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Views and Opinions.

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The Will to Believe.

No one who is acquainted with religious controversy in modern times would be surprised to find that many of the pleas used by the *Daily News* writers take the familiar form of the argument from ignorance. Sometimes the want of reason is quite frank. Thus, the Rev. H. R. L. Sheppard says that while it would be comforting to be able to sit down and prove the existence of a future life, the time arrives when "a man comes to the certain knowledge that with the intellect he can prove nothing." But when he has done this,

He may begin to understand that we do not believe in immortality because we have proved it, but that we try to prove it because we believe in it.

That is a very clear endorsement of what I said last week, namely, that what is advanced by the writers are not reasons why people believe in a future life, but excuses for continuing to believe in it, a plea of "Please let me alone, I feel so comfortable." It would be cruel to be hard on a man who so frankly asks for mercy. And we may leave Mr. Sheppard with his belief, which he admits he cannot prove and does not hold because anyone has ever been able to do so. Mr. Sheppard will, I have no doubt, find comfort in the statement of Mr. Robert Lynd that the child is more nearly in agreement with great religious teachers than is Sir Arthur Keith. I should expect children—from seven to seventy years of age—to be impressed by the statements of both gentlemen.

Mr. Lynd also confesses that he does not know of a single conclusive argument by which he could convince anyone of the truth of immortality. But, of course, he believes in it firmly. Mr. Hugh Walpole—quite a dare-devil where anything non-reasonable is concerned—says:—

Suppose that to-night it were definitely proved to me beyond the shadow of doubt that Sir Arthur Keith's words were true, even then I should not believe it. Nothing can rob me of my conviction.

The *Daily News* knew what it was about when it

selected Mr. Walpole—that is, so far as its Christian readers were concerned. Mr. Walpole will continue to believe the future life to be true, even though it is proved "beyond a shadow of doubt" that it is false—which leads one to inquire, how does a man manage to believe a thing to be true and at the same time have it proved to him—that is, believe it—to be false? But where religion is concerned, Mr. Walpole evidently is a whole-hogger—and of such is the kingdom of heaven. I think there is already a Saint Hugh in the calendar, but if not, here is a good subject. The Church will never find a more suitable one.

Mr. Hilaire Belloc states the Catholic, and his own, position in a little more intellectually respectable language, although it amounts to the same thing. He says:—

The Catholic believes in the immortality of the human soul (and for that matter in the very existence of the human soul) on Authority. He believes it because he is told it is true by the voice of the Church, which . . . is for him the voice of God . . . Having concluded by the use of observation and reason that the Church has this supreme power and the right to teach, I accept what she teaches, and trust her more than I do the evidence of my senses. Whether I can imagine the thing believed or not is to me of no intellectual consequence at all.

That is quite frank, and is the orthodox Catholic position. Mr. Belloc agrees with Mr. Lynd in saying, "I don't care a damn whether the belief is true or not, I am going to believe it." The reasons for acting so are not identical in the two cases, but they are the same in the end. One cannot argue with such people, one can only gaze and admire, and wonder whether there is anything quite like Christianity for so completely robbing a man of mental dignity and self-respect. No wonder these men snatch at any argument, no matter how irrelevant and how inconclusive, to bolster up their position. I do not wonder that they fight shy of open and straightforward debate.

* * *

Science and Nescience.

I do not think that much time need be spent with the very frequent assurance that science cannot disprove the existence of a soul. Professor H. J. Spooner admits that science cannot prove that "the impalpable entity we call the soul is present in the mortal body," but that matters nothing because it cannot disprove the non-existence of a "death surviving soul or consciousness." I quite agree with this, but my difficulty is to find how one can prove the non-existence of anything. How does one set about that task? Suppose I assert the existence in the stomach of a diamond-shaped impalpable, invisible entity, which at death takes to itself impalpable wings

and turns itself into an impalpable butterfly. I am quite sure that no scientist on earth can prove that such a thing does not exist. He can only say that he sees no sign of any such existence, he can see nothing for it to do, nor trace anything it does, and is able to explain all that takes place without it. Still, I could defy science to disprove it, and I could write columns of the stuff written by Professor Spooner to show that my conviction is very satisfactory—to me, and that “deep in the hearts of most people”—or at least in the hearts of such as agree with me—is the conviction that I am right. But that does not answer my question of how on earth one can prove the non-existence of something that does not exist. Actual proof and disproof must surely be concerned with existing things or with conceivable things. But what of things that do not exist, or which are not conceivable? Is it quite impossible for believers to discuss religion without descending to such downright foolishness as this? And if men of education, professors in universities, well known writers in history, or literature, can write thus, why should one be surprised at the intellectual inanities of the Bishop of London or street corner Salvation Army ranters? The most charitable conclusion is that it is not the man but the subject that is responsible.

* * *

Evolution and Annihilation.

A variation on the argument from nescience is the statement that nature will not destroy something that it has taken so long to produce as man. Mr. T. R. Glover, the gentleman who writes articles on religion weekly in the *Daily News*, says he is led to believe in immortality “because I find it so hard to think the universe or human nature without immortality,” which would be quite a convincing argument if we could only take Mr. Glover as a safe measure of what is mentally possible, or if the universe was under some kind of a contract to live up to the requirements of Mr. Glover. The plainest expression of this sort of thing, touched on by several of the writers, was given by the Editor, who said, in the course of a concluding article:—

Is it reasonable to suppose that a product of centuries of infinitely marvellous evolution, such as the soul of a man is, simply perishes when the body dies? Where in the whole of the universe does annihilation operate?

This is frightfully confused, but we will take it at its best, noting only that it is the question of the existence of a “soul” separate from the body that is the whole point at issue. But to the question, “Where in the whole of the universe does annihilation exist?” (journalists who ask that kind of question ought really to confine their abilities to reporting police court cases) the answer is, “Everywhere.” There is no part of the known or conceivable universe where the *form* is not ultimately annihilated. The *Daily News* is evidently confusing two very different things. When science speaks of nothing being annihilated it means fundamental force, or matter, or what philosophers call “substance.” But it does not mean that the *form* of things is not annihilated; on the contrary, it points out that nothing known to us in the whole of nature is permanent. And if we follow the analogy to the end the assumption surely is that just as other forms pass away, so the form, man, no matter how highly specialized, will one day pass away also. The answer, then, the scientific answer to the question is, “Everywhere.” There is really no room for argument here, it is an axiom of modern science.

Man and Nature.

Why should we suppose, as do many of the writers, that “evolution” (again, I disavow any responsibility for this way of using the term) or nature will not destroy so valuable a product as man. In the first place, I have sympathy with the Rev. Mr. Sheppard’s query, whether “Eternity would suffer if we happen to be snuffed out altogether?” Certainly the universe appears to have existed without man, and I see no reason for a serious disturbance of things if he ceases to exist. The piece of egotistic foolishness involved in the “demand” that man must continue to exist or the universe is a fraud and a failure we will examine later. At present we are concerned with the argument from evolution. And where in the whole course of animal evolution can we find evidence that nature is concerned with the preservation of the individual? The law here is rigorous and universal. The organism that falls below a certain level of efficiency is swept on one side. Even in human society the same law operates, although here the issue is somewhat disguised by a modified change in the terms from mere individual to social efficiency. And if nature is not careful of the individual, neither is it careful of the species. If these writers, instead of evolving theories in the seclusion of the study, or in the foggy environment of the pulpit, would consider the facts, they would realize the significance of the extinct species of animals which geological history furnishes. “The history of the rocks” is one long testimony to the small care which nature takes of even the species. And man also comes under the same law. The earliest type of man we know are extinct. In our own days several varieties have died out and others are in process of disappearance. What are we to say of these things? Are we to argue that every one of these extinct varieties of man, and even of animals, is existing somewhere else? If so, on what ground is the assertion made? The only reason that can be urged is that they do not continue to exist here, and therefore, they must exist somewhere else, and that as nature gives us not a single instance of any anxiety to preserve permanently either individuals or groups, therefore it must intend to preserve them in some future state. In most directions we base an argument for the future on what has happened in the past. In religion the argument runs that because things have run in such and such a way in the past, therefore they *must* run differently in the future. God, on the hypothesis, having so arranged things that every one of his products come to an end here, it is argued that he *must* have made another world in which these are miraculously perpetuated. Otherwise they say, to quote the *Daily News*, “Can the Creator be pictured as the author of such a diabolical joke as to give man that instinct (for immortality) and then laugh at him at the last.” But if there is a God, and if he gave man the “instincts” he has (there is really no “instinct” in man for either immortality or religion), the instinct for life here is as strong as any, and if that instinct is futile very early in the life of many, and ultimately in the life of all, why should we take it for granted that the alleged instinct for a future life receives gratification? Again, in other directions we judge what the future is to be like by our experience of the past. In the language of the *Daily News*, the Creator does laugh at man during life, why not at death? It is very kind of these men, who, finding that the “Creator” does not manage things as well as he might here, give him an opportunity of correcting his blunders somewhere else. They give him another chance, under a kind of First Offenders Act passed for his special benefit.

I really know nothing at all about a Creator, and do not know whether he can enjoy a joke, or whether he is as solemn as a parson removed from a good "living" to a poor one. But if he exists, and if he enjoys a laugh, and if there is a celestial press-cutting agency which keeps him up to date with terrestrial affairs, then the *Daily News* will set heaven ringing with his laughter at the mental gyrations of his followers.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be continued.)

A Real Chinese Cracker.

"When found, make a note of."—*Captain Cuttle.*

"East is East, and West is West,
And never the twain shall meet."—*Kipling.*

"The chief difference between a theatre and a church is that you pay to go in one, and pay to get out of the other."—*Mark Twain.*

UNDERTAKERS and clergymen cultivate the same gravity of countenance, but undertakers unbend out of working-hours, usually on licensed premises. With the clergy, however, the seriousness appears to be chronic. From the slight droop of the lip of the Anglo-Catholic to the resemblance to a tired funeral-horse of the soldiers of the Salvation Army, the type can be recognized. Indeed, as faith wanes, the gravity of the priests grows more pronounced. If there are any jolly monks nowadays, they are hidden in the monastery gardens. Although the clergy no longer smile; they sometimes cause laughter, not only by their appearance, but also by their pearls of speech. The latter are often priceless, and must add to the gaiety of the nation.

Editors, who are wicked and worldly-minded, have noticed this peculiarity. Not for worlds would they print verbatim the sermons of the saintliest archbishop, but they dig out the indiscreet utterances of bishops and curates alike with amazing and clock-work regularity. Should the Bishop of London talk more than usually like a maiden aunt, he is rewarded with a bright headline. If Woodbine Willie discusses theology with the breeziness of a bargee, he finds his words in print. When Billy Sunday expresses his ignorance with the vigour of a backwoodsman, the naughty pressmen turn his utterances into "copy," and religious conferences, from those of the Anglo-Catholics to the Anabaptists, from the Methodists to the Muggletonians, have ever been happy hunting-grounds for journalists pursuing paragraphs that pay.

A recent sample is taken from the Wesleyan Conference at Liverpool, where the Rev. J. H. Ritson said he would be thankful to see a real Chinese missionary in England, and he was sure it would come to pass. When I read those lines I felt like stout Cortez, when he stared at the Pacific and swore softly at his men. What a prospect! Mind you, I am no novice in these matters. I am hardened enough to be able to listen to the leather-lunged lecturers of the Christian Evidence Society, and can hear them drop their h's with a bang without blanching. I have withstood the blandishments of countless evangelists, both male and otherwise, who have asked me where I expected to spend eternity. My ears have listened to the nasal twang of hundred-per-cent "Ammurican" citizens, who have told me of the message of Mormonism, and of the beautiful home-life in the Salt Lake City. Theosophists have told me fairy tales of the Mahatmas of Tibet, and Spiritualists have related more fairy tales of life in the Never-Never Land. But Chinese evangelists sound like a desperate adventure, worse than going to Boulogne for the day through a lumpy sea.

I want to be fair to the Rev. Dr. J. H. Ritson.

His thanksgiving regarding the prospect of a real Chinese missionary followed a piteous plaint that the Christian nations were going to the "demnition bow-wows." According to Brother Ritson, they are dominated by a growing secular view of life. This dreadful Secularism has attacked Eastern nations, but Oriental religions have a spiritual element. Hence his burning desire that England should be reconverted to religion, even if it be by a Chinaman.

The remedy seems as bad as the disease. If this Chinese missionary makes good, the prospect is appalling. To begin with, the staff of the *Free-thinker* will have to learn Chinese, so as to intelligently follow the evangelist. Even if he talks the "Oxford English," usual among his compatriots in Limehouse and Liverpool laundries, he will be preaching a new faith, and so add yet another burden to those hard-working sceptics. Whatever that faith is, it will be non-Christian. It may be Confucianism, or it may be Buddhism, or some other drowsy syrup of the East. The twelve Chinese Presbyterians in China are most unlikely to send one of their number to reconvert Scotch Presbyterians to the same faith. Being Presbyterians they would not so waste their saxpences. If the gospel message be that of Confucius, or that of Lăo-tsze, or even Mumbo Jumbo, it makes little difference. The strong Christian love of the 50,000 priests already in Great Britain will prompt them to homicide in the defence of their faith and their stipends.

You see what an inflammable matter religion is. If one solitary Chinaman starts a strange evangel he will be mobbed. This will mean a riot, and the Celestial evangelist will find himself at Scotland Yard for a prolonged talkee-talkee. He may even find himself in a little room with barred windows. If the missionary follows custom, and brings a warship and soldiers, what are we to do? There is sure to be a row, and somebody get hurt. Then follows a little war and a question of indemnity. All this will happen, too, in the name of "love." The Chinaman will quote the Buddhist Golden Rule, and his opponents will hurl the Beatitudes at him as well as the bricks.

Brother Ritson is in a hurry to reach the millennium, and I am not at all sure that his Celestial messenger will be so welcome as he imagines. Besides, to substitute one superstition for another is almost as bad as to give a patient smallpox in place of scarlet fever. As a great poet once observed, an onion by another name would talk as sweetly. The ordinary citizen in this country no longer pays his pew-rent because he notices that precept and practice are no longer associated in the Christian fold. Nor does the Buddhist circus correspond with the highly-coloured posters on the walls, so why should Tweedledum be preferred to Tweedledee?

Things often look better on paper than in sober fact, like the navy of the Sultan of Zanzibar, which was, report says, once a Thames pleasure-steamer. The teachings of Confucius and Lăo-tsze are altruistic; but even German travellers, who nose out most things, have failed to notice this pleasing trait in the Chinese themselves. Buddhist priests are as keen tradesmen as the Christian clergy in this country, and will not allow a coin to pass them alive. If report be true, the Chinese Penal Code begins with the Thirty-third Degree and ends by putting the unhappy prisoner through a sausage machine. At the present time the Celestials are engaged in the humanitarian enterprise of cutting each others' throats, just like the Christian nations in the great war. Indeed, the resemblance between religion in China and religion in Britain seems as close as that between an alligator and a crocodile.

There is one attractive item, however, that Britishers might adopt with advantage from Orientals. This is the praying-wheel, a machine which combines utility with ornament, and enables a believer to repeat his prayers by turning a handle. Like so many mechanical inventions it is labour-saving. Let the Christian believer in this country use the praying-wheel, and he will have no further use for the clergy. At once there would be a saving of many millions yearly, for there are 50,000 priests in this country, the majority of whom enjoy comfortable incomes. With a praying-machine in his home, the believer should be more certain than ever of his salvation. Whereas his prayers now occupy three minutes daily, the supplications could be extended enormously to his spiritual advantage. With an electrical attachment the prayers could continue night and day, month in and month out, right through the Christian year.

The believer need not even limit his supplications on behalf of the Royal Family, but could include his local Member of Parliament, his mother-in-law, and other weak vessels in need of grace, wisdom, and understanding. Some business men might even include a prayer for their office-boys, so that they might expect a letter posted in less time than three hours. Not the least advantage would be, if the idea materialized, that the manufacture of praying-machines would constitute a new and important industry. Indeed, their sales should be colossal. What Christian could resist such an appeal as: "buy a wheel, and go to heaven." Some of the disbanded clergy, instead of joining the ranks of the leisured class, could act as commercial travellers for the praying-machine, and thus once more be in the soul-saving business. It is not so far-fetched as it sounds. This is a mechanical age. Even the War Office, solid as the Stone Age, has mechanized the army. Why should not religion be mechanized also? So far as the State Church is concerned, religion has been a mechanical matter for centuries.

The coming of the praying-machine is a consummation devoutly to be wished, both by the believer and the unbeliever. The Christian will have his faith strengthened, and his praying-power increased by much horse-power. The "intellectuals," in their turn, must also benefit. By the disendowment of the priests, many millions of money will be available for other purposes than the keeping of putrescent superstitions in cold storage. If, for example, this truly enormous revenue could be applied to national education, what marvels could be accomplished. The masses in this country could be really educated, instead of being half-educated. Boys and girls of ability could get a chance of self-expression, instead of having to wait half a lifetime for an opportunity. Teachers would not be over-worked and underpaid. It would mean a great stride towards a real civilization.

The praying-machine is a better method than the importation of Chinese missionaries, however Celestial. There is some danger in inviting a foreign invasion, even of sky-pilots. If the new evangel proved popular, it is within the bounds of possibility that Ho Mi and Li Ka Joka might prove greater successes than Gipsy Smith and Burglar Bill. I submit the claims of the praying-machine to all really seriously-minded Christians. Besides, I am too old to master the intricacies of the Chinese language.

MIMNERMUS.

The real history of mankind is that of the slow advance of resolved deed following laboriously just thought: and all the greatest men live in their purpose and effort more than it is possible for them to live in reality.—John Ruskin.

Pagan Christianity.

THE troubling of the theological waters, caused by the controversy over the Prayer Book, has been all to the good so far as Freethought is concerned, because it drags into the light, and throws open for discussion, ancient and discredited doctrines and rituals which it would be better, in the interests of the Church, to have kept in the background.

People who never thought about the things in dispute, because they had been brought up to believe in them without thinking, or because they thought it was wicked to doubt them, have been forced to consider the grounds for their belief in these irrational dogmas and practices.

Moreover, you cannot deal with one dogma, or ritual, like the Eucharist, without bringing up other questions, such as the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, who wrote them, and where, and when? One subject cannot be railed off and discussed by itself; it must inevitably involve all the religion from its foundation upwards. And the questions, once raised, are out of control of the Church. The thinking public no longer looks to the Church for information. While the two viragoes, Evangelical and Anglo-Catholics, are engaged in their shrill and discordant dispute, the sensible people apply to the archæologist to learn what he has to say upon the subject. And he has a great deal to say.

One of the first-fruits of this state of affairs is the publication of *The Paganism in our Christianity*, by Arthur Weigal. (Hutchinson, 7s. 6d.) Mr. Weigal is the well-known Egyptologist and Archæologist, for many years Inspector-General of Antiquities to the Egyptian Government. He is also the author of many historical and Archæological works, including *A Life of Akhnaton*; *a Life of Cleopatra*, and *A History of Egypt*, two volumes of which have been published, and the third of which is in preparation.

Mr. Weigal, in his introductory chapter to *The Paganism in our Christianity*, observes that the tumult aroused by the Prayer Book controversy has reverberated through Christendom; "but the non-partisan layman, unless he has chanced to be by habit a church-goer, has found it no simple matter to decide which of the two delivers the greater insult to his secular intelligence—the bigoted Evangelical 'Fundamentalist,' or the strange and subversive Sacramentalist." (p. 12.) And further:—

The whole fight, however, in its doctrinal aspect, is relatively unimportant, because it is overshadowed by the much more serious fact of the growing indifference of educated people throughout the world to church-going at all. On all sides one hears it said that the dogmas of Christianity can no longer be accepted by the modern mind, there being such a wool of nonsense interwoven across the warp of Christian belief that the intelligent layman must needs weave his own religious fabric. Not merely the English Prayer Book in England, but the whole scheme of Christian theology as taught throughout the world by the various sects and churches, is now under criticism; . . . The fear that Christianity will collapse before the dread tribunal of modern rationality is widespread; and it is perhaps for this reason that the layman in England shrinks from investigating too closely the theological matters involved in this great Prayer Book dispute, and confines himself, as I say, to a somewhat blind opposition to the reintroduction of any foreign practices ejected at the Reformation. In these chapters I want to bring that lurking fear into the open. (pp. 13-15.)

To make clear his own opinion about Christianity, he says that, "such of its doctrines and beliefs as have the genuine authority of the historic Jesus Christ are unassailable and eternal." But he believes, "that much of the generally accepted Christian doctrine is

derived from pagan sources, and not from Jesus Christ at all, a great deal of ecclesiastical Christianity being, indeed, so definitely paganism re-dressed that one might almost speak of it as the last stronghold of the old heathen gods. I believe that the adoration of these ancient gods has never died out, and that in places of Christian worship to-day we still unwittingly maintain it, and solemnly recite the myths of heathendom." (p. 16.) Yet, for all that, he believes that there really was a historic Jesus and that his teaching alone can inspire us to "that fervent adherence and service, which in former ages could be obtained from the average layman by the expounding of theological dogmas, the threat of hell, and the performance of elaborate rites and ceremonies."

If by "former ages," Mr. Weigal means the Middle Ages, as he evidently does, then we can only suppose that he is not so well acquainted with the Middle Ages as he is with the pre-Christian ages. However, he quite candidly admits to a bias in favour of the Church. He says: "I must confess to a certain prejudice in its favour, due to a fact which fairness compels me to admit, namely, that I happen to be respectively, the stepson, the grandson, the nephew, and the cousin many times over, of English clergymen." If any of these gentlemen happen to be at all orthodox, I imagine they will immediately disown all connexion with Mr. Weigal after reading his book, for it is a perfect arsenal of facts and arguments against the prevailing beliefs which constitute Christianity.

Apologists of the Chesterton school deride those scholars who hold that there is no evidence that such a person as Jesus Christ ever existed, as if they were cranks who can safely be ignored. Mr. Weigal is not of that opinion, he says: "There is a widespread critical school which, seeing only the gods grouped about the Christian altar, thinks that Jesus never existed at all, but that His life is a myth invented during the First Century A.D.; and it is with this powerful school that I wish to do battle." Mr. Weigal, who is a vastly better authority than a score of Chestertons, recognizes these scholars as "this widespread" and "powerful school."

We do not think that many Christians will thank Mr. Weigal for his book. They will be more inclined to say, with Falstaff: "Call you that backing up your friends?" Or with the householder in the parable: "An enemy hath done this." For, far from establishing the historical existence of Jesus, Mr. Weigal, at the outset, abandons all the contemporary evidence for his existence which has hitherto been advanced with such confidence. He admits that there is no contemporary reference to Jesus in history, except in the Epistles of Paul and Peter, "where, however, His life on earth is hardly mentioned at all, nor anything which really establishes Him as a historic personage." (p. 26.) He points out that Justus of Tiberius, and Pliny the Elder, do not mention him; and that the testimony of Tacitus, Josephus, Pliny the Younger, and Suetonius is quite worthless. And that the Gospels "were not written until the last quarter of the First Century and first quarter of the Second Century, and therefore are open to the charge of being fiction." (p. 27.) Yet in spite of all this, Mr. Weigal thinks that when the Gospels are "stripped of their supernatural trappings, and when critically edited," they yield "the historic figure of a young man, the son of a carpenter, who went about the country preaching and healing the sick, who was ultimately regarded as the Messiah or Christ, who was crucified as an imposter, and, after being taken down from the cross as dead, was seen alive by many persons."

Around this historic figure, so Mr. Weigal con-

tends, "a mass of pagan legends collected, and a great theological structure grew up, and to-day these have to be removed, so that we may get back to the real and credible Jesus. We have to face the fact that the church congregations are dwindling because people are saying—and quite rightly—that many of the dogmas of the Faith are borrowed from paganism, and many of the details of the life of our Lord are too wildly improbable to be accepted in these sober days." But when all these excrescences have been removed, we shall, says Mr. Weigal, find the real Jesus, "if only we can break through to Him past the ring of old gods who have surrounded Him." We are, in fact, to remove from the story of Jesus all the supernatural, and all the miracles. Also all those stories which coincide with the mythology of the Pagan gods. By that time, it seems to me, the historic Jesus will have evaporated into thin air.

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

Savagery in Civilization.

THE past half century or so of evolutionary teaching has driven home the lesson that we must seek the meaning of things in their history. Forms of animal life, animal capacities, ideas, institutions, beliefs, all have an ancestry, and it is only in the light of their history that they can be completely understood. Our culture enshrines customs, some of them of value, even though of a different one from that which distinguished them formerly; others are useless, but continue because they are harmless, or because of a certain picturesque value. It is not often that these customs are recognized for what they are, but to the instructed in such matters their nature is unmistakable. Few, for instance, know that when drinking the health of another person they are perpetuating the very ancient custom of pouring out a libation to the family gods, and asking for their good-will in return for the offering of a little drink. In this instance, it will be noted, the primary significance of goodwill is still there. Other instances might be given that are not so innocuous.

Readers of newspapers will have come across many accounts of the marriage of military officers, and will have seen pictures of the bride and bridegroom leaving the Church. There is the more or less happy couple in the centre, with the brother officers forming an archway of drawn swords, under which, and through which pass the married pair. So, for most readers, the matter ends.

But why the arch? Why only in connexion with marriage? A guard of honour drawn up in connexion with other ceremonies does not adopt this form. Why, we repeat, is it done in connexion with a marriage?

Let us start with the fact that the bride and bridegroom are leaving a building in which is enshrined the dogma that in at least one instance a birth was the direct result of supernatural action. More, the church in which the marriage was performed sanctions the belief that prayers to a supernatural being may effect procreation, and which sees nothing wrong in men and women asking their particular god to send them children. Probing further, we discover that there exists all over the world practices which point to a time when all birth was supposed to be directly due to the incarnation in the woman of one of the tribal spirits. Mr. E. S. Hartland has published a three volume work, *The Legend of Perseus*, and another work in two volumes, *Primitive Paternity*, which contain hundreds of examples in support of this; and there is, of course, that ency-

clopædia of primitive thought and custom, Frazer's *Golden Bough*. Certain of the aboriginal tribes of Australia have this belief to-day. They believe, and say, that when a baby is born it is due to no act of the male, but to one of the tribal spirits taking up residence in the body of the woman. The Christian story of the Virgin Birth has a very lengthy and interesting history behind it, and is a surviving instance of a once world-wide belief which covered all births without exception.

Two things have to be borne in mind. One is that originally woman only is connected with the birth of a child. Her connexion is obvious, direct, and invariable. The connexion of the man with the birth of a baby is not obvious, it is not direct, and is more in the nature of discovery. The stage of pre-fatherhood is that in which the child is born as a result of the action of the tribal spirits. And the problem of the woman who wishes to have a child is how to get the tribal ghosts to give her what she requires.

This explains why we have, not merely in savage communities, but also in all parts of Europe, customs and legends, the whole significance of which is to be found in the consideration just stated. One need not, however, go outside the Christian Church and Christian communities for examples. There is, first of all, the general practice of offering prayers for children. Then there are the hosts of beliefs in the eating of particular things, which must be done at set times and under certain conditions. To these must be added such popular sayings as the rocking of an empty cradle by a young woman will lead to its being filled. Within the Church we have prayers to saints, embracing the statues of saints, in some cases under such conditions as can leave no doubt as to the purely phallic nature of the ceremony. At Perugia, one Church does a good trade selling Lourdes water, which is sold under the seal of the Pope. The drinking of the water is believed to cure sterility. In Finchale Priory Church, Durham, there is a seat which, if a woman sits therein, she will, in due course, become a mother. At Jarrow-on-Tyne, brides use the chair of St. Bede for the same purpose. One could fill a large volume with examples to the same end.

We pass on to the next step. It is a well known and well understood thing that mimicry plays a great part in primitive religious ritual. Most savage dances, if not all, have their origin in mimetic magic. The rain dance—intended to procure rain—imitates the sound of rain falling; the war dance imitates the capture and slaughter of enemies. Fertility dances, which so shock missionaries, act on a similar plan. The indecent element in the latter is provided by the "civilized" onlooker, there is nothing of the kind in the mind of the savage. The idea underlying all this is pure magic. It is a way of getting what is wanted by inducing or coercing the powers that be to respond.

We have now got very near the significance of the arch of crossed swords outside a Christian Church. In Cornwall, and in other parts of Britain and the Continent, may be found here and there some curious shaped large stones, with a hole in them large enough to permit the passage of a human body. Tradition has it that a woman who wishes to become a mother may have her desire gratified if she goes alone to one of these stones at a certain hour and crawls through the hole. The custom is anything but dead. One may imagine that if the woman does not become a mother the faith in the magical power of the performance will not be greatly weakened. As with prayers, it is a case of "Heads I win, tails you lose."

To those who are versed in the meaning of such things the meaning is obvious. The passage of the

woman through the hole is symbolical of the child's entrance into the world. It is mimicking the "portals of life" so that the actual birth may materialize. Similar examples may be found in many parts of Europe. It is present in the arch of crossed swords at a Christian marriage. The savage with his fertility dance, the peasant woman crawling through the hole in a stone, and the hole in the air made by the arched swords are all parts of the same thing. It is a form of primitive magic, asking the tribal god to make the union fruitful. And it is only fitting that it should be with us in association with an institution that is a perfect museum of petrified phallic and other primitive customs.

Of course, to those who take part in it, there is nothing more than a picturesque custom. As such it will continue, and other things equal, as harmless as the libation that is poured out to the bride and bridegroom at the wedding breakfast.

ALPHA.

Acid Drops.

The *Daily News* has commenced its series of articles on "If Christ Came to London?" and it almost looks as though the writers had consulted our forecast as to what the articles would be like and had written accordingly. As an illustration we may take the article by Mr. Angus Watson, which was heralded as "probably the most remarkable article ever penned by a business man." Mr. Watson says that if Christ came to London he would be pleased to see men and women trying to live up to his ideals (nature of ideals not stated), he would be indignant with the Scribes and Pharisees (offences not stated, and who are the Scribes and Pharisees also unstated), he would be impressed with the beauty of the Church Service, but would not be pleased with the Prayer Book controversy, he would smile at the garb of the bishops, he would marvel at our war machinery (it is not hinted that he would condemn it, since that might offend someone) he would look with questioning eyes on the pomp and circumstance of our State, he would look at the idle rich (but, apparently say nothing to offend them), he would approve the charity of the Salvation Army, etc., he would visit the hospitals and watch our surgeons. (Nothing said about casting out demons and curing by prayer). Finally, he would gather round him a little group of friends and followers. (A thing that no one in this world, no matter what he was teaching, has ever failed to do.) So ends the most remarkable article ever written by a business man.

You see, the whole idea is not to say anything that can by any possibility offend anyone, but to keep the advertising value of "Always use Jesus for all aches and pains" unimpaired. Really, we do not know any public man who has not something to say against the Scribes and Pharisees, they even denounce each other. No one is pleased with Prayer Book controversy, each side wishes the other side would drop it, and the outsider wonders what it's all about. All parties are a bit ashamed of our war machinery, and everyone pokes fun at the pomp and circumstance of our State. So we might go through the programme. So far, the articles simply bear out what we said, namely, that nothing would be said but the emptiest of commonplaces, and so would be nothing more than an elaborate humbug. Why does not the *Daily News* take our suggestion and set its writers discussing "How would Jesus deal with the war problem," or the labour problem, or some other concrete question? Of course, it will not do this, because if it were attempted it would prove the utter inability of Jesus Christ to deal with anything. And that would never do.

One of our readers sends us a report of a speech made by the Bishop of Chelmsford, in which that gentleman lets himself go as follows:—

One hundred years ago or thereabouts, little children were sent to prison, they were even hanged for petty crimes! We have changed all that! And who has done it? The pioneers in that movement have been members of the Christian churches.

That is excellent! A visitor from another planet might reasonably conclude that when Christians arrived in this wicked world they found young children being sent to prison, or hanged, or ill-treated, and at once, or in just about a hundred years, they set to work and remedied these things. That is, unless they were thoughtful enough to ask: When did Christianity commence, and who offered opposition to this kind of thing being removed? Then they might come across just a few facts that would put quite another complexion on the matter.

First of all the inquiry might bring forward the information that it was with the Christian people of this country that the factory system originated, and that it was under this system that children of six and seven years of age were kept at work in the mills as long as fourteen hours a day, deliberately murdered for the sake of the profit they brought to their Christian employers. In the mines, the children were articed to work fourteen hours a day. If men and women applied to the parish for relief, the parish claimed the right to dispose, at their pleasure, of the children of those receiving relief, and these were promptly hired out to the mill-owners, or to chimney-sweeps, for the horrible task of climbing to chimneys, actually a practice of child slavery. It was considered quite a comfortable situation in which the children worked only seventy-four hours a week. These children were apprenticed till they were twenty-one, and one need not be alarmed at exaggerating the facts, since nothing could exaggerate the state in which they were kept.

Now we should be greatly obliged to the Bishop of Chelmsford if he would compile a list of the Christians who worked against this state of things, and those who supported it and reaped profit from it. The Church of England drew its profits from the mines, but I do not know of any protest raised by the body to which the Bishop belongs. The Wesleyan Methodist revival was in full swing, but that Church also remained silent. It was a period of great Christian activity, but apart from the usual philanthropy, none of the well known Christian bodies appear to have seen anything very wrong about it. And there is this to be said for it, that even though the children might work for fourteen hours a day, though they might be under-fed and well beaten, yet their religious education was not neglected. They were taught to pray, made to attend Sunday school, and the apprentice masters were ready with their certificates that the children were being well and truly taught the principles of the Christian religion.

And the principles of the Christian religion! What were they? Well, here they are as laid down by that well known *Christian* philanthropist, William Wilberforce, in his *Practical View of the System of Christianity*. In that very pious work he tells the poor that Christianity teaches them to be diligent, humble and patient. They must also bear in mind that if they lack many comforts which the rich have, they are also free from temptations by which the rich are beset. Moreover, they must bear in mind

that their more lowly path has been allotted to them by the hand of God; that it is their part faithfully to discharge its duties, and contentedly to bear its inconveniences, that the present state of things is very short; that the objects about which worldly men conflict so eagerly are not worth the contest . . . having food and raiment, they should be therewith content since their situation in life, with all its evils, is better than they have deserved at the hand of God; and finally, that all human distinctions will soon be done away, and the true followers of Christ will all, as children of the same father, be alike admitted to the possession of the same heavenly inheritance.

Could anything be more admirable than this? It is true that Wilberforce gave his strong support to the

anti-combination laws, which provided transportation for any workmen who should get together for the purpose of getting an increase in wages or better conditions of labour, but he did hold out to them the comforts of Christianity. It is also true that Freethinkers like Robert Owen, Cobbet, Francis Place and others, cried out against this systematic exploitation of childhood by Christian employers, but they did not dwell upon the blessings of Christianity, so the Bishop of Chelmsford rightly ignores them. He would be unworthy of his position if he did otherwise.

Before leaving the subject, we should very much like to introduce the Bishop of Chelmsford to the Rev. Daniel Nihil, who, in addition to being chaplain, was in 1837 appointed Governor of Millbank prison. One of the steps taken by this Christian man, was to get a boy of eighteen sentenced to three hundred lashes with the "cat." The boy died before he received his full allowance—which must have grieved the good chaplain very much. That he was greatly concerned about the spiritual welfare of those committed to his care was evidenced by his bitter opposition to the appointment of a Roman Catholic chaplain for the purpose of attending to the members of that faith.

Sir Gerald du Maurier thinks "there is no earthly reason, and certainly no divine reason, why the public should not be entertained on Sunday night." Sir Gerald is mistaken. There certainly is a divine reason. The parsons have had it direct from God. It is "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy"—which means, according to inspired interpretation, "Let there be no competition to interfere with the parsons' Sunday trade."

A woman writer in the *Daily Express* reminds her readers that just seventy-seven years ago Mrs. Bloomer, of Massachusetts, first appeared in the garments to which her name has been immortally attached. These greatly shocked the men and women of that time. The majority of men and women then dubbed the garments and those who wore them, "immodest."

The same writer makes some observations about modesty. In the minds of the majority of people, she says, modesty is predicated on the covering of the body. "The more clothing, the more modesty, and vice versa. They measure it by the yard. They can conceive of it neither as a way of life nor as a state of mind." We think this will come as a shock to our puritan friends. The following, too, may give a rude jolt to godly men:—

It is the old Adam in man that incites him to a tirade against a woman wearing a one-piece bathing suit. When he insists that in the name of modesty she shall don enough clothing to sink her, that is tantamount to admitting a moral weakness and no little emotional susceptibility.

The writer adds that the new and more enlightened conceptions of modesty are far more wholesome than the old. We agree, adding that they are more wholesome because they are less Christian.

A reader of a daily paper considers that the neglect of the Bible is the cause of empty churches and the growing loss of religion. So far as he is concerned, the older he grows the more he clings to the Bible for guidance and help. What he should now consider is why the Bible is neglected. Possibly he may find out that average persons have discovered they can get along quite nicely without studying the queer superstitions and muddled philosophy of an ancient race of shepherds. And arising out of this discovery is a further one—that they can also manage without gratuitous or other advice from self-appointed guides called "men of God." These are far-reaching discoveries. They have thrown men back upon reason as their surest guide. And that augurs well for the future progress of mankind.

Mr. Justice Rowlatt thinks this world is so full of nonsense that one doesn't know where one is. Well, he should console himself with the thought that there is less nonsense in the world than there used to be. Four-fifths of the people do not attend churches. This means that the nonsense of the parsons can only be broadcast to a limited number of minds.

The Rev. J. N. Britton: "Until the Church thoroughly acquaints herself with the industrial situation she cannot render effective help." If the parsons are to be believed, the Church has a sure and easy method of obtaining the desired information. She has only to ask God for it. Apparently, the Church has omitted to do that, according to Mr. Britton. She has been busy with more vital matters. She has been trying to decide the proper way to petition God. Once the Prayer Book difficulty is settled she will know exactly how to ask for the desired information. First things first is the Church's motto.

The newspapers are gravely discussing the modern "noise plague." As a start at diminishing this, why not prohibit blaring Salvation bands and pious community-hymn-singing mobs?

"What we all want is what the old people call the grace of God; and call it a sense of humour," says Mr. J. A. Cairns, the magistrate. Mr. Cairns is mistaken. A sense of humour cannot be "the grace of God." Where in the Bible, from which such grace might presume to be learned, can one find any signs of a sense of humour?

When, under the terms of a recent bequest, Southwark Cathedral is enlarged, a "children's corner" will be made for boys and girls of the locality. A weekly journal is greatly pleased with the idea. "That's how it should be. New schemes that do not take account of the new generation are foredoomed to failure." For our part, we think the money would be more usefully spent in acquiring a playing field and a club-room, which would be open both Sundays and weekdays. Certainly such things would benefit the children far more than a corner in a praying-shed. And we are sure they would be preferred by the wholesome-minded modern child.

The Bishop of Chelmsford described as "cowardly" the parishioners of Galleywood, who pelted with tar, eggs and soot, the vicar with whom they disagreed. He might truthfully have described them as Christians. For the parishioners' method of expressing disapproval is typically Christian. Religion breeds intolerance. And to the intolerant Christian mind, violence naturally suggests itself as the only means for silencing or suppressing opposing ideas and the exponents of them. The trouble encountered by the vicar would appear to have been caused by his, or his predecessor's, training of the parishioners having been too thorough. Galleywood would be more peaceful if the pagan virtue of tolerance could be inculcated.

According to a religious weekly, the Vicar of Southborough, near Tunbridge Wells, would not himself claim to be among the "scholars," but he can always be depended upon to deal very conclusively with the claims and theories of the Higher Critics, and he is recognized as an outstanding fundamentalist stalwart. Stout fellow! What a hero he would be in Tennessee.

After reading the Old Testament, one would imagine that it takes a lot to shock the Christian God. Nevertheless, the sight of a woman's uncovered head in church is more than the Celestial eyesight can stand. So we gather from a *Daily Sketch* reader:—

Modesty is one of the beautiful traditions we hold. And as it is reckoned, both by Scriptural authority and high-minded present-day people, to be immodest for a woman to uncover her head in a place of worship, then such a view must be accepted by decent people.

Quite so. Long live the "high-minded" and "decent people"!

The organizers of the Scripture Text Carriers' Convention in London are asking for prayer that the Lord may be graciously pleased to grant fine weather on August 5 and 6, in order that their meetings in Hyde Park will be successful. Writing before these dates, we hope the Lord will be gracious. There are millions of pleasure seekers not interested in Scripture texts, who hope for a happy holiday with plenty of sunshine.

In the *Radio Times*, a listener says: "An uncongenial programme is really a blessing in disguise, as it gives us a good excuse for going to bed early." But a large number of listeners who are not pious are not anxious for a programme that will send them to roost early Sunday evening.

J. H. Parsons, the Warwickshire professional cricketer, intends to resign in order to become a Church of England parson. Every man to his taste, of course. But we think that the job of giving pleasure to a sport-loving crowd is a better one than that of assuring people they are miserable sinners.

The Rev. Leslie Weatherhead says: "During the past few days I have been contemplating with absolute wonder and amazement that source of everything that is—the mind of God. Everything we see and know had its beginning in that vast brooding mind." He adds that everything that is once existed as an idea in the eternal mind of God. Yes, but why stop there? Why not continue—everything that once existed as an idea in the mind of the Christian God once existed in the mind of the Creator of the Christian God.

A reader of *Radio Times* reminds the Editor that so far "nothing has been done for that by no means insignificant minority of listeners who have little respect for Sunday." The word "minority" is obviously a misprint for "majority." He also points out that for most, Sunday provides the only opportunity they have for daytime listening. But "there is no morning programme, and 6.30 to 8 p.m. is vacant, and the material that is broadcasted is nicely calculated to induce that smug Sunday satisfaction of the conventional classes." This listener will no doubt be glad to know who is responsible for his boring Sunday. It is the B.B.C.'s select committee of parsons who are responsible. Their chief job is to see that, as far as possible, there shall be no wireless competition to spoil the Churches' Sabbath trade. In commercial circles this is called "safeguarding" or "protection."

Of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, a Sunday school journal says they have both recognized the supreme importance of a teaching ministry and a complete education, which is fundamentally a religious education, for both the growing generation and men and women of maturer years; they have fostered all true developments in this direction within the Churches and without. What is really meant by this is, that the Archbishops have recognized the tremendous importance of getting children and adults to believe they cannot do without the priest. There is nothing particularly commendable about that. It merely reveals the fact that the instinct of self-preservation dominates archbishops as well as more lowly men. If priests are to live, they must see that the supply of clients is maintained.

Are You to Blame?

It is a reproach to Freethinkers that, after nearly fifty years of existence, we still receive letters from strangers saying they have only just come into contact with this journal. What are YOU doing to alter this state of affairs?

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.

F. METCALFE.—Thanks for report of work being done by Nelson Branch. Mr. Clayton's meetings should do much to increase the number of Secularists in the District.

J. C. PRIOR.—Well-intentioned criticisms are always welcomed. We are obliged for yours.

G. H. LEPPINGS.—Letter has been forwarded. Mr. Cohen may issue a pamphlet on the subject later. It will keep.

A. W. COLEMAN.—It was, as you say, probably a "try-on," but it is well to let these people realize that others are on the alert.

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.

There is enough of the holiday season left for all of our readers who will to do a useful bit of propaganda work with this paper. Specimen copies should be taken and distributed wherever they are likely to do good. A name and address sent to this office will secure a parcel of specimen copies, post free. Until we are in a position to attempt some systematic advertising scheme, this is the only way in which the paper can be brought to the attention of the public, and we seriously invite the help of all interested.

Messrs. Gerald Howe have added two more volumes to their series of half-crown works on the origin of civilization. One is *Pots and Pans*, by H. S. Harrison, which, apart from the special thesis it is written to uphold, gives much curious and interesting information about these common domestic utensils. The book contains a number of illustrations. The second of the two volumes is the one that should have appeared first in the series—*In the Beginning*, by Professor Eliot Smith. Here the reader will find a general outline of the case for the Egyptian origin of civilization presented with great force and clarity. The crux of the question is whether civilization owes its existence to something in the nature of an accident, and which was gradually dispersed from a centre, thence to take on various modifications in accordance with local circumstances, or whether there have been a number of independent origins, the unquestionable general likeness being accounted for by the pressure of identical circumstances on the human animal. All that one can say here is that the dispersionists make out a very strong case for themselves, and if their crusade does not result in a complete victory, it must at least modify what is now the orthodox position of anthropologists.

Spiritualism and its Evidence.

IN previous articles published in this journal, it has been shown that only to the few has been granted the power of mediumship, and, in consequence, the bulk of the evidence, vast as it is, is traceable to comparatively few psychics. Believers, with a number of exceptions verging on the fractional, are not psychics at all. Sir Oliver Lodge is not a psychic. Nor is Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Nor was Sir William Barrett. Nor was Sir William Crookes. These, the Mullahs of the spiritualistic world, base or based their beliefs, their faith, on the phenomena or the revelations of mediums. Now the sincerity and honesty of these believers are beyond doubt. But sincerity and honesty do not of necessity imply knowledge or even truth. Nor, popular opinion to the contrary notwithstanding, does knowledge of one thing imply knowledge of another. Successful men, however, are listened to with a good deal of respect. They are invited by newspapers, by societies of various kinds, to give their opinions on matters of which their ignorance is colossal; and they give them with gusto. Which explains how politicians come to give addresses on literature; how bank directors talk about art; how actresses with solemn assurance make senseless diatribes on dramatic criticism; how boxers hold forth to enthusiastic yokels on philosophy. The moment any man earns the peculiar brand of fame that gains for him the interest of the readers of Sunday newspapers regarding such private matters as the state of his health, his love affairs or his amusements, it is a sure and certain thing that his opinion on every matter claiming public attention at the moment will be sought and welcomed. Lloyd George's views on literature would be weightier than Thomas Hardy's; Charlie Chaplin on the psychology of sex would receive more newspaper space than, and eclipse anything from the pen of Havelock Ellis.

Enthusiasm is the death rattle of truth, and simultaneously the nascency of delusion. It is the hallmark of jejune thinking. It is the root of a good deal of plain lying. It appeals to the herd for the self-same reason that every decorated platitude, every gaudily upholstered banality, every rubber-stamped, machine-made, puerility appeals. It is for this same reason that the Chamberlains, the Lloyd Georges, the Coolidges, the Bryans, the Baldwins, will ever be the leaders of thought, the worshipped, the respected; while the Stirners, the Nietzsches, the Dreisers, the Joyces, the Cabells, the Moores will produce their illuminating prose and sanity-brimming thoughts for the esoteric few.

It is precisely here that the distinction arises between the evidence provided by mediums and believers. To the sane critic, whatever statement is made by Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and indeed the bulk of believers who are themselves unpossessed of psychic gifts, is, *per se*, negligible. It is tainted evidence. It is impossible for Sir Oliver Lodge to tell the real truth about Spiritualism, because he is obsessed with its non-truths. The truth as it appears to him is not the truth at all, but something vitally aberrant. Different to an enormous degree is the psychic. Here the question of honesty is not so relatively simple. There are instances, especially in automatic writing, where through sheer feebleness of intellect, as we have seen, a hallucination takes on objective reality—in such cases the honesty of the psychic is beyond doubt. Such were the witches who persisted in their beliefs to the end, confessing, at trial after trial, to sexual intercourse with the devil. It is easily conceivable that the ecstatic Joan of Arc could never be convinced of the unreality of her visions. But it is equally certain that Kate Fox could not

fail to be perfectly well aware of the trickery she was practising: it is equally certain that D. D. Home planned with meticulous care every fresh phenomenon; it is just as certain that Florrie Cook trusted to the credulity of the infatuated Crookes.

The King of all mediums, we are assured, was Daniel David Home.¹ Again and again are we told of his integrity, his honesty, of the marvellousness of his phenomena. Five minutes research lays bare the reason for this universal applause. Home was never exposed. Again, Home was an unpaid medium. To Sir William Barrett, to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and to innumerable others, it seems to be in the nature of a great truth that the unpaid medium is necessarily honest. Again and again does Sir William enlarge on this point. On page 53 of his book, *On the Threshold of the Unseen*, we read of the evidence given by "persons of good social position and integrity, who had no pecuniary interest to serve." Again, in reference to a lady automatic writer: "Mrs. E—, the wife of a lawyer holding a responsible official position, and herself a matronly lady of great acumen and common sense, the centre of a circle of religious and charitable activity." True enough, lying and deceit are not promiscuously done, and rarely without a distinct and definite object. It is a mistake, however, to assume that money alone is the cause. It is the commonest, and often enough an additional cause, but it is a long way from being the only one.

Sir William Barrett overlooks entirely the fact that fame is as big an inducement to trickery as is money; he overlooks the fact that Home lived for years on the patronage of befooled Spiritualists; that he obtained possession of no less a sum than £30,000 by methods little removed from plain embezzlement;² that Florence Cook, another unpaid medium, gathered a shower of gifts at pretty nearly every seance she held.

Manifestly it is phenomenally difficult, and, in fact, well nigh impossible to differentiate between the genuine psychic and the imposter. It is for this most excellent reason that the only safe and sound rule is to dismiss every jot and tittle of evidence which leaves a loophole for fraud. All of which is in exact opposition to the method adopted by the believers in Spiritualism. Sir Oliver and his merry crew persist in considering everything true until it is actually proved to be fraudulent, and this, too, in respect to mediums whose whole career teems with trickery. How precisely they justify such a method of reasoning I am at a loss to know.

As a specimen of the rubbish which is called evidential, I give here an incident which, in the opinion of Sir William Barrett, is "one of the strongest links in the chain of evidence on behalf of survival after death."³

The following case Mr. Myers considered to be one of extreme interest and value, owing to the fact

that only after Mr. Moses' death a series of chances led Mr. Myers to discover additional proofs of its veracity. The spirit purporting to communicate through Mr. Moses was that of a lady known to Mr. Myers, and who will be called Blanche Abercromby. This lady died on a Sunday afternoon at a country house some 200 miles from London. Of her illness and death Mr. Moses knew absolutely nothing, but that *same Sunday evening*, a communication, purporting to come from her, and stating that "she had just quitted the body," was made to Mr. Moses at his secluded lodgings in London.

A few days later Mr. Moses' hand was again controlled by the same spirit, and a few lines were written purporting to come from her, and asserted by the spirit to be in *her own handwriting*, as a proof of her identity. There is no reason to suppose Mr. Moses had ever seen her handwriting, for he had only met her once casually at a seance. The facts communicated to Mr. Moses by the deceased lady were private; accordingly he mentioned the matter to no one, and gummed down the pages of the communication in his note book and marked it "private matter."

When, after the death of Mr. Moses, his documents were examined by Mr. Myers, he received permission from the executors to open these sealed pages. To his astonishment, he found the communication to be from the lady whom he had known, and on comparing the handwriting of the script with letters from this lady when on earth, he found the resemblance was incontestable. He submitted the matter to the lady's son and to an expert in handwriting and both affirmed that the spirit writing and that of the lady when living were from the same person. Numerous peculiarities were found common to the two, and the contents of the automatic script were also characteristic of the deceased lady. The ordinary handwriting of Mr. Moses is quite different from that which usually comes in his automatic script, and that again was wholly unlike the caligraphy in the present case.

In *The Survival of Man*, Lodge gives the case in even fuller detail, and in so doing, merely serves to show up more clearly its tawdriness and feebleness.

Evidential forsooth! I have examined the thing with vast care, and fail to find a jot of evidence that does not rest upon the bare and unconfirmed word of that prince of shuffling mountebanks, the Rev. Stainton Moses. And yet this is a sample of the brand of evidence on which the proofs of Spiritualism rest. Three leading psychical experts, distinguished savants all, in all seriousness and in no measured terms, have themselves selected the case out of countless thousands as one of the most evidential: says Barrett, "I regard the case as one of the strongest links in the chain of evidence"; Lodge dubbed it, "another striking case"; Myers hymned it for all the world to hear.

GEORGE R. SCOTT.

(To be continued.)

¹ "The greatest medium of all, Mr. D. D. Home, showed his phenomena in broad daylight, and was ready to submit to every test, and no charge of trickery was ever substantiated against him."—(Conan Doyle, in *The New Revelation*, p. 47.) Again: "By far the most remarkable psychic or 'medium,' whose powers have ever been investigated was Mr. D. D. Home."—(Sir William Barrett, in *On the Threshold of the Unseen*, p. 57.)

² Briefly, by means of messages purporting to come from her dead husband, a Mrs. Lyon was induced to pay over to Home large sums of money. The widow's relatives took action, and on the case being tried in London, in 1868, Home was compelled to return the money, Vice-Chancellor Gifford stating that "the gifts and deeds are fraudulent and void."

³ On *the Threshold of the Unseen*, from which the account, as here given, is reproduced.

LIGHTS FOR MY STUDY.

That place that does contain
My books, the best companions, is to me
A glorious Court, where hourly I converse
With the old sages and philosophers.
And sometimes, for variety, I confer
With kings and emperors, and weigh their counsels;
Calling their victories, if unjustly got,
Unto a strict account, and in my fancy
Deface their ill-planned statues. Can I then
Part with such constant pleasures to embrace
Uncertain vanities? No: be it your care
To augment your heap of wealth; it shall be mine
To increase in knowledge. Lights there for my study!

John Fletcher.

The Grave at the Cross Roads.

SLEEP, poor Youth, sleep in Peace,
Relieved from Love and Mortal Care;
Whilst we that pine in Life's disease,
Uncertain Bless'd, less happy are,
Couched in the dark and silent Grave,
No ills of fate thou now canst fear;
In vain would tyrant Power enslave
Or scornful Beauty be severe.

Wars, that do fatal storms disperse,
Far from thy happy Mansion keep;
Earthquakes that shake the Universe,
Can't rock thee into sounder sleep,
With all thy charms of place possess,
Secure from Life's Torment or pain,
Sleep and indulge thy self with rest,
Nor dream thou e'er shalt rise again.

I AM now an old man, long past the allotted span of life; yet, let people say what they will, my mental faculties are strong and vigorous. I have a retentive memory, and I am blessed—or cursed it may be—with a fertile and vivid imagination. Age may have dimmed mine eye, and reduced the buoyancy of step, but I aver that the province of reason has not been assailed.

I mention this in case, when my narrative is told, some should say that my emotion arises from enfeebled intellect, the natural heritage of age and decrepitude. If there be such, I answer that perturbation of spirit, arising from the same cause, has followed me through the prime of life, equal in intensity to that which disturbs my repose in declining years.

Long years ago I had a friend, a friend whom I cannot forget—he was the friend of my youth. We were boys together, neighbours' children, and bosom companions. Ah! how fleeting are the casual acquaintanceships formed in after life, compared to the companions of our early years!

Time strengthened our friendship; nothing, apart from our daily labour could separate us, even at the threshold of manhood. Our natures beat in unison, our lives seemed linked together. But a time came when we parted for ever. It was death—an ignominious death wrought by his own hand, that parted us, and left me a lonely and silent mourner.

Cast no reflections on the misguided man's memory, but for my sake let his soul rest in peace. I truly loved him; yes, if ever man loved man, I truly loved him, and I know that my affection was reciprocated.

His inmost thoughts and feelings, his joys and sorrows, I verily believe, were better known to me than to any other mortal. His nature was too sensitive, his spirit too gentle and retiring to meet the rebuffs of this cold and unpropitious world; and, withal, the untoward circumstances of his life tended all too soon to form a discipleship to the doctrine of despair.

We were poor, dreadfully poor, our means being barely sufficient to purchase the meanest fare, and our raiment was old and threadbare. Our parents were poor, so poor that we often refused the food which they offered us. The ever-growing population in our isolated village caused the supply of labour to exceed the demand; and, though we were willing to work, circumstances often compelled us to remain unemployed. At such times our shame prevented us from eating at our parent's table, and we wandered over the fields and moorland subsisting on what we gathered.

We talked of better days, days when the sons of toil would find ample scope for their labour. Our spirits rose at the bright prospect we pictured, and

for a space poverty and hunger lost their terrors. But our mental exhilaration was all too transient; as the sun went down the thoughts of our wretched homes made us gloomy and dejected.

These were times when doubt and despair pressed heavily on my friend's mind, when prognostications of the future afforded him no consolation. His melancholy was constitutional; but the prolongation of poverty and disappointment had heightened his disorder. He bemoaned his fate and spoke ruefully on the miseries of life, while my own feelings often belied the cheerfulness which I assumed. But if misfortune made him morose, in his brighter moments he was the most cheerful of men. Moreover, he was an enlightened companion, and his knowledge on natural subjects puzzles me to this day. Book-learning he had none; yet, in the nomenclature of plants, trees and flowers he had few equals. No bird, animal or reptile in the neighbourhood of our travels were strangers to him. Of their habitat and instinct he had an inborn familiarity, and his knowledge of their lives exceeded the information of his elders. But the beauties and mysteries of creation failed to keep burning the lamp of cheerfulness in a heart now grown sad in adversity and suffering. I witnessed, day by day, a human being gradually becoming weary of existence. I listened, without comment, to remarks on the futility of life. I knew that the canker worm of want and neglect was eating into his soul; that hope and faith in the future were well-nigh abandoned.

Still, with all his pessimistic views of life and chidings against fate, I was loth to believe that he contemplated self-destruction. But one day my friend's conduct betrayed a state of mind which filled me with alarm, and instinctively I felt that he was doomed to die by his own hand. We were returning across the moorland to our wretched homes after a day's fruitless search for employment. As was our wont, we walked along the cliff, the nearest approach to the village. On nearing the steepest precipice, my friend, who had been unaccountably silent for sometime, suddenly gave way to violent emotion, and came to an abrupt stand at the edge of the yawning abyss.

"I have resolved to die!" he exclaimed, in a voice I scarcely recognized. "Life to me is unendurable! I am weary of my miserable lot!"

At the sudden outburst I felt the hot blood tingling in my veins like fire. His frame shook in violent tremor, and his expression was such as I never beheld on mortal's face before. He stood for some moments at the edge of the cliff rocking convulsively, hanging, so it seemed, between a burdensome life and the leap of death.

During those awful moments of suspense I stood motionless and silent, curiously enough involuntarily analysing my own feelings. My mental state gave ample food for reflection. It is not every man's experience to witness another on the point of self-destruction. But, conscience knows, it was not callous indifference nor morbid curiosity which held me rooted to the spot. The fate of my friend held me speechless. I instinctively felt that words of counsel at that critical moment would have proved fatal. Had I reproached his conduct, had I attempted to dissuade him from his mad act, I would, I feel sure, have cast fuel on the flames, and determined his sinful course. I uttered not a word, but turned slowly away and wandered to a distance. From there I tremblingly glanced in the direction of the precipice. His hesitation gave me hope; I watched the mental storm subside, and sobbing and ashamed, at length he walked towards me.

As we came together a mutual understanding, as it were, passed between us; no reference was made to the sad incident, and with an effort I concealed my agitation. Although my thoughts were foreign to our conversation, I maintained a cheerful exterior during our journey homewards; but notwithstanding my successful efforts in tranquilizing my friend's troubled spirit, I reflected on his conduct in secret alarm, and foresaw, as in a revelation, his darksome deed accomplished.

The well-to-do, the prosperous and the robust, have no conception of the mental torture endured by the wretchedly poor under the daily grind of a perverse destiny, whose miseries are aggravated by inherited melancholy. To feel one's self gradually pushed to the wall, while vainly struggling with adversity is, to the sensitive-minded, grief the most poignant.

Constitutional defects disqualified us from entering the King's service, a career, which, in our forlorn circumstances, we would have gladly undertaken. Weeks passed, but our luckless star still overshadowed us. At times my friend's gloomy reflections gave place to brighter visions, and he experienced a tranquility of mind which allayed my perturbation. The fateful presentiment, however, still possessed me. He often quailed before my scrutinizing glance, as I read his secret meditations, but, right or wrong, I kept my uneasy convictions locked within my breast.

In our wanderings in search for work, it so happened that the husbandman required assistance. The demand being for one only it rested with the employer as to which he would employ. My friend's evil star, ever in the ascendancy, shed its baneful influence over him. I was the favoured candidate, and though pitying my friend's disappointment, I entered promptly on the task.

For some days, in his futile search for employment he would call upon me and share my humble meal; his heartfelt gratitude amply repaying my hospitality. But a week following these events the startling news was brought me that my friend's dead and mangled body was lying below the cliffs, circumstances disclaiming accident, and admitting the theory of suicide.

"I knew it! I knew it!" I exclaimed in agitation, scarcely knowing what I said, while the implements of toil dropped from my helpless hands. "O my poor friend! my poor friend! thou hast sought the presence of the Eternal unbidden."

"Then it was an unmanly act, premeditated?" asked my informant.

"As the Fates witnessed it, 'tis useless to conceal the crime," I tearfully replied.

The confession wrung from me at the inquest brought in the verdict of *felo-de-se*, and I heard the wretched clay branded with self-murder. The thoughts of viewing my friend in death unnerved me; but if my conduct was strange, I declare it was not apathy or cowardice which held me aloof, and led me stealthily from the chamber of death. Common sense has made our laws more humane; but in accordance with the usages of the time, the sacred rites of burial were denied him. At midnight he was buried at the cross-roads, an irreverent, unfeeling crowd forming the cortege, while I, unobserved at a distance, was a solitary and silent mourner.

Decades have passed since then, and the population of the village has quadrupled. No one speaks now of the grave at the cross-roads; nay, I could count on the fingers of my hand all who have any recollection of the event chronicled, and even these are rambling in dotage.

But I marvel at my own vivid remembrance. What psychological mystery, I ask, has possessed me through life? Why does the unchanging form of my early friend continually hover near me in my dreams? Why does his unhappy image haunt my waking hours?

In the shades of evening I frequently sit on the wayfarers' bench at the wayside leading to the cross-roads, ruminating on fleeting time. I retrospect on my own life, weigh pleasure and pain in the balance, and sometimes a small voice within seems to say, "What has he lost?" After all thy life's experience, canst thou answer the question, "What has he lost by quitting the scene even during youth?"

Over the once little frequented road I hear the rumbling vehicle and the busy tread of hurrying pedestrians. I often tarry at the bench till the hour is late, long after the rippling laughter of thoughtless lovers and the busy hum of life have ceased. Then the deserted road to me is sacred. Supported by my staff, I wander to the cross-roads. It is needless to measure the place as in days of yore; the spot where I reverently stand has long been familiar ground. I listen, anxious that no human sound assails my ears. All nature seems hushed in repose as, uncovered, I gaze on the silent stars above and bend slowly to the earth beneath me. The blessing pronounced under my breath seems at times inadequate to express my emotion, though it is akin to my daily prayers. But the act accomplished feels like duty done, and brings balm to my wearied soul.

Loitering in reminiscence, the moisture on my cheek grows cold in the icy breeze; but as I wend silently homewards I heed not the chill blast or midnight gloom, for once more I have paid homage at my friend's grave.

* * *

Silent emotion, at times, interferes with sleep after my nocturnal visit to the cross-roads, and I lay awake on my couch in contemplation. At such times, when sleep is wooed, I repeat memorized passages from books I love. I endeavour to live for a space with the sages of the past, dwelling on their noble precepts. Neither are the poets neglected in my search for tranquility. Their creations may be sad or cheery; to me, those which I have gathered, have a helpful charm. One comes readily to mind. It may speak of sadness and sorrow; to me, its voice is soothing and strangely fascinating. Once more I repeat, musing on its forlorn beauty as it lulls me to sweet and restful oblivion.

Spirit of Night!

Grant me thy stillness, thy shelter, and shade.
How I have watched for thee; waited, and prayed.
What is the world and its gladness to me,
Whose heart is in anguish? I long but for thee.
Hold thy dark pinions as here I lie prone—
Unhappy, unwanted, unfriended—alone.
Hide me from sight—Spirit of Night.

Charming mine ear with some lullaby song.
Hold to my parched lips thy goblet, well filled
Of sweet soothing nectar, from poppies distilled.
Let me drink deep. Spirit of Sleep.

Spirit of Death!

Come in my dreams in the dead of the night;
Take me within thy arms; clasp me so tight.
Press my hot cheek to thy soft snowy breast;
Whisper sweet words of love; lull me to rest.
Stay my poor broken heart. Grant me but this—
The power to forget. In a last, lingering kiss—
Take my last breath. Spirit of Death.

WILLIAM WATSON.

Freethought Flashes.

The world without God is a problem. The world with God is an outrage on decency and common sense.

A believer lecturing an Atheist on how much he has lost in not knowing God is like an inebriate lecturing a sober man on how much he loses in not getting drunk.

Nothing is farther from the truth than to say that little things please little minds. It is the exact opposite of the truth. The truth is that little minds require great things to please them. It is little minds that think things are great when they are merely large—like people who say that American architecture is great because Americans put up buildings of twenty-four stories, or that a war is a great war if it employs some five or six millions of soldiers, and costs some thousands of millions of pounds. Great architecture can be seen in a small building no less, or even better, than in a large one. A war is in no degree different because it employs a million men, from one that employs a thousand a side. It is really the great mind that sees the significance of little things. It is a Shakespeare that sees the greatness of human nature mirrored in the small things of everyday life; the commonplace mind that requires something large to influence it.

If Christianity had not been so intensely selfish, its followers might have realized, what the Greeks and Romans had realized before them, that the tragedy of death does not consist in meeting one's own death, but in facing the death of those for whom we have profound respect or great love.

There may be a science of politics, but it is certain that Science has nothing in common with politics as at present existing. Science consists in carefully drawn, rational conclusions from carefully classified experiences. Politics consists in the arrangement and use of a number of appeals to non-rational sentiments, class interests, proletarian or aristocratic, the exploitation of phrases—economic interests, patriotism, duty to country or the King, loyalty to party, etc., which for the most part are to those who are influenced by them as devoid of a scientific element as is the fear to sit down thirteen at table, or the belief in the evil influence of black cats. There are heaps of superstitions in the world besides those that are incarnated in the Churches.

The belief of a Christian minister that he understands religion because he knows the function of doctrines in the routine of a religious service is akin to the delusion that one can understand the function of pipes by studying the nature of holes.

Most people affect an admiration of sincerity, but the sincerity that is most appreciated and honoured is that shown in defence of established beliefs. And that is of all forms of sincerity the easiest and of least value. For it requires neither strength of character nor of conviction. But the form of sincerity really valuable to Society, that evidenced in the support and avowance of unpopular opinions, receives neither honour nor any great measure of public applause. A politician of the stamp of Gladstone receives public honour and has monuments raised to his memory, and his outstanding quality was an abnormal ability to convince himself of the moral justification for everything he did. But what homage is paid to the sincerity of a man like Richard Carlile, whose influence on the well-being of England was immensely greater than that of Gladstone? His reward was over nine years' imprisonment in English prisons for daring to be sincere in an unpopular cause.

Further Gospel Truths.

(Mark xvi. 9-19.)

HER name was Mary—Mary Magdalene,
Who said she had the risen Jesus seen;
She knew him well, for in the recent past,
Had he not from her, seven live devils cast?
Now after her, came two trustworthy men,
And they declared, most solemnly, that when
Perambulating in the country, they
Had Jesus seen and heard that very day.
The brethren doubted, how could dead men talk;
Sec, hear, discourse, and in the country walk?

That night when gathered round their frugal
board,

Who should appear but Jesus Christ their Lord;
Who warned them to beware of unbelief;
Assured them he was still their deathless chief.
Then said he: Go ye into all the world,
And keep the glorious gospel flag unfurled;
Those who believe, eternal bliss shall gain;
But unbelievers find eternal pain.

Those who believe shall devils exorcize;
Speak with new tongues, that shall confound
the wise;

Fake up live serpents; deadly poisons drink,
And though the sick be hovering on death's
brink,

The balm of faith, through the believers' hands,
Shall health restore to peoples of all lands.

Here, "Jesus wept," and through his tear-
dim'd eyes,

Once more beheld those mansions in the skies;
Blest his disciples; kist them one by one,
Then heavenward walked to realms beyond
the sun.

EPILOGUE.

Breathes there a Christian, north, south,
east or west,

That dares submit to his redeemer's test?

S. PULMAN.

Correspondence.

PAINÉ AND THE GIRONDINS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I wish to thank Mr. Davis for his effort to trace my statement concerning Paine and the Girondins. I was under the impression that it was made in this journal, many years ago, by the late J. M. Wheeler, citing a book by Alger—who wrote several works dealing with Englishmen in the French Revolution. I have searched Alger's works at the British Museum, but without success. But, as I have found by previous experience, the memory is apt to be very treacherous in such matters.

Mr. Davis thinks that I am mistaken in saying that the Girondins were "nearly all Atheists," and cites Professor Aulard's statement that they were all Deists.

Professor Aulard is, of course, our best authority on the French Revolution; he spent a life-time of research among its archives and literary remains; but he was not infallible. An infallible history, of any length, has yet to be written; the best abound with errors, and the most fruitful sources of error lie in generalizations such as this of Aulard's.

There were twenty-two Girondins condemned and brought to the guillotine by Robespierre. Of these I have only been able to trace two, Brissot and Verniaud, as definite Deists. On the other hand, Condorcet, Isnard, Héroult de Sechelles, Chenier (Andre, not Joseph), and Garat, were Atheists. Anarcharsis Clootz, who, although he escaped the guillotine for the time being, but fell a victim later on, was also a pronounced Atheist. The same may be said of Salaville the journalist, who wrote on the side of moderation and the Gironde, and out-lived the Terror. Madame Roland, according to her biographer, Miss Blind, was an Agnostic.

Gensonne, Buzot and Ducos appear in Wheeler's *Dictionary of Freethinkers*, but he does not say whether

they were Atheists or Deists. What the beliefs of Barroux and Louvet were, I do not know; but the above names comprise all the leaders and most influential members of the party. The rest are so undistinguished that their lives have never been written, neither do their names appear in the dictionaries of biography, except perhaps with a bare mention of the dates of their birth and death. And the result works out that there were seven Atheists and one Agnostic to two Deists and five nondescripts, who had so little interest in religion, that, in all the hectic and feverish debates in the National Assembly that raged around the subject of religion, they do not seem to have taken the slightest part!

Lamartine, the historian of the Girondists, himself a fervent Deist and believer in immortality, in describing the last hours of the condemned Girondists, gives us Verniaud's speech in defence of immortality. He also gives the following:—

"What shall we be doing to-morrow at this time?" said Ducos, who always mingled mirth with the most serious subjects. Each replied, according to his nature. "We shall sleep after the fatigues of the day," replied some. The scepticism of the age corrupted even their last thoughts, and only promised the destruction of the soul to those men who were about to die for the immortality of a human idea. (Lamartine: *History of the Girondists*. Vol. 3. p. 181.)

No, I think that my description of the Girondists, as "nearly all Atheists," comes nearer the truth than Prof. Aulard's, that they were all Deists. Still, I have no quarrel with Mr. Davis, who was quite within his rights in raising the point.

W. MANN.

Society News.

MR. G. WHITEHEAD AT WIGAN AND BOLTON.

DURING the past fortnight Mr. Whitehead addressed sixteen meetings, six being held in Wigan and the rest at Bolton. As is usual, all the Bolton meetings were well attended by appreciative audiences, many members of which assembled each evening before the advertised time of meeting. With one or two exceptions the local religionists behaved like civilized people, confining their opposition to questions and criticism from the platform. One of them, however, a local Catholic councillor, a veritable Peter Pan, bawled out sentiments towards the speaker, reminiscent of the Inquisition in the thirteenth century, and was promptly howled at in protest by a resentful crowd. Several new members were enrolled.

At Wigan there was a gratifying change from the hooliganism of last year, and large and orderly crowds listened with much approval to opinions which only twelve months ago moved some of their members to rage. One reason for the improved behaviour was the absence of a number of clergymen, who, previously, by their example at the meetings, excited their supporters to a display of bad manners. The Bolton and Wigan meetings altogether were among the most successful addressed by Mr. Whitehead during the present season. Messrs. Sisson and Partington, assisted by three of the younger members, rendered enthusiastic and indefatigable service during the whole of the fortnight.

BURNLEY BRANCH.

QUITE a crowd was awaiting Mr. J. Clayton when he arrived to lecture at Higham, on Monday, July 30, and a most successful meeting was held. The local Spiritualists at Padiham offered some opposition at the meeting there on Tuesday, but even with the help of the spirits they were not formidable opponents, as the audience saw. Mr. Clayton addressed a meeting at Brierfield on Wednesday, and on Sunday lectured at Accrington, where the meetings are always good. The local newspapers are beginning to report Mr. Clayton's meetings, and the audiences are naturally increasing. *The Leader* admits that the Secularist is drawing larger audiences than any other local speaker, and praises his ability as an advocate of "the best of causes."

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—A Lecture.

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

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

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

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.—Ramble to Havering, Stapleford, Lambourn. Leader Miss Elsie Gould. Train Liverpool Street, 10.7 a.m. to Squirrels Heath. Walking tour ticket No. 25 (reversed), returning from Chigwell Lane. Tea at Blue Boar, Abridge.

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

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

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

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

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

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Blackburn Market Place): 3.0 and 7.0 p.m. Monday, August 13, to Saturday, August 18, inclusive, at 7.30 p.m. Sunday, August 19, at 3.0 p.m. Speaker—Mr. George Whitehead.

BURNLEY BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. J. Clayton's Meetings: Friday, August 10, 8 p.m., at Rawtenstall (Bacup Road); Sunday, August 12, 7 p.m., at Todmorden (Centre); Monday, August 13, 8.0 p.m., at Higham; Tuesday, August 14, 8 p.m., at Padiham (Recreation Ground); Wednesday, August 15, 8 p.m., at Nelson (Chapel Street). Sunday afternoon, August 12, 3.15, at Burnley Market Ground, Debate: "Is Man a Special Creation?" *Affir.*: Mr. J. Clayton. *Neg.*: Mr. Ransome. Sunday, August 19, 7 p.m., at Accrington Market.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S. (Houghton-le-Spring): Tuesday, August 14, at 7.15 p.m. (Hetton): Thursday, August 16, at 7.15 p.m. Speakers—T. Brown, W. Raine, J. Robson, J. T. Brighton.

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.

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