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Views and Opinions.

The Great Imposture.

"THE Great Debate" on "Where are the Dead?" initiated by the *Daily News*, and which ran through its columns for nearly a month, brought its dreary and dishonest career to an end on June 28. I had intended deferring my examination of the contributions until they appeared in book form, but circumstances have made it advisable to alter that plan. The debate was, as I have said, dreary and dishonest. It was the first because in the main it was an unconvincing repetition of very familiar statements made by selected writers, whose opinions were so well known that they might as well have been written by some member of the *Daily News* staff. Out of a total of twenty-four who took part in the discussion, three only were allowed to cast doubts upon the belief. No one who represented complete and outspoken Freethought was invited to give his or her opinion. And I say that this was obviously dishonest. The real purpose of the debate was to give the impression that the overwhelming bulk of educated opinion was in favour of the belief; and, to the ordinary Christian, superiority in numbers equals superiority in evidence.

We were not much surprised by the action of the *Daily News*. Many years ago we gave up all expectations of Christians behaving with ordinary fairness where their religion was concerned, but in the interests of the education of others we called attention to the fact. Quite unexpectedly, the exposure, made on more than one occasion during the course of the debate, had its effect. Stung by what we had said, the *Daily News* quoted our statement, that it dare not admit "a complete statement of the case against the Christian superstition," and announced several days after the close of the discussion that it had arranged for an article to appear from the pen of Mr. J. M. Robertson. It added that letters had been printed from Freethinkers, "in their correct proportion to the number of letters representing all shades of opinion." Well, we have no means of testing the correctness of the last statement. As for the first, we can only say that we are glad that we have aroused some sense of responsibility in the mind of

the *Daily News*, even though it be late in the day; and also that the invitation to a Freethinker to add his comments on a debate that is over, does not quite meet my challenge that the *Daily News*, which constantly devotes so much of its space to articles on religion, dare not admit "a complete statement of the case against Christian superstition."

* * *

Are We Unfair?

But were we actually unfair in what we said, and are now saying, against the *Daily News*? Directly the paper announced the coming discussion, many letters were sent to the Editor from all parts of the country, expressing the hope that one who had a right to speak in the name of Freethinkers would be invited to contribute. To some of these letters the editor replied that the list of writers had been drawn up, and as it extended to twenty-three, it was felt inadvisable to lengthen the list. But when, some time after, it was pointed out that a certain Nonconformist had not been asked, although it was known that he would have nothing to say that had not been said by the others, his name was promptly added. If the *Daily News* had overlooked the existence of Freethinkers, the letters should have reminded it that all the people of the British Isles are really not members of Church or Chapel. If they had not room for a known opponent of Christianity, why find room for an extra Christian? We are very glad that what we said has caused an invitation to be sent to Mr. Robertson, but that must not be permitted to blind anyone to the truth of our statement.

We want to ram home this matter now that the *Daily News* has reopened the subject. In an open discussion it is the rule to arrange that all sorts of opinions shall be allowed expression. And in the conduct of the debate a speaker from each side is called upon alternately. What was the policy of the *Daily News*? The first article was by a believer. The second was by Mr. Arnold Bennet, whose presentation—for either its logic or its Freethinking—I should be very sorry to endorse. The fourth was by Professor Julian Huxley, who was sitting on the fence. The fifth was by a Christian, and the sixth by Sir Arthur Keith, whose Manchester lecture set the ball rolling. I began to think that the *Daily News* had arranged for at least a prima facie pro and con discussion. There were eighteen articles yet to come, which should have meant nine on each side. But the *Daily News* had had enough, and the whole of the remaining articles were by believers in a future life. The reason for this could not have been a dearth of disbelievers. Mr. Robertson was there all the time. And I may add that I, who, as President of the National Secular Society and Editor of the only Freethinking weekly in the country, have as great a right as anyone in Britain to speak as representa-

tive of Militant Freethought, was also there. There were representatives of Buddhism and of Positivism in the country. None of these were asked. And, if anyone doubts the real purpose of the discussion, I may refer them to an article from the pen of the responsible Editor of the "Great Debate," who summing up the discussion, triumphantly reported that all except three were in favour of the truth of a future life. Wonderful! Twenty-four writers are invited to send in a contribution on the subject of a Future Life. It is known that twenty-one are believers. They were invited because they were believers. And at the end, the chairman declares that the ayes have it. I do not remember that so complete a display of trickery has been given in a public newspaper for some time. Others have been content to exclude and to say nothing. The *Daily News* excludes and then cries there is no one present. The Editor must feel very certain of the Christian character of his readers.

* * *

Loading the Dice.

Here is a list of the contributors to the "Great Debate":—

Bishop Knox	G. K. Chester-	Arnold Bennet
Canon Hannay	ton	Julian Huxley
Rev. H. Town-	Sir Oliver Lodge	Sir Arthur Keith
send	Hillaire Belloc	
Rev. R. H.	Hugh Walpole	
Shepherd	H. J. Spooner	
Rev. J. P.	Conan Doyle	
Arendzen	Lord Gorrell	
Rev. T. Rhondda	J. A. Spender	
Williams	Lady Southwark	
Rev. E. S.	Lloyd George	
Waterhouse	Robert Blatch-	
Rev. R. J.	ford	
Campbell	R. T. Glover	
	Robert Lynd	

There they are! Eight clergymen, thirteen pronounced believers, and three non-believers of a kind. The ayes have it. Why, certainly. They had it before the discussion commenced. The *Daily News* says that the charge brought by the *Freethinker* is baseless, and that probably Sir Arthur Keith, Professor Julian Huxley, and Mr. Bernard Shaw represent "freedom of thought in its fullest sense." That adds duplicity to the offence. I would not, of course, question that Mr. Shaw, Professor Huxley, and Sir Arthur Keith are quite entitled to the description of Freethinkers in the academic sense of the word. But the *Daily News* must know that when we speak of Freethinkers in relation to an attack on Christian belief, a very definite and quite well known frame of mind is indicated. And Mr. Shaw was not a contributor to the series of articles. His communication appeared in the form of a letter, and was printed quite apart from the set of articles.

I shall, later, have to examine the contributions of Mr. Arnold Bennet and Professor Huxley in detail, but it may be pointed out now that Professor Huxley stultifies whatever criticism he has to offer by stating that his own opinion is in favour of the hypothesis:—

Just as every scrap of material energy is never lost . . . so spiritual or mental activity is not lost, but all of it returns, in some way not yet understood, to a pool or store of spiritual reality, which is the non-material counterpart of energy.

Beyond pointing out that the analogy is so far misleading that it begs the whole point at issue by ignoring the transformation of energy everywhere going on, I may leave him for the time. Mr. Arnold Bennet may also be left for the moment. He gets hopelessly and splendidly confused by talking about the impossibility of conceiving annihilation, which is

really not the point at issue here more than in other connexions, and declaims that:—

Atoms are indestructibly alive . . . Nothing can be destroyed—no quality of mind, no beauty, no kindness.

He might with equal cogency have confined his contribution to putting the multiplication table into poetical metre. If people can forever be fooled by this kind of thing, then the education of the human race would appear to be a hopeless task. Only one is inclined to ask whether people who can be so easily fooled are worth the trouble of catching.

* * *

How it is Done.

It will be noted that no one who might have given a critical analysis of the belief in a future life, traced its history, shown its origin, and exhibited its disastrous consequences on civilization, was invited to contribute. I again leave out of sight Mr. Robertson, as it was the action of the *Freethinker* that forced him in. Without that he would have been kept out. The object of the "Great Debate" was plain. A letter appears asking a question about a Future Life. The letter may or may not have been arranged for, but the writer of that also was a believer. Then believers are asked to write, parsons are informed that extracts from sermons they give on the topic will be published in the *Daily News*, and, as most parsons are hungering for publicity, there is an avalanche of sermons. Finally, there is the triumphant parade of the selected letters and articles as evidence that the overwhelming weight of opinion is in favour of a future life. What a game!

The *Daily News* says it published the letters of Freethinkers in proportion to the number received. This may be correct if it is using the word as connoting men like Arnold Bennet and Professor Huxley, but if in relation to those who definitely disbelieve in a future life, then, candidly, I doubt it. It is also amazed at the brilliancy of the articles and the intelligence displayed in the letters. It is quite a pity that some of these very intelligent letters were not published. There were scores of letters saying that the Bible had settled the question, once for all; others, that the revelation of Jesus Christ had settled the matter; but these can hardly be called of a very high philosophic quality. And the ability of the editor to give an opinion on the philosophic character of the discussion may be gauged by his remark that the burden of proof is now thrown upon the materialist. The believer in a future life asserts the existence of a "soul" within the body. The scientist can discover no such existence, he can find no use for it, he sees no need for assuming it. And then the believer tells him it is his duty to prove that no such thing exists! Which leaves one wondering by what method does one prove the non-existence of something that does not exist; and secondly, what kind of an intelligence is it which imagines that this can be done?

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be continued.)

I also am a Freethinker, that is to say, a rebel against all the dogmas that the fear of death has induced man to invent; but I bear no malice against Churches, be they Catholic, Apostolic, Roman, Protestant, Russian, Greek, Buddhist, Jew or Mussulman. Besides, I have a way of looking at them and explaining them. A church, I say, is a piece of homage to the unknown. Now the more knowledge increases, and the more the unknown diminishes, the less need there is for churches.

Uncle Sosthène—Guy de Maupassant.

The Big Bluff of the Bishops.

"The services of the clergy are imaginary, and their payment should be of the same description."

George Foote.

"The Bible is like a nose of wax; it can be twisted into any shape."—*Martin Luther.*

"Freedom is the life-blood of Science."

Oliver Lodge.

THROUGH the action of Parliament the big bluff of the Bench of Bishops to obtain Parliamentary, and, apparently, national, sanction for a new Book of Common Prayer, incorporating Papist ideas, has failed. This is all to the good, for the priests of the English State Church still influence certain sections of the population, and, owing to the tacit support of successive Governments, still have a monstrous and undue control of national education. Whilst State priests have been checked in their endeavour to revive medieval superstitions which preceded the Protestant Reformation, it is well to recall what is actually being taught by these priests. For the whole matter concerns the State Church of this country, and it raises a constitutional instead of a mere ecclesiastical issue.

The present Book of Common Prayer, sanctioned by the Act of Uniformity of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, is far too often accepted blindly without criticism. It may be more Protestant in tone than the proposed new volume, but it is still open to many grave intellectual objections. Truth to tell, both books form a choice of evils. But the difference is like to a mild or severe attack of disease. The more advanced a man's ideas are the less he will like the tone of the prayer-book actually in use to-day.

Although sanctioned by Parliament in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, this Prayer Book even then contained much that was ancient ignorance. Shakespeare, a contemporary dramatist, gained popular applause by portraying the equality of the sexes, but the Book of Common Prayer emphasized the lowly Eastern position of woman, and regarded her as the weaker vessel. In this matter, even in the "spacious days of great Elizabeth," the priests were relying on Oriental ecclesiastical tradition and not following the best thought of their age. And to-day, three centuries later, the State priests are still keeping their putrescent superstitions in cold storage, and still teaching the inferiority of woman. This would be bad enough if it meant that 25,000 priests were engaged in the sorry trade of putting the clock back, but when it is realized that all this is done in the name of the State Church of a civilized people, what can be said in printable language?

As the priests were hopelessly wrong concerning the position of woman, so were they as mistaken concerning Royalty. The lick-spittle flunkeyism of the dedication of the Authorized Version of the Christian Bible to King James the First ought to make a civilized man rub his eyes. There have been kings who have also been rulers, but that this padded and half-forgotten buffoon should have been selected for the most fulsome address ever written is a rare jest. The sacred compilers of the Book of Common Prayer had as great an inferiority complex as the translators of the Christian Bible, and they not only carried on the bad tradition of their predecessors, but they out-toadied the earlier toadies. Not content with addressing the monarch as if he were Jove upon high Olympus, they must need include prayers for individual members of the Royal Family. They only made one little reservation. Those reserved for divine favour had to be born "on the right side of the blanket."

The waters of time slip silently away. Monarchs

are cheaper in the world's bargain sales to-day than they were in the days of great Eliza and the Spanish Armada. It makes no difference to the priests. Kings are "god-anointed" folks, and the anointing is done by the priests, for a consideration. King and priest must hang together, or, perchance, they may hang separately. The old, bad Oriental view of Royalty must be repeated with the reiteration of a gramophone till the end of all things.

As for the working-class, beyond the use of a few sonorous phrases, which cost nothing, the priests have no use for them in their Prayer Book. During the past three centuries this class has attained political consciousness, and is on the road to real power, but to the thousands of priests they only count in so far as they contribute to their Church's alms-dishes. Even in the Church of England hymn-book there is only one hymn devoted to the working-classes. I blush to transcribe the balderdash:—

"Sons of Labour think of Jesus
As you rest your homes within,
Think of that sweet Babe of Mary
In the stable of the inn.
Think, how, in the sacred story
Jesus took a humble grade,
And the Lord of Life and Glory
Worked with Joseph at his trade."

The Thirty-nine Articles of Religion of this State Church are as out of date as the ancient Oriental dresses of its bishops. These articles make the most curious reading in the twentieth century. They include the belief that a spirit can be at the same time a father and a son, and also proceed from itself as a ghost. They teach that Adam was the first human being, and that he ate forbidden fruit, in consequence of which countless millions are condemned to everlasting torture. They teach that the Roman Catholic Religion is the vain invention of man; that the Christian Bible is the only word of the Almighty God; and that King George the Fifth is the head of the one and only Church of Christ.

Being a State Church, the ecclesiastical canons are still in force legally, except they conflict with the law of the land, and the Law Courts have actually decided that they are binding on the Anglican priests, of whom there are 25,000. The first dozen of these canons are aimed at Nonconformists, and all but one ends with a curse, a distinguishing mark of vital, and not decadent, Christianity. If you deny the royal supremacy in Church affairs, you are cursed. If you deny that this State Church teaches the pure, unadulterated doctrine of Christ, you are cursed. If you say that the Book of Common Prayer is out of harmony with the Protestant Version of the Christian Bible, you are cursed. And so on, and so forth, in the true spirit of Christian charity. But that the law of the land overrides these ecclesiastical canons, everybody who refused to attend Church would be cursed, and the names read out in churches.

The whole thing is as hopelessly out of date as the Tower of London. It is a grievous and a bitter thing that boys and girls, silly women, and ignorant people, should be taught such awful nonsense in language which leads them to believe, and is craftily calculated to that end, that millions of their own countrymen are outcast. It is an affront to the spirit of Democracy. No wonder the churches are emptying of real men and women. It would be good if the Church schools were emptying as fast of boys and girls. Until Democrats unite and throw the priest out of educational matters, so long will this country be tyrannized over by a clerical caste. Parsons claim to be sacred persons, and the State, unhappily, supports them. Millions of money are wasted on priests and their mummeries, on creatures who are, to all intent

and purpose, no more civilized than the black medicine-men of Africa. Citizens of a really civilized nation should not kneel before other men; it is an open confession of servitude and inferiority.

A tale is told of a man who approached a comfortable old citizen and asked for alms. "You want help, a strong able-bodied chap like you? Have you no relations or friends who can support you?" "The only relative I have is a brother at the University" Well, if your brother is at the University, why doesn't he help you?" "Well, sir, you see he can't do it. He's in a big bottle in the museum." Priests cannot help the modern man. It is high time they were relegated to the antiquities in the museums, among the sarcophagi of the Bluebeards of old Babylon. For they are drawing their Sunday salaries by false pretences.

MIMNERMUS.

Freethought and Politics.

(A Paper Presented to the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society.)

"And when the mind is quicken'd, out of doubt,
The organs, though defunct and dead before,
Break up their drowsy grave, and newly move
With casted slough and fresh legerity."

PERIODICALLY in Secularist circles the question of Freethought and Politics arises, and is the cause of considerable discussion—with some variety of opinion. At the present time there are clear evidences of re-awakened interest in Freethought; and a gratifying number of intelligent young recruits is coming in. It may be useful, therefore, again to review this matter. Freethinkers—above all others—are always prepared rationally to re-consider their principles, their policy and their attitude to other movements and other parties. The fact that we find, so seldom, any reason for change in principles, policy, or attitude, may be set down to our first stand and statement having been made under the guidance of rational philosophy—*i.e.*, of Secularism.

There is another reason why this review is appropriate at the present time. We have achieved great victories, and have seen great progress made, in our fight of Freethought against authority, reason against faith, knowledge against superstition. Yet never—in my opinion—was there more need for a militant Freethought movement than there is to-day. An enemy who is in retreat and who fears disaster—which is true of the Christian Churches—may be a very dangerous enemy indeed, and even more unscrupulous than heretofore. Moreover, it is not only in regard to the Christian forms and forces of religion, it is not only in regard to the other forms and forces of religion in Britain and the World, that we have to fight for free inquiry, reason, and knowledge, against dumb obedience to dictatorial authority, unreasoned deaf faith, and blind superstition. These retrogressive influences are active in other spheres as well. In medicine, law, journalism, sociology, economics, and—above all—in politics, we can note the existence of those evils which have been pre-eminent in the Christian Churches—and in other Churches too. *There*, is the justification for our ceaseless—but rational—activity. George Meredith coined a famous phrase when he styled the Freethought Movement, "the best of all causes": and, when Geo. Bernard Shaw wrote that "the Freethinker does work that no one else can do," he penned another sentence that will live. The question is, in doing that work, is our method the best possible; or, should we take another line—so far as politics is concerned?

First of all, let us clean up two preliminary points. In raising this matter of political activity, I am not

referring to the activities of individual Freethinkers—as individuals—in one, or any, of the various political parties in Great Britain. Freethinkers—as good citizens—probably take a more active interest in politics, in legislative and administrative work, than most. Their efforts ought to be more useful. That is as it should be; and it goes without saying.

Nor am I thinking of the N.S.S.—as the premier organized body of Freethinkers in Great Britain—taking part in some particular political struggle. It might, or may, well be that, in some vital question in which we have special interest, we should do so. The political situation in regard to many matters might be such that Freethinkers, *as an organized body*, might take an active part in conjunction with some political party or parties. Disestablishment, secular education, rating and taxing of religious buildings, free speech, free press, international peace and arbitration, are only a very few of the many issues in public affairs in connexion with which Freethinkers have a special right to state their case and to join in the fight. If and how that should be done must be decided by the N.S.S., according to the circumstances of the case. Thus, these two objections can be put aside.

When this question of Freethought and politics is mooted, it is "party politics" that is in view. The suggestion is that we should act with some political party—generally one particular political party; or that, at least, we should express approval of, and agreement with, the policy and programme of one party. That we have declined, and still decline, to do. In that, we are wise; and, to justify our policy, many good reasons could be adduced. To propound some of the most important proofs is the purpose of this paper.

Let us take the most important first. That is the need for the main, straight, and direct, attack upon all the forms and forces of Christian superstition in this country. There are estimated to be at least 50,000 paid officials of Christianity, whose business it is to uphold and spread—if possible—the superstitions upon which they thrive. It is, to-day, a nasty business. It is conducted only at the expense of logical and political consistency; and, apparently, in this religious trade, intellectual sincerity or mental honesty is ignored. Of this trade, the "wages" is *not* death—not even premature death—for these tradesmen in a sorry trade enjoy a longer earthly life than the average. Their "wages" vary from the £15,000 of Canterbury and £10,000 of York, down to the much smaller sums paid to the curate and the little minister; and the former class will not "lend without hope of reward" to their poorer brethren. Even these last get more than a miner, a textile worker, or a Clyde engineer—and they have a much softer job, with "prospects" unknown to the useful—but suffering—workers in coal, cotton, and iron. Their business methods vary from the wriggling, twisting, mental-wangling, obfuscating, dodges of the modernist Christians down—or up—to the bad old barbaric blood, hell-fire, bible, and holy ghost, of the fundamentalists.

Journals by the score—weekly and monthly—are devoted to the evil cause of maintaining superstition's sway. In the ordinary press, religion and intellectual retrogression have space and opportunities denied to Freethinkers and rational thought. The denominational schools of the Anglican section, of the largest Nonconformist Church, and of the Roman Catholic section (which are often poor from an educational point of view) still receive financial support from public funds—which is absurd, as well as unjust. In the State schools, that bad old book, the Bible, is retained in use as a hindrance to education; and that

evil is due to the mentally-dishonest compromise connived at by the Protestant Nonconformist sections. In a great many other ways in public life, Christian superstition still exercises much influence. Last—but by no means least—these Christian forces own, control, and utilize wealth amounting to millions of pounds sterling.

Against these immense powers of evil, mental darkness, and re-action, we have the N.S.S. and the *Freethinker*, along with our younger friends of the R.P.A. and *Literary Guide*. Yet, up to date, we have been steadily victorious in the fight! "We few, we happy few." When we survey the promising position to-day for us, but in face of the great power still held by the enemy, we should be stirred to a constant courage to be worthy of our predecessors. "Progress is only possible through liberty, which is at once a right and a duty." Standing and striving for that—as do the N.S.S. and the *Freethinker*—we are doing a work that needs doing; and which no one else appears particularly to be concerned about. It is truly well worth doing; but it is a "whole time job." We are wise—as the premier organized body of Freethinkers in Great Britain—in devoting ourselves entirely to it.

The time at my disposal does not permit one to cover all the ground; still some of the secondary—but important—reasons for our non-party political position may be sketched briefly. In British party politics, all but the oldest party have been secularized—nominally at least. That oldest party still retains "God" as a member, or part-time member—and as a political asset. As for "God" in the other political parties, it has been eliminated; although the elimination may be ignored often enough. So soon as Roman Catholics, Mormons, Christian Scientists, Jews Mussulmans, Parsees, Hindus, Buddhists, and Atheists, are free to equal membership in a political party, and to be elected to Parliament; then that party has become—in form—a secular party organized for secular purposes. Religion becomes a private and personal concern. "God" may be kept for consumption in the home; but it may not be used—officially—in the House! That advance is—in itself—a gain for our principles. These parties, representing interests rather than principles or ideals, carry on their struggles without reference to "God." Apart from physical force or revolution—and some at both party-political extremes favour that—they argue for their interests, guided by reason and knowledge (defective, it may be) not by religion. In advocating the nationalizing of the Bank of England, and the running of it for the common good under a Board of Control, or in proposing the nationalizing of the coal industry in a similar way for the same purpose, no reference is made—as a party—to "God," "God's" will, or religion. Whether the project be right or wrong, wise or foolish, is of no matter here. The struggle for the achievement is based on reason and knowledge, and utility is the guide. That is, in effect, practical atheism. It is a big step forward in the secularizing of life.

Another aspect is that political parties—the youngest as well as the oldest—offer glittering prizes to the swift, the strong—and often to the unscrupulous. The more the power, the more the prizes and the greater the glitter. It may be quite laudable to strive for these prizes within party politics; but the nature of the struggle, and the types of swiftness and strength which count in that struggle, are not likely to help towards that "logical consistency and intellectual sincerity" which constitute the ideal of the *Freethinker*, and still more of the Freethought Movement. Our Movement has never offered such glitter-

ing prizes: we hope it never will. 'Tis true indeed that the philosophic materialist is often the greatest idealist in life—as witness, Charles Bradlaugh; while the Philosophic (religious) idealist is, as often, grossly material—as is proved by the lives of any number of Christians. Oft do we find that the idealist in belief is attracted most by the miracle of the loaves and fishes.

In a political or nominal democracy, a political party—to attain its ends—*must* obtain votes. When the objective aimed at is "good" this is quite as true as when it may be "bad." Under such conditions, political leaders would be false to their party—and would soon lose their leadership—if they did not do all that could be done to obtain the necessary votes. There is the inevitable tendency to go out to get votes, honestly if you can, but—get 'em. It was Blucher (was it not?) who is said to have said—when he saw London: "What a city to sack!" In much the same way, I can conceive a political party leader surveying the great body of Protestants or Roman Catholics or Nonconformists, and saying: "What a voting power to exploit!" For a "good" purpose, in a nominal democracy, such a line of campaign *may* be quite justifiable. Freethinkers—as individuals—in a political party may join in such a campaign. Still, here, once more, I think we shall be unanimous in determining that the Freethought Movement can do its work best *outside* the field of party politics.

Democracy—in the widest and fullest sense—means that every man and woman thinks and decides on every question in the light of reason and knowledge. That implies—as a primary fundamental essential—mental freedom. Therefore, in conclusion, the Freethought Movement, outside party politics, is doing educational work that is vitally necessary if the aspirations of good politicians are ever to be realized. "We strive to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people." In that Freethought work, we are inspired only by the greatest and grandest of mottoes—"La verité oblige."

ATHOS ZENO.

Unto God the Things that are God's.

Do you know, Cap'n,
How evil things happen?—
Aye, surely I do,
And so do you, too.

Tell me this, Cap'n,
Where did it happen?—
Behind yon ruined tower
I plucked that lovely flower.

Tell me more, Cap'n,
When did this happen?—
In the twilight hour
I plucked that wild flower.

Why did this thing happen?
Tell me, tell me, Cap'n!—
Ask God, if you can,
Why He made me a man;
Why He made her a maid
That was not afraid;
Why He made the two sexes,
The world so perplexed:
What more can I say?
It happened that way,
And the woman must pay.

BAVARD SIMMONS.

Freethought Flashes.

I often wonder how the expression "damned fool" came into use. And what is a "damned fool" like? Most of the fools I have come across appeared to be quite sure they were "saved." Their cheerful imbecility was quite impressive.

The objection to drastic criticism of religious beliefs because it hurts the feeling of believers, illustrates one of the main evils which religion develops, and which ought to be destroyed. A man is no more justified in feeling hurt because another declares his opinions to be wrong on religion, than he has to feel hurt because someone disagrees with his political opinions. It is not a virtue to be respected, but a vice to be eradicated. The only valid reason for not openly disagreeing with another's opinions is that he is so far undeveloped mentally, or so deranged, that one must be silent in his presence as one would have to avoid wearing a certain colour in the presence of an incipient lunatic who would be roused to frenzy by the sight of it.

Why should a clergyman trouble himself about the truth? It is not his job to seek it or to speak it. He is paid to preach certain doctrines—and is the paid advocate of a brief that has been drawn up for him before he was born. He is not appointed to find out what is true, but to preach to others what this or that Church decides ought to be accepted as a substitute for genuine truth.

The very worst aspect of eternal life is that it is eternal. Imagine having to live for ever in the company of a Billy Sunday! The only apology nature can make for bringing such a person into existence is the guarantee that he will pass out again.

For that reason one may think of God Almighty breathing a sigh of satisfaction every time he sees a batch of souls making for the lower regions.

I have every sympathy with those Christian missionaries who go out to China, and then complain that the natives treat them unkindly. It is not what they have a right to expect. For the Chinese are without a sacred Bible which tells them "If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom . . . entice thee saying, let us go and serve other gods . . . thou shalt surely kill him, thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death." How could any missionary tell that a people without a Bible would act just as though God had given *them* a revelation? The Chinese are taking advantage of the innocence of Christians, and we are not surprised that the missionaries demand that the Government shall take the matter in hand. People have no right to behave as though they were Christians before they believe in the Christian religion.

Ignorance is the mother of devotion, midwife to the gods, and watches with jealous devotion those whom she has brought into being.

When a man says that having been brought into existence he has a right to remain in existence for ever, it looks as though he is denying nature's right to correct any of its blunders.

It would not be a bad retort to some of the more fanatical teetotallers to point out that the jackass is a perfectly sober animal. Something more than sobriety in drink is required to make life worth living.

Acid Drops.

From a letter in the *Daily News* from one of its very Christian readers:—

"Voltaire, in his book *The Age of Reason*, never denied the existence of a God."

We beg to point out that the *Age of Reason* was written by the Bishop of London. Voltaire was the author of "Rock of Ages," which he wrote immediately after his conversion to Wesleyan Methodism, and as an expression of regret for having written articles for the *Freethinker*.

Another Christian letter writer who puts in a plea for trust in the "Master Intelligence, whose existence we cannot deny," asks, concerning the evolutionary process:—

Why all the toil, all the straining and striving, through misery and blood and tears?

But, consider, the evolutionary process has produced Billy Sunday, and General Booth, Gipsy Smith, etc. Does not that justify the misery and blood and tears? Could any price be too great to pay for such products? We fancy the "Master Intelligence" has a better sense of values than has this writer.

A short time ago the Rev. R. R. Jones, pastor of Bethesda Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, at Festiniog, fell dead in Twrywyn Chapel, Bangor, while singing with the congregation the last words of the hymn, "Let not evil cast me down." This is not an instance of answer to prayer.

Forty Christian students from various universities are to make a mass attack on Nottingham in September. Just to make the Lord's work a little harder, and therefore more meritorious, we suggest that Freethinkers in the district prepare some counter-irritant to the pious poison.

Referring to the Shops (Sunday Trading Restrictions) Bill, the *Sunday School Chronicle* remarks that whatever reasonable facilities are necessary for meeting the problem of distributing food and so forth on Sundays, it is obvious that the greater number of shops and markets are open in response to a thoughtless demand on the part of people who, even if they have no religious convictions regarding the use of Sunday, would at least respond to an appeal based upon consideration of the human needs of shop-keepers and assistants. Our pious contemporary seems greatly concerned about the "human needs" of business people. If a clause were added to the Bill providing an optional closing day, we wonder if our friend and the parsons would be prepared to support the Bill. If the Labour Party was not so afraid of offending pious voters, it would have tried to get such a clause added long ago.

The Rev. H. C. Carter, in a Sunday school paper, says:—

The teaching of some Church or sect may produce sober and industrious people, but it may be that their sobriety and industry are of a selfish kind, based on the fear of saving their own souls from torment, or in the hope of winning a mansion in the skies for themselves, and so may not be really good.

True; but it will be entirely Christian. For, the great inducement to accept Christianity is that there are available heavenly rewards for right conduct, and hellish penalties for bad. One's life here, say Christian apologists, would be meaningless if there was no hereafter with compensational sugar-plums for being good. So the religionist cannot dispense with his selfish motive. It is a fundamental of his creed. He may argue that he does what is right merely to please God. But a Heavenly Father, as well as an earthly father, must have some means of showing his pleasure or displeasure.

Mr. Carter, in trying to explain how "Christ-like" characters may manifest themselves outside the Church, declares that these are the fruit of earlier Christian training. But he adds, that if such Christian influence cannot be traced, Christians should not suspect that this goodness is not quite the real thing, but suspect that the Christian "vision of the Church is not big enough." Well, as there are many good and noble characters outside the Church that owe nothing to Christian influence, we may presume the "vision" is not big enough. In which case, reform is clearly indicated. But the curious thing about such reform would be that the standard to which the "vision" is to work would be a non-Christian standard! For obviously the present "vision" is the best the cream of the Christians have been able to visualize.

We judge by an advertisement of the National Sunday School Union, that the modern Sunday school is "soft." The advertisement says "Chairs give scholars comfort in Sunday school. Comfort increases attention. Try chairs in your school." Shades of St. Simon Stylites! There is nothing of the ascetic expected from the modern young Christian. What about another advertisement: "Try cushions in your school. They stop squirming and wriggling. Padding induces reverential attention."

A reader of a daily paper complains that on attempting to enter a village church the other Sunday, he found the door locked, the service being finished. He thereupon went into a pub next door and had a glass of beer. We daresay he didn't lose anything by substituting pub for church. After all, God is everywhere, according to the parsons. And our disappointed friend should be able to find the Holy One in a pint pot as easily as in a church. All things are possible to a true believer earnestly striving to tune in with the Infinite.

Radio, says an "Ordinary Listener," is one medium that will help the clergy enormously in their work of bringing people to Jesus Christ. Our ordinary and pious friend is forgetting that it is not the B.B.C.'s job to broadcast lop-sided propaganda in the interests of one particular vested interest—the Christian Church. The Corporation needs reminding that its income is drawn from listeners holding every conceivable opinion about the Christian religion.

At a time when everybody is taxed to the eyebrows to pay for the largest and stupidest war in history, and when a million and a quarter British people cannot get work, it is worth noting that the Church authorities in Wales are concerned about the grievous state of disrepair of local churchyards. The authorities deem it a "grave scandal" that nobody is responsible for the upkeep of the churchyards. We should say it is the Church authorities who are responsible, seeing that burial and priestly fees are charged for every interment. But apparently an effort is to be made to get the public to shoulder the ecclesiastical burden.

Councillor J. Hawnt has learnt the parsons' patter off by heart. He told a Sheffield Sunday School Union gathering that "if you have not the development of spiritual life among your young people, you will not have a healthy society in spite of education." For our part, we believe that society cannot be healthy when the minds of the young have been "developed" by means of religious dogmas.

At a luncheon to welcome Dr. Chas. Clayton Morrison, editor of the *Christian Century*, of Chicago, Viscount Cecil said (apropos of the outlawry of war): "Nature abhors a vacuum, and if you take away war you must put something in its place." Well, how would a few nice religious squabbles do as a substitute, after the manner of the Prayer Book dog fight? These could provide vent for the national pugnacity, and exercise for inborn religious instincts.

A reviewer of *Life in Shakespeare's England*, by Dr. Dover Wilson, mentions that the author states that the subject of religion is deliberately omitted from the book because he is illustrating Shakespeare's, not Elizabeth's England, and "the omission is Shakespeare's." We will add that the omission is a significant one. Shakespeare was a Freethinker, as G. W. Foote pointed out years ago. The spacious mind of Shakespeare ranged over the whole of life, but found nothing in either the Christian religion or the Church worth eulogizing. That was the acute judgment of one of the world's greatest intellects.

At a resumed inquest on the child killed by a fall of the ceiling at the Wesleyan Central Hall, a verdict of "accidental death" was recorded. The Coroner said that no one could be blamed for the fatality. In other words, it was an "act of God," we presume. As "Thou shalt commit no murder," doesn't apply to a God, Christians can continue worshipping.

Says the Rev. P. H. Hinds, "Vicars are human like everyone else." Having been assured that clerics are divinely inspired and are in direct communication with God, we think the rev. gentleman is asking us to believe rather more than is credible.

A Barnstaple reader of *Radio Times* suggests that nine-tenths of wireless listeners are persons who work long hours and have a very limited time to listen. On an average the time available to them would only include Sundays and week-nights, from 8 to 10 p.m. That is probable. What is improbable is that four-fifths of such persons (who, by the way, never go to a church) are satisfied the B.B.C.'s Sunday fare, and lack of fare during church hours.

We have received a circular issued by the Irish Vigilance Association, which is obviously a religious body, or it might show a little more regard for the truth. It is demanding that the Irish (Free State) Government stop the importation of certain weekly papers from this country. Amongst them it refers to one—no information given as to name—which shows a total disregard to the laws of God and the Church, which advocates "gross immorality"—no further information given. It also gives the information that the Government will shortly bring in a Bill which will suppress these papers. Well, well, we don't know this paper which advocates gross immorality, but we do know the Catholic Church, and we should say that the description of the paper is a good, healthy Christian lie. But we do not expect that other Christians will think the worse of it on that account.

"I cannot," says Sir William Joynson Hicks, "leave Hyde Park alone. If I did so it would be a disgrace to civilization within a fortnight." Now that is what we call a magnificent tribute to the civilizing and moralizing influence exerted by Christianity. We wonder what "Jix" would have said had he been upon a Christian platform dealing with a non-Christian Society, of which a similar statement was made? But we need not wonder long. He would have pointed out that with these people unblessed by the Bible and the "glorious gospel," morals were so bad that the finest site in their chief city could only be kept tolerably clean by employing a number of officials disguised as ordinary citizens prowling round to detect men and women committing offences. "Jix" appears to forget that he is dealing with a society controlled by Christians, ruled by a House of Commons that can lash itself into a furore of enthusiasm over the right or the wrong way to offer up prayers, a society that for many hundreds of years has been dominated by Christianity. And, as a consequence, unless kept under close observation, the people so reared would, within a fortnight, be a disgrace to civilization!

We are waiting to see the Report of the Committee on the Savidge case, before dealing with the present position of the police and the public, but we observe that no one has noted the peculiarly distasteful business of keeping a number of men prowling round, disguised, in order to discover offences. There may be cases, there probably are, where some kind of spying is inevitable, but we do not believe that this kind of thing can be indulged in for long in civil life, without it having a demoralizing effect on all concerned. In the main, perhaps the sole purpose of such spying is not to prevent, but to detect, and the spy's usefulness is measured by the number of detections he registers. Where that leads to it is not difficult to imagine. But the occupation itself is a poor one, and we are convinced that its consequence is to, on the one hand, diminish the self-respect of those engaged in it, and to attract a poorer and meaner type of character to the work. If an increase in the police force is demanded, let it be increased, and let their presence be plain and unmistakable. But it is, after all, a quite Christian conception that morality can be manufactured and preserved by a police force. That is not more than a translation into action of the function of God Almighty in keeping people decent. Men who can ask what would become of morality if there were no God to reward and punish, may well ask what will become of decency in Hyde Park, unless a number of spies are kept busy watching that Christians do not misbehave themselves. And the Home Secretary may well exclaim, "Thank God England is still Protestant."

The Bristol Sunday School Union recently passed a resolution requesting the National Sunday School Union to call upon the various Christian denominations to make definite and unequivocal pronouncement that "war is not Christian." The Bristol and District Baptist Association has also passed a resolution repudiating war, and pronouncing it to be "anti-Christian." A reader of a religious weekly quotes these resolutions and says that, surely if war is not Christian it should not be engaged in by Christians. If war is not Christian now, it was not Christian fourteen years ago. He adds: "Is it possible that while future wars are not Christian, the past war was Christian? What does it all mean?" We suggest he should address his queries to Mr. Lloyd George, who has just discovered that it was not the Atheist and the infidel who made the last war. Meanwhile, we should advise our troubled friend not to worry about whether war is or was Christian or anti-Christian, but to ask himself whether it is anti-social and anti-commonsense.

The agitation for the introduction of the Bible into New Zealand schools is as active as ever, and a determined effort is being made to meet Roman Catholic claims so that this can be done. The fact that Secular Education has been established in New Zealand is proof that while Christians are in the majority, the only time they will act with justice and common sense is when they cannot agree among themselves as to sharing the public plunder. If they could agree to put religion on the rates in education, all Christians would be glad to do so, but each sect wishes to knock the other out, and the old maxim that when rogues fall out honest men get their dues receives exemplification.

But the people of New Zealand must be a very bad lot—that is, if the report of the speeches made at a meeting of the Bible in the Schools League, held at Auckland, is to be trusted. For one of the leading speakers said that if there was no sense of responsibility to a supreme Being there was no power in them to fight against the degrading tendencies of their own nature. Now we are sincerely sorry to learn that the people of New Zealand are so full of degrading tendencies that they need a heavenly policeman to make them behave with some regard for ordinary decency. Let us hope that it is not as bad as it seems. But perhaps the speaker was only speaking for the Christian audience he was addressing. He knows what they do with a heavenly police-

man, and wonders what on earth they will be like if that guardian is withdrawn. So far as Freethinkers are concerned the warning is quite unnecessary. They do not feel full of degrading tendencies, and do not need a policeman to be always watching them.

A great concern to all who believe in the coming of God's Kingdom on earth, says a religious weekly, is that of education in the schools. There is need for strenuous research into the methods and aims of modern education, and for a real and effective deliverance from all that is external, unideal, and purposeless. The question must be asked whether most of the schools are denying the coming of the Kingdom through the stress of competitive and selfish materialism. There is, we are told, the whole field of Scriptures teaching to be explored, and great possibilities in other subjects, especially history, for the advancement of God's Kingdom. Evidently our pious contemporary is anxious to exploit the nation's schools still further in the interests of the Churches. Freethinkers will be advised to watch the manœuvres of the Churches in this direction.

Twenty-five parishes in Berkshire need playing-fields for the children. As the Ecclesiastical Commissioners specialize in dispensing other people's charity, we suggest the Commissioners should make the children a present of suitable fields.

Dr. R. J. Campbell quotes Dean Inge as saying: "It is only those who half-envy the wicked who want to roast them." Since they neither believe nor want the wicked to roast in Hell, Freethinkers are not open to be suspected of half-envy. That is a spiritual enjoyment they can leave entirely to primitive-minded Christians.

Morcambe Council has again banned tennis, bowls, and boating on Sundays. Prospective visitors who do not share the narrow views of Morecambe's Councillors should go elsewhere for their holidays, and persuade their friends to do likewise.

In *The Freedom of God*, the principal of Baptist College, Manchester, declares that "many who have denounced the critics are unable to answer them adequately because they have never worked hard enough at the Bible for themselves. The Bible has nothing to fear from criticism, whereas we are seeing that there is much to fear in modern life, because our interpretation of the Bible is not winning the intellectual respect of men." Obviously, then, the eternal verities of Christian teaching need painting, gilding, and general re-decorating—that is, re-interpretation—if the Churches are to retain clients. But we fear this manœuvre will not enable the Churches to win the intellectual respect of intelligent men. If God wishes to save the Churches he will have to present them with a new Bible, a fresh revelation, with all the crudities, obscurities, and contradictions of the old left out.

A Hint for the Week.

The "Daily News" has called attention to the belief in a future life. For several weeks we are following suit. The "Freethinker" is the only paper in this country that will criticize the "Daily News" writers at any length, and inquiring Christians will have no other opportunity of seeing a strong criticism of this fundamental religious belief. A few pence expended in circulating an extra copy or two of these issues may do much good.

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.—J. Sanders-Bates, £1 1s.; E. L. Bishop, 2s. 6d.; E. A. Kemp, 2s. 6d.

A. JACKSON.—The notice will stand until different arrangements are made. Copies of the *Freethinker* for distribution may also be had as required.

A. F. MCINTYRE.—We are always obliged for addresses to which the *Freethinker* may be sent. Have attended to the matter.

S. SAMSON.—Mr. Cohen's *Other Side of Death* does far more than criticize the belief in a future life. It explains it, its origin, the way in which the social feelings have been exploited in the interests of the belief, and shows the main machinery of Spiritualism. Your friend could never have read the book, and is just drawing a bow at a venture. We should very much like to see a reasoned criticism of the work.

T. W. HAUGHTON.—Pleased to hear from you again and to know that you are well. The priest is the same all over the world, no matter what the particular brand may happen to be. What they want in the schools is to see that children receive the brand of this or that sect while they are too young to protest. The talk of the desire of the parent is humbug, it is the priest behind the parent.

C. P. BUDGE.—Thanks. Papers will be sent from the issue for July 8.

T. MCCRAE.—We are quite satisfied with what has been done. It is something to have forced the *Daily News* to practically confess its unfairness. It may mend its manners on another occasion. One day it will admit that Freethought—real Freethought—is a fighting force in the world.

W. W. HARDWICKE.—We are obliged for little book. It is a comment on the quality of our culture to find such things printed and circulated.

MRS. J. WRIGHT.—We quite appreciate the annoyance of one living far from any town, and who is, on Sunday evening, compelled to cease using the wireless or listen to the "piffle" from wireless parsons. But you must never expect fair treatment from Christians where their religion is concerned.

J. C. PRIOR.—It is the boycott that we have to break down if we can, but we do not intend to do so by cringing to the bigots. If they will not attend otherwise they must be lashed into decency.

W. J. MILES.—Shall look forward to your visit to this country. Our best wishes.

S. SODDY.—Pleased to hear from you. The papers will be sent as requested.

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 connection 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 62 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.

Mr. Cohen commences, in this issue, his criticism of the *Daily News* articles on "Where are the Dead?" If the *Daily News* really wishes to know what can be said against the belief in a future life, we give them full permission to reprint as much of these articles as they please, or all of them if they prefer it. No charge will be made. And if the *Daily News* wishes to arouse a sensation in the journalistic and the religious worlds, we can guarantee that this will be the way to do it. They would keep the churches busy for months.

Meanwhile, we repeat that we want our readers to assist in the circulation of these articles. We are having them sent out to all likely quarters, and so far as our financial resources—which are generally as near a minus quantity as is possible—will allow, we are seeing to it that the copies are distributed as widely as possible. Our readers can help by sending names and addresses to which copies are to be sent, and by helping in any other way that suggests itself. The articles will extend over seven or eight issues, and the criticism will be made as thorough as is possible in the space. But the quite hopeless confusion of some of these "brilliant" journalists would take a volume to straighten out. Some of the confusions are so elementary that one almost doubts their accidental occurrence.

Mr. J. M. Robertson's article on "Where are the Dead?" duly appeared in the *Daily News* for July 5. We presume that paper now thinks it has acted quite fairly. Well, of course it might not have admitted any Freethinker at all. It originally arranged for twenty-three articles, twenty of which were by believers, and only one of which met the belief in immortality with a genuine rejection; then, when asked to give the other side a show, it replied that it had not the room, and, to prove it added another article by another Christian. Finally, when, as it admitted, this paper stung them into action, and brought a hornets' nest about its ears, it accepted our "challenge," or pretended to, and invited Mr. Robertson to write an article, but meanwhile had added another two articles, both by believers. Still, as Christian papers go, we must assume that the *Daily News* has acted with wonderful courage. But what would happen if any of them dared to give Freethought a fair show? In a very little while there would be hardly enough of the Churches left to bother about.

Some time ago the Secretary of the N.S.S. was approached by a deputation from the Spiritualists' National Union, asking whether it was possible for a discussion to be arranged between Mr. Cohen and a leading Spiritualist. Mr. Cohen said he had no objection provided the selected person was a suitable one. The names of Mr. Hannen Swaffer of the *Daily Express*, and Mr. Oaten, Editor of the *Two Worlds*, were put forward and Mr. Cohen was assured that one of the two would meet him in discussion. After considerable delay a letter was received that both Mr. Swaffer and Mr. Oaten had "no possible time" for the discussion. As there are a good many dates between September, 1928 and March, 1929, we are interested to find that the time of these gentlemen is so fully occupied. We should say they must be the two most sought after men in the country. Or it is, perhaps, only a matter of discretion? We are forced to say this much because of the enquiries we have received, and a plain statement of the facts of the case appears to be advisable.

Considerable interest has been taken of late in the subject of Materialism, and it occurred to some of the members of the Board of the Rationalist Press Association, that a public discussion on the subject would be of interest to a large section of the public. Mr. C. E. M. Joad, the author of a number of works on philosophy,

who has made himself responsible for the statement that Materialism is discredited, and Mr. Cohen, whose work on Materialism will be well known to readers of these notes, were asked if they were willing to debate the question of Materialism. Both agreed, and the discussion is fixed for September 26. Caxton Hall has been engaged. Fuller details will be announced later.

Mr. A. Mitchell writes: "Mr. Cohen has hit the nail on the head when he says that the B.B.C. has converted itself into an agency for the propaganda of Christianity. Last night the announcer said some listeners did not seem to be aware of the daily morning service, and he wished to make it known that there was religious service every morning at 10.15." We believe that kind of announcement is made very frequently. The B.B.C. first starts, quite on its own, another dose of religion, then it announces that it is there, next it gets people to write approving it. Finally, it announces that it was commenced to meet an expressed need. Which makes one wonder whether, in any circumstances, it is possible to get complete honesty and Christianity under the same hat, or even in the same building.

We are asked to announce that the Manchester Branch will hold the third of its series of rambles on Sunday next, July 22. The ramble will be over Bolton Moors. Members and friends will get the bus for Bolton at Exchange Station, Manchester, at 10.30 a.m., and then proceed by bus from Bolton Town Hall, at 11.30, for Horwich. Those joining the party are requested to bring lunch; tea will be provided. The party will return from Belmont. Total bus fares will be 2s. 6d. Will intending rambblers please notify Mr. T. F. Greenall, 34 Goulden Street, Pendleton.

The Secretary of the Manchester Branch, Mr. F. E. Monks, has been re-elected to the Salford City Council. Major Jones, who beat Mr. Monks by one vote at the election last November, died in May, and Mr. Monks was elected by a large majority at the bye-election on June 26. Major Jones conducted his campaign against Mr. Monks in a Christian and disgraceful fashion, making great play with Mr. Monk's association with the Manchester Branch of the N.S.S., and misrepresenting to the utmost of his ability the principles and objects of Secularism. It was an appeal to the ignorance and religious prejudice of electors, and only narrowly succeeded. Now, Major Jones's God has taken a hand in the game, and removed the Major to another sphere.

A FREETHINKER'S IDEALS.

To be sound in wind and limb; to be healthy of body and mind; to be educated, to be emancipated, to be free, to be beautiful—these things are ends towards which all should strive, and by attaining which all are happier in themselves, and more useful to others.

We see clearly that it is good for every man among us that he and every other man should be as tall, as strong, as well knit, as supple, as wholesome, as effective, as free from vice or defect as possible.

We see clearly that it is his first duty to make his own muscles, his own organs, his own bodily functions, as perfect as he can make them, and to transmit them in like perfection, unspoiled, to his descendants.

We see clearly that it is good for every woman among us that she and every other woman should be as physically developed and as finely equipped for her place as mother as it is possible to make herself.

We see that it is good for every woman that there should be such men, and for every man that there should be such women. We see that it is good for every child that it should be born of such a father and of such a mother.

We see that to prepare ourselves for the duties of paternity and maternity, by making ourselves as vigorous and healthful as we can be, is a duty we all owe to our children unborn and to one another.

We see that each man and each woman holds his virility and her femininity in trust for humanity.

Grant Allen (1894).

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus in the Talmud.

DURING the second century of our era there flourished a famous rabbin named Jehuda and surnamed "the holy." He held the important office of Patriarch at Jerusalem; but attained far higher celebrity by compiling the Mischna, a work which recorded the oral teaching of the rabbinical sages up to its day, and which initiated the voluminous literature known as the Talmud. According to later Talmudical writings, some of which are derived from sources existing at or near his time, this rabbin, familiarly called "Rabbi," was the esteemed and trusted friend of a certain Roman emperor named Antoninus, or Antoninus, son of Asverus, whom the said writings frequently mention in terms of reverence and affection. The emperor and the rabbin became acquainted by exchange of letters; then they met each other in the holy land; and afterwards they resumed their epistolary intercourse. When the news of the emperor's death arrived, his venerable friend exclaimed in heart-stricken tones: "The bond is torn asunder." The question now arises, who was this "Antoninus"? Six persons at least bore that name with or without right. They are Titus, Marcus, Lucius, Commodus, Caracalla, and Heliogabulus. Of these, the first is excluded by the fact that he never visited the east; whilst the last four are excluded by their character and conduct. For how could Jehuda the Holy have been the close friend of the frivolous Lucius, the monstrous Commodus, the bloodthirsty Caracalla, or the beastly Heliogabulus? Because, even supposing that his own instincts had not preserved him from cherishing one or another of those incompatible amities, any such friendship would have disgusted his fellow-believers and caused them to deprive him of his office without delay.

From the above, it might be inferred that Marcus was obviously the emperor in question. But some very learned and intelligent members of a race which has never lacked either learning or intelligence have held the contrary opinion. At first a certain chronological difficulty was the principal objection alleged. But when deeper research, combined with critical ingenuity of no mean order, had solved that difficulty, more than one famous scholar, whilst admitting that Marcus and "Rabbi" held their respective positions at the same time, still refused to believe in their friendship, because of the difference in their philosophical and religious convictions. Dr. Grätz, for instance, who was one of the most brilliant among the sons of the Promise, did not scruple to modify tradition by putting the grandson of "Rabbi" in the place of "Rabbi" himself, and Alexander Severus in the place of Marcus, although he did not dispute that "Rabbi" was patriarch when Marcus was emperor. But apart from the violence thus done to tradition, there is the fact that Alexander Severus took the names Marcus Aurelius, but not the name Antoninus—probably because it had been so defiled by his predecessor, Heliogabulus. Besides which, certain communications between "Antoninus" and "Rabbi," whilst pertinent in the case of Marcus, are irrelevant in that of Alexander. Finally, though both pairs were respectable, yet the earlier one surpassed the other by possessing certain noble traits which are attributed to the pair presented in the Talmud. Taking a hint from Grätz, another Jewish scholar, Zacharius Frankel, imagined the existence of a friendship between "Rabbi" and Lucius Verus, and one between "Rabbi's" grandson and Alexander Severus; but this seems only to complicate matters without yielding any advantage.

Dr. Arnold Bodek,¹ who thinks that Marcus Aurelius and Jehuda the holy are the "Antoninus" and "Rabbi" brought together in the Talmud, defends his thesis very skilfully. Here are the facts which he presents: "Rabbi," says the Talmud, was born almost at the same time that R. Akiba died.² This event occurred close upon the capture and destruction of Bethar in the disastrous rebellion of the Jews under Bar-Cochba. Jewish sources date the Bethar incident fifty-five years after the fall of Jerusalem, which corresponds to A.D. 125;³ but Roman sources add ten years, thus bringing it down to 135 of the same era. Dr. Bodek thinks that the Jews, having suffered frightfully in connexion with the affair, would be more likely than the Romans to remember when it happened; and therefore, he accepts the earlier date, hereby assigning 125 as the year of "Rabbi's" birth.⁴ At that time circumcision was forbidden by the Romans under penalty of death. But the Patriarch, R. Simon ben Gamaliel, father of "Rabbi," nevertheless circumcized him. For this, he with his wife, and son, were sent prisoners to Rome, where the mother of "Antoninus" exchanged him for "Rabbi," whom she nourished at the breast, whilst "Rabbi's" mother presented "Antoninus" to the authorities as her child. Happily all turned out well, for by the intercession of the Roman lady, the Jewish parents were absolved, and the edict itself was repealed.⁵ Dr. Bodek's faith in this story has not even the dimensions of a mustard seed; but he regards it as evidence that a primitive tradition connecting "Rabbi" with the particular "Antoninus" who entered this world about that time, to wit, Marcus Aurelius, whose birth, as we know, occurred in the 121st year of our redemption. Alas, when once a tale is set going, it usually receives improvement. A canonical gospel connects Jesus with the faithful malefactor, misnamed the penitent thief; and one (or more) of the apocryphal gospels bring the two together during the infancy of the holy child.⁶ The next we hear of "Rabbi" is that he became patriarch upon the death of his father, which, according to the Talmud, occurred when the locusts had come into the land, and the tribulation was increased.⁷ This reference, says Dr. Bodek, points to the calamities which afflicted the empire soon after Marcus came to the throne; and one of which, as is known from Victor's *Epitome*, was the devastation of the most fruitful districts by innumerable swarms of locusts. Dr. Bodek assigns 164 as the date involved; but I fail to see why he should not have taken 162 for the same reasons. He is much more convincing with respect to the time of "Rabbi's" death.

In the eighth verse of the eleventh chapter of *Zechariah*, it is said: "And I cut off the three shepherds in one month; for my soul was weary of them, and their soul also loathed me."

Dr. Bodek, whilst refraining to quote this passage, quotes the comment thereupon reproduced in the *Midrasch Jalkut* from the *Midrasch Jeldenu*; and which is as follows: "'I let the three shepherds vanish in one month.' This means that Rabbeun (Jehuda-ha-Nasi), Antoninus and Artaban, the king of Persia,

all died in one month, and to this is applied universally the passage: 'I let the three shepherds vanish in one month.'"

Dr. Bodek justly remarks that what impressed the rabbinical sages in this connexion was not the simultaneous decease of the two mightiest monarchs then on earth, but the fact that this event coincided with the death of "Rabbi," who was the seventh of his race from Hillel, who himself descended from King David.⁸ Commodus Antoninus died right at the end of A.D. 192, whilst Artaban, known to the Romans as Vologesus III, died on the threshold of the next year. The first of these facts might seem to imply that Commodus was the "Antoninus" of the Talmud, but the implication does not exist, for the work refers also to one "Antoninus the Younger."⁹

According to the above inference the death of "Rabbi" occurred near the close of A.D. 192, or the beginning of A.D. 193. Before examining the intercourse between the patriarch and his imperial friend, there is a matter that requires explanation. If the "Antoninus" whom the Talmud exhibits in such close connexion with "Rabbi" is Marcus Aurelius, how comes the work to call him "Antoninus, son of Asverus"? The father of Marcus was named Annius Verus, and it has been suggested that these two names were corrupted by the Jews into Asverus. Dr. Bodek, who for excellent reasons declines this suggestion, proposes in its stead the following ingenious theory. The Jews used the word "son" very loosely, putting it for grandson, and great or even great-great grandson, their principle being to point out a man by connecting him with some well-known ancestor. Now, at an early period of his life Marcus bore the name of his mother's grandfather, Catilius Severus.¹⁰ This man was prefect of Palestine under Hadrian;¹¹ and he is probably identical with the Julius Severus who led Hadrian's forces against the Jews at the revolt of Bar-Cochba.¹² It is probable, therefore, that his name lingered among the chosen people, and that they knew Marcus as his "son." The word "Asverus," says Dr. Bodek, is "Sevenus" vocally modified in accordance with a known law of the Semetic languages.¹³ We come now to the occasion and the details of the intimacy. Dr. Bodek, who conjectures that Marcus, who was meticulously exact in the discharge of his duties, got to know "Rabbi" by corresponding with him as patriarch about matters affecting the Jewish community, and that having found him an excellent man he made him one of his friends.¹⁴ It appears that a communication was to be addressed to the emperor, and that R. Ephes, "Rabbi's" colleague, would have liked to strike a proud note in making it, but that "Rabbi" insisted upon the use of the most modest and courteous terms.¹⁵

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

(To be continued.)

It is only by labour that thought can be made healthy, and only by thought that labour can be made happy.

Ruskin.

Reading furnishes the mind only with materials of knowledge; it is thinking that makes what is read ours.

Locke.

¹ Marcus Aurelius Antoninus al Zeitgenosse and Freund des Rabbi Jehuda-ha-Nasi . . . von D. Arnold Bodek. Leipzig, 1868. As the D before the author's two names differs in type from their capitals, I take it to stand for Dr.

² b. Kidduschin, 272b; Midr. Rabba on Genes 58. Midr. Koheleth i. 4. B. p. 49.

³ Jer. Tamith iv. Echa Rabba p. 71b.

⁴ B. p. 50-54.

⁵ b. Meila 17. B. p. 55.

⁶ Luke 39-42. *Evan Injan Arab* 23.

⁷ b. Sota 49b. B. p. 57.

⁸ j. Tannith iv. (p. 68). B. p. 55-57.

⁹ Midr. Koh x. 5. B. p. 68.

¹⁰ Cap. M. Ant. 1.

¹¹ Spart Had. 5.

¹² Dio. L. 19.c.13.14.

¹³ B. pp. 70-73.

¹⁴ B. pp. 134-135.

¹⁵ Midr. Rabba. i. 75. B. 136.

American Notes.

RELIGION AND SUPERSTITION.

Most Freethinkers are puzzled when religious friends talk to us about "superstitions." A graphic illustration of our difficulty came under my notice recently, in an American newspaper, famous for its generous patronage of Christian "news," and its stinginess when asked to report a Secularist meeting, or even to admit a sceptical letter to its numerous wasted or badly filled columns. To-day's issue contains a long, illustrated article on "South Sea Superstitions" (the alliteration probably proved an added attraction). There is no fault to be found with the article, which is from the pen of a competent professor who does not hesitate to condemn a number of beliefs on logical, historical, and moral grounds. He even denies the alleged "hoary antiquity" of some. He wittily, and probably wisely, suggests that some of these "folk-lore" superstitions were introduced to the natives by British or American gin-traders, a very reasonable explanation of several curious customs in which "fire-water" is conspicuously an element. The professor has obviously had no vetoing blue-pencil of a pious editor to contend with. Why? Simply because the Editor's patrons do not happen to believe in South Sea Superstitions.

A whole section of the same journal is devoted to appreciation and flattery of Christian Churches. Sermons extolling Daniel, priestly allusions to "the resurrection of Our Lord," and a Fundamentalist manifesto every bit as ignorantly conceived as any South Sea Savage Sorcerer could have done it. All these are editorially passed on to readers as though there was some distinctive difference between them and the other sort of lies. Religion is the superstition we happen to believe in. Superstition is the religion we do not believe in.

It is amusing to add that the same journal has a "Daily Horoscope," to enable readers to know definitely which will be their lucky and which their unlucky days. Incidentally it serves to show our evident superiority to the South Seas.

"KEEP OUT MODERNISM."

The African Branch of the Methodist Church in Conference assembled, received the very appropriate advice from Bishop Gaines, "Whatever you do, keep modernism out of your churches."

The real line of cleavage between religion and science is expressed in those words. Truth cannot fix a date and refuse to admit evidence of facts discovered since that date. Science recognizes no eternal truths, every truth is held subject to assault through new observation.

All the same, it must be admitted that modernism, so-called, is mostly a dishonest attempt to retain the emoluments of a business no longer carried out. The modernist is often a double fraud. He swindles the church which pays him, and deceives those who imagine he has become emancipated.

THE CLOTHING OF A CONVERT.

The African Methodists are alarmed at the progress towards trousers shown by the native races. It was all very well in the old days to amuse oneself with letting a benighted heathen dress up in some incongruous "silk hat and pyjamas" style of clothing. It looked well in photographic Missionary literature. Nowadays, according to the Methodists, "it often happens that the native is dressed as well as the missionary." Imagine the sorry plight of Bishop Gregg, who met in Swaziland some converts who turned up at his meetings in full "fig," instead of full fig-leaf, or to use the bishop's own description "Sobhuza, a member of our church, wore evening dress, spats, and topper, but I dare say he feels more at home wearing the leopard's skin." It seems a pity to discourage the native idea of "evening dress." I like those "spats"! But perhaps, after all, this is merely Bishop Gregg's "Fashionable Hints to Natives." They could never have hit on those spats by mere inspiration.

AN ANSWER TO PRAYER.

Collier's for May 12, is responsible for the following "deadly parallel":—

Life in Chicago is one racket after another. The graft got so bad that churchmen held a day of prayer, asking divine assistance to end crime and corruption. Next day one man was killed, three were wounded, and one robbery netted 750,000 dollars.

It is not wonderful that the idea of religion as a remedy for robbery is regarded as ridiculous. A pill to cure an earthquake is about as sane. Agreed that Chicago churchmen do not, as a body, participate in these outrages, one must remember that the so-called "Christian vote" can be used to obtain privileges for the churches, and to prevent citizens from honestly and openly obtaining alcoholic refreshments. Christians may be justified in all their prohibitions and puritanical laws, but quite obviously they have not hitherto regarded civic corruption and gangster looting as being so important as the blue laws of which they boast their successful enforcement. The Rev. William Stewart, a coloured minister of the gospel, is suspected of participating in the murder of Attorney Granada, on election day. He may or may not be guilty of murder, but he has admitted, under oath, that he was corruptly placed on the city pay-roll a year ago as a Sanitary Inspector, and had never done a day's work for his pay.

METHODIST POLITICS.

The Annual Convention of the American M.E. Churches was not a very exciting affair. They decided to appoint a whole bench of "judges" (bishops and clergy of course) to investigate in secret the charges of immorality brought against one of their ministers. Very naturally the whole crowd decided to subordinate every other political issue to the infinitely more important one of Prohibition. Cabinet ministers may be as corrupt as they like, judges may be bought and sold, human beings may be lynched, tortured and burnt alive, cities may seethe with gangster wars and mob murders, but the church of Christ has its eyes glued to the glass of beer which, in spite of its prohibition, still defies the laws of God and Stiggins.

The only other published decision of the Convention was that there ought to be a revision of the Hymn Book. It appears there are many hymns which praise war. These are to be altered. The word "war" is to be changed to "peace." Some time ago I asked, how can a republican believe in the King (and the Kingdom) of Heaven? Now I want to know, how can any kind of Pacifist believe in Christianity? The whole conception of arbitration involves a new and irreligious view about the difference between good and evil. The idea of extermination of either the people or the ideas with which you disagree, represents a stage of evolution on a level with the religious stage. The toleration of things and people you regard as inimical, willingness to live at peace with all sorts of creatures, agreement to let an arbitrator fix conditions to enable you to live and let live, these are irreconcilable with the uncompromising clear-cut right-and-wrong ideals of religion. The Christian spirit is a crusading spirit. All the days of my youth, from the time of Beaconsfield to the William Watson "Purple East" period, myriads of Britains wanted the country to declare war on Turkey. To-day, we are learning that the objectionable governments of the U.S.A., of Britain, of Russia, of Italy and of worse countries, if they exist, have to be tolerated, not because they are not the epitome of all that is base, corrupt and demoralizing, but only because we begin to see that war cannot cure these evils. We are learning that, as Blake said:—

"Vain the sword and vain the bow,
They ne'er can work war's overthrow."

And if that is the case in human affairs, why should it be regarded as right for "The Son of God" to "go forth to war, a Kingly crown to gain"? Why may we not expect God and Satan to submit their disputes to arbitration? And, finally, what on earth do a few silly hymns matter, anyhow, when it is the Bible itself that has always been the great source of war inspiration, encouragement and justification.

MORE BIBLES WANTED (?)

That amusing society of impertinent busybodies, the Gideons, are advertising that a million more bibles are wanted. Were this all, there would not be the slightest difficulty in obtaining two million bibles which are not wanted. Hotels, prisons, work-houses, schools and private houses contain so many superfluous bibles that there is no excuse for printing another copy of the scriptures for at least a century. It reminds one of the familiar story of the Londoner who read that two criminals were "wanted" in Chicago. It seemed so like carrying coals to Newcastle.

You may rest assured the Gideons don't really want any bibles. It is their way of begging for money. So much cash from the credulous will provide so many officials to supply so many unnecessary bibles to people who do not want them, will never look at them, and could afford to pay for their literature, anyway. "The book nobody knows" is a misnomer. Everybody knows it. Its better title would be "the book nobody wants."

THE DANGERS OF SUNDAY SCHOOL.

A Christian writer, in the current *Forum*, questions the utility of Sunday Schools. "The Church," he says, "is losing the young people. Foolish young people? No! Foolish Church." The *Forum* writer sees clearly that the teaching staff of Sunday Schools is entirely unfitted for tampering with the education of the young. His argument is that what the children learn in the day school of the elements of science, makes them easily aware of the ignorance of the Sabbath school teacher. "Modern Sunday school training," he continues, "even under the best conditions, is not vital, is illogical, is absurd, is reactionary, and is futile. Our enlightened children are not to be coerced by threats of hypothetical punishment, and, in the critical period of adolescence, a grave danger lies in presenting Christianity sentimentally." Altogether this article, appearing in one of the best known reviews, deserves filing for handy reference. To an outsider it seems remarkable that strict Sabbatharians should see no breach of their God's commandment in perpetuating schools which are open on the "day of rest." The "Lord's Day Rest Association" ought to have closed all these schools long ago.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

The Story of the Gadarene Swine.

(PARAPHRASED.)

In times gone by a so-called Nazarene,
Was plodding through the fields of Gadarene;
When lo, a madman, fiercely-wild and weird,
From crumbling rocks and moss-grown tombs appeared.
One glance, and lo, the Nazarene beheld,
A daring devil that in heaven rebelled,
And was by angels and archangels hurled,
From heavenly mansions to this nether world.
Nor was the devil slow to recognize
The form divine that fought him in the skies.
A brief negotiation soon ensued,
And to avoid a second fearful feud,
A truce was called. "Look here," the devil said,
"My name is legion; give us leave to tread,
Where yonder herd of swine bestud the hills;
And with their unclean ways pollute the rills."
Well, leave was granted, and the devils all,
Responded gladly to their leader's call.
The swine were rounded up with hellish glee,
And driven headlong down into the sea.
In taking stock, next day the owner found
About two thousand pigs were lost or drowned;
And sinners raved, while saints cried: "Let us pray
That Jesus will not come again this way."

S. PULMAN.

NOTE:—St. Mark's account, v. 1-17. St. Matthew's gives two madmen, and the place Gergesenes. viii. 28-34.

Religion of Poor-Law Children.

At the meeting of the Manchester Board of Guardians the question whether Nonconformist children in the Styal Homes should be compelled to attend Church of England Sunday schools was one of the principal items of debate. Miss Annie Lee moved an addendum to the reference back of this portion of the minutes, asking that the Committee should report in writing exactly how many Nonconformist children there were in the homes . . . Miss Lee said that the principle of allowing religious freedom should be observed among the children in the care of the Guardians as much as with children who had parents. It seemed to her a curious attitude on the part of the Guardians to force these children to attend the Sunday school of a denomination to which they did not belong when there was a Nonconformist school in the neighbourhood. Miss Lee's protest received . . . support . . ., but Mr. Mason pointed out that there were eight denominations among the Nonconformist children, and asked how the Guardians were going to send them all to different churches. Miss Lee explained that the Free Church Council had agreed that the children should all attend the Wesleyan Church, which was the one Nonconformist church in the vicinity. The motion for the reference back of the minutes and Miss Lee's addendum was carried.

The Styal Homes accommodated somewhere about 500 children. The Poor-Law provisions with respect to the religious instruction of children is as broad as rights can be. In this matter the earlier statutory provisions have been re-enacted and consolidated by sections 89-91 of the Poor-Law Act, 1927. Section 91 is the big section. It reads as follows:—

"91.—(1) Where a child who is an inmate of a workhouse or a district school is regularly visited by a minister of his own religion for the purpose of religious instruction, then, if the parents or surviving parent of the child, or, in the case of an orphan or deserted child, if such minister as aforesaid makes a request in writing to that effect, the child shall not be instructed in any other religious creed or be required or permitted to attend the services of any other religious creed than that entered in the creed register, except where the child is over the age of twelve years and desires to receive instruction in some other creed or to attend the services of some other religious creed and is considered by the minister to be competent to exercise his own judgment on the subject.

"(2) A child who being an inmate of a workhouse or district school is not so regularly visited as aforesaid, shall not be instructed in any religious creed other than that professed by his parents or surviving parent, and to which his parents or surviving parent object, or, in the case of an orphan or deserted child, to which his next-of-kin object"

The Regulations in Poor-Law Orders are word-bound by the statutory provisions. The expressions "religious instruction" and "religious creed" and "religion" are not defined by statute, so the rule of construction that applies to the expression respectively mean what is to be found in an up-to-date standard dictionary or is commonly known to mean. There is a record of the Judicial Exposition of the expression "religion" given in Stroud's Judicial Dictionary. It is given as follows:—"What is religion? Is it not what a man honestly believes in and approves of and thinks it his duty to inculcate on others, whether with regard to this world or the next? A belief in any system of retribution by an over-ruling power? It must, I think, include the principle of gratitude to an active power who can confer blessings. (Per Willes, J., *Baxter v. Langley*, 38 L. J., M. C. 5.)"

A child under the care of the Guardians must certainly have religious instruction. Even if the parent desired it, the child could not be allowed to grow up uninstructed religiously, for if the parent made such request the Common Law of England would require him to be ignored. As regards the Nonconformist children (Protestant dissenters) at the Styal Homes, the agreement put before the Manchester Board of Guardians by the Free Church Council, in our opinion, meets section 91 (1) of the Poor-Law Act, 1927, as to requests that may be made by ministers.

(From *The Poor-Law Officers' Journal*.)

Correspondence.

THE VICTORIANS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Your issue of May 24:—

"Their boasted age is a synonym for a narrow and conventional view of life."

Oh, Minnermus, Minnermus! You should have added—in brackets—EXCEPT CHARLES DICKENS!

It is impossible that you class Charles Dickens with "the last kick of Feudalism." He was the first kick of democracy.

J. M. STUART YOUNG.

Onitsha, Nigeria.

Society News.

MR. G. WHITEHEAD AT GLASGOW.

MR. G. WHITEHEAD, who has spent an active and profitable fortnight lecturing in Glasgow, concludes his Scottish visit on Friday, July 13. The meetings have been uniformly successful, keenly interested audiences being the rule. The lecturer has had more questions than he could possibly deal with if he lectured all night, and there has been opposition. The meetings have introduced the propaganda of the N.S.S. to a considerable number of people, and should result in an increase in the already large number of Freethinkers in Glasgow. Mr. Whitehead will lecture in the Chester-le-Street district during the week-end, and from there will proceed to Darlington, where he will lecture at the Market Place from July 16 to July 20, inclusive.

MR. J. CLAYTON'S MEETINGS.

MR. J. CLAYTON had a good meeting on July 3, on the recreation Ground at Padiham. The audience listened most attentively; many questions were asked, and there was some good discussion. On Saturday, July 7, after several days of bad weather, Mr. Clayton paid a return visit to Todmorden, where he had the support of a few local Freethinkers. The audience was fairly large, and there was no opposition. At Accrington, on Sunday, July 8, the people were, in spite of rain, able to listen to the lecture by standing on the covered ground of the market. Questions came thick and fast, and an opponent took the platform. Literature is being sold steadily, and a considerable number of copies of the *Freethinker* have been distributed.

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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, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"The Function of Newspapers."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. F. P. Corrigan—A Lecture.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrolds Road, North End Road, Walham Green): Every Saturday at 8 p.m. Speakers—Messrs. Campbell-Everden, Bryant, Mathie and others.

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

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury. (Brockwell Park): 6.0, Mr. W. Sandford. 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, 7.30 p.m. Speakers—Messrs. Botting, Hanson and Baker. Thursday, July 12, at 7.30 p.m.: Dance at 101 Tottenham Court Road. Admission 1s.

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

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith): 3.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

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

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. Whitehead, Monday, July 16 to Friday, July 20, at Market Steps, Darlington. Tuesday, at Houghton-le-Spring. Please note Mr. Jno. T. Brighton's new address: 18 South View, Chester-le-Street.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S.—Every Monday, at Islington Square—Mr. P. Sherwin; every Tuesday at Beaumont Street—Messrs. Shortt and Sherwin; every Thursday, at High Park Street—Mr. J. V. Shortt; and at Edge Hill Lamp—Mr. P. Sherwin. All meetings at 8 p.m.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Moor, near North Road Entrance): 7.30, Mr. Jno. T. Brighton.

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