

The
FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN · COHEN · · · EDITOR · 1881-1915 · G · W · FOOTE

VOL. XLVIII.—No. 45

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1928

PRICE THREEPENCE

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Views and Opinions.

Religion and Insanity.

THE other day a lad of eighteen, living in the North of England, committed suicide by throwing himself under a train. He had been attending some Spiritualist meetings, and the Coroner attributed his act to the influence of Spiritualism on an ill-balanced mind. He also added the usual sapient comment of officials similarly circumstanced:—

If people like to believe such nonsense they are at liberty to do so, but they should not pester other people. Fortune tellers are prosecuted. These people are not. It is about time they were.

Now, I beg to call attention to the fact that people who believe in nonsense are not usually reprimanded publicly for pestering other people. The nonsense of Spiritualism is certainly not greater than the nonsense of the Mass, or the Eucharist, or vicarious atonement, and similar things. Yet people are pestered day after day by believers in these fantastic superstitions, and I hardly think the Coroner would wish his remarks to apply to them. It seems that what people should not do is to pester others with the nonsense in which this Coroner does not believe. The nonsense he does believe in may be hawked about in perfect freedom. And I should not be surprised to find that he actually supported it.

* * *

Exploiting Ignorance.

Moreover, I would point out that *all* fortune-tellers are not prosecuted. Spiritualists tell us our fortunes in this world and the next. Some rather general information about what is likely to happen to us here, never requiring abnormal illumination, and more detailed information as to what will happen to us in the next world—more detailed because there is no method of checking it—comes to us from "mejums." On the other hand, there are very many thousand parsons who also tell us our fortunes. They tell us what God will do to us in this world if we do not act in such and such a way, and they tell us our destination in the next world. The

Roman Church even goes the length of accepting fees for getting us from one department of the next world to another, much as a shipping agency would arrange for our transport from Australia to New York. The Christian religion is built up on this kind of fortune-telling. Would the Coroner advise that these fortune-tellers should be prosecuted? The Coroner might reply that Spiritualism lives by exploiting the ignorance and credulity of people. I do not feel inclined to deny it; but it certainly does not do so to a greater extent than does the Christian Church. Take the relations of a Catholic priest to his flock. Is there less ignorance and credulity there than is present in a gathering of Spiritualists? I do not think that any one will seriously say there is. Look at some of the Catholic papers with their records of people who have had all sorts of good things happen to them as a consequence of reading so many authorized prayers, or purchasing some of the fantastic absurdities sold by advertisers. Again, I suspect that the Coroner has in view only such superstitions as are not established; and I do not like such partiality. I like fair play, even for religious credulity.

* * *

Why Spiritualism?

The *Sunday Chronicle* quite agrees with the Coroner's remarks about the suppression of Spiritualism, and talks at large about Spiritualism sending young men to suicide, of mediums living on credulity, and of people whose minds have been upset "by unwholesome probings into the unknown." *Freethinker* readers know quite well my opinion about Spiritualism, and I shall therefore not be misunderstood when I say that this talk of the need for mediums being suppressed because some dabblers in Spiritualism go insane, strikes me as the most complete form of journalistic rubbish that one could wish to meet. Of course, men and women have gone insane as an immediate consequence of obsession with Spiritualism. But then men and women have gone insane as an immediate consequence of dabbling in a thousand and one other things. Quite recently I knew of one case where a man went insane and committed suicide as a consequence of being obsessed with fears about the condition of a cricket pitch. But I do not think that anyone would argue that cricket, therefore, ought to be suppressed. I take it, any alienist would agree that the immediate cause of insanity is not of great moment. It is the predisposing conditions that are of consequence. Also, I should expect to find that people of a certain ill-balanced type would be readily attracted to flirtations with the spirit world, and I should not be surprised to find, as a consequence, that this want of balance might very easily result in insanity. I do not know that any figures are available showing the

number of cases that are directly attributed to Spiritualism, but I do not think the figures could possibly vitiate this conclusion.

* * *

Religious Mania.

In any case, why single out Spiritualism? In whatever degree it be true that Spiritualism acts as an exciting cause of insanity, it holds with equal force of religion. There is not an asylum in the country that does not have its quota of religious cases. And religious mania is one of the most difficult to deal with. The classical history of Christianity also furnishes us with numerous cases in which it is not at all difficult to trace the influence of brooding on religious visions and fancies as an immediate cause of insanity. Revivals nearly always bring in their train a crop of insane cases. Newspapers constantly furnish examples of men and women who have committed suicide or murder as a result of fixed religious ideas. And instances of minor delusions, harmless enough in themselves, but purely religious in their origin, are too numerous and too well known, to need more than mentioning. Finally, as readers of my *Religion and Sex* will recall, the harm done to numbers of young people by religious excitement during adolescence, is well known to all medical men.

Now I do not find the *Sunday Chronicle* and other papers, and also medical men who have chosen to call attention to the harm done by Spiritualism, mentioning the fact that what they say actually applies to religion as a whole. They do not say that something should be done to suppress these "probing into the unknown" when the probing is connected with any form of Christian belief. The only reason for silence that one can see is that Christianity is established, and the unhealthy frames of mind encouraged by religious brooding are therefore passed by without comment. And yet one can safely say that the harm done by Spiritualism is as nothing to the harm done by religious organizations, and by religious belief as a whole. A professional medium is denounced as the cause of mental breakdown in others. Evangelists like Gipsy Smith, Billy Sunday, Evan Roberts—himself a pathologic case—are passed by without comment. They may even meet with praise on account of their efforts to "uplift" men and women.

* * *

The Pathology of Belief.

And yet I would say of religion what I have said of Spiritualism. It is not so much the actual cause of insanity as it is the immediate condition which drives the subject over the border line. Given a man or woman of nervous instability, and what the *Sunday Chronicle* calls "probing into the unknown," and, again to cite the *Sunday Chronicle*, neurologists will "have many patients on their lists who have been seriously influenced mentally by these dabbings." But had these same neurologists lived in the golden age of Christianity, they would have had on their lists some of the greatest names in the history of the Church. They would have had saints and religious leaders by the score, who felt themselves in actual physical contact with the angelic world, who had actual contests with angels and devils, and who had those visions of heaven and hell that have helped to build up the whole structure of Christianity. Those who fasted and tortured the body and saw visions would not have been treated as inspired men, but as subjects for the neurologist. George Fox and Martin Luther, Santa Teresa and the Blessed Mary Alacocque, would, in a scientific age, have figured in

the case book of the physician and not in the calendar of Saints.

Still more so would it be the case if the relation of adolescence to religious conviction was properly recognized. It is not without significance, surely, that the ages of conversion and adolescence should coincide. In this fact we have substantially the same condition before us that meets us in the case of religious mania. Boys and girls, during the most susceptible period of their lives, during a time when new functions are developing, new feelings are beginning to arise and old ones to expand, are exposed to the assault of professional evangelists who are either criminally ignorant of the nature of the material before them, or criminally careless of the consequences of their action. A very eminent medical authority, Sir W. R. Gowers, has pointed out that the tendency of the emotional appeal is fraught with danger, since its action is to bring out undeveloped weaknesses. And yet it is at this peculiarly dangerous period that the developing human being is exposed to the strain of religious emotion, with results that only a skilled worker in nervous disorders could properly appreciate. Such cases inevitably lead to insanity; and in this respect we have no greater reason to blame Spiritualism than we have to blame any other form of religious excitement acting on weak and unstable characters.

Finally, when will our sapient public servants recognize, or when will they have the courage to say plainly, that if we would have people cease to dabble in the so-called "occult," we must do what we can to destroy the general atmosphere of the supernatural in which they are educated? What is the use of anyone talking about the harm done by people probing into the unknown (=the supernatural) if at the same time we teach them the probable truth of visions seen by neurotics and half-demented individuals during the ages? Why gibe at the ten shilling and sixpenny mediums when we praise or speak with respectful attitude of the "mystic" who sells us a guinea volume filled with fantastic nonsense about an occult world which is all around us, and which choice spirits are allowed to enter? Why complain of people trying to get into contact with another world if we take it as an established truth that there is another world? After all, the greater embraces the lesser. The smaller superstition lives upon the type of mind encouraged and developed by the greater. Those who wish to make man sanely rational must strike at the irrational. Those who bring up their children to believe in the supernatural, those who fight for the retention of religious teaching in the schools, those who see nothing amiss in the existence of nearly 80,000 professors of one of the grossest superstitions the civilized world knows, must not be surprised if some of those nurtured in this way fly to superstitions of an unauthorized character. Hobbes defined superstition as religion disallowed, and religion as superstition allowed. That put the matter in a nutshell. The "medium" is really in the same business as the priest. He trades in the same elements of credulity, fear, unreasoning emotion, and irrationality. Spiritualism is one branch of the great superstition business, and if at times its consequences are unpleasant, it can at least plead that it does not lie with the Christian to throw a stone.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Good Lord, what is man! for as simple he looks,
Do but try to develop his hooks and his crooks,
With his depths and his shallows, his good and his evil,
All in one, he's a problem must puzzle the devil.

Burns.

"Tolerance is Christian: Intolerance is Pagan."

It has become a common practice of successful novelists to write articles on religion and other subjects of which they know little or nothing; and the reckless statement quoted above appeared at the end of such an article in a well-known periodical.

Anyone who possesses even the most elementary knowledge of the history of Christianity must be aware that intolerance is of the essence of the system.

We note, in the first place, that the doctrine of exclusive salvation through belief in theology and membership of the Church was bound to produce intolerance. This doctrine, as we now know, arose first in ancient Persia, some three thousand years ago. Here, in lieu of the older general belief—that of the Babylonians, Assyrians, the early Israelites, and the early Greeks and Romans—that all went down alike to the nether world, the idea arose of a posthumous place of happiness and a place of torment; and as Professor Jevons remarks, the Persians adopted the "spirit of exclusiveness which rejoiced in the idea that non-Persians were debarred from paradise and were doomed to hell." The Jews, as is equally well known, embraced the idea, and also that of a devil (Satan being a lineal descendant of Ahriman, as also is Shaitan of the Mohammedans); and, naturally, the doctrine became part of the Christian religion.

The view of the Jews on the point is clearly shown in Deuteronomy xiii: "If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods . . . thou shalt surely kill him, thine hand shall be the first upon him, to put him to death . . . If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities . . . certain men, saying, Let us go and serve other gods . . . then shalt thou enquire and make search, and ask diligently, and behold if it be the truth . . . then thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying them utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword. And thou shalt gather all the spoil of it in the midst of the street thereof, and shalt burn with fire the city and the spoil thereof, every whit . . . that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and show thee mercy."

This attitude very naturally led on to the sanguinary persecutions of non-Christians and of Christian "heretics," to the Inquisition, to the thralldom of thought, of speech, of the press, of education, and to many other evils.

If it be urged that these things belong to a less enlightened age, we may fairly ask why Christianity did not arrive at some notion of tolerance at an earlier stage. Religious tolerance was a normal feature in Greece, and in Rome, until Christianity developed. The same feature was evidently established in India in the third century B.C., as we learn from the following edict of Asoka:—

His Majesty does reverence to all sects, whether ascetics or householders, by donations and various modes of reverence. His Majesty, however, cares not so much for donations or external modes of reverence, as that there should be a growth of the essence of the matter in all sects . . . the root of it is restraint of speech, to wit, a man should not do reverence to his own sect by disparaging that of another man . . . self-control is meritorious, to wit, hearkening to the law of others and hearkening willingly.

Again, we have the case of the Moors who ruled in Spain from the eighth to the fifteenth century, who "made the name of Spain glorious, and had spread science and thought through Europe from that focus

of light—they who had welcomed to their cities all who thought, no matter what their creed, and had covered with an equal protection Mohammedan, Christian and Jew." As is well known, when the country had again fallen to the Christians, the "unbaptized" Moors, and also the Jews, were banished, the former being forbidden to go to Mohammedan dominions.

Christian tolerance, so far as it has developed, is of quite recent growth, and has been forced upon religionists by the efforts of unbelievers, in conjunction with the growth of modern science, history and other knowledge; and it is still debatable whether Roman Catholics, if they increased to a considerable majority in all western and central European countries, would not reintroduce persecution, with penalties for unbelief. At the least, we may be certain that they would freely use excommunication and other forms of ostracism, and that our and other educational systems would be subordinated to the inculcation of childish superstition.

J. REEVES.

Reasons for the Conduct of Marcus towards the Christians.

In the foregoing article it has been shown that Marcus, abandoning the policy of his immediate predecessors, Hadrian and Pius, and returning to that of Domitian and Trajan, revived and even reinforced punitive measures against the Christians. How is this severity to be explained?

It is sometimes pretended that Marcus knew very little about Christianity, but this pretension is absurd. He had a studious, thoughtful, and inquisitive disposition; and he showed special interest in religion by frequenting the Salian priests as a boy, and learning the Eleusinian Mysteries as a man. Besides this, his friend and teacher, Cornelius Fronto, attacked the Christians in an oration which became famous. On their side of the question, the polite apologies of Melito, Athenagoras, and Felix, to say nothing of Justinus's rude appeals, could not but arrest the attention of Marcus. Again, it is certain that his scrupulous justice would impel him to go thoroughly into the case of the Christians even with respect to the operation of existing laws; and therefore still more with respect to the imposition of severer edicts; whilst it is equally clear that one so inclined as he was to forgive all kinds of personal injuries, would not be less disposed to pardon offences involving no personal injury. Finally, it must be remembered that the matter was extremely grave, for the property and the lives of thousands of his subjects were at stake, and we know that Marcus always insisted upon even trivial cases being heard with meticulous care, and that he preferred to punish under the limit, except for the worst crimes.

Why then this difference in the present instance? According to the popular notion, the Christians of the first three centuries were meek, inoffensive folk, who suffered persecution because their shining virtues aroused the envy of a wicked world. This view reduces the matter to an episode in the age-long struggle between good and evil. But the representation is false. The Christians were only meek and inoffensive when they had no power to be pretentious and aggressive; and it was not long before they began to exhibit their dangerous tendencies. It is worth remarking that although the divine legation of Moses punished with death all who taught anything contrary to the national religion,²⁰ the Roman Law was

²⁰ Deut. xiii. 6-11; xvii. 2-7. The penalty was to be inflicted by stoning, and a man must inflict it even upon his brother, son, daughter, wife, or friend.

much more lenient. By the statutes of the XII Tables (B.C. 451), private gods and new gods were forbidden; and likewise strange gods, unless publicly acknowledged. But a wide and ever increasing toleration prevailed. Unlike Catholic and Islamic powers, the Romans never attempted to extend their religion by the sword. The senate decreed the gods of the Fatherland; and recognized those of the conquered provinces. Proselytism was forbidden. Liberty of worship was respected and even protected. The Jews, although greatly disliked, were, nevertheless, on account of their religious prejudices, exempted from attending Law Courts on the Sabbath, and from all military service; and they also escaped worshipping the emperors by paying a light tax. The only interference was in the case of rites and principles likely to endanger the State or to injure public morality. Thus in B.C. 186, the Consul Postumius, calling an assembly of the people, brought before it a charge of obscenity against the Bacchic Mysteries, then practised by great numbers, mostly women; and, having proved his charge, got them suppressed with drastic penalties.²¹ Between A.D. 41-54, the emperor Claudius likewise put down the human sacrifices of the Druids.²² After the sanguinary revolt of the Jews under Bar-Cochba, the false Messiah, the emperor Hadrian, knowing that their religion animated their disaffection, deprived them of their religious rights, even including that of circumcision, which however was restored to them in the next reign, on condition that they restricted it to themselves and made no converts.²³ Marcus himself forbid the inhabitants of Pelusium (New Tinch), a city in Egypt, to hold the fêtes of Serapis, the great god of their people, because at these ceremonies licentiousness prevailed.²⁴ These facts prove the toleration of the Romans towards the religions of the empire; and indicate the reasons why they adopted repressive measures in particular cases. This equity, however, did not suit the Christians, for, as a High Church writer approvingly declares: "Christianity would not come to terms. It would not even consent to the drawing up of preliminaries for a treaty of peace. The words of its Master were being continually illustrated by all Christian missionaries, 'I came not to send peace but a sword.' Christianity sought not toleration, nor compromise, but universal supremacy."²⁵ "The Fathers of the Church," says Hagenbach, "uniformly asserted, both in opposition to heretics, and to all those who were not Christians, that there is no salvation out of the Church."²⁶ As a result of this intolerant and bellicose attitude, Christianity soon entered into collision with the authorities. Polytheism was the creed of the empire. The Christians attributed the origin of that faith to evil spirits, and covered it with abuse and ridicule. They polluted the altars and images of the gods, and invoked those deities with truculent blasphemy.²⁷ They declined to frequent the public games, the theatres, and even private feasts, because of the religious ceremonies therewith connected. Moreover, although the worship of the emperors, living and dead, was the test of both loyalty and orthodoxy, they refused to render this homage, thus exposing themselves to the charge of treason as well as to that of impiety. Hence, it is certain that they were even justly liable to punishment. The only question is whether from policy, or from humanity, the offence should have been condoned. To this it may be answered that a government must protect the liberties of its subjects;

and that the conduct of the Christians proved them a danger to the greatest of all liberties, liberty of conscience. The prevoyance of Marcus was lamentably justified, when little over 200 years later, Theodosius, the miserable creature of St. Ambrose, suppressed the pagan sacrifices under penalty of death. Previous to this the Church had become infamous by its treatment of Jews and heretics; and by its enmity to the glorious culture of Rome. Statues of ineffable beauty, monuments of stately splendour, and vast libraries replete with the intellectual wealth of long ages, vanished before the hammers and the torches of Christian mobs, led by Christian clerics in the fury of obscene destructiveness. The mental servitude which followed this ignoble triumph of the Cross resulted, first, in the almost immediate fall of the Roman Empire, and then, in a period of darker ignorance and baser vice than had ever before afflicted humanity. The punishment received by the Christians from the authorities for their rebellious conduct filled them with enmity towards the State. The apologists, indeed, represent them as loyal citizens, and as lovers of their persecutors; but the falsity of these contentions is evident from the writings of the prophets which express the secret thoughts and wishes of the community. The Seer of the *Apocalypse* gloats with excogitated malice over the prospective burning of Rome:—

Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye saints, and ye apostles, and ye prophets; for God hath judged your judgment upon her. (xviii. 20).

The Sybils raise the same strain:—

Oh! how shalt thou weep then, dispoiled of thy brilliant garments and also in habits of mourning, O proud queen, daughter of old Latinus! Thou shalt fall, no more to rise again. The glory of thy legion, with their proud eagles, will disappear. Where will be thy strength! what people will be allied to thee of those whom thou hast overcome by thy follies. —(Renan: *Christian Church*. c. 27.)

Certain it is, that an Irish patriot who thus depicted the burning of London, or a Communist who thus envisaged the destruction of the British Empire, would be likely to find himself a person of no small interest to the police. The hostility of the Christians towards the established religion naturally irritated the populace, and, whenever an earthquake, or any other disaster occurred, it was imputed to the wrath of the gods at Christian impiety. This rendered disturbances inevitable; and thus the Christians became obnoxious to justice for occasioning breaches of the peace, as well as for refusing religious obedience. In many cases, the authorities would have ignored what the Christians had done but for the knowledge that in overlooking it they would lose public respect, and that, unless they did interfere, the people would take the matter into their own hands with terrible consequences. The above facts are notorious, and they will not be disputed. But the Romans also took proceedings against the Christians for other reasons, the validity of which is less easy to determine. About 111 A.D., Pliny the younger, a man of high character and of great wisdom, who was then administering the provinces of Bithynia and Pontus in Asia Minor, wrote the emperor Trajan to know whether he should prosecute Christians for "the name itself," or only "for the crimes *flagitia* cohering to the name"; adding that as the result of his own inquiries, he had discovered nothing worse about the religion than that it was "a debased and extravagant superstition."²⁸ A few years later, Tacitus, the philosophical historian, who was a friend and correspondent of Pliny, stated in his annals that, in the time of Nero, the

²¹ Liv. l. 39. c. 8-19.

²² Suet. *Claud.* c. 25.

²³ Renan *Christian Church*. c. 12. ²⁴ Cap. M. *ANT.* 23.

²⁵ Blunt. *Dic. Hist. Theol.* (1872) art. *Paganism*.

²⁶ *Hist. Doct.* i. Per. v. Sec. 3371.

²⁷ Keim's *Celsus*. p. 127.

²⁸ *Epist.* x. 9.

Christians were "hated for crimes *flagitia*"²⁹ Later still, Suetonius, the entertaining biographer of the first twelve Cæsars, declared that under Nero "the Christians, a class of men of new and prolific superstition, were afflicted with punishment."³⁰ Neither Pliny, nor Tacitus, nor Suetonius specifies the accusations made against the Christians, but from the various apologists who appeared somewhat later in the century, and also from Eusebius (280-340) we learn that the Christians were accused of polluting their nocturnal assemblies with drunkenness and lewdness, and even with ritual cannibalism. Now in the early days of Christianity we find the Apostle Paul complaining of grave disorders in the Corinthian Church.³¹ He mentions inebriety and fornication, "such fornication as is not even among the Gentiles."³² Cardinal Bellamin asserts that the nocturnal vigils of the Church were abandoned, because "abuses had begun to creep in, or rather crimes *flagita* were not rarely committed."³³ What transpired between Paul's time and this abolition? The charges occurred at trials widely separated topically and temporally. Affirmative evidence was obtained from servants of the accused, and from past members of the Church. Tertullian, who left the majority of his fellow Christians for the Montanist sect, drew a terrible picture of his former companions.³⁴ There were then as there are now, innumerable associations professing and calling themselves Christians, and Justinus says that he does not know whether any of these committed such offences as those laid to the charge of his brethren, but that he is sure the authorities do not make them the object of proceedings.³⁵ Later fathers, however, declare that some of these sects and parties were guilty of the misdeeds in question.³⁶

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

(To be concluded.)

Helen.

*Her beauty is a daunting thing,
A flaunting thing,
An haunting thing;
And of her beauty I will sing.*

Her beauty daunts, for who but the high gods
Could gain so fair a prize?
How could this mortal win against such odds?
She would not hear my plaints nor heed my sighs.
No, not for me
Her godlike quality.

Her beauty flaunts, as does the perfect rose,
Full well aware
That in Love's garden there is naught more fair.
Yea, she her beauty knows
And flaunts it with a matchless grace and pose.

But daunting loveliness more surely haunts,
Haunts me by day, by night;
I close mine eyes, and yet appears her face;
The echo of her voice abides in many a place:
A fantasy, a dream, but ever in my sight.

*Her beauty daunts me;
Her beauty she does flaunt;
Her beauty is an haunting thing;
And wounded of her beauty I must sing.*

BAYARD SIMMONS.

A Letter from Yahweh to Jove.

DEAR JOVE,

THE MOUNT.

I am having trouble in a part of my Kingdom, and think that possibly you may be willing to give me—as one god to another—the benefit of your experience and advice.

I have felt a little hesitation about writing you, and have put off doing so for some centuries, being afraid that my claim to be "King above all Gods" may have appeared arrogant and offensive.

If so, I hope that you will accept my assurance that no offence was intended. The statement was not meant as a challenge to other deities, but as one means of dealing with a very troublesome lot of my creatures. It is about these that I now ask your brotherly advice. You see I have no one here to consult—at least, no one capable of giving a sensible opinion. My son is too much obsessed with his Salvation Army and such matters to discuss serious problems, while H.G. has no mind of his own, and merely re-echoes what I say.

It would not do to discuss State matters with the Seraphim, for they must be kept in place or I might be faced with a second revolt, and although I managed to get the better of Lucifer and his friends, there is no guarantee that I should have equal luck another time.

I did once mention the matter to old Michael, but he is a confirmed militarist, and can propose nothing but war, which to me appears as an undignified attitude for a Creator to assume towards his creatures.

Ah, how rebellious, disobedient, and stiff-necked have they been! Many times have I repented me of that experiment in Eden. I thought that I was doing a fine thing when I made man in my own image, thought it would be interesting to watch a lot of miniature Yahwehs running about, and that the earth would be a sort of god's doll's-house.

But I had overlooked Lucifer. I seem fated always to forget something. It was just a chance for him to get a bit of his own back, and he wormed his way into Eden and told them the secret of their nature. Of course I had not intended that they should know it, it was like giving a restless horse the bit between his teeth. Off they went, and have been going ever since, in spite of almost super-godlike efforts on my part to bring them back to the robot condition which I intended.

I got so exasperated after a few centuries, that I decided to drown the lot—as one would a litter of miserable pups. But, here again, I was foolish enough to save drunken old Noah and his family, and the trouble soon started again.

Many times since I have been on the point of repeating the operation, and promised myself that it should be effective—*no more arks*. But I was hindered by the recollection of a pledge given to Noah, that I'd never drown them again. It was a silly thing to do, but I'd given them the rainbow as a sign, and if I had gone from my word, they could have put that up against me.

And so I've had to grin and bear it these thousands of years; but matters grow worse and worse. I never realized when I made them like me that they might grow up. But they have been educating and "improving" themselves until now "Jack is as good as his master." They actually want to tell me my business, to criticize my works, and even to say that they could have done better.

I don't know what the devil to do with them. I thought once of handing over the earth to Lucifer—stock, lock, and barrel—only I don't quite fancy the sardonic grin with which he would receive the gift. No, I really don't think I could stomach that, but something must be done. They have found out that my dominion, which to them should be universal, is really a small affair. They know something about the Milky Way, and the infinite extensions of Space, with its millions of Solar Systems. I had told them that Earth was the centre of everything, that I had hung up the Sun and Moon, and pointed out the minor lights for their benefit. Now they openly accuse me of lying for my own aggrandisement.

Yes, old god, they are far too knowing, and are now, I fear, on the point of throwing over all allegiance. It's

²⁹ An. xv. 38-44.

³⁰ Nero 23.

³¹ I Cor. xi. 21.

³² I Cor. v. 1.

³³ De Eccles. Triump. i. 3, c. Acts.

³⁴ De Jejunis 17.

³⁵ I Apol. 35.

³⁶ Iren. Adv. Hoeres i. 1, c. Clem. Alex. Stroon iii. 430. Epiph. Hoeres xxvi. 42, 43.

very worrying, and I don't know what the devil to do. I should indeed appreciate your sage and sympathetic advice. As I hinted before, it is lonely here. When I picture you with your jolly companions at the ambrosial board, I wish I had not been always so jealous. If I had compromised with Lucifer, what an interesting pal I might have had throughout the cons. Not only was he the most handsome, but he was far and away the wittiest and brightest of the host. Moreover, this trouble would not have occurred.

My court is deadly dull as compared with yours. There is little variety and we lack the spice which feminine society supplies. Of course we now have Mary, but she is not really one of us, and although we occasionally get a little mild amusement from twitting H.G. about her, she is far too serious and anæmic for any real fun.

I've let myself go somewhat, but can trust you to treat all that I have said as *in camera*. I feel sure that you will help me if you can. You had my full sympathy in that affair of Prometheus, as you will doubtless remember.

My high respects to Juno, Apollo, and the hierarchy.

Yours for ever,

YAHWEH.

SCIENCE THE SAVIOUR.

Naturally there can be no widespread appreciation of all science. The field is vast, and the harvest has been abundant. The most one should expect in the case of astronomy, geology, chemistry, and physics is a reasonable dissemination of their broad generalizations regarding the structure of the universe and the composition of matter. Biology, on the other hand, must advertise its wares far and wide. Its more important conceptions must become household knowledge. The keystone of the new social structure, the pivotal factor of advancing civilization, the guide of the new religion, is biology; for man is an animal, and his characteristics, his requirements, his reactions, can be recorded and studied quite as carefully and precisely as those of any other animal. Biology is the Science of Life. And it is the Science of Life that must be pondered so continuously, so conscientiously, so reverently, if an Art of Living is ever to be developed.

No established fact in anthropology, anatomy, embryology, physiology, or any other of the grand divisions of the subject can be regarded as meaningless or even superfluous in connexion with the task that is set before us. Nevertheless there are two outstanding beacons, two lighthouses of first magnitude, that will probably do more toward steering society into safe channels than any others. I speak of psychology and of genetics, the study of the nature, function, and phenomena of the mind, and the investigation of heredity, variation and evolution. On a solid foundation of psychology and genetics, students of social science can synthesize safely and soundly. And in due time, perhaps our alderman, our members of Congress, our presidents, and others to whom we let subcontracts for the actual work of social construction, will become aware of their findings and will labour with more intelligence and efficiency than heretofore.

"Science," says George Moore, "is a good old barn-door fowl; build her a hen-roost, and she will lay you eggs, and golden eggs. Give your money to science, for there is an evil side to every other kind of almsgiving. Science will alleviate the wants of the world more wisely than the kindest heart that ever beat under the robe of a Sister of Mercy; the hands of science are the mercifullest in the end, and it is science that will redeem man's hope of Paradise."—Edward Murray East, *Prof. Biology, Harvard Univ.* (in "The Forum").

No very studious man was ever very cruel; no two things in nature have less affinity than violence and reflection.—Landor.

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

Newman.

Acid Drops.

For many years we have been insisting that if people are really in earnest about ending militarism, one very effective way is to discourage the war mind. And a first step towards this would be to keep the soldier out of all civic ceremonies. A parish pump will function none the less effectively, and a foundation stone will lie none the less securely because we have no soldiers on view for the young generation to admire and envy. We are, therefore, the more pleased to find our suggestion at last bearing some fruit in the proposal that at Armistice Day celebration the soldiers round the Cenotaph shall be without arms. That would be a good start, and as the army that fought in the war was, in effect, a civilian army, and in any case was enlisted on the part plea that the war was to end war, if this year soldiers are paraded without arms, next year they might parade without uniforms. But we have no great hopes of the suggestion being adopted yet. Those in control are hardly likely to miss the opportunity of advertising the army, and so doing something to cultivate faith in the gun as the final decider of international disputes. Still, we may note one more instance of the fact that the *Freethinker* advocacy does tell, even though no acknowledgment is made.

Lord Polworth, chairman of the Prison Commission in Scotland, informed the National Conference on the Welfare of Youth, held at Croydon, on October 27, that returns from Edinburgh show there was a higher percentage of juvenile offences on Sunday than on any other day in the week. Out of 733 cases, 257 occurred on Sunday. Wednesday came next with 100. We do not think this will in the least affect our Sabbatarians, who do not care what happens so long as the work of Sunday demoralization keeps on. Apart from this, everyone is aware that once we give youth an opportunity for rational and healthy enjoyment on Sunday we at once sharply limit the opportunities for the development of bad habits which may easily grow into "crimes." That is the testimony of responsible police officials all over the country. We commend this statement of Lord Polworth's to that ineffable stupidity, Mr. Joynson Hicks, who was recently lamenting that Sunday was not now observed as it was when he was a boy.

The intellectual output of parsonic speeches is staggering. Thus, the Chaplain-General to the Forces, Bishop Taylor Smith, tells of "a remarkable dream he had." He dreamed he was motoring along a cliff road, when the car went over. He made sure of death, but "my faith brought a great peace and I was listening for the music of heaven to welcome me. And then I woke up. I was never more disappointed in my life." We can imagine this good man's disappointment at finding himself still alive, and the cheerful sadness with which he continues to shoulder the burden of terrestrial existence. And we ought not forget the modesty of the man who comes back to earth after heaven has sent out a special band to welcome him. Probably, when he does get to heaven, Peter will see that the streets are properly decorated, and instead of blessing cannons and poison-gas he will be told off to consecrate haloes and harps.

Eastbourne Corporation has made £1,500 profit on sea-bathing this year. It would have made a larger profit if only it had smothered its Sabbatarian bigots and permitted Sunday bathing.

A woman reader of the *Daily Mail* declares that a little child should never be taught to fear God but to love him. Neither should the child be taught that he will burn everlastingly if he lies or steals. She adds: "I was taught this hideous untruth, and, needless to say, I thought I might as well make the best of my time before I went to hell." The "hideous untruth" is still taught in Catholic and Protestant countries to

millions of innocent children. That is why the spread of Freethought is so necessary—to counteract the evil teaching of Christians.

The air of the House of Commons, says Sir Wm. Bull, is washed, combed, scraped—and criticized. So it might need to be—after the recent Prayer Book dog-fight. It never ought to have been polluted with religious discussion.

The Rev. David Walters thinks "we are suffering from undigested civilization." A more accurate conclusion is that "we" are suffering from too-well-digested Christian theology.

A noiseless bus is being experimented with in London. We wish, for the sake of ordinary person's eardrums, some one would experiment with a noiseless Salvation Army.

Of a reverend gentleman lately departed to glory, an obituary notice says that as an advocate of Foreign Missions and the Bible Society, he "revealed his broad outlook on humanity." What this really means is that, in the interests of his profession, the good man encouraged the conversion of people of other races to his own narrow creed. That doesn't strike us as revealing a broad outlook on humanity. But Christians are fond of this misuse of language.

Methodist re-Union is steadily proceeding. The chief job for the Methodist theologians is to phrase the pet dogmas of each Church as nebulously as possible, so that former separative differences will be neatly camouflaged. That done, then Hallelujah!

The International Missionary Council make the following pronouncement regarding the missionary motive:—

We believe that men are made for Christ and cannot really live apart from Him. Our fathers were impressed with the horror that men should die without Christ—we share that horror; we are impressed also with the horror that men should live without Christ.

A glance through Christian history suggests that this horror "our fathers" had doesn't seem to have prevented them from butchering Freethinkers, infidels, and persons of other Christian sects who worshipped the wrong kind of Christ. The world should be grateful that the descendants of "our fathers" have a slightly different horror to shape their conduct. Still, we would remind the Missionary Council that the ordinary man, living without Christ and Christian horrors, can manage quite nicely without officious and impertinent enquiry about the welfare of his "soul."

Dr. Raven, in his book *A Wanderer's Way*, asks the following question: "Is Jesus alive now as he appeared to be to St. Paul?" And after this one may well understand that the rate of real human progress is not quite so fast as a snail travelling backwards.

If we are to believe newspaper reports, our civilization is not exactly the kind of thing to make a song about to Mars. At the Glasgow University rectoral election the ammunition used between the rival factions consisted of the following telling arguments for and against:—

Over 60,000 bad eggs.
Thousands of decayed cods' heads.
Barrels of rotten fruit, and
Innumerable small bags of soot, pease meal and ochre.

Mr. Stanley Baldwin, Prime Minister, headed the poll, and although the jargon is distasteful, the masses do not appear to have anything to learn from the classes. Let us be charitable and answer that Scotch frugality could not endure to have anything wasted.

A Deputy-Coroner at an inquest at Birtley, Co. Durham, stated that it was about time Spiritualists were prosecuted. We do not agree. There is enough ignorance in the country which is carefully encouraged by religious bodies to foster any kind of nonsense, and the only cure is the dissemination of a little common sense. The newspapers might make a start. In the meantime, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has sailed for South Africa, to spread the good news of Spiritualism, and Mr. Hannen Swaffer is keeping the home fires burning with a "personal" advertisement as follows:—

PERSONAL, CONTINUED.

"HOW dare they SELL us BIBLES which tell us to try spirits, and then persecute us for doing so."—Hannen Swaffer.

Dr. W. B. Selbie, Principal of Mausfield College, Oxford, states that most of the undergraduates and undergraduettes have no religion at all. This almost reads like a complaint against people for being healthy.

The ethics of a presidential election in America are interesting reading, and whatever that famous country does, it always seems to be singing on a top note. Those in opposition to Governor Smith, evidently with superior goods in their own candidate, describe the three keys to Hell as "Rum, Romanism and Ruin." Others with the foot on the loud pedal declare that

"to murder Protestants and destroy the American Government is an oath binding Roman Catholics."

which all goes to prove the lovely influence of Christian brotherhood, fellowship, uplift or whatever the name of the muddy article is, produced from passion.

The following item was not on the agenda of the meeting of Bishops in London to discuss medieval jigsaw puzzles:—

The price of bread in London and parts of the provinces was raised yesterday a ½d. per quarter loaf—from 8d. to 8½d.

A strange and weird sentence met our eye in glancing through an article by the Bishop of Manchester. Here it is:—

St. John says that "God is love." St. Matthew reports our Lord as saying, "All authority is given unto me in heaven and on earth." Those two sayings express the same essential meaning.

Ever since reading that passage we have had grave doubts as to our sanity. How can these two things mean the same thing? What is the relation between God being Love, and his delegation of all authority to some particular person? We have looked at it upside down, right side up, and sideways, and find it quite impossible to say what it means. What an easy thing it must be to be a Bishop! Evidently you need not think about what you say, because you feel sure that those to whom you say it will not think about it either.

Mr. Gandhi says: "The Hindus, Christians, and Mohammedans are all branches of one beautiful tree." Judging by their incorrigible habit of squabbling, fighting and murdering one another—each in the name of one true God and faith—we think they might with greater accuracy be called branches of the tiger family.

A report issued by the borough authorities of Shoreditch reveals an appalling state of housing conditions. We shall be reminded of this when next we see that thousands of pounds have been used to build a church, for the glory of God. Good Methodists will hardly need reminding that the obvious Christian remedy for those conditions is to start a few Mission Halls in Shoreditch. An evangelizing campaign might also help towards improvement. It is a well known Christian fact that sinfulness is the cause of all human misery.

New South Wales has had a gale which tore off the roofs of houses, fanned a bush fire a mile long, and did a million pounds of damage. This is a piece of evidence to prove that the Christian God's love for the creatures he created passeth all understanding.

According to a weekly journal, in China, under the new Nationalist Government, absolute freedom is to be given as regards meeting, speaking, and writing, and women are to be made as free as men. If that is the case, we hope China never becomes Christianized; for once the people and rulers come under the influence of the Bible these freedoms will vanish.

When the time comes for relating the story of that great-hearted worker for mankind, Dr. Nansen, we hope whoever is entrusted with the task will tell the world that the Doctor was a Freethinker. Perhaps some day it will be possible to collect in one large book the stories of great Freethinkers, relating what they have done for the world, and what were their ideals.

The Chief Constable of Hythe has founded a club for delinquent boys, and for boys who will try to help them. They make the following pledge:—

I promise, with the help of God, and will endeavour to be honest, straightforward, and manly in my daily life . . .

It would have been better to get the boys to promise to be decent without the "help of God." Boys should be taught to rely on themselves, and when they need help, to seek it of their elders. The only aid boys and men get in this world is from their fellows.

A pageant of the Bible entitled "Eden to Bethlehem," was presented the other week at a Wesleyan chapel in North London. What ought to have been shown was the marriage feast where Jesus turned the water into wine. Seeing the merry party quaffing the magical wine with gusto would have filled the audience with first-class spiritual fervour.

The Rev. Professor Waterhouse has also been asked whether the study of psychology does not damage the religious life by "dissecting sacred things until their awe and sanctity is lost, and what our fathers called the hand of God, their children call a complex." The professor replies that there is always a danger lest familiarity breeds contempt. Students "who enter the lecture-rooms when the soul is analysed . . . may fail to see the divine, or they may find 'knowledge grow from more to more, and more of reverence in us dwell.'" Psychology, as the scientific study of the process of our minds, neither exalts nor depreciates religion, says the professor. It tries to study it as it is. What result psychology has upon the individual student depends not on psychology, but on himself. The reverend professor might have seized the opportunity to give some good advice on these lines: The best means to ensure the student staying a Christian, is for him to bring to his studies, not the scientific impartial mind, but a mind stuffed with Christian prepossessions. The danger of the impartial mind is that it so often leads to infidelity and irreverence.

Sir Arthur Yapp, of Y.M.C.A. fame, appoints himself champion of the new generation. Says he: "Youth is all right." This assurance is not needed among intelligent observers. It is only the Christian bigots, measuring youth by the narrow notion of a 2,000 year old theology, who deplore the badness of youth. There is not much the matter with youth, when it reveals its possession of sound sense by casting off the fetters of clerical authority and refusing to listen to officious advice and admonition.

As an aid to "brighter Sunday Schools," some suggestions made at the Primitive Methodist Sunday School Conference were: Cinema pictures, shorter prayers,

floral decorations, and up-to-date literature. Poor Jesus appears to have lost his magnetism with children! Seemingly, they cannot be persuaded to take the Christly pill unless it is very thickly coated with sugar. The Sunday School of the future is to be turned into a cross between a florist's shop, a picture palace, and a Smith's bookstall! The job of catching-'em-young is a real problem nowadays.

Volume I of the Report of the International Missionary Council, which met at Jerusalem, deals with the Christian life and message in relation to non-Christian systems. In it, according to a religious weekly, Dr. Temple says:—

The essential element in any religion is the character of its God. And it is here that religions deeply differ from one another . . . The fact that rays of the true light shine everywhere is no contradiction of the other fact that in the Bible they are focussed as in a burning-glass . . .

Dr. Temple adds:—

. . . we must remember that Christ is Himself the heart of the gospel, not as a merely historic Figure who once lived on earth, but as the one historic Figure in whom the eternal God is once for all revealed.

From all this we gather that God has been distributing little lumps of "light" mixed with large chunks of darkness (namely, error or untruth) all over the world. He then saw the danger in this, and decided to give the "light" in one chunk—in the Christian Bible. People who accepted the chunk were entrusted with the task of convincing those who held only the little lumps of light that what they venerated was all wrong. This doesn't seem a very intelligent sort of scheme. But we are quite willing to believe, with Dr. Temple, that it is what the Christian God might do or has done.

A Wesleyan reporter has been visiting Gloucester Cathedral and the city. Gloucester, says he, is very quiet on Sunday—dull for those who haven't the sense to go to church. Later on he gives us a notion of what the "senseless" could enjoy in the Cathedral. He was struck with the reverence and courtly bows of clergy and choir after the procession is over! Every man to his taste—even if it be childish. What seems not to have occurred to this sensible Wesleyan is that the pious have no right to prohibit other people's amusement on Sunday, so that church-going is the only available pastime. In a country where the people profess belief in fair-play and "live and let live," the harmless desires of the godless majority should be catered for as much as the primitive fancies of the pious minority.

The same Wesleyan gives the titles of sermons preached at the Cathedral in 1832. One was "A warning against attendance at the theatre, fair, and race-course, preached previous to the annual occurrence of revelry in or near the city." He exclaims: "Why are not such sermons preached before certain things happen in Sabbath-breaking towns to-day?" What a question! And what an unenlightened intelligence it reveals! If this is the result of being "Christ-like," thank the Lord most English people have ceased striving to acquire godliness.

In the *Sunday School Chronicle* a writer says: "The very success of the [Christian] missionary enterprise has caused Hinduism, Islamism, Buddhism, and in less measure, Confucianism, to modernize their teaching, and to assert that this enshrines moral and spiritual truth at least as valuable as the doctrines of Christianity, and more appropriate to the needs of the people among whom these faiths had birth." That, however, is not exactly what the missionary societies want. Their aim is to make people Christians. Whether Christianity is better suited to them than their own native beliefs is quite a subordinate question. Most observers would agree that in the majority of cases native beliefs, with whatever modifications are possible, are far better than an imported system such as Christianity.

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. E. H. LASTON.—A very good letter, but we do not anticipate that you will receive a reply. The safest policy for the clergy is that of silence.

W. R. HARDING.—We do not agree with you that the Rev. Saturley showed no departure from good taste in saying prayers over the grave of the dead Freethinker after the family had departed. He was told that the dead man had expressed the desire that no religious forms or ceremonies should appear at his graveside. It can hardly be said that these wishes were respected because the man's family was not there when it was done. Mr. Saturley refrained only while those who had the authority to do so were there to prevent him. From any point of view it was a gross impertinence.

J. BRYCE.—It is unkind to remind us that you heard us lecture nearly forty years ago. It makes us realize that we must be getting on. Luckily we commenced to lecture very young.

J. H. HEWITT.—Thanks, shall appear.

H. SAMSON.—The man of eighty-eight who wishes to go on living for ever strikes us as a standing example of the indiscretion of his parents. That kind of man is usually one who ought never to have been born.

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

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

Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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.

Mr. Cohen to-day (November 4) will deliver the first of four lectures in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester. The lecture will commence at 6.30, and as the meeting is free, we are hoping to be able to report a crowded hall.

Owing to the serious illness of his daughter, Mr. Cohen was unable to leave home last week-end, and was therefore compelled to forego his engagement at Darlington. He was very sorry indeed to disappoint both the local friends and those who had come from a distance, but it was, in the circumstances, unavoidable. He hopes to pay Darlington a visit at a later date this season. His place was taken at very short notice by Mr. Mann, and as this was his first visit to the North of England, we are glad to learn that he had good audiences, and that those who heard him were highly appreciative of his efforts. Several friends have written us saying that they hope to hear him again in the North, and from what we know of North Country Freethinkers they do not form opinions lightly, or express them without care.

We regret to announce that Mr. S. Samuels, one of the oldest members of the Executive of the National Secular Society, is now lying seriously ill in a London Hospital. Mr. Samuels has been in poor health for some time, and has been unable to attend the last few Executive meetings. There was no London Freethinker who had the interests of the Cause more at heart than had Mr. Samuels, and during a very lengthy connexion with the Movement was at all times ready to do what he could to help in any way he could. His many friends will hear of his illness with as much regret as we make this announcement.

This is the last chance we shall have of calling attention to the National Secular Society's Social and Dance, which will take place at Slater's Restaurant, Basinghall Street, E.C., on Saturday, November 10. The hall of the Restaurant is a comfortable and commodious one, and those who attended the last Social will not need to be assured of a good evening. The tickets, which will include supper, are 3s. each, and early application is advisable. A good band has been engaged, and there will be some good vocalists also. The Restaurant is situated next to the Guildhall, and so will be easy of access from all parts of London. Full details on back page.

Those who have any doubts about the tenacity of superstition would do well to study a book such as *The Mysteries and Secrets of Magic*, by C. J. S. Thompson (Bodley Head, 10s. 6d.). Mr. Thompson is a good guide, and he takes his readers through almost every branch of magic and sorcery from the earliest times onward till almost the present day. Beginning with the primitive ideas of magic, Mr. Thompson examines the magical rites connected with ointments, perfumes, names, methods of raising the devil, controlling the weather, inflicting injury on an enemy, etc. It is an unending phantasmagoria of childish beliefs set down with all the gravity of a profound science, and which, although it may have been driven underground by modern culture—to some extent, at least—has up to date defied eradication. Magical rings, jewels, talismans, magic circles, love philtres, their use and popularity, are all brought before us, generation after generation, varying in form, but remaining unchanged in essence. It is a curious, a depressing, but an important history to all who would understand and appreciate the vagaries of the human intellect.

Of these magic circles, talismans, etc., we have plenty of survivals around us to-day. The mascot craze, which exists in the most "cultured" society, from the throne downward, is one illustration. The belief in unlucky days, in the power of amulets, the carrying of a cross, the sacredness of particular objects blessed by a priest, or "sanctified" for use in a church, owe their origin to the earlier magical practices described by Mr. Thompson. The trade in love philtres flourishes to a degree unknown to many. West African and Indian lucky charms are openly advertised and sold to a very considerable extent. And those who are inclined to smile at this kind of thing should remember the adoration of the Mass, or the veneration of the Cross, the magical efficiency attributed to the water of Lourdes, or the touch of a "sacred" object by Christian devotees. These things all appeal to the same type of mind, and the fact of one person expressing his primitive beliefs in cultured language with an Oxford accent, ought not to blind the scientific inquirer to the essential fact.

Mr. Thompson appears to agree with Wundt, that at the back of all the magical rites and ceremonies described in his book is the idea of the soul. That is the parent of all. We think that is the substantial truth of the whole matter. And it would be interesting to trace, even from Mr. Thompson's pages, the way in which the Christian Church took over this mass of superstition and blessed it. It is true that it prescribed certain forms of it, but this did not amount to much. It prohibited dealings with the devil, but it vastly strengthened the sense of the devil's activity. It prohibited unauthorized magic, but established a vast magical system in its own ceremonies. Above all, it struck hard and deep at the conception of natural law, which is always and everywhere an antidote to superstition. It enveloped life in a thick atmosphere of magic, and from that atmosphere we are not yet freed. Mr. Thompson's delving into the world of magic has been deep, and his researches wide. The result is a book which both interests and instructs. A word also ought to be said in praise of the many excellent plates with which the text is illustrated.

A Gospel Vaudeville.

To measure the distance we have travelled away from religious faith since the eighteenth century, we have only to note the different reception given to revivalist preachers at that time, and the response accorded to them to-day.

As Father Ronald Knox truly observes:—

George Whitefield, in the early Methodist days, would preach in the open air to 20,000 people at once. That is, perhaps, exceptional; but I gravely doubt whether there is a religious speaker to-day who can, unless on some special occasion, and with the help of some incidental attraction, muster (in England) more than 2,000.¹

The revivalist campaign started by Wesley and Whitefield, ran through the working and lower middle classes of England like a prairie fire.

The most successful revival of modern times was that organized by Moody and Sankey, who came over from America in 1874, and again in 1881 and 1892. During the four months of their mission, held in different halls in London, they addressed "over two and a half millions of people."² Moody was the preacher in this partnership, he was a common-place vulgar man, just on a level with the average street corner Salvationist of to-day. The more cultured religionists complained that he treated sacred things with painful familiarity. Sir Alfred Robbins, the veteran journalist, who heard him preach at Exeter Hall, in the Strand—a celebrated religious meeting place, which once occupied the site of the Strand Hotel—says that he spoke with a marked American accent, which was not specially grating. But:—

What sometimes repelled was his easy familiarity in dealing with names which possessed for Englishmen a definite sanctity. An example was afforded in his address that morning. "I had a dream last night," he told his hearers. "As I was coming here to-day, walking down your Strand outside, I met Paul. I stopped him and said, 'Hello, Paul,' and he said to me, 'Hello, Mr. Moody.'³

Sir Alfred says that Moody's preaching left him "spiritually cold; but Sankey was a very different proposition." Seated at an American organ, assisted by a well-trained choir, he rendered appealing hymns, the words and music of which he had mostly composed himself. To quote Sir Alfred again: "With a mouth strikingly awry as he sang, he possessed the incalculable advantage of 'a singing voice.' To hear Sankey give 'Hold the Fort,' or 'Shall we gather at the river,' the one with the rousing cry of promise and response, the other with the wistful inquiring verse and the triumphant answering chorus, was the never-to-be-forgotten experience of a lifetime." As he further observes, what the great revivalist of the past had understood, and Sankey had practised, was to get at the emotions of the mass through well known hymns, or with hymns so simple in wording, and so "catching," that they could be sung at once. The whole thing was an appeal to the emotions. There was no appeal to reason or to the intellect. That is why the effect, although great at the time, was not permanent.

About ten years after the last visit of Moody and Sankey, the Torrey-Alexander mission, also from America, arrived in 1903. Torrey turned out to be on exactly the same intellectual plane as Moody—besides perpetrating some libels on Freethinkers, for which he was called to book by the late Mr. W. T. Stead. Alexander, with his large trained choir was responsible for the musical show. His trump card,

or rather hymn, was, "That will be glory for me." But by this time the Churches began to realize the futility of these revivals. For, although the evangelists could draw large audiences, they found that they were composed almost entirely of members, or attendants at, other churches and chapels. They made no impression at all upon the masses outside the Churches.

Following close on the Torrey-Alexander mission, came the Evan Roberts revival in Wales. This ended with the mental breakdown of Roberts.

Since then, we have had peace for more than twenty years; until, in fact, the arrival, on October 4, of the fascinating evangelist, Mrs. Aimee McPherson. Her fame had preceded her. So much so, that the Home Secretary was petitioned to order her exclusion from this country as an undesirable alien. Fortunately the Home Secretary declined, and thus deprived the amiable Aimee of the chance of posing as a martyr; and also gave reasonable people the satisfaction of seeing the utter failure of what the *New Statesman* (October 6) describes as: "Her 'gospel vaudeville' performance."

Mrs. McPherson opened her revival campaign at the Albert Hall, on Sunday, October 7, with an entirely new and up-to-date technique. The Hollywood technique. At her home city, Los Angeles, she is known as "the evangelist with sex appeal." Owing to the reports of peculiar, not to say sensational, adventures in America, and the advertisement given by the petition for her exclusion, the Albert Hall was packed to capacity, people had been waiting for hours in queues for admittance. One paper estimated that there were 10,000 in the hall and 4,000 excluded. London appeared to have deserted the devil and surrendered to the first assault. The evangelist came on the platform, a charming apparition, attired in short skirts, silk stockings, and a coiffure which one critic declared must have taken her all the previous part of the day to achieve. In this he was wrong, for the wonderful coiffure of golden curls which has been the envy, the admiration, and the despair of thousands of women, is not natural; it is a wig, a perfect specimen of the hair-dresser's craft. Sister McPherson's natural hair is short and darker, and she does not consider it suitable for platform performances.

Although the evangelist's appearance was all that Hollywood art could make it, there was nothing striking about her discourse, which was composed of the conventional stock phrases of the ordinary revivalist. One critic declared that many listeners found her dull. Mr. Robert Lynd, who attended one of her meetings, says that her address was similar to that of thousands of others:—

If it differed, this was chiefly due to Sister Aimee's habit of ejaculation—"Oh, I'm so happy!—and to her practice of suiting the action to the word as she speaks. She sawed at her side, for instance, to represent God removing Adam's rib, and she smacked the Bible hard again and again to represent Noah felling trees with his axe in order to build the Ark." (*Daily News*, October 10.)

But with all her talking and theatrical gestures, her performance was a failure. Mr. Arnold Dawson says: "She left her hearers cold. She could not arouse the enthusiasm of her audience, and at no time did I see any sign of that mass hysteria which is the stock-in-trade of the stunt press and of stunt preachers. Those who went to the Albert Hall in the true American revivalist spirit must still need reviving. London audiences are perhaps more critical than those of Monkeyville." (*Daily Herald*, October 8.) The fact is, that the people did not go to hear the Gospel, but to see the much talked of Sister Aimee McPherson.

W. MANN.

¹ *Sunday Dispatch*. October 14, 1928.

² R. Mudie-Smith: *The Religious Life of London*. (1904) p. 318.

³ *The Daily News*. October 9, 1928.

"God Made One and All."

HAVING an ample supply of this world's goods, I live as a man of leisure. Every street, nook, and cranny in this busy northern town is well known to me. My daily walks over a course of years seems to have made every step familiar ground, and like many another, observation and investigation have brought events to my notice seemingly outside the pale of reality.

In one of the busiest streets of the town there is a few yards of ground, near the kerb, which never fails to attract my attention as I pass. At this spot, up to a few years ago, there daily stood a nondescript, ramshackle carriage occupied by a crippled, idiotic man of most repulsive appearance. The man was begging, and held in his claw-like hand a rusty tin vessel wherein the alms of charitable passers might be dropped. Only the upper part of his person as a rule was visible; a piece of dirty tarpaulin or coarse sacking usually covered his lower extremities. Unkempt, neglected and sickly-looking, he reclined listlessly in his carriage, scarcely ever giving signs of animation. Report averred that he was helplessly paralyzed. Sometimes one of the distorted hands held a box of matches, apparently for sale, but the charitably disposed, as if unwilling to touch the uninviting hand, usually dropped their coin into the receptacle provided, and left the goods behind. Few seemed disposed to remain near the carriage longer than necessary.

This unpleasant sight had been familiar to me and others for years; in fact, the public had grown used to it; they seemed to know the habit of the carriage. The crippled man was wheeled to his stand in the early forenoon and, weather permitting, left until late afternoon. He was usually brought by an elderly woman; sometimes by an elderly man, at other times he was wheeled by a younger man: all of untidy, poverty-stricken appearance. His home was in one of the lowest slums: in my investigating peregrinations I have passed the hovel: I knew by sight the three persons who wheeled his carriage; but for a closer acquaintanceship I felt no impelling inclination.

As already said, the public were quite familiar with the ramshackle carriage and its helpless occupant: the beggar's presence seemed inevitable to all passers. But one day a most strange event happened: an event mystifying and perplexing in the highest degree. It was midday, bright and clear, when an outcry from one of his attendants, who had called at the carriage as usual, brought to the notice of the surrounding people that the paralyzed beggar occupant was absent. The carriage was unoccupied: the man was missing. Scores of people in the vicinity swore to having seen the cripple in his usual position within the last hour; many claimed positively to having seen him but a few minutes before the outcry. What had become of him? Helplessly paralyzed and idiotic from birth, he could neither walk, stand, nor articulate. "Spirited away" did not satisfy the mystified public mind; yet the repulsive, sickly beggar had so completely disappeared as if he had vanished into thin air, or as if the ground had swallowed him. How could the helpless occupant leave the carriage unassisted? Had the covetous dissector been at work; planned the kidnap, and defeated public gaze? Hardly likely in a crowded public thoroughfare. But supposing him to have been kidnapped in broad daylight, what hands could touch or handle such an unclean, forbidding person? Even the most callous body-snatching ghouls might have hesitated before placing themselves, under eye,

in contact with such a nauseating creature. Yet the carriage was empty; the cripple was gone, leaving not a trace behind.

All search and inquiry for the missing beggar proved unavailing; he was neither seen nor heard of again by police or public. The unaccountable disappearance, under such strange circumstances, is still discussed by our townfolk; but the affair is likely to pass into one of the most baffling, unsolved mysteries of our time.

* * *

Then there are sea mysteries of which the more we attempt to penetrate, the deeper the mysteries seem to become. Ships have been abandoned in mid-ocean for no apparent reason; their crews and personnel never having been heard of again. In one well-known case, when the derelict ship was boarded, a partly consumed meal was on the table, evidencing that the diners had left the food leisurely. The cabin clock ticked merrily in its place; the log-book was duly entered up to date; everything in the life of the ship, minus its personnel, was found fully in order. Not a sign of struggle, mutiny, or violence to the ship was observable. The decks were clean and tidy; stores well replenished; coffers intact, nothing could be found calculated to give disaffection. And yet the ship was deserted, floating helplessly with the tide.

What had become of the crew? Why was the ship abandoned? In explanation of the mystery sea monsters have been mentioned as having attacked the ship and feasted on the humans. Herculean demented ruffians, murdering and throwing the rest of the crew overboard, then doing violence to themselves is another theory. But these and other like speculations could not be true, otherwise overwhelming evidence in their favour would regard these inexplicable happenings of the sea as mysteries yet to be solved.

* * *

I had been musing on these and similar strange affairs as I was preparing to make a short sojourn on the Continent. Having arrived at the station, ensconced in a first-class carriage, I scanned the morning paper desultorily. My mind was alive with the prospect before me. Railway travelling I am partial to: in the rush and change I find much to arrest the contemplative. I was wondering if anything would happen on my travels to add to the number of strange events which I have encountered. Certainly, I was not expecting to meet with deep-seated mystery; but one never knows; for indeed I was again fated to become an observer of an affair so far removed from the common rut of things that its mysteries still haunt my mind at this hour.

After a lengthy run, with various stoppages, the train entered the station of a residential and aristocratic neighbourhood. The passengers on the platform were of superior caste and bearing. Near my carriage stood a tall, graceful lady, accompanied by her maid servant, and two aristocratic-looking boys of about eight and ten years. The lady was speaking to the station-master, the latter paying her great deference. Though the lady's face was of surpassing beauty I noticed signs of deep grief in the expression. I observed she was dressed in mourning; the maid also, but her two handsome boy companions were dressed in the customary attire recognized by people of enormous wealth. The dark, exquisite material of the boy's clothing was lined with the richest silk; the coats were decorated with valuables and golden clasps. Their shoes, collars and other accessories were superb, even to the highest and best quality obtainable. Clear-skinned, pretty, and highly refined, they were indeed lovable children.

As luck would have it, the station-master opened the door of my compartment and the aristocratic party at once entered.

Ostensibly scanning my paper, yet I was observing the party intently. The boys played about the carriage, occasionally giving their attention to superior picture books in their possession. I am a lover of children, and few repel my advances. My surreptitious glances soon attracted the little fellows, and the smiling faces told me that a friendliness was established.

It was easily to be seen that the lady was the mother of the children. She sat regarding them lovingly and proudly; yet, at times, so I thought, pityingly. She had become somewhat pale; evidently something was troubling her. I sought for the cause of her grief. Were the boys going to school or college, leaving her for the first time; and was the parting more than she could reasonably bear? Well, such things will happen, I mused; yet such melancholy dejection, as shown by the mother, hardly gave credence to my idea.

The boys continued to romp and play the man until the train reached its destination, and as I left the carriage I felt as if parting from two little friends.

All was bustle preparatory for the channel crossing, yet I noticed that the aristocratic party were intending passengers. I got but one chance glimpse of the boys during the sea journey, and as I disembarked my own affairs almost put the incident of our meeting out of mind.

After calling at Paris, I decided to journey to Frankfort, and from thence to Heidelberg. Arriving at the latter place I was early astir the next morning, and as I made a round of the streets, whom should I see but the lady and her maid driving alone in the direction of the railway station. The parting from the lovely children had evidently taken place, and time alone would mercifully assuage the fond mother's grief.

The meeting I regarded as a trick of chance. Neither the lady nor her maid, I thought, recognized me. Anyway, so inwardly absorbed were they that my show of deference passed unnoticed. The presence of the lady in town caused my mind to again revert to her two lovely, sumptuously-dressed children. I mentally pictured the two little high-bred fellows as happily ensconced in the high-grade college or in some gorgeous mansion. Neither would my surprise have been great had I seen the little men rolling along in some luxuriantly equipped carriage carefully guarded by their liveried attendants. But the short stay in Heidelberg did not reward me with the coveted vision. In a few days I went on to Baden-Baden, and plunged into the life of the town. I renewed old acquaintanceships, and met a few people from home whom I knew. For some days I was enjoying myself immensely. But it was here that I got my second surprise: and a surprise it was. One day, after taking the waters, I was leisurely walking the street, when of all the people whom I least expected to meet, whom should I see but my two little boy acquaintances of the railway journey. But Oh, what a change! The transition from the appearance of vast wealth to the direst poverty was unbelievable. I was astounded. They were dressed in coarse cotton garments: both were shoeless and barefooted. They were in the charge of a fierce, brutish-looking, stubby-bearded man of middle age. One at each side of him, he held them firmly by the hand. But as their heads turned from side to side they saw me and recognized me, and would have stopped and come towards me had not their fierce, scowling custodian jerked them along by the arms,

Who was the man? Was he the father? He might have been. He was seedily dressed, yet after all there were traces of comportment not always shown by the commoner.

Was he a man ruined by extensive gambling speculations and other extravagant vices, living menacingly on the fears of certain wealthy persons?

I loitered behind them, until the trio turned into a narrow street, at which spot I stood for some minutes in a state of bewilderment. Having lost sight of them I turned and walked along contemplating on what I had seen. I could neither make head nor tail of matters.

I saw the children once or twice after this, but, as before, watchfully escorted by the scowling man; so I deemed it prudent to make no outward sign of recognition. I observed the children's frightened manner as they looked at me, and up into the face of their forceful guardian.

For this was the college or luxurious mansion at which they had arrived! I mused. They were probably living in some wretched apartment suffering privation.

As I left Baden some days later, my last thoughts were in regard to these two children. Certainly, I never expected seeing them again, and wondered what could be their destiny.

From Baden I went to Bale; thence to Lucerne, and so over the St. Gothard into Italy. From Milan I went to Venice, and there made a short stay. And now comes another astounding part of my adventures. A few days after my arrival in Venice I called at an apotecary's shop, situated in an outlying part of the town to buy some remedy usually requisitioned by travellers in those parts. Coming unconcernedly out of the shop I stopped abruptly, for whom should cross my path but one of the two little boys I had left at Baden. I was mystified. Again in his disreputable outfit, and barefooted, he looked hard at me for some moments, then shyly ran to a ragged old hag of a woman, who roughly took his hand and both disappeared into an obscure passage nearhand. The mystery darkened: I could only reflect and marvel, and eventually tried to put the matter out of mind.

Shortly after this I took train for Gartz. In the railway carriage I accidentally came in contact with two gentleman tourists with whom I had become slightly acquainted at Baden. At one of the stations en route for Gartz, one of my acquaintances alighted for refreshments, and as he re-entered the carriage he remarked: "There's that horrible fellow with the young boys joining the train, whom we observed at Baden." I was intensely interested, and hastily questioned the speaker. It appeared that, like myself, yet unknown to me, my two acquaintances had had an eye on the fierce-looking man, and had remarked on his savage conduct towards the two ill-dressed yet well-mannered boys. My questioning elicited such information as convinced me, without a doubt, that the man and boys mentioned were none other than those whom I also had had under observation. The train was anything but punctual, and noticing confusion at the luggage van, I ventured on to the platform and walked the length of the train peering into carriages. The carriages were in a crowded state, giving but a poor opportunity for inspecting the occupants. Anyway, I did not see those for whom I was searching; and although I ventured on to the platform at other stations the strange man and boys did not reward me with a sight of them. Neither have I ever set eyes, from that day to this, on those mysterious persons, or on any one connected with them.

Who were they? What could they be? What is the meaning of it all? How can you explain the

mystery of a mother giving them up; of the remarkable splendour and elegance of their appearance while under her care; of their barefooted squalor in Baden-Baden, a week or so afterwards; of the wretchedness of the one I saw in Venice? Was the father ruined, and while living in vicious poverty had sold the boys' clothes? How came they to have passed out of the hands of a refined lady (as she evidently was, with whom I first saw them) into the charge of a seedy, brutish man at Baden; and the one I saw later into the keeping of a coarse, untidy woman at Venice?

My adventures are but one chapter of the mystery. How I have yearned, at times, to come across others who could give a later chapter in connexion with the boys; also a chapter relating to the boys' lives preceding the one narrating my own observations.

But who knows: the apparent mystery might have some simple solution. I saw two happy children, attired in princely apparel, taken from their mother and consigned to the care of others. Shortly afterwards I saw the same children barefooted, ill-treated, and of beggardly appearance.

I look upon my adventure as a riddle.

WILLIAM WATSON.

Mother Told Me So.

I AM not going to say anything against mothers. I remember the sweet soul who gave me birth. How often in moments of trouble, of weariness, of disgust, have I longed for a soothing look of those tender eyes that never fell upon me except in love! Despite the long interval of all those years since I stood by her open grave, I see her still in the moonlight of memory. He who has had—alas that one should ever say *had!*—a good mother can never quite lose his reverence for women. That sacred affection will soften all his feelings; and amidst all the disillusion, the bitterness, and perhaps the cynicisms of life, he will be refreshed by the waters of a pure and holy fountain, springing up perpetually from the depths of his own heart. He will also be in touch—perhaps unconsciously, but none the less surely—with the central fact of human civilization; for the smile of a mother, bending over her child, was the first ray of sunshine on the red struggle of existence.

Let us honour the mothers of the race—the *true* mothers; the women who love, and strive, and sacrifice, and eat the bread of carefulness, and stitch and mend little garments, and sometimes taste the saltiness of tears in the silence of the night. I do not despise the Frenchman—I honour him—who is smitten to his knees at the sound of the words "*Ma mère.*" Cant clings about all our emotions, as the ivy clings about the oak, sometimes smothering and killing it; but the oak itself is grand and noble, and so are our natural emotions. *Ma mère*—my mother! When a man says that tenderly I would pardon even his kneeling, for he is in Nature's holy of holies.

Love is the greatest thing in life, and the mother is its first priestess and missionary. But love is not all. It may even be dangerous if misguided. Thought is necessary too. The head is wanted as well as the heart. And in the past, owing to the necessary course of evolution, the woman has supplied the affective element in life, while the man has done most of the hard thinking. Not *all* men, of course; the majority of them have been mere plodders and acquiescers; but the minority of them have made the valuable discoveries and promulgated the fertilizing truths. This is a fact too patent to be ignored. And it is perfectly natural. We are all subdued to what we work in; environment determines organization; and the greater originality of man has been caused by the greater enterprise of his social functions.

But the very fact that the woman stayed at home more than rectified the balance of power. It gave her the greatest influence over the children. The man saw them occasionally; she saw them every day and all day long. She taught them to walk, she taught them to

speaking, she gave the first direction to their minds and the first impulse of their characters. For this reason it has been said that the hand which rocks the cradle rules the world.

One class of man stayed at home with the women, while the other men tended cattle, hunted, or fought. These were the priests, and thus they laid the strong foundations of their empire. The priest still rules through the women and children. "The mother, the wife, the sister," as I wrote many years ago, "shield him and his creed; and their white arms and soft eyes are a better guard than all the weapons in the armoury of his faith." The mother is the priest's proxy. She rears her children for the Church. "She whispers of God," I wrote, "with accents of awe, that fall solemnly on the little one's mind. She trains the knee to bend, the hands to meet in prayer, and the eyes to look upward. She wields the mighty spell of love, and peoples the air of life with phantoms." She moulds the child for the priest, who burnishes it with catechisms and stamps it with dogmas.

When scepticism comes in later life the priest has always a ready warning. "Don't forsake the religion of your mother." He tries to throw the doubter back at his mother's knee. Occasionally he has the audacity to ask, "Would you call your mother a liar?" And the worst of it is that this irrational appeal is too often effective. Yet this same priest has no hesitation in begging for subscriptions to Missionary Societies, whose agents go through the "heathen" world, which is the largest part of it, endeavouring to make its inhabitants forsake the religion of *their* mothers.

"Mother told me so" is a very good reason up to a certain point. She is likely to tell her child the truth as far as she knows it. But outside the sphere of her interests and affections she is very rarely a thinker. Even in religion it is the worship, and not the doctrines, to which she is really attached. The truth is, she tells the *child* what the priest tells *her*. She is an unwitting instrument of deception. She unconsciously promotes a wretched imposture. She enslaves the beings she loves to an enfeebling superstition. She does not know that she is a tool in the hands of designing priests, who prey upon her and, at the same time, use her to rear a fresh generation of victims.

Well, if the mother's influence is so potent, Freethinkers should recognize the fact as well as the priests. I have no patience with a Freethinker who goes to a Secular meeting and leaves his wife at home, or lets her go to church. Of course, he must respect her freedom. He must not try to govern her will. He must refrain from every shadow of coercion. But he is bound to use every possible persuasion, without being ostentatious or offensive. And if he is a good husband, and a tender father, she is very likely to listen. If a woman both loves and respects a man she will go a long way with him. It was a woman, not a man, in the old story, who said: "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." And if the Freethought husband can make his wife a Freethinker, he will make his children Freethinkers too. Surely this is worth a strong and patient effort. I invite all my readers who need the invitation to commence this experiment. It is idle to talk about converting the world unless you make a beginning at home.

G. W. FOOTE.

Epitaph to Two Neglected Authors.

Ribald, Piebald, Belated, Post-dated, Ill-fated and generally boycotted or given *Poiseau*, being a Jig or variation on "Pass the Salt" to be said or sung in time of affliction.

To "A.M."

SEE how this table bends, hear how it groans
With weight of meat and fish and fearful fare.
The little cellar makes no fearful moans
If he's left out—but watch the feaster's glare!
If no big sellers splutter round our name,
Then little cellars must our worth proclaim.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Correspondence.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Your correspondent, S. Soddy, has succeeded in collecting an assortment of arguments against capital punishment, some of which are irrelevant and none of which really touch the main issue.

The statement that Chicago has more murders than the whole of Great Britain hardly helps Mr. Soddy's case, since Chicago also has Capital Punishment. If she abolished it and thereby substituted a penalty provoking less sentiment, and resulting in a higher percentage of convictions, she would no doubt have less murders.

The fact that some of us desire to treat the murderer in a humane and civilized fashion is no indication that we have "more sympathy for him than for his victim," and your correspondent has no right to say so. Rather does it mean that we have such an abhorrence of murder, that we object to the State imitating it in the name of Justice.

Neither is it relevant to drag in the alternative substituted in Italy. When we abolish the Death Penalty in Britain we shall hardly emulate her. Solitary confinement has been abolished in this country.

But surely the main argument against Capital Punishment is that the experience of abolitionist countries has proved it to be unnecessary. The fact that these countries have dispensed with it without an increase in murder is a sure indication that the Death Penalty is not necessary as a deterrent and can safely be dispensed with.

E. ROY CALVERT.

National Secular Society.

EXECUTIVE MEETING, OCTOBER 26, 1928.

THE President, Mr. Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Miss Kough, Messrs. Clifton, Corrigan, Easterbrook, Hornibrook, Moss, Rosetti, and the Secretary.

Minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

New members were received for the Birmingham, Plymouth, South London, and West London Branches, and for the Parent Society. Permission was given for the formation of a Branch at Darlington.

The Monthly Financial Statement was presented and adopted. The Executive considered the financial situation of the Society, and a number of grants were made to Branches in aid of their work.

Reports were received of the summer mission of Mr. G. Whitehead, of Mr. Corrigan's week's mission at Darlington, and of Mr. Clayton's lectures in the Burnley district during the summer.

Correspondence was received from the Society for the Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, from the Chester-le-Street, Glasgow, Liverpool, and Swansea Branches, and from individuals.

The Executive considered the arrangements for the Society's Social on November 10, and the Secretary was instructed.

The Executive considered the question of propaganda by leaflets in connexion with general activity on the part of Secularists all over the Country, and the Secretary was instructed to obtain further information for consideration at the next meeting.

The Executive decided to meet on November 30, 1928, and the meeting closed.

FRED MANN,
Secretary.

Society News.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

MR. R. B. KERR's lecture on "Labour's Illusions," delivered last Sunday at the St. Pancras Reform Club, provided a strong discussion, the Socialists present disagreeing entirely with the lecturer's statement that Capitalism was not the cause of unemployment. Mr.

Kerr, however, had no difficulty in meeting his opponent's arguments.

To-day (Sunday, November 4), the lecturer is Mrs. Ettie Hornibrook, and she will deal with "Practical Birth Control." This subject should appeal particularly to women, and as Mrs. Hornibrook is one of the foremost authorities in the country on birth control, she should attract a large audience.

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.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Mrs. Ettie Hornibrook—"Practical Birth Control."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Station): 7.15, Mr. F. Mann—"The World's Six Greatest Men."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.): 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"Morality and Beauty."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY ("The Orange Tree" Hotel, Euston Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Mr. Prynce Hopkins—"What so many wise men have believed."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Eclipse Restaurant, 4 Mill Street, Conduit Street, W.1): 7.30, Mr. A. H. Hyatt—"I am the Resurrection and the Life."

OUTDOOR.

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.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12 noon, Mr. James Hart; 3.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. Freethought meetings every Wednesday and Friday at 7.30. Various lecturers. The *Freethinker* is on sale outside Hyde Park during our meetings.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BELFAST (Proposed) Branch N.S.S. (48 York Street): 3.0, Councillor Midgley—"The Case Against Capital Punishment."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall): 11.30 and 6.30. Mr. George Whitehead. Subjects: "How Religion Fosters War," and "The New View of Evolution." Tuesday, November 6 (Paisley)—See local papers. Wednesday, November 7 (City Saloon Hall, Candleriggs): 7.30 (doors open). Debate on "Is the Belief in God Reasonable." *Affir.*: Mr. John Grant (Glasgow). *Neg.*: Mr. George Whitehead (London). Reserved Seats, 1s.; unreserved, 6d. Chair at 8 p.m.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): Mr. Chapman Cohen.—For full particulars see advert. on back page.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street): 7.30, Mr. P. Sherwin—"The Development of Human Marriage." Wednesday, November 7 (Lovely's Coffee-house, 1 Park Street): 8.15, Study Circle. Mr. Egerton Stafford—"Atheism."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (4 Swilly Road): Members Meeting on Tuesday, November 6 at 7.30 p.m.

OUTDOOR.

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

UNWANTED CHILDREN

In a Civilized Community there should be no UNWANTED Children.

For an Illustrated Descriptive List (68 pages) of Birth Control Requisites and Books, send a 1½d. stamp to—

J. R. HOLMES, East Hanney, Wantage, Berks.
(Established nearly Forty Years.)



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—Milton.

DO you get that? Quality alone will withstand the searching test of light. Faultiness and deficiency shun light, whilst quality welcomes it always, and there is no light more piercing than the blazing beacon of publicity.

For eight years we have stood before you in the white dazzle of its rays, and we have grown and not withered. Grown and not withered—let that sink in. It means that we have quality not merely to bear the light but to thrive in it. It means that every claim we make about our goods and service is substantiated and upheld. It means that you absolutely should not neglect to take advantage of the very enticing offer we made you last week. *Read page 703 of last week's "Freethinker" again.*

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SOME PIONEER PRESS PUBLICATIONS:

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- PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN MORALITY. By W. MANN. 2d., postage 1/2d.
- THEISM OR ATHEISM? By CHAPMAN COHEN. The Great Alternative. An Exhaustive Examination of the Evidences on behalf of Theism, with a Statement of the Case for Atheism. Bound in full Cloth, Gilt Lettered, 3s. 6d., postage 2 1/2d.
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