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Views and Opinions.

(Continued from page 515.)

Excuses for Belief.

So soon as we face the question of the natural history of the belief in a future life, it is as plain as anything can be that not one of these champions are stating their reasons for believing, or the reason why the belief exists. One contributor to the series of articles makes his belief in immortality depend upon a belief in God, another rests the belief in God on the fact of a future life, another (Bishop Knox) finds a basis in the belief in a metaphysical "I" which uses the machinery of the body, another upon the belief that the possibilities of human nature are not exhausted in this life, another upon the fact that good is not rewarded and evil is not punished in this world as he believes they should be, and yet another triumphantly produces the existence of "love" as a convincing argument in favour of immortality.

As I have before said, these are not reasons why the belief exists, they are no more than excuses for retaining it. If one bears in mind the fact that the belief in survival is one of the oldest beliefs in human history, that it can be traced back to the most primitive stages of human existence, and that there is an absolutely unbroken history between these early stages and our own, the absurdity of the arguments advanced should be clear to all. Let anyone sit down and try to think of a tribe of primitive savages cogitating on the mysteries of personality, on the unexhausted possibilities of human nature, or any other of the pseudo-philosophical reasons advanced by the selected twenty-one, and they will realize the truth of what has been said. In a word, the belief in a future life is, in its essence, a survival of that primitive mode of thinking which gave a double to everything, which peopled the whole of nature with ghostly inhabitants, and which formed the raw material of all the religions of the world. All that after ages did was to tone down this primitive belief, and attempt to adapt a pre-scientific view of man to a scientific age. And that is all that is being done to-day.

Moonings and Matrimony.

But while fully recognizing that the arguments advanced do not embody the reason why people believe, it is necessary to follow these special pleaders where they lead, and to show that even then the case breaks down hopelessly.

What, for example, is the value of the almost morbid dwelling upon the existence of love in the world when the issue is that of a future life? A man loves his wife, or a woman loves her husband, and therefore the man's or the woman's passionate longing to see him or her again *must* be gratified. Why? Certainly if all husbands and wives are to meet again, the "Summerland" will not be a place of unalloyed happiness. For there are good wives and bad wives, good husbands and bad husbands. There are wives that make a man's life a hell on earth, that wreck his home and undermine his character, and there are husbands who are just as objectionable. Are all of these to meet again and to live together? And there are men who have had more than one wife, and there are women who have had more than one husband, and there has been healthy love in each case. Will all these meet, and heaven be dotted with polygamous and polyandrous establishments? It may be replied that love attracts and hate repels, and those men and women only will meet who love each other. Well, but there are such things as men marrying the wrong women, women marrying the wrong men, and each loving another's mate. What then? Will they automatically be reassorted, and a state of things exist in heaven that would keep a divorce court judge quite busy for the rest of his life? When we come to deal with the Spiritualistic case, we shall have to say something on the impossibility of love or any other human quality existing in the "Summerland." At present we are content to ask what is the matter with the mentality of men, who exclaim, "I have a wife of whom I am very fond, therefore we must both live for ever," and consider that a reasoned statement.

As a matter of sober and irrefutable and demonstrated fact, love is not the mysterious and insoluble thing that these men would have us believe. The highest form of love rests on the fundamental fact of sex, and is a transformed and sublimated form of sex attraction. The primary attraction of the male for the female, or vice versa, is that one is a male and the other a female. That passion can be seen beginning low down in the animal world. The love of a cat for a kitten, of a bitch for her pups, of any animal for its young, is only a lower form of the highest expression of love in the human. As is common in other directions, the later and sublimated form, other things equal, dominates the lower and determines its expression, just as the development of taste determines the form the building shall take in which we seek shelter. But the fundamental fact of shelter re-

mains, and the fundamental fact of sex remains. Remove either and the later forms are without foundation, and atrophy just as changed conditions of life have led to the decay of the muscles moving the car. These seem to me obvious conclusions that follow from all we know of the course of animal evolution. It would be impertinent on my part to suggest that these things are not quite well known to writers like Canon Hannay, T. R. Glover, and others. My puzzle is to find out whether they ever *think* about what they mean, or do they, when they get on religion, cease thinking altogether? Perhaps it is a way in which one gets ready for the heavenly life, for judging from the specimens produced by Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, thinking in the next world is certainly reduced to a minimum.

* * *

Dividends and Deserts.

My wonder as to whether these advocates of immortality ever really think of the bearings of modern thought on their belief, is intensified when I find it justified on the grounds of morality. The Rev. Dr. Townsend says that "Moral realities cannot be explained apart from their ultimate source in a Person who is good," and stresses the need for rewards and punishments in some other life. The Rev. J. P. Arendzen, representing the Roman Catholic view, promises eternal reward for the good, and for the bad "tormenting influence" for ever. This looks like being fire; it is, in fact, called fire—but with the charming inconsequence of the apologetic theologian, he explains that it is not the same thing as the fire we know. What fire is like that is not like fire I cannot conceive. Perhaps it may be ice, or feather beds. The only drawback to that conclusion is the positive information that it will be some eternally "tormenting influence"—perhaps boiling oil, or molten lead, or iron-jawed parsons delivering sermons without end.

But, to take point number one, the one clear fact to-day is that morality is of social origin, and has no other application than to a social body. Any and every ethical prohibition or command—to love, to be honest, to be truthful, to be pure, not to lie, not to steal, not to kill—any moral command we can conceive has reference to our behaviour in relation to others, and, obviously, to a society such as the one in which we are living. "Moral realities" have not their origin in a Person who is good, and Mr. Townsend ought to remember that we are living in the twentieth and not in the twelfth century. Goodness is a social product, it has reference to life here, not to life somewhere else, it does not originate in a Person—with a capital P—but in an aggregate of gregarious animals who are of necessity bound to observe certain customs if corporate life is to continue. Mr. Townsend is the head of a Baptist College. I feel inclined to say "God help" his pupils.

* * *

Cash for Conduct.

And the question of reward and punishment? Being a mere Freethinker, I must confess that I am not very much concerned whether good actions meet with a dividend in some other life, and bad ones meet punishment. As for reward, I have some sort of suspicion that nothing can rob a good man of the satisfaction he receives in doing good, although I admit that it is hard to persuade any really sound Christian that this is so. He cannot divest himself of the inculcated teaching that the only real reason for decency of conduct is that there is a God who will reward him if he behaves, and punish him if he

misbehaves. And as to *punishing* a bad man in the next world, that concerns me even less. In fact I don't know that, when I am calm and reasonable, I want to punish anyone so long as the infliction of pain is the only end in view. I would like to prevent a great deal of harm being done that is being done; and if some kind of "punishment" can be devised that will serve as a corrective to bad or anti-social habits or acts, then I should advise punishment. But it must be inflicted here, not elsewhere. If a man has dishonoured women, ill-treated children, and wronged his fellows in a variety of ways, I really do not see how this state of things is either remedied or improved by God waiting till he gets that man in some other world and then torturing him. It may appeal to the spirit of revenge, it may gratify the *Christian* sense of justice, but to me it only points to downright, inexcusable brutality. And if I believed in a God, I hope that I should have common sense enough to say that if God has arranged this world in a particular way, I see no reason for assuming that he has arranged another world differently. But, perhaps, if I had enough common sense to see that much, I should have common sense enough not to believe in God at all.

* * *

Instinct.

One other word on the question of instinct. If it were possible, it would be a good thing to abolish this word from the language, and force people to find out what it is they are talking about. It is not only used in different senses by different people, but it is used in different senses, varied with no sense at all, by the same person. Several of the selected twenty-one write as though there was some "instinct" in man which points to another life. If that really were the case, it would be the only instance known in which an animal manages to develop an instinct that bears no relation whatever to the environment in which that animal is living. I wonder whether it has ever struck these men that an "instinct" is a species of mechanism which adjusts an animal to a particular environment, and that it is always, and must be, developed in strict regard to that environment? I expect it has not. "Instinct" is just a "blessed word" that fills a gap, and indicates a vacancy where it should connote knowledge.

Man has no instinct for immortality. In the very nature of the case that is an impossibility. He has, if the word is applicable, an "instinct" for life, that is, once launched into existence he strives to persist, and, as a condition of survival, capacities are developed to help him in persisting. The sex instinct, the herd instinct, are both illustrations of this. An instinct implies an automatic reaction of every member of a species in a given direction, and in a particular manner, and I imagine that not even Dr. Townsend will argue that there is this automatic reaction to a future life. Men do not seek it, they do not welcome their alleged approach to it. I do not imagine for a moment that if Mr. Townsend were told by his doctor that he was so ill that death was probable within the next three months he would react towards it in the direction of saying "Thank God" and hail it as good news. He would more probably at once take a holiday, visit the South of France or Madeira, and resolve that heaven, if it must be, is better reached via either of these places than from Manchester's Baptist College. That would be the attitude of every other Christian, and one would really like to know what kind of an instinct is it that reacts in this way? It is certainly something unique in scientific annals.

Man has no more an instinct for immortality, or

an instinct for religion than he has an instinct for cannibalism or for listening to sermons. What he has, what is the source of all his troubles and the condition of his greatness, is the capacity for forming opinions about things, for framing generalizations, for propounding theories concerning the world and himself. Some of his conclusions about the world find expression in what has come down to us as belief in gods, ghosts, and a future life, etc. He is a religious animal only in the sense that he is a scientific animal. His mentality runs now in the direction of framing religious theories of the world, and again in framing theories that destroy the religious ones. And the whole history of religion indicates the difficulty there is in keeping his mental energies in the direction of religion. For the decline of religious belief is universal and inevitable. All the energies of vast armies of priests of every religion, have not been able to prevent this decline. The most rigid and the most unscrupulous selection that human Society has ever exercised has not been able to prevent the decay of religious ideas. The priest cries out that man instinctively turns to religion, when all around him is the patent fact that man everywhere turns from it to a more satisfactory explanation of the world. The decline of religious belief is one of the outstanding features of civilization. And I do not think that this army of twenty-one will be able to either arrest this weakening of religion, or even to blind all of those who read, that a belief which requires so much defence, and which dare not meet its opponents in the open field, is weakening to the point of extinction.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be continued.)

A Cleric on the Carpet.

"This mystery of vending spiritual gifts is nothing but a trade."—Swift.

"Not a fantastical fool of them all shall flout me out of my calling."—Shakespeare.

It has been said that Englishmen possess a genius for compromise. Rather than throw the baby out with the bath-water, they sometimes wait till the baby is grown up, and the condition of the water threatens an epidemic. This curious state of affairs is nowhere so pronounced as in the matter of religion. Foreigners even go so far as to say that the English are in this respect both stupid and obstinate. Certainly, in this country they have a tortuous way of doing things, which drives foreign critics mad. If a Frenchman, for example, is dissatisfied with the Roman Catholic Church he becomes a pronounced Anti-Clerical. No half-way house for him. Here, in this country, if a pious Englishman is dissatisfied with the Anglican Church, he joins one of the Free Churches. If the recognized homes of Nonconformity no longer attract him, he joins some fancy religion, such as the Christadelphians or Muggletonians. If these should fail, there still remain the Spiritualists and the Theosophists. Having very nearly boxed the theological compass, there is little left to do but shuffle to the nearest post-office, draw the old-age pension, and starve himself out of existence.

Such a pilgrim's progress causes little astonishment here. There are, however, cases that are so remarkable as to excite comment. Such a one is that of the Archbishop-Elect of York, who is said to have been a member of the Labour Party for the past nine years. This is a remarkable proposition even in a "free" country, or one where tolerance is too often mistaken for liberty. Provided that an Englishman is superstitious he is allowed plenty of

rope. He can, if he feels so disposed, worship a stuffed snake in his own backyard. He must not, however, criticize his neighbours' religious views too loudly. If he should be irreligious he is supposed to keep his saucy views to himself. He can think what he likes, but he must not talk. If, however, an Englishman wears a label, he must keep within the fold or be excommunicated. He must not emulate the daring of a Transatlantic "cop," who draws five dollars a day for keeping drink out of the country, and also draws another six dollars for bringing it in.

The Anglican Church and the Labour Movement are as the poles asunder. The former is so old that it has whiskers on it; whilst the latter is so new that the paint is scarcely dry. One is bound up with the old order of things; the other seeks to make a new world. Yet Dr. Temple belongs to both. He is a political Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and his gyrations make one dizzy. There never was such an obliging man, nor one so polite. He is like the politician who finished a rousing speech with the affecting words: "These, my friends, are the sober convictions of a lifetime, but if they do not suit they can be altered." Such a point of view might have attractions from a purely business or money-making outlook; but they most certainly do not inspire much confidence in a calmer atmosphere.

However, Dr. Temple wishes to run with the hare and also ride with the hounds. He wants to be the bride at the wedding, and the corpse at the funeral. Like the salesman in the song, he is not ashamed to say: "Yes madam, we have no bananas." Consider what it means to be a loyal Churchman and also a member of the Labour Party. It is like attempting to ride two horses at once, each one running in a different direction. As a Prince of the State Church, with a seat in the House of Lords, Dr. Temple will be, willy-nilly, an aristocrat; but as a member of the Labour Party he should be a democrat. This is an excellent start, but more is to come. As a Churchman, Dr. Temple acknowledges King George as head of his Church, and is, therefore, a Royalist; but as a Labourite the same person is also a Republican. As a Christian, Dr. Temple believes that woman is "the weaker vessel"; but as a democrat he also believes in the equality of the sexes.

The watchwords of Labour are "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity." In the Christian scheme of things the world is divided into sheep and goats, believers and unbelievers, saved and damned. Here you find division, and not fraternity. Nor is this all, for the priests of the Church of Christ are sacred persons, a caste apart. These men are not plain "misters," they are dubbed "reverend." Dr. Temple himself will be "most reverend"; he will be entitled "your Grace"; he will live in a palace. All of which things are not only undemocratic; but the very things Labourites are out to alter, and must alter, if democracy is to be a reality instead of a sham.

The Labour Movement stands for Liberty; the Anglican Church stands for the negation of Liberty. This is not an idle statement. Half a century ago Lord Shaftesbury, himself an ardent Churchman, asked the question: "Of what use are the bishops in the House of Lords?" In the age-long struggle of Roman Catholics, Jews, Nonconformists, and Freethinkers for civil liberty; in the humanitarian crusade for amending the then ferocious penal code; and in the slow building up of national education, the Bishops stood against the People. In its days of weakness the Labour Movement found the Bishops always in the ranks of its enemies. To-day, when Labour is a force in politics, and a power in the country, the newspapers tell us that the Archbishop-

Elect has been a member of the Labour Party for near a decade. It is more exciting than the mad-hatter's tea-party.

The prospective Archbishop of York was the headmaster of a famous public school. He should know some of these things, or else he has been living in a balloon. He ought not to behave like the country yokel who criticized a Freethought lecturer by remarking: "That man over there says there aint no Noah's Ark. I know there is, for it's a public-house, and I've had many a drink in the bar." When Dr. Temple entered the Anglican Church he subscribed in the most solemn manner to the "Thirty-nine Articles of Religion," a piece of theology calculated to turn a democrat's hair white, and curl it afterwards. Even the Church's Book of Common Prayer is no more useful nor ornamental than the Tower of London. The boasted, revised Prayer Book simply glosses the mistakes of the older volume, and adds a further dose of superstition. Nearly eighty per cent of the Church's priests are Anglo-Catholics, which means, in plain English, disguised Roman Catholics. Is the Archbishop-Elect essaying a piece of Jesuitry in remaining with the comrades of the Labour Party, when he is to be a Prince of a Church Militant?

The Labour Movement stands for international peace. The Anglican Church, on the other hand, has never thrown its weight in the scale of peace when the balance trembled before war was declared. During the past two centuries Britain has waged war in every corner of the world and with almost every nation. The Christian Bishops in the House of Lords never condemned one of these wars. Anglican priests always blessed the standards of murder, christened the battleships, shouted with the Jingo's, and sang *Te Deums* at the conquest of the enemy, and, incidentally, saved their skins by being exempted from military service.

The Archbishop-Elect is not a mere curate. On the contrary, he is a leader of the State Church, and will be second only in importance to His Grace of Canterbury. He is one of the men who pulls the wires in Church affairs, and is striving to maintain the integrity and power of the Established Religion. His yearly bread, which will amount to £10,000, is derived from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. What, therefore, is Dr. Temple's interest in the Labour Party? His "spiritual home" is the Carlton Club, or the Athenæum. Perhaps, he is preparing for the day when the red flag will fly at Westminster, and is hopeful of saving the Anglican Church from the wrath to come, or, at least, safeguarding the emoluments of the priests. My Lord has turned Democrat and must have had an object. Maybe, he hopes to serve the Labour Party as the monkey served the cat when he took her paw to rake the chestnuts out of the fire with.

MIMNERMUS.

The struggle against superstition and ignorance is a fight for civilization.—*Haeckel*.

The entire theory of the Church is antagonistic to any concentrated or consistent scheme for raising the earthly condition of the suffering masses.—*W. R. Greg*.

What more dost thou want when thou hast done a man a service than the fact of having done it? Art thou not content to have done something conformable to thy nature, and dost thou seek to be paid for it, as if the eye demanded a recompense for seeing or the foot for walking?—*Marcus Aurelius*.

Pagan Christianity.

(Concluded from page 517.)

THE story is told of a Roman Catholic lady, who, after much persuasion, was induced to attend a High Church noted for its Ritualistic service. Asked what she thought of it; she replied that she "preferred the simpler service of Rome." And, indeed, an ancient pagan of pre-Christian times, if he could attend a Roman Catholic or Ritualistic service in our churches to-day, would feel quite at home. He would find the familiar altar with the sacred sign of the Cross, the holy water, the clouds of incense, the chants and hymns. He would recognize the priest in his official vestments, and hear him repeat the age-old story of the god, born of a virgin, who lived and taught on earth, was put to death, as a sacrifice for the good of mankind, and rose again the third day, to guarantee a future life to all those who believed in him. He would see the rite of baptism performed, and partake of the mystic and symbolic meal of bread and wine, representing the body and blood of the dead divinity. As Mr. Weigal truly observes: "The old gods, ousted by Jesus, have crept back, and have, so to speak, dug themselves in once more. Their temples being destroyed and their altars forsaken, they have come to church; and there you may find them to-day, receiving, under other names, the worship denied them in their immemorial forms."¹

At the time when the Gospels were composed: "Everybody believed in miraculous events, in signs and wonders; and it was always assumed that saintly or divine personages showed their power by performing miracles." The Jesus of Christian theology, says Mr. Weigal, does not belong to modern times:—

He is dated; He is the product of the early centuries A.D., when men believed in Olympus, and drenched its altars with the blood of sacrificial victims. Ancient magic plays about Him like lightning, and the primitive conception of the supernatural thunders in answer to His behests. He walks upon the waters, ascends into the air, is obeyed by the tempests, turns water into wine, blasts the fig-tree, multiplies the loaves and fishes, raises the dead. His birth was heralded by signs and wonders; a star appeared in the East; hosts of angels sang in the heavens; the clouds opened at His baptism, and the voice of God echoed over the world; while at His Crucifixion darkness hid the sun, the earth quaked, and the dead came forth from their graves. All these marvels made Him God incarnate to the thinkers of the First Century; all these marvels make Him a conventional myth to those of the Twentieth.

Many of the most erudite critics are convinced that no such person ever lived. Their argument is based primarily upon the fact that ancient mythology is full of stories of incarnate gods who suffered on behalf of mankind, who died, were buried, descended into hell, and rose again from the dead, and by whose redeeming blood the faithful were saved. (pp. 24-25.)

The story, told by Luke, of the census taken by Cæsar Augustus, when Cyrenius was governor of Syria, which compelled Joseph and Mary to go to Bethlehem, because it was their birthplace, says Mr. Weigal, "is pretty certainly incorrect; for no such census is known to have been made in any year which can be regarded as a likely date of the birth of Jesus, if we assume that he was somewhere about thirty at the beginning of his ministry. It is obviously impossible, also, that citizens should have been obliged to proceed to their ancestral home to be numbered, and indeed, it is known that all Roman

¹ A. Weigal: *The Paganism in Our Christianity*. pp. 19-20.

censuses were made at the place of residence of the citizens: moreover, Galilee was ruled independently by Herod Antipas at the time when Quirinus, or Cyrenius, went to tax Judea." (pp. 51-52.) Luke evidently invented the story to provide a motive for the journey to Bethlehem, but, writing long after the time, he had forgotten, if he ever knew, Roman history, and Roman customs.

In writing about the *Gnostics*, in these columns three years ago, I stated that the Cross was not only a religious symbol, ages before the advent of Christianity, but I produced evidence to show that there existed an actual Cult of the Cross; that it was worshipped as an actual divinity in itself; that it could move about and even speak to its worshippers. Mr. Weigal, from precisely similar evidence, but of a later date, has arrived at a similar conclusion. He says: "Long before the Christian era, a cross was widely used as an object of worship. Just as in Egypt the obelisk was not only a symbol of the sun-god, but was also itself a god, so the cross was itself an actual divinity." And concludes that, "He (Jesus) was in some sense identified with the older divinity of the cross or tree itself." (pp. 79-80.)

Mr. Weigal also points out that the word "crucifixion" itself had become symbolical of all kinds of suffering. He observes:—

So widespread was the understanding of crucifixion as meaning the pious bearing of suffering, not as a punishment but as a sacrifice, that the word was used, long before the time of Christ, in regard to all kinds of sorrows and afflictions wherein there was no suggestion of dishonour. Thus when St. Paul spoke of "the preaching of the Cross," he meant the preaching of the doctrine of religious suffering and pain, such as the sacrificial victim endured; and he must have used the expression in the knowledge that it would be perfectly intelligible to pagan minds, crucifixion being a theological commonplace. And when he wrote: "O, foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you?" he meant "why do you not grasp the truth, when you see that Jesus Christ endured that traditional rite of sacrificial sufferings by crucifixion which you know all religion demands?" (p. 81.)

St. Paul was a neurotic mystic; all he knew of Jesus Christ was what he saw in a vision, and we must remember that the Epistles were written before the Gospels. There can be no doubt, says Mr. Weigal, that, "Judaism and Paganism had alike implanted in men's minds a sense of awe of the cross as an ancient, divine thing, and had familiarized them with the idea of a divinity sacrificially crucified; and gradually, the crucified Jesus took the place of the preaching Jesus as the centre of the religion." (p. 86.) In plain words, the story of the Crucifixion was a well-known pagan myth long before the advent of Christianity.

The ascent of Jesus into heaven is just as mythical, says Mr. Weigal: "Such an ascension into the sky was the usual end to the mythical legends of the lives of the pagan gods, just as it was to the very legendary life of Elijah . . . similarly Dionysos Herakles, Hyacinth, Krishna, Mithra, and other deities went up into heaven." (p. 101.)

Mr. Weigal also points out that one of the earliest seats of Christianity was Antioch, where there was celebrated each year, the death and resurrection of the god Tammuz or Adonis, the latter name meaning simply "the Lord." The term applied to Jesus. This worship was so well known to the Jews that Ezekiel complained that the women of Jerusalem wept for the dead Tammuz at the very gate of the Temple. And Mr. Weigal proceeds: "The place at

Bethlehem selected by the early Christians as the scene of the birth of Jesus (for want of any knowledge as to where the event had really occurred) was none other than a shrine of this pagan god, as St. Jerome was horrified to discover—a fact which shows that Tammuz or Adonis ultimately became confused in men's minds with Jesus Christ." (p. 110.)

No wonder then that when Christianity had collected to itself all the most popular pagan beliefs, rites and sacraments, and floated these as a new religion, that it was at once a success. There was something for everybody. The followers of all the prominent Cults in the Empire could meet together here and find their wants provided for. There was nothing supernatural about the spread of Christianity. As Mr. Weigal truly observes: "Jesus not only fulfilled the Judaic scriptures, but He also fulfilled those of the pagan world and therein lay the great appeal of early Christianity. In Him a dozen shadowy gods were condensed into a proximate reality; and in His Crucifixion the old stories of their ghastly atoning sufferings and sacrificial deaths were made eternal, and were given a direct meaning. It is not to be wondered at, then, that the dark and savage doctrine of the Atonement became the central dogma of the new Faith: it is only a matter of astonishment that it is still preached in the Twentieth Century." (p. 158.) Yet Mr. Weigal believes that when we have deleted all the pagan myths, along with the miraculous and incredible events from the Gospel story; we shall find the figure of a real historical Jesus.

For our part, we believe that this process will result in a similar manner to that of the boy who wanted to find out what was inside the onion. When he had removed a great number of skins, he found—Nothing!

We do not think that Mr. Weigal will receive any bouquets from the Church. He may consider himself lucky if he escapes with no worse than being stigmatized as an infidel to religion; and in morals as no better than he should be. For our part we welcome the book with both hands, and ask for more.

W. MANN.

The Roots of Religions.

ALDOUS HUXLEY, in *Jesting Pilate*, writing of an old brass cannon lying buried among the grass in a public garden at Batavia, in Java, says, "There is no God but God and Mohammed is his prophet. No doubt. But a cannon is cylindrical, and long before they became Moslems, the Javanese were worshippers of the reproductive principle in nature. An immemorial phallism has crystallized round the old gun, transforming it from a mere brass tube into a potent deity, to be propitiated with flowers and little lanterns, to be asked favours of with smoking insense. Men come, and standing before the sacred symbol, silently implore assistance. Women desirous of offspring sit on the prostrate God, rub themselves against his verdigrised sides and pray to him for increase. Even white ladies, it is said, may be seen at evening alighting inconspicuously from their motor-cars at the Penang Gate. They hurry across the garden to where the God is lying. They drop a few gardenias and a supplication; they touch the God's unresponsive muzzle; then hurry back again through the twilight, fearful of being recognized, of being caught in the flagrant act of worshipping at the shrine of a God, who was being adored a thousand generations before Adam was ever thought of, and besides whom the Gods of Zoroaster and the Vedas, of

Moses and Christ and Mohammed are the merest upstarts and parvenues."

That is a straightforward statement of what lies at the root of all religions, the worship of the reproductive principle in nature in its nearly most primitive form. Traces of it can be found in what has been called the more advanced religions, but it flourishes in its crudest form in the East. Huxley says that in Jaipur, most of the shops do a busy trade in phallic symbols, not alone in those refined past all meaning, but in the stark elemental thing. At Puskar Lake, in the little alcoves around the sacred pool, where the author expected to find something like the Adoration of the Virgin pictured on the walls, he found a rough hewn cow of red sandstone, "kneeling reverently before a bi-sexual phallic symbol and gazing at it with an expression of rapt ecstatic adoration." Many travellers must have peeped into those alcoves and seen the trade done at Jaipur, but they generally have kept a discreet silence. It is a way people brought up in a Christian environment have; they can look past the truth with easy facility and forget that their eyes have seen it once in naked simplicity.

These primitive symbols are scattered here and there throughout our own land. The standing stone, a rough hewn pillar standing in lonely places, is common enough in Scotland, and its obvious meaning is hidden, generally, under the term "pre-historic," which seems to bar any further attempt to elucidate its history. Thomas Hardy wrote a poem on one in Dorsetshire, the Pyx, and their connexion with early Christianity is reflected in the name given to one of the chapels in Westminster, that of the Pyx. There was also, somewhere in London, a church of St. Mary of the Ovaries, which is explicable only in terms of contact with the same primitive phallic cult.

Mr. Huxley is under no illusion concerning the foundation of the Hindoo's object of worship; neither is he at a loss to account for the result of centuries of evolutionary fashioning seen in the modern theologian's idea of God. "God," he says, "is a sensation in the pit of the stomach, hypostasised," which covers fully the spiritual longings of the ordinary "found Jesus" type of Christian. And the God of the *Daily News* theological expert is "the gratuitous intellectualist interpretation of immediate psychophysiological experiences," which again covers the outpourings of the bulk of established or professional Christians. But that is by the way. Phallism is prevalent in the East, and Mr. Aldous Huxley proclaims the fact. But openly dealing with matters that tend to demolish the claims of Christianity is not at all prevalent among writers on Eastern subjects, nor, indeed on any other. The art of interpretation has reached a high state of efficiency, the ignoring of patent facts being not the least effective in the labour of shoring up the retaining walls of the Christian creed, and the evil example extends outside the circle of the elect.

Take a little book in Benn's series—published, so they tell us, to dispel ignorance—Miss Jane Harrison's *Myths of Greece and Rome*. There is nothing to complain of when the author is dealing with myths as they functioned in the later Greek and Roman periods, it is when she refers to their origin or early traits, that a certain lack of outspokenness is manifest. She either could not, or would not, tell her readers that the roots of all religions are clustered about the phallic idea. The Christian God, the great father, giver of life, is phallic in one sense, although time has changed his face beyond recognition. A familiar example of this development of myth is seen in the case of what is known as the "Judgment of Paris." Miss Harrison, in studying the vases on which the "judgment" is depicted, was struck by

the absence of Priam's son as judge on the earlier examples. There, the three goddesses walked in procession behind Hermes, and in still earlier drawings the goddesses have, as Miss Harrison says, dispassionately attired themselves in one huge cloak, which suggests the triple phallic deity. Hermes, we are told in another part of the essay, is just a pillar to keep the dead in memory, and why he should be leading three ladies famous for their association with the phallic symbol is uncertain. On the assumption that Hermes was the old "herm" or pillar of stone, representing the male element, the uncertainty vanishes; he was there to complete the combination necessary for the production of life. The primitive form of Hermes, later the winged messenger of the gods, was a large upright stone, sometimes endowed with priapic attributes. In some places, Mexico for instance, the idea was taken further, an unconventional lim-gam being depicted in public places. There was no question of indecency involved; the reproductive principle in nature was sacred in the eyes of old time people, and certainly of vast importance. Its universal practice and appeal was indicative of that. Licentiousness came later with a developing civilization. And through it all the idea, or at least the symbols of phallism—at one time a belief of an austere character—survived into Christian times, and are doing duty in the Church of to-day. The cross, which to the Christian signifies eternal life, is descended from the cross that, made up of phallus, stood for the generation of life in pre-Christian days. The many beautiful rose windows in churches are of phallic origin. They are generally formed after the signs of the zodiac, with the female symbol, in the centre. Religion's old friend, the devil, when in the form of a snake, is a phallic form, universal in its scope. According to Hargreave Jennings, the modern—i.e., fifty years ago—Romans have a phallus or lingha in front of almost all their churches, and in Ireland, up to the end of the eighteenth century, the carving over the church doors, in many instances, was phallic in its crudest form. In every churchyard there is an obelisk, or pillar, which, along with the spires of churches, in a perpetuation of the original monolith. In the social life of the community the symbols of this idea still persist; the broad arrow of Government, the royal badge of the Prince of Wales, along with such things as a bishop's mitre and staff, all testify to the fact that so far from being a revelation from some supreme being outside this world, Christianity is of the earth in its origin and growth.

H. B. DOBBS.

Moth and Star.

ATTRACTED by my lamp alight,
A moth who loved all colours bright,
Came circling with fantastic flight
Into my room, one summer night.

Declared the flame—"Not I thy sun!
Frail creature, learn these paths to shun.
Beware! Beware! Lest all undone
Be thy brief life, thou beauteous one!"

"Not so, dear flame!" cried Velvet Wing,
About the danger fluttering:
"Thou art so fiercely fair a thing,
My life I lend an offering!"

Love, whom I worship, heart and name,
Consume me not with golden flame—
My life is thine, but I would be
Moth to thy STAR, eternally!

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

Acid Drops.

A music-hall artiste in Berlin has been earning his living in a rather curious manner. Some railway officials found a man hanging on a large wooden cross, propped up in one of the compartments of a train. His hands and feet were pierced with long iron nails. The artiste then proceeded to free one hand and drew out the nails securing his feet and the other hand. He explained that he did this in order to secure publicity. Well, he is not the only man who has managed to get a living on the cross.

Boys from English orphanages are sent as "farm apprentices" on Irish farms. Justice Rice, at Leitrim County Court strongly condemned the practice as virtually turning the boys into slaves at 2s. a week wages. He wondered "how the English Government can tolerate this white slavery." Many, if not most, of these orphanages have a reverend gent as organizing secretary, and are run by a select committee of Christian men and women. Perhaps these pious persons will vouchsafe an explanation of why they encourage "white slavery."

The Swiss Government has adopted a method of temperance propaganda against the drinking of Schnapps, a powerful intoxicant much drunk on the farms in Switzerland. The propaganda takes the form of a defacing stamp on letters. It depicts a bottle of Schnapps labelled with a skull and crossbones, with the words: "Schnapps ruins the family and the race!" This kind of propaganda reminds one of the efforts of pious temperance fanatics in England. We think the Swiss method will be just about as useless as the English. Improvement in the drinking habits of the people here has not been brought about by the temperance fanatics. The improvement has come through the spread of education—opening up new interests—improved housing and working conditions, and also the accessibility of wholesome out-door recreation and indoor amusement. The Swiss Government will achieve greater results in the way of temperance if it encourages this sort of thing.

These be sad times for parsons. And the Rev. Alfred Fawkes recognizes the fact in a recently published book of his. Changes have come over the Church, he says, in the last fifty years:—

The status of the clergy has markedly declined; the Church counts far less in English life than formerly; religious observance is at a low ebb; attendance at public worship is exceptional; civil marriage is on the increase in all classes; and the ignorance of people who would commonly be regarded as "educated" with regard to anything connected with religion—the Bible, the Church, her history, and her service—must be experienced to be believed.

Perhaps Mr. Fawkes may be able to glean a little comfort from the Lamentations of Jeremiah. If not, maybe the thoughts: "God wills it!" and "It's all for the best"—which have helped many a Christian in adversity—will console him.

Dr. Luther Wevgle, at a Los Angeles Convention, said that the principles of modern educational theory and practice lend themselves to the fulfilment of the Christian purpose more naturally and readily than did "the older, more formal and material-centred systems of education." It will do no harm to remind this gentleman that the older systems of education—based on fear (of God, of parents, of teachers)—were pre-eminently Christian in theory and practice. Their aim was to hang out "original sin," and to drive in Christian virtues, with a big stick. Before they could get a footing in the world, modern educational principles have had to wait for Christian notions to weaken.

Mr. Arthur Mayhew, late Director of Public Education in Central India, and now a master at Eton, has been criticizing the educational policy of the Government of India. His opinion appears to be that Indian

education should have a religious foundation. A pious weekly says the Bombay Government has taken Mr. Mayhew's remarks to heart and has appointed a Committee to report on the question of the kind of religious instruction that should be given in schools and colleges controlled and staffed entirely by the Government, which has so far been neutral in religious matters. Our contemporary says "many thoughtful people"—which means, of course, pious English people—are alarmed at the way in which Indian students are regarding "Nationalism" as a religion, and discarding all other "isms." Our pious friend thinks the solution will be found only when religious-minded teachers are placed in Government institutions. What this really means is that the Indian Government should appoint as teachers Christians only. That is a quite Christian suggestion. If adopted, it would require Indian teachers to be subjected to religious tests—a principle repudiated by English teachers. The duty of the Government is to maintain its policy of neutrality, and leave the various religious sects to catch clients as best they can.

An appeal to the Churches, signed by ministers of many denominations, has been issued in reference to "the grave moral and social conditions" arising from the closing of collieries in South Wales. The appeal is for prayer, and for united action in pressing the Government to seek a solution, and to give practical assistance to keep the collieries working. We presume the parsons are anxious to make a show of doing something in the matter, so if something should be achieved by the politicians, the Churches can say that their "prayer and pressure" was the cause.

The British and Foreign Bible Society celebrated its 125th year of existence with a very heavy over-draft at its bankers. Here is a chance to work a modern miracle. Let the Society set aside a day for prayer, asking God to make good the whole of the deficiency in twenty-four hours. If this were done, there wouldn't be a single sceptic left in the country.

Forty Christian organizations are meeting at Geneva to "find a common basis" upon which to combine their forces for peace. This truly wonderful idea is rather late in budding forth. Perhaps the Churches have been too busy to think of it before. They have been so pleasantly occupied in blessing battle-flags and warships, justifying wars, encouraging combatants, and praying for victory. While the Churches are gravely seeking "a common basis," perhaps they could do something to encourage peace in the following directions. They might eliminate from their praying manuals all cursing psalms and prayers for combatant forces and for victory. They could give up the pastime of blessing warships. They might also use their influence to discourage the presence of the military at civic functions. Furthermore, at war memorial services, they could cease assuring people that God helped to win the last stupid war. If they will not do this, we cannot see how the Churches' future peace propaganda, telling how antagonistic God is to war, is likely to be effective.

Following the poverty-stricken preacher of Nazareth has its compensations. A Welsh pastor, the Rev. John Owen, on his leaving Engedi Church, has been presented with a wallet of treasury notes and a handsome timepiece, and Mrs. Owen received a gold watch. Mr. Owen's reward for preaching "blessed be ye poor" is a decent salary and a safe job for eighteen years at least, and now some handsome presents. If Christ came to London, no doubt he would telegraph congratulations to Mr. Owen, and a "well done thou good and faithful servant!"

The Chief Scout has been presented with a heat-proof coat. Presumably the donors of the gift have been interested in the discussion, "Where are the Dead?" and are anxious that Sir Robert should "Be Prepared" for possible future emergencies.

Still they come! More Lives of Christ are expected soon. The late Robert Keable, the novelist, wrote a "Life," which will be published in the near future. One by Lord Beaverbrook, and another by Sir Hall Caine, are also reported to be ready for the printers. Parsons and writers for the religious papers should make a note of these facts. The publishing of these romances furnishes unmistakable evidence of the public's keen interest in religion.

One effect of the recent warm weather has been that the brains of our "Mrs. Grundys" have boiled over. This has resulted in hectic fulminations against the sensible persons who wear no more clothing than is essential. But the believers in the theory that what was made in God's own image should be concealed, not revealed, are not having the argument all their own way in these days of commonsense. So, a "Father of Daughters" points out that it is an established scientific fact that exposure of the body to sunlight is highly beneficial. Therefore, those who wear a minimum of costume when bathing or sun-basking are wise and sensible. He adds:—

The younger generation has taken the measure of Mrs. Grundy, and realizes that what this horrible old woman calls "decency" is in reality dirty-mindedness, a feature common to all forms of so-called "Puritanism."

The apostles of dirty-mindedness, we will add, get their inspiration from the Holy Christian Bible. Incidentally, we note a change in the editorial viewpoint in regard to the opinions expressed by newspaper readers. Forty years ago, no paper would have printed so outspoken a letter as that quoted above. The sentiments expressed would have been thought to savour too much of the *Freethinker*. To-day, editors are less timid. In the meantime Freethought has been steadily growing.

A wireless listener says: "The curse of radio is the habit of turning on a loud-speaker like a gas-fire. I have played bridge to it, and when my frenzy became apparent to my host he *turned it lower!*" We should hate to think that the Sunday sermon was on at the time and got treated like a gas-fire. Yet that might well have been the case. We have seen cribbage being played with a wireless accompaniment from the "Silent Fellowship."

The Rev. Leslie Weatherhead (Wesleyan) thinks that often there is confusion because parsons use words that are understood in quite another sense by people in the pews. He thinks there is danger in this. Maybe there is. On the other hand, such confusion is not altogether without its advantages, especially to the modernist parson in these hard times. It enables him to say one thing and mean another, and to leave each hearer to interpret according to his fancy. Surely that is helpful where the parson's clients are a mixed crowd of modernists and fundamentalists, and the parson is mortally afraid of offending one or the other.

A bunch of pious university students carrying on a missionary campaign, asked permission of the Devon Education Committee to address children in schools. But the Committee refused the application on the ground that it would open the door to all kinds of propaganda. So, religious addresses are propaganda. We congratulate the Committee on their ability to see that fact. We suggest that, for consistency's sake, they should also exclude from the schools any kind of Christian teaching.

'Tis true, pity 'tis! The education of Wesleyan congregations is enormously in advance of that of fifty years ago. Annually, scores of thousands of Wesleyan children from elementary schools gain scholarships for higher education; also, Wesleyan graduates at Universities have increased at least ten-fold. Yet, deploring the Editor of the *Methodist Recorder*, the proportion of these better educated who offer for the ministry is little, if at all, greater than fifty years ago. As the Methodist

Editor has forgotten to state the reason for this state of affairs, we will do so for him. The chief reason is that the Christian religion does not—to quote the Editor—"command the intellectual respect of the rising generation." 'Tis true, pity 'tis!

"If Christ came to London," we fancy all his time would be taken up with revising the New Testament, so that his teaching would have but one unmistakable interpretation. He would not need to be here long before he realised what a sad mess his apostles had made of the New Testament as a guide for the righteous. There are hardly two Christians who can agree as to what it really means. Hence, the multitudes of sects, and the innumerable squabbles, arguments, persecutions, and shedding of blood which have marked the Christian era as so great an improvement on the age of paganism.

A suggestion has been made to plant along bare arterial roads, trees in memory of soldiers who died in the war. Trees would certainly be an improvement on Christian crosses which the parsons persuaded villagers and townsmen to erect everywhere—to the "glory of God" first, and secondly to the fallen—as a free advertisement for their superstition. But one may suppose that if trees be planted, the parsons will want to mumble some incantation over them. One can trust men of God not to keep out of the picture.

A reader of a daily paper says:—

Many thousands of people even to-day believe that only Church marriages are legal, an error for which the Church alone is responsible.

We will not discuss whether or not the Church is responsible for the error. But we can say that all the Churches are responsible for the widespread superstition which is believed by the ignorant of all classes, that if a marriage is not contracted in a church it is unlikely to be happy. The superstition fetches many fees for the parson.

Just as the vendor of a patent cure-all assures the world that his commodity is the one thing needful, so too, does the Rev. Henry High solemnly declare that social reclamation, social justice, and social right cannot be accomplished by any other thing except "the application of the Christian spirit." The important part of the reverend gent's "pull" is, of course, that which is to be implied—namely, that you must attend the parson's house of business if you would acquire the aforesaid Christian spirit.

In a recent book by Dr. D. F. Fraser-Harris, the author says:—

Education is the process whereby we learn how to acquire knowledge rather than the mere acquiring of it. The knowing about things is not being educated; it is being instructed. Education is the appreciation of the value of knowledge, of its quality rather than its quantity. It is the conviction that we are forced to recognize a rational principle underlying all things.

After reading this, one is left wondering just how one should classify that weird kind of knowledge called "religious education." Acquaintance with the irrationalities of the English Bible, and with the absurdities of Christian dogma and ritual, is certainly not likely to arouse the conviction of there being such a thing as a rational principle to be recognized.

WORK FOR ALL.

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J. HIGGINS.—There is no Branch of the N.S.S. in Luton, although there are many Freethinkers there. We do not quite grasp the bearing of your inquiry on Christian Science. Will you write again, and we will then deal with the matter?

A. H. M.—Thanks for MSS., shall appear as early as possible.

C. HARPUR.—We are not responsible for, nor do we endorse, all the views expressed by every contributor to this journal. There is room for wide divergence of opinion among Freethinkers, even when they are in substantial agreement.

Mr. T. J. KING.—Thanks for paper. Of course, Sabbatarianism is far from dead, but it has been badly scotched. The claim that the protestors are in favour of sports and recreation "at suitable times," gives the inevitable touch of pious humbug to the performance.

MARIE PERRIN.—There is no branch of the N.S.S. at Houghton-le-Spring at present.

F. HUMPHREY.—Rhyme is pungent enough, but hardly suitable. Thanks all the same.

J. W. THOMAS.—Thanks for paper. Quite an interesting item.

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.

We must ask the indulgence of correspondents this week. Mr. Cohen is taking a brief holiday, and wishes to make it as complete as possible with a strenuous autumn and winter before him. His letters have to be forwarded to him, and replies to some must, of necessity, be held over until next week.

Mr. R. Harking writes, *apropos* of our articles on "Where are the Dead?" that we might have suggested to the Editor of the *Daily News*, a discussion on "Where are the Unborn?" Certainly a discussion as to where we were before we were here, is as sensible and as intelligible as where we are when no longer here. But in all religious discussions one must avoid making the absurdity too apparent.

One of our South African readers, Mr. D. Matthews, has been carrying on a vigorous correspondence in the *Rand Daily Mail*, on the subject of "Life After Death." He suspects the Editor of the paper of the policy of weeding out letters that are too plainly spoken, and we expect the suspicion is justified. But the letters that have appeared cannot but do good. Mr. Matthews thinks that our "Views and Opinions" on the *Daily News'* articles should be reprinted in pamphlet form. Others have written to the same effect, but we are afraid they are, of necessity, too sketchy for permanence. Anyway, there is Mr. Cohen's *Other Side of Death*, which really covers the whole subject.

The *Cape Times* of July 17, gives the following excerpt from the will of Mr. W. Grey Rattray, of Johannesburg:—

After my death my body shall be enclosed in a plain deal coffin and cremated at the nearest crematorium and the resultant ashes cast to the winds. Should I die at sea, then I direct that my body be enclosed in a common blanket, weighted with stones or other heavy substances and cast into the sea. I desire that no flowers should be placed on my body and that no religious service of any kind shall take place, believing firmly as I do that there is no hereafter, and that the alleged immortality of the soul is but a myth invented by the Churches to terrorize the ignorant and credulous. To my mind, the idea of God is a human invention. Man made God, not God made man.

That is a very unorthodox way to die. The proper method is either to die regretting one's inability to believe, or expressing a hope that one may meet in the next world all whom one loved in this.

Every day brings events that show the absurdity of religious beliefs and ceremonies, but the following report, which is reprinted from the *Manchester Guardian* of August 8, is in a class by itself:—

AMAZING BURIAL DILEMMA.

A minister of religion has written to the *Cæuvre* about a curious burial that has just taken place at Marseilles. It was of the four victims, three men and a woman, of a recent motor-car accident, reported in all the newspapers, on the road to Biarritz. Their car turned over on them and took fire, so that in a few minutes they were all reduced to an undistinguishable mass of calcined bones. These were collected, he writes, "by a pious hand," put into a common coffin, and sent to Marseilles for burial.

Now it so happened that the four victims belonged each to a different religion. One of the men was a Roman Catholic, the second a Protestant, the third a Jew, while the woman was a Greek Orthodox. Naturally the respective families desired a religious ceremony according to the victim's faith, but here a difficulty arose, for the clergy of the four various denominations refused to meet simultaneously.

The Roman Catholic clergy of the parish declined to officiate at the cemetery and went instead to meet the coffin at the station, where absolution was pronounced. The Protestant pastor, the Jewish Rabbi, and the Orthodox priest went to the graveside, but a sort of timetable had to be arranged for the various ceremonies and to prevent contact.

At this the writer of the letter is scandalized. Prayers said in common, he suggests, would have been much more becoming in such a unique case.

"Unique case, indeed!" comments ironically M. de la Fouchardière, in the columns of the same newspaper. "Such a peculiar case of conscience," he writes, would have given delight to the fathers of the Church, and it might well have provided us with several supplementary volumes of St. Thomas Aquinas. . . . But none of the councils had even foreseen such a case, and indeed it does so much seem to bear the very marks of the Devil's own claws that it might have been brought about expressly to plunge the ministers of these four holy religions into the most extreme embarrassment."

The satanic scenario, adds M. de la Fouchardière, was not complete: "It only needed to add a Freethinker to the amalgam."

Further comment would only brush the bloom from this specimen of unconscious religious humour.

Spiritualism and its Evidence.

(Continued from page 522.)

FOR sheer spectacularity the phenomena known as materialization transcends every other form of spiritualistic hocus-pocus. It has been responsible, in clever hands, for the conversion or partial conversion of a small army of scientists. The Fox sisters, Home, Mrs. Guppy, Herne and Williams, Rita, all made crude attempts at partial or complete ghost materializations. With success came additional daring, and Florence Cook drew Katie King out of spirit land for the edification of Sir William Crookes and his credulous friends. Here is the scientist's own account, lifted from the pages of his *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism* :—

I pass on to a *seance* held last night at Hackney. Katie never appeared to greater perfection, and for nearly two hours she walked about the room, conversing familiarly with those present. On several occasions she took my arm when walking, and the impression conveyed to my mind that it was a living woman by my side, instead of a visitor from the other world, was so strong that the temptation to repeat a recent celebrated experiment became almost irresistible. Feeling, however, that if I had not a spirit, I had at all events a *lady* close to me, I asked her permission to clasp her in my arms, so as to be able to verify the interesting observations which a bold experimentalist has recently somewhat verbosely recorded. Permission was graciously given, and I accordingly did—well, as any gentleman would do under the circumstances . . . Katie now said she thought she should be able this time to show herself and Miss Cook together. I was to turn the gas out, and then come with my phosphorus lamp⁴ into the room now used as a cabinet. This I did . . .

I went cautiously into the room, it being dark, and felt about for Miss Cook. I found her crouching on the floor. Kneeling down, I let air enter the lamp, and by its light I saw the young lady dressed in black velvet, as she had been in the early part of the evening, and to all appearance perfectly senseless; she did not move when I took her hand and held the light quite close to her face, but continued quietly breathing. Raising the lamp, I looked around and saw Katie standing close behind Miss Cook. She was robed in flowing white drapery, as we had seen her previously during the *seance*. Holding one of Miss Cook's hands in mine, and still kneeling, I passed the lamp up and down so as to illuminate Katie's whole figure, and satisfy myself thoroughly that I was really looking at the veritable Katie whom I had clasped in my arms a few minutes before, and not at the phantasm of a disordered brain. She did not speak, but moved her head and smiled in recognition. Three separate times did I carefully examine Miss Cook crouching before me, to be sure that the hand I held was that of a living woman, and three separate times did I turn the lamp to Katie and examine her with steadfast scrutiny until I had no doubt whatever of her objective reality. At last Miss Cook moved slightly, and Katie instantly motioned me to go away. I went to another part of the cabinet and then ceased to see Katie, but did not leave the room until Miss Cook woke up, and two of the visitors came in with a light.

Such is a learned professor's idea of what is evidential. The cabinet was in pitch darkness, and Sir William, by the light from his phosphorus lamp, examined the trickery of an expert prestigiator, who had served her apprenticeship to a mediumistic fraud.

⁴The phosphorus lamp consisted of a 6-oz. or 8-oz. bottle, containing a little phosphorized oil, and tightly corked."

As well might he look for a needle by the light from a glow-worm. In most cases, Florrie Cook and Katie King were, of course, the same personality. In the recesses of the cabinet the girl made suitable changes of apparel and walked the room as the ghost, Katie King. But also, on occasion, there is not the smallest doubt Cook had an accomplice. Unquestionably the *seance* described by Sir William Crookes was one of these. Cook was on the friendliest terms with the Crookes' family, she had the run of the house, and the preparing of her trickery was the mildest of peccadilloes. Had it occurred to the scientist to throw away his ridiculous bottle of phosphorus, and to turn on the light, it is a safe and sure assumption that Miss Cook's exit would have been a quick and painful one. But Sir William's credulity was marvellous. Even after a ghost at one of Cook's *seances* in 1880 was seized and identified as the medium herself, Crookes still stuck to the opinion expressed in his original published report.⁵

It may be wondered if it is possible for human credulity to exceed so pitiable a spectacle as that of Sir William Crookes, scientist of international fame, Fellow of the Royal Society, being imposed upon by such a tawdry and puerile trick. It most emphatically is possible. There is in this great and benighted land yet another man, decorated with a similar title, of even more extended fame, gaily admitting his belief in the same rubbishy jugglery. I present the King of the army of gudgeons: the illustrious creator of the immortal Sherlock. With the full story of Florence Cook's⁶ career before his two eyes, with the four-fold exposure in his mind, Sir Arthur can not only believe in the materialization of Katie King, but, in addition, he can explain the formation of the ghost. His theory, or rather the theory he has adopted, for Professor Richet, Dr. Crawford and Gustave Geley have all given similar explanations, is that of an exudation from the body of the medium, called "ectoplasm," which assumes or is moulded by the medium into material form. But let us see what Sir Arthur says:—

We can well suppose that during those long periods when Florence Cook lay in the laboratory in the dark, periods which lasted an hour or more upon some occasions, the ectoplasm was flowing from her as from Eva. Then it was gathering itself into a viscous cloud or pillar close to her frame; then the form of Katie King was evolved from this cloud, in the manner already described, and finally the nexus was broken and the completed body advanced to present itself at the door of communication, showing a person different in every possible attribute save that of sex from the medium, and yet composed wholly or in part from elements extracted from her senseless body.—(A. Conan Doyle: *The Vital Message*, p. 205.)

Not unnaturally, to those unacquainted with the history and evolution of spiritualistic phenomena, this so-called "ectoplasm" is something vastly new. There is, however, in reality nothing new about it ex-

⁵"Every test that I have proposed she has at once agreed to submit to with the utmost willingness; she is open and straightforward in speech, and I have never seen anything approaching the slightest symptom of a wish to deceive. Indeed, I do not believe she could carry on a deception if she were to try, and if she did she would certainly be found out very quickly, for such a line of action is altogether foreign to her nature."—(*Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*, p. 112.)

⁶To the admirers of this charlatan there is no end. F. F. Fournier D'Albe, in his book *New Light on Immortality*, writes in reference to the Katie King materializations: "It will be useful at this stage to enter somewhat fully into the details of one of the most remarkable and best authenticated manifestations of supernormal activity on record."—(p. 218.) [The italics are mine.—G.R.S.]

cept its rococo name, and the glamour that excited and ecstatic observers give to a simple trick. "From the body of the medium," says Dr. Geley, "there exudes or is exteriorized a substance at first amorphous or polymorphous. This substance takes on diverse forms, usually representations of more or less complex organs." The solid forms, continues the learned scientist, are more suitable for examination. All the scrutiny of this Geley, however, failed to suffice for their identification as what they really were: strips of muslin, masks, cotton wool and other paraphernalia of the theatrical make-up box. Dr. Geley continues: "It has been observed under this form, from several mediums, especially from the famous medium, Eglinton."⁷ And again, "But it was from the medium Eva that this solid substance is generated with astonishing completeness."

Now this Eva is in good truth worth a little extra study. Not that she did anything that a hundred others have not done every bit as well; not that she was anything but a remarkably ignorant peasant, not that she came within a good mile in the matter of sheer ingenuity, of the famous Daniel D. Home. But in view of the unquestionable fact that she was the direct and sole cause of Dr. Gustave Geley,⁸ Director of the International Metapsychical Institute of Paris, scientist of world-wide fame, as a result of the study of her antics, giving to the world in all seriousness a new theory of evolution worked out with patient and laborious effort in 328 pages of piffing mush. He professes to upset Darwin's theory of selective evolution; he magnifies, as we have seen in another part of this book, the subconscious mind into a vast and inordinately powerful force which he terms "dynamo-psychism." Hear him:—

The notion of ideoplasticity forced upon us by the facts is of conspicuous importance; the idea is no longer a product of matter. On the contrary, it is the idea that moulds matter and gives form and attributes to it. In other words, matter—the unique substance—is resolved by final analysis into a superior dynamism which conditions it, and this dynamism is itself dependent on the idea.

This is nothing less than the complete reversal of materialist philosophy. As Flammarion says in his admirable book, *Les Forces Naturelles Inconnues*, these manifestations "confirm what we know from other sources: that the purely mechanical concept of nature is insufficient; and there is more in the universe than matter. It is not matter that governs the world, but a dynamic and psychic element." This is so, the ideoplastic materializations demonstrate that the living being can no longer be considered as a mere cellular complex. It appears primarily as a dynamo-psychism, and the cellular complex which is its body appears as the ideoplastic product of this dynamo-psychism. Thus the formations materialized in mediumistic seances arise from the same biological process as normal birth. They are neither more nor less miraculous or supernormal; they are equally so. The same ideoplastic miracle makes the hands, the face, the viscera, the tissues, and the entire organism of the foetus at the expense of the maternal body, or the hands, the face, or the entire organs of a materialization.

This singular analogy between normal and so-called supernormal physiology extends even to details; the ectoplasm is linked to the medium by a channel of nourishment, a true umbilical cord, comparable to that which joins the embryo to the

maternal body. In certain cases the materialized forms appear in an ovoid of the substance. The following instance taken from my notebook is characteristic. "On the lap of the medium there appears a white spot which very rapidly forms an irregular rounded mass like a ball of snow or cotton wool. Under our eyes the mass partly opens, divides into two parts, united by a band of substance; in one of them appears the admirably modelled features of a woman. The eyes especially have an intensely living expression. At the end of a few moments, the phenomenon fades, diminishes in visibility, and disappears." I have also seen, on several occasions, a hand presented wrapped in a membrane closely resembling the placental membrane. The impression produced, both as to sight and touch, was precisely that of a hand presentation in childbirth, when the amnion is unbroken.

So the learned professor, through page upon page of dreary argument, develops his thesis of palingenesis. Wallowing and floundering in mazes of sophomorous epistology, he vomits chapter after chapter of the most amazing rubbish that ever existed between book covers. And all on a foundation of such excessive flimsiness that the building of St. Paul's on a bed of jelly would, in comparison, be sanity itself. Let us go a little deeper.

Eva, we are told, was trained and educated by Mme. Bisson, and that through the German scientist, Baron Schrenck-Notzing, Geley came in touch with her. For a year and a half, we are told, Dr. Geley, "at bi-weekly seances," studied the marvellous Eva, and was able to "see, touch and to photograph" the materializations. Supposed to be in a trance, Eva sat in her dark and curtained cabinet while the scientist, in the dimly lighted room, watched for the forms appearing from the cabinet much in the way that children watch for Punch and Judy. In the main the "ectoplasm" came from the medium's mouth. The manner of its coming is described with fine detail by the watching scientist:—

The substance has variable aspects; sometimes, and most characteristically, it appears as a plastic paste, a true protoplasmic mass; sometimes as a number of fine threads; sometimes as strings of different thickness in narrow and rigid lines; sometimes as a wide band; sometimes as a fine tissue of ill-defined and irregular shape. The most curious form of all is that of a wide-spread membrane with swellings and fringes, whose general appearance is remarkably like that of the epiploon (caul). In fine, the substance is essentially amorphous, or rather polymorphous."—(*From the Unconscious or the Conscious*, p. 55.)

On the next page is an admission of a peculiarity of this stuff that might have caused a more astute and critical observer to suspect the impeccable Eva:—

"it shrinks from all contacts and is always ready to avoid them and to be re-absorbed."

Again, there is abundant indication of the medium's resourcefulness in the explanation given for lack of definite information as to the composition of the "ectoplasm."

"Analyses of the exteriorized substances are, of course, not to be had. The moral impossibility of amputating from the medium's ectoplasm a portion which might grievously injure or kill her, will always prevent this."—(*Ibid*, p. 64.)

Had Dr. Geley taken the risk it is reasonably safe to assume his book would never have been published. He would have found that the faces shown in his photographs were ensembles of phosphorized paper, masks and muslin. It was a pity, too, he did not trouble to inquire into the past history of the artful Eva, alias Marthe Berand, self-confessed trickster and fraud.

GEORGE R. SCOTT.

(To be continued.)

⁷ Eglinton was exposed in 1876. Colley discovered him carrying about with him the apparel of his ghost.

⁸ Dr. Geley has never actually joined the spiritualistic ranks. His theory of ideoplasticism and telikeniticism is merely an elaboration of that formulated years ago by Sergeant Cox and Prof. Richet, as an explanation of physical phenomena other than the spiritualistic conception.

Books and Life.

MR. EDEN PHILLPOTTS, according to the incidentals of printing, has not waited for Christmas, as he has given the world, whether it likes it or not, a message of goodwill. There has never been any need to be niggardly although custom requires that the month of December is the accepted time to remind men to behave decently towards each other. In imagination, we can see the author looking over many years in the past, and weighing up the good and indifferent efforts of trying to knock a little sense into man's head; he decides, and we admire his choice; in five lines out of his book entitled *Goodwill*, he writes:—

"To feel is easier than to appraise,
To sit in judgment easier than to judge;
And looking backward often do I grudge
The fierce, uneven, raw, tempestuous days
Impotently misspent in railing at our ways."

No one who is afraid of admitting error will deny the truth in these lines; critical we may be—criticism is as easy as slapping a child instead of correcting it—but the real test of value comes when constructive effort is required. Our civilization has not yet tried reason, yet there are thousands of critics who strain the English language, make jig-saw puzzles of the simple, and warn us of the danger attending an outbreak of common sense. With an old controversial trick Bergson states that common sense is fatiguing; there are a hundred replies to this gibe if we assume that the statement is worth consideration—and philosophers must live. Another five lines show our author in touch with modern movements:—

"Some stand for Reason; some mistrust her note
And vow that Intuition shows the way;
While other prophets of this deafening day
Sambo proclaim, give savages their vote
And on the primitive voluminously gloat."

There are many valuable reasons why primitive thought should be encouraged; there are powerful incentives by certain interests to deliberately muddy the clear stream of reason, and they are all known and charted on the map of Freethought. In the foreword Mr. Phillpotts writes that he does not pretend his thoughts in this form are for poetry; we do not agree, for the very first stanza brings pleasant memories of Spenser, the second has caught a note from Longfellow's best sonnet, and the third evokes the spirit of Milton. The fourth has the mark of Landor and has an excellent line—"Toiling to see the naked truth more clear," and the whole poem has the anvil ring of strenuous and sustained sincerity. Some day, our author will be discovered when we have climbed out of a mechanical, noisy, distracting age, at a time when human values are almost dead. He is well known now, and has, for what we know, had a fair measure of success; but the discovery we mean will take place when his simple philosophy is absorbed by mankind, and his thought sublimated in action. Art and Science, he states, hold between them the keys of human hope; like a good soldier, Mr. Phillpotts has done his duty to the former and never left the earth of common sense. For that alone, in years to come, he will be recognized as a representative of English letters who takes his place because it is his right; his work for Freethought in the novel form is quiet, unobtrusive, but effective, and always done with a laugh or a smile. *Goodwill* is published by Watts & Co., 5 and 6, Johnson's Court, E.C.4. 2s. 6d. net, and we for one take it as a touchstone for the times' need.

Good taste is the mark of all the books that are published by Messrs. Gerald Howe, Ltd., 23 Soho Square, W.1. In form and printing they are a delight to the eye, and our love for short books is gratified by *In the Beginning—the Origin of Civilization*, by G. Elliot Smith, 2/6 net. This little book, as a companion of the distilled wisdom of *Materialism Re-stated*, forms an excellent pair to fit the pocket. Their perusal brings a generous reward; one is a history of mankind and the other is a history of clear thinking up to the present day. Both are popularly written, and both make the complex

simple because the respective authors know their objects and handle them easily, and make a bee line for truth. Professor G. Elliot Smith does not worry his subject by abstractions; from his study, and in the very act of writing, he takes the reader by an easy process to the beginning of civilization, and marks out Egypt as the cradle of the human race. Barley, he states, was discovered in the stomachs of the earliest people buried in Egypt, and our joyful and singing brothers in the street when the curfew bell of the law has rung, would be surprised to be told that their good spirits had a beginning in Egypt, for the storing of barley led to the inauguration of beer-making, Professor Smith is no half-hearted praiser of Egypt; on page 51 in a paragraph, he generously covers our debt to her for gifts of infinite variety and, by ignoring Christian apologetics he answers them. There is one omission for which it is a pleasure to forgive him; for a disc of diluted silver called half-a-crown, he has given us an epitome of civilization for the price of a song. This fact as an hypothesis will work, and the chance eye of a native Egyptian that noticed the growth of a grain of barley was perhaps of more importance in the world's history than the giggle of Sarah behind the door or the hygienic advice in Leviticus. We know of no better companion to this book than *Materialism Re-stated*, for they both save the time spent in chasing wild geese.

Mr. Sean O'Casey's latest play, "The Silver Tassie," has not yet been produced on the stage. *The Irish Statesman*, June 9, contains a discussion of its merits by the author, Mr. W. B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, Mr. Lennox Robinson, and Walter Starkie. We have a preference for the last named critic's opinion when he writes of O'Casey, "He is groping after a new drama outside the conventional stage; at any moment he may make a great discovery." "The Silver Tassie" is a war play, and one may see, on a large scale, the tug of war between the big-hearted brother of humanity—the dramatist, and those sinister forces that can stir up nations to knock out each other's eyes—presumably to enable them to see better. We strongly object to the dramatist's use of religion in the play, as the inclusion of this subject narrows the appeal, and furthermore, Catholicism, or the Holy Sec, or any religion did not come out of the war with any credit. The sacrifice of life by white nations was an event of universal significance, and the inclusion of religion in the holocaust makes it an affair of the parish pump. The author deals with causes and the play ends inconsequentially. If Sean O'Casey can kill the passions of hatred with the virtue of pity, well and good—but we doubt it. It is not expected of the dramatist that he shall save the world; if he can point the way to avoid the necessity of saving it the laurel and bay shall be his. It is curious to note in this play the holy oaths, and nasty characters; it is a play to be swallowed like a pill—and not chewed; and if the absurdity of the first act had been sustained throughout the play war might have been shown for what it is, with all its lying romance and trappings merely stupid, as Wilde stated. Messrs. Macmillan & Co., Ltd. are the publishers, and the price is 7s. 6d. net. The polemic in the *Irish Statesman* is an example of vigorous criticism seldom heard this side of St. George's Channel, and one has the impression that the Abbey Theatre is a tight pair of boots for the author, and his plain speaking bids us hope that the wish of Mr. Starkie may one day be fulfilled if the dramatist will address the world that is neither Catholic, Atheistic, nor tied in the knot of Nationalism.

WILLIAM REPTON.

The world has to obey him who thinks and sees in the world. The world can alter the manner of that; can either have it as blessed continuous summer-sunshine, or as unblessed black thunder and tornado,—with unspeakable difference of profit to the world! The manner of it is very alterable; the matter and fact of it is not alterable by any power under the sky. Light, or failing that, lightning: the world can take its choice.—Thomas Carlyle.

Freethought Flashes.

A character that will not bend is the more likely to break. A little departure now and again from the quite correct is advisable, just as the genuinely comfortable room in a house is where the furniture is not quite so tidy and regular as it might be.

The moment spirits are in question—whether of the bottled or disbottled variety—the most ordinary methods of common sense are forgotten. Thus, in all the “examinations” of Spiritualism, not one of the scientific converts to that very primitive superstition has taken the elementary precaution of asking for a life history of the mediums that were operating and thus discovering whether he or she was in any degree subject to psychological abnormalities which would throw light upon what was going on before them. If it had been a case of cancer, or drunkenness, or epilepsy, this is the first thing that would have been studied. Where it is a question of talking to the dead, precautions seem to be an insult to “our friends” in summerland.

The one unanswerable advocate of revolution is the man who denies the right to reform.

When it is argued that the growth of man implies a continuation of that growth in some future state, it is ignored that if the individual shows growth he also evidences decline, both bodily and mentally. And if we are to argue continuance from growth, we must certainly be justified in arguing discontinuance from decline. Besides, the stressing of growth is radically dishonest. The true picture is a growth followed by a decline; and this is true of every case where death does not come through accident or rapid disease. No man of normal health has the same vigour or strength of intellect at eighty that he had at the age of forty or fifty. There is an inevitable decline, and decline presages extinction. And nature nowhere promises the resurrection of individual forms. What it does is to create another form of existence out of the old material.

Ananias belonged to the first group of Christians. It is likely that he will be well represented in the last.

There need be no surprise to find a judge speaking with some harshness of Freethinkers. If judges had none but Freethinkers to deal with, half the judiciary might be dispensed with. It is only gratitude for judges to speak well of religion. It is the religious world that has hitherto provided full employment for them.

The best and the only adequate apology for God is that he does not exist.

When a Christian complains that he is oppressed with a sense of “sin,” he is usually experiencing nothing more than a profound dissatisfaction at missing what he considers to be a “good time.” That is one reason why he demands that there shall be another life in order to compensate for the “mortification” he has undergone in this one. And if there is no future life, he fancies himself in the position of a drunkard who has held himself in all the week only to find the public houses closed on Saturday.

You do not convince a minority that it is wrong by reducing it to impotency; you only convince it that it is a minority.

A Nonconformist is one who claims the right to think as he pleases, but strongly resents anyone else exercising the same privilege.

Correspondence.

THE BUDDHA.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE “FREETHINKER.”

SIR,—I was glad to notice a reference to Buddhism in recent issues of the *Freethinker*. During my residence of two years in Ceylon and fifteen months in Burma, I had some personal contact with this remarkable philosophy, it being my purpose to make a study of its tenets and its beauty on the spot, and in the locality of its early development. In Rangoon, I had apartments with a Buddhist family, so I am qualified to speak with some knowledge and authority on the matter. And in Ceylon—Colombo—there I lived in the native quarter, and my personal acquaintances were English-speaking Buddhist gentlemen and students. But it is in Rangoon where Buddhism in all its primitive purity is manifest, and where its precepts are daily practised in social and family circles. The family in Rangoon I had apartments with were orthodox Buddhists, and besides its canons, I observed its beauty as it influenced family life in the Buddhist homesteads.

Love and eternal mercy to all flesh is the Buddhist's only creed. Buddhism essentially is *not* a religion, as the word “religion” means “*I know and I fear the gods*,” and the Buddhist knows not a god, or if he knew a god he would not fear a god. The orthodox Buddhist regards a personal deity or tat with contempt, and that if there be a personal deity his character and attributes are more of a *devil* than a god, and that Nature and we exist in spite of him and not because of him. The Buddhists regard beauty as Truth, and Love as God, with her founts of eternal mercy to all flesh. Buddhism like all other creeds has been corrupted in the passage of the ages, and the tenet of Karma or Reincarnation is *not* a part of primitive Buddhism, however, having subsequently evolved in its teachings. Gautama taught that if a personal deity *does* exist, he should be regarded with indifference, as it is *conduct of the individual* that matters and not *homage and dogma*, that now is the eternal and that now is our daily concern, and that nothing is immortal and soul a delusion.

The Jew, the Christian and the Moslem all believe that the vital part of every man is his immortal indestructible spirit. The Buddhist seeks *not* immortality, nor does he want it, and if he is good and virtuous, it is for its *own beauty*, and not for any reward hereafter—not even for a golden harp in paradise and for the poor and oppressed only a bit of the gilt off the harp in this world and in this our present expression. I will further tell you what Buddhism is in all its primitive purity, in its eternal and practical tenet of love, and in its beauty and in its mercy. It is a very complex and subtle philosophy. Eastern in its form and in its elaboration. In this respect it is in striking contrast with Confucianism. Its founder was one, Siddharta Gautama, about the sixth century before Christ. The “*Jain*” religions for many centuries ran parallel with Buddhism in India and shared with Buddhism during one period almost equal popularity. The central idea of Buddhism is that *life* is an unqualified *evil*. Gautama taught that the belief that a man possesses a soul is a mere delusion, and that nothing is immortal. The Buddhist spur to virtue and self-sacrifice is tremendous, and to us the longing for personal happiness, petty and foolish. The injunction to be pure and kind is insistent, and with no personal end to serve or in view.

Researches of recent years here brought to light and explained much that has been obscure in its doctrine, proving it to be in its purity and beauty one of the most interesting and one of the most altruistic moral codes ever cherished by men. Apropos my studies of this philosophy in Burma, from copies of original documents, the Christian creed of love and the beautitudes *en bloc* are from primitive Buddhist tenets, via a Buddhist propaganda in Syria and at Alexandria in the second century of our era. This Buddhist propaganda and its contact with primitive Christianity is a historical fact. In truth John Baptist was one of the many Buddhist monks, and Jesus—if he be a historical figure—was most

likely a disciple or convert of John. In my researches in Buddhist MSS., *Jesus* I could not identify, but John Baptist is alluded to. The whole of the Christian Canon is a duplicate of primitive Buddhist tenets, attached by Christianity during the second century of our era.

I will not trespass further on your space, except to add that re Mr. Upasaka's letter on Buddhism, I would be glad to correspond with him on modern Buddhism and its prospects in Europe as a philosophy amongst educated and cultured people—and perhaps at some very early date supplanting Christianity—as the most engrossing Moral Code ever conceived or cherished by mankind.

WALTER BIRKS.

Society News.

MR. G. WHITEHEAD AT WIGAN AND BOLTON.

THE third week spent by Mr. Whitehead in the above districts was no less successful than the other two. In consequence of the annual holidays only two meetings (held on the Sunday) were addressed in Wigan and the other six were held in Bolton. The Wigan meetings especially excited large crowds, and a lot of interest, from which was absent the horseplay of last year. Indeed, on all sides requests were heard that more Secularist meetings should be organized here, and the close attention and keen questions testify to the genuineness of the interest. Wigan has proved that whatever hostility was displayed last year was due to the presence of the clergy, their deputies this year being speedily dealt with by the fair-minded section of the crowds.

The Bolton meetings, as usual, were well attended, and as the result of previous work, it is now possible to deliver lectures of a solid nature, which would be above the heads of audiences new to the A.B.C. of Freethought propaganda. Psychology, evolution and history, from a Secularist view point, have accordingly furnished the main subjects of Mr. Whitehead's Bolton lectures, to the satisfaction of a large number of people, many of whom have personally thanked the lecturer for his efforts. Messrs. Sisson and Partington, and three younger members were again assiduous with their enthusiastic assistance at all the meetings.

BURNLEY BRANCH.

ON Monday, August 6, Mr. Clayton paid another visit to Great Harwood, where a good-sized audience listened with close attention to the lecture, which was followed by numerous questions and some opposition. Great Harwood has a strong Roman Catholic element in its population, and the meetings are exciting considerable attention. Mr. Clayton spoke at Nelson on Wednesday, where he had the usual good audience. On Thursday night, Mr. Clayton paid a first visit to Worsthorne, where the meeting was most successful. At Rawtenstall, on Friday, Mr. Clayton had the support of several local Freethinkers at his meeting. The debate at Burnley, on Sunday afternoon, on the question, "Is Man a Special Creation?" was an argument between a Secularist and a Fundamentalist. Mr. Ransome, who put the Christian case, was faithfully dealt with, and the debate provided those present with an opportunity of judging for themselves the reasonableness of the respective cases. Mr. Clayton went from the debate to lecture at Todmorden, where a concert in the town reduced the audience somewhat below its usual size.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

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

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

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY.—Ramble to The Chiltern Hundreds. Conducted by Mr. F. James. Train 10 a.m. Baker Street to Amersham. Cheap return, 3s. Lunch at Little Kingshill and tea at Chesham.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Outside Municipal College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.) : 7.30, Mr. F. Mann—"Modern Christianity."

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.

BURNLEY BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. J. Clayton's Meetings : Sunday, August 19, Accrington (Market), 7 p.m.; Thursday, August 23, Worsthorne (The Square), 7.30 p.m.; Friday, August 24, Rawtenstall (Bacup Road), 7.30 p.m.; Sunday, August 26, Todmorden (Market), 7.0 p.m.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S.—(Houghton) : Tuesday, August 14, at 7.15, A Lecture. (Hetton) : Thursday, August 16, at 7.15. A lecture. Speakers—Messrs. T. Brown, 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.

NELSON BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. G. Whitehead's Meetings : (Chapel Street) : Sunday, August 19, to Friday, August 24 inclusive, at 7.30 p.m.

VISITING Freethought Posters, Mr. Macconnell, of MACCONNELL & MABE, LTD., will be in the counties of Durham and Northumberland in the beginning of September, and may possibly continue into Scotland. He invites correspondence from any others who would like to be called on.

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