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Views and Opinions.

The Apparatus of Illusion.

We have not read Lord Oxford's just published *Memories and Reflections*, and as we have not received a review copy, and the book is published at the extravagant price of 42s., we are not likely to do so. Such prices for such works seem to offer some slight justification for the historic bracketing of publishers and Barabbas. Publishers appear to work on the principle that a certain number of libraries and a certain number of people must buy copies, and the devil take the rest of the public.

Judging from some of the reviews, Lord Oxford does not say much, if anything, about his opinions on the subject of religion, although there are indications. For instance, there is a passage in which he remarks to a friend that the Catholic Church understands better than anybody "The apparatus of illusion." That is a phrase worth remembering, and it is one that a Christian could hardly have used of any branch of the Church. It does not say that only the Roman Church makes use of illusion, it substantially brands Christianity as depending upon the apparatus of illusion, with the Roman Catholic as the most expert manipulator. Nor should we be greatly surprised, from what we know in other connexions, to find that this does really represent Lord Oxford's opinion about religion in general. There is just one other sentence worth recording, one in which he speaks of a certain bishop as one of "the most fatuous of the many donkeys that bray from the pulpit." The competition for asinine supremacy in the pulpit is very keen to-day, and it is well that the competitors should know just what many of those who sit listening to the servants of the Lord think about them.

Reserve in Religion.

What one would like to see in the case of men who have occupied the position in public life that Lord Oxford has occupied, would be a frank confession of their opinions about religion. That, how-

ever, in the present state of affairs, is too much to expect. Here and there we do get, in a volume issued after the death of the writer, a full confession that he or she had no belief in religious doctrines. But even where the confession is made, the MS. has to run the ordeal of the family, and it does not always survive. Even in the case of John Stuart Mill, his drastic criticism of religion as contained in the *Three Essays* was not published until after his death. A volume of other cases in point might easily be compiled.

I am indebted to the *Christian World* for a statement which indicates more than it says. It remarks that, "An impenetrable reserve surrounds Lord Oxford's deepest thoughts on matters of belief"—religious belief, of course. It does not condemn this silence, or wonder at it. It merely records it. And that makes the situation curious, or it would be curious if it were not so common. For Lord Oxford's book is very frank in its discussion of people and things. It will be praised because it is frank, and many will say that, being what he was, the public has a certain right to know what his thoughts were. If, in relation to the life of his time, he was not frank, many people would wonder why he wrote at all. Besides, in connexion with matters other than religion, prominent men who pen their reminiscences do not veil their opinions with an "impenetrable reserve." Rightly or wrongly, they give the world the benefit of their thoughts on art, on science, on literature, on politics, on all sorts of men and things. They practise an impenetrable reserve on religion alone.

* * *

Playing for Safety.

Why this reticence? Perhaps the expression, "the apparatus of illusion," gives the key to the problem. For it is to be noted that when prominent men have been unmistakably religious, there is no reserve about their religious views. To name Lord Oxford's one time leader, W. E. Gladstone, he certainly practised no reserve about his religious beliefs. His views on religion were crude, uninformed, and while from the point of view of culture he ought to have been ashamed of them, he was not, and he stated them with the utmost frankness. I do not blame him for so doing. If he believed them to be true and valuable, he was only doing his duty in laying them before others.

So I say that this "impenetrable reserve" on matters of religion occurs only in such cases where the attachment to religion is suspect. And from this I conclude that one may say with considerable certainty that whenever a public man in this country practises "reserve" concerning his religious belief, it is usually because he has none to disclose. There is no other discoverable reason why he should be re-

served on the subject. Ask him his opinion about religions other than Christianity and he will show no reserve whatever. If occasion calls for an expression of opinion about these religions he will speak readily enough. It is where Christianity is concerned that he becomes suddenly and suspiciously silent. With a different mental make-up, he would go the whole hog and make a profession of belief in Christianity. With greater moral courage he would revolt against being placed in intellectual blinkers, and would tell the world that he had no religion about which to practise reserve. As it is, he remains silent, and Christians are content with his silence lest worse should befall them. Next to real belief, the humbug of an assenting conformity is helpful to the smooth working of the "apparatus of illusion."

* * *

What is My Neighbour?

Now, this is a state of things which escapes criticism only because it is so terribly common. Religion is, the Christian insists, of all things the most important; the one subject on which it is of supreme urgency that all men should know the truth. But in practice it is the one thing about which I can be least certain that my neighbour is telling the truth—not the absolute truth, but merely the truth as he sees it. I am fairly certain as to the ranting ignoramus on one side of me, who makes the evenings hideous with his hymn singing evening parties, and the bright day dull with the funeral procession that leaves his doors on Sunday *en route* for the nearest chapel. A little reserve on his part would be quite acceptable. But I am not at all sure about the local councillor, or political agent, or suburbanite on the other side who sends his family to Church, or shrouds his opinions on religion in an "impenetrable reserve." It is quite possible that he inwardly agrees with me in thinking religion to be a gigantic illusion, but he does not say so. If he did, it might mean difficulty in securing promotion, losing his seat on the local Council, or being looked down upon by his religious neighbours. I know that number one is a fool, but I know where he is. I feel that number two is not a fool, but I do not know where he is. He does not tell a lie, but he is acting one. And he probably looks on me as being a bit of a fool because I will neither tell the religious lie nor act it. And that does appear to be one of the greatest and least questionable triumphs of the Christian religion. In the result, it proclaims the fool as more powerful than the wise man, and exalts humbug as being a surer guide to social advancement than unswerving devotion to what one believes to be right. It is not for nothing that the first of the recorded triumphal processions of Jesus was upon the back of an ass.

* * *

The Reign of Cant.

Now I do not believe for a moment that these men—the scientists, the journalists, the men of letters, the politicians, and others—practise this reserve because they prefer secrecy to silence, and humbug to straightforwardness. In the mass, men and women take the line of least resistance, and where dissimulation in this or that direction is the condition of social ease then dissimulation will become the rule. There is no reason, on the face of it, why men should not confess their real convictions on matters of religion with the same ease that they confess their convictions on politics or other subjects. To say that men will not do so because religion is the most important and the most "sacred" of all subjects, is beside the point. The more important it is the

greater the need for frank discussion, in order that error may be weeded out and truth better understood. Labelling religion as a "sacred" subject brings us nearer the real issue, for the religious significance of "sacred" is something that is set aside and which must not be touched by profane hands. But there is only one reason why so large a number of our public men decline to permit their real convictions on religion to be given to the public. This is found in the wholly unhealthy social atmosphere created by the Christian religion. A state of unavowed terrorism, under which men are afraid to speak the truth on religion, is responsible for the "impenetrable reserve" with which they cloak their convictions about the Christian "apparatus of illusion." There is simply no question that, if every public man and woman would to-day speak out exactly what they thought about the Christian religion, the system would soon crumble into dust, for the many millions of its stupid or unthinking followers are kept where they are because of the apparent support their religion gets from better men. The instruments of physical suppression, mental terrorism, and social boycott, have produced an environment in which fearless speech has become, to thousands, the sign of sheer folly. Men keep their opinions on religion to themselves. Lord Oxford—representative of the vast majority of sceptical publicists—"surrounds his deepest thoughts on matters of belief" with "an impenetrable reserve." If one is looking for a complete and an unanswerable indictment of Christian influence they can find it here.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A Secular Psalm of Life—and Death.

I.—FACTS.

COLD and still, while hearts are breaking,
Lie the friends whose loss we mourn,
In that sleep which brings no waking;
In that night which knows no dawn.
Ne'er again they'll roam the meadows
Gemmed with dew on flower and blade;
No more walk, mid gleams and shadows,
Through the woodland's leafy glade.
Never more they'll hear our singing;
No more hail the radiant morn;
No more hear the joy-bells ringing
When the glad New Year is born.

II.—DUTIES.

While the hours of life are fleeting
Many duties line our way:
Baseless creeds, though now retreating,
Still o'ercloud the dawning day.
Heroes trod the way before us
Spite of foes on every hand:
Follows now our mighty chorus
Scatt'ring Superstition's band.
Though we fail to banish sorrow;
Though King Death may still hold sway
We may gain a nobler morrow;
We can clear some wrongs away.

III.—HOPES.

Struggling on through many ages
Man has climbed from low estate,
Sometimes bright'ning history's pages;
Sometimes wrecked by storms of hate.
Upward still the way is leading;
Ever wider grows the view;
Mystery's clouds are fast receding;
Wisdom's rays are breaking through.
Soon, o'er dread disease victorious,
Man's full powers may be displayed;
Each succeeding stage more glorious
'Til the orb of day shall fade.

E. HORACE JONES.

The Powder in the Jam.

"Power has been hitherto occupied in no employment but in keeping down wisdom. Perhaps the time may come when wisdom shall exert her energy in repressing the sallies of power."—*W. S. Landor.*

"Any zeal is proper for religion, but the zeal of the sword and the zeal of anger; this is the bitterness of zeal."—*Jeremy Taylor.*

VOLTAIRE said that England possessed a hundred religions and only one sauce. He wrote a long time ago, and the number of religions has considerably increased since his day. A few years back *Whittaker's Almanac* published a full-page list of the religious bodies as registered in this country. This was done annually, and became a familiar feature of that famous reference book. Then the list disappeared, and it was whispered that it was withdrawn because the publication of the facts contradicted the public illusion concerning Christian unity in a Christian country.

The list was what is vulgarly termed an "eye-opener." It ranged from the Roman Catholic Church to the Unitarians, and included such playful variations as the Peculiar People, Christadelphians, Swedenborgians, Seventh Day Adventists, and Christian Science Churches. Beyond all these were the Theistic Church, Greek Church, Muggletonians, Theosophists, and the Anabaptists. I do not remember that the followers of Joanna Southcott were registered, but they undoubtedly existed, as did branch Churches of the Latter-Day Saints, popularly known as Mormons. The single entry, "Spiritualists," although it meant little to the ordinary reader, covered a wide activity in all parts of the country. Indeed, that one page in *Whittaker's Almanac* showed that the soul-saving business was prospering in this country, and the existence of fifty thousand priests and a train-load of mediums proved it.

As the Druids had ceased to exist, the Greek Church is the eldest superstition in the list. This, however, has little interest for the English people, being the Church of the Greek and Russian colony in London. Next in order comes the Roman Catholic Church, which, like Sir John Falstaff, is old and of questionable reputation. It is important because it was once the principal religion of this country, and also because its followers now represent a mischievous minority, bent on restoring the Pope's temporal power, and reinstating the worst form of priestcraft.

The Roman Pontiff must always be a matter of interest to Freethinkers. For Papa is the ecclesiastic who addresses the largest congregation in the world. Compared with the Pope, other archbishops seem parochial. Using the patter of his profession, Papa utters words which are heard from Bolivia to Bermuda, from Stockholm to the South Seas. The rhetoric may be enfeebled and the platitudes exhausted, but the patriarch possesses something of the tragic character of Tithonus, "immortal age beside immortal youth." His unique position with regard to the huge numbers of men and women who hold their rule of faith from the largest of the Christian Churches is striking. That his teaching is treated lightly by large numbers of Christians is not his fault. Publicly he stands, the Lear of thankless and ungrateful children, shrill in his menaces, but keeping unimpaired the dignity of a paternity rejected.

Papa is the hardest of hard-shell Christians, not a lath painted to look like iron. A Torquemada he may be, if occasion serves, but never a tadpole. No one ever expects that he will behave like a British Broad Churchman, who claims Bradlaugh and Dar-

win as unconscious Christians, and pretends to regard Freethought as a wholesome tonic, to be occasionally used by tired theologians. It is as well, for when Papa turns, all the armies of Catholic priests turn with him.

What does Papa's Church teach? The fundamentals of the Roman Catholic faith are the same today as they were when Dante wrote the *Divine Comedy*, and the great poet has been dead six centuries. Catholic priests have not damped one solitary spark of their hell. The confessional is still used. Priests are still celibate; everything is too reminiscent of the Middle Ages. A dying religion is fittingly celebrated in the use of a dead language.

A dying creed! Yet, like Charles the Second, "unconscionably long a-dying." For the fight of the future will be between the Romish Church and Freethought. Protestantism has shot its bolt. Consider the facts! Protestantism has gained no victory since the Reformation, none whatever. The countries which became Protestant then are still Protestant, but no additions have been made in Europe. Even in America, Rome splits fifty-fifty with her rivals, the perfervid Puritanism of the United States being more than balanced by the allegiance to Catholicism of the Central and Southern Republics. And, remember, Papa's God is the Deity whose trade is not to forgive.

Papa claims that the Roman Catholic Church is the cat's whiskers; that it is the original firm, and all others are fraudulent imitations. As all the Churches in the world make the same claim, there is nothing original in this advertisement. But Papa goes further. He affirms that Rome's alleged miracles are a continuation of those said to be wrought by Christ and the twelve disciples. He insists that the so-called "cures" at Lourdes, and elsewhere, and the very questionable liquefaction of the blood of Saint Januarius at Naples, are precisely such as those mentioned in the Christian Bible, and that the apparition of the Virgin to children at I. a Saletti is as genuine as the miracles in Judæa.

Yet the doom of this most powerful of the Christian Churches is sounded. It seems strange that this should be so, for thousands of cities shimmer with the gee-gaws of Catholic shrines, and the roads of Europe are dotted with clerical black-birds. From being truly powerful in the world, the Romish Church is now at the foot of the ladder of progress.

What is the reason for this decline and fall? The answer is simple. The Roman Catholic Church has become a stereotyped superstition. To the sincere Catholic, religion is not a pastime for one day in the week when the shops are closed. Nor is it a social decoration, or a private police force. It is a passion that inflames his nature, and makes other things appear trivial. It is like an attack of fever, only, in this case, the virus is introduced by the priest. This fanatical spirit has destroyed the value of the Roman Catholic Church. During the past four centuries it has done nothing for human advancement. Its doom is said, for no institution can live on its past alone. Its swan-song is "Bye-bye, blackbird!"

The theology of this most powerful of Christian Churches is built up on the writings of the early Fathers of the Church, as strange a collection of lunatics as ever escaped from an asylum. Their writings prove it, and the results were lamentable. So conceited were these priests made by what they called religion, that they thought themselves wiser than the wisest of those who differed from them. They became so ferocious by holding fast to their faith that they resembled nothing so much as a terrier holding a rat. Their idea of wisdom was to creep into a

corner and put their hands before their eyes, in order not to see the worldliness of the world. Ignorant of life, these Oriental fanatics denounced it as the abomination of wickedness. Innocent of humour, like all cranks, they used reason to deride and mock reason. Was it not, truly, a divine comedy?

The continued existence of this Romish Church is in itself a most ironic criticism of our boasted civilization. The real truth is that the majority of European populations is not half educated, despite two thousand years of Christian teaching. It is as plain as a pikestaff that to be a Christian one need not be educated, nor intelligent. To be a Freethinker one must learn and think. The strength of Priestcraft lies in the unthinking and uninformed masses, and it battens upon ignorance. O Democracy!

MIMNERMUS.

Spiritualism and its Evidence.

(Concluded from page 587.)

It is undeniable that the whole case for automatic writing rests upon the slenderest of evidence: the bare word of the writer himself, unsupported by even so much as a policeman's affirmation, that it was dictated by a spiritual being. It is supremely doubtful if one could justify the starting of a war, the beginning of a new faith, or the extermination of a spider on proof so phantasmal. It is mainly owing to this phenomenally poor backing that I am confident the bulk of these automatists are absolutely genuine. No plain cheat would have the audacity to attempt an imposture so gigantically absurd. Its very idiocy is the proof and the only proof of its genuineness. But there is in good and sweet truth a limit. Of its authenticity, as already stated, I am convinced. But this much admitted, I hold out a firm and immovable halting hand. To ask me to agree that the communications have a spiritual source is too much. It is, in addition, sheer rubbish. The source is plain enough. It is the garbage heap of an enfeebled brain, and from it, in moments of ecstatic dissociation, the matter pours forth. The extent of the editing it receives between coming from the automatist's pen and appearing on the printed page, I know not, but if its inanity is any more apparent in the caligraphic script, then my pity for the original reader is as huge as it is profound. It may be urged, how is it possible for any grown man or woman to sit down and write pages of matter and fail to recognize it as his or her composition? For precisely the reasons that I have given in another connexion: that in a state of dissociation, which in some persons seems to be pretty nearly an habitual state, the brain fails to recognize subjective visions for what they really are. For precisely the same reason that every newspaper reader fails to realize that he is putting words into the text and leaving others out; for precisely the same reason that no two witnesses examined separately can give exactly similar accounts of any incident, and yet each will swear on a stack of Bibles that his account is the true one.

Before me, as I write, is a book devoted to these spiritual revelations. It is from the inspired pen of one, the Rev. G. Vale Owen. It is hall-marked with Lord Northcliffe's encomium, and, of course, it has by way of introduction a ladleful of praise from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. In the main, it is a description of heaven, such as one might expect a professional soul-saver to see in his dreams; a garbled medley of St. Paul's conception of paradise, the multiple heaven of the Persians, and the Book of Revelation. The book is the size of a full-length novel, and with unutterable weariness have I searched its pages for

so much as a solitary sentence worth the reading. A veritable master mush-peddler, this Arnel, who signs the communications and who, we are told by the editor of the script, "is a being of a high spiritual order." At random, I open the book and quote from a *communiqué* headed "Some Principles of Creative Science—The Spiral."¹³

We saw, as we went down one avenue, how worlds were made. On the left hand, as we went, we saw how the thought of God, vibrating and pulsing outward, became, by degrees, of denser element, until it issued into what you call ether. Here we were able to notice the nature of the movement, and we saw that it was spiral, but that, any certain wave reached the top of the spiral, it continued its course by a descent, also of spiral form, but now within the atom of ether.

There are pages of this pseudo-scientific jargon, interspersed with banalities, thus:—

Here, in the heavens, we have different orders of beings, differing in authority, differing in power, and in character, and also in ability for one branch of work or another. This also obtains on earth.

So you will find it also in the animal kingdom. Animals have different powers, and some have skill in one direction, some in another. They also differ in character. The horse is more apt at friendship with man than is the snake; the parrot than the vulture.

As heavily decorated with capitals as an exposition on Esoteric Buddhism are some chapters. Here is a sample:—

When we were all assembled, the Angels who were His attendants lifted up their voices and led an anthem of praise, and we all joined them in their adoration. I see you wish me to give you the motive of the theme. It was as I write it now:—

"BEING was, and from the heart of Being came forth God.

"God thought, and from His Mind the Word became.

"THE WORD went far abroad, but with Him went God. For God was the Life of the Word, and through the Word God's Life passed onward into Form.

"So MAN became in essence and emerged from his first eternity a creature of the Heart and Mind of God, and the Word gave to him the heart of angels and the form of man.

"Right worthy is the CHRIST MANIFEST, for He it is Who, through the Word, comes forth of God, and so declares God's purpose, and His life through Him is poured upon the family of angels and of men.

"This is God Manifest, through the Word, by the Christ, in angels and men. This is the Body of God.

"When the Word spoke forth the will and purpose of God, the outer space took on a semblance of matter, out of which matter was made, and it reflected back the rays of light which came from God, through the Word.

"This is the Mantle of God, and of His Word and of the Christ.

"And planets danced to the music of the Word, for they were glad when they heard His Voice, because by His Voice alone might they hear of their Creator's Love, Who speaks to them through His Word.

"These are the Jewels which begem the Mantle of God.

"So from Being came forth God, and from God came the Word, and of the Word was the Christ of God ordained to Kingship of the Worlds for their salvation.

"And in the eternities man shall follow Him, after the long journey in places strange and

¹³ The book from which these passages are taken is *The Life Beyond the Veil*; Vol. IV: *The Battalions of Heaven*, by the Rev. G. Vale Owen.

some most desolate, homeward, Godward, in the evening of the day whose hours are eternities, and whose Noon is now.

"This shall be the Kingdom of God, and of His Christ."

There is more—reams of it. But enough! I have made no unfair selection. The book reeks with tawdriness of thought, with rubbishy sentiment, with sweltering polemics, with piffling morality. It is infinitely worse than the Johannes' *communiqués* of Dennis Bradley: it is on a par with the stuff poured out from the pen of Andrew Jackson Davis, of Poughkeepsie, eighty years ago. "... among the passages I have perused are many of great beauty," was the opinion of Lord Northcliffe, while in this welter of rubbish Conan Doyle sees "the hand of the Lord."

How exactly J. Arthur Hill comes to have such a position of eminence in the ranks of the avatars is to me something of a mystery. Indeed, the wonder is that someone does not pitch him out neck and crop.

Whatever harm Sir Arthur, with his child-like credulity may do, it is as nothing to the damaging effect of Mr. Hill's peasant-like unsophistication, puerile naiveness, colossal fickleness. He is as uncertain in his ideas as a society divorcee, he wobbles about in his faith like a politician; he is afflicted with mental myopia, strabismus, and drunkenness all at the same time. The book that lies before me, in all its piddling detail and emasculated prose, is Mr. Hill's latest work on Spiritualism. (*From Agnosticism to Belief*, J. Arthur Hill, 1924.) It is dull to an astounding degree: it consists, in the main, of reports of trivial, meaningless seances, with a peculiarly stupid and blundering medium, by name, Wilkinson; tacked on at the end are some cumbrous and amateur incursions into psychology, consisting of a mass of platitudes and clichés, and the constant repetition of the author's fixity of belief in survival. It almost looks as though the writer were attempting to persuade himself. Thus:—

I do not, of course, regard my own experience as the sole ground of the belief in survival and communication, to which I have been driven. (p. 114.)

But the hypothesis that we are even now living in a spiritual world, of which the present material existence is a stage or an aspect, seems to me the best philosophy attainable at present. (p. 151.)

I am satisfied that life continues and that progress is not checked; that evolution extends over there. (p. 174.)

It is sufficient for me to know that the soul survives and continues to progress. "Give me the glory of going on and still to be." I believe that we do "go on," and I have facts which justify that belief! (p. 176.)

Despite these facts, after three more pages, doubt again creeps in:—

I am therefore driven to adopt the spiritualist explanation as a working hypothesis, until some one supplies me with a better. (p. 179.)

But at last, on page 201, a crescendo of belief has been worked up:—

Basing on actual scientific evidence, not on faith, I say that there is a spiritual world in which souls continue to exist and to progress.

And again:—

But my main point is that the facts of psychical research justify belief in survival and progress on the other side. (p. 203.)

"Proof," says Mr. Hill, in his extraordinary naiveness, "is cumulative." "It is necessary to have a large number of sittings with the same medium, if we are to reach any conclusions." Is it

possible that any mortal man parading the mentality of a radio-listener cannot see that by this very admission he reveals the whole hocus-pocus of psychical phenomena? So far as being of any evidential value is concerned, the records of any but the first sitting may be used to light the fire. Nor is that of a first sitting very much better. Professional mediums have means of obtaining information that would send the eyes of such credulous nincompoops as Mr. J. Arthur Hill and his precious confrères gaping.

CONCLUSION.

"I, in any event, knew that, whatever other motives might now and then have prompted me, the Biography had been written in chief for my own diversion." Thus, the incomparably sane and lucid Cabell.

Apart from its bald impossibility there is in me, from purely selfish reasons, no wish to divorce mankind from its colossal and unending follies. The horse-laughs of the few stand majestically apart from the ruck of their fellows, hats tilted libidiously are only possible so long as ignorance and stupidity render the members of the crowd blind to their own folly. A world in which every individual was an Anatole France would have given the French *littérateur* no world at which to snigger and chuckle.

A nation comprised of units brandishing one universal level of high intelligence is fortunately an impossibility. If the free, expensive and national educational system of democracy has proved anything at all, it is this great truth. It has, more than any other solitary thing, sufficed to prove, did not politicians and public alike view its lessons with shut eyes, the enormous fallacy of the notion that one man is as good as another. What it has proved is simply that mankind is divisible into two extraordinary unequal classes; extraordinary unequal not only as regards intellect, but also as regards numbers. The one is a true aristocracy, the only aristocracy: the aristocracy of intellect. The other, to which ninety-five per cent of the population belong, is the herd of men and women parading an intelligence that never transcends the histological capacity of an intelligent ape. To this enormous and ever-swelling class appeal the follies, the idiocies, the stupidities of mankind.

In these pages I have held up for the amusement of my own particular self and others who care to join me, one vast array of these follies. And unless I have failed most dismally, Spiritualism, the ovum of all religion, stands stripped to the buff: it is before the intelligent reader in all its pristine nudity. Precisely here then my task ends.

GEORGE R. SCOTT.

BLOOMS the laurel which belongs
To the valiant chief who fights;
I see the wreath, I hear the songs
Lauding the Eternal Rights,
Victors over daily wrongs:
Awful victors, they misguide
Whom they will destroy,
And their coming triumph hide
In our downfall, or our joy:
They reach no term, they never sleep,
In equal strength through space abide;
Though, feigning dwarfs, they crouch and creep,
The strong they slay, the swift outstride:
Fate's grass grows rank in valley clods,
And rankly on the castled steep,—
Speak it firmly, these are gods,
All are ghosts beside.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON, 1803-1882.

A Shorter Bible.

OPEN LETTER TO CANON SIMPSON, OF WALLASEY.

MY DEAR CANON,—I see that in your parish magazine you are pleading for a shorter Bible, a proposal, I may say, that fills me with no little amount of apprehension. The early years of my life were so blighted by the Shorter Catechism, that the prospect of having my declining years threatened with a Shorter Bible, is very alarming. I had hoped to end my days in peace, but this drastic measure of yours will bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. But I am afraid you hardly realize all that this momentous step would involve. You speak of shortening the Bible as if it was a simple act, like shortening the baby. But, while the shortening of the baby may be necessary to its healthy development, I am sure the shortening of the Bible can only lead to disastrous results.

You will be aware, of course, that this idea of yours, of applying the pruning knife to such monumental works as the Bible, is not by any means a new one. There was once a gentleman of the name of Bowdler—not the originator of the bowler hat, but the person whose name has become enshrined in the word "Bowdlerize"—who wasted many years of his life in trying to make Shakespeare respectable. The title of his work—"The Family Shakespeare, in ten volumes; in which nothing is added to the original text; but those words and expressions are omitted, which cannot with propriety be read aloud in a family"—stands as a monument of his folly. In being thus scrupulous to *add* nothing to the text, he missed a grand opportunity to improve the shining hour by interpolating in the plays such warnings as, "Flee from the wrath to come." Another work, published after his death, bears the title: "*Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, for the use of Families and Young Persons, reprinted from the original text, with the careful omission of all passages of an irreligious or immoral tendency." If one could only get a record of the meeting of Shakespeare and Gibbon and Mr. Bowdler, when he passed over to "the other side," I am sure it would be interesting. He might have gone on to blue-pencil *Tom Jones*, *Peregrine Pickle*, *Humphrey Clinker*, *The Arabian Nights*, and a whole host of Indian literature, had not fate mercifully stayed his hand. The publication of the Shakespeare was a circumstance unfortunate for his reputation, as the word Bowdlerize has come to mean any version that is incomplete, inaccurate or incorrect; and a sin against literary taste. I am pointing this out, dear Canon, as I am sure you would not like the word "Simpsonize" to be a constant reminder to your descendants of your colossal folly.

Following the example of Mr. Bowdler, there have been persons who wished to apply his methods to the Bible itself, and eliminate all those nasty passages which every school-boy knows where to find. Their aim was to make the sacred word fit for families and young persons to read, either in private, or hear publicly in the pulpit. But I gather that your idea is not so much the deletion of the objectionable parts of the Bible, as the elimination of the "uninteresting and unintelligible" parts of the book, such as the genealogical lists in the Chronicles, and the theological arguments of St. Paul. The removal of the genealogical lists would doubtless make the Bible "shorter," but I can see endless difficulties arising as the result. How, otherwise, would the modern Jews be able to trace their ancestry, or know to which tribe they belonged? When these scattered people return to the Holy Land, how would

they know whether to march behind the banner of the lion of the tribe of Judah, the serpent of Dan, the hind of Naphtali, or the strong ass of Isacchar? There would be such a mix up of the Ephraims and Manassehs, that all the rabbis of Christendom would not be able to sort them out. I really think, dear Canon, that you have bitten off more than you can chew.

I have often wondered how long it would take the Church to find out the illogical nature of the reasoning of St. Paul, and I am glad to find that you are not afraid to put up the props to this Jack Johnson of theology. I really think this Paul wants taking down a peg or two; he has ruled the roost too long. Some people say that Christianity would have perished in its infancy had it not been for the watering and transplanting care of his genius. If Jesus Christ has not left a single written word behind, this indefatigable apostle has certainly made up for the strange omission. If his theological arguments are not very convincing, it must be confessed he had an apt way of using metaphors that has rarely been equalled. And what a fellow he was for appealing to Cæsar! Jesus Christ seems to have taken the abuse that was hurled at him lying down. Not so St. Paul. When he was had up, like a Freethought lecturer, for obstruction in the market-place, and the magistrate asked him if he would have his case tried at that court, he invariably jumped up in the dock, and with dramatic gesture, exclaimed: "I appeal unto Cæsar." There has been a good deal of surmise lately as to what would happen if Jesus Christ came to London. Nobody seems quite to know what really would happen. But there is little doubt as to what would take place if St. Paul came. After smashing all the champagne bottles that grace the take at the bishops' annuals, he would make straight for Wallasey, and the residence of Canon Simpson. And, considering the way he used to chastize those of his converts whose sexual morals did not meet with his approval, I can see you having rather a hot time.

I think I would advise you to leave well alone. Because, if you begin to interfere with the sacred Scriptures, and especially with the writings of St. Paul, you would have all the Christian sects flying at each others' throats, and when the *melée* was over there would probably be no good Christians left to carry the gospel tidings to the heathen. It is sometimes unwise even to interfere with the spelling of a person's name. You may not be familiar with low music-hall songs, but there is one from which you might learn something. It runs like this:—

If I knocked the I, out of Kelly,
It would still be Kel(l)y to me;
But if I knocked the L, out of Kelly,
He would knock the 'ell out of me.

I have been reading some newspaper letters lately, commenting upon your proposal, and these fellow Christians of yours seem quite prepared to knock the 'ell out of you. Indeed, I once knew a tradesman who lost a good customer for simply putting a P in the lady's name where it didn't oughter be. You cannot be too careful in these matters, Canon.

I scarcely think that your ecclesiastical *confrères* will thank you for characterizing parts of the Bible as "uninteresting and unintelligible." The Church for ages has held the Bible up as the inspired word of God, the only means of eternal salvation, and the source of England's greatness, and to be told now by one of its dignitaries that much of it is nonsense, will make the people sit up and wonder. They will think the Church has been guilty of telling fibs. Your candour seems to be the candour of a man crying stinking fish.

I think, Canon, I can suggest a way out of the

difficulty. Let the Bible be published in its complete form, but with a margin—a very wide margin. You might begin with the story of our first parents and the Fall. In the margin you could explain that this account is only legendary, that Adam and Eve never existed, and the Fall is a pure myth. You might take the opportunity to say that the scheme of redemption resting, as it does, upon the Fall, was only a theological creation to bamboozle men's minds. When you come to the life of Jesus, you might suggest that it is very uncertain whether any such person ever existed; that the Roman histories of the time know nothing of him, and that he himself has not left a scrap of writing behind to enlighten us as to his teaching or divine mission. This method of treatment would be a vast improvement upon the old-fashioned commentaries, and would mark a new era of biblical exposition that would bring you fame as a pioneer.

Or there is another method. Like yourself, I have long felt that the Bible in its present form has become unsuitable to modern needs. But my method would not be to shorten it, but to expand, elaborate, and embellish its wonderful pages, and supply the necessary links to make the narrative consecutive. I may say, that for a number of years I have made an effort to reproduce many of these stories in a popular form. The latest of them appeared in the *Freethinker* as recently as August 26, being an elaboration of the story of Jezebel, 1 Kings, Chap 22. I cannot boast, like Mr. Bowdler, that I have added nothing to the text, but what I have added seemed to me necessary to the story's interest and completeness. I think that you and I together, Canon, could produce a Bible that would be neither uninteresting nor unintelligible. And if you think favourably of my suggestion, I would be happy to submit a sample story for insertion in your magazine.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

Acid Drops.

In "Views and Opinions," this week, we deal with the hesitancy of public men to speak out quite plainly where their opinions are likely to conflict with current religious views. What might be taken as an addendum to what is there said, occurs in the case of the Presidential Address of Sir William Bragg, to the British Association. The portion of the address we are about to note is welcomed by the *Daily News* as correcting "the attitude of some of his colleagues who appear to maintain that the mechanistic theory presents a wholly comprehensive view of the universe." One may safely back the *Daily News*, where religion is concerned, to give its hearty support to anything that is intellectually unsound.

This is the passage to which reference is made, as given in the papers of September 6.

Scientific research in the laboratory is based on simple relations between cause and effect in the natural world. These have at times been adopted, many of us would say wrongly, as the main principle of a mechanistic theory of the universe. That relation holds in our experimental work, and as long as it does so, we avail ourselves of it, necessarily and with right. But just as in the case of research into the properties of radiation, we use a corpuscular theory or a wave theory, according to the needs of the moment, the theories being incompatible to our minds in their present development, so the use of a mechanistic theory in the laboratory does not imply that it represents all that the human mind can use or grasp on other occasions, in present or in future times.

Now, on the face of it, there does not seem any reason why Sir William Bragg should have ventured on this

extremely confused statement, save that of setting himself right with the religious world, or as right as he can be. There is no other reason discoverable why a scientist should go out of his way to tell a crowd of parsons that he is not opposed to their beliefs or to their theories. There was a time, of course, when men of science did this as a method of protecting themselves against prison or the stake. But those times are past, although the policy of setting yourself as nearly right as is possible with the men of God, still has its vogue.

And what does this statement mean? As we have said, the statement is confused, and one hopes that Sir William is wrongly reported. For instance, the principle of causation, which rules in the natural world, has, wrongly, been taken as the basis of the mechanistic theory of the universe. But why "wrongly"? What other basis could it have? The relation holds good in our experimental work, but apparently Sir William thinks it may not hold good always, at all time, and everywhere. That is enough to make one gasp. The principle of causation which, it is admitted, holds good in experimental work, is only that for every phenomenon there are discoverable conditions, the effect being the product of the conditions. Does Sir William wish us to understand he believes that there may be somewhere or the other a phenomenon that is not the product of definite conditions? If what he says means anything, it means that. And with every respect for Sir William and his work, we must say quite plainly that if he means that, then it is undiluted nonsense, better worthy of a pulpit than the chair of the British Association. Moreover, the principle of causation is not the product of the laboratory, or of experimental research, it is one of the basic conditions of human thinking. Thinking implies causation, the distinction between right and wrong thinking, scientific and unscientific thinking, being, not an absence of the belief in cause and effect, as an inaccurate conception of the nature of causes. When a man carries a mascot about to prevent ill-happenings, he is not denying causation, he is simply at sea as to the nature of the forces operating. And we really cannot think of a time or an occasion when thinking will go on in the absence of conditions that make thinking possible.

The illustration of scientists using now a corpuscular theory and now a wave theory is quite beside the point. Neither theories are a negation of causation, and both are used only so far as they help to explain a given group of experiences. It is for the future to disclose whether the two theories may be merged in some larger generalization, or whether one of the two may be proved to be all-sufficient. But we should like to see Sir William Bragg attempt the task of proving that it is possible to think in the absence of causation. If he did that he would have struck a very heavy blow at the Mechanistic conception—one which, apparently, Sir William holds so long as he is dealing with the world he knows, but which he thinks may not hold good of some future time when thinking is not thinking, and religious views will therefore rule the roost.

The Bishop of Southwark has raised £100,000 for building twenty new churches and enlarging five old ones. There used to be a lot of talk about a housing problem, and the imperative need to clear away slums. This must have been all bunkum. We feel sure the Bishop would not be worrying about building churches if there were houseless people in the land, and also persons living in slums.

Canon Peter Green, at Manchester, recently declared:—

The central truth of Christianity is the doctrine of the blessed Trinity. This is the form in which the Church's faith concerning God took shape after five centuries of hard and patient thinking.

The men of God, you will note, first took a childish speculation and assumed it to be undisputable fact, and then devoted five centuries to evolving a conglomeration

of absurdities, which they called a doctrine. People who suggest that the Churches—meaning the parsons—and the Churches' patent nostrum could cure all social ills, might remember the kind of hard and patient thinking the parsons specialize in, and the sort of problems the parsons have practised on. Bearing this in mind, we will be pardoned for doubting whether men of God are qualified for solving the very concrete problems of this everyday life.

Visiting Brighton the other week, an ex-Mayor of Blackpool said:—

One thing which has most favourably impressed me about Brighton is that you are free, to a large extent, of those irksome restrictions, which so often send British holiday-makers to the Continent. You have dancing and other amusements at your hotels and dance halls on Sunday. I think such liberty is good.

Brighton is lucky in not having a powerful kill-joy element among its citizens. Still, we have no doubt that Brighton has plenty of bigots whose godly fingers itch to interfere with other peoples' recreation and freedom.

If Wesley were to return to England, says a sorrowful Methodist, would he recognize the Church he founded? "I hardly think he would; we have compromised too much with the world." That is very sad, but it couldn't be helped. The Wesleyan Church had to choose between retaining its narrow prohibitions and losing clients, and getting rid of the prohibitions and retaining some portion of its clients. It is very wrong to compromise with worldly things. But even the narrowest of Churches have to broaden out to survive.

The Bishop of Valencia has issued a notice to the faithful that Catholics must not belong to the Rotarians. His objection is that Rotarians are trying to moralize Society and the individual without the aid of religion, and it is therefore condemned. What the Bishop is afraid of is that the Rotarians may succeed, or at least have some effect in this direction, and the Roman Church cannot permit this on any account. It is not a question of whether the world can do without the Church, the point is that it must not do without it.

The Roman Church appears to have established a pretty firm hold on the Irish Free State, and to be getting very much its own way in things. The State Censorship of Publications Bill, at present before the Irish Parliament, is issued under the influence of the Church, and is a measure that is as retrogressive as one could wish. Under it, all advertisements of books on birth control, or for the cure of venereal disease are strictly forbidden, and all "indecent" publications. It is admitted that the word "indecent" is very elastic, and will cover almost anything to which a selected Board may take exception. This is not denied by the Catholic Press, which gloats over the fact that it is so.

The gem of the whole thing is that the power of censorship is to be placed in the hands of a Board of five members, three of whom it is expected will be Roman Catholics, and one can imagine what the word "indecent" will cover to them. Any suspected premises may be searched by the Civic Guard, without, apparently, any warrant being necessary. There does not appear to be any right of appeal on the part of the person responsible for the circulation of the "indecent" literature, and we expect the *Freethinker* will not be long before it comes under the ban. On the whole, the Bill appears to place the freedom of the press in Ireland at the mercy of two Protestant bigots and three members of a Church which has always hated the freedom of publication with all its strength. If this is what "Freedom" from English control has brought Ireland, the sooner it loses its freedom the better.

The Rev. A. E. Baker cheers up the Christian readers of *The Outline* with the information that while in the eighteenth century it was common ground between Christians and their opponents to believe in God, Freedom and Immortality, to-day, he says, "The typical modern man doubts the existence of God, is certain that freedom is an illusion, and is not interested in immortality." And he also says, "It is no accident that eighty per cent. of the industrial workers in large towns are indifferent or hostile to Christianity." Now this is very unkind, just when so many religious leaders are discovering a revival of Christian belief, and our vote-catching chapel Labour leaders are asserting that the working man has a passionate affection for Jesus Christ. And the worst thing about Mr. Baker's statements—worst, that is, to Christians—is that they are so true.

An International Conference of Spiritualists is being held in London, and according to a "puff" in the daily papers, the Conference claims to have proved by "scientific tests," (1) The existence of God as the intelligent and supreme cause of all things—but, after that, we do not think the other things matter. When a body of men claims to have proved the existence of God "by scientific tests," it looks as though we are in for an exhibition of either omniscience or idiocy. The news that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle exhibited scores of spirit photographs to over 2,000 Spiritualists in the Queen's Hall is, after that, a very mild and unexciting item. Personally, we could undertake to exhibit 2,000 spirit photographs to a very small audience—provided people were not over critical as to how they were obtained. But the existence of God proved by scientific tests! That really should make the world sit up and take notice.

The *Church Times* is filled with despair at the fact of certain people adopting, in the face of the decline of some of our industries, the Mohammedan attitude of "Kismet!" Well, but Jesus also said that everything happened by the will of God, and that is only a variant on the same theme. So a Christian paper is filled with dismay at people trusting God enough to leave everything in his hands! But our religious friends need not despair. When it comes to anything critical, Mohammedans trust in God no more than do Christians. It is all mere verbiage. The *Church Times* is afraid lest Christians will act up to what they say.

The Southern Baptist Mission Church is in trouble. Its good and energetic Secretary has disappeared, and his accounts show a shortage which may total £200,000. The gentleman turns out to be an ex-convict, but we assume he was quite a zealous servant of the Lord. And now he has disappeared! Perhaps he has only been translated *à la* Enoch, who walked with God and was not.

In a recent sermon, the Rev. H. Mortimer (a Methodist) stated:—

A woman said to me, "I don't know how it is; my children are growing up practically heathen. When I was their age I knew the Psalms, and my mother taught me to pray. My children seem to have no desire for these things."

The explanation probably is, that the new generation has managed to get itself born without those religious instincts talked so much about in newspapers and pulpits.

OUR WEEKLY HINT.

If you sincerely believe that the Christian superstition is mentally, morally, socially harmful, do something to end it.

National Secular Society.

THE FUNDS of the National Secular Society are now legally controlled by Trust Deed, and those who wish to benefit the Society by gift or bequest may do so with complete confidence that any money so received will be properly administered and expended.

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

THOSE SUBSCRIBERS WHO RECEIVE THEIR COPY OF THE "FREETHINKER" IN A GREEN WRAPPER WILL PLEASE TAKE IT THAT A RENEWAL OF THEIR SUBSCRIPTION IS DUE. THEY WILL ALSO OBLIGE, IF THEY DO NOT WANT US TO CONTINUE SENDING THE PAPER, BY NOTIFYING US TO THAT EFFECT.

A. JACKSON.—Your lecture notice, although bearing date September 3, did not reach this office till September 5, the day after we went to press. Why not post notices on Sunday, or even earlier?

A. MILLAR.—Glad to hear from you again. Sorry to learn that you have been out of sorts.

H. MORRIS.—A scientific theory is not concerned with explaining everything. No one but a fool ever attempts that. All a sound theory must do to explain something and contradict nothing. Try and remember that an ounce of understanding is worth a considerable quantity of mere knowledge, although some knowledge is essential to sound understanding.

D.P.S.—Regret to hear of your accident. Hope soon to hear you are quite better.

A. H. MILLWARD.—Thanks for article. Shall appear.

H. A. VIESP.—We are not at all concerned with what the person you name has to say about us. We have some recollection of him as a hanger-on of the Christian Evidence Society many years ago.

R. O. NORMAN.—The finest birthday present we could have would be another 1,000 readers for the *Freethinker*. We will take that present in instalments, payable all the year round.

H. W. (Louth).—We cannot control the wholesalers who refuse to supply newsagents on sale or return. All we can say is that the paper is supplied to all newsagents on those terms, and we are willing to supply direct from the office on those terms.

R. CAMP.—The reports of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners does not give the specific mines from which royalties are drawn, only the totals. But from Durham the amount is between 300 and 400 thousand pounds.

W.P.B.—We do not remember missing your query last week. What was it about? You are evidently a close and appreciative reader, and we note the compliment under guise of a censure. See "Acid Drops."

W. WILDING.—It takes a long time for some people to outgrow their supernaturalism. When they have got rid of the orthodox form they so often invent a new absurdity. The "Life Force" is one of them. The world is littered with the ghosts of gods.

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

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

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

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

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

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.

The Plymouth Branch of the N.S.S. has arranged a series of lectures during the winter season, the first one of which will be given in the Co-operative Hall, on October 7, by Mr. Cohen. The series will involve considerable expense, and the Branch is asking those interested to help financially as well as morally. Those willing to help are asked to communicate with the Hon. Secretary, Mr. J. McKenzie, 4 Swilly Road, Plymouth. We need hardly point out that expenses are so heavy now in conducting indoor meetings, that the Branch has to be prepared to face a substantial deficit. It is to meet that deficit help is asked.

Books and pamphlets on Birth Control are to-day too numerous for one to easily keep pace with, although that task is made the lighter from the fact that so many of them go over precisely the same ground, and state almost the same facts. They are, moreover, mainly of a propagandist character, either for or against. We are the more ready to give a hearty welcome to *The Truth about Birth Control; a guide for Medical, Legal and Sociological Students* (Werner Laurie, 6s.), by Mr. George Ryley Scott; a name that will be quite familiar to readers of this journal. Mr. Scott will, we have no doubt, excite strong criticism from ardent birth controllers on account of his belief that the compelling reason for the decline in the birth rate is biological rather than contraceptive, although he does not question that this element plays its part. His argument on the necessarily casual nature of positive checks are worth consideration, and are strongly put.

Mr. Scott comes down very heavily on cant, whether it is patriotic cant, hygienic cant, or religious cant—particularly the latter. He is correct in saying that "Nine-tenths of the organized opposition to birth control is in the hands of the clergy, and it may be set down as a solid fact that it is only with the decay of the power of the Church that the broadcasting of contraceptive methods has been possible. Had they had their way, the parsons would have clapped into prison every man or woman who ever dared to open his or her mouth on the subject." The whole chapter on the "Religious View" is good. Mr. Scott sums up his view of the whole subject in the opinion that whether birth control should be practised or not is wholly a matter for the individual. He says:—

The trouble with the birth controllers and with their opponents is that in considering what should essentially be a private matter, they concern themselves with the State, with religion, with eugenics, with everything and everybody, in fact, except the point that matters. Birth control resolves itself into a problem for individual solution. Every married couple have the right to decide whether or not they shall practise contraception. . . . There is only one logical and justifiable solution. If either partner is disinclined to have children, the matter should be considered settled, and a legitimate case for the practice of contraception is made out.

We congratulate Mr. Scott on having given us a most suggestive work on this subject.

Mr. George Whitehead commences a week's mission in Birmingham on Sunday, September 16. On Sunday forenoon, Mr. Whitehead will lecture in the Bull Ring, at 11 o'clock. A special lecture on "The New View of Spiritualism," will be given by Mr. Whitehead on Sunday evening, at 7.30, in the Bristol Street Schools. From Monday, September 17, until Friday, September 21, meetings will be held at 7.30 each evening in the Bull Ring. We hope Freethinkers in Birmingham and district will do all they can to make these meetings widely known.

The New "Index Expurgatorious."

MISS RADCLYFFE HALL'S book, *The Well of Loneliness*, has been withdrawn from circulation. Mr. Jonathan Cape, the publisher, submitted a copy to the Home Office, with the result that the Home Secretary has declared that, in his opinion, the book is unfit for circulation.

Behold the new literary Pope, whose arbitrary ukase can damn any book that does not conform with his singularly narrow and contracted views on morality, without any hope of redress by the author!

The famous boast of the Catholic Church—*Roma locuta est; causa finita est*—can now be rivalled by our Home Office with: "The Home Secretary has spoken; the case is finished." But is the case finished? We sincerely hope not. No one who cares for the free expression of opinion can rest satisfied with this state of affairs. We do not believe that the ex-Kaiser, at the height of his power, would have ventured upon so arbitrary an act.

Mr. Cape ought never to have submitted the book to the Home Office in the first place. In doing so, he has sold the pass; the Home Secretary has been quick to seize the opportunity of an extension of his prerogative and powers, and has created a precedent full of foreboding for the future of free thought and free discussion. For instance, suppose a Labour Government is returned to power at the next general election, and suppose Mr. Wheatley becomes Home Secretary. Mr. Wheatley is a Roman Catholic, and strongly opposed to birth control and the circulation of literature advocating it. He is also, of course, strongly opposed to Atheism. Who can say he would not use the new power created by the precedent of our present Home Secretary?

Mr. Jonathan Cape was, of course, playing for safety. Frightened by the hooligan uproar created by this yellow press stunt, and the sex-bedevelled hawlings of the editor of an illiterate Sunday paper which caters mostly for the sporting and variety entertainment fraternity, and the lowest superstitions of the multitude; Mr. Cape, in a panic, sent the book to the Home Office to avoid the prosecution he evidently feared would follow this ignorant tirade. Mr. Cape would, no doubt, justify his conduct by saying that he did not go into business to vindicate the rights of authors, but to make money. Nevertheless, his action has let us down, just as did the defendant in the prosecution of the first volume of Havelock Ellis's great work on sex.

The defendant pleaded guilty—being induced to do so, if I remember rightly, by the offer of being dealt with leniently—with the result that he escaped imprisonment; but the bigots achieved a regrettable victory. The prosecution should have been fought through all the Courts to the end—like Bradlaugh fought the attempt to suppress the publication of Malthusian literature, and for which he and Mrs. Besant were sentenced to six months' imprisonment and a £200 fine each—a verdict which was quashed on appeal, and the victory won. Bradlaugh's action was all the more creditable because he did not wholly approve of the Knowlton pamphlet which he defended, but he stood up for the right of free discussion of all sincere opinion, and after he had won the fight he gave up selling the book.

But men of the heroic stature of Bradlaugh are not born every day. Men of great original ideas, especially scientists, are rarely men of action; and naturally so, for they are so absorbed and immersed with the working out of their ideas that they are ill-fitted to bear the rack and strain attaching to a prosecution. Many of them would not even defend their views

when publicly attacked. Even of the great Isaac Newton himself, we are told: "Newton had a morbid fear of publishing anything, and throughout his life his friends had to plead with him incessantly before he would publish his discoveries. This was not modesty, since Newton himself said that he would not publish because he disliked the subsequent controversies which his revolutionary discoveries inevitably caused."¹ It is well known that Darwin never replied to the swarm of angry and venomous theological wasps who attacked his evolutionary theories. However, Huxley took upon himself this task, and enjoyed himself immensely in its execution.

The *Nation* (September 1), in an article entitled "The New Censorship," points out the seriousness of the situation:—

The rights of the public have been betrayed. The fact that Miss Radclyffe Hall is a writer of refinement and distinction, the fact that her previous novel won European recognition, the fact that her present novel is weightily prefaced by Mr. Havelock Ellis and has been favourably reviewed, not only in these columns, but in the *Times Literary Supplement*, the *Sunday Times*, the *Saturday Review*, the *Morning Post*, the *Daily Telegraph*, and elsewhere—these all are facts, but they are beside the main point. The point is that the book has never been put on its trial, it has never had such a chance of justice as the British Courts provide, it has been condemned unheard by the Home Secretary, to whom Messrs. Jonathan Cape appealed because they were afraid of the *Sunday Express*.

The episode may have serious consequences. Newspapers love to display their power, and vie with one another in the attempt to impress the world with a sense of the great influence which they wield. The revelation that (so far as appearances are concerned) a single article in the *Sunday Express* can cause the almost immediate suppression of a book is not unlikely to stimulate rival newspapers to emulate this remarkable achievement. This, at any rate, is a possibility with which any publisher will now have to reckon in considering whether to publish a book against which a popular outcry might conceivably be raised. Important books which would represent a real addition to our national literature may thus be denied publication, although their suppression would not be warranted on any reasonable interpretation of the law. For the line between what is permissible and what is not permissible under the new censorship is uncertain and undefined. It will be drawn in accordance with the estimate formed by the publishers of the calculations likely to be made by editors as to whether an onslaught on the book under consideration promises a successful "stunt."

The statement, in the above, that Miss Radclyffe Hall's "previous novel won European recognition," refers to the fact that her novel, *Adam's Breed*, published in 1926, was awarded the much-coveted honour of being selected for the Femina-Vie-Heureuse prize for that year.

And it is not only in the matter of books that we lie under the harrow of the censor. The public little know the extent to which cinema films are censored. It has been publicly stated that the film, "Waxworks," has been ruined by the Board of Film Censors, and what the public now see is "mere wreckage." Many foreign films, like the "Potemkin" film of the Russian Revolution, are not allowed to be shown at all. The enterprising manager of the "Avenue" Cinema, who specializes in films of artistic quality only, after referring to the difficulty of obtaining foreign films, observes that when they get into this country they are "often mercilessly slashed by the Censor." The fact is, we

¹ J. G. Crowther: *Science for You* (1928.) p. 225.

are not allowed to see anything that would be unsuitable to a Band of Hope meeting, or a Sunday school class. And soon we shall not be able to read anything that might possibly offend the same audiences.

Since writing the above, we see that two of our leading novelists, Mr. E. M. Forster, and Mrs. Virginia Woolfe, in a letter to the Editor of the *Nation* (September 8), express their opinion that "*The Well of Loneliness* is restrained and perfectly decent, and the treatment of its theme unexceptional. It has obviously been suppressed because of the theme itself." And they ask, is this: "the only taboo, or are there others? What of the other subjects known to be more or less unpopular in Whitehall, such as birth-control, suicide, and pacifism? May we mention these? We await our instructions! . . . we feel that Miss Hall's fellow writers ought to protest vigorously against the action of the Home Office, an action detrimental to the interests of literature. Not only has a wrong been done to a seriously-minded book, a blow has been struck at literature generally, and, as your editorial article points out, the blow will certainly be repeated unless public opinion can be aroused."

The Home Secretary has altogether exceeded his powers, and, to use the expression I once heard a workman make about a very bullying foreman: "He wants his horns knocking in."

The best remedy would be to have the book republished by a publisher with a backbone, one who would not bend the knee to the Home Secretary's *verboten*. I do not believe he would dare to risk a prosecution, and if he did, I do not believe he would secure a conviction.

W. MANN.

The "Religious" Novel.

A WELL-KNOWN publishing house has just announced a prize competition for the best "Religious Novel," and though this term is given a fairly liberal interpretation, there remain certain limitations by which competitors must be bound. In the first place, the novel must have a strong story; then, it must deal "with religious thought and conviction, and the effects of religion on human character and conduct." As its basis it may have "the religious problems of the day; or the writer's personal experiences in religion; or the influence of religion, or what results from the loss of religion, in modern life; or, finding a theme in history, it may deal with the clash of creeds and the part played by religion in the life of the past." It will be of interest to see what the response of our aspiring novelists will be to this invitation, for never has there been a time when so many, nurtured in the puerile doctrines of one or other of our little religious systems, have sought, honestly and unflinchingly, to face the implications of their youthfully-enforced faiths. Even in the sphere most hypocritically partitioned off by the average Englishman—that of institutional religion—our authors have made a beginning with "speaking out." Among our major writers the tendency, in fact, has long been a marked one. Where, indeed, among our accepted masters of fiction must we look to find one who subscribes in orthodox fashion to the doctrines of a Joynson Hicks or a Rosslyn Mitchell? No, the contemporary novelist of the best type ranks as a real leader of the intelligentsia; to think of books of *The Rosary* order would for them end in complete neurosis. Unfortunately, our truly reputable iconoclasts—our Wellises, Bennetts, Galsworthys, Phillipotts, May Sinclairs, Rose Macaulays, Aldous Huxleys—are not likely to answer this challenge, under its sensational

competitive guise, to indulge themselves in speculation on historical religion and contribute to the contemporary theological disputations. Like all other great writers of the novel, they have at all times contrived to put into their work an expression, however indirectly, of their "personal philosophies."

It cannot be contended that "religious" novels—that is, stories in which a definitely religious atmosphere prevails, as distinct from those concerned with some more or less critical investigation of the crisis which faces every intelligent, though religion-pummelled, mind—are either very plentiful or very outstanding in literature. For the most part novels inspired thus are beneath the level of serious literature, since philosophic thinking as distinguished from mystical platitudinizing is unknown to their emasculated authors. And yet few works of fiction are entirely dissociated from "religion" in the widest and highest sense; the nature of the characters' reactions to their environment presupposes, on the part of their creator, some reflection on the central issues of life, the value of the work being in proportion to the profundity of the issues raised, and the result being almost immaterial, for in philosophy, as has been well said, the route counts for much more than the "destination." Few writers, then, have cared to stake their reputations on a novel, the "inward-seeking" phase of which would devolve upon religion in the restricted sense, but many have known, even novelistically, a vital absorption with the greater cosmic problem. The danger in either case is the escape afforded from the novel's insistence upon a strong story, for the second type of study in particular—practically conditioned as an intensely personal revelation—is one that is least easy to present along narrative lines: Tolstoyan depth in thought and plot are not often attainable, and where the first requisite predominates, the temptation to Zolaesque homily and Wellsian didacticism needs to be rigorously fought.

"Religious" novels in the past have rarely combined the requirements of this new competition: either they have been objective to the extent that "religion" has supplied the *motif* just as, with another set of characters and a different *milieu*, politics or social reform might have done (*Old Mortality* may be cited as a novel of this type), or when they have been subjective, they have been so only in incidental fashion as far as the spiritual crisis in the life of some principal character has been involved: the requirements of story-interest have generally asserted themselves exclusive of the strict needs of the labouring soul.

It would be easier, then, to discuss novels "about religion" than "religious" novels. Of the former there have been many in every epoch of modern literature. Surprisingly, however, the great Victorians provide few samples. Dickens, as Mr. G. K. Chesterton says, "had all the prejudices of his time," yet few have ever outdone him in genuine humanitarian principle. The mind of the clear- and freethinking George Eliot was much more "philosophically disturbed," but she never completely overcame the religious inculcations of her youth, however resentfully these were reviewed by her mature judgment: in a word, for complete enlightenment she awaited the advance of our own century, in which she would have obtained a freedom unknown to her conservative age. In the "Barchester" group of Trollope we have a series of novels ranging round ecclesiasticism, but it is the external effects that are emphasized, as befitted so exact a recorder of England's most celebrated diocese.

In many foreign novels of this century speculation

on the problem, purpose and value of life is rife, although there are practically no authors who may reasonably be termed "religious." Balzac's *Quest of the Absolute* is in the novel the key-note to the scientific method of the time. "Religion" was for Emile Zola—"the Balzac of the Second Empire"—a fruitful source of study, although in his courageously-astringent novels uncompromising opposition to organized religion is encountered in rare degree. In *Work* and the "Three Cities" series of *Lourdes*, *Rome* and *Paris* are discharged the full weight of his anti-clerical missiles. A defection, however, must be recorded, for in the work of Huysmans—the one-time associate of Zola at Médan—the Catholic mystic prevails. But only a complete bigot would deliberately avoid reading the famous "Cathedral" series of *La-Bas*, *En Route*, *La Cathédrale* (Chartres) with the rival strains of naturalism and æstheticism so wonderfully woven. In the great Russian novelists of this time no one need look for "his" religion: the sense of primal wonderment impressed by the limitless lines of the Steppes and the sterile wastes of Siberia transcends all attempts to fit the cosmos within doctrinal limits. Is is not one of them, Turgenyev, who has given us that wonderful definition of the nihilist: "a man who does not bow down before any authority, who does not take any principle on faith, whatever reverence that principle may be enshrined in."

Coming to the fiction of our own time, we find the terms "material," "disillusioning," "pessimistic" applied continually to it. The "spiritual history"—to adopt Mr. Wells' phrase for the *genre*—is written with more avidity than ever, but grave offence is apparently incurred in clerical, evangelical and orthodox circles by the scientific analysis, the courageous outspokenness, the unwavering moral endurance of many present-day writers. Mr. Wells' own study of an individual "crisis of the soul" is brilliantly set forth in *The Soul of a Bishop*, which can be accounted "irreligious" only by the denominational interests of traditional Episcopalianism. In Hugh Walpole's *Polchester* (that is, Truro) novels, *The Cathedral* and its indirect sequel *Harmer John*, neither the glamorous panoply of the Episcopal system nor the glory of mighty gems in the diocesan crown can refute the heretical lapses of the author. Thus the Rev. Ambrose Wistons in *Harmer John*: ". . . . And what are the other things? The spiritual life? What man or woman alive to-day but has doubts of its existence? God, Christ, the Saints? Does not book after book seek to prove them fairy tales?" In *The Parson's Progress* cycle of Compton Mackenzie recognized credal disparities disappear absurdly before the acclaimed ideal of Anglo-Catholic unification. For other contemporaries touching on the impositions of theology, however, "honest doubt" is not so easily dissolved. For Somerset Maugham in that gigantic work, thought-provoking from its title onwards, *The Moon and Sixpence*, the Rev. Mr. Carey is a sincere but completely misunderstanding character; but the author is too charitable to strive for the effects of direct opposition when his nephew, Philip Carey, revolts from his stupid proscriptions and unreflecting insistencies. "He was thankful not to have to believe in God, for then such a condition of things would be intolerable; one could reconcile oneself to existence only because it was meaningless." And for Rose Macaulay in that sway of contending systems, *Told by an Idiot*, it can also be said that "the end of the tempest and the long trouble is not yet." Doubtless many other single fictional works of an apposite kind can be cited by readers, but enough has been given here to prove

that, while "religion" is a theme of endless fascination to our enlightened novelists, there are few to uphold it in its sectarian applications. "You're wrong," Father Darnay is made to say in that stupendous novel, *Portrait of Claire*, "A religion that isn't terrible is no religion. If you don't believe in the vengeance of God, you might just as well not believe in Him at all." Happy are our novelists and their hosts of rational readers who know not the fear of this God in their hearts! J.A.R.

The Religion which Really Counts.

THE "liberal," "modernist," "broad church," and other "advanced" sections of the religious world, invite and often receive the respect of many Freethinkers. In the case of a few of the more blatant sort, they obtain our contempt, in fact they are "asking for it."

America has as many of these advanced religionists as England. Their oratory is far superior to the average pulpit preaching in England. It may even be said that the famous modernists of America are on the whole more intellectually equipped. With some exceptions their "sermons" make wiser appeal to our intelligence. There is less glibness in rounding difficult corners. The American "humanists" as a rule, make less play with theological phrases. Nearly all of them, including men like John Haynes Holmes, while building a working policy on lines independent of theology—a policy, that is to say, which men who don't believe in religion of any kind might accept—there is in the back-ground a hazy sentiment of "faith in God's eternal purpose, call it what you will."

At the recent Walt Whitman Annual Dinner, promoted by excellent secularists, a few of the religionist admirers of the Atheist poet insisted on claiming Walt as "one who would have frankly recognized the natural power which we to-day call God"!

By a false analogy many of the followers of these modernists get into their heads that the advanced section of a society is the section that really counts. In a political, or say Labour party, it might be argued that the advanced section is the most regarded. It may be said that the more enlightened amongst the negroes, men like Washington Booker, have much greater influence than the average ignorant negro. Be that as it may, the world does not think of Dean Inge when judging Christianity much less does it go to Bishop Barnes for an exposition of Christian theory in regard to miracle.

Knowing our British religious denominations fairly well, I was anxious to see for myself whether the American Christians are different. I go of necessity to the great churches.

The rank and file, or we might say the rag, tag and bobtail, in other words "the people," are to be found in the Methodist, the Catholic, the Baptist, the Congregationalist, and similar churches, and the Salvation Army. These are for all intents and purposes the Christian Church of to-day. In regard to numbers and wealth this position will not be disputed. How can it be seriously argued that the "influence" of the same religion comes from elsewhere?

In one important respect the position differs from what might be thought at first glance to be analogous cases. The honest fanaticism of many extremists has given those extremists a weight out of all proportion to their numbers or wealth. But in such cases they have been men or women who were "whole hoggers" in their cause. Tectotallers who, like Carrie Nation, went to the very limit of proving their detestation of alcohol. Quakers who wore funny hats and lived up to pacifist principles. Peculiar People who suffered imprisonment rather than drop inconvenient doctrines of their Bible. Disenters like Spurgeon, who believed in disestablishment and the crudest of Calvinist twaddle such as predestination and salvation by faith. The religion which counts is that of men who are sincere enough to hold to it whether it pays or not, whether it is illogical or

not, and whether its belief entitles the believer to our respect or not.

The average religionist in America is just as irrational as his British brethren. He believes (I do not say he thinks) what Saint Paul taught, he professes to follow Jesus Christ, but only so far as his church creed interprets and discriminates between those contradictory authorities. I have heard sermons in the year 1928, which could be, and for all evidence to the contrary, were actually preached a century or more ago. The ordinary Movie Theatre crowd may dream that in the churches to-day, while no doubt God and Jesus are respected, the actual teaching is a goody-goody incentive to "the better life." It is incredible to some of my non-church-going nominally Christian friends that all the sections of religion which really count are disseminating all the ancient nonsense about the "blood of Christ," about eternal hell-fire, about the "Fall of Man," and every other stupid ignorant dogma which the outsider charitably thinks must have been discarded when education became compulsory.

Blasphemy cases are rare in America, but Mr. Lewis's very interesting case shows that pious preachers can persecute Atheists still. Mr. Lewis, the President of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism had what, in other connexions, one would call a friendly discussion with the Rev. Mr. Straton. Lewis sent Straton, incidentally, one or two copies of the *Truthseeker*, containing relevant matter for Straton's consideration. The *Truthseeker*, like the *Freethinker*, while in the main consisting of well written serious articles by competent authors, has a page or less of "jokes," appealing to the humour of Freethinkers. One of these jokes dared to jest about the alleged "virgin" birth. The joke was poor enough, no doubt, and perhaps as little to the taste of the cultured reader as ninety per cent. of the jokes in the most respectable of all daily papers. But this was a Freethought journal, and evidently the reverend pastor was not contented to read only the serious articles to which Mr. Lewis wanted to draw his attention.

Mr. Straton has a sense of humour, as is evidenced by his believing in Jonah and Obadiah, no less than by his witty story against evolution. (A table has four legs, he says, but that doesn't mean that a horse is descended from a table.) But the *Truthseeker's* wit is blasphemy. Mr. Straton complained that by Mr. Lewis's sending him this blasphemous anecdote, Lewis had used the mails for a criminal purpose. At first the judge himself laughed at so incredible a cause of action. Lewis won in the lower courts, but Straton appealed. After a long fight the Court of Appeal has decided that Lewis must pay a fine or go to jail. Lewis has served a day in jail, but the fine has since been paid. Straton, needless to say, is no "modernist." But who makes, administers and maintains these persecuting laws? Can it be said that any of these "humanist" or broad churchmen count? Many of them are too cowardly to protest against laws and judgments of this kind. But the best of them object and protest. To what extent are their protests heeded?

Obviously the religion which counts as religion is the worst—not the best. It is always the Stratons who count. It is the orthodox creed which dominates and predominates. The only religion which has any weight as such is the ghastliness of the modern, not the modernist, pulpit. Never was a greater delusion than the blind laziness of those who think the preaching and teaching of popular Freethought is antiquated, superfluous, or a waste of time. Benighted believers in the most absurd miracles recorded in the Bible are tremendously more influential than any of the "intellectuals" in the churches, and as Christians. This is as it should be, perhaps. These "intellectuals" deceive themselves, but not their fellow-Christians. The Catholics and the other hell-fire worshippers know that the church stands on the strength of the credulous, not the critical sections. The "intellectuals" should speak and write as citizens, for their intellect counts for nothing while they claim to use it as Christians.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

In Memoriam.

JOHN MCBRIDE, late Express Engine-Driver, L.M.S.R., and sturdy pioneer Freethinker, Ardrossan, Ayrshire.

"See what a grace was seated on his brow."—*Hamlet*.

FROM Pit to Footplate, toilsome the career,
Yet hiving knowledge, wisdom, reason clear;
A loving father always, stern but dear;
Brave fighter to the end—now lies he here!

Yet lives in thought, his grave and memory green,
Tho' all expunged and razed his mortal scene.

There was a nobleness about his brow—
Though gone the man, the spirit liveth now
A pride, an independence, hard to bow.

His aged dame still hither doth abide,
Who bade me write her sorrow, love, and pride—
And mine—for I was often by his side,
To differ and agree, unite, divide—
Now all compounded in a world more wide!
Hail and farewell! old comrade, John McBride.

ANDREW MILLAR.

Correspondence.

CHRISTIAN AND HEATHEN DEATH.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I and a few other Freethinkers out here read with great pleasure the fine articles in your paper on the *Daily News* debate. Perhaps this experience may be of interest.

I was recently invited to a Christian funeral here. It was the usual morbid, miserable affair. The black coffin, black clothes, weeping women and howling children. The black robed priest mumbling Latin prayers, doing his "ju-ju" ceremonies, fear of Hell, Purgatory, Resurrection, dust to dust, etc. Mournful hymns and dreary music. It made me feel half dead, and I was very glad to get away.

A few days later I was in the jungle, where a very primitive type of half-savage people lived. A man had died and I went to the funeral. But what a difference from the previous one. In the house, tea, cigars, and sweetmeats were handed to the visitors, everyone was cheerful and happy, and wore brightly coloured clothes. Children danced and sang, and it was more like a wedding than a burial. When the sun was setting, the body was carried to a hilltop and placed on a pyre, and soon the flames began their work. We sat around and chatted cheerfully during the burning, and when all was over the ashes were thrown to the wind.

"Where do you think he has gone to?" I asked one of the relatives.

"Why, to the wind, the trees and the flowers, of course," she answered unconcerned.

Then I began to realize the curse Christianity has been to mankind with its awful doctrine of Fear. These "heathens" don't debate "Where are the Dead?" nor are they anxious for a "glorious Resurrection of Christ." Upper Burma. F.F.

Society News.

MR. G. WHITEHEAD AT MANCHESTER.

THE week spent at Manchester proved to be the most exciting of the present season. Eight very successful meetings were addressed—two in Stevenson Square, two in Devonshire Street, and four near Alexandra Park. The Stevenson Square meetings held on the Sunday attracted deeply interested crowds in spite of half a dozen rival orators, and the lectures induced a police inspector to offer congratulations on their unusually high standard. Good sales of literature were registered; numerous questions and a little platform opposition, together with a distribution of membership forms to highly

sympathetic audiences, were agreeable features of these meetings. The Devonshire Street meetings also attracted large crowds of orderly listeners, who followed with every sign of approval some rather drastic criticisms of religion.

Alexandra Park meetings always provide something resembling a Ballyhooly Fair, the Christians who assemble apparently imagining the way to love their enemies is to yell insults and threats at them if they venture to invade this highly respectable neighbourhood for the purpose of civilizing the heathen. Appeals to the police to arrest the speaker, interruptions, insults from fair ladies and dark gentlemen, threats galore, and at least one determined effort to rush the platform and strike the speaker, were some of the events of these four meetings. On the other hand, in the intervals, unpalatable truths were rammed home by Mr. Whitehead, and on all sides came congratulations for the ability and fairness exhibited by the Secularist in contrast to his opponents. At least three Catholics, amongst others, expressed their retirement from the fold of the Church, being impressed with the strength of the case they had heard.

The Manchester members rallied round in good style, and nobody but the harassed propagandist can realize what encouragement is derived from a few friendly faces when the fight is on such distinctly hostile territory. Mr. Francis deserves special thanks for his efforts to advertise the meetings on heterodox lines. Messrs. Monks, Greenall, Bradley and Rosetti were also very helpful in numerous ways.

Mr. Whitehead commences a week's mission at Birmingham on September 15.

MR. J. CLAYTON'S MEETINGS.

OWING to the holidays, it was necessary to change the arrangements made for Mr. Clayton's meetings. Rain interfered with the meeting at Great Harwood on Monday, September 3; but a most successful meeting was held on Tuesday, at Higham, although Mr. Clayton was expected that evening. Once the lecture started the crowd quickly gathered, and listened attentively. At question time, a man who had not been present during the lecture came forward and boasted that he would silence the speaker. He found this more difficult than he had expected, and completely lost his temper. While Mr. Clayton was packing up his literature, he was struck on the back by this follower of the peaceful Jesus. This fellow is a member of the local Council, and he hinted that meetings would not be permitted in the future. That is as it may be, but some of his friends should inform him that it is only by the Secularists' forbearance that he did not have to face a charge of assault. On Friday, Mr. Clayton had the largest audience he has yet addressed at Worsthorpe. Mr. Clayton spoke on Friday at Rawtenstall, and on Sunday afternoon at Brierfield. On Sunday evening, at Todmorden, a large and appreciative audience listened to the lecture, some Freethinkers coming over from Bacup to be present. Altogether, it was a very busy and most successful week.

Some Pioneer Press Publications—

THE HISTORICAL JESUS AND MYTHICAL CHRIST. By GERALD MASSEY. A Demonstration of the Origin of Christian Doctrines in the Egyptian Mythology. 6d., postage 1d.

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RUINS OF EMPIRES. By C. F. VOLNEY. With the Law of Nature. Revised Translation, with Portrait, Plates, and Preface by GEORGE UNDERWOOD. 5s., postage 3d.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, Dr. Bernard Hollander.—"The Origin of Morality and Immorality."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S.—(Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. L. Ebury—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.

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

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12 noon, Mr. James Hart—A Lecture; 3.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine—A Lecture; 6.30, Lecturers—Messrs. Campbell-Everden and Le Maine. Freethought meetings every Wednesday and Friday, at 7.30. Speakers—Messrs. Campbell-Everden, Hart, Hyatt, Maurice Maubrey and others. The *Freethinker* can be obtained at the corner of Bryanston Street during our meetings.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S.—(Bristol Street Schools): 7.30, Mr. G. Whitehead—"The New View of Spiritualism." Admission Free. Silver Collection.

OUTDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. G. Whitehead's Meetings (The Bull Ring): 11.0—A Lecture. Monday, September 17 to Friday, September 21—Lectures each evening at 7.30.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S. (Houghton): Tuesday, September 18—7 p.m. (Hetton): Thursday, September 20—7.30 p.m. Speakers—Messrs. Brighton and Brown.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S.—Mondays: Beaumont Street; Tuesdays: Greerson Street and Islington Square; Thursdays: High Park Street and Edge Hill Lamp. All at 8 p.m. Speakers: Messrs. Shortt and Sherwin.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (4 Swilly Street): Tuesday, September 18, 8.0—Committee Meeting.

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