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Views and Opinions.

Wireless Religion.

In connexion with the protests we have never ceased to make against the British Broadcasting Corporation turning itself into an agency for the propagandism of Christianity, two recent occurrences are worth noting. The first is connected with the House of Commons vote on the new prayer book. On the day that the vote was taken the B.B.C. announced the result. Then, in the ordinary way, it should have proceeded with its dance programme. Instead of doing this it closed down. Asked why it did so, the explanation was given as follows: "We considered that dance music following the announcement would have been out of place, so we decided to close down." Why out of place? On the face of it, the announcement was an item of news, quite as much so as when the result of the Derby was announced. And we venture to say that at least as many were as interested in hearing what had won the Derby as what had become of the prayer book. But the B.B.C. evidently wishes us to believe that the nation as a whole was either in such a state of spiritual exaltation, or so spiritually depressed at it being rejected, that dance music would have jarred upon their religious feelings. Even if that were the case, the remedy for these super-sensitive Christians would have been to take off the headphones—those who have protested against being insulted Sunday after Sunday by the stupid sermons delivered, were soon advised that this remedy was always open to them, and what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. But the religious advisers of the B.B.C. would not have it so. Just as they will not permit ordinary music to be played during church hours on Sunday, so they will not have so sacred a matter as the fate of the prayer book mixed up with dance music.

We are not surprised that this last action of the B.B.C. should have caused the *Daily Sketch* to say that the action shows "a strangely amateurish conception" of the real function of the B.B.C., and that "so complete a failure to interpret the minds and moods of ordinary citizens would place the B.B.C. in an utterly hopeless position if it were sub-

ject to the customary laws of commercial competition."

* * *

Tweedledam and Tweedledee.

The second occurrence was in connexion with vivisection. Some weeks ago the B.B.C. was "mystified" at receiving a number of postcards asking for a talk on anti-vivisection. It will be remembered that one reason why the B.B.C. will not permit anything to be said against religion on the wireless is that men and women feel very strongly on the subject, and it is therefore not advisable to permit it. But it will hardly be questioned that a large number also feel very strongly on the subject of vivisection, and this should lead to its exclusion also. But one cannot expect the B.B.C. to act with even moderate reasonableness in these things. At any rate the receipt of these cards made the sagacious officials suspicious, and at length it was discovered that they were sent at the suggestion of the Anti-Vivisection Society, and the B.B.C. evidently imagines that the publication of the fact justifies their refusal to allow any such talk.

But it may be pointed out, that in reply to the many thousands of complaints about the use of the wireless by the Churches, to the exclusion of anything that may make against Christianity, that the defence of the B.B.C. has been that a large number of people have asked for the religious service, and that very few have protested against it. Now, if the B.B.C. had been equally inquisitive about the source of the requests for a religious service they would have found that these, in a very large number of cases, owed their existence to the activity of the clergy. It could not be otherwise. Bear in mind that there is not more than ten per cent of the population that attends Church. And yet the B.B.C. would have us believe that the remaining ninety per cent that cannot be bribed, or cajoled, or intimidated into going round the corner to attend Church, suddenly became clamorous to get the B.B.C. to bring a church service into their houses. The officials of the B.B.C. know better. They know that they have not been snowed under with letters asking for a religious service. They know that it is more than a "very few" who have written protesting against the religious service. They know that most of the letters in favour of the service owe their origin to some parson or other. In one case they actually asked through the columns of the *Radio Times* for such letters. It is part of a game of religious bluff, played by the B.B.C., because it believes this will make its position stronger when the time comes for it to ask for a renewal of its charter.

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Religion as a Business.

Now, if the B.B.C. were an ordinary trading or commercial company, it would be out of place to pro-

test against it broadcasting religious services or anything else. But it is not that. It is, of course, commercial in the sense that it wishes to get as large a revenue as is possible, and I believe that the pretence of being profoundly interested in religion is only a cover for a desire to make its position secure, and the feeling that if it can secure the good will of the clergy of all the denominations, it will have gone a great way towards doing this. But the B.B.C. is more than a mere business. It is a monopoly existing under a government charter. No one else is permitted to broadcast; and that being so, it should at least hold the scales even. If on a subject on which there exists wide and sharp divisions of opinion it gives one side, honesty, even decency, demands that it should give the other. What it does is to convert itself into a new religious agency for the propagation of Christianity. And it does so under the cowardly pretext that the majority of the people in this country call themselves Christian. I say cowardly, because when anyone puts that plea forward where an opinion is concerned—a sphere in which majorities and minorities have no logical existence—he is saying that if it can be shown that the majority do not believe in Christianity, then quite an opposite opinion will be preached—Buddhism, Atheism, or any other 'ism. The B.B.C. thinks that the majority believes in Christianity, so it becomes a Christian agency. It will in that way sell a larger number of licences and get a larger number of backers when it makes application for a renewal of its charter. At any rate, it will not have the intolerant and back-stair working clergy against it. But it may here make a very great mistake. The majority do not believe in Christianity. The majority may make some kind of a formal profession concerning it, but the B.B.C. has formed its impression, and allowed itself to become the tool of the clergy, because the non-believing section of the population was lax in making its desires felt. The clergy mobilized their forces early. They set to work when the B.B.C. was struggling to make its position secure. The B.B.C. had no opinions of its own, at least none that were not open to alteration, and under the influence of the parsons it committed itself to a set plan, which it dare not even to-day submit to a plebiscite of licence holders. If those who do not wish to see a new and disguised State Church established bestir themselves in time, the B.B.C. may find, when the time comes for a renewal of its charter, that it has made the mistake of its existence. For it would be far better to place the whole thing under direct government control than to have it as it is at present. No government would dare to be so plainly one-sided as is the B.B.C.

* * *

The B.B.C. Programme.

I have said that the B.B.C. has converted itself into an agency for the propaganda of Christianity. It will be remembered that in its earliest stages there were many protests from the clergy against broadcasting on Sunday. It tended, they said, to keep people from church. The Company guarded itself by making the entertainment duller on Sunday than it was on week-days, and thus preserving, it was hoped, a religious atmosphere. Then a short talk on some religious topic was introduced, with an obvious desire to placate the parsons. As they could not stop the Sunday entertainment the clergy played the usual game of trying to use it. It was arranged that there should be no broadcasting, other than religious, during Church hours. As the *B.B.C. Handbook* puts it: "With the exception of those somewhat infrequent occasions when an ordinary service is broad-

cast in full from a cathedral or church, the wireless religious services are held outside the regular church hours." This is the rule observed with public houses, which also are closed during church hours. And, of course, "nothing of a controversial character is ever allowed to pass the microphone." That must have been written with a tongue in the cheek. Seeing that there is nothing in the world quite so controversial as is religion, and so bitterly controversial that there is not a social club in the country which does not bar the discussion of religion because it is so, the statement of the B.B.C. may be described as pure cheek. And when we note that once every month there is an address advocating the support of Foreign Missions, a topic on which there exists a wide difference of opinion, even among Christians, the cheek becomes simply colossal. Step by step the parsons made their footing good. The brief religious talk soon became a full-fledged sermon. Then a full service, then a reading of the Bible as a close. Not satisfied with Sunday, religious services and addresses were introduced on week days, and we may, if the present rate of progress continues, find ourselves with compulsory installations, which compel us to have grace before meals, and prayers before going to bed.

* * *

Mrs. Partington Outdone.

But the gem of the whole is the following, also from the official handbook:—

At a time when complaint is sometimes made that religion is losing its hold upon the world . . . the B.B.C. is doing the best of service to prevent any decay of Christianity in a nominally Christian country . . . in broadcasting religion, it is not only keeping alive, but giving new life and meaning to the traditionally Christian character of the British people.

And it is doing it by traditionally Christian methods—by suppressing hostile opinion, by issuing the falsehood that the people desire a church service to be broadcast, by exaggerating the number of letters it has received in support of their policy, and concealing the amount of criticism they have received concerning it. I do not know whether this is wholly due to the fact that each station has attached to it a "representative committee of the leading Christian denominations," or whether it is because, when one sets out to defend Christianity, complete truthfulness and straightforwardness is at once ruled out, but the fact remains. The B.B.C. has constituted itself a champion of Christianity, and is stupid enough to imagine that it can prevent the decay of Christianity. The Roman Catholic Church at its greatest could not do it. All the Christian Churches combined, with their methods of imprisonment, torture, control of the Press, dominance in education, bribery in social and political circles, have not been able to do it. And one feels inclined to ask what kind of elaborated incompetence have we in control of the B.B.C. which imagines it can reverse what is an obvious world tendency, and perform a feat which would involve an arrest of the whole process of civilization? It is no use citing Mrs. Partington and the Atlantic. The figure is wholly inadequate. Trying to compel the planetary system to adapt itself to the Ptolemaic theory would be more to the point.

The moral of the situation is, it seems to me, simply this: The Churches have captured the B.B.C. because they were first in the field, and with their traditional policy of counting everything justifiable that advances their sectarian interests, have persuaded the Corporation that it is to its interest to act as champion of Christianity. The fact of the new

State religion that has been set up being a compound of all the leading Christian bodies may serve its purpose if it reminds us of what is likely to happen, unless we are on our guard, when the disestablishment of the present Church of England becomes an accomplished fact. It may mean merely the establishment of a form of Christianity which suits all the sects. It remains to be seen whether Freethinkers will bestir themselves enough to make their presence felt, and whether when the charter of the Broadcasting Company requires renewal, that body will receive a sharp reminder that it has all the time been backing the wrong horse.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Much Ado About a Book.

"Our help in ages past cannot fulfil our hope in years to come by reading the minutes of ancient council meetings."—*Bernard Shaw*.

"The lie at the lips of the priest."—*Swinburne*.

By rejecting the new Prayer Book by a bigger majority than in December, the House of Commons has allied itself with common sense. To the man in the street, it must have been a source of amazement that so much fuss was made over, what seemed to him, a purely ecclesiastical matter, and one that dealt with medieval superstitions in which the modern world had but an academic interest.

It is true the matter concerned the internal affairs of one of the very many churches of Christendom, but it happened that the body concerned was the State Church of this country, which is as much a part of the Constitution as the Civil Service itself. The position was that the vast majority of the bishops, and eighty per cent of the voters of the central and diocesan parliaments of the Anglican Church, supported this new Prayer Book, which the State Legislature has now twice rejected. The result of these two rejections is that it brings the question of the disestablishment of the Anglican Church within the region of practical politics. For no priest, and few laymen, are prepared to hand their Church over to perpetual slavery to a purely secular authority, such as the State Legislature. The House of Commons is composed of members of all shades of religious opinion, and of no religion; and this secular authority will not have the revised Prayer Book. What are the bishops to do? Call upon the faithful Church people to use the new Prayer Book, and to hold the decision of those meddling politicians as of no moment; or to disengage their Church from State control, and become masters in their own house? It is a choice of evils at the best.

The bishops will, in all probability, do nothing but "sit on the fence." They are not men enough to risk being dragged to Scotland Yard on a charge of sedition. And the awful risk of disestablishment being accompanied by disendowment is sufficient to keep quiet the most militant of these Fathers-in-God. Britons have never been enamoured of priests, and would quickly resent any impertinence on their part.

The debate in Parliament will do good if it only results in the ordinary citizen realizing the anomalous position occupied by this so-called Church of England. For that particular Church is the State Religion. It has been manufactured by Parliament, and from time to time has been under the hands of its creator for alterations and repairs. The creator is a cynical association, having no religion in particular, and looking upon the theology which it patronizes and subsidizes as a special constable, whose principal duty is to frighten folks from attending too much to

the affairs of life by promising them golden rewards when they are no longer alive.

In the ranks of the clergy are a large number who take themselves very seriously. They even pretend that this Church of England represents a religion independent of the Houses of Parliament. Most priests are notoriously ignorant of the culture of their own profession, but they have had an object lesson. They have seen their beautiful new Prayer Book submitted to a tribunal composed of Nonconformists, Jews, Unitarians, Freethinkers, Roman Catholics, and other fancy religions. And this national tribunal has rejected the new Prayer Book, and sent the bishops about their sorry business of saving souls and safeguarding their stipends.

No reform of the Church of England is needed. It should be disestablished and disendowed, and then let it reform itself like any other society. This storm concerning the new Prayer Book will have served its purpose if it brings this question of the disestablishment and the disendowment of the State Church within the realities of the near future. The Established Church simply absorbs millions of money, and keeps in comfort thousands of useless priests, and is an ecclesiastical branch of the Civil Service. It is neither useful nor ornamental.

Elsewhere, one knows what a Church stands for. You say this obeys implicitly the Pope of Rome and the Italian College of Cardinals. You point to another that is faithful to the Westminster Confession. Yet another yields homage to Eastern Patriarchs with bird's nests in their whiskers. But ask what this Church of England stands for, and who can tell you? One points to the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, whilst another petticoated pessimist laughs in his dainty lawn sleeves at the simplicity of laymen.

The die-hard defenders of the Established Church in the House of Commons suggested that a secular tribunal was not competent to deal with so-called "spiritual" matters. But a State Church is not an ordinary church. It concerns us all, for the legal theory of this country makes us all parties to the constitution of the Anglican Church. If it were in the United States, Canada, Australia, South Africa, or other British Colonies, where no such thing as a State Church exists, we need not care a brass button what humbug went on in a particular church, for it would be none of our affair. But the legislation of the two Houses of Parliament makes us all partners in this Church of England, and compels us to be, as it were, privy to its dishonesty and malpractices.

Because the Church of England is the State Church, it is permitted to draw hundreds of thousands of pounds yearly in mining royalties. Because it is the Government Religion it is allowed to collect tithes and church rates. Because this Church has State patronage, it continues to be a contrivance for keeping putrescent superstitions in perpetual cold storage. Because State and Church are, for the time, friendly, this Anglican Church usurps a place in the national education as though it was of profound intellectual importance, which it never was at any time in its history.

This proposed new Prayer Book was an astute move on the part of the priests to obtain Parliamentary sanction to putrescent superstitions which were better buried. Under the present conditions there is far too much Priestcraft in this country, without any further attempt to degrade it to the level of Ireland, Italy, or Spain. Few worse misfortunes can befall a people than this of possessing a powerful, wealthy institution in its midst, that saps the very springs of morality, that fosters mental and moral confusion, and that hinders the wheels of progress in the way that this Church of England does. It may be the State

Church, but it no longer is the true Church of the British people. Otherwise, empty churches would not be offered for sale at so much a dozen in the metropolis of the nation.

A tale is told of a party of American tourists visiting Europe, and being shown over a tawdry Continental shrine. The attendant priest pointed to a lighted lamp, and explained that it had been alight nearly two thousand years. One of the party blew hard, and remarked: "Well! I guess it's out at last." In like manner, when a real Democratic Government is elected in this country, the leaders will turn to the priests and say: "We guess your light is out at last." There is no room for the farthing rushlights of Faith in the full blaze of the sun of Freedom.

MIMNERMUS.

Robert Blatchford's Latest.

MR. ROBERT BLATCHFORD is a writer of great talent and distinction, and has been supplying the British public with his contributions on all sorts of subjects for close on half a century. During that period he has dealt largely with social and economic questions, but on rare occasions he has given us his views on the God problem and the doctrine of Determinism. For many years I read his articles in *The Clarion* and other journals with great pleasure. Even when he took up with Spiritualism I did not cease to read him. I have always believed in his absolute sincerity. Moreover, I admired his literary style; and his great gifts in the presentation of his case, whatever it might be.

But lately he has taken to unsaying a good deal that he has been teaching for some years, and a short time ago he announced that he had withdrawn his book *God and My Neighbour* from circulation, because he considered that the ideas it contained were before their time, in other words, because the people were not ripe for their acceptance.

But if Robert Blatchford had read John Stuart Mill carefully, he would have learned that no man or book were ever before their time; the unfortunate fact is that the majority of mankind are always behind the time, and it is really the business of the pioneer to educate them gradually to the point of accepting the new ideas.

The latest article I read from the pen of Mr. Blatchford appeared in the columns of the *Sunday Graphic*, for June 10, and was entitled "How Much do we Believe?" In the course of that article Mr. Blatchford touched on a variety of questions, which he says mankind has been endeavouring to solve for ages—to two of which he affirms no final answer could be given, *viz*: What is Life? and What is God? In respect to the God question, he says he is an Agnostic; that is, he does not know whether there is a God or not. But to his Christian brethren, who call him infidel, he wishes to inform them that he is a "reverent Agnostic," and that "his unbelief is a form of reverence amounting to awe." But why should he be reverent or irreverent towards something he is unable, after earnest and diligent study, to find out?

The fact is, the metaphysical or theological conception of God has no clear or definite meaning to him; but when the gods are described in something like definite fashion, then Robert Blatchford says quite plainly, I have no belief in them. To use his own language, "Confronted with the immensity and complexity of the Universe, I cannot accept the gods which man has created in his own image." But as man creates all the gods that were ever conceived, it

is only natural that most of them should be in the image of their makers. And when they take the form of a more ethereal type, he still talks of them in the language of anthropomorphism. He speaks of such gods, as his "Heavenly Father," as "the Almighty," the "Infinite Governor of the Universe," and so on, which still shows that he cannot get away from the anthropomorphic conception in one form or another.

But if Robert Blatchford had studied the evolution of the God idea more closely, he would have seen that all gods were of human origin—and that he really disbelieves in them all, and therefore might more correctly be described as an Atheist. It would not, however, have been considered quite the thing for him to describe himself as a "reverent Atheist."

That would have been considered too ridiculous—but a "reverent Agnostic," that is considered to be good form and does not offend the tender susceptibilities of his Christian friends.

Robert Blatchford, however, goes one stage further and says: "A God who always was and for ever will be is a God I am unable to conceive, and when I hear my Christian brothers talking about God as if he were the Postmaster-General or the King of the Jews, I am filled with astonishment."

But why? They have always spoken in such fashion.

However, he goes on to say that "religion is still at grips with materialism, and I don't think there is any doubt that materialism has made the greater progress during the last fifty years." Well, that is a matter about which there should be no dispute among those who have studied the subject. But when he ventures to say "that scientific argument is negative," he is absolutely in the wrong—science means a knowledge of the facts of life, and correct deductions therefrom—facts and deductions that have been verified over and over again.

Or in other words, science is another name for methodized knowledge. But what are we to think of a statement like this: "The materialists depend on science, the religionists depend on tradition. They call their tradition revelation; but opinion moves steadily against them. Scientific argument is negative, we must not forget that Science has not discovered a soul in the body, *but cannot prove there is no soul* and cannot account for the phenomena of life?" Surely it is the business of those who affirm that man possesses an entity that they call a soul to prove it, not for those who disbelieve in it to disprove it. Has Mr. Blatchford forgotten that the *onus probandi* always lies with the affirmer of a proposition?

Or does he on this occasion prefer to adopt the general logic of the ignorant Christian and ask the Freethinker to prove a negative? Finally, Mr. Blatchford thinks that the only hope for religion in the future is the acceptance of spiritualism; he does not say the Christian religion, but he leaves his readers to make that inference. Further, he says that there exists a great volume of evidence testified by a cloud of witnesses in favour of spiritualism." But he does not tell his readers that some very eminent spiritualists admit that 80 per cent of the alleged phenomena were fraudulent, 10 per cent doubtful, and that of the other 10 per cent, only a very few scientific men thought them worthy of credence or examination. For my own part I say quite seriously that I have no desire to live for ever and for ever. It is a little too long. Nor have I any desire to reach that stage of existence referred to by the melancholy Jacques in "As you like it."

"Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."

When my body decays and my organs cease to function, I shall be satisfied to enter that sleep from which there is no awakening; for I agree with Prospero that:—

"We are such stuff as dreams are made of
And our little life is rounded with a sleep."

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

The Machinery of Spiritualism

(Concluded from page 411.)

It is rare that anyone goes to a seance without expecting phenomena of some description. Indeed it is unlikely to a degree that anyone except a sceptic, out of sheer curiosity or for purposes of investigation, would. With men like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sir Oliver Lodge and Dennis Bradley; with dabblers in Theosophy, New Thought, Rosicrucianism; with patrons of the army of palmists, crystallographers, psychometrists, phenologists and astrologers, whose announcements decorate the advertisement columns of such literary trash-peddlers as the occult journals and ladies' fashion papers; it is entirely another thing. Their attitude at a seance is expectant to a degree. In what is barely distinguishable from actual darkness, they perceive in the crude materializations which are either crepe decorated dolls or manipulated bits of muslin, the features of their dead relatives. No more is presented to them than the vaguest outlines, the most amorphous forms: the sitters read into them the detailed features they are expecting to see. Similarly with the direct voice, which time and again we are told was the remembered accent of the dead. With all respect to the honesty and sincerity of the listeners, which not for a moment do I doubt or question, this is nonsense. The direct voice comes from a trumpet,¹² and the distortion produced by a megaphone of any brand is an axiomatic truth. And the sitters, again with all due respect, are not in a mental condition to recognize the voices of the dead.

The essentiality of a medium has been a matter requiring much explanation. Men and women anxious to communicate with their dead have decried the necessity of this interpolation of a stranger; they have very nearly abused their Maker for his steady denial of direct communication. Sceptics have repeatedly pointed this out as the weak point of spiritualism. Sir Oliver Lodge and his hierarchy have in turn explained fully. And what then is their explanation? Simply that a medium is possessed of peculiar and remarkable psychic gifts beyond the capacity of the average individual. In his *New Light on Immortality*, Fournier D'Albe puts the matter thus:—

Intercourse between the earth-world and the soul-world requires a modification in the denizens of either the one or the other, before it is practicable. That is to say, souls must become like men, or men must become like souls, before they can communicate on anything like equal terms. As matters stand, the vast majority of disembodied souls are inaccessible to us, or we to them.

Even those who were loath to admit the existence of a spirit world, such as Richet, Flammarion, Lombroso, Morselli, held, as a result of Eusapia Palladino's consummate trickery, that there was evidence of her being in possession of a power which was

supernormal.¹³ But we know there are a hundred professional conjurers touring the music-halls and circuses who could duplicate every trick in the repertoire of the astute Eusapia, of D. D. Home, of the Goligher family; and in addition, do it far more capably and in front of a sceptical audience. There are, in every asylum, in every inebriates' home, in every hospital, patients by the score whose feats of clairvoyance and clairaudience would make the most skilful psychical medium burst with envy.

Mediums who are genuine psychics are different to the general run of mortals. But this difference is not according to the interpretation of Sir Oliver Lodge and his associates. It is something a good deal more prosaic. Its rarity consists in the possession of a degree of anomalous cerebral functioning, which, under the stress of emotion, morbidity, enthusiasm, leads to hallucination, which although exceeding vastly the everyday illusions of children, savages and idiots generally, never reach the degree of incoherence or are accompanied by the pathological conditions associated with the delirium of fever, of somatic disease or of actual insanity. It is therefore a condition of some niceness this genuine clairaudience; and this alone accounts for its comparative rarity. Its simulation is easy: hence the honeycombing of mediumship with fraud. It is only since the introduction of seances regularly held that the induction of trance has become a simple matter. When Joseph and Daniel were professional clairaudients, when Elisha had visions, when the witch of Endor gave seances, when Rose Cullender¹⁴ and Temperance Lloyd¹⁵ had intercourse with the devil, the ecstatic condition coincident with thaumaturgy was induced by fasting, by music, by asceticism, by drugs, by philtres. The modern seer dispenses with the lot of these artificial aids: he assumes at will, and as a rule for a monetary consideration, the ecstatic state: his powers only fail when the presence of a critical intelligence offends the spirits.

It may be taken as an axiomatic truth that the genuine clairaudient is invariably a personage of almost infantile intelligence, the possessor of the feeblest powers of associating ideas.¹⁶ The power displayed of distinguishing between subjective and objective images barely transcends that of a child or a savage. Dream images are as real to this brand of mentality as are the persons met in waking hours: to think of a person is to visualize that person.¹⁷ And the vision is real inasmuch as it is seen with all the distinction of an objective image. I have already pointed out how we are all to some extent deluded by the subjective images which we build into objective perceptions, how we invariably see more or less than actually exists. This is illusion. But the hallucinations of clairvoyance and clairaudience are more than

¹³ "Dr. Morselli was disposed to interpret these phenomena by what he termed the hypothesis of special psychic or bio-dynamic forces; that is to say, he attributes them to some peculiar power emanating from the person of the medium." (Sir William Barrett in *On the Threshold of the Unseen*, p. 314.)

¹⁴ Tried for witchcraft 1665.

¹⁵ A Devon witch tried in 1682—For the accounts of these and other witch trials see *The Witch Cult in Western Europe*, M. A. Murray.

¹⁶ Visions seen sporadically and instantly recognized by the victims as hallucinations are altogether another thing. The highest intellect may, on occasion, through fortuitous circumstances, through temporary peripheral excitation, pathological disturbance or visceral jactitation, be victimized. Of such were the hallucinations of Nicholai already referred to.

¹⁷ Many primitive races possess remarkable powers of visualization, as is seen in their ability to remember the exact conformation of country once travelled over, or of drawing rough maps from memory.

¹² I presume the trumpet is required to render the saturated spirit-voice audible. To the man of sanity, however, another possible explanation suggests itself. Its obviousness is too great to require elaboration here.

this: they represent the perceptions of things which objectively are non-existent. When the dog barks at its reflection in a mirror it is moved so to do by a simple illusion. If the dog could supply and see an image in a non-reflective surface there would be an hallucination. This is precisely what the clairvoyant does.

Naturally, there are decided limits to the possibilities of clairvoyance. Time and again have critics commented upon, and time and again have spiritualistic writers admitted the triviality and childishness of the vast bulk of these so-called messages from the unseen world. It would be strange were it otherwise. The control of every fallacious perception, in other words of every hallucination, is determined by the failure to see what exists as well as the seeing of the non-existent, by the merging of the real and the unreal; all of which is determined by the precise mentality of the percipient. Visions, auditions, even tactile and alfactory illusions are all subject to this general and essential law. Examples of this are best seen in hallucinations induced by religious ecstasy. Thus Moses saw and conversed with God; St. Paul saw Christ and visited Paradise; Mohammed received revelations from Allah, Swedenborg from God, the witches of Biblical and medieval times had carnal intercourse with Satan himself. Sporadic apparitions furnish additional evidence. Raphael was entranced with a vision of Madonna; Sir Walter Scott, immediately after receiving news of Byron's death, saw an apparition of the poet; Schumann, while in the throes of composing, heard Beethoven dictating to him; William Blake, the artist, saw a fairy's funeral; Bunyan saw Christ, George Fox heard him. But the list is endless.

Precisely the same applies to the news professing to come from ghostland. For the best part of a century, the spirits of the dead of all nations, of literateurs, scientists, doctors, philosophers, have by direct voice, by trance exposition, by table rapping and by automatic writing, been pouring out of their best to thousands of mediums on two continents; books by the hundred, of vast bulk and closely printed, have been filled with the accumulated erudition; and yet in the whole collection there is not a single original idea, not a solitary thought beyond the mentality of a cloth weaver or a shoe salesman. The ghosts of the Christians have failed to give us anything more about the Lord God Jehovah than is available in the Bible; the best that Raymond Lodge can do is to describe a sort of milk and water socialist heaven; Johannes mixed up a lot of pseudo-scientific rubbish with the pure Bradleyism of *The Eternal Masquerade*; Oscar Wilde has supplied reams of stuff that, had it been accredited to him in life, would have caused him to spew with disgust.

Well, what would you? I have been at some considerable pains to point out that the only living beings who can suffer from illusions and hallucinations and not recognize them as such are little removed from pure idiots. Anyone is in danger, through the incidence of fortuitous bio-chemical means, of seeing things or hearing things. But the following morning, or week, as the case may be, he regains his normal self, mentality intact, chemical action regular. Not so the genuine psychic. He goes on seeing objectively the imagery of which he is thinking. He continues surreptitiously mumbling his thoughts, and hears them as from another's lips as unconscious of their true origin as the sufferer from the vertigo is of the eye movements which induce the hallucination. He fingers the ouija board or the planchette, spelling out with vast industry a garbled medley of the stuff he has been reading the day or the week or the month

or the year before. Seventy years ago, following in the tracks of the notorious Madame Guyon, Andrew Jackson Davis, the seer of Poughkeepsie, wrote at spirit dictation a mass of semi-scientific jargon, tintured with Swedenborgism, and a miscellany of prophetic utterances of the Mother Shipton brand, that are the delight of Conan Doyle. Subsequently Stainton Moses did the same thing, but in much better style. So too did Home. But the two of them, Home and Moses, I have the smallest hesitation in dubbing plain frauds.

Rarely does a sitter become hallucinated. Should this happen the sitter ceases to be a sitter and blossoms into a medium, amateur or professional. In the language of the profession, "he or she has developed psychic gifts." But in the prodigious main, the sitters never develop anything except the most astounding credulity,¹⁸ the most colossal capacity for illusion. Every physical seance is one tissue of prestidigitation from start to finish, and where there are materializations or "ghosts walk" all is pure illusion brought about by the conjuror's bag of tricks coupled with false perception.

GEORGE R. SCOTT.

If Christ Came—A Bit Late.

MR. W. T. STEAD's famous *If Christ Came to Chicago* wants a new chapter added. The Illinois "Primary" Elections have brought new laurels to the brow of Christ. The Galilean has conquered Chicago. "The gates of Hell have been shattered" (I never could understand Christian symbology). All the Christian ministry are cock-a-hoop over the victory of God and Good Government.

On the Sunday before the election, almost every church in Chicago united in denouncing the existent Governor of Illinois, the State Attorney and the Mayor of Chicago. Prayers were offered, and full information given to God as to the best way of ending the present wickedness.

As a stranger in Chicago, I took the word of the critics, who seemed to agree that the city was about as bad as it could be. The most moderate statement of the case was that Chicago's elected chiefs were thieves and thugs, that government in the State was in the hands of crooks, that the public utilities were corruptly leased, and that the governor had been compelled by the courts to disgorge 100,000 dollars, and had avoided more claims by forcing the legislature to repeal the law by which he could be attacked. Murder and attempted murder were charged against the mayor, to say nothing of his depending for support on killers, gamblers, procurers and brothel keepers.

We must assume that all these stories are true, and further, that on Tuesday, April 10, 1928, God, directed by the Chicago Christians, swept it all away. True, He had to do a bit of electioneering. As God is not registered as a citizen of Chicago, He had to leave the actual power in the hands of the voters; not exactly the sort of deity He used to be, according to revelation. Now, everything is changed—or will be, as soon as God's chosen instruments get into office (King George's bold foe, Mr. Mayor Thompson remains Mayor of Chicago, because even God Himself seems incapable of miracles, such as making the election of mayor coincident with the other elections). On the Sabbath following the defeat of Hell's Chicagoan Forces, every conventicle in the State burst into a Song of Triumph. Christ has really come to Chicago.

These Christians give themselves away. Either there is no truth in their contention that God has defeated "the corruptest of all modern governments" (to quote a Chicago Congregationalist); or, if that statement be true, God must equally be blamed for the existence in office of "the corruptest of all modern governments."

¹⁸ "It may be well to state here that I myself am not in the least psychic." (Sir Wm. Barrett in *On the Threshold of the Unknown*, p. 179.)

Christians look only on one side of the shield. They see God defeating Thompson (how irritating to think that Omnipotence even now after declaring Himself opposed to the Mayor cannot abbreviate the Mayor's tenure of office), but they refuse to see the necessary corollary of this view, namely God Almighty voting for corruption, supporting corruption, maintaining corruption and opposing good government.

It is far easier, saner and more in accordance with the known facts to dismiss the contention of Christians altogether. The fulminations of the pulpits had little influence over even the congregations of the churches listening to them. Congregations yawn over weekly denunciations of somebody or something. Who cares?

There were 4,757 lawyers in the State of Illinois who publicly, in their own names, supported the "Reform" candidate for State Attorneyship. The *Chicago Tribune* conducted a whirlwind agitation against the old gang. These were but two of the many influential forces arrayed on the same side, and it is preposterous presumption for the Churches to pretend it is their victory.

Another aspect of the case needs wary walking on the part of an alien visitor. Without expressing any opinion on prohibition, it is easy to see that one reason why bad government exists is that sanctimonious puritanism tends to defeat every good cause with which it appears to be bound. He was an uncommonly wise bishop who said: "I would rather see England free than England sober." American citizens see the Churches fighting against every form of Sunday entertainment, against betting, and what they call "gamboling," and against a great many of the mildest types of "necking," "petting," and "dissipations"; it is only natural that in these circumstances the average man fights shy of the political reforms advocated by such kill-joys.

A husband and wife were recently prosecuted here for kissing one another in their own motor-car. Millions of dollars are spent in prosecuting users of the sort of slot-machine games so common at English seaside resorts. Sabbatarian cranks are rampant in every church. In Illinois several men have been sentenced to life-long imprisonment for a fourth conviction for the crime of having a pint of gin in their house.

You cannot have good government unless it is also reasonable government. Chicago does not want Christ: it wants commonsense.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Acid Drops.

Being a political leader, it has taken Mr. Lloyd George just about fourteen years to see what was said in these columns in 1914. Said he:—

The last war was made by monarchs, statesmen, warriors who were all Christians, every one of them. It was not the atheist, the pagan, the infidel, it was Christian ministers, Christian kings, Christian emperors . . . It is said the Church is not responsible. I say it is. If the Church does not contain a majority of the population, it contains a majority of the people who matter, who govern, who rule, who dominate everywhere.

Only fourteen years behind the *Freethinker* with this particular message, but very much longer so far as its general tenour is concerned. Now, if Mr. Lloyd George became a regular reader of the *Freethinker* he might be a little more up to date with his views.

But, as Mr. Lloyd George was addressing a Baptist gathering, he probably felt compelled to follow a little taste of common sense with a whole dishful of non-sense. So he proceeded with the following:—

What grander declaration could you have than the declaration that came from a galaxy of angels on a Christmas morning, calling out "Peace on Earth and good will amongst men"? I think the Churches will begin to think of answering these questions. It rests with them, and if they don't do it, I cannot see where the hope is to come from.

Well, anyone of ordinary common sense would conclude that if the Christian Church has never found that

angels' message—which Mr. Lloyd George probably believes was scattered about on Christmas cards—in the way of it helping, and even creating war, why should he imagine it will stand in the way now? And what hope is there for the people when a politician of his standing can tell us plainly that the only hope we have is to look to the Churches for guidance? Imagine a people who are so far gone as to look to the half-baked intelligence of the Churches for social salvation! A people who have no more sense than to do that deserve all that is coming to them, and a little extra. We wonder whether Mr. George really believes what he says in these concluding sentences?

The Rev. F. W. Boreham, of Australia, says this is an age of compromise, but that compromise in matters of faith is impossible; one must either believe or not believe. Faith must make up its mind to accept or reject; all men must make up their minds whether there is a God or whether there is no God—and fix the whole tenor of their lives accordingly. We agree, and will add that the purpose of the *Freethinker* is to aid men to make up their minds. As an out-and-out advocate of no compromise, the Rev. M. Boreham will no doubt be pleased to know that. And also to know that the *Freethinker* doesn't encourage half-and-halfers and reverent Agnostics, and other not-quite-sure-of-anything thinkers.

A super-optimist is the Bishop of Ripon. He hopes to catch the wholesomest of modern pagans—the cyclists of England. The Bishop is starting Sunday open-air services for cyclists at the road-side beauty spots of Yorkshire. He explains that the object of the services is to give city cyclists opportunity to worship "without curtailment of their ability to enjoy the one free day of the week." How thoughtful of him! The Bishop hopes to snare these freedom-loving wayfarers on their own highways and byways. What a hope he has! Look at them as they come streaming out of the big cities in their club groups of a dozen, or maybe twenty or thirty. There they go, lasses and lads alike in shorts or knickers, pedalling their lightweight machines, lunches carried in saddle-bags, out for the whole Sunday, from nine to night-fall. No Sabbatarian prohibitions hinder them. No kill-joy disapproval deters them. Does thought of immortality, heaven and hell, and saving their souls disturb their joyous camaraderie? Not a bit! The highways and leafy lanes are calling, and tea is preparing in a village inn, some thirty or forty miles distant. And the Bishop imagines they will tarry to learn of Christ and the Cross, dogma and damnation. What a hope he has! What a hope!

A noted German archaeologist, Prof. Hertzfeld, has been carrying out excavations between Shiraz and Persepolis, and has discovered relics of the founder of the Persian Empire, Cyrus the Great, who lived in the fifth century B.C. A religious weekly remarks that:—

Cyrus was a great warrior and statesman, but he was also a man of noble character. He believed in religious toleration. When he captured the Babylonian provinces in Syria, he permitted the Jews, whom Nebuchadnezzar had transported to Babylonia, to return to Palestine and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. This was no isolated piece of generosity, for he destroyed no town, nor did he put captive kings to death. He was one of the great figures of the ancient world, and in his humane treatment of his enemies was certainly in advance of his time.

Still, no doubt, Cyrus might have done better had he lived 500 A.D., and had benefitted by tuition from the Holy Roman Church.

The Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society in China says that the recent upheaval has severely shaken many Chinese Churches; some have been scattered and seem to have disappeared. But he thinks that some of the Churches have not only survived but have become more vigorous. One evidence, he says, of the vitality of the Chinese Churches is the maintenance of the demand for the Scriptures. The circulation of Scriptures issued by the B. & F. Bible Society in China in 1927, totalled more than three-and-a-half million copies (Bibles, Testaments, and Gospels). Our godly friend

makes a mistake here. The millions of copies are not evidence of demand, but of efforts made to create a demand—which is not quite the same thing.

Truth crushed to earth will rise again, and it sometimes gets up in the deuce of a hurry. Thus, the Bishop of Manchester writes in the Missionary magazine *The Church Overseas* :—

The outstanding single feature of agreement is the conviction that in all parts of the world, the only effective rival to Christianity is not any other religion but Secularism. Against that all Christian peoples in East and West alike are bound to unite.

We congratulate the Bishop on having seen something at last.

Is the Bible read to-day? The B. & F. Bible Society asks the question, and adds that if there is to be a revival of Bible rading, the first essential is to circulate the Book. The Society issued in Europe in the year 1927-8, 2,175,908 volumes (made up of Bibles, New Testaments and portions). But you can carry the Scriptures to the people; getting them to read them is another matter. We fancy the 2,175,908 volumes mostly circulated into household dustbins. Which was a pity, and love's labour's lost.

Speaking about a Fixed Easter, the *Methodist Times* says that the fluctuation of Easter is a national disadvantage, and has no beneficial effect on any religious observance whatever. What strikes us as odd is that God, who has known all about this national disadvantage, has never taken the trouble to advise his servants to get rid of it during these hundreds of years. Perhaps our pious friend had better search the Scriptures before it advocates alteration. No doubt God, in the first place, had a reason for attaching Easter to a Nature festival. If that should be the case, perhaps it would be as well to see if the alteration has the sanction of *Old Moore*, who gets his information from the private diary of the Most High.

Rydal School, a Wesleyan academy at Colwyn Bay, aims to produce boys of "strong Christian character." The head prefect should cheer the heart of the Governors. At a recent Speech Day, he addressed the honoured guests thus: "We have a wonderful time here; we have magnificent masters and a wonderful headmaster. All of us enjoy every minute of our life at the school. We are taught all the essentials of manhood." With so wonderful a command of soft-soap and priggishness, what a perfect Wesleyan parson this head prefect would make!

New Wesleyan Sunday Schools at Edmonton have cost £11,890 to erect and equip. Since England has solved the housing problem, and slums have blossomed into garden cities, the money was well spent. It is good that the children should have somewhere to go on Sunday, their playing-fields are barred against them.

A very reverend prelate remarks that it is strange how people honour great conquerors who were merely brigands, men like Frederick the Great and Napoleon. Equally strange is the veneration of lousy saints, persecuting fanatics, and scheming ecclesiastics.

A woman writer in a religious weekly has much to say about Freedom and laws. Freedom, she says, is not license to do as you like. Freedom does not lie in the absence of laws, but in the character and application of laws. "We have to preserve freedom for the individual, and yet live together without injuring each other." She then gives the essentials of good laws :—

- (1) They must be agreed to by the people who are to obey them.
- (2) They must be disinterested; namely, they must be imposed solely for the benefit of the community. The moment a law has in it any suspicion of interest, any suggestion of exploitation, it ceases to be disinterested, and becomes tyranny.

It would be interesting to hear this lady justify the various Sabbatarian prohibitions, which are enforced in the interest of the Churches, are not agreed to by the

generality, and are not framed to prevent individuals injuring each other.

Apropos of the rejection of the new Prayer Book, the *Sunday School Chronicle* remarks that the fact is clear :—

That the majority of people in this country will have nothing to do with the establishment by law of any religious doctrine or practice which even faintly resembles, or can be deliberately perverted into accordance with, those of the Roman Catholic Church.

We suggest that the "majority of people" are not the least bit interested one way or the other with any religious doctrine or practice; and are more concerned about a Kent v. Surrey cricket contest than about a dog-fight between two factions of the Christian brotherhood.

The Rev. H. C. Carter, of Cambridge, deals weekly with perplexities of faith and conduct. Someone wants him to answer people who say they see "more real Christianity outside than in the Church, that the lives of many non-professing persons are more Christlike than are the lives of many calling themselves Christians and attending church regularly. Mr. Carter admits that there is much real "Christlike goodness" outside the Church. He adds: "And real goodness is real goodness, whether it calls itself Christian and is attached to the Christian Church or not." That is the most intelligent statement the rev. gent. makes in his one-and-a-half columns. Real goodness is a human, an ordinary human quality. It is Christian arrogance and impertinence which labels it "Christlike."

Three members of the Student Christian Movement have written a composite article on the Sunday School, which has been reprinted in a Sunday school weekly. The writers say that the Sunday school is the "Nursery of the Church," and suggest that if so many men and women drift away from the Church in adulthood, the fault lies with Sunday schools. It appears that why there are so many non-church-going adults is because the chief features of the Sunday schools are dingy schoolrooms, uncomfortable furniture, wheezy harmoniums, and uneducated and unskilled teachers. As an explanation this will serve, until one mentions that these chief features were prominent in Sunday schools a generation or so ago, yet there was no great difficulty in getting church-going adults. Our Student Christian friends should try again. Perhaps next time they may light on the truth—that men and women and youths drift away because religion does not interest them.

Radio Times gets many hundreds of letters each week from listeners, showing intelligent and critical interest in broadcasting. As, however, many correspondents fail to express properly their individual point of view, the Editor is offering a guinea for the two best letters, one of appreciation, the other of criticism, of the B.B.C.'s policy and programmes. The letters should not exceed 300 words in length. This should give Free-thinkers an opportunity to criticize the B.B.C.'s policy of no alternative programme on Sundays for listeners who have no desire to be debarred from listening because the parsons decree only religious "tripe" shall be available. We shall be interested in noting whether any such letters are allowed to appear. They will not if they are referred for approval to the consulting committee of parsons.

A THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK.

Great Causes are not won by wishes alone. It is work that wins. Are you a worker or a wisher?

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.—The Flea, 2s. 6d.; J. Wearing, is.

E. W. FLINT.—Thanks for cutting. We are always glad to receive news of the prospects of Freethought in other countries. We appreciate your high opinion of our work in the *Freethinker*. We have always given the best we could to the Freethought Movement, and shall continue to do so.

A. W. GAYTON.—We are obliged for cutting. You will see the subject is dealt with elsewhere in this issue.

J. ALWARD.—There are many books giving what you require, but you will get a brief summary of one side in Gerald Massey's *The Historical Jesus and Mythical Christ*, published at this office. Price 6d. Or a larger work that may suit you is *Pagan Christs*, by Mr. J. M. Robertson.

F. J. GREENALL.—We are glad to learn that "Ramble" of the Manchester Branch, on Sunday last, was so successful, and that the opportunities for distributing Freethought literature were seized. A very great deal of good can be done in this way during the summer months.

L. LAWRENCE.—We are afraid that the suggested debate with Mr. Cohen will not materialize. This is not due to any unwillingness on Mr. Cohen's part, but the person with whom he was asked to devate, evidently considers discretion the better part of valour. And on the whole we are not surprised at the decision.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

We must ask the indulgence of readers this week. Several unexpected demands on the editor's time prevent his dealing with all the things calling for attention. Some of these correspondents will be answered privately, others will hold good for our next issue. Some Letters to the Editor are also held over for want of space.

We published last week the following letter from Mr. Hillaire Belloc:—

"You say in your issue of June 10, that Catholic papers refused Mr. Wells the right of reply to my articles, and that I made no protest against the refusal. The *Universe*, to which Mr. Wells appealed, offered him six columns in which to reply. I wrote strongly urging his right of reply."

The letter came to hand just as we were going to press with the paper, and we printed it without comment.

We had no time to check the statements. On the face of it, it looked as though Mr. Belloc had caught us napping.

But only on the face of it. Examination proves that Mr. Belloc's letter properly comes under the head of religious apologetics. For what we said was that Mr. Belloc made no *public* protest. We clearly could not know what he had done privately. Mr. Belloc proves us to be wrong by omitting the important word "public." We clearly could not know what Mr. Belloc had done privately. And we hope that if the editor of a paper to which we were a regular contributor had treated an opponent in the way in which the *Universe* treated Mr. Wells, a little more would have been said about it.

The other matter is outside our knowledge, and we can only go by published statements. In the "Foreword" to *Mr. Belloc Objects*, it is stated that it was not the editor of the *Universe* that offered six columns to reply to twenty-four, but Mr. Wells, who asked to be allowed to reply to Mr. Belloc in that number of columns. The "Foreword" goes on to say that after a month's delay, and "various consultations with Mr. Belloc and the directors of his paper," the editor offered Mr. Wells the "opportunity of correcting definite points of fact upon which he might have been misrepresented"; but declined to allow him to defend his views or examine Mr. Belloc's logic and implications in his column." We are not surprised that Mr. Wells declined to be drawn into such an obvious, and dishonestly laid, trap. As the controversy turned upon the trustworthiness of *The Outlines of History*, it is quite clear that a large part of any controversy would turn upon questions of logic and deductions drawn from facts. Otherwise it would be like discussing the character of Henry VIII, but confining the discussion to the dates of his birth, accession, marriages, and death. We are not surprised at the editor of a Christian paper declining to do anything that would open the eyes of his readers, but Mr. Belloc has shown scant wisdom in standing up for his paper in the way in which he has done. After all, we suppose that no one outside very fanatical believers ever expects a Catholic paper, or other paper, to deal fairly with opponents.

Which reminds us that the farcical debate on "Where are the Dead?" which has been running through the *Daily News*, has now come to an end. These articles will be reprinted in book form, and so soon as the book is issued we intend examining it in these columns. Candidly, there is very little to examine. Most of the articles were sheer emptiness, not one faced squarely and fairly the real issue, and the editor of the *Daily News* saw to it that neither in the articles nor in the letters which were published should any straightforward representative Freethinker be given a hearing. Between the editor of the *Universe*, and the editor of the *Daily News*, the only difference is that they serve two different branches of the Christian army. In policy they are at one. Neither of them dare permit a complete statement of the case against Christian superstition.

The West Ham Branch has arranged for an excursion to Ken Wood to-day (July 1). Friends will meet at Bow Road Station (District Railway), 9.30, and book to Hampstead. Tea has been arranged for at Golders Hill Park, at 4.30. Mr. and Mrs. Venton are to act as guides.

We are not at present well supplied with lady speakers, and we are the more pleased to note a very fine meeting held in Regent's Park by Mrs. R. H. Rosetti, on Sunday last. She held the close attention of the meeting against the noisy and vulgar buffoonery of a Christian Evidence speaker, and dealt with both questions and opposition in a most effective manner. Our correspondent, whose judgment we can trust in such matters, expresses the hope that Mrs. Rosetti will be heard of more frequently in the future. As we know the lady in question, we endorse this thoroughly.

The Science of Religion.

I SOMETIMES wander into the reading room of the local library in order to peruse *The Christian World*, *The Catholic Herald*, and other divinely-inspired journals. I have noticed that these visits invariably coincide with a feeling within me of intense boredom, coupled with a desire for such entertainment as requires the minimum expenditure of thought. On this occasion, I came across the following passage. It is from the pen of a certain Sheffield rector, Mr. W. Morrissy, who, I suppose, felt like his fellow rectors, that he must bring his vast scientific knowledge to bear against the disbelief of Sir Arthur Keith in the survival of the spirit or soul after death. Mr. Morrissy says:—

The excellence of science depends chiefly on the certainty with which it establishes its conclusions, for certainty alone affords the most complete satisfaction. Now the science of religion affords the highest and fullest certainty conceivable. For the truths on which it rests are attested by the authority of God himself, while the principles of other sciences rest on reason. As far as then, God's intelligence surpasses the knowledge of man, so far does the certainty of the science of religion excel that of any other science. If, therefore, the science of religion says that the soul or spirit survives after death, there is the highest evidence that it does.

After delivering himself of this effort, I can imagine this worthy gentleman exclaiming to his wife: "By goom, lass, Ah've gone and putten t' kybosh on those freethinking folk ter-day!" Well, I should be the last to deny that he has put the "kybosh" on those misguided Freethinkers who entertain hopes for the future sanity of mankind. But I entreat Mr. Morrissy to pardon me if I suggest that he has been a little unfortunate in the choice of a career. There is, I admit, a severe overcrowding in the profession of seaside entertainers, especially at the present moment, but a gentleman of such undoubted talent as Mr. Morrissy should not experience any great difficulty in procuring a suitable berth. For sheer unconscious humour, I have only come across one passage to beat it; and that occurs in a charming little book by Mr. A. Vennel Coster, who, in an endeavour to render plausible the love story of Adam and Eve, suggests that the forbidden fruit was the fermented juice of fruit—that is to say, alcohol! It says much for the enterprise of the proprietors of *Punch*, that they manage to remain in the field against such powerful competitors.

Now, since Mr. Morrissy will, no doubt, be unable to appreciate his own humour, it will be necessary to point it out to him. In the first place, let us consider the sentence: "The science of religion affords the highest and fullest certainty, for the truths on which it rests are attested by the authority of God himself, while the principles of other sciences rest on reason." I take it then, that the science of religion does *not* rest on reason. This is obvious, of course, but it comes as a delightful surprise to find a Christian admitting it openly. Unfortunately, however, I have a great fear that Mr. Morrissy does not understand even the definition of the term "science." If he does, then perhaps he will explain how it is that religion is a science when it does not rest on reason? Personally, I suggest that it be called the Art of Religion. For is it not an exceedingly fine art to reconcile the teaching of the gospel of brotherhood, truth and love, with the suppression of liberty of thought and speech, and, until recently with the custom of torturing and murdering people who merely expressed, respectfully, different opinions to themselves? One is led to suppose from Mr. Morrissy's very first sentence that he appreciates the scientific method. In that

case, provided he has taken the trouble to honestly study the subjects, he must have secured quite a considerable amount of satisfaction and certainty from the way in which the theory of evolution and the truths of geology have been established. Unfortunately, on these subjects, as on many others, the "science" of religion has something different to say. In these cases Mr. Morrissy must discard what his senses and reason tell him (which, by the way have been given by his Creator, presumably for the purpose of doing something with) and accept what is founded on the *possibility* of a tissue of absurdities being the Word of God. He may also be aware of another very important function of all sciences—that of forecasting future events. The science of astronomy tells us to a minute when any particular heavenly phenomenon is to take place. This is exceedingly plain proof that the scientific method is universally sound. But the only difference between astronomy and evolution is the field of activity, not the method, and, therefore, for Mr. Morrissy to accept the results in one case and not in the other is one of those numerous inconsistencies in the assimilation of which Christians are such past masters. And when the "science" of religion does forecast anything, it always seems to do it on things that cannot be experimentally tested. But perhaps this is a coincidence. However, the fact remains that Mr. Morrissy cannot both have the bun and eat it. He must take his stand on either the "science" of religion or the proper sciences. In common with all those theologically befogged, he cannot see the very, very simple truth that if God gave him the faculty of reason it was not meant to be suppressed. It has always seemed to me a very curious thing, that being provided with the faculty of reason and credulous imbecility mixed in uncertain proportions, one is considered to lead the most pious life by giving full rein to the latter gift!

Now, at this stage, I do not flatter myself that Mr. Morrissy's complacency has been in the least degree shaken. I say complacency, for one cannot call Christians faithful when they fear examination of their faith. It is a little difficult to argue with those who think that it is usual and conventional for a serpent to enter into familiar conversation with a young lady, in order to persuade her to accept an apple, the eating of which damns the myriads of unborn, and therefore perfectly innocent people. It is a little difficult to make headway against those who believe that a child can be conceived without the aid of any human father, and that this child was sent to earth in order to atone for the eating of an apple. It is a little difficult to reason with those who consider that out of the millions of worlds in existence, God selected ours in which to send his only son. For it would be unwise to assume that our world is the only one on which human life resides. What is more, no pious person can believe that each world had a serpent, an Adam, an Eve, and a redeemer; and that Jesus was obliged to go through thousands of crucifixions, separated at regular intervals, in his travels. For all this would imply a different Mary in each world—a state of things that savours too much of the sailor with a mistress in every port. Again, it is a little difficult to understand the psychology of those who gather together every Sunday in order to applaud the glory and infinite wisdom of God, and at the same time, to cringe and humble themselves in an effort to get him to alter his mind. When there are deaths, earthquakes, storms, droughts, floods and diseases, perhaps Mr. Morrissy will explain why one prays to God to prevent or stop them, when it is believed that there is a purpose behind his work?

Surely he must realize that it is impertinent to remark upon the decision of one who is infinitely wise! When God caused the Thames to overflow its banks last Christmas, there was, no doubt, a brilliant idea underlying this proceeding. I mean there was some very good reason, if only we could see it, why a number of *innocent* people should be drowned like rats in a trap. Yet promptly to time, Christians went down in an access of genuflection, and took the liberty of begging God to choose some other form of playfulness. While not wishing to tax Mr. Morrissy too much, it would remove some misunderstanding if he would explain why we should not regard as inconsistent those creatures who do such curious things.

Now, providing there is no danger to the community, we have no objection whatever, to any individual accepting facts and basing his whole creed on hearsay and the testimony of superstitious people who lived 2,000 years ago. One need not bother to reason for oneself unless one wishes to. After all, for weak-minded individuals who were condemned at birth, the prospect of not bothering to think, and getting the State's money for it at the same time, has its attractions. But unfortunately the Churches have been in the past an instrument of education; and any instrument of education must rest on a rational basis, since on it depends the shaping of thoughts and ideas. The impulses of children have to be *guided* into channels that are socially valuable. The Church's method is to *drive* these impulses into channels, the social value of which is not at all obvious. For instance, intellectual dishonesty can hardly be described as socially valuable. If religion is to be of use, it simply must rest on reason and not on purely personal feeling. Towards progress, Christian theology, which is the study of human fancies concerning God, offers not assistance, but hindrance. It is strange that the few good things in the Bible—a few moral precepts—are the only parts that would have been suggested to us by reason and experience. It does not need the Word of God to tell us not to hate one another. The march of civilization would have made us realize the futility of cutting each other's throats. As it is, the colossal conceit of Christian mythologists has put back civilization 1,700 years. Had our knowledge advanced from the time of Christ as it did before, among the Greeks, and has done since A.D. 1700, there seems little doubt that we should have had a civilization worth boasting about.

In conclusion, I set Mr. Morrissy a small problem on which to expend his logic. The only remarkable thing there will be to him about this problem, is that the premises are perfectly unchallengeable. Firstly, it is a fact that civilized thought is making progress. Mr. Morrissy cannot deny that. Secondly, the power of the Church is slumping. Mr. Morrissy can certainly not deny that. What conclusions, therefore, does he draw from these two facts?

B. L. WILKINSON.

THE CULT OF VIOLENCE.

Monstrous activities such as those of the "Balilla" (Junior Fascist Scouts) and the "Piccole Italiane" (Fascist Girl Guides) pursue a veritable corruption of youth. Irresponsible children, even young girls, are armed for the defence of the régime. In the streets of Italy, children of both sexes are to be seen going through military drill with fire-arms. They are taught the principles of violence, they hear every day justifications of war, hatred is inspired in their young hearts. They are told that Italy should be an empire, and that in consequence she will have to go to war.—*Signor Nitti*,

How I Became an Atheist.

(Concluded from page 413.)

ANOTHER man who greatly influenced me was J. M. Wheeler, sub-editor of the *Freethinker* at that time. His reading was wide and deep, as can be seen by his *Dictionary of Freethinkers*, a monument of research. So many books did he requisition at the British Museum reading room, that an official there imputed to him a desire to read all the books in the Museum; his death at the age of forty-eight was a great loss to Freethought. I owe him much. He carried his learning easily; without writing down to the people, he made himself easily understood and made a liberal use of quotations from expensive and out-of-the-way books which are unknown to the average general reader. I used to sigh and think how I should like to be able to write like that. And with it all, Wheeler was one of the most modest and unassuming of men. He deserves a niche in the Pantheon of Freethought.

As I have said, I was greatly incensed at the discovery that I had been crammed with such an abominable and cruel lot of superstitions. My life, as I remember it, as a child, was one of strain and unhappiness. Religion hung over it like a black cloud. I was terrified with stories of the power of Satan and visions of Hell. I dreaded the coming of darkness every night, for in imagination I saw the devils lurking in the dark corners, or coming out of the cupboards in my bedroom, where I slept alone. But, upon reflexion, I saw that those who taught me were themselves victims, and suffered equally with myself. I could see plainly that our family would have been much happier without religion than with it. But I could see that it would be a very delicate matter to introduce the subject at home. So, without revealing the real extent that I had strayed from the fold, I propounded a few mild examples of the Higher Criticism to my mother, who had received a much better education than my father. She answered them to the best of her ability, but I expect she suspected something, for she took an unexpected and drastic method of ending it. At the next meal she put one of my questions to my father, telling him that I wanted it answered. My father was silent for a moment; then fixing me with a stern look, he said: "He *knows* better than that." That was all. It was enough. I was convicted of pretending to find difficulties in the Bible which I knew did not really exist. If I had persisted I should not have been argued with, I should have been ordered out of the room. I must say this in extenuation of my father, that he was then past his prime—I was the last of a large family—also that he was worried with the cares of a large and declining business, and suffered from attacks of acidity and rheumatism; all things conducive to irritability, which even the best religions cannot alleviate.

Having discovered the unscientific and unhistorical character of the Bible, not gradually and by degrees, as is the general rule, but quite suddenly, I thought my friends and acquaintances would be equally interested in the matter. To my great surprise most of them were quite indifferent; others maintained their belief in the book and retorted with questions, such as: "If the Bible is not true, how do you account for this, and that, and the other?" Questions, many of which, at that time, I was quite unable to answer. I saw that if I was to do any good I should have to make a complete study of the subject in all its bearings. So obtaining a large reporter's note-book, I spent all my spare time reading and making extracts from the best scientific and historical works of the time. What I could not find at one library I sought for at another. What I longed for was an Encyclopædia of Freethought, and I vowed, that in the extremely unlikely event of my becoming wealthy, my first care would be to produce such a work.

Like Wheeler, and Buchner, I believe in the efficacy of the Gospel of Fact. For a man who is induced to give up a false belief by eloquence or fine writing alone, will be quite as ready to be convinced to the contrary by an equal display of eloquence and rhetoric upon the other side. So I have always endeavoured to provide the facts. Some people, perhaps, do not care for this

method. This does not concern me at all, I am more concerned with the quality of my readers than their quantity. I have more joy over one working man who tells me, and many have done so, that the facts I have provided have been just what they required, and have been searching for; than in ninety and nine letters which praise the mere literary character of my articles, and make no further use of them. The efforts to extend Free-thought by those who object to such extracts and quotations, are not likely to amount to much. The time is long gone by since the working man was content to believe upon authority.

Modern machine shop practice, which demands working to hundredths of an inch, reacts upon the worker's mental processes and leads him to demand an equally high degree of accuracy for every statement he is asked to give credit to. What is required now is not a lot of new and startling discoveries—we have all the facts we require to prove our case, in abundance—what is required is to gather them together and make them available. The Roman Catholics have their Encyclopædia, and the Jews have theirs, and I think it is about time the Freethinkers had theirs. The present writer, for want of a better, is compiling a new Text-book of Free-thought, which the National Secular Society will publish, if they approve of, and consider it suitable. If that meets with success, then nothing would please me more, than to spend my remaining years in compiling an encyclopædia.

And the moral of it all is, that the chance slipping into a boy's hand of a *Freethinker* may, after many years, bear fruit in the form of an Encyclopædia. Go thou and do likewise.

W. MANN.

"Doping" with Prayer.

LET the nation rejoice!! Even whilst Parliament has been tinkering away at the subject, a finer method has been evolved, and the country will become purer and more wholesome for its denizens!!

After that prologue, let me again descend to earth and try to explain my drivelling. Betting on horse-races will soon be a thing of the past. Bookmakers will be obliged to close their offices. There will be no need for the Commons to proceed further with the "Tote" Bill. In fact, there will be no sense in running the horses at all, for the Almighty has now condescended to take an interest in the matter, and to listen to the prayers addressed to him on behalf of Scuttle.

Scuttle won the "Guineas," as a direct result of the earnest prayers of the Rev. J. H. Davies, according to statements made by that gentleman. Still further, we are advised to "keep an eye" on that particular stable for which this minister is responsible, as still more prayers are to be put up in the future.

But—how horribly sceptical is that word—what is going to happen if others take a leaf out of the book of Mr. Davies? I can imagine that some one of our distillers may employ two parsons to pray, and perchance a shipowner may have three, until, eventually, along will come a bloated war-profitier who will charter an entire cathedral staff, complete with organ, choir and nightshirts.

Then will there rise such a mighty din up to heaven, that the deity will get so fed up that he'll wash his hands of the whole affair and leave it, as before, to the tender mercies of the owner, trainer, jockey and—I nearly forgot this one—the horse.

At the same time, if this prayer business becomes fashionable, I already fear complications. Should it so happen that one of our Hebrew friends leads in a winner, it will *prove* (mark the word) that Jahveh is still faithful to his chosen race, instead of being willing to be a second-hand deity sharing power with two other bits of himself for the benefit of the Gentiles. Further, supposing one of the Hindu potentates strikes lucky? Or if Prince Mboozee of Lake Tchad is first past the post by reason of help received from his little wooden joss? Above all, what will be the inference if a racing Freethinker (is there one rich enough?) should own the winning colours?

Moreover, is there not something in the Rules of

Racing that horses must not be "doped," and what will the Stewards say about an owner's horses that are treated in this way? It looks as though Scuttle ought to be disqualified.

After all, I think that this idea of the Rev. Mr. Davies has come a little too late in the day, and he will find that the punter will still be willing to trust in his swastika, lucky bean or farthing with a hole in it, whilst the bookie will still repose all his faith in the gullibility of the poor flat who makes the book worth while.

L. M. WERREY EASTERBROOK.

CHRISTIANITY'S DEBT TO THE GREEKS.

It will be urged that the ethics of the modern world owe more to the influence of Christianity than to any other spiritual source; and it is true that the Christian scale of virtues is different from the Greek. But then we have to ask, what does Christianity itself owe to the Greeks? Dr. Charles has shown that the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, which contains an ethical passage closely resembling the Sermon on the Mount, was a pre-Christian document. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul was Greek, not Jewish; so, too, was the doctrine of the Word or "Logos," which informs the Johannine Gospel. That there was a close connexion between early Christianity and the Greek mystery religions is now generally acknowledged. The idea of a sacred rite or sacrament by which the soul was purged of sin belongs to the Orphic tradition, to which source also may be traced the conceptions of hell, purgatory and heaven characteristic of medieval and popular Christianity.

Some critics have described Christianity as a decaying form of Hellenism, others as the last and most triumphant expression of the Hellenic genius, others again have sought to extend the Hebraic as against the Hellenic influences in the religious creed of the modern world, and to find in Jewish conceptions authority for the Catholic Mass. All, however, would agree that the contribution of Greek thought to Christian theology has been decisive. The extreme claim is made by Dean Inge, who traces back to Plato "the religion and the political philosophy of the Christian Church and the Christian type of Mysticism."

There are some features of modern Christianity which would have been profoundly alien to the Greek of the age of Plato and Aristotle. The Greeks were in bondage neither to a book nor to the instruments of a church. The crudities of fundamentalism would have been unintelligible to them, and they had nothing to fear from sacerdotal tyranny. The Christian Science service, in which alternate passages are read out from writers differing so widely in spiritual force and literary merit as S. Paul and Mrs. Eddy, would have seemed to them bad art, bad religion, bad philosophy, and bad science. The prodigal emotions, it is true, of a Welsh revivalist meeting, the "chorybantic Christianity" of the Salvation Army, would not have seemed so foreign to the author of the Bacchæ or to the votaries of Dionysus. "Ecstasy" and "enthusiasm" are Greek words illustrating ideas deeply rooted in the popular religions of Hellenism. But the higher religious consciousness of the Greeks was not a mere movement of sensibility; it was compounded alike of metaphysics, ethics, and the emotion of piety. To it Protestant nonconformity would have seemed deficient in metaphysics, Greek monasticism in metaphysics and ethics alike, Roman Catholicism in intellectual freedom, and all the churches to be too deeply involved in questions of politics and organizations to be free for the sublime contemplation of divine ideas. Only in some phases of Christian mysticism would the Greek discover a reflection of the soul of Plato or in the sterner forms of Calvinism an analogue to that valiant austerity of conduct which was preached by the Stoic moralists among the splendours and luxuries of Rome.—(Reprinted.)

Man is distinguished from the lower animals chiefly by his capacity for making false generalizations.

George Eliot.

Ghosts.

MADAME DE STAEL said "I do not believe in ghosts, but I am afraid of them." Probably there are millions who would say the same thing if they had the wit. The belief in ghosts is dying out, but the fear of them survives. Our intellects have not yet impressed their sanity on our nerves. Darkness and mystery still disturb our imaginations, and evoke psychological reminiscences of ancient times. Within the clear light of consciousness we are ourselves, but beyond that we are automatic legacies of the past. Our ancestors, as Emerson said, are potted within us. When we act, they are moving us. It is the inevitable law of mortmain. Our forefathers rule us from their tombs, and many of the weird thrills we experience, in situations that millenniums ago roused the barbarous terror which is the nurse of superstition, are caused by the charnel breath of their sepulchres sweeping through our sensitive frames.

My personal experience on this subject is worthless. I know that very ignorant people in towns, and bucolic minds in sequestered villages, have a deep-seated faith in ghosts. I have met educated men and women who dislike conversation about them, and others who frankly shared Madame De Stael's sentiment. A few—a very few—I have met who were entirely superior to the superstition. Does not this show how powerful is inheritance? Does it not warn us that the follies of barbaric ages, the delusions of the ages of faith, must be strenuously repudiated by our minds, lest they assert themselves in our blood?

In my tender childhood I listened to ghost stories before the winter fire till it was a horror to leave the room. Frequently I crawled upstairs to bed with my eyes shut tight, fearing that if I opened them I might behold a grisly shade. For years I lived next door to a haunted house. Some persons asserted that the ghost still roamed at midnight, which appears to be the hour when the spirits take exercise, as we further perceive in Shakespeare's "'Tis now the very witching time of night." Other persons, however, asserted that the ghost had been "laid," no one could say exactly when, by a clergyman who encountered it at the critical moment, and drove it underground with a chapter of the Bible. That ghost was the subject of my dreams. Yet I never saw it, nor indeed any other, although I watched for its appearance by the hour with a fearful fascination.

On one occasion, however, I made sure I had felt a ghost. Our family was residing a few miles from Plymouth, and I slept by myself in a room at the top of the house. Several miles beyond us lived my uncle's family. He was a farmer, and his eldest son used to attend the Plymouth market. One evening, as my cousin was returning home, he took supper at our house, and being exceedingly tired, he rested there, intending to proceed home in the morning. The only available bed was mine, and he was put into it. I was out with other boys that evening, and when I returned at an unconscionable hour for an urchin of eight, I sneaked into the passage, and persuaded one of my sisters to let me scurry off to bed so as to avoid a storm. In the hurry she forgot to tell me of my cousin's visit, and I slipped upstairs in the dark. I undressed myself, and the bed being high, I took my usual running leap upon it. Horror of horrors! Instead of descending on a flat counterpane, I alighted on a living form. Quick as lightning, I jumped off, opened the door, and fled downstairs, followed by the dreadful presence, which I concluded was old Nick himself. The whole family met me at the bottom of the stairs, where I rushed into my mother's arms shouting "The Devil, the Devil!"

A famous spectre, far more so than the one I lived next door to, was the Cock Lane Ghost. Johnson's credulity as to this supernatural visitor seems to have been an invention of his enemies. Belief in the Cock Lane Ghost was very general in London in 1763, and Churchill satirizes Johnson as one of the dupes. But, according to Boswell, the great lexicographer sat on the committee of investigation, which proved the whole thing a fraud. It is obvious, however, that Johnson did believe in the reality of ghosts, although he appears

to have been stricter than other superstitionists in his notions of evidence.

That Shakespeare believed in ghosts I think is untenable. The ghosts in his plays are mere "stuff o' the mind." He employs them as accessories to heighten the interest of the drama, but he never lets them affect the natural development of the plot; and, what is more remarkable, he makes them visible or invisible, audible or inaudible, to suit his purpose. The ghost in *Hamlet* is seen by the fated son and his friends, yet in the closet scene, while Hamlet sees and hears it, his mother sees and hears nothing. Similarly, Banquo's ghost is only perceptible to Macbeth. When "the great magician, bold Glendower," boasts that he can "call spirits from the vastly deep," Harry Hotspur answers: "Why, so can I, or so can any man, but will they come when you do call for them?" Shakespeare's philosophy of the subject be summed up in one of his own phrases—"Such tricks hath strong imagination."

Ghosts are falling out of fashion in the present age. They still appear at Spiritist seances, but if any person has the courage to seize them they turn out to be solid flesh and blood. When superstition is reduced to a trade, it is a miserable mixture of trickery and dupery.

Ghosts never trouble sceptics. Their visits are always confined to believers. Nor do they appear in the daylight. They flit about, like bats, in the dark. A haunted house is sure to be more or less sequestered. Nobody hears of one in a busy thoroughfare. A ghost in the Strand would be a case for the police. Sometimes a ghost proves a rank impostor. There was one of this kind a few years ago in Texas. It used to spring up on the wall of a graveyard and frighten the passers by; indeed, its uncanny presence soon produced a perfect reign of terror. But one night it popped out on the wrong man. He drew his revolver and took a potshot at the obtrusive spirit, who dropped to the earth with a groan, and was presently taken to the hospital.

The belief in ghosts is the beginning of religion; yes, and the end of it, too, for the first and second childhoods are very similar. The only difference between the savage and the civilizee, in this respect, is that the former expects to see ghosts any night, while the latter only expects to see them after he is dead. The essence of religion, in both cases, is ghostology.

Gods themselves are only ghosts. They are the chiefs, but they cannot survive their tribe. *Ghost* (Anglo-Saxon *gast*, German *geist*) originally meant breath or air, like the Latin *spiritus* or the Greek *pneuma*. The Holy Ghost is literally Holy Wind; in other words, nothing but gas. The true Holy Ghost, therefore, is pure air; in which I believe as devoutly as any Christian. It is life and health and hope and joy. "Come Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire," is a capital prayer when you understand it in the right sense. The Churches have always misunderstood it. They have built grand and costly edifices, devoted them to the service of God, and consecrated them in the name and by the power of the Holy Ghost. These imposing structures have been adorned with stained-glass windows, depicting some incident or episode of the Christian superstition; and millions of worshippers have felt a rapture of devotion as they saw the sunlight streaming through the storied panes, and kindling all their red and purple glories. Yet the splendid houses of God often threw their shadows (and do so still) over squalid hovels or fetid slums. How much better it were, if the choice must be made, to lose the glorious temples and gain the happy homes; to lose the red and purple glories of sunlit storied windows, and gain the crimson of glowing health on the faces of humankind.

G. W. FOOTE.

A negro preacher was in the habit of ending his discourse with a verse from a hymn. One day he quoted:—

As pants de hart fo' cooling streams,
When heated in de chase;
So pants mah soul fo' Ye, O Gawd,
An' thy refreshing grace.

After a pause he added, in all seriousness: "Brederen, Gawd wants yuh pants!"

Correspondence.

CHRISTIAN TRUTH.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Anent your "Acid Drop" on the New Oxford Dictionary and "Christian Truth," is it possible that the word "codology" will be found in it? If not, it ought to be, because there is more of it in "Christian Truth" than there is to be found elsewhere.

CINE SERE.

Obituary.

MR. JAMES WILLIAM WOOD.

It is with the very deepest regret that we record the death of a very old friend, in the person of James William Wood, of Chard, Somerset. No stauncher Freethinker existed in the country, and he won the respect of all with whom he came into contact. He had an intense love of books, with a catholicity of taste that did credit to his intellectual outlook. These, with his home and garden, and only those who have had the privilege of visiting him know what a lovely garden it is, filled his life.

Mr. Wood remained engaged in his usual business up to within a week of his death, although for some time his health had been failing. He returned home from a car-ride feeling unwell, took to his bed and died on June 21. At his own request and that of his wife, Mr. Cohen attended the cremation at Golders Green, and delivered a short address. Mr. Wood leaves behind him three sons, who can look back upon their parent with a respect and affection that he well deserved. To them and to his widow we offer our sympathy. They have lost a good parent and husband, and I have lost a good friend.—C.C.

Society News.

MR. WHITEHEAD AT NEWCASTLE.

THE seven meetings held by Mr. Whitehead in Newcastle-on-Tyne were very successful, although the one held on Town Moor was somewhat marred by a fall of rain. The meetings held on the Sandhills and in the Big Market were quite satisfactory, but some attempt was made by the police to interfere with the sale of literature. This being circumvented, Mr. Whitehead's name was taken, with a view to summoning for obstruction. Up to the time of writing, nothing further had been heard concerning this, and the names of nearly a dozen witnesses were given for use if required.

Mr. Whitehead will be lecturing in Glasgow, from Saturday, June 30 until July 13.

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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—"Mother India" and Modern India."

OUTDOOR.

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

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6.0, Mr. W. Campbell-Everden—A Lecture.

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

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park): Sunday, 3.0 and 7 p.m.; Thursday, 7 p.m. Speakers—Messrs. Hanson, Botting and Baker.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Branch Outing to Ken Wood. Meet at Bow Road Station (District Railway) at 9.30 and book to Hampstead. Tea arranged for at Golders Hill Park at 4.30. Guides, Mr. and Mrs. Venton.

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. Lectures—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. J. T. Brighton—A Lecture.

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