published in Colombo has become a thorn in the flesh of the Christian missions. The Buddhists have the advantage of being able to use all the weapons of scientific rationalism against their opponents without prejudice to themselves.

It was in Ceylon and Burma that the idea of a Buddhist mission to England was first contemplated. The earliest effort was the Buddhist Society of Great Britain and Ireland, founded in 1907, with headquarters in London. This society was an eventual failure owing to internal dissensions. It was as nearly as possible dead during the war, and later attempts to revive it were not successful.

If there is one religion in the world that should appeal to Freethinkers it is Buddhism, not so much on account of its religious, as its philosophic, aspect. Even as a religion, however, it has its interest, for it is the only one in all the world that can be considered sane. It may be regarded as a sort of homeopathic remedy for the disease of supernatural religion. For, in pure Buddhism there is nothing of the supernatural. It is distinctly laid down that the test for truth is thorough investigation and criticism in the light of reason and experience. There is, in true Buddhism, no theology, no dogma, and no

creed. And there is nothing whatever in the method and teaching of modern science that conflicts with it.

Thus the news that a Buddhist temple is to be established in London can hardly be regarded otherwise than with sympathy by Freethinkers. It is claimed that there are already 500 British Buddhists in London, in addition to the hundreds of Ceylonese, Burmese, Siamese, Japanese, Chinese and Indians.

The Buddhists of the East, who are behind this project, will need to learn a lesson from the earlier effort, and its failure. There are, perhaps, as many as 500 white people, men and women, who call themselves Buddhists, in England. But these number a large percentage of Theosophists, whose primary cult is derived, not from Buddhism, but from Hinduism, and a collection of miscellaneous cranks. It is from this source that dissensions will arise, as they did before, to threaten the whole scheme at its very beginning.

Further, there is an insidious element which will creep in with the deliberate purpose of causing dissension, and with a view to breaking up the movement *from within*, just as the Brahmins did in India centuries ago. Into the old society there entered sundry disgruntled Christians who had left their sects for various reasons; and there was an attempt to conduct Buddhist services in parody of a Nonconformist "bethel." Against the real Buddhists intrigue was set afoot, in the underhand, sneaking fashion peculiar to Christians, and the Buddhists in the East unfortunately gave heed to it. We know something of this nuisance in the Freethought movement, only it takes another form, namely, the half-boiled, invertebrate "rationalists," and apologetic "reverent agnostics." They are mostly of Nonconformist origin, and can never get rid of the taint of self-righteousness, sanctimoniousness and hypocrisy; but, significantly enough, there were some Catholics who actually joined the Buddhist Society.

There was one European who gave his life to the service of Buddhism. He became a member of the Buddhist Order in Ceylon and Burma. He was a man of fine character and outstanding ability. But years of residence in the tropics broke his health, so that he had to leave the Order and return to England. Owing to the nature of his ailment he had to resort to a certain remedy under medical advice. But for that he would probably have died sooner than he did. Those influences which were determined to check the Buddhist movement set it about that he was a "drug fiend," and thus he ceased to have that support from the Eastern Buddhists which he ought to, and otherwise would, have received.

There was another European who gave time and money that he could ill afford, neglecting his own affairs to the verge of catastrophe. Concerning him the slander was spread that he was in the movement for what he could make out of it. Hearing this, and finding that the lie was believed in the East, he withdrew altogether, very much to his own advantage be it said.

Now, all this sort of thing, this slander and loathsome ingratitude, is peculiarly Christian. It is not Buddhist. If so, then we do not want Buddhism in England. We have already quite enough of the kind of religion of which it is characteristic. If Buddhism is to be established in England, therefore, it must be in such form as will appeal to rational, straightforward men and women. If it is only to attract the idle, ennuist-stricken women of the wealthier class, long-haired, emasculated youths, hocus-pocus fakers, mystery-mongers, and more or less amiable imbeciles, then it will add one more to the "fake and crank" cults which Freethinkers have to oppose and expose.

K. J. LAMEL.

Drama and Dramatists.

The well-spring of credulity will never run dry, and Autolycus, a creation for all time, will be busy as long as time lasts. In a blind rage, Swift would viciously attack the follies of mankind, and perhaps he hurt himself more than his victims in the encounter. The playwright, on the seat of Olympus, away from the hurly-burly of the world, sets his puppets dancing, and leaves the rest to spectators. Comedy, as it appears to us, is the intellect at play, but the kind of play varies according to the author's capacity. Landor states that genuine humour and true wit require a sound and capacious mind, and it was in the full knowledge that Fielding would have something to say, and say it well in his comedy "The Lottery," that we went to see it, and were not disappointed.

This exquisite cameo, written in 1732, is a brilliant stage essay on credulity, together with avarice, the other foe of peace of mind, and also the ever young and ever old subject of marriage. The manuscript was discovered in a London Museum by Mr. Robert Barclay Wilson, who has arranged music for the presentation of it at Playroom Six, Compton Street, Charing Cross Road. This little theatre, asking quite a nominal sum for membership, is an example of an active minority up against an inert majority, and is an expression of dissatisfaction against the inane and senseless productions of the big theatre that, at the outset, are strangled in the attempt to provide matter for discriminating taste. That hoary-headed scoundrel, "What the Public Wants," is like charity; he covers a multitude of sins. A bored queue is, we suppose, something in the nature of a human advertisement of the unknown, and, for what we know, the busy and lively procession of street entertainers must provide outside a canon of criticism when the weary waiters are permitted to go inside. Little theatres are justified if for no other than a protest by those Marthas who stand and wait or, in some cases, sit and knit.

Mr. Stocks, in this play, is our friend Autolycus, who is promoting a lottery, and therefore the stage is well prepared for the entrance of the characters. They are treated better than they deserve; they arrive and depart on the tip-toe of expectancy—rich and poor—but all with a thirst for the riches of Golconda. Lovemore's sweetheart, Chloe, has come up from the country, and Lovemore is in chase, catching her up at the Lottery shop. Chloe is fickle; the frills and laces of a fop are for the time being preferred to her honest squire lover, and, in the words of Bottom, the little spirit of equity and justice whispers to us, "It will all come pat—you just wait." The squire is outbidded, but when the spinning tub gives Chloe a blank instead of a fortune, Lovemore, with the hero's bounding and vigorous virtues, claims his repentant sweetheart, and the play ends with the traditional qualities triumphant.

The dialogue is rich in matter, and the texture is woven together with songs that recall leisure and the art of human enjoyment. Instead of the present rush and clatter of nonsense of modern plays that make one leave a theatre with a sense of having lost something, "The Lottery" brings an atmosphere that is restful and the feeling that we have not even exchanged old lamps for new. It is to be hoped that a three week run will not end the possibilities of "The Lottery"; it is the "Beggars' Opera" with a cleaner face, for there was more ballast in Fielding than in Gay. It should, with elaboration, find a home in London; and we know that in the provinces, the taste for pure fun and good music is not dead—let saxophones play ever so loudly. If the new is trashy, taste in the country will have the old; even Madame Patti knew that when she included "Home Sweet Home" in her programme.

There is, at the little theatres, a noticeable intensity of acting—a positive swallowing of the part, and the company of Play Room Six is no exception. Mr. Horatio Taylor, as Mr. Stocks, has a splendid voice, and in the dual part of producer is to be congratulated. O Labour of Love; we salute thee, having been a close companion for many years of those who strive to make life worth living! The scenery does not ask you to imagine that three lines anywhere and anyhow repre-

sent a house; it is of its period, and one could cross a road at that time without claiming the Victoria Cross, and Capek's criticism of modernity "What the hell is it all for?" still remains unanswered. Jenny the maid is a rogue, lovable and lively—the Coachman (Derek Birch) sets one thinking if the slow extinction of the horse in our streets will make us forget the imperfect links in life that live to provide exercise for our virtues. We have seen at Covent Garden, early in the morning, an old woman talking to a horse while she gave it a crust to eat; may the Pope's delightful children in Spain, with their bloody orgy in the arena, take a lesson from the old lady who knew as much of Latin as the horse! Mr. Noel Dixon, as Lovemore, is breezy, stalwart, fits the part, and sings so that only a sweetheart with a heart of stone could refuse him. In the quartette in the third act, the music is ravishing, melodious, sweet and wholesome; Jessica and Lorenzo could not desire more. Mr. John Gattrell, as Jack Stocks the lordly fop, was an excellent foil for Lovemore. Miss Helen Goss, as Chloe, must be congratulated on her perfect interpretation; she has mastered the difficult art of singing and acting that makes her presentation approximate to Nietzsche's first proposition of aesthetics: "What is good is easy; everything divine runs with light feet." She has a bewitching charm and grace that gives a lustre to this comedy of Fielding's; she presents us with the paradox of a natural woman, and for nearly two hours, she makes time stand still, and there must be a beneficent future for her according to the laws of poetical justice.

Our sole reason for speaking well of this comedy is for its undertone of common sense. Fielding, in his own particular style was an enemy of humbug, cant and pretension. For his human qualities we cannot help but love him, and one cannot read him and forget. Parson Adams, in *Joseph Andrews*, gives us the author's criticism of affectation: "He concluded with a chapter of Theocritus, which signifies no more than that sometimes it rains, and sometimes the sun shines." Fielding would have all wars fought with fists, and, if a division of life into admiration and pity is made, we will let Thackeray speak of him for what we admire. "He has an admirable natural love of truth, the keenest instinctive antipathy to hypocrisy, the happiest satirical gift of laughing it to scorn. His wit is wonderfully wise and detective; it flashes upon a rogue and lightens up a rascal like a policeman's lantern. He is one of the manliest and kindest of human beings; in the midst of all his imperfections, he respects female innocence and infantine tenderness, as you would suppose such a great-hearted, courageous soul would respect and care for them."

The diamond set in gold is beautiful to the eye, and, in a world of abstraction, is as much the property of the one who beholds it as it is the property of the owner. Perhaps humour is the setting of commonsense; from Democritus to Darwin, from Lucretius to Swinburne, those who are content with one world at a time will find this continuity one of the most precious inheritances of mankind. In the survey, Fielding will not be forgotten, for the process of laughter cleans the brain, puts paid to humbug, and helps to open the gates of wisdom. It is a rare distinction for Miss Hilda Maude, and Mr. S. Reginald Price to assault the castle of stupidity with "The Lottery," and those with an eye for technique will appreciate the ability of the producer, Mr. Horatio Brown, who, in the words of Marlowe, gives his patrons "infinite riches in a little room."

WILLIAM REPTON.

Omens and Auguries.

THAT night from Troy's high battlements
They saw a falling star,
Where shone above the Grecian tents
The moon's gold scimitar . . .

To-night I saw a falling star
O'er roofs and chimney pots . . .
I wonder who the pedants are
That weave Time's dusty plots . . .

JOHN H. HEWITT.

Mussolini and the ex-Kaiser on Democracy.

BOTH Mussolini and the ex-Kaiser have informed the world that democracy is a failure, and that there is no prospect of improvement. In substance, they say that this is so, because the masses are too ignorant to choose proper representatives to legislative bodies; and the ex-Kaiser thinks that the remedy must come from monarchs, who, with the assistance of those whom they will appoint to office, will decide difficult questions of government from their "viewpoint."

The world has certainly not been wanting in decisions that have come from the viewpoint of monarchs, who have always been both theocrats and autocrats combined; and the improvement in the wisdom of such decisions is very little in proportion to the advancement in intelligence on the part of the masses. In fact, there was no improvement in the wisdom of the decisions of monarchs from ancient times to the close of the middle ages; while all improvement has come from the masses, who have supplied the world with brains.

We read of a monarch in ancient times, who ordered "all of the wise men" in his kingdom to be "cut in pieces," because they could not interpret his dream, which he had forgotten; of another who ordered all witches to be killed; and many of them were in the habit of burning dumb animals to make a "sweet savor" for the Lord, while another used his daughter for the same purpose; and during the middle ages, when theocracy was in the zenith of its power, Europe was turned into a slaughter-house in the burning, and otherwise killing, of witches and heretics. It was not many years ago, comparatively speaking, that an English monarch had a doctor's feet pressed and beaten into a pulp, among other tortures inflicted upon him, to make him confess that witches had caused a storm by going to sea in sieves; while a French monarch, at about the same time, would not allow agriculturists to remove the weeds from their growing crops, because it might destroy the bird's nests, thereby diminishing the supply of royal game. These are just a few of the examples of the wisdom of monarchs, and those whom they have appointed to office; and the recent world war, the greatest criminal folly in history, except the Crusades, is the latest exhibition of the wisdom of monarchs, and their chosen advisers. They, no doubt, would like a chance to try it over again. The Crusades lasted over a hundred years, ending only when Europe was wholly exhausted.

The errors of the past are, and always have been, the most serious problems with which advancing civilization has been forced to contend. Great advancement has been made in modern times, since the masses have had something to say. Witches have disappeared, heretics are practically safe, angels are no longer active, and dreams have been discarded in most things. But the danger from superstition is not passed by any means; its terrible hand is still reaching for the throat of civilization. A powerful class want the "good old times" back again; and unfortunately, they know how to get them only too well. Keep the women away from the apple trees, so that they will not pass out anything more that will "make one wise," and listen to "babes" rather than to the "wise and prudent."

Mussolini says, with much truth, that the few can lead the many into voting for any scheme that such few may desire. He probably knows how few it took to start the Crusades, and he must know how Turkey was induced to join forces with the ex-Kaiser in the world war. History repeated itself. Probably another repetition, so far as Turkey is concerned, would not be so easy after her present constitution, eliminating theocracy from the affairs of the government, has had a chance to work for a few years.

Sudden conversions arouse suspicions. Only a few years ago, this same Mussolini was as much of a Democrat as Jefferson, but, not having the wisdom of the latter, was exiled from his native land, which he is now ruling with a rod of iron. The World War furnished him with his opportunity. He seized it, and was advanced from the editorship of an almost unknown

socialistic paper to world fame. "One is born every minute," as Barnum said; and one humbug could probably catch them all with sufficient opportunities and the right kind of bait.

Republics have been more successful in government than monarchies. It is under the latter that the worst abuses have prevailed. Fools, as well as knaves, have been born monarchs, with little to choose between the reigns of either. France appears to have had all the monarchies she wants. Her third republic has survived the World War, which is more than can be said of most of the monarchies of Europe. In England, monarchy is just a name under which passes the most democratic government in the world. Under it, Englishmen can have all that they could have under a republic, and much more. The House of Commons, elected by the people, could abolish the House of Lords, and the office of king, if found desirable; and no one would have any ground of complaint.

In the United States, republican form of government has not been a failure. The English charters of liberty, so common to American fundamental law, with safeguards of religious freedom, have been effective. Humbugs cannot start revolutions at will, as those who made such attempts in early times found out. Grave abuses prevail, it is true, more in the judicial department than elsewhere. Judicial legislation is too common, and much is concealed under judicial decisions that would not look well in print. There are too many offices, and too many seeking them, with too much money to spend. Some don't know how to vote, while others know too well; but the same abuses prevail, probably to a greater extent, under monarchies.

But nothing is to be gained by further adherence to past errors. Steps backward never did, and never can, accomplish anything; evils can never be cured by resort to their cause. Remove the cause, and the evil will disappear in due time. But the remedy must come from democracy, and theocracy. If the League of Nations was not so much like the "Holy Alliance," it would make some effort to prevent further exploitation of suffering China, through the sale of "homes in Heaven," opium, and manufactured goods in that unhappy land.

Rationalism must be the teacher of the future. There is safety in nothing else. When enough of the natural is known to eliminate the supernatural, and when the world is ruled by democracy instead of theocracy, warfare, and most other evils, will disappear from the affairs of man. International co-operation for the purpose of supplying the world with brains would do more good than anything else.

E. W. PHILBRICK.

Week's Mills, Maine, U.S.A.

Acid Drops.

A "religious" reader plaintively asks why we persist in referring to Christians as being on the level of savages. The only reason we can think of is that, where religion is concerned, they are on the level of savages. For example, by the time this is in the hands of readers, Parliament may be discussing the question of the Revised Prayer Book, and they will solemnly debate as to whether bread and wine can be changed into flesh and blood or not. Moreover, only the other day the Central Council of Catholic Societies issued an official declaration, in which is stated the belief of the signatories that "the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ by virtue of the prayer of consecration," also that he is "truly and personally present in the Consecrated Sacrament." Now if people really believe these things, what are we to call them but savages? Preferring the term "Christian" does not alter the fact.

In the desire to be topical, and as an indication that the fountain of inspiration is run dry in Christian quarters, we notice that the Rev. J. Shepherd said that:—

To-day many good women would rather sit in the gloaming of a lion's cage than in the gloaming of a

public park. Ugly fears were destroying the beauty of our parks.

The pulpit, it will be noticed, is a near neighbour to the daily newspapers.

In the New Reichstag, out of a number of 489 members returned, there are seventy-eight Catholic and thirteen of the Christian Nationalist Peasant Party. Will all those frothy-mouthed individuals who, during the war, told us that Germany was a nation of Atheists, please note?—and conveniently forget as quickly as possible.

The activities of the spider are as nothing compared to those of the Rector of Ripple, near Deal. The rev. gentleman is helping to fell pine and elm trees in order to make a gateway into a paddock which he is allocating for the free parking of motor cars on Sunday. There are, we feel sure, in this land, a few benighted heathens who would prefer to look at live trees rather than listen to dead sermons.

There is a certain amount of pleasure in watching the verbal squirming of our reverend friends now that they cannot frighten their clients to church by threats and ostracism. When they were safely in the saddle non-church-goers were made mighty uncomfortable by the black army, but to-day the clerical voice is as gentle as a sucking dove. The Rev. A. Manby Lloyd is a bold fellow; he says:—

I do not blame people for spending their Sundays out of doors. They may be working in shops or offices all the week, and want all the fresh air they can get on a Sunday, but their duty is to go to church at the place where they are spending the day.

We gather from this that the rev. gentleman imagines everyone to be deaf and blind to the selfish opposition of his kind to the opening of playing fields on Sunday; it is also possible that human opinion is not in such a depraved condition that it requires a parson's impertinent assistance in the matter of duty.

In a morning newspaper on the same page containing the Prayer Book views of the Bishop of Norwich, Sir William Joynson Hicks and Lady Bates, is an account of the discovery of the skeleton of a pre-historic man. In this account there is the mention of England appearing from the Ice Age, and also the difference of opinion as to whether the place of man's origin was South Africa or the Far East. The training in keeping a straight face would appear to be more necessary than ever for expounders of the one and only true religion.

In a recent address, the Rev. Kenneth Saunders said: "The results of investigations into the religious ideas of men in the Army give us no ground for complacency." The Rev. J. J. E. O'Malley, Senior C. of E. Chaplain at Aldershot, told the Soldiers' Friend Society that the great bulk of the 30,000 young men joining the Army each year would seem to have been almost entirely untouched by religious agencies. In a class of twenty-eight men he found that not one had heard of the Prodigal Son parable, and in a class of fifty-two only two could repeat the Lord's Prayer! If this is typical of soldiers, we should say it is typical also of the average man outside the Army. Perhaps the B.B.C. will explain how and why the average man acquires a rapacious hunger for religion when he gets a wireless set.

"Ominous Returns" is a heading in a Methodist journal. It relates to the annual returns of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Wesleyan Methodism, we learn, has an increase of 1,769 members, and there are sixty-three more local preachers. All the southern districts, except Cornwall (decrease, 288) show increases. But from Manchester, Macclesfield, Nottingham and Derby, Lincoln, Hull, York, Whitby and Darlington, and Newcastle, a decrease is reported. Eight districts show decreases of more than 100. As regards junior membership, twelve

decreases are recorded, Newcastle heading the list with 508. "Sunday school figures are alarming"—a decrease of over 10,000 scholars, and nearly 1,000 teachers. Manchester, a one-time Sunday school stronghold, has 1,327 decrease in scholars and 263 decrease in teachers. Our contemporary plaintively asks how long will this deadly decline be allowed to continue before drastic action is taken. God knows! Short of an Act of Parliament making Sunday school attendance compulsory, there seems little in the "drastic" line for our pious friends to do. Perhaps a few Punch and Judy shows and more bun-struggles, and two "treats" a year might improve matters, now that the magnetic Jesus no longer hypnotizes youth.

A Methodist suggests to his Christian friends that when using the Sunday wireless service, they should put some money in a box, and send the proceeds to some good cause at the end of the year. The idea is worth imitating. Every time, on Sundays, our readers feel irritated because Christian influence has prevented the broadcasting of secular items, they might put aside some money to be forwarded to the *Freethinker*, which is striving to get such state of affairs altered.

After all, says the Rev. A. Gordon James, fellowship and religion are one and the same; for what is religion but fellowship with God and our fellows? Quite so; but strictly between ourselves, Freethinkers don't come in the Christian category of "our fellows." The perfect kind of fellowship only recognizes brotherhood among believers.

The author of that stirring piece of best-selling fiction, *The Christ of the Indian Road*, has been made a bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church of America. This is another instance of making the punishment fit the crime.

As the prelude to a note on the work of the National Playing Fields Association, the *Methodist Times* says: "It will not be denied that the right to play is part of the heritage of every child." Intelligent people will not deny, too, that where facilities exist, the child should not be prohibited from exercising his right to play on Sunday as well as week-days.

Mr. Hilaire Belloc writes in the *Methodist Times*:—

Now remember that what I am about to say will necessarily be at issue with what you, the average reader of this paper, hold: that is the whole value of hearing other people's points of view.

From this, Mr. Belloc would appear to be a "whole hog" advocate of free expression of all opinions. But some of us have reason to doubt that. We remember that Roman Catholic papers refused Mr. H. G. Wells a hearing in reply to Mr. Belloc's criticism of the "Outline of History." We remember that Mr. Belloc made no public protest against this refusal. In practice, Mr. Belloc appreciates the value of allowing other people's views to be published when he desires to air his own; but when others' views happen to be Freethought views, he discovers truly Catholic reasons for suppressing them. He is a worthy son of his Church.

Mr. Belloc says he quarrels with the evangelical attitude in doctrine because he thinks it fragmentary and partial. Next, he is intellectually at issue with the foundation:—

I do not see upon what rational ground either the old-fashioned evangelical based himself when he made the Catholic canonical books of the Old and New Testaments his infallible authority, or upon what rational ground the newer type stands when he makes his personal emotion a sufficient authority. A rational basis is lacking. Why are the Bible or personal emotion final authorities? This attitude seems to me to be below the dignity of the human reasoning faculty.

Hear, hear! And it seems to us "to be below the dignity of the human reasoning faculty" to accept as fact what a gang of priests tell one to believe. To us "a

rational basis is lacking" in what the priests say, and in the acceptance of anything on the authority of priests. But, then, our rational faculty is not squint-eyed like Mr. Belloc's.

Primitive Methodist Church returns tell much the same sad story. Fourteen districts show net decreases, and twelve show net increases. And there is "an unarrested decline" in the youth doping departments. "Are the Churches," asks a commentator, "really meeting the religious needs of the age?" We daresay they are. But the lack of progress and the decline arises from the fact that a large portion of "the age" has few religious needs, and a still larger portion none at all. And as the children are in increasing numbers keeping out of the Sunday schools, the parsons are deprived of the opportunity to bamboozle the children into thinking they ought to have religious needs—which is a very doleful state of affairs, calling for prayer and thought and Christian fortitude.

Apropos of Methodist Union, a religious weekly quotes from the *Times* :—

While all respect is due to those who fight for principles against great odds, and who, for conscience' sake, struggle on in a losing battle, the world is coming more and more to realize that the work of no Church can prosper through negatives and bickerings and narrowness of views. The future power and efficacy of the Church must lie rather in an ever-expanding comprehensiveness and a wide and all-embracing charity.

What the world also has come to realize is that no Church has ever been free from negatives, bickerings and narrowness, and that these things arise from the nature of the Christian religion, and its God-inspired book. As regards "future power," our staid contemporary appears to be dreaming of an india-rubber religion. What would Jesus have thought about that? He wanted all men to shape themselves to fit his religion; the *Times* would have it stretched to fit all men.

The Rev. Owen Watkins, Deputy-Chaplain-General, recently addressed a Chaplain's Conference. He reminded the chaplains of the greatness of the opportunity of an Army chaplain. The men are compelled to attend Church parade, he said; and for five to seven years chaplains can talk to them about "the greatest things in life." Then, each year some thirty thousand of these men are discharged, to be re-absorbed into the national life. Thus an Army chaplain has an unusual opportunity of leaving some thoughts about religion that will remain with them. Soldiers are compelled to listen to a Christian priest—what a thing to exult over! It is only a gang of priests who could praise God for a heaven-sent opportunity when soldiers are denied the liberty enjoyed by the meanest subject of the realm. What a contemptible tribe these chaplains are!

We all know the story of Rev. Charles Lowe, preaching in a Church where, in the evening, a parson named Adam was announced to preach. Lowe took for his text, the words, "Adam, where art Thou?" The same evening, Mr. Adam returned the compliment by preaching from the text: "Lo, here am I." Of the same class is the happy choice of a text by a parson, preaching for the first time in his son's pulpit from the words: "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic." To these stories may now be added the authentic one culled from the current "To-day's Sermons," announced in the *Chicago Tribune*: At the Moody Memorial Church, the pastor, Rev. P. W. Philpott will preach on "How to be Filled with The Spirit."

On a certain Sunday in May hundreds of people visit the Culloden wishing-well near Inverness, and throw down a coin as they wish. This is a survival of the ancient superstition of making gifts to gods of the fountains and rivers, and probably this place was sacred to some pagan water-sprite in ancient days. To-day, however, when the superstitious wishers have gone, the authorities remove the gifts from the well. This year £25 was recovered and given to local charities.

It is possible, says Dr. Cyril Norwood, to create a world that would be free from disease and illness. We feel we ought to protest against this blasphemous suggestion for interfering with the divine scheme of things. It questions the Heavenly wisdom in creating disease germs.

Criminals will one day have injections of something that will make them useful citizens, says Dean Inge. Maybe the injection will be useful also for priests and parsons, and other non-producing barnacles burdening the generality.

A Wesleyan journalist went to the Central Hall and noticed the absence of towels, soap, etc. On enquiring the reason, he was told: "It's no use supplying things like that; a brush or comb or towel, when it has been put out, goes in no time." It is very sad, says the journalist. It is more than that; it is a useful commentary on the value of Christian training.

Dean Inge says he has too much confidence in God's building to tremble at the removal of the old scaffolding. Well, it is the Dean's friends who are removing the scaffolding, and one can be sure that for their profession's sake they will work pretty cautiously. But what the Dean and his tribe do fear is the Freethought undermining of the foundations. That is why they talk so glibly of "re-interpretation."

The Christian life, says the Rev. Donald Soper, is restful—that is, it has balance and poise—but it cannot be comfortable. We presume it is somewhat like tight-rope walking. We never did fancy that; perhaps this explains why the Christian life leaves us cold.

Where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, says Gipsy Smith. It takes a lot of believing when you remember what kill-joys, Puritans, Sabbatarians, and the rest of the holy mob have done and are doing in the way of officious interference with the liberty of others.

The Canadian Pacific liner, which was chartered to convey the Baptist delegates to the Congress at Toronto, had sixty-three ministers on board. Sailors have a traditional dislike to carrying too many parsons, and as dancing, whist drives, etc., are forbidden, and it is announced that the ship will be turned into a floating chapel, we should imagine that even the delegates themselves will be glad when the voyage is over. Fancy a week in chapel! Ninety per cent. of the population find two or three hours a week more than they can stand. But a whole week! Imagination pales at the unbelievable horror of it.

"Don't sing any hymns, don't say any prayers. Don't lick the boots of any God for me. I am too tired to climb the golden stairs," was contained in a letter found on the body of Mrs. Mary L. Ward, whose body was found in a pool at Groby, Leicestershire. There is a world of tragedy behind a letter of that kind. A woman, wearied of her battle with life, seeking rest in death, but with the fierce pride that disdained to "lick the boots" of a god to gain a fantastic heaven. Even a suicide can give a Christian a lesson in moral courage. For the Christian way would be to grovel at the feet of God, and ask him for forgiveness, without being able to summon up the courage expressed in the letter from which we have cited.

OUR WEEKLY HINT.

Take an extra copy of the "Free-thinker" and leave it where you feel sure it will be read. You may help some mind to free itself from the bonds of superstition.

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.—E. C. Saphin, £3 3s.; W. Wearing, 6d.; B. F. O'Connell, 6d.

A. B. MOSS.—Sorry to learn of your accident, but glad that it stopped at a bruised head and a black eye, although the shock from a fall is often more serious than the observable injury. Shall hope to hear soon that you are better.

F. BORR.—The person you mention is no longer connected with any school.

F. G. PORTER.—There might be little to notice in Church and Chapel members slandering each other, but for the claim that the Christian religion fills men and women with good feeling towards one another. It is precisely in connexion with religion that the worst side of human nature expresses itself.

P. W. PATE.—Sorry we cannot help you with the authorship of the quotation, "I expect to pass through this world but once," etc. It is certainly not by Ingersoll.

F. H. CURTICE.—We are always pleased to hear from those interested in the paper. Thanks for your very flattering opinion of our articles on the Keith controversy.

H. PREECE.—Will try and find what you call "a corner" as early as we can.

J. T. BRIGHTON.—Your letter was handed to us. We are pleased to hear that your Committee feels encouraged by the N.S.S. Annual Report to go forward and do "even better" next year. Four meetings a week, at different places, is good work, and we wish you success in your efforts to start a Branch of the N.S.S. at Houghton-le-Spring.

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.

The Daily News is responsible for another imposture in the shape of a symposium on "Where are the Dead?" The ostensible purpose of the articles is to give different points of view from various writers. The real object is to make it appear that while some people are rather dubious of a future life, there are only a few who would straightforwardly reject it, and they who do so are of no standing. Up to the time of writing, two articles from doubters have appeared. One is by Arnold Bennett, who is doubtful, but will cheer the religious by nonsensical talk about atoms being "alive," and that no quality of mind can be destroyed; the other is by Professor Julian Huxley, who writes the quite un-

scientific jargon that just as energy is never lost "so spiritual or mental activity is not lost, but all of it returns, in some way not yet understood, to a store or pool of spiritual reality." With such scientists, we really deserve such clerics as the Bishop of London. But the aim of the Daily News is quite clear. If the rank and file of the religious world cannot be kept from coming into contact with unbelief, it is best to give them the impression that unbelievers admit the strength of the believer's case; all that is required is a modification in form, not a rejection of fact. Curiously enough, in the shoals of letters which have been received by the Daily News, it has not opened one from a man who has any definite opinion against a future life. We say it has not received one, because not one has been published. We suppose this hypocritical farce will go on until the non-Christians in the country summon up enough moral courage to say quite definitely and quite publicly what they really do believe.

Several readers have asked why Mr. Cohen has not been asked to contribute an article to the Daily News series. That is obviously a question that should be addressed to the Editor of the paper, but what we have said above may probably answer their question. At any rate Mr. Cohen does not go about either asking entrance to these papers or offering them contributions. And they are not likely to ask him so long as he insists on expressing his opinions fully and freely. It will be remembered, the mistake made by the Manchester Evening News, some time back, when it included an article by Mr. Cohen in a similar series. Manchester Churches and Chapels had never had such a fright before, and sufficient pressure was brought to bear upon the paper to prevent the error being repeated. There is no room in any paper in Britain to-day for a Freethinker who is genuine and outspoken in his Freethought. Of that we may rest quite assured; and the recognition of the fact should nerve Freethinkers to renewed efforts, and above all to circulate the only paper in the British Isles that is not afraid to say what it thinks in relation to the Christian superstition.

Now that the question of a future life is before the public, we take this opportunity of commending to our readers the two books advertised on the back page of this issue, which deal with the subject. They will find the subject fully treated in the larger work, including an examination of Spiritualism from the strictly scientific point of view—a point of view which, we may say, Spiritualists, from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle downward, persistently refuse to deal with. Perhaps that shows wisdom on their part—the wisdom which is said to be the better part of valour.

Readers of this paper know how difficult it is to kill a religious lie, although in the case we are noticing here, we fancy that the lie is not wholly religious in origin. The late Charles Watts will be known to the older Freethinkers mainly, and the strange yarn we have come across concerning him is that he died worth £50,000 or £60,000. Like other Freethinkers, Charles Watts lived poor and died penniless—without even enough to pay the funeral expenses; while his widow, at the age of fifty-five, was compelled to resume work in order to gain a livelihood. We do not expect that this statement will kill the lie, which is grotesque enough on the face of it. Common sense ought to have been enough to settle it. But some people have a curious readiness to listen to tales of this kind.

We are greatly obliged to those of our friends who have sent us names and addresses to which the Freethinker is to be sent, and also to those who have written for parcels for distribution. Until we are in a position to pay for advertisements, this is the only method we have of bringing this paper before new readers. And experience proves the plan to be an effective one.

Report of Annual Conference, N.S.S.

THE Annual Conference of the National Secular Society was held on Whit-Sunday, at the Washington Hotel, Lime Street, Liverpool.

The morning session opened at 10.30. Mr. Chapman Cohen, President, occupied the chair.

Letters of regret at inability to attend were read from Mr. A. B. Moss, Mr. F. A. Hornibrook, Mrs. J. Wright, Dr. L. Barnard and others. There was a good muster of members from the Lancashire towns, and from other parts of the country.

The following branches were represented: Bethnal Green (Mr. J. Neate); Birmingham (Mr. Frank Terry and Mrs. F. Terry); Bolton (Mr. W. H. Sisson); Manchester (Mr. A. C. Rosetti, Mr. F. Edwin Monks, Mr. S. Cohen); Newcastle (Mr. Fred. Terry); Nelson (Mr. J. Clayton and Mr. F. Metcalfe); Plymouth (Mr. W. J. W. Easterbrook); Swansea (Mr. J. Short); West Ham (Mr. R. H. Rosetti); Chester-le-Street (Mr. J. T. Brighton and Mr. W. Watson); Shotts (Mr. F. Price); Liverpool (Mr. J. Ferrand and Mr. P. Sherwin); North London (Mr. H. R. Clifton); South London (Mr. G. Whitehead); Fulham and Chelsea (Mr. A. Jackson).

The roll having been called the Agenda was proceeded with.

Mr. Jackson (Fulham) moved and Mr. Rosetti (West Ham) seconded that the minutes of the last Conference be taken as read.—Carried.

Mr. Brighton (Chester-le-Street) moved and Mr. S. Cohen (Manchester) seconded the adoption of the Annual Report.

Mr. Sisson (Bolton) said that with regard to the broadcasting of religious services, he had received a letter from the B.B.C. stating definitely that the services would continue, but that if he did not like one form of service he could get another.

The President explained that he was informed, during an interview with the B.B.C., that it was impossible to give an alternative programme until a proposed new station was set up, but the B.B.C. would not, of course, promise anything.

Mr. Brighton (Chester-le-Street) said that his Branch had had a wireless set installed, and as a protest they decided to discontinue its use. They received a letter from the authorities asking the reason, and they replied that the license would not be renewed until an alternative programme for Sunday was given.

After a number of comments the Report was formally adopted.

The next item on the Agenda, the Financial Statement, was moved by Mr. Parker (Glasgow) and seconded by Mr. Terry (Birmingham).

A number of questions concerning the Balance Sheet were asked and answered, and one or two suggestions offered, which the President promised to pass on to the Accountant.

The next item on the Agenda being the election of President, Mr. Cohen vacated the chair, and the President of the Liverpool Branch (Mr. J. Short) moved the re-election of Mr. Chapman Cohen. This was seconded by Mr. Jackson, supported by Mr. Easterbrook, and carried with acclamation.

Mr. Cohen thanked the Conference for his re-election. He said at the end of thirteen years the Society was stronger financially and otherwise than it was when he first took office. He would be sixty years old on the September 1, and out of that sixty years he had spent about thirty-eight years in the service of the National Secular Society. It was the only Society he had ever belonged to, and he thought the only Society he ever should belong to. So long as there was a National Secular Society he would be in it, and his interests did not lie anywhere else. He valued the position because he thought he had the confidence of a number of people throughout the country, whose opinion was worth having. He then referred to the presidential hammer, which originally belonged to Richard Carlile. It was afterwards passed to James Watson, then to Charles Bradlaugh, from Mr. Bradlaugh to Mr. Foote and then on to himself. It has been suggested that I should approach the Conference to have my name added to the

others. If you agree to that it is the best thanks you can give me for anything I have done.

Mr. Sisson (Bolton) said he had very much pleasure in moving that. Mr. Jackson (Fulham) seconded and the motion was carried with acclamation.

The next item was a motion by the Executive, West Ham, South London, and Fulham Branches, that Mr. F. Mann should be elected General Secretary. Mr. Mann had been elected for six months and his appointment now came up for ratification.

Mr. Rosetti said he had much pleasure in seconding the motion. Mr. Mann had a difficult position to fill, they believed he was the right man for the office, and it was hoped that he would have a promising career, and that the Society would have a valuable servant.

The motion was carried unanimously.

Mr. Mann thanked the Conference for his election, and said he felt more than ever impelled to do all he could for Secularism. He realized the difficulties and the newness of his position, but he hoped when the matter came before the next Conference it would be felt that the choice had been justified.

The President then moved the re-election of Mr. Quinton as Treasurer. He had known Mr. Quinton ever since he had been in the movement, and in his opinion no one was better fitted to fill the position of Treasurer.

Mr. Rosetti (West Ham) seconded, and the motion was carried.

Mr. Jackson (Fulham) moved and Mr. Clayton seconded, that Messrs. H. Theobald & Co. be re-elected Auditors. Carried.

Mr. Jackson (Fulham) moved that the nominations for Executive be taken *en bloc*.

Mr. Sissons (Bolton) asked the procedure with regard to the nominations. When did the information go to the Branches as to sending in nominations?

The Chairman said the Rules gave all information as to the procedure, but in future Mr. Mann would call special attention to it.

On Motion No. 9 by the Executive, that in future all cards of membership should be issued direct from headquarters, Mr. Sherwin (Manchester) said while this might suit the Executive, it might be resented by Provincial members. It would detract from the prestige of the local Secretary, and in consequence there might be a falling off in membership.

Mr. Sisson said if the cards came from London he, personally, he would wonder what he had to see his members about.

Mr. Clayton (Nelson) said he should be pleased to furnish names of his local Branch members at any time. The difficulty with him was getting in subscriptions, and if the local Secretary could not get subscriptions in, how could the Executive in London?

Mr. Clifton (N.W. Group) said he had been requested by North London Branch to support this resolution. As a way out of the difficulties which had already been referred to, he suggested that all cards of membership should be issued by the Central Executive, signed by the President, and sent to the Branch Secretary to be countersigned, and then passed on to the members. Older members of the Society would remember that at one time certificates signed by the President of the Society were issued, and these were much valued by members. By the method now suggested each member would have a card signed by Mr. Cohen, and this would be valued in the same way.

The motion with the suggested amendment was put to the meeting and carried unanimously.

This concluded the morning session and the Conference adjourned for luncheon.

The afternoon session of the Conference opened at 2.30 p.m.

Mr. Jackson (Fulham) put Motion No. 10 on the Agenda:—

“That in the opinion of this Conference it is desirable that the Society should gain possession, by lease or otherwise, of a hall in London suitable for public meetings and other purposes.”

He said the Society was considerably handi-

capped by not having a central meeting place in London, and it would be a very great advantage if one could be secured.

Mr. A. Williams (Port Sunlight) agreed with the last speaker, and hoped the Central Executive would find some suitable place.

The Chairman said the only prospect as far as he could see, would be to get hold of some old house, carry out alterations, building a hall at the back, and letting the front portion on lease for shops or offices.

The motion was then put and carried unanimously.

On Motion No. 11, the amended form of which appears below, Mr. Clifton (North London) said he had been requested in the unavoidable absence of Mr. Samuels, to put this to the Conference. He did not know precisely what was in the minds of the framers of the resolution, but thought possibly the idea was to set on foot a testimonial to the President, as Editor of the *Freethinker*.

Mr. Easterbrook (Plymouth) thought the resolution should include something tangible; for instance, it might put on record the desire of the Conference that the Endowment Trust should be continued until the sum of £10,000 had been raised.

Dr. Carmichael said the resolution in its present form, put before him an indefinite proposition. He did not understand where the second part was leading to.

The Chairman said Mr. Clifton had indicated something which was possibly in the minds of the framers of the motion. When G. W. Foote died, the general opinion was that the *Freethinker* would follow its founder and Editor. That had been the rule with Free-thought papers in the past. The *Freethinker* did not die, it continued to flourish. Then we had the trying time of the war, when many advanced papers went under. People were flabbergasted to see the *Freethinker* get stronger. When the war was over several people suggested that the time had arrived when some sort of testimonial should be made to him. He said that was out of the question while the friends of the paper were being called on to make good a recurring deficit. Then the *Freethinker* Endowment Trust came along, with which Mr. Easterbrook had as much to do as anybody, because it was his suggestion that set it on foot. Then there were several suggestions again as to a testimonial. Now the suggestion is that the Society should give the President a testimonial. He did not, however, feel inclined as President of the Conference and as Chairman of the Executive in agreeing to that. Frankly, it was not that the testimonial would not be acceptable, and if it were offered in some other manner it would be accepted. If he were leaving the post and could not be their President any longer, and it were said this testimonial was given as a mark of past services, that would be all very well. No man in the Freethought Party had ever taken less from it or given more. He was pleased with the work but, of course, he had to live. At the same time he did not ask anyone to share his responsibilities. The *Freethinker* Endowment Trust was going on. Later in the year he (Mr. Cohen) would be making special notice of the fact that they wanted to complete the £10,000.

Dr. Carmichael said the President's point of view might seem right, but suggested that the Conference had another point of view on this motion. He further suggested that as the President had behaved so frankly they should be equally frank. He thought the Conference should insist in expressing an opinion on this motion, and if afterwards anyone hurled the matter against members, they would only feel a profound contempt for so gross a misunderstanding of the position.

The President said he hoped the time would never be when people could live splendidly by Freethought. The danger was commencing now that they were beginning to get money. Greater care than ever should be exercised in selecting those who were to be put in charge.

Dr. Carmichael said mention should be made of the fact in returning the motion, that it was returned in deference to the wishes of the President.

On the suggestion of the President, the resolution was altered to read:—

That in view of the importance of the *Freethinker* to the Freethought Movement, and of the way in which it

places its columns at the service of the National Secular Society, this Conference takes the present opportunity of warmly congratulating the Editor on the splendid achievement of the *Freethinker* Endowment Trust, whereby there is an opportunity of placing the paper on a sound financial basis, and notes with pleasure that it is the intention of the Trustees to keep the Fund open until a sum of £10,000 of invested capital is realized. Finally, it pledges itself to do all in its power to achieve this object.

This was put to the meeting, and carried unanimously.

Motion No. 12:—

"That in view of the large number of Freethinkers connected with advanced movements in this country, this Conference is of opinion that advantage should be taken of this association to check the attempts made to exploit these movements in the interests of the Churches."

was moved by Mr. Sherwin (Liverpool). He said the Churches were doing far more permeation than the Secular Movement. Advanced movements were over-run by parsons. Further, they had to recognize that the Press was becoming more and more closed to Secular views. He therefore felt that local Branches should organize their resources to exclude parsons from their fields of activity. He did not think they had made the best use of the talent they had at their disposal.

Dr. Carmichael seconded and the motion was carried.

Motion 13, by the Bethnal Green Branch:—

"That in view of existing circumstances, the Executive be authorized to extend the practice of engaging regular speakers for open-air work during the summer months for both London and the provinces."

was proposed by Mr. Neate. He said they were, of course, aware of the great amount of work Mr. Whitehead had been doing, but some felt it should be followed up by engaging other speakers.

Mr. Jackson seconded, and the motion was carried.

Mr. Clifton (North London) introduced Motion No. 14, that:—

"That the Executive be asked to consider an alteration or amendment of the existing form of membership whereby some guarantee would be given of the good faith of individuals applying for membership of the Society."

He said it was of the greatest importance that care should be taken in regard to new members brought into the Society. As far as it was possible to ascertain, they should be individuals of good principle and high character.

Mr. Easterbrook (Plymouth) said that Branch felt very strongly that the occupation of an individual was of no consequence whatever, and they would like to see it deleted.

Mr. Collins and others agreed with this view, and it was decided that the motion be referred back to the Executive for consideration, and to be reported at the next Conference.

Mrs. Rosetti (West Ham) introduced Motion No. 15, demanding the abolition of religious instruction on all State-supported schools. She said she had a special grievance on this matter, as she had been compelled to teach what she did not believe. There had been a suggestion that the schools should be split up into different sets, some under the Nonconformists, some Church of England and so on. Some people thought that would be a very good solution, but from what she (the speaker) knew of teaching, it would lead to chaos in a very short time. She thought the whole aim should be to give the children a sense of unity. From the experience of the last 100 years, it was evident that as long as the clergy had a hand in the matter of education, the struggle of each sect for supremacy would continue.

Mr. Short (Swansea) seconded, and the resolution was carried.

In the absence of Mr. J. Pearson, Mr. Easterbrook introduced Motion No. 16, asking that the official school time should begin after the religious lesson had been given. He said he understood from teachers that the best results were obtained in subjects which were given first thing in the morning.

Mr. Rosetti said there was no doubt that many

parents shelved the question of withdrawing the children from religious instruction through not being aware of the correct procedure, and he therefore suggested that the Executive should print forms with a space at the bottom for the signature of the parent or guardian, and send them out to the Branches.

Mr. Jackson seconded the resolution, which was carried unanimously.

Motion No. 17, by the Manchester Branch, protesting against the waste of Parliamentary time by the discussion of the Prayer Book and other religious topics was agreed to.

Mr. Easterbrook (Plymouth) introduced Motion No. 18:—

"That this Conference, bearing in mind the fact that the British Broadcasting Corporation is a monopoly which receives its charter from a Government which professes to hold itself impartial between all forms of religious opinion, strongly protests against the broadcasting of religious services and addresses, during which time no other programme is available; it protests also against an institution subsidized by public money, setting forth as one of its objects the prevention of any decay of Christianity, and also its refusal to permit any opinion contrary to Christianity to be heard."

He suggested that if passed by the Conference it should be sent to the British Broadcasting Company. The motion was duly seconded.

Mr. Rosetti in putting the final Motion on the Agenda (No. 19):—

"That this Conference deems it advisable and necessary to strongly reaffirm the central position of the Society, that self-government can be realized only by a people that has freed itself from superstitious creeds and religious authority."

said he thought the time was ripe for reaffirming the Society's position in regard to keeping the movement free from politics. The Communists were particularly active at the present time, and too much latitude was allowed them by some of the Branches. Membership of the National Secular Society was open to Conservatives, Labourites or Communists, but no politics should be allowed in the Secular propaganda.

Mr. Short (Swansea) seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

The business of the Conference being concluded, three most interesting and instructive papers were read by Dr. Carmichael, Mr. Egerton Stafford and Mr. Rosetti, with regard to which the Chairman said he did not think it would be possible to hear in a similar space of time an equal amount of common sense. All these papers would appear in the paper in the near future. A paper by "Athos Zeno," which could not be read owing to want of time, would also appear.

The Chairman, in closing the proceedings, said many things had been suggested which might be done during the coming year. A great deal would depend upon the activities of individual members. The N.S.S. might never be a very large Society. It was not the largeness of a Society but the quality of its members that counted. There had never been a time in the history of the Society when it had exerted a larger influence in the formation of ideas. A great many people in the forefront of progressive movements owed their opinions to Freethought. English Freethought led the world, and it had been brought to its present high position by the National Secular Society. That Society was at present entering upon a new phase of its history, and the need for it was as great as it had ever been. Our predecessors had blazed a trail. It was for us to tread it into a broad highway.

In the name of the Conference the Chairman thanked the Liverpool Branch for the time and trouble they had given in making the arrangements for the Conference.

A public meeting was held in the Picton Hall in the evening, which was addressed by Mr. Chapman Cohen, Mr. Sisson, Mr. Clayton, Mr. Rosetti, Mr. Whitehead, and Mr. Mann. The speeches were listened to with the closest attention, the Hall was well filled, and the audience showed, by their applause, that Liverpool contains Freethinkers of a virile type, and they will no doubt be much in evidence wherever or whenever the Secular principles are at stake.

The Song Against Bishops.

(With Apologies to G. K. Chesterton.)

"Every student of comparative religion knows that the doctrine of Transubstantiation has affinities with the magico religious beliefs of a lower cultural level than ours."—*Bishop Barnes.*

God made the Modern Bishop
His Myst'ries to perform,
And makes him preach such sophistries
(To raise a Fleet Street storm)
As "Bacon *may* be Shakespeare,
And Wine *perhaps* is blood,
And though this world's a fake sphere
It's *Relatively* good!"

This vacillating Bishop
Would call the Virgin "Mrs."
And censure Roman Catholics,
Who cover her with kisses.
He dubbs it horrid and he calls
The whole thing "oversexed,"
Though *Honi soit qui mal y pense*
Should be a Bishop's text.

His "props" are not episcopal,
But pseudo scientific,
And his "Fearless Modern Outlook,"
The Press hails as "Terrific!"
He keeps Darwin's Evolution
Quite handy on his rostrum,
And with Einstein's Relativity
Dilutes the Christian nostrum.

Our Journalistic Bishop
So often wields his pen,
To write "Outspoken Articles,"
And awe unlettered men.
But who hath seen a Bishop
With indignation write,
At the Church's Mining royalties,
Or poor men paying tithe?

He sells machine-made wafers
As the Living Flesh of God,
And grocer's watered claret
As blood—it's very odd!
He damns all wicked Freethinkers,
And sneers at what they've missed
Yet when they grow by thousands,
Becomes a Modernist!

This Modern type of Bishop,
At Magic draws the line.
Not frankly—like the Freethinker,
Who says that Wine is—wine—
But packed with reservations
And Metaphysic sham.
Yet if he draws his salary,
He doesn't give a damn!

This Hell-rejecting Bishop
Thinks that Blasphemy's a sin,
But that Science and Religion
Are really Kith and Kin.
But people aren't so stupid,
Nor will they long be caught,
And buy the Modern type of pup,
The bloomin' Bishop's bought!

GWYN EVANS.

The right end of all human action is the creation of the largest possible balance of happiness.

Jeremy Bentham.

Public opinion will be the only security against the violation of peace, which opinion has still to be laboriously built up. War is not yet looked upon as a crime, carrying a moral stigma and disgrace on the warring nations. The building up of a peaceful world mentality remains the most arduous task of the future.

General Smuts.

The Shadow Show.

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

OMAR KHAYYAM.

THIS WEEK'S NEWS REEL.

Poison! Quite a Borgia touch is featured in the Press. The Poison gas at Hamburg made a most unholy mess. The Pace Case and the Rougier bring the subject nearer home—but what about the poison gas they still distil in Rome? The Pious Poison of the Pope (one of Borgia's successors) that fills his dupes with Ju-Ju dope while he pretends to bless us! They hanged Crippen, likewise Armstrong, for poisoning their wives; but what of Christian Medicine-Men who poison children's lives with the noxious filth of Fetish books, the venom of their creeds—far deadlier than arsenic we use for killing weeds? The Poison of the Pulpit, distilled *ad lib*, on Sunday from the flesh and blood of Jesus and the bones of Mrs. Grundy!

It's a gruesome kind of News Reel I'm exhibiting to-day, but with Murder as a *motif*, it cannot well be gay. At Pentonville and Wandsworth they rang the curtain down on the grim Old Bailey drama—exit Kennedy and Browne. The usual hysteria was manifest outside, some fools sang hymns and prayed to God, while kneeling women cried. It's not quite clear what good it did to Browne and Kennedy, but Christians never miss a chance of cheap publicity!

Let's switch off from *Grand Guignol*. Stands Weymouth where it did? For the town was cursed by Pharaoh when he built the pyramid. Some nit-wit Nonconformist prophesied a Tidal Wave and also—greatly daring—the time and date he gave when it would submerge Weymouth and perhaps engulf the earth—but the only thing that happened was a Tidal Wave of Mirth! These Pyramidomaniacs continue undeterred to prophesy disaster and quote God's Holy Word. The half-wits do not seem to care what fallacies they're fed on, and still keep on announcing new dates for Armageddon!

The *Daily News* is asking with awed and bated breath (since Sir Arthur Keith's pronouncement) "What happens after Death?" They've Medicine-Men, and Novelists and Blatchford there as well to give their views if after death we go to Heaven or Hell. They've Doyle and Lodge and Chesterton all down to state their views, but the name of Chapman Cohen isn't featured in the *News*! Depend on all the others for a safe and sound reply, wrapped up in reverent verbiage on what happens when you die! But the Nonconformist conscience of the poor old Cocoa Press would be profoundly troubled with sorrow and distress if that wicked Freethought Editor was allowed to state *his* view in a plain, outspoken article there'd be a sad to do! So they exclude the Atheist—*his* future is Damnation. The *News* refuse unvarnished views—they're bad for circulation!

THE PAST PANORAMA.

June 10th. Hullo! Here we are again my hearties—another Conference come and gone, and the Flag of Freethought still flying proudly from the citadel of Truth. I suppose you won't be happy until you've had another couple of saints to add to your collection. Know then that to-day is the Feast day of St. Margaret, Queen of Scotland, and Blessed Henry and Rigo of Treviso, confessor. I'm not quite clear whether it is they or us who are supposed to feast on these days.

You will be sorry to learn that on this date, in 1190, Frederick Barbarossa was drowned in Syria. Incidentally, I was nearly drowned there myself four years ago. Bathing at Beirut is delightful, but the tide is very treacherous where the Dog river flows from the Lebanons into the Mediterranean, so I feel a certain sympathy for Barbarossa. In 1605, on this date, Feodor II, the Czar of Russia, was murdered, and in 1688, Prince James Stuart, the Old Pretender was born, a stormy petrel, who added fresh trouble to an already distressful country. It is worthy of note also to record the birth on this date, in 1706, of John Dollond, the famous optician. Dollond and spectacles are almost synonymous, and the

firm he established still flourishes. As recently as 1692, on this date, a poor old crone named Bridget Bishop was hanged as a witch at Salem, that hot-bed of Christian fanaticism in America. David Garrick made his last stage appearance on June 10, 1776, and the stage was the poorer for his passing. It is also amusing to note that on this date, in 1809, Napoleon was solemnly excommunicated by Pope Pius VII with bell, book and candle. And a fat lot "Boney" cared!

To-day is also the anniversary of the death of Robert Buchanan, that fearless Freethinker and poet who, under the name of Robert the Devil, flayed the Orthodoxy of the Christian witch doctors with his biting satire. He died on June 10, 1901, after a lifetime of battle against cant and superstition. He was a poet, novelist, critic and essayist, and the lines of James Thomson are particularly applicable to him.

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

Mimmermus, in a recent appreciation of Buchanan, wrote: "As the queen of months returns, our thoughts go to the grave of one of the most romantic and striking personality, who, to use the beautiful line of Shakespeare, carried upon his tomb:—

After life's fitful fever, sleeps well."

A MYSTERY FLIGHT.

"All Madrid is excited over the thrilling adventure of Captain Iglesias and Captain Jimenez, two airmen who are flying the airplane "Jesus of Great Power," in an attempt to beat the long distance flight record. Where they are bound for no one knows, and speculation is rife."—*Daily Express*.

Have you heard about Inglesias and Captain Jimenez?

They've called their airplane Jesus, and they're starting off to-day

They may be flying Heavenward to Venus or to Mars,
Across the broad Atlantic or beyond the furthest stars,
Peru, Capetown, or China, or Himalayan snows,
But where they'll land eventually—Jesus only knows!

MEET GODFREE.

My friend 'Arry 'Awke (whom faithful readers of this column will remember, is the village Atheist of Little Ditchington) surpassed himself over the Whitsun holidays.

Taking mine case at mine inn, "The Goat and Compasses," on Whit-Monday, that unregenerate Freethinker approached me and said in a hushed undertone: "What you want maister is a goat—it'll amuse that kiddie o' yourn." With that, to the consternation of the taproom, he lugged in a protesting billy goat that he had acquired in his own peculiar fashion.

"What's its name?" I queried. It was then that 'Arry gave me a knowing wink, and I knew there was some mischief brewing. "To-day being Pentecost," he announced to the assembled bar, all very stiff and formal in their Sunday best, it be only right to 'ave a christening ceremony. This 'ere goat ain't got a name. I propose we baptize 'un with beer." With that 'Arry borrowed a prayer book from the landlord, and in a passable imitation of the vicar conducted the baptismal service. He christened the animal Godfree, in the name of the Pig and Whistle, Bunch o' Grapes, and the Goat and Compasses, and solemnly sprinkled the beast with the best four-ale. Godfree seemed to enjoy that part of the ceremony, and was brought home in triumph. My wife and I were elected Goat father and Goat mother. "You are now the owner of the only Atheist goat in captivity," said 'Arry 'Awke. "I've trained it not to kneel—and God-free be a grand name for it!" I am now the proud proprietor of a godless goat. He has already eaten up my spring cabbages, a pair of slippers, my wife's summer dress, which was hanging on the line, otherwise his behaviour is perfect. Unfortunately, however, 'Arry's blasphemous travesty of the baptism service has reached the vicar's ears. I told 'Arry about it to-day. He winked. "Leave 'un to Godfree maister," he remarked, "I've trained 'un to butt parsons on sight!" I'm afraid 'Arry's incorrigible.

THE SHOWMAN.

Correspondence.

ATTILA AS THE "DESTROYER."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Permit me to assure Mr. Mann that he cannot forfeit my esteem for not seeing eye to eye with me. That is the beauty of being Freethinkers, we can differ without losing our level-headedness, and I am sure Mr. Mann will bear with me for my inability to accept the explanations quoted by him in that letter as a satisfactory reason for Attila sparing Rome, after the tremendous effort he made to take it. It does not square with my conception of human psychology, which after all was not different in Attila's time from what it is to-day.

We must bear in mind that Attila was not only a remarkable warrior, remarkable not only for his age, but for all time; he was also a statesman and organizer of exceptional calibre. Now an intellect of that type may be and often is influenced to some extent by puerile trifles. But such men do not plan and carry out such enormous undertakings as the taking of Paris and Rome involved, and give it up so lightly as we would have to assume if we believed him to have been influenced by the very simple yarn quoted by Mr. Mann. There is no Hun record to confirm that Attila's counsellors frightened him from entering Rome. The "awe of Rome" can only indicate a Christian source of the yarn. To a hard-headed Pagan Rome may have looked imposing, but why the "awe"?

Men of Attila's type do not live in terror of death because someone died after doing a job they are habitually engaged in. Moreover, the death of Alaric was known long before Attila planned and started carrying on to take Rome. If Alaric's death would have been so keenly felt by Attila, he could have saved himself all the enormous effort by not starting at all.

It is difficult to-day to know for certain why Attila spared Paris and Rome. The facts remain that he did so, and I am unable to accept any other explanation but magnanimity, which does square with my conception of a real man.

M. STEINBERGER.

BRAIN AND SOUL.

SIR,—Readers of this journal owe you, Mr. Editor, a debt of gratitude for your very timely and much needed exposure of the more or less stereotyped sophistry always indulged in when the above subject is on the tapis. By tearing Sir Oliver Lodge's specious fustian to a veritable frazzle, you have shown the utter hollowness of all equivocal pleading.

I submit, that never since man learnt the trick to sophisticate was there a more arrant specimen of the noble art than the one quoted. It is, as the article proves, even daring in its vacuity of meaning.

A prevaricator is essentially a champion of some superstition, falsity or error. *Truth has no use for equivocation.* And no movement has ever exemplified this alliance more palpably than that of spiritualism. Within a few years it has engendered a measure of credulity never surpassed in the annals of religion—possibly never equalled. And, by the bye, a credulity far more reprehensible than that of religion. The religious variety emerged into being in an atmosphere of metaphysics, and under the dense pall of ignorance and the domination of priestcraft; whereas spiritualism parades its prevarications in the broad daylight of the twentieth century, and prostitutes the nomenclature of science to impart to its myths a verisimilitude.

I would that a million copies of those articles were broadcast.

KERIDON.

Society News.

MR. G. WHITEHEAD AT LEEDS.

MR. WHITEHEAD addressed a series of meetings in Victoria Square, Leeds, on May 29, and the three following evenings. The audience, as is usual here, were friendly and sympathetic, and attended in respectable numbers. Many questions were put at each meeting,

and the platform opposition of a good tempered, eighty-year-old, non-Christian Deist, enabled the lecturer to ram home the weaknesses of the Deistic position to the loudly expressed satisfaction of the crowd. It is unfortunate that in a city where the people are so receptive to Freethought propaganda the local branch at the present time is inactive.

Messrs. Brown, Hurst and Davis, helped to make a success of the four day's mission.

Mr. Whitehead speaks on Swansea Sands every evening until June 15, also on Sunday afternoon, June 9.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"The Testaments of Shaw and Wells."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6.0, Mr. F. Mann—"Where are the Dead?"

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, F. Mann—"Where are the Dead?"; (Brockwell Park): 6.0, W. Sandford. Wednesday—(Clapham Old Town): 8.0, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Thursday—(Cooks Road, Kennington): 8.0, Mr. F. Mann—"More Nonsense from the Universe."

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

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

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

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

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

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Moor, near North Road Entrance): 7.0, Mr. Brown—"Science and Religion."

FOR SALE—The late Mr. J. Lloyd's books: Lists on application. Apply: Miss PERKINS, 82a, Portsdown Road, Maida Vale, W.9.

GREAT YARMOUTH—Comfortable Apartments with full or part board; bed and breakfast; or rooms and attendance; 3 minutes sea. Terms moderate.—13 Beaconsfield Road.

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A Freethinker's Fetish

WHEN is a line not a line? Out of our experience, we would answer, when it is a seam line; and, as our experience comes mostly from advertising here, we would add that it then becomes a Freethinker's fetish. Give you a measuring tape and show you a chalk line, a pencil line, or an ink line, and you would scorn the idea that you could not measure these; but equip you in the same way and show you a line of stitches joining two pieces of cloth and you would say: No, I cannot measure that; that is a tailor's job, and I am no tailor.

This line of thought about lines is quite the reverse of free; it is wedged deep down in the rut of convention and superstition. Tailors eat and drink, and can do their work only if they do so. You also eat and drink—these are anyone's job, and so is measuring, if you know where to measure. In measuring clothes you follow clearly defined lines—lines as distinct as this line of print—and we make it still more plain by telling how with pictures. Besides, isn't the fitting on which you have so far submitted to proof that there is much more in tailoring than measuring? There is—there is everything; and this everything begins precisely where measuring ends. Measuring yourself is a reasonable proposition; something you can do both easily and accurately. If measuring alone has stood between you and us, let us be friends from now forward.

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