

FALLACY AND FUTURITY.

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Views and Opinions.

(Continued from page 482.)

Fallacy and Futurity.

IN dealing with the articles by the twenty-one writers who were champions of the belief in immortality, one has to take them as a whole for the reason that so many went over the same ground, that to deal with them singly, even with the few who attempted something in the nature of a reasoned argument, would involve an almost unbearable repetition of the same points. The only practicable way is to consider them under general headings. And here the first observation that one has to make is that not one of the writers touched upon the *reason* why the belief in a future life exists; each one wrote as though we were still living in the eighteenth century, certainly as though the past sixty or seventy years of anthropological research had never existed. They gave many excuses why Christians and others ought to go on believing in a future life without being disturbed by unwelcome criticism, but no reason *why* the belief is held, even by themselves.

To say nothing of the work of the large army of investigators from the time of Tylor onward, Sir James Frazer has written an encyclopædic and authoritative work on the history of religious ideas in which this particular belief figures largely, but not in which this particular belief figures largely, but not one even mentioned it. The same authority has written the first three volumes on *The Belief in Immortality*, covering some 1,200 pages, but none of the selected contributors appear to be aware of their existence. It is a startling state of affairs, and one wonders whether all these men are quite so ignorant as the absence of notice would make it appear. If they are ignorant of the nature of these works, they are much in the position of men writing on chemistry with no later text book than one written in the middle of the seventeenth century. If they know works such as those mentioned, what are they going to do about them? For if these writers are to be believed, if the *facts* to which they draw attention are reliable, then the whole theory of a "soul" is not a whit better than the belief that the blood is circulated through the body because of the action of

unseen spirits. It is a gigantic but inevitable illusion, resting upon no better foundation than many other illusions connected with religion that are now universally discredited. Clearly the man who champions the theory that the blood is pushed through the body because of the action of spirits has to disprove Harvey. And the man who holds to the theory of a soul and of a future life has to disprove Tylor and Frazer, and all who came between them. As a matter of scientific fact, until the anthropologists are disposed of there is nothing to discuss. While they hold the field we are entitled to say that the belief in a future life is a gigantic illusion.

* * *

Ghosts and Gods.

Not merely are these investigations ignored, but we have a number of statements concerning early beliefs that are, quite plainly, nonsense. Lady Southwark asks plaintively, but apparently in complete ignorance that the answer lies in the direction I have just indicated:—

If there is no future life . . . to what are we to ascribe the . . . beliefs of even prehistoric man in a system of rewards and punishments after death?

Others speak of the "yearning" that man always had for the next world, and picture primitive mankind stretching out their hands in longing for reunion with their dead. And Mr. Robert Lynd manages to turn all we know of primitive life upside down by saying:—

The belief in immortality is not a superstition of savage tribesmen that gradually fades as the human mind develops and genius flourishes . . . If it is a superstition, it is a superstition that has a stronger hold on the brain of a Plato than on that of a Bushman, and dominates the imagination of a Dante far more powerfully than that of a Dyak head-hunter.

I am quite certain that every anthropologist in the world will thank Mr. Lynd for the information he has given them. It is, of course, quite contrary to what they know to be the truth, but they will recognize that, as a selected contributor to the "Great Debate," he has probably been chosen because he has some unusual information to give the world—and he has given it.

Still, assuming that anthropologists really do know what they are talking about, I would venture to point out a few things for the benefit of Lady Southwark, Mr. Lynd and the others of the gallant twenty-one. First, the picture of primitive man "yearning" for intercourse with the departed is quite imaginary. The universal attitude of primitive mankind towards the dead is not that of affection, but of dread. He would get away from them if he could, and, as he thinks he cannot, he invents various plans by which he can placate them or dodge

them. Even our existing practice of wearing black at a death is a survival of the savage practice of seeking protection from the ghost by adopting a disguise—a mask, or dress different from that which the person usually wears. These are not, be it noted, expressions of opinion, mere theories about people long since dead; they express the attitude of existing savages all over the world.

* * *

Plato and Piffle.

What is it that has given Mr. Lynd the notion that the belief in a future life had a greater hold on the brain of a Plato than on that of a Bushman? Certainly not a study of Plato and of the mentality of a savage. Does not Mr. Lynd know that Plato argues for a belief in a future life, and can he not see that the mere fact of arguments being bandied to and fro offers incontestable evidence of the existence of doubts? We advise Mr. Lynd to drop the *Daily News* for a while and spend a few hours with Plato's *Phædo*, and he will then realize that not only had Plato some doubts about the matter, but he may realize, as Jowett points out, that the doctrine of the survival of the individual had but a feeble hold on the Greek philosophic mind. To speak of this belief dominating the mind of a Plato—I do not for a moment suppose that the use of the name means any more than that Mr. Lynd grasped at any thing that looked well—more than that of a savage, is absurdly untrue. Why, the mind of the savage, and of the early religionist, is completely dominated by this belief. It is to the spirits of the dead that he attributes most of the good and evil that befalls him. Many of the most brutal customs of uncivilized life owe their existence to this belief. The sacrifice of people on the graves of the dead, the burning of the wife when the husband dies, even the head-hunting of the Dyak, which Mr. Lynd drags in, all owe their being to the belief in the survival of the dead. Plato was at least aware of the arguments which in his day were used against the belief. But in primitive society there is simply no argument against it. It is a belief that no one calls into question, and its brutalizing consequences are writ large in the history of primitive society. If Mr. Lynd reads this statement with surprise, I advise him to spend a few hours with the vast array of facts which have been brought together by Frazer and his fellow workers. It will prevent him again writing the kind of nonsense which so impresses the Editor of the *Daily News* with its brilliancy. Finally, it is plain, on the face of it, that the belief has grown weaker as man has become more civilized and has known more. There never was a time in the history of man when there existed greater doubts as to a future life than exists to-day. And it needs but a glance over our own society to see that the belief is most certain where knowledge is weakest. It is not the ignorant, the uneducated, the unintelligent, who to-day doubt the truth of immortality. They are the most certain about it—the type that writes to the *Daily News* that the Bible is conclusive for them. It is the educated believer who feels doubt. It is the completely emancipated mind that gives that doubt almost the character of a denial.

* * *

Look at the Facts!

I want to emphasize this question of anthropology, because, in my judgment, it is as nearly conclusive as anything can be on such a topic, and also because I cannot help having a suspicion that most of the professional apologists for a future life feel it to be

so. At any rate, they will not face it and deal with it. This cannot be because it is trivial, or because it is unsupported by facts, or because it is not endorsed by reputable authorities. It is because, I think, they really do not know what to do with it; its presence makes them very uneasy, and so they pretend it is not there, and go their way arguing in the manner of the medieval schoolmen, and as though the hypothesis of evolution had never been heard of. But if the account we have of the origin of the belief in a future life be reliable, the truth of it is no longer a subject for debate.

Consider the facts. The Rev. T. Rhondda Williams, in his contribution to the series, writes:—

So far from the faith in immortality being blind, it seems to me to be the outcome of insight—insight into the meaning of human nature itself.

Now that is written fifty-seven years after Tylor published his classical work, which stamped him as the virtual creator of a new science, and when the mere titles of works on that science would fill a very large volume. And Mr. Williams' statement is simply not true. Again, look at the facts. In no single case, so long as we are dealing with civilized people, can it be said that the future life is a theory that was created by them. With all of these it is a heritage from the past. We can actually trace it back in unbroken sequence to the most primitive strata of human existence. The most that can be said of later humanity is that it, in the main, accepts the theory, and it lies upon the face of it that it expends no small portion of its energy in adapting it to the requirements of a more sophisticated reason. The conflict of opinion, even with believers, the way in which these cancel one another's apologies, with the despairing confession of some that reason has nothing to do with it, but it must be taken as an act of faith, alone would disprove the assertion cited. But when we have traced the idea of a "soul" or double back to the mind of primitive humanity, when we see how it came into being by a mistaken interpretation of dreams and other subjective states, it becomes glaringly absurd to speak of this particular belief as being the *outcome* of profound insight into human nature. It is just part of the mass of primitive superstition which peoples earth and air first with a mysterious supernatural force, and afterwards with a vast assemblage of disembodied spirits working good or ill—mostly ill—on man. Are we to understand, does Mr. Williams really ask us to believe, that when primitive man was mistaken concerning the nature of everything around him, when he believed "spirits" to be the cause of disease, of death, of birth, of good and bad harvests, of success or defeat in war, etc., that while wrong in every other direction, he was absolutely correct in his theory of a double inhabiting the body, and that his being right was due to his "insight into the meaning of human nature"? I do not think that in the face of a plain statement of the facts he would dare to make any such claim. But with an ignoring of the facts, one may make almost any statement—particularly when one is writing for those who in the mass are not given to reflect upon the actual facts of the situation.

But the question I wish to put to any one of these twenty-one selected writers (and the columns of the *Freethinker* are open to them if they will face the question) is just this. If a belief can be shown to have grown out of a mistaken interpretation of facts, if it can be shown that every one of the facts upon which this belief was based is susceptible of a different interpretation altogether, what possible ground is there for discussing whether that belief is true or not? To explain the circulation of the blood, people believed in "spirits" perambulating

the circulatory system. So soon as Harvey showed that this was a mistaken interpretation of the facts, the spirits disappeared. When people were ignorant of the nature and functions of the nervous system, demons were invoked to explain epilepsy, and the trade of the expeller of demons, from Jesus Christ onward, flourished. When medical science showed the true nature of insanity, the devils vanished forever. No one said there was a profound truth underlying these theories, and demons were still active. One explanation being accepted the other was discarded. Why is it not the same with the belief in a future life? When we take the facts on which the belief was built and show that all of these can be explained in other ways, and that this explanation is accepted, what real ground have we for keeping to a discredited and rejected interpretation? That is the question which for the last forty years I have been trying to get defenders of the religious interpretation of things to face. Up to the present I have met with complete failure. They will not face the issue. I go further and say they dare not face it. And I have a strong suspicion they dare not and will not because they realize that if they ever do so the game is up. In the opening article of the series Bishop Knox said, "We want to get down to realities." Well, I offer them the chance of doing so. Will they seize the opportunity?

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be continued.)

Religion in the Melting Pot.

"Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind."—Emerson.

"The crime of inquiry is one which religion never has forgiven."—Shelley.

"Reason is a rebel unto faith."—Thomas Browne.

THE Christian Religion, which is the only form of religion of any importance in this country, is undergoing an entire transformation. The alteration has been taking place so quietly that it appears to have been wrought with the complete unconsciousness of clergy and congregations alike.

The clergy have actually helped this revolution. The attacks of the Freethinkers on the theological balloon are beginning to tell heavily, and the priests are getting nervous, and are throwing out the sandbags in a frantic endeavour to escape. A number of priests have actually persuaded their congregations that "hell," contrary to centuries of belief, is slightly less monotonous than "heaven," and that everlasting punishment means only an eternity of unpleasantness. So much is this the case that "blood" and "brimstone" are almost eliminated from the vocabulary of the educated clergy, and also of their congregations.

In certain circles undogmatic religionism is the order of the day, and modern Christianity is largely composed of sloppy sentiment in the place of dogma. This dilution of dogma has had its disintegrating effect on all the Churches save only the Roman Catholic. Painful Sabbaths have been replaced by pleasant Sunday afternoons. String bands and soloists have usurped the place of dirges and doleful hymns of yesteryear. Tame Labour Members of Parliament threaten to oust from Christian platforms the once-popular converted burglars and retired policemen. Notorieties of all kinds share the pulpits with the preachers. This can have but one meaning; it is the secularizing of the Christian Religion. Some time since, at a leading London Non-conformist place of worship, a famous actor, and a contributor to *Punch*, occupied the pulpit one after

the other, to pronounce eulogiums upon a world-renowned Freethinker. The queue of women outside the chapel gave the finishing touch of high comedy. It was magnificent; but it was not Christianity as taught for nineteen centuries. It must have shocked some hard-boiled believers. It was too much like meeting one's pet Pekinese in the form of sausages.

Nor is this all of the horrible story. The Book of Common Prayer is being redecored and reupholstered. Great changes have been made in the hallowed volume. Barbarous and unseemly portions of "The Psalms" have been eliminated, to spare the blushes of young curates and maiden ladies. It has even been suggested that the strong language in the Marriage Service is to be toned down. If this sort of thing goes on the Holy Bible and the *Sporting Times* will be the only publications in the country untouched by the dainty blue pencil of the censor.

Straws show which way the wind is blowing. The Rev. J. H. Ritson, speaking at the Wesleyan Conference at Liverpool, said the white races of the world and the Christian nations were now dominated by a growing secular view of life. The opposition to Christianity arose not in the non-Christian nations, but in our so-called Christian lands. The disintegration had even spread to certain Eastern religions.

It will be seen that the old orthodoxies of religion become daily of less importance. Nor, in the particular circumstances, is this so entirely surprising. The world-war was an object lesson which should have impressed the staunchest defenders of supernaturalism. The war's avalanche of horrors should have shocked all thoughtful men and women, and made them pause whilst reciting the Christian shibboleths. Few, we imagine, would feel inclined to refer to an alleged Heavenly Father at the moment when the conception implied that Moloch was devouring his own children by the million. Their hands would be less inclined than usual to go up to "that inverted bowl we call the sky."

And, mark you, at this world crisis, who heard the pathetic cry of humanity in anguish? Was it their thorn-crowned Messiah with his thousands of angels, or their Virgin Mary with cohorts of cherubim, who came to succour the unhappy victims of organized wholesale murder? Not at all! Mankind was left to its own resources, and it was to the ready sympathy of other men and women that war's victims had to turn in the bitterest hours of sorrow and disaster.

Such an upheaval brings home to everyone the impotence of Christianity, and the growth and change of ideas. Knowledge has widened in ways never dreamed of in the narrow ecclesiastical philosophy of the Christian religion. New tones have grown into human sentiment. All the lights and shadows of life have shifted, and its whole surface has been dyed in different colours. The Western world is progressing beyond the reach of Oriental ideals of twenty centuries since. They voice different views which men are outgrowing. They can make no direct response to these. At their note their minds and feelings rouse to little movement, except amazement. They come like "the horns of Elfland faintly blowing," and men are beginning to realize that they were meant for other ears than ours, and are but an echo from the far-off days of the Ages of Faith. The conscience of the race is rising above Supernaturalism. Educated people are daily being driven out of the churches.

The whole matter of the conflict between the Freethinkers and the Churches cannot be settled by trumpery revisions of the Bible. Secularism has invaded the Churches, and all the priests of Christen-

dom cannot put the clock back. Priests may pretend that they are sacred persons; they may even threaten those who differ from them. But the younger generation is beginning to realize that a man may be ordained to the Christian ministry, and yet most certainly have never been converted to civilization.

A story is told of a hard-shell episcopalian minister who resided in an obscure township in Oklahoma, U.S.A. Chatting with a Freethinker, he said: "Thank God! There isn't a solitary Freethinker in my home town, not even one." "Yes!" replied the other, "That's what's wrong with your town. That explains why it is a one-horse show."

MIMNERMUS.

The Truth about the Middle Ages.

(Concluded from page 486.)

As to the boasted religious equality of the Middle Ages, that is another pious fiction. Says Dr. Coulton:—

It was, indeed, possible for a man of lowly birth to rise high in a monastery, but this was exceptional, even beyond the fact that it was very exceptional for a peasant or serf to obtain admittance at all, unless it were as a lay-brother. A St. Gall chronicler could vaunt of the late ninth century that the monastery had never admitted any but freemen, and a twelfth-century poet records a similar boast: "Son of villein shall never be in my cloister."—(G. G. Coulton: *Five Centuries of Religion*, Vol. 2, p. 57.)

As he truly observes: "The modern contention that feudalism was free from snobbery will not bear serious examination." (p. 58.) And further: "There is no doubt that, on the whole, the Church was definitely on the lords' side. We have already seen how Aquinas would have kept the peasants down; quite similar is his attitude towards serfdom." (p. 76.)

Dr. Coulton, in this and his other historical works, gives us an intimate and minute picture of life as it was lived in the Middle Ages; in detail, and with a wealth of illustration from medieval documents on a scale never attempted before. Everyone can now judge for himself as to the conditions of the lives of the noble, the landlord, the monk, and the serf. And it was the labour of the kicked, cuffed, and scorned serf that supported all the rest.

It should also be borne in mind that Dr. Coulton is not a hostile witness, he is not what Christians, in their charity, call an "Infidel"; he is a believing Christian and a member of the Church of England; and in fact, he could have presented a much darker picture of medieval times if he had dealt with equal detail upon the lawlessness, the callous cruelty, the intolerance, the general inhumanity and bestiality of those ages. The beautiful idyllic picture of the Middle Ages, held up for our admiration by Roman Catholic writers, is simply false. False witness in favour of a false creed.

Dr. Coulton does not deal with the science and philosophy of the Middle Ages; indeed, the subjects he has made a study of are more than sufficient to occupy the whole lifetime of any one man. Moreover, the science and philosophy of the Middle Ages required not only a scholar, but a trained man of science for their proper elucidation.

Fortunately, this omission is filled by another equally learned work just published, entitled *From Magic to Science*, by Dr. Charles Singer (Ernest Benn, 25s.). Dr. Singer, like Dr. Coulton, is a Doctor of Literature, but he is also a Doctor of

Medicine and a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians. He is also Lecturer in the History of Medicine in the University of London, and late University Lecturer in History of Biological Sciences at Oxford. Like Dr. Coulton, Dr. Singer is a master of his subject; he has spent a lifetime in researches among the literary remains of the Middle Ages. He is also a recognized, we may say *the* recognized authority, upon the science—especially the medical science and practice—of the ancient Greeks and Romans. His works include: *Greek Biology and Greek Medicine*, and *Greek Science and Modern Science*; also *A Short History of Medicine*, and many other works. What Dr. Singer does not know upon these subjects is not likely to be known by anyone else.

The title of Dr. Singer's latest work, *From Magic to Science* is somewhat misleading, but the publishers may be responsible for that—as they very often are—for the book commencing with a chapter upon "Science under the Roman Empire," goes on to show how it began to decline until, by the end of the fourth century A.D. ancient science entirely petered out, from which point mental deterioration proceeded until the nadir of mental darkness was reached in the tenth century. The "Dark Age" he places between the years 400 and 1543; more than a thousand years!

In the preface the author explains his object: "Here some sort of attempt is made to trace the collapse of ancient science into the swamp of magic and the first attempts at recovery from that hideous slough." (p. viii.)

Now although we are shown the collapse of science, and later, its re-discovery, yet we have no detailed account as to how the decline came about. Dr. Singer skims over this question very quickly, as if it was the thinnest of thin ice. He says the Roman had forsaken his early gods and was presented, as an alternative, with the "oriental cults whose gods were but mad magicians . . . His soul recoiled and he fled into Christianity. Science had induced that essential pessimism which clouds much of the thought of later antiquity. It was reaction against this pessimism which led to the great spiritual changes in the midst of which antiquity went up in flames and smoke." (p. 58.)

It is not very clear what Dr. Singer means by the "essential pessimism" engendered by science. Why did it not operate upon the Greeks, from whom the Romans derived their science? Why does it not operate to-day, when science is again in the ascendant? However, it is quite clear what the "great spiritual changes in the midst of which antiquity went up in flames and smoke," consisted of. It was the change over from Paganism to Christianity, which diverted men's interest from science and the earthly life, and concentrated it upon the future life, in comparison with which the earthly life was dross and stubble.

The following extract, from the preface, is a shrewd hit at those Romish writers who are continually booming the Middle Ages as if they were the golden ages:—

A type of medieval enthusiast exists who would have us believe that the world would be well lost if we could only return to the intellectual habits of our forefathers. Books and articles are written on early Irish learning, on the Carolingian revival, on the British and early English Churches, and on like topics, in a tone which would lead undiscerning readers to believe that the learning, the civilization, the culture, or the humanity of those days are comparable to our own. Progress to these writers is but illusion, and that which has been shall again be. To those disposed to think on these despairing

lines, we may recommend a perusal of the material with which we have to deal. It may be objected that we have chosen the lowest and rejected the highest manifestations of the medieval spirit, and that these are but the products of local ignorance and perversion. But the manuscripts from which we have taken this material are, in fact, for the most part, of exquisite monastic workmanship. They were valuable and valued possessions, written by highly skilled scribes, among a people with whom even literacy was rare. If we were really to exhibit the lowest manifestations of the medieval spirit, we should have to go beyond the written page with which these Essays deal, and should be exhibiting customs comparable to those of West African savages. (pp. x.-xi.)

The medical science, if such it can be called, of the Middle Ages, was entirely founded upon the Bible; as Dr. Singer points out: "The pathology of the New Testament is mainly demonic, and many of the miracles of healing are exorcisms. There were devils of blindness, dumbness, madness, and epilepsy; and Luke, the physician, regarded the great fever of Simon's wife's mother in the light of a demon; for Jesus, he says, 'stood over her and rebuked the fever; and it left her.' . . . So, for the fathers of the Church, disease was largely the work of demons." (p. 157.)

Moreover, the knowledge they had "was not only perverted and corrupted in quality, but that it was also extremely small in extent." Even Albertus Magnus, who, says Dr. Singer, "was among the best, not the worst, of medieval men of science," knew "so piteously little compared to a modern scholar." And of his most important scientific work, "the *De Animalibus*, it has been possible to trace almost every sentence to its source." Which shows that even the greatest of them had no original ideas, they were mere copyists. And finally, as Dr. Singer shows, it was the introduction of the ancient science, which had been preserved by the Arabs, into Europe, mainly by the Jews, who also translated many of the Arabian writings into Latin, that enabled mankind to emerge from the morass of the Dark Ages.

W. MANN.

Rondeau Redouble.

The Dreams of Youth! Ah God, our youthful dreams!
At middle-age how distant they appear:
The hope of Spring: how far away it seems
When we are more than half-way through the year.

At middle-age what dullness and what fear!
The youth, whose mind with noble fancies teems,
At middle-age holds futile, mad, or queer
The dreams of youth. Ah God, our youthful dreams!

The poet young inspired by lofty themes,
At which we smile and Philistines do sneer,
Droops from his vision, and its few faint gleams
At middle-age, how distant they appear.

He hesitates where once his course seemed clear;
His inward light now casts but feeble beams;
His wistful eye can scarce withhold a tear:
The hope of Spring, how far away it seems.

The years leap by more swift than mountain streams;
Fall soon our youth is left far in the rear;
We smile to think of all our springtime schemes
When we are more than half-way through the year.

Forbear, Ripe-Age, forbear at Youth to jeer,
Though Youth be rash and fly to great extremes,
The saint and sage have ever held most dear
That guess at Truth which Folly only deems.

The Dreams of Youth.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

That Revival!

If anyone takes it into his head to take a walk round the Islington Churches, he will, for some time at least, find it difficult to get a seat, even if he is able to worm his way into the crowded buildings. For in Islington, "whole families who for years have been divorced from organized religion are returning to church. . . . In several families the father and mother, sisters and brothers, and even grandchildren, numbering over twenty people," have gone back to the fold. Clearly, it will not take many families reconverted in this wholesale manner to fill the ordinary church. That is why I say that if anyone wishes to attend church in Islington he must get up early. Particularly must he do so if he wishes to attend Islington Chapel, Upper Street. Perhaps, if he does manage to get in to the morning service it would not be a bad plan to take some food with him, and a thermos flask of tea, and stay right on to the evening service.

I mention Islington Chapel, because it is the minister of that chapel, the Rev. Joseph Shepherd, who, in the *Daily News* for July 20, gives this knowledge to the world. He has "seen nothing like it for years." "The people are clamouring for guidance." Men and women have told him that from now on they will take a definite interest in the Christian religion." "Their consciences have been awakened and their faith renewed." The whole of Islington is aflame! And if Islington, one suspects that the same must be true of the whole of London. And if London, why not England? For there is nothing that I know of which should mark off the inhabitants of "Merrie Islington" as being in any way different from the rest of the population of the country. There should soon be a revival in Church building. The long expected and much talked of revival of religion has come at last.

It has all been brought about by the articles published in the *Daily News*, on "Where are the Dead?" Some remarkable, and quite unexpected, consequences have followed the "Great Debate." Here are one or two:—

A little Sunday school scholar was fatally injured in a street accident in Islington last week. When I called on the bereaved relatives, I found that through the *Daily News'* articles they are assured that their little one is not dead, but that his spirit is with them even at the present time.

We pause to wipe away the tears and get on to another:—

The consciences of Islington men who served in the trenches are awakened. One of them told me that he had resolved that those who had died by his side in the "Great War" shall not be disappointed. He will do his bit to establish the great ideal for which they died.

The pulpit has also come in for its share of "uplift":—

Christian ministers should be deeply grateful to the *Daily News*. I have been bombarded with questions, and as a result I am more careful in my sermons. I realize that I must deal with questions which hitherto I have shirked. The people are clamouring for guidance.

Nothing that I have read for some time has so affected me as this simple—very simple—tale of the Islingtonian Shepherd and his recovered sheep. When I think of the grief-stricken family mourning the loss of their little boy, and finding consolation, not in the Bible, nor in the Church, but in reading the articles in the *Daily News*, my emotion overcomes me. They had their doubts before, but they have seen the truth proclaimed in a daily paper. They had "seen it in print," and their doubts dis-

appeared. Moreover, twenty-one out of twenty-four had voted in favour of a future life. The majority had settled the dispute in quite a constitutional manner. For that family, at least, there was no more "debate." The question was settled—by twenty-one articles in a daily paper.

I pass over in silence the effect of the articles on the consciences of Islington ex-soldiers, not being quite clear on their connexion between the men who died in Flanders and elsewhere. Evidently there is some connexion, and as a result we may see a new Church put up to accommodate ex-soldiers. It is true that Mr. Shepherd only spoke to one, but one must not conclude that because one swallow does not make a summer, therefore one soldier does not make an army.

Mr. Shepherd is on quite firm ground when he deals with the effect of the articles on himself. He intends to be more careful with his sermons. He is also going to deal with questions that he has hitherto shirked. Everyone will admit that if clergymen will deliver better sermons—some malicious people have suggested that any change at all must be for the better—there will be cause to thank the *Daily News*. Provided that Mr. Shepherd does not get either intelligible or sensible, he may even receive an invitation from the B.B.C. for a Sunday evening address.

It is sad to know that Mr. Shepherd has been so remiss as to "shirk" certain questions. The people have "clamoured for guidance," but Mr. Shepherd has refused to guide the flock, which in sheep-like confidence has looked to him for guidance. Now Mr. Shepherd has been awakened to a sense of his obligations. He feels that people whose minds can be influenced by the *Daily News* are not above, or below, being influenced by him. If they can find wisdom and spiritual truth in the *Daily News*, then they may even find it in his sermons. The *Daily News* has made it quite clear to Mr. Shepherd that people are not so critical as he had thought they were. They are not so tinctured with modern thought as he had been led to believe they were. Therefore, he can deal safely with the questions he has shirked. And if, greatly daring, he opens his church to a "debate," he can act as did the *Daily News*—see that no one is permitted to speak who is likely to let out *too* much of the truth. No wonder that Mr. Shepherd is of opinion that "Christian ministers should be deeply grateful to the *Daily News*." I should be also if I were a Christian minister.

But I again advise all and sundry that if they wish to visit a Church in Islington they must go early and be prepared for a long wait. Whole families are returning to Church, the people are "clamouring" for more religion, the consciences of the ex-service men are stirred, the great revival of religion has arrived—in Islington. It is quite on the carpet that huge processions will parade the streets of Islington, chanting praise to God the Father, God the Son, and—the *Daily News*.

ALPHA.

Let truth and falsehood grapple; who ever knew truth put to the worse in a full and open encounter?—Milton.

It is plain every great change is effected by the few, not by the many; by the resolute, undaunted, zealous few.—Newman.

There are now but two camps: the camp of reaction and anarchy, which acknowledges more or less distinctly the direction of God: the camp of construction and progress, which is wholly devoted to Humanity.—Comte.

Acid Drops.

We do not imagine that the conviction of a member of the Spiritualist Alliance on a charge of fortune telling will have any serious effect on the propaganda of Spiritualism, nor do we see any reason why it should. The law simply cannot prevent people getting the information, from spirits or others, that they will marry a fair man or a dark woman, etc.; it can only prevent their taking money for it. Which would mean that it could only be done through some association, and this would in turn mean the setting up of a new organization for the control of fortune telling, having its own professional exponents. It is a comparatively harmless form of folly, and in essence the prosecution is a survival of the ecclesiastical endeavour to see that no unauthorized form of superstition is permitted. It has always been the policy of the Christian Church to have, if possible, every form of superstitious idiotcy under its control.

For, consider. To give a few shillings to a person who will tell you, that in the near future you will go on a journey, or get married, or have a child, is fortune telling and criminal. To walk into a Catholic Church and buy candles, the burning of which will in some mysterious way benefit your friends in the next world, or further your prosperity when you get there, is quite legal, and consonant with the highest probity. To go to a man who for a half-crown will tell you that in the near future you are going on a journey and will discover a gold mine soon after you arrive, may lead to the prophet getting fined or imprisoned as a common rogue and vagabond. But let a man tell you where you are going to after you are dead, what kind of place you will live in, and the kind of robes you will wear, and that is good, sound religion, and may lead to your becoming Bishop of London, with £10,000 a year and a couple of palaces in which to receive your clients. We suggest that these fortune tellers, if they require protection, should try and get themselves enrolled as part of the national church. Then they would be with the other fortune tellers and all those who live on the exploitation of human ignorance. For the real evil in these cases the law does not touch, and does not even attempt to touch. It is not in the money taken by fortune tellers that the harm is done, but by the superstitious ignorance that lies at the root of it. And the master superstition, the soil in which this kind of thing is bred, and from which it derives strength, is the religion which is preached in all the churches and chapels, and which the law upholds.

Incidentally, the case presented yet another illustration of what men of "education" are inclined to accept as evidence once they are obsessed with the mania of communicating with the dead. Dr. Henry Munro, one of the witnesses for the defence, as an illustration of the fact that "spirits" foretold the future, said that he had heard "great events foreshadowed." One future event in his life had been foretold, and the Great War was foretold to him by a medium "a month before it happened." He did not believe it. The medium, it appeared, did not tell him that the war would be between Germany and England, but only that England would be involved. Now what state of mind must a man have got himself into who took this information as proof of intercourse with the spirit world—not merely at the time, but now? We imagined that the story that England was totally unprepared for any war with Germany was now quite given up, and that anyone at all in the know knew that quite a month before war was declared it was in the air, and responsible people both here and in France expected it unless events took a sudden and favourable turn. Even apart from this, a medium who at any time prophesied that war would break out, without giving the names of the parties or the place, could be pretty certain to hit the mark one day. And if the war did not occur, those who are affected by such communications never remember the misses. They count only the hits.

It is announced that Tunney, the heavy-weight champion of the world, is to enter the Roman Catholic priesthood. Why not? If there is one man qualified to preach on the texts, "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also," and "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," it is Tunney. And Tunney proving the existence of God in fifteen rounds would fill the largest church in the States.

What a difficult thing it is to always avoid speaking the truth. Canon Raven, speaking at a Sunday school demonstration at Liverpool, informed his audience that "children break away when they begin to think." It is not often that a Canon goes off in this way, but it is a bull's-eye and no mistake.

Another interesting piece of information comes from the Rev. H. E. Fosdick. He says that "One often reads modern sermons with amazement." Not if one reads many of them and can keep awake long enough over the last one. Then one's amazement is regarding the quality of the audience that can listen to them.

Thetford Town Council has passed a resolution favouring the removal of a German gun presented to the town as a trophy of war. Why not plant the gun in the local church? The clergy, plus God, helped to win the war, and so it is only right they should have a trophy to exhibit the result of their efforts.

Oh, these politicians! The other day Mr. Lloyd George said that no pact to end war would be of use that did not limit armaments. But were wars less common when armaments were much smaller than they are to-day? Suppose that all arms were destroyed beyond bows and arrows, would that stop people fighting? In Chicago ruffians fight with pistols. In other parts they fight with the much more primitive weapons of knives or sticks. Revolvers do not increase the fighting, sticks or brickbats do not decrease it. All that an agreed decrease in armaments means is that the destruction, in the event of war, will not be quite so devastating nor so expensive. A decrease in armaments means that each country will have as good an armament as its neighbour in proportion to its assumed requirements, and in the event of its falling out with a bigger neighbour, it will join with others to get the sized armament it needs for war. Anyone but a politician would surely see this much.

Militarism is not dependent on the size or quality of armaments at all. But there is one way in which the taste for war might be greatly discouraged—although one cannot expect any of our leading politicians to either see it or act on it if they do. *Let the military be kept in their place during times of peace.* At present everything is done to place the military in the forefront of our civic life. At all kinds of civic ceremonies the military are there in the place of honour. If the King or the Prince of Wales is to perform a civil function, military guards are provided, and the streets lined with soldiers. In a thousand and one simple civic ceremonies military officers attend in full uniform, and are asked because they are military officers of rank. In our public schools everything is done that can reasonably be done to encourage belief in the army as a desirable profession in life. Everything is done, in a thousand and one ways to keep the army in front of the public as the one institution on which the safety of a nation depends.

In this we are not worse than other nations, in some respects we are better, but the process of educating the rising population in militarism goes on everywhere. And as a natural and a necessary consequence, when disagreements do arise between nations the idea of war is there, and the mind of the public is attuned to it. So if our politicians are intelligently in earnest in their desire to end war, let them try to arrive at an agree-

ment with other nations that during times of peace the army shall not be permitted to take part in any civil function whatever, and military officers shall be forbidden to officiate at civic ceremonies. Let them have the intelligence and the courage to say, not merely that actual war is an evil, but the military life is an evil, and the soldier at best a necessary one. We should then be killing war by educating the civil mind away from it. For it is not so much the soldier who makes war possible as it is the civilian. The soldier merely fights. And if it cannot be done, perhaps an effective plan might be to agree that in the event of war all men over sixty years of age should be put into the fighting lines.

In days of old, before newspapers were bought up wholesale by Beaverbrooks and Northcliffes, and editors were something more than writers who were taken on and discharged with as little ceremony as one gets rid of an office boy, some writers occasionally spoke out. Here, for instance, is a clipping from the *Morning Advertiser* of July 20, 1803. :—

The great plan brought forward by his Majesty's Ministers for placing the country in a state of security against invasion, must indisputably receive the sanction of every man attached to his King and Country. The measure is vast, and if carried into execution, we may set the world at defiance. Still, however, the plan should not be subject to *partial exemptions*: Why are the *Clergy*, or *Medical* men to be exempt? Have such men no stake in the country—no property to lose? and if the public are to be exercised *en masse* on Sundays, the *Clergy* will only have to enjoy a holiday.

But there is perhaps, no body of men that could be of greater service in a field of battle than the *Clergy*, whether regular or irregular: not less than *six thousand* of these gentlemen take out an annual licence for *shooting game*; and certainly a man who can bring down half a dozen brace of pheasants or partridges in the course of a day, may be able to do some execution against a regiment of Frenchmen. The Archbishop of Canterbury might lead the Southern division of this black-coated corps, while his Grace of York might direct the Northern.—The Bishops, Deans, &c., will of course fill up the subordinate offices; the rectors and curates to constitute the serjeants, and rank and file.

We should be the last to say that a great many editors of newspapers in our time did not think this way during the war period. But we are certain that none of them would have dared to say so. They were in too great awe of their owners, and the drapers, and others who would have shown their displeasure very promptly. We have to-day papers with huge circulations, miraculous news-services, and wonderful facilities for giving promptly the results of a horse race, the private life of a murderer, or the way in which a member of the Royal family smokes a pipe, or wears his moustache. But as expressions of independent opinion, it is probable they were never at a lower point than they are to-day.

According to Dr. Chesterman, a Christian Missionary, when missionaries first went to the Congo, the only name the natives had for God was the same word as stood for small-pox. Later they substituted the word for sleeping sickness. Perhaps they had taken a really intelligent interest in the Christian's Bible and had a sense of the fitness of things.

A Smethwick Presbyterian Sunday School is severely handicapped by the lack of a piano. No money is at hand to buy one; so an appeal is being made to kind persons to offer one. It is astonishing what a lot of musical instruments are required by the godly in order to let God know that religious exercises are being proceeded with.

A Wesleyan editor says: "The prevalent disturbance of religious faith is—not by any means the first time in history—accompanied by a remarkable development of religious craving." This must be true. Look at the extraordinary and remarkable evidence of such craving produced by the *Daily News* in its Great Debate, "Where are the Dead?"

The Rev. J. H. Saxton, a Primitive Methodist of Northampton, believes that the Sabbath School can exercise an influence that cannot be found elsewhere. True; and many unfortunate children never manage to throw off the evil influence imposed upon their immature minds.

At Topeka, Kansas, the first Presbyterian Church has found a new way of attracting patronage. Here is the actual announcement of that enterprising vineyard of the Lord:—

LUNCHEON AND FASHION REVIEW
Thursday, One o'clock
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
The newest fashions presented on
living models . . .
(All apparel shown on models, courtesy
The Pelletier Stores Company.)

And as an example of how science and surgery work together for the Kingdom of God, the following is taken from the *Milwaukee Journal*:—

The Lord will fill the teeth for His children who have enough faith to ask Him and to believe that He will do so, declared Lloyd H. Bovee, thirty-three, a farmer living five miles northwest of here. No such concoctions as silver amalgam or even gold are used by the Lord in His dental work, Bovee told fellow members of the congregation which holds church services in the Harris School-house here. The Lord fills cavities with real tooth, the farmer testified Sunday in describing his prayer and the answer to it. Bovee said he had been reading in the Bible about Jesus healing all who came to Him . . . He said he stood on those promises and believed that the Lord would fill his tooth, and that where there was a cavity there now is solid tooth.

On the whole, I think we prefer plain ignorant Mr. Bovee's honest idiocy to all the rubbish of Mrs. Eddy and the Christian Scientists.

Blackpool has a number of establishments in which the publishers of music demonstrate the quality of their wares. There is nothing wrong in this—during the week, but they do it on Sundays, so a busy-body of a chief constable has sent round to the offenders cautioning them that unless the practice of showing music and songs for sale on Sunday is stopped he will take proceedings against them. Quite in the grand style, the chief constable says:

I do not wish to enter into any argument as to whether songs and dancing should be permitted on Sundays, but I have a duty to perform, and I do not wish to bring a case before the court.

This tremendously important individual is not arguing with them, he is simply "a-telling of 'em." But the religious bigot cannot be suppressed, so he complains, according to the *Northern Daily Telegraph*, of

some of the music as objectionable and inappropriate for Sunday. He complained that some of the demonstrators indulged in step-dancing to attract the crowds, and that others shouted through a megaphone; the general atmosphere being out of keeping with the Sabbath.

Now we will wager the next issue of the *Freethinker*, and if we lose will pay the bet over to any Church or Chapel in London, that this policeman is a very devout member of some religious body. The bigot shows itself in every line. If the methods of these men are really a nuisance, they must be as bad on week-days as on Sundays. The impertinence lies in a policeman setting himself to decide what is the proper atmosphere for Sunday. And we will wager another issue of the paper—to be paid in the same way if we lose, that this same policeman finds nothing objectionable in Salvation Army hands blaring out at any time on Sunday, or in preachers indulging in their antics for the glory of God. A fine is all that can be inflicted, even if the policeman has his way with the court. And we strongly advise the music sellers to tell this particular policeman to go to the devil, or anywhere else he chooses.

Canon Charles Raven, of Liverpool, thinks that the principal cause for the present drift from the churches is the wrong methods of teaching religion to the young. Sermons, the music, the length of services, the coming of motor-cars, the week-end habit, and the war have all been blamed, but the chief reason is the prejudice against religion created by inefficient teaching in childhood. Thanks to the form in which clergy and teachers have introduced people to religion, their idea of God is predominantly such as to inspire fear not love; their concept of Jesus is of a remote, rather effeminate, but eminently mythical Being; the Holy Ghost is a name utterly unintelligible; heaven is a fairy-land; hell is a nightmare; goodness means piety—a dull unpleasant life on earth followed by a still duller, if more musical life hereafter. The Canon believes that new methods will alter all this. We are not so sure about that. For the principal cause mentioned by Canon Raven happens not to be the principal cause. The reverend gentleman should make a keener analysis, and, in the words of the heading in his article, "face the facts." These may be unpalatable, but no sort of cure can be suggested until the real causes are known. And when they are known, we are sure the Churches will not discover an effective cure.

Addressing a Whitefield's men's meeting, Dr. Lynn Hough declared that "every great movement depends upon men and women who have achieved soundness and stability in their own hearts"; and that "centre of soundness" comes by the creative power of Christ exercised upon one's personality. Sweeping generalizations that extol the Christian religion appear to be the stock-in-trade of Christian preachers. Great movements have been thought of and organized by non-Christian men and women. That fact knocks the bottom out of Dr. Hough's "every." There is one thing the Christian religion has never taught its adherents—the virtue of modesty. If facility in making arrogant claims for the Christian religion can secure for believers a place in heaven, Christian priests and their followers are sure of a golden crown.

For the potato and tobacco we owe a debt to America; for the following pearl of wisdom uttered by Dr. Parkes Cadman, at the Central Hall, Liverpool, we sink deeper into obligation. He said:—

The Church had learned there was no virtue in democracy unless it was interpenetrated with the spirit of Christianity.

In whose opinion? In the opinion of the Wesleyan Church. And these are the organizations that are supposed to need instruction in the art of advertising!

Women need not now wear hats when looking over Exeter Cathedral, but must do so when attending services there. The God this cathedral is evidently rather peculiar. He is shocked at the sight of women's hair only when they are praying to him and praising him. Or, maybe, the explanation is that, as a concession to modern feminine habits, he had agreed to look the other way, out of business hours. We hope the ladies are duly grateful.

Our Ultimate Aim.

Any radical re-shaping of life must be accompanied, if not preceded, by an alteration in men's opinions about religion. It is for this reason that every man converted to Freethought becomes a force in the work of social regeneration.

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.

B. L. WILKINSON.—Thanks for article.

H. EDWARDS writes: "If the rest of the articles you purpose writing on 'Where are the Dead?' are of the same quality as the three already published, I think the readers of the *Freethinker* ought to give the *Daily News* a vote of thanks. I am a new reader of your paper, but I should say that the Editor of the *Daily News* shows much wisdom in keeping you out of its columns. Will the series of articles be republished?"

J. C. RION.—Excellent, but the "If Christ Came to London" will give a much finer chance for the hawkers of religious futilities than did, "Where are the Dead?"

E. H. JONES.—Shall appear as soon as space can be found.

H. C. B.—Our apologies for not replying to your letter in last issue. To the publications named on your card you might profitably add *Christianity and Mythology*, by J. M. Robertson. Also *Ecce Deus*, by W. B. Smith.

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

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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, 15/-; half year 7/6; three months, 3/9.

Sugar Plums.

A curious leading article appeared in a recent issue of the *Eastern Daily Press*. The writer pointed out that in the case of public libraries and similar institutions their provision was discharged as a public duty, and a corporate responsibility. But in the provision of churches no such responsibility was recognized. The growing suburbs demand more churches and most regard that as the business of the ecclesiastical authorities. But, concludes the article, "There are many who . . . see in it a moral and social responsibility which cannot safely be left to or fairly thrust upon individual or sectional endeavour." The only conclusion to be drawn from this is that churches must be provided at the public expense, and we are glad to observe in a succeeding issue of the paper a letter from one of our readers, Mr. A. W. Coleman, who says quite bluntly that it is a proposal "that places of worship in new religious areas shall be provided, or partly provided, at the expense of the general taxpayer and ratepayer." That is the obvious implication, and we can be quite sure that just as churches and chapels tax the community by not paying rates and taxes, the clergy would jump at the plan suggested by the *Eastern Daily Press*.

Mea culpa! But anyhow, we have sinned in decent company. Sir Oliver Lodge, in his new work on personal immortality, finds that the "exuberant denial of a spiritual or supersensuous existence," in which W. K. Clifford indulged, is shared by the patrons of that "amusingly cock-sure and not over modest periodical, the *Freethinker*." We have a fancy that "cock-sure" is another name for the dreadful habit of not being afraid to say that a thing is nonsense when it is devoid of sense, and the practice of saying quite definitely and unmistakably what we believe. The "polite" way is, in the first case, "We are quite unable to follow," etc., and in the second, that "Such profound problems as the existence of God and a Future Life, baffle our limited understanding." That leaves every muddle-head in the kingdom satisfied that he is on the right road and really grappling with a profound intellectual problem, and perfectly happy.

We may deal with Sir Oliver's book at a later date, but in a quite unrepentant mood, we beg to point out that the indictment might have been more clearly stated. For example, "Spiritual" is a question-begging word, and may mean what we imply when we speak of mental, or psychological—in which case the charge is not true; or it may mean something of a ghostly kind—in which case we deny the existence of ghosts as we deny the existence of witches. And if, "supersensuous" means simply something that does not fall within range of our senses, then Sir Oliver must have read the *Freethinker* very carelessly to have come to his conclusion. We are neither called upon to, nor do we, deny the possible existence of things not discoverable by our present senses. To say that our knowledge of the world is based, fundamentally upon our existing senses is quite another proposition.

The following from *The Poor Law Officers' Journal* for July 20, is worth noting:—

A protest against a candidate being asked to what particular religious body she might belong was made at a special meeting of the Guildford Board of Guardians on Saturday, when they appointed a new Superintendent Nurse.

Three selected candidates were interviewed for the vacant post, and the unanimous choice was Miss J. Rhodes, who has been Deputy Matron and Sister Tutor at Coventry since June, 1926.

When one candidate was being interviewed, the Rev. A. P. Glyn asked, "Are you attached to any particular body of the Church—if that is a proper question to ask?"

Mr. C. Jones: I hope no questions relating to religious matters will be asked or answered. I do not like it at all. Religion is best kept out of such a matter. I protest against the question.

No answer was given.

We are glad to see the incident ended as it did, although it shows plainly what we have so often pointed out, namely, that a parson, although he may be elected on a public body, and by the votes of all kinds of people always regards himself as elected to represent his own sect. In anybody but a parson this would be called a want of a sense of public responsibility. In a parson it is taken as a matter of course.

A Correspondent calls the attention of Mr. Cohen to a blunder in his last volume of *Essays in Freethinking*, which we hasten to acknowledge and correct. Mr. Cohen referred there to Mr. William Archer having received inspiration for his play, "The Green Goddess," from the spirit world. We are informed that this has been emphatically repudiated by the family of Mr. Archer. All that the author said was that the idea of the play came to him in a dream. Mr. Cohen followed without adequate inquiry a newspaper report, although fortunately the statement was only by way of illustration, and is by no means vital to the argument pursued. But it is an example of the way in which the credulity of Spiritualists grasp at anything, when a statement that a man dreamed something, quite a com-

mon occurrence, becomes inspiration from "spirit guides." A great deal of "psychic evidence" is of this quality.

The following was reprinted in the *Evening Standard* of July 24:—

Robert Owen, with such of his friends as are "conscientiously" opposed to all religion, invites ministers of the Gospel to nominate champions to discuss with him the following questions:—

1. Whether all religions are not opposed to facts?
2. Whether all religions do not destroy charity?
3. Whether religion does not keep one in ignorance and poverty?
4. Whether mankind cannot be made more happy and intelligent and independent without religion?

We are very glad to see this acknowledgement of the Atheism of Robert Owen in the public press, in view of the way in which his atheistic opinions are slurred over and reduced to a colourless "Agnosticism" or some other half-and-half heresy. Robert Owen was an Atheist. To him all the religions of the world were, to use his own words, "so many forms of geographical insanity." He spent a fortune in his reforming efforts, and no man of his time did more for the education of the working classes. The "upper classes" of his time were almost beyond education.

Spiritualists and Debate.

ONE of the big guns in the Spiritualist world of today is Mr. Hannen Swaffer, whose dramatic criticism forms one of the entertaining features of the *Daily Express*. Mr. Swaffer is not one of those journalists who love to hide their light under a bush—or is it bushel?—and one gets to know, from his articles, quite a lot about Mr. Swaffer himself. There is no doubt, for example, about the truth of Spiritualism, in which Mr. Swaffer devotedly believes. Indeed, there is nothing whatever in Spiritualism in which he does not believe, though, so far, I haven't read an account of his emotions when he learned how some wicked sceptics, making totally unauthorized grabs at spirit forms, discovered the wraith of a departed lady wearing genuine braces holding up genuine trousers. The worst feature of Spiritualism is the tendency of so many evil spirits to try deliberately to wreck a holy movement by playing pranks of this sort, but fortunately the steadfast devotion to the cause of people like Mr. Swaffer or Mr. Bradley or Sir A. Conan Doyle is sufficient to overcome this terrible wrong, and the spiteful spirits draw back gnashing their teeth in impotent rage.

Mr. Swaffer loves to address Spiritualist meetings, and give wonderful accounts of various "experiences" he has undergone. To a lay mind such as my own, these "experiences" seem dreadfully like countless others with which, ever since the Fox sisters started on their triumphant career in 1848, spiritualistic journals have deluged their readers. Still, everybody does not read these papers, and Mr. Swaffer likes nothing better than a thoroughly receptive audience eagerly hanging on every word he utters, and gratefully acknowledging his splendid attempts to make "summerland" on the "other side" an active reality.

Actresses, naturally, help Mr. Swaffer a great deal in demonstrating the divine truth of Spiritualism. Miss Betty Chester, for example, once mentioned to him that she had lost, two hours before, a comb at the Shaftesbury. (I am not sure whether this means the Avenue, the Pub, or the Theatre). The comb was then immediately thrown into the room by

supernormal means! If that does not constitute proof at its highest and best, then words have no meaning. All Mr. Swaffer's experiences are like that, and how there can be any wicked, low sceptics after such demonstrations leaves the illustrious dramatic critic in a state of unparalleled perplexity. But Mr. Swaffer bravely faces the issue. Please understand once for all, Mr. Swaffer is not a-argufying with you—he's a-telling of you. In a burst of unexampled courage, he lets the unbeliever have it in the neck. No one jeers twice at him, he tells you. But he must be allowed to speak for himself:—

And no one jeers twice. For I am a man of blunt speech and vigorous argument, and, thank Heaven, I have a gift of cynicism which I indulge at other people's expense when they oppose me. My reply, *always*, is this: I will debate the subject of Spiritualism with you in public, anywhere you like. You can choose your own chairman and, if you like, your own audience. If you do not accept this challenge, talk about something else, something you know, about jazz, for instance, or Shirley Kellog. [*Italics mine.*]

Now, I ask you, is not that splendid? Who says, after that, Spiritualists shirk debate? Here is a champion after my own heart, ready to debate in public, anywhere you like. There is no mincing matters. Here is your *chevalier sans peur*. Here is your Ivanhoe, with the additional weapon of cynicism, which, thank Heaven, can be indulged at other people's expense. Bless the dear man! Yet the one unfortunate thing Mr. Swaffer forgot to mention is the snag in the jam. Of course, he'll meet anybody in debate, but he hasn't always got the *time*. The snag is the time, don't you know. Give him the time and he doesn't care who he meets. He only remembers the time when a debate might come off. It was a most unfortunate omission. "I'll speak before any Spiritualist audience anywhere at any time," roars Mr. Swaffer with delightful cynicism," but I haven't time to meet anyone in debate—at least not if it's that dreadful creature the Editor of the *Freethinker*. Besides, he might jeer twice, and that's once too often for me. And then he might also be of blunt speech and vigorous argument, and two of us can't stand on the same platform! No, just you tell him I haven't the *time*!"

Mr. Swaffer hasn't the time to meet Mr. Cohen. He has, of course, the time to give lectures and to write no man jeers twice at him, and he is ready to debate with any sceptic. But not with Mr. Cohen. Oh, dear no. It is not a question of Mr. Swaffer's superlative courage or his undeniable facts. It is merely—you quite understand—a question of time. Give him the time and he is ready to meet anybody, anywhere. But what would you have when he hasn't the time? Let us quaff a goblet to the great champion of Spiritualism!

H. CUTNER.

Count Your Blessings.

You blessed the regimental flags
And mighty ships of war.
But in your pious innocence
I don't think you fore-saw,
What modern science would invent
So now you can't refrain,
To bless the cruel poison gas,
And bombing aeroplane.

S. SODDY.

A Little More Gargling.

LAST week I showed how evolution and geology can be reconciled with Christianity, by pointing out that they are simply illustrations of the beauty, perfection, and completeness of God's holy work. For creation is ever appearing; this is inevitable from the nature of its inexhaustible source. That being so, unenlightened minds will always encounter difficulties; and it is my intention, this week, to deal with more of these, for they constitute a serious barrier to the development of right progress.

I propose to hold an enquiry into the so-called suppression by the churches of the liberty of thought and speech. This is a topic for which Freethinkers especially display a distinct partiality; and if I can persuade these unfortunates who have not been enlightened of the glorious fact that they are God's children, that entertaining resentment for fancied injuries stands in the way of universal understanding and sympathy, then I shall rest content. For the qualities expressed by our Lord—those of unselfishness, love, and humility—must be expressed by ourselves before the Divine Love can be revealed in all its beauty and wisdom. God has given us the power to think righteously; and until one understands and puts this into practice, he cannot become one of His children.

To fix our ideas, let us consider the case of Galileo, bringing to our aid all the Christian ideals of fair play and brotherly love in an endeavour to understand why the Catholic Church paid more than usual attention to this scientist. In the first place, let it be clearly understood that Catholics were quite prepared to render all possible assistance to Galileo provided he was content to be satisfied with the mere viewing of orbs through optic glass. If this is understood, then it should be perfectly obvious why they were a trifle annoyed when he suggested to them one day that the world might not be the centre of the universe. For they realized that such a belief as this would seriously interfere with the domestic arrangements of their Church. When a body of men have undertaken the responsibility of shaping the Spiritual Destiny of the WHOLE of mankind, it is a little tiresome to be bothered by such tactless persons as Galileo; and the Catholic priests did, I think, the correct thing in requesting him to keep his opinions a little more to himself. They even went so far as to provide him with a special room for the purpose—together with an implicit guarantee that his contemplations would not be disturbed by the general public. That the Church has since been proved wrong and that Galileo has been proved right, is just the sort of thing that would impress those who had not experienced the Glorious Sufficiency of the Christian Faith. Why, even the Bible itself, if we put a too literal interpretation on it, proves God to be a hopeless nincompoop! But it is such things that bring forward the true type of Christian. For my own part, this superficial biblical evidence does not impress me in the least. My faith convinces me that God wanted to be thought of as a nincompoop in order to prove to us that He was nothing of the kind. I generally find that instances like this which call for subtle discernment, prove too much for the feeble imagination of the majority of Freethinkers. Under the circumstances, therefore, it is really in their place to respect the opinion of those who have been imbued with the Glorious Spirit of God. We Christians have been chosen by the Heavenly Father to make the sunlight of His will penetrate every nook and corner of this earth. That is the real reason why the Churches consider it desirable to pay particular attention to those who spend their time searching for truth, and more especially when these truths threaten to become at all inconvenient.

But in this connexion, and I do not wish for one moment to question the infinite wisdom of the Heavenly Father, I cannot help thinking that He has a little overdone it in sending to us such a galaxy of tactlessness as Paine, Galileo, Voltaire, Sir J. Simpson, Darwin and Sir Arthur Keith in such bewildering succession. We do not object in the least to Sir Oliver Lodge, for he does not fall into the error so common with most scientists, of calling in question perfectly obvious truths.

But to send the others, without an adequate interval between each of them in which to give our recognized methods of controversy a fair chance, is such a very serious tax on those who are working for the Salvation of mankind.

The worst of it is, it is difficult for us Christians to impress upon the world the need of regarding science in its proper proportions. For when all is said and done, what has it really accomplished? It may perhaps, be instructive to consider the work of Sir J. Simpson, for instance. He discovered the surgical use of anaesthetics—it was really too uncalled-for. Their only use, so far as I can see, is to facilitate the removal of certain portions of the anatomy. What has all this to do with SPIRITUAL welfare? I consider that the Catholic Church displayed the true spirit of Christianity in condemning their use at child-birth. It was our Lord's intention that women should experience a little pain now and again, and it is simply disgraceful that His purpose should be thus so flagrantly interfered with. However, when it is fully recognized by the world that true progress and actual achievements are only possible when thought responds to the Father's will; and that activity emanating from the mere human will is simply a waste of time, a drastic reconstruction will be necessary. But this human blindness fortunately does not discourage the Churches in their work. They are the same now in spirit as they were in the time of the old Roman cardinals. The purely Christian method of teaching and preaching are the same, and will continue to be the same until the Last Day, for the Divine purpose for which they were created will ever remain unchanged.

In conclusion, I must refer to the gratifying response to my offer of last week with regard to the bringing of lost souls into the light of spiritual understanding. It distressed me very much not being able to reply to some very urgent cases, but in this connexion I would again point to the necessity for enclosing a stamped addressed envelope. In many cases, too, the text required such delicate handling that I fear I shall have to hold off the answers until an opportunity occurs for me to visit the local library, in order to consult the latest works of Mr. Chesterton. However, that need not deter those whose spiritual ailments are of a very minor character.

B. L. WILKINSON.

In the Light of Christ.

It is recorded somewhere in St. Matthew, I believe, that the devil took Jesus to the top of an exceeding high mountain, and shewed him all the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them. While dwelling for some time on this thread-bare figure of speech, we propose, in the first place, to accept implicitly the word of those who wrote the passage. In the second place, we intend to dispense with that tedious, though none the less pertinent criticism which insists that Christ must have been a trifle rural to take the devil's word for it that the panorama before him included every kingdom. For it by no means follows that if a person is simple-minded, it is necessarily a reflection on his godly character. Indeed, in real life, the two qualities so often appear side by side as to suggest the possibility of a causal law between them. But that is mere speculation.

Now the earth is an oblate spheroid in shape; and we will assume it to have an independent objective existence. Therefore, we cannot entertain the possibility that it became momentarily flat—even for the convenience of children's fairy stories; for this would entail a serious disturbance among the planets. On the other hand, we are willing to permit Christian mythologists to allow Jesus to rebuke the winds and the sea; to hold back the tide when no one was looking; and, in general, to be the great fore-runner of Maskelyne and Cook, but at a period when people exhibited that nice perception that does not call for a scientific explanation of unusual phenomena. But as for persuading the planets to adjust their equilibrium whilst he borrowed the earth for a few moments to tinker with its dimensions—no, I fear we cannot grant that. We could imagine the good protoplasm on Saturn registering curiosity and some alarm when they found their birthdays coming round

with rather more insistence, and when their favourite satellite Phœbe suddenly abandoned its retrograde motion for one more complicated. Hence, if one cannot accept our theory concerning the indiscriminating nature of our Lord's receptive faculties, we are forced to the conclusion that there must have been something remarkable about his eyesight. His ophthalmic outfit must have contained provision for temporarily rescinding the rectilinear character of the propagation of light. This is feasible, since no two persons see the same thing alike. For instance, no two persons see the same thing quite the same light—that is, of course, when they enjoy normal health. On a deathbed it is a different matter. We have it on good authority that when one's mind and faculties are weak and wandering, even a life-long Atheist regards God with eyes of benevolence.

We must assume, therefore, that Christ's retina was such that he could, at will, adjust it so that rays of light would, before striking it, describe any arbitrarily assigned locus. For instance, if he wished to see all the kingdoms of the earth from the top of an exceeding high mountain, his brain would telegraph the message to the optical nerves: Be good enough to prepare for reception in plane circular arcs of 4,000 miles radius.

Now in the light of this theory, it is not a little remarkable that credence was given to Newton's Corpuscular Theory for so long. While admitting the possibility of corpuscles of light sprinting from a source to a person's retina, it is hardly likely that under any circumstances would they adopt any route other than a straight line. Travelling in a lemniscate (say) at the colossal speed of 180,000 miles per second would bring into play a violent centrifugal force which would shoot the unfortunate corpuscles off to infinity. The result would be a world of complete darkness with a halo of light at infinity which would only be visible from the other side. Hence, if we are to accept the word of the Bible, the Corpuscular Theory is simply untenable. It is very curious that this point of view did not occur to scientists like Newton, who were supposed to have had a telescope in one hand, a cross in the other, and a Bible in their laps. Moreover, we cannot regard the case of Jesus as an exception unto itself; for if we did, what would happen when the Kingdom of Heaven called one day, and the earth was flooded with people of great faith? But perhaps adjustable retinas are peculiar to redeemers alone.

It would be interesting to conjecture what would happen if Jesus were living to-day. If residing in England—which is more than probable, since he would wish to be near his loyal friend Mr. Chesterton—he would, of course live in a mansion and have at least £10,000 a year. For even Christ would find it impossible to preach nowadays to the accompaniment of crusts of bread and tattered garments. All our bishops, as true, godly, unselfish, unworldly, sharing-with-the-poor, and intellectually honest men, have given it a fair trial; but they have found that simple living is not conducive to the reception of divine inspiration. Then there would be the difficulty of providing spectacular temptation for our Lord; for devils nowadays do not possess the necessary qualifications such as ability to maintain equilibrium on the pinnacles of temples without the aid of faith. Probably a Chicago film-comedian might be persuaded to lend his services in return for the forgiveness of sin in marrying a second time. It is not a little disconcerting to know that nowadays, with all our boasted common sense and sane outlook, nobody seems to have seen angels alight from burning bushes, or to have had a short Cook's tour inside a whale, with the added attraction of being coughed up on dry land. I wonder why?

However, my intention in supposing Christ to be living to-day was to consider the advantages of such a retina as his in regard to certain modern problems. First of all there would be no night for him. When the sun had gone down he would be able to see it. He would be able to see any star at any time of the year; to see the other side of the moon (for this, propagation in straight lines with a hook at the ends would be required); to have a private solar or lunar eclipse any time his inclination led him that way; and, any time

astronomers needed information arising out of a transit of Venus, to supply them with it. If he ever lost his pipe inside a dark theatre, rays of light would be required to travel from a street lamp outside, turn through the doorway, and by a series of dance-floor manoeuvres involving osculation with hyperbolas, conchoids, chainettes, parabolas, catenaries, helices, epicycloids, astroids, Pascalian limaçons, hypocissoids, Archimedian spirals, cardioids, and trigonometrical loci, hurry along corridors, up stairways, past attendants, chocolate boys, programme girls and the audience's knees, make for the pipe, and finally end up on the retina. If he was driving a car, he would be able to see round corners and behind him without disturbing the muscles of his neck. If a young lady was coming down a side street while he was walking down the main road, he would be able to contemplate her at his leisure, for she would not be able to see him. How useful this would be to modern parsons! Just picture to yourselves a curate anbling amiably along a sidewalk. Picture to yourselves a pretty young thing floating along towards him. Picture to yourselves the shudder and the expression of apparent indifference on his face as he momentarily dipped his gaze a few degrees. Picture to yourselves young Juliet fluttering by, and the simultaneous appearance of concentrated, making-up-for-lost-time, and feverish interest on the godly countenance as he adjusted his retina in order to see behind him. Finally, picture to yourselves the curate offering up a silent prayer for strength and forgiveness, and the subsequent re-appearance of the original beatific mask of godly respectability.

When we consider even a few of the results of the possession of a Christly retina, it is forced upon us that it is as well that there are some people without superlative faith. For if everybody had it, the accomplishment would lose a good deal of its charm. We should be able to see each other looking at each other round corners, and that would never do. Let us be content to leave such things to fairy stories and for the amusement of kiddies between nightfall and bedtime. In spite of the injustices that have been perpetrated under its cloak, and no matter to what ragman this garment is eventually assigned, let us be thankful that Christianity existed, and let us preserve the Bible as a competitor to *Grimm's Fairy Tales*; for without it, the material for a sense of the ridiculous would be seriously restricted, and paternal resource on dark evenings would be severely taxed.

PANSY.

American Notes.

"MILLIONS OF ATHEISTS."

Mr. E. T. Colton, Secretary of the foreign work of the Y.M.C.A., has raised Cain amongst his audiences and readers. He has recently tried to organize Y.M.C.A. work in Russia and Siberia. Probably to cover his own incapacity for the job thrust on him—at a good salary—he makes a terrible "thriller" of his story about the demons of Russian rulers. It is impossible to learn what are the real facts from a perusal of this clerical orator's inflated rhetoric, except that Mr. Colton has failed. "Millions of Atheists," he says, are being made by the Soviet Government.

Needless to say, the paid officials of Christianity consider the absence of Christianity a serious loss to morality, good government and even health. Russia is too young an Atheistic Government for any great results to be immediately forthcoming. It also exercises a new and hitherto untried political system with which we as Freethinkers have no concern. But two facts stand out as remarkable. First, the Government is undoubtedly opposed to every sort of religious help (or hindrance) in its work. And secondly, even with all sorts of political and financial difficulties, the Russian Government is neglecting no kind of civilized public work of education, poor relief, or other form of national aid to progress which the most religious governments of the world usually undertake. It is probably the only government at the present day which regards education as more important than armaments.

The best that Mr. Colton can say for religion is :—

The Church recognizes the existence of the spiritual principle; Communism denies it. The Church believes in the living God, Creator of the world, Guider of its life and fate; Communism does not admit His existence, believes that the world was self-organized, and that no reasonable principles or purposes govern its history. The Church sees the aim of man's life in the heavenly calling of the spirit, and never ceases reminding her children of their heavenly fatherland. She does this even when the conditions of outward culture and material well-being are at their height. Communism desires to know no other aim for man except his welfare upon earth. And this difference of ideology and philosophical view-point which exists between the Church and the State manifests itself also in the realm of practical everyday life, and in that of morality.

And his fear of the "millions of Atheists," while easily to be understood by everyone who has ever had to face unemployment, has so little basis from the point of view of public polity, that Mr. Colton imagines the world will be frightened by reading Trotsky's sensible words which he quotes :—

A complete abolition of religion will be attained only by a developed socialistic order, that is, with the help of such a technique as shall liberate mankind from the humiliating forms of subordination to nature, and by such social relations as are deprived of mystery and are clear through and through and do not press upon mankind. Religion translates into the language of fantastic symbols the chaos of nature and the chaos of social relations. The liquidation of the terrestrial chaos can alone forever do away with its religious reflection. A sensible, prudent, planned guidance of all sides of social life will exterminate forever all mysticism and deviltry.

WHERE SCIENCE ENDS.

This is the heading of an article in the *Literary Digest*, and its text is the banal childishness of some nonsense written by Mr. Alfred Noyes, of England, which it quotes with approval :—

We cannot identify God with a universe in which nothing is self-sufficient, or its own explanation. Behind all these contingent shadow-shows we are driven at last by inexorable logic to that which is its own explanation, and is sufficient to itself and all that it has produced. When we ask what the attributes of that Being must be, we are forced to believe that they are above reason and beyond nature as it is known to science. What is this, after all, but the supernatural Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible, of whom the Nicene Creed tells us, and whom St. Augustine found, not in the discourses of the Platonists, but in the voice of the Supreme Personality, infinite in perfection, speaking to what was highest in his own personality, and saying, "Come unto me"?

That "inexorable logic" of Mr. Alfred Noyes is too good to be lost in the literary pages of an American journal. *The Lutheran*, from which the *Digest* quotes, hails Mr. Noyes as "literally the voice of a prophet." *The Lutheran* ought to know. Is it not the organ of those who worship Martin Luther, who said: "The fool (Copernicus) wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy. But sacred Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and not the earth." Inexorable logic, no doubt, judged by the standard of all prophets in all ages.

NOWHERE TO LAY HIS HEAD.

The Methodist Cathedral at New York is about to be completed. A recent gift of £100,000, by Mr. Phillips, a "public utility man," whatever that is, raises the fund to £6,000,000. It will be a sky-scraper building, and the money will not be wholly lost: it will, indeed, not merely give Jesus a pretty expensive place to lay his head, but it will also return the "investors" a handsome annual dividend. Profiteering in religion is not new, but it is more flagrant and unashamed than it was.

It must not, however, be supposed that the new six million pounds building was necessitated by the absence of quite a number of expensive "places to lay the head" of the lowly despised and rejected Nazarene. Not at all. *The New York Herald* publishes a list of the costliest churches in that city, with the money spent on building them; and the "accommodation." It seems, too, that

about two hundred million dollars more is represented in the further new churches, cathedrals and synagogues in course of erection in New York City.

An article in the current *American Mercury*, complaining of the ridiculously inadequate salaries paid to the overworked librarians in the United States makes one wonder at the *Herald's* pride in parading these wasteful new unwanted buildings.

"The Man That Nobody (except Bruce Barton) Knows," is being advertised. The "Star" that found the manger in Bethlehem will not be needed to indicate the Methodist Sky Scraper in New York. The angels will have to take an express "elevator" to reach the top floor where the Son of Man raises (not lays) his head. "I, if I be lifted up," assumes a new meaning. "In my Father's house are many mansions," will read, as far as New York is concerned, "In my Father's Methodist Mansion are many flats," and the flats will be of two kinds, and both kinds will pay dividends to the Methodist money-makers.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Correspondence.

FREETHOUGHT CYCLING CLUBS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In his paper to the N.S.S. Conference, Mr. Rosetti provides much food for thought. He advocates in particular the building up of a social side to our Movement with a view to attracting and retaining the younger generation. I hope something may be done towards acting on this suggestion.

In this connexion I would suggest the forming of N.S.S. Cycling Clubs, as offering many advantages to our Movement. Such clubs would prove attractive to the new generation, and furnish a useful outlet for youthful energy and enthusiasm. They could combine Freethought business with pleasure, by carrying Freethought into small towns within a 50-mile radius of every large centre. They would also enable the isolated member to take part in militant Freethought activities.

Cycling being an all-the-year-round recreation, each N.S.S. cycling club could furnish support and also help to Freethought speakers at both indoor and outdoor lectures. Aspiring young speakers, who were cyclists, could train and test their powers away from their home towns; this would, I think, appeal to some who are diffident about addressing their home-town folk. By means of the cycling clubs, such novices could develop confidence and skill. I may also mention that if each club would invite non-Freethinkers to attend runs, many potential Freethinkers might be drawn into our Movement.

I may add that the Socialist Party has proved the value of cycling clubs. To-day there are scattered about the country sixty sections of the Clarion Cycling Club, each of which is working along lines similar to those I have suggested for N.S.S. cycling clubs.

Your readers will admit, I think, that few other pastimes offer so many advantages—social, recreational, and propagandist—to our Movement as cycling offers when organized into clubs. Cycling readers who favour the forming of a club in their district should write to the Branch Secretary of their area.

D. P. S.

Obituary.

MR. J. L. VICKERY.

PROBABLY the oldest Freethinker in London passed away on July 25, in the person of Mr. J. L. Vickery, in his ninety-fourth year. Mr. Vickery had been an enthusiastic Freethinker for the greater part of his long life, although increasing years, with deafness, had kept him from public meetings for some years. But his interest in Freethought never flagged, and he was a frequent caller at the *Freethinker* office some five or six years ago. He was always a keen inquirer about the work of the party, and as delighted as could be at the progress our ideas were making; and, looking back at his lengthy experience, he could judge better than most. Most of the older

members of the Movement in London will hear of his death with regret, as snapping another link with the past. The funeral took place on July 28, at Norwood Cemetery, Mr. Gorham of the R.P.A. officiating.

The National Secular Society.

EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD AT 62 FARRINGDON STREET, ON JULY 26, 1928.

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Miss Kough, Miss Vance, Messrs. Corrigan, Easterbrook, Gorniot, Quinton, Samuels, Wood, and the Secretary.

Minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

Apologies for unavoidable absence were received from Messrs. Clifton, Coles, Hornibrook, Neate, and Rosetti. New members were received for the Parent Society, and for the following Branches: Chester-le-Street, Liverpool, and South London.

Correspondence was received from the Chester-le-Street, Liverpool, Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Birmingham Branches, and from members of the Society.

The question of London meetings was raised and discussed, and other propagandist items dealt with.

It was decided that the next meeting of the Executive should be on Friday, August 31, 1928.

F. MANN,
General Secretary.

Society News.

MR. J. CLAYTON'S MEETINGS.

RAIN on Monday and Tuesday, July 23 and 24, made out-door propaganda impossible, but a most successful meeting was held at Nelson on Wednesday, when a large audience listened attentively to the speaker. Considerable local interest was taken in the debate which Mr. Clayton had with Mr. Robinson at the Nelson I.L.P. on Sunday, July 29. A large audience heard the debate, and afterwards offered the Secular speaker their congratulations on the way in which he stated the case for Secularism. Mr. Clayton concluded a busy week by lecturing at Burnley on Sunday afternoon.—A.B.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH.

THE Liverpool Branch has increased the number of its out-door meetings to four each week. Lectures given at Beaumont Street, Lodge Lane, have provoked determined opposition from Christians. Ugly threats to rush the platform have been met by persistent good humour on the part of the Branch speakers, and the tact and tolerance displayed in the face of Christian bigotry is bound to carry weight with the members of the audience whose opinion is worth while.

SOME PIONEER PRESS PUBLICATIONS:

SOCIETY AND SUPERSTITION, By ROBERT ARCH.

A Commonsense View of Religion and its Influence on Social Life. 4d., postage ½d.

RELIGION AND SEX. By CHAPMAN COHEN. Studies in the Pathology of Religious Development.

6s., postage 6d.

THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH. By Col. R. G. INGERSOLL. id., postage ½d.

WHAT IS RELIGION? By Col. R. G. INGERSOLL. Contains Col. Ingersoll's Confession of Faith. id., postage ½d.

THE ROBES OF PAN. By A. MILLAR. Literary Essays. 6d., postage id.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

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.—Bank Holiday. No Lecture.

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

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.—Ramble to Stoke Common and district. Conducted by Mr. Lidstone. Train Marylebone, 10 a.m. Take cheap return Gerrards Cross, 2/2.

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : 12 noon, Mr. James Hart.—A Lecture. 3.30 p.m., Mr. Campbell-Everden. 6.30 p.m., Messrs. Hyatt and Maurice Maubrey. Free-thought 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) : No Meeting.

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. (Houghton) : Tuesday, August 7, at 7.15. A Lecture. (Hetton) Thursday, August 8, at 7.15. A Lecture. Speakers—Messrs. T. Brown, J. T. Brighton.

LANCASHIRE DISTRICT.—Sunday, August 5, Accrington Market, 7.0; Wednesday, August 8, Nelson (Chapel Street), 8.0; Friday, August 10, Rawtenstall (Bacup Road), 8.0; Sunday, August 12, Todmorden (Centre), 7.0. Speaker—Mr. J. Clayton.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S.—Each week as follows. Sunday: 6.45, Beaumont Street—Messrs. Shortt and Sherwin. Monday: 7.45, Beaumont Street—Mr. P. Sherwin. Tuesday: 7.45, Beaumont Street—Mr. J. V. Shortt, Islington Square—Mr. P. Sherwin. Thursday: 8.0, Edge Hill Lamp—Mr. P. Sherwin; High Park Street—Mr. J. V. Shortt.

WIGAN (Wigan Market Ground) : August 4 to August 11 inclusive, Mr. George Whitehead. Sunday afternoon meeting, at 3.0 p.m.; all other meetings at 7.30 p.m.

A FREETHINKER whose occupation takes him away from his home all day, and whose wife is compelled to be under medical care for a considerable period, desires a home for his two healthy boys, aged three and five. A married couple without children of their own preferred. Terms must be moderate.—Address: G. CLARK, 11 Raveley Street, Tufnell Park, London, N.W.

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