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Views and Opinions.

Preying on Prayer.

THE leg-pulling, circulation-hunting stunt of the *Daily Express* on Prayer has come to an end, and it has created a record for sheer silliness, even in the records of newspaper religion. From not one of the contributors has come an article of which even the average educated clergyman might not be heartily ashamed. And, of course, no one who did not believe in prayer was asked or permitted to contribute. If a visitor from another planet were to judge the population of this country from the *Express* articles he would certainly conclude that prayer was universally indulged in, and everybody believed in it. A single article from a level-headed writer would have blown the whole stunt into thin air—which was the reason why they were strictly taboo.

In this competition for circulation Mr. James Douglas comes an easy first. Some one said of a famous university Don that no one could possibly be half as wise as he looked. And one may say of Mr. Douglas that it is very difficult to believe that anyone with a pretence to education could be quite so silly as his article would lead us to believe him to be. If it were in *Punch* one would take it as a rather lame attempt at being humorous. Thus, judging from his own account, he appears to have been always more or less under the special protection of Providence. When he was a child, he was blind for six months. The oculist held out no hope. But his mother prayed. She called God’s attention to the important fact that it was the future James Douglas who was threatened with blindness. His mother’s prayer was answered, and his sight was restored. Yet again: “I was dying of blood poisoning. Harley Street gave me up. Nine specialists gave me up . . . I came so near to death that nothing short of a miracle saved me. It was prayer that wrought the miracle.” Yet another occasion. Again he was seriously ill. “I was taken out of my bed on a stretcher and borne in an ambulance to a nursing home at midnight. I had only a few hours to live . . . Prayer again brought me through by a hair’s

breadth.” Does it not all ring true? Has it not the note of sincerity in every line? Always the desperate condition! Always at death’s door! Always given up by the doctors! And then with fine dramatic effect God is informed by prayer that his future servant “Jimmy” Douglas is dying. What is he going to do about it? And then comes the great cure. Douglas is preserved, and the Lord’s work will go forward. One can imagine the tears which will flow down the cheeks of Mr. Douglas’s Fleet Street comrades when they read this touching narrative. It is not for me to say what will set them crying.

* * *

Thanks to God.

Mr. Thank-God-we-are-still-Protestant Rosslyn Mitchell, M.P. also gives us “a forceful article.” The Editor kindly informs his readers of the character of each article so that they may know what it is, and be able to describe it to their friends. Mr. Mitchell is a member of the House of Commons, one who could move the House to tears by his defence of the Prayer Book—which is not, I believe, the prayer book of the Church to which he belongs—and he helps the good cause along. A lesser man (on the *Express*) than Mr. Douglas, he never seems to have been dying, and so the Lord never had occasion to step in and save his life—after nine specialists had given him up. In all these cases the despair of specialists is very important. Still, some very wonderful things happened to some of his acquaintances. “A very dear friend” had suffered for years from an internal swelling. The time came when two surgeons (Mr. Douglas had nine) said that the growth must be removed. The lady appears to have dreaded the operation, and the night before it was to take place she prayed, “Lord, I know thou dost not need a surgeon to do this.” In the morning “the lump had gone”—and she was no relation of Mr. James Douglas! It is true that in this case Harley Street was not in despair, and nine specialists had not given the lady up. But a growth of many years that had grown serious enough to demand an immediate operation, and to disappear in a single night, is very, very good. *Vive le Bon Dieu!*

Another wonderful case, this time a cash miracle. Some other friends of Mr. Mitchell’s were in need of eleven pounds to pay a doctor’s bill. “They prayed that the Lord would in His own way open up a path for them.” The next morning they received a letter containing a cheque for eleven pounds. The Lord had moved some one to send the money—he had even given the sender the name and address of the people to whom the money was to be sent. (May I call the attention of the Lord to the fact that we have a “*Freethinker* Endowment Trust,” and the Trustees wish to raise a further £2,000? The address will be found on the back page, and all miracles in

that direction will be duly acknowledged). I have no doubt but that Mr. Mitchell could dig up more of these cases if he were called upon to do so, but I do not think he will ever have anything more striking than the serious growth of many years' standing which disappeared in the course of a single night. On the whole I like that better than Mr. Douglas's nine despairing specialists. Mr. Mitchell is said to be destined for a place in the Cabinet when a Labour Government comes into power. Such rare intelligence and absolute honesty of speech deserves a very high post in Parliament—or in the Salvation Army. And General Booth is seriously ill.

* * *

Playing Both Ways.

Most of the *Express* writers give similar instances. But in spite of their child-like trust in the Lord, their faith is mixed up with a certain element of artfulness. For while they all give examples of *particular* answers to prayer, they tell us that we must not judge prayer by such tests. They tell us that a man gains strength in the act of prayer. He finds comfort in it, and many a one after praying feels himself the better for it. I have not the slightest doubt about the truth of this. If a man believes that prayer will help him in trouble he will be helped by prayer. But the conviction is a consequence of the belief, not the belief a consequence of the experience. That is true of other things beside prayer. It lies at the root of the successes of every quack medicine on the market, particularly when we count the hits and forget the misses. Belief in any God, from the stone image of the savage to the metaphysical nightmare of the Athanasian Creed will be just as effective. But this is evidence for nothing save the power of a fixed belief. No one denies this. It is one of the commonest facts of experience. Auto-suggestion, I may inform Mr. Mitchell (and also Mr. Douglas), is not quite unknown to modern science. What it falls short of is the despairing nine specialists, and the tumorous or cancerous growth that disappears in a single night.

* * *

The Ineffectiveness of God.

Now the theologian does not say, "I believe that if I can bring myself to pray, the fact of self-communion will bring a sense of relief." What he says, so far as his belief in prayer is intelligently sincere, is that in consequence of prayer there exists some one who will alter the course of events as desired. What other meaning are we to attach to prayers for the safety of those at sea, or for better harvests, or for rain during a drought, or prayers for the Lord to cure a sick man? Prayers, real prayers, are offered up in the belief that there is some one who listens, who can do what he is asked to do, and who would not do what he does unless the prayers were offered. Let any man believe otherwise, and how long would his practice of prayer persist? Let him say to himself that there is no *one* to listen to me, or if there is he will not alter the incidence of forces so as to give rain or sun, or cure a disease at my request, let him say that he is only praying to himself, communing with himself, and then see how long the practice of prayer will last. It is idle saying that God answers prayers when they are not selfish prayers. When a man prays for better health that is a selfish prayer. When the old people prayed for £11 to pay their doctor's bill, that was a selfish prayer. And how many of this kind of prayer remain unanswered? What of another kind of prayer? A few days ago

seventeen brave men, who set out in the Rye lifeboat, to save the lives of others, were all drowned. I do not suppose that any of these men had any time to waste in prayer while they were at sea, but one may take it for granted that there were prayers offered by the wives and children they had left on shore. And what was the answer of the Lord? It was to give back seventeen corpses! The God who could preserve the life of Mr. Douglas time after time, who could help the friends of Mr. Rosslyn Mitchell, could not—or would not—save the Rye boatmen. Why, a God who is worth the respect of a single honest man or woman, who could have saved them, would have saved them without being asked at all. If people only looked at life intelligently there would have been more than a boatload of men drowned in that wild sea off Rye, a God would have died with them.

* * *

Prayer and Miracles.

A gleam of intelligence from Mr. Rosslyn Mitchell. What man, he asks, has not at some time been driven to his knees by an overwhelming sense of his own helplessness? That really gets us somewhere, only Mr. Mitchell does not appear to realize it: The root of prayer is twofold—helplessness and ignorance. Men begin to pray because they feel themselves at the mercy of forces which they cannot control, and which they believe may be controlled by some supernatural power. As their ignorance and helplessness diminish, their dependence upon prayer grows weaker. We pray for a man to be cured of a fever, but who prays for him to have a leg restored that has been cut off through an accident in a saw-mill? It is quite true that prayer lies at the root of religion, but that is because primitive ignorance lies at the root of prayer. In a world where causation obtains, a genuine religious answer to prayer is an impossibility. It is useless saying that the writers of the *Express* articles all believe in prayer. They *may* believe they believe in it, but the test of genuine belief is how far does one trust it? How far will these men and women depend upon prayer in any critical situation where they believe that human help is possible? The genuine believer in answers to prayer believes in the possibility of miracles, and in the world known to modern science miracles simply do not happen.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Fall.

*All a long summer's day
The mown and prostrate grass turns into hay.*

So we may see,
By Nature's subtle plan
(Man's destiny),
How all a lengthy life
A mighty, strong-willed man
Is worn down by his wife.
By slow degrees she bends him to her will;
Thus has it ever been, and thus is still.
For Nature's ally woman is:
To wear down hills and fill the valley up,
To level all,
This, yea, this
Is the great end for which they strive.
Adam, the egoist, must fall;
Must drink effacement's bitter cup;
His ego shrivel that the race survive.

*The mown, still-living grass
By slow degrees into dead hay must pass.*

BYARD SIMMONS.

The Twilight of the Gods.

"No soul that lived, loved, wrought, and died,
Is this their carrion crucified."—*Swinburne*.

"There is nothing on earth divine beside humanity."
Landor.

How popular conceptions of religion are changing in this country is illustrated by the disappearance of the once-familiar remark, "God willing." Writing of the old coach-roads of England, Mr. Tristram notes that in King Charles the Second's giddy reign the stage-coaches were advertised to do the distance between London and Bath in three days "if God permit"; but in 1780, the time had been reduced to two days, and the pious saving clause was omitted. Indeed, "God permit," according to Grose, was a regular slang term for the old stage-coach, and readers of Scott will remember what the antiquary said about it. But a contemporary story has come down to us of the village carrier who, upon being asked when he would be at Aberdeen, replied: "I'll be in on Monday, God willing and weather permitting, and on Tuesday whether or no."

"D.V." are initials that have dropped out of public notice, except in the case of small religious communities that are themselves mere survivals of the past. "*Deo volente*" is the proviso, "God willing." But Mr. and Mrs. Everyman of the present day do not trouble to put such a proviso in ordinary announcements as to future events, and order their dinners and go journeys without the addition of "D.V.," or even thoughts of the clergy at all.

The clergy, naturally, still insist on the willingness and interference of their god. Some years ago, in a far corner of South Carolina, a pastor was prompted, in the midst of a drought, to offer up prayers for rain. Shortly after, rain fell and lasted some days. The contentment of the inhabitants of South Carolina, however, was not great, nor enduring. A few, it may be, were pleased; the majority were indignant. Certain crops were ruined, and business affairs compromised. In this complicated world nothing ever happens without offending somebody. This rain supposed to be summoned by a pastor's supplication, forced the inhabitants of the town to go to court and get an injunction against the reverend man. So the story goes.

This American yarn shows the resentment men would feel nowadays were the old Christian Bible Stories to happen in our day. For, according to the legends, the prophets were for ever doing things more troublesome to the mass of men than merely asking for rain, and getting more than a shower-bath. They foretold the onslaught of Assyria, the triumph of barbarians from the West, and poked their sacred noses into many things. Statesmen and rulers of those far-off times may have been forgiven for supposing that these howling Dervishes were a public and a private nuisance.

The present day is not an age of faith. It is the twilight of the gods. Our own fifty thousand priests no longer call benefits or evil out of the sky, beyond asking for fine or wet weather, or calling blessings on the present tenants of Buckingham Palace, or the Duchess of York's baby. They do not openly pray for the discomfiture of Stanley Baldwin, or the success of Lloyd George, or the destruction of Bernard Shaw. They are alert enough to know that they could never succeed in praying for or prophesying anything that pleased everybody. The majority would restrain them with judicial injunctions, or the minority would have them locked up, preferably in a mental institution. The old, bad conception of a

tyrannical, bullying deity has gone for ever, and the majority of men no longer believe in a limited-liability god, and that such a supernatural being could be swayed by the sweet smell of sacrifice or the stimulus of entreaty.

According to our fifty thousand clergy, the Christian god is the Lord of Hosts, the God of Battles, and also the Prince of Peace and the Saviour of mankind. These priests, who consecrate regimental flags and christen battle-cruisers, also prate that their god is a loving parent, and that all mankind are his children. What absurdity and what hypocrisy! In the last war, Prussian pastors said, "Germany must win, because she ought to win. God cannot desert his children." The British priests used almost the same language, tempered by local patriotism. "Give peace in our time, O Lord," says the preacher. "Because there is none other that fighteth for us but only Thou, O God," responds the bowed congregation. Observe that the priests of all the nations concerned blessed the flags which floated over the seas of blood, and invoked their gods for victory. Many millions of human beings, the very flower of a whole generation, perished in the last war. And the priests, who were exempted from military service, presume to thank their deity for this wholesale murder, and perpetuate the martial spirit which provoked it. The priests have failed, and their god has failed with them. What, after all, is their deity but a magnified, non-natural man, encrusted with the ignorance of the ages? If the peoples were wise, this god would be dethroned at once and for ever. Then the people would no longer require thousands of priests to tell them the "old, old story," and absorb millions of money in the process. Money may be more usefully spent than in placing ancient ignorance in perpetual cold storage.

A story is told of a dying Italian silversmith. A priest was fetched hurriedly, and the holy man snatched up a silver crucifix and held it before the dying man, with the words: "Behold your God!" "Yes," replied the artist. "I know him quite well. I made him."

It is now the twilight of the gods. Modern man has outgrown ancient ignorance, and the conscience of the race is now rising above the deities of decadent superstitions.

MIMNERMUS.

THE glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things;
There is no armour against fate;
Death lays his icy hand on kings:
Sceptre and crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

Some men with swords may reap the field,
And plant fresh laurels where they kill;
But their strong nerves at last must yield;
They tame but one another still:
Early or late
They stoop to fate,
And must give up their murmuring breath
When they, pale captives, creep to death.

The garlands wither on your brow;
Then boast no more your mighty deeds:
Upon death's purple altar now
See where the victor-victim bleeds;
Your head must come
To the cold tomb;
Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in the dust.

James Shirley.

Problems of Relativity.

THE writer of the leading article on the first page of *Nature* (November 3), is much concerned about the gulf which has widened between the discoveries recorded by modern science and the appreciation of, or understanding of them, by the general public.

He observes that nine years have now elapsed since the epoch-making confirmation of Einstein's prediction, by means of his new theory of Relativity, that starlight would be deflected by the gravitation pull of the mass of the Sun. Since then, a ceaseless procession of books, pamphlets, lectures and articles, has been devoted to making the new theory plain to the man in the street. But in spite of all this activity, the writer complains, it is very rarely that one finds a non-scientific man who understands Relativity, or even one who claims to do so; any ordinary person who affects to understand it is regarded with suspicion. The attempt to explain Relativity in ordinary language, he declares, "represents the most conspicuous failure of modern scientific exposition." Some of these expositors, he further remarks, have a very hazy idea of the subject themselves, others are unintelligible or dull, added to which, their methods are all wrong.

This reminds us of a rather amusing police court incident. A young man was charged—not for the first time—before a magistrate; the explanations he offered for the events of which he was accused, were extremely flimsy; which, along with his assumed air of injured innocence, aroused much amusement. At last, turning upon his derisive audience, he said: "If any of you think you can tell a better tale than that you'd better come up here and have a go." We fancy that the authors of the books in question would make a similar reply.

However, we quite agree that it is somewhat disconcerting to those not specially qualified to find that they have lost touch with science—that science has entered an inaccessible region where they cannot follow. As our author points out:—

It has a profound effect on the whole habits of thought of the person concerned. Once let the possibility be admitted that knowledge is not firmly grounded in experience, and the mind loses its anchor . . . He has no longer any hold on the world, and has become a potential victim to any delusion or absurdity that he may encounter. The most serious effect of the failure to realize the meaning of Relativity is the tendency to lapse into this state of mind.

The real difficulty, he further observes, "that be-sets the beginner in the subject is, not to *understand* what he is told, but to *believe* it. The look that meets the expositor is a look of incredulity, not of blankness." This is intelligible enough when we remember that, previous to about 1912, Einstein's new theory of Relativity was regarded, even in his own country, Germany, as fantastic. What the writer seems to be advocating is, that the results obtained by Relativity should be taught, without attempting to teach the process by which the results were obtained.

We observe with satisfaction his remark that, "another common error, namely, that in some way Relativity has killed 'Materialism.'" This he stigmatizes as "nonsense."

To understand the new principle of Relativity—or, rather, to understand why we cannot understand it—we must go back to the third century before Christ; to the time of Euclid, the founder of the Alexandrian school of mathematics, whose work has endured for more than two thousand years as an introduc-

tion to Geometry, to the great disgust and abhorrence of succeeding generations of youth. There were, of course, many geometers before Euclid, but Euclid collected together and arranged consecutively all the more important problems, to which he added many of his own. His *Elements* has been used as a text-book down to quite recent times, and the books by which it has been superseded are merely revised editions of the old book.

Now the space in which Euclid worked out his problems is a space of three dimensions, namely, length, breadth and thickness. For instance, you measure a piece of wood, or stone, and you find it is, say, twelve inches long, six wide, and three thick, you cannot measure it any further. It was in a space of three dimensions that Newton, by the aid of further developments of mathematics, made his great discoveries in gravitation and the revolutions of the Solar system. Also, the problems of Euclid are all founded on axioms, or postulates. If you grant his fundamental assumptions to start with, his conclusions follow as a matter of course. But in course of time it was found that the Euclidean scheme proved insufficient for the working out of all the modern mathematical problems, and another geometry founded upon other assumptions arose; a non-Euclidean geometry, of which Sir Henry Savile, so long ago as 1621, appears to have been the founder. M. Maurice Maeterlinck, the Belgian scientist, has been exploring in these regions, and has a surprising story to tell of the marvels of the new territory. He tells us of:—

A non-Euclidean geometry. In this new science shine the names of Saccheri, Lambert, Gauss, Lobachevsky (whose works made a tremendous sensation in the world of science), Bolyai, Riemann, Helmholtz, Beltrami, and others. This new geometry declares that our space is not strictly Euclidean, and that we are capable of conceiving various kinds of space, in which parallel lines may meet, in which the curve is not longer than the straight line . . . and there are other inexplicable anomalies. This non-Euclidean geometry becomes hypergeometry or metageometry, which is the method of investigating hyperspace, of four-dimensional space—fictitious in the opinion of some; entirely real in that of all the rest. And this is the space in which Einstein develops his tremendous problems. This geometry—to mention but one of its theories—regards the three-dimensional sphere as a section of hyperspace, and studies the possible properties of lines which lie outside our Euclidean space, together with the relations of these lines, angles, surfaces and solids of our geometry. (M. Maeterlinck: *The Life of Space*. pp. 15-16.)

Maeterlinck quotes Ouspensky, whom he describes as a kind of Slav Pascal, as saying that mathematics escapes from the limits of the visible, and deals in quantitative relations which do not correspond with any reality of the world of three dimensions. He continues:—

But it is impossible that there should be mathematical relations with which no relation to reality corresponds. This is why mathematics exceeds the limits of our world and makes its way into an unknown universe. It is the telescope by means of which we are beginning to explore multi-dimensional space and its universes. Mathematics is stripping our thought, our powers of imagination and perception. At this very moment it is calculating relations which we can neither imagine nor comprehend. (Cited by Maeterlinck: *The Life of Space*. pp. 29-30.)

But, as Maeterlinck observes, there is no question of only imaginary problems: "The higher mathematics and hypergeometry have already yielded,

notably in astronomy, tangible and irrefutable results." (p. 35.)

Of the extraordinary character and contents of the Fourth Dimension we shall deal in our next.

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

"The Trial of Jesus."

No one who regularly reads our modern newspapers and journals can have failed to notice the desperate attempts made by their editors and contributors to save Christianity. Any number picked up at random will be found to contain some long and earnest article by a clerical or very religiously-minded gentleman full of pious platitudes, and at the same time begging the dear reader not to forget what our Saviour did for the world in the past, what he is doing now, and what—if He were only given the chance—He would do in the future for sinful humanity. But it must be complete surrender to the Saviour. It must be to Christ Jesus. Or it must be to the man Jesus Christ, so much greater than the Church. Of course the Church, rightly understood was Christ Jesus—and so on, yards of this dreadful piffle mixed up with pictures of our slums—"What would Jesus say if He saw our slums?"—and our poor—"would Jesus allow a single man in the whole world to be poor?"—and our unemployed—"Would not the Great Heart of Jesus break if he contemplated our unemployed?"

Now for those people who are comforted by this kind of thing, who find their spiritual sustenance in imbibing columns of it, I am not writing. Not for worlds do I wish to destroy a very sincere faith which finds its happiness in Christ Jesus here and now, and hopes to find it in his bosom in the hereafter. I have come across crowds of these people, and I am quite sure there are millions of them. But I do wish to say I am by no means certain of the sincerity either of those writers who are so full of the Saviour or the editors who are so anxious to bring the great message to their readers. I simply find it hard to believe, in these days of science and history, that the average well-educated man or woman can be persuaded to believe in the truth of the Grand Old Story. Does one well known paper honestly imagine it can get readers to believe that prayers are answered merely because some writers say they are? That prayer will pay rent and grocery bills? And if prayer cannot be used for purely material ends, what in the name of all that's holy should it be used for? "Spiritual" blessings? Good Lord!

I write this preamble as a sort of preface to three articles by a great lawyer, who, with his trained legal mind, has embodied in them his views on the "Trial of Jesus Christ," in some recent numbers of *John O'London's Weekly*. I read them with profound astonishment—and let me say, amusement. Here is Lord Shaw of Dumferline, a Solicitor-General, a Lord Advocate, a Lord of Appeal, writing columns of childish comments on a purely imaginary trial for which there is not a shred of evidence in existence, and he can only do so because he sees how the better-informed people in this sceptical age are not merely slipping away from Christianity, but from *Jesus*. Let me only, he cries, bring back the world to see our Lord in His Agony in His Blessed Martyrdom, and perhaps all will be well again with God and His Own Religion. The picture of Jesus on the Cross has been of incalculable benefit to the Church. She has never ceased exploiting it, and while she could make the people see it only as depicted with

such realism as was shown by medieval artists, she could arouse any passion in her favour. But nowadays people prefer reading the *evidence* for the case, and it is obvious, the more they read the less they believe. That is why so many lawyers enter the field for Jesu's sake, and also explains Lord Shaw's articles.

This is how the great legal mind commences his thesis:—

It is assumed, *of course*, that the record is a *real and historical* record made by *four different sacred* writers, who *were contemporaries* of Christ; and, further, that the references by *others* to the events and their immediate and striking sequences are *real and historical* references. Vehement assertions were *at one time* made to the contrary. They went to the length of pleading, for example, with regard to Tacitus, not only that the passage as to Christ's execution under Pontius Pilate was an interpolation, but even of claiming that the whole *annals* of Tacitus were not the work of that great author, but of an Italian named Poggio Bracciolini! [*Italics mine.*]

Read this delightful passage over again. What scholarship, what knowledge! You have not here the vapourings of a Christian Evidence lecturer, but the reasoning, cool, calm and thoroughly impartial, of a great lawyer. We poor laymen sit at the learned one's feet. We look up on high from far below. We want to learn something about the trial of Jesus, and we are told with all the authority of General Booth, or the Pope, or the average Seventh Adventist, or Mrs. MacPherson, that the four "different" sacred writers were contemporaries of Jesus, and their accounts are "assumed" to be not merely "real," but "historical." Here I get puzzled. If something is "historical" only, is it "real"? Or can a "real" incident not be "historical"? Then again if you get "four" writers, must they be necessarily "different," or can they perchance be all the same? I am asking for information. But, you will ask me, what about the writers being "sacred"? There you have me stumped. If the writers are "assumed" to be "sacred" (which, in Lord Shaw's case, means they *are* sacred) then their accounts must be true, and therefore, what in the world is the noble Lord trying to do? We can read all about the trial in the official documents, which, coming from "sacred" writers, surely must be entirely true. Does the great Lord of Appeal mean to infer that we poor puny mortals, who ought to be convinced by the records, are not convinced, and our wavering faith requires his magnificent advocacy to annihilate our approaching scepticism? That the "sacred" records, so holy and pure, are (between me and Lord Shaw) not quite—well, let us say, *emphatic* enough? Then look at that delightful piece of ironical humour, that sly dig at poor old Poggio, and those who, "at one time," actually believed that "the whole annals" (complete even to the small "a") of Tacitus were a rank forgery! I like the "at one time." It reminds me of the way in which our "leading" scientists were "at one time" all materialists. Now, bless your heart, we know they are, if not exactly believing Christians, getting on that way, for, of course, materialism is quite "exploded." Lord Shaw does not intend to stand alone either. The Trial of Jesus formed the work of another writer, Mr. Taylor-Innes, who, forty years ago, went into the question very thoroughly. So whenever Lord Shaw wants to emphasize a point, he more or less refers you to Mr. Innes, and quite rightly. And I have no doubt, Mr. Innes refers you to other works to prove what has already been so beautifully proved by four sacred—and different—writers, nearly 2,000 years ago. Alas, that erring

mankind should be so obstinate as to require still more proof.

Lord Shaw indulges in quite long disquisitions on the Sanhedrin, on Roman Law, what Pilate thought about, what the mob did—and didn't—in fact, looking through the sacred writers' own accounts, I begin to wonder where he got it all from. Mind you, I do not say that Lord Shaw has not read all about the Sanhedrin in the original Talmud, and all about Roman Law in the original Latin, but I have, as Burns would say, my doubts. Perhaps he got it all from Mr. Taylor-Innes, who either read it up in the original, or got it from somebody else. But I am certain of two things, quite certain indeed. Lord Shaw has convinced all those who believe already, and has not convinced a single sceptic who had any doubts whatever. And I congratulate him.

As for his own arguments, they are not worth the paper they are written on. They do not meet a single argument against the trial. The four "sacred" accounts themselves are packed with contradictions, absurdities and nonsense. Commentators have exhausted themselves in attempts to reconcile the statements, and all have signally failed. Lord Shaw would not dare to attempt to *prove* the four "different" accounts are historical. He is not equipped for the task, and that is the truth of the whole matter.

The Editor of *John O'London's Weekly* received many replies, some enthusiastically praising the articles (one of which he reproduces) and many against them. Needless to say all discussion is barred. What would you have? Dare a single journal but this, and one other, in the whole country raise a discussion, not on the non-historicity of Jesus himself, but on his trial? I doubt it. It would kill the paper. But if Lord Shaw's attempt is the best that can be done by a trained legal advocate, who is also a thorough believer, then all I can conclude with is, "God help Christianity!"

H. CUTNER.

Drama and Dramatists.

By arrangement with Mr. Robert Loraine, Komisarjevsky, the famous Russian producer, presented "The Brass Paperweight," at the Apollo Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue. It is explicitly stated that the story of this play was taken from *The Brothers Karamazov*, but it is not intended to be a representation of the novel. It has a happy ending, and if it is remembered rightly, Mr. Edward Shanks made the remark somewhere that we are accustomed to think of Russian authors as spending most of their time brooding on Uncle Ivan strangling himself behind the clothes press. Dostoevsky, in our opinion, spent a lot of time in creating problems for himself, and passing them on to the reader for solution—if the reader accepts them. He had an intense preoccupation with the "soul," which is like looking for a needle in a haystack without any proof that it has been put there. Mr. J. Middleton Murry, with possibly better information than most of us, states in his book that this Russian "loved Christ, indeed, as few men have loved him." That he was a powerful author none will dispute, and as he wrote many volumes, the chances were that he would say something to make his labour worth while. That his excessive love for Christ did not make him a reasonable citizen of the world is one of those paradoxes that sets one thinking about the difference between the writer's word and the actual life of the writer.

The story of *The Brothers Karamazov* is perhaps too well known for any elaboration. Simon Romanov is murdered; he is found in his bedroom with his head battered in. His spendthrift son, Dmitry, is suspected and the plot in this play holds attention to the end. Simon Romanov, as an unbeliever, is made a repulsive character; the murderer is an Atheist who hangs him-

self, and the play concludes with the usual thanks to the Almighty for having, through a murder and a suicide, brought happiness to an epileptic and a girl who is in various states of mind over her matrimonial prospects. The insufferable conceit of those who claim special favour in a world of millions of inhabitants is unequalled in its childishness. Unequalled we say—perhaps we are wrong; it is equalled by the malignancy of treatment for the murderer and the suicide.

What then, shall be our estimate of the writer Dostoevsky? There is voluminous work on his art, on his life, his opinions. His personal life is one long story of conflict; like Gorky, he did not come into the world to comply with it. At one time, Dostoevsky was found guilty "of having taken part in criminal plans, of having circulated the letter of Belinsky (to Gogol) full of insolent expressions against the Orthodox Church and the Supreme Power." . . . For this he was sentenced to eight years penal servitude—subsequently commuted to four years. From 1850 to 1854 he served his term in Omsk convict prison. And in that world alone he must have seen much that could not be reconciled with Divine or human justice. As Mirsky states in *A History of Russian Literature*, "his Christianity in particular is of a very doubtful kind," and later on Mirsky concludes: "the real Dostoevsky is food that is easily assimilated only by a profoundly diseased spiritual organism." This is not very illuminating; like Byron, we should require an explanation of the explanation. A "spiritual organism" must fall in the same category as a blue moon.

In looking over some letters from Tolstoy (1880) to A. N. Strakhov, the latter gives us his opinion: "I cannot consider Dostoevsky either a good man or a happy man. He was spiteful, envious, lewd, and all his life he spent in such agitations as would have made him pitiable." Strakhov also recounts how Dostoevsky, the preacher of humility, in Switzerland, harassed a waiter to distraction. He also gives an account of unsavoury details in the author's life, and Tolstoy in reply to Strakhov writes "Turgenev will outlive Dostoevsky, and not for his artistry, but because he was without a kink." In a letter from Dostoevsky to N. A. Ljubimov, associate editor of the *Russky Vestnik*, he writes: "I will compel people to admit that a pure, ideal Christian is not an abstraction." There is the saving grace recalled by his statement that all men do not think alike; there is also the lurking suggestion of the St. Augustine madness of compelling them to come in.

In *The Idiot* there is a record of Mahomet's epilepsy, and, looking with provisional sympathy on Dostoevsky's period, perhaps the times helped to produce the man; the author was subject to fits, and when it is remembered that people are still alive who remember occasions in the late Czar's reign, when carriages were driven over the bodies of drunken peasants lying in the road, Russia would not be exactly a paradise in Dostoevsky's time.

From a review of a book recently published, *The Diary of Dostoevsky's Wife*, another phase of the author's life is revealed as a gambler, and, as there is no wish to create a problem and pass it on to readers of this journal, we will record one of his sayings, probably not given in the above expensive book. He wrote: "It is not a vain dream that man shall come to find his joys only in acts of enlightenment and mercy," but, in a world where common sense is almost suspect, the practice of this needs "happy moments for such skill."

To revert to the play "The Brass Paperweight," which has now terminated a short run, it provides a stimulant to the intellect. This is sufficient to provoke curiosity as to why it came to be written, and the compensation for such trouble in research is always useful. Dostoevsky, a descendant of a priestly family, entangled himself with theological metaphysics; there are other entanglements such as getting a quart into a pint pot, and *le dernier cri* how to fit a left-handed glove on the right hand. If one forgets half of his adjustment to the physical world, one will probably try, but Dostoevsky follows faithfully in the line of epileptics, noticeable in commanding figures in the world. As Mr. Chapman Cohen so carefully proves in his *Religion and Sex*: "Of all nervous diseases that of epilepsy appears to have

been most favourable to the encouragement of a belief in spiritual agency." Hail then to the *best* that the giants in literature can give us, and farewell to that which is, like a pearl in the oyster, a disease, for it is definitely diagnosed, and only one with the misfortune to have a journalistic mind would ever dream of a reconciliation between science and religion.

Mr. Komisarjevsky is to be thanked for his production and the popular novel climax, but, in whatever form Dostoevsky is presented to the English public, he does not completely fit—for many plain and obscure reasons. If we are to learn from Russia the novels of Gorky could be used to advantage. They are all written without an obsession, would spring into life on the stage, and their commonsense knocks on the forehead of the reader. Perhaps that is the reason why he is neglected.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Acid Drops.

Bishop Barnes says that the Bishop of London confessed to him that he could not understand anything about electricity, and that he thought an electron was something between a tadpole and a noise. Well, but why should the Bishop of London understand anything about these things? It is quite clear that the Bishop of London was never appointed because he knew much or understood anything. He was appointed to tell us all about God and the Soul, and the next world, and the less a man knows generally, the better able he is to tell us about these things. We consider the Bishop of London admirably fitted for his post. He is never likely to upset things. A man like Bishop Barnes is quite unfitted for his post. He is a positive danger to true religion. If "Our Lord" came to-morrow he would certainly find himself more at home with the ignorance of Bishop Ingram than with the learning of Bishop Barnes.

Now the Courts have declared the football competitions to be illegal, the *Daily Express* congratulates itself on having vindicated the honour and dignity of British journalism. What colossal humbug! The *Daily Express* was not in the least concerned about the honour of British journalism, all that it troubled about was the fact that the inflated circulation of the "coupon press" gave it an unfair advantage with the advertisers, and so tended to check its own advertising revenue. And what difference—moral difference—is there between running a football competition and engineering any kind of a "stunt" that will attract buyers, or lavishly advertising insurance schemes to the same end? The aim of it all is advertising revenue. And the motive of the dislike to the competitions is that it gives certain papers an advantage in angling for the big drapers and the like. What would happen if Lord Beaverbrook made up his mind to run a really honest newspaper, avoiding all "stunts" and giving all opinions a fair hearing and a reporting proportionate to the public they commanded? The *Daily Express* is never likely to discover this because it is never likely to test the question. But the honour and dignity of British journalism! Well, well, there is, of course, a maxim which says there is honour among thieves.

The Bishop of Ripon, speaking at York Minster recently, urged that a more Christian attitude should be adopted towards the Jews. "We must win back the right to preach Christianity to the Jews by practising it towards them." The Jews will not be exactly grateful for the Bishop's kind thought. The remembrance of nineteen centuries of Christian practice of Christianity towards them is not a very joyful one.

Money is neither to be worshipped nor wasted, says the Rev. Dr. Richard Roberts, "It is the gift of God for reasonable human use, it is also something to worship God with." As regards wasting money, a parson is the last man who should speak of that. The business of worshipping God is a very costly and wasteful practice. Millions of pounds are spent on building and maintaining churches and paying parsons. We feel sure

an economical God doesn't desire that, while money is so badly needed for more useful purposes.

The chief objects of the Girls' Life Brigade are, according to advertisements, to keep the older girls from drifting away from Sunday School and Bible Class, and from the Church altogether. Two aims of the Brigade are to influence the girls to the service of God, and to keep the girls in touch with the Church. A third aim is to develop the use of body and mind. The Generals and Colonels of the Brigade had better be very careful about the mind-developing business. Mind development has been known to cause clients to leave the Church and have done with the service of God. Therefore, let the mind-training be confined to memorizing the Antediluvian Creed.

The Bishop of Chelmsford: "An oyster gets into trouble if it opens its mouth. Often a bishop does the same." The moral would appear to be—oyster intelligences should keep their mouths shut.

Says the President of the Astronomical Society: "Jupiter seems to have been grossly behaving himself." Men of science should call a spade a spade. Instead of "Jupiter," why not say "God"? Then Christians would know what or whom to praise or blame.

Let us so play that we work better, says Prof. Ernest Barker. By all means. But, according to the bigots, we should beware of playing on the Sabbath; whether we work better for it, doesn't matter. The jealous God of the Christians ordains only one pastime for Sunday—praying and hymn-singing. And awful will be the punishment of the nation that neglects it. Thus saith the Lord!

The Church has still a few giant intellects. One such, whose brain is obviously bursting with big ideas, tells the world that if the flow of young men to Canada is not met with a corresponding flow of girls, Canada will become a nation of men seeking wives. Thus, Bishop Roper of Ottawa. After this, who dare question the divine right of a bishop to be one of the country's legislators?

From the *Christian Herald*:—

At the request of the "Anti-God Society," the Central Council of the Soviet Trade Unions, in Russia, has instructed all branches throughout the Soviet Union to forbid active participation in any religious service by trade unionists. (See Rev. xiii. 11 to 16).

The Bishop of London recently attended a celebration at a Church of England school in North-West London. A photo in a daily paper shows the headmistress grovelling before the Bishop—anyway, she has one knee on the ground, and appears about to kiss his reverend paw. We wonder what the women who advocate sex equality think about such antics. They might make a note of the fact that the priest is the only male who accepts the subjection of women as a matter of course, and he does so because he has Biblical warrant for it.

Over 13,000 summonses for noisy motor-cycles have been issued in the past twelve months. Meanwhile, those holy noise makers, Salvation Army bands, are still permitted to make themselves a nuisance to quiet-loving people. One of the greatest inventions of this age would be a God who hated brassy music.

Some huntsmen have deplored the injury done to hounds by tins and broken bottles thrown in a river. These men are much concerned about injury done to their own animals, but they never express any regret for the pain they inflict upon the animals they chase.

At a Grafton Hunt dinner the Rev. H. S. Vinning said, "If I had never been a parson, I should like to have been a fox." One can appreciate the wisdom of the Lord in making Mr. Vinning what he is. He has the right kind of intelligence for the job of Chaplain to a Hunt.

Wigan Town Council intends to banish war ideas from its school literature. The Council's first move should surely be to cast out the Old Testament. It is full of war ideas and blood-thirsty tales of battle and slaughter, which are especially harmful to the young mind because the incidents recorded are declared to have had God's approval. From reading these repulsive chronicles, the young intelligence gets the notion that if war was acceptable to God in ancient days, it is as acceptable now and morally justifiable. The Council's purging process should begin with Holy Writ.

According to the Bishop of Blackburn, one of the main causes of church decline is the inadequate intellectual alertness of many clergymen. There is truth in that. But not much in what the Bishop implies—that in the past, intellectual alertness was common among the clergy. As for the decline of church patronage, another main cause is the greater mental alertness of many of the congregation. The Church's mummified meat doesn't appeal to them nowadays. They have acquired a taste for something fresher and more wholesome.

Little Rock, Arkansas, U.S.A., has distinguished itself. By the Anti-Evolution law, the use of *Webster's Dictionary*, which is the American national dictionary, is banished from all public libraries and other institutions. It describes evolution as "The theory, which involves also the descent of man from the lower animals, is based on facts abundantly disclosed by every branch of biological study." Little Rock is on the Lord's side.

Mr. Robert Blatchford says: "The journalist is the tribune of the people and the repository of the national common-sense." Once upon a time Mr. Blatchford was an optimist.

A change of government has taken place in Rumania. The National Peasant Party, which represents more sections of the nation than its name might suggest, has come into power. This Party is pledged, among other things, to abolish all restraints on personal liberty, and to make the expression of personal opinion, either in the Press or at elections, as free as possible.

After the wail about the shortage of candidates for holy orders, comes the Methodist lamentation about the shortage of local preachers, and the low standard of what local preachers there are. Moreover, the educated young men and women are not offering themselves for the job of parson's lackey. That's the worst of education, it does tend to develop intelligence. As a cure for the Methodist trouble, what about a neat little prayer, sent up in bulk, requesting the good Lord to reduce the intelligence of young Methodists to the level of their eighteenth century forebears?

Our grave contemporary, the *Christian Herald*, records the fact that a recent mission in Durham, lasting a month, achieved a number of conversions. This means, as is usual with such missions, that some convinced Christians came forward to testify that they had just been converted. Hallelujah! Considering the number of missions taking place everywhere and throughout the year, and also noting they are all successful, one cannot help wondering why church congregations get no larger, and how it is that there are so many unbelievers in the land that daily papers feel compelled to give the parsons a hand.

The Rev. H. C. Carter, of Cambridge, is glad to note that the old doctrine of human depravity, which coloured so much of the dealings with the young two generations ago, has lost its hold over Sunday School teachers to-day. We, too, are glad; for the effects of that doctrine in social affairs—especially in education and prison treatment—were viciously far-reaching. It is as well to remind the rev. gentleman, however, that the inspired Word of God continues to affirm the evil doctrine, and that therefore this must remain a part of the Christian religion for all time. Moreover, the "glad tidings" of the New Testament has no meaning without it.

The Rev. W. F. Geikie-Cobb calls judicial separation a "no man's land of marriage," a halfway state which forbids an open and honourable life, and forces decent men and women into bigamy, concubinage, and even prostitution. He adds:—

Except for the State of South Carolina, in which divorce is not recognized in any circumstances whatever, England in the matter of marriage reform lags behind every other country in the world.

Perhaps there may be some chance of getting this evil state of affairs altered now. For, in the past, opposition to easier and cheaper divorce has invariably been religious opposition. The miseries of judicial separation are Church created miseries. When easier divorce is being advocated by a parson, one must remind him that the pioneers in the advocacy were the despised and execrated Freethinkers.

It is reported in a newspaper that Mrs. Hinchcliffe has "in a very wonderful way" been able to find her husband who was lost at sea in an aeroplane. She is entitled to her consolation in this, but it may be pushed too far. If means are known of finding dead people they will seriously interfere with established interests; clergymen and the whole army of sorrow exploiters will be out of work.

Discipline at Harrow School is to be tightened up. When answering names, the boys must salute, and behaviour must be as smart as at an O.T.C. parade. It is assumed therefore that a military standard at the seat of learning is better than nothing at all. We all know where the Battle of Waterloo was won in spite of Bill Adams' version; perhaps Harrow is to have a similar honour in the next mess.

Another menace to the churches has arisen. This time it is the *Daily Mail's* publication on the advantages to trade of Sunday night Shop-Gazing. Remarkable on the views of a shopkeeper the *Daily Mail* states:—

Since more people go for a leisurely stroll in the West End, with time on their hands to spare, on Sunday evening than on any other evening in the week he was probably right.

A lyrical reviewer of Mr. Edward Grubb's book *Christianity as Truth* has the right attitude for the job. Hear him:—

Through valleys of deep reasoning on the place of human sin, the difficulties of doctrine and the problem of evil, we are led at last to the hill-top of assurance—the turning of evil itself into good, which is the essence of the Christian faith.

That's the stuff to give 'em, as they say in the classics; it sounds like a voyage on an underground submarine.

The Rev. P. B. Clayton, in the absence of Dr. T. R. Glover, appears to be carrying on in the Saturday Pulpit of the *Daily News*. The commodity is still the same. The Rye Lifeboat disaster evokes the following:—

Such homes as these men came from constitute the wealth of the country, compared with which the fevered life of cities rings hollow and debased.

And a scanning of "Wills" will show where much cash is left by the reverend fraternity. Can these people ever say the right thing if they tried?

For the production of a play in a house that was not licensed, the Rector of All Saint's Church, Manchester, the Rev. Etienne Watts has received a summons from the police. The play was produced in his church with the Bishop's consent, but apparently the authorities in their action are not giving any preference to the Church in such matters.

The vocation of marriage, says Prof. O. A. Wheeler, requires qualities of heart, mind, and character far greater than those required for any other profession. Pious people who endorse St. Paul's inspired statements as to why marriage was ordained for man, will suspect the Professor of "leg-pulling."

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.

S. B. SAVILL.—Thanks for letter. We did not keep all the cards and letters, but the number given, even the large one, is quite an under-estimate. And to those we received, one must add the number received by the R.P.A., which followed our lead in inviting Freethinkers to protest against the action of the B.B.C.

A. COLEMAN.—Capital! *Punch* is to be congratulated. Will make use of the article next week. No space in this issue.

J. F. HAMPSON.—We agree with you that Bolton Branch of the I.L.P. must feel rather poorly when it has to sing hymns to their "Heavenly Father" for help in their work. But we assume that it is just a sprat to catch the mackerel of a vote.

H. ELLIOT.—Thanks for letter. If you refer to "Sugar Plums," you will see how much dependence may be placed on either the fairness or the truthfulness of the B.B.C. where Christianity is concerned. It has made itself an agency for Christian propaganda. All the same we hope that all Freethinkers will keep up the bombardment. The religious hide of the B.B.C. is very thick, but continuous battering may take an impression.

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.

To-day (December 2), Mr. Cohen will lecture, in the afternoon at 3.0, and in the evening at 7.0, in the Co-operative Hall, Whitehall Road, Gateshead-on-Tyne. It is a long time since Mr. Cohen lectured at either Gateshead or Newcastle, and he hopes to meet a good many of his old friends there. There will be, we expect, a number of friends from the nearby towns. There will be music before each lecture, and tea will be provided for visitors from a distance.

Next Sunday (December 9), Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Town Hall, Stratford. His subject will be "What are we Fighting For?" and we think we may say that it will be a lecture that will interest not merely Freethinkers, but also others. Stratford Town Hall is in Stratford Broadway, and can be reached easily by bus, tram, or train from any part of London. A quantity of slips advertising the lecture have been printed, and we should be obliged if those who do not mind doing a little work in distributing will write or call for a quantity. They might also help by making the meeting known among their friends. The Hall should be crowded.

Some time ago we called attention to a statement made by the Rev. H. R. L. Sheppard in the *B.B.C. Handbook* for 1929, to the effect that in spite of the efforts made by this journal not more than twenty letters were received protesting against Sunday broadcast religious Services. One of our readers has taken up the matter, and Mr. Sheppard has confessed that the twenty should be 200. His excuse is that he took the figures from a memorandum given him by the B.B.C., and at the time the memorandum was taken, not more than the twenty had been received. We say quite frankly that in this matter we decline to trust the B.B.C. To our knowledge more than 200 were sent in, and the proof that the B.B.C. was not giving the truth to Mr. Sheppard is that to our own knowledge letters have been flowing into the B.B.C. for the past two or three years from all over the country, and more than the larger figure mentioned must have been received before we invited our readers to send a united protest. In this matter the B.B.C. has played a quite dishonourable part. It converted itself into an agency for Christian propaganda, and then adopted the usual methods of Christian propagandists where non-

Christians were concerned. If the B.B.C. would promise a modification of its religious policy if enough letters were received, we would promise them a couple of thousand in the next week or two, and every address could be verified.

Mr. Cohen concluded his series of lectures at Leicester on Sunday last, and it was gratifying to note that, in spite of the inclement weather, the audience was in point of numbers up to the excellent level of the previous ones, and actually an improvement on the first of the course. The interest of those present was also very gratifying to all concerned. Mr. Gimson occupied the chair, as he did on the other occasions of the previous lectures. Mr. Gimson has for very many years been a prime mover in Freethought in Leicester, and we were pleased to note that he is looking hale and hearty. Leicester Freethought without a Gimson would strike one as very strange and unusual.

Mr. Cohen has also undertaken to issue his four lectures just concluded at Leicester. The four lectures will cover about 100 pages, and will be issued, probably at the price of 1s. As Mr. Cohen does not write his lectures, it will mean writing the book from the few notes he used while lecturing. All the same it will be a fairly faithful report of what was said, and he hopes to get the book out by the end of the year.

The lecturer to-day (December 2) at Leicester, is Mr. Williamson, a newcomer to the ranks of Freethought writers, but whose recently published book should serve as an excellent introduction to the platform.

Freethought has a very sturdy and a very able defender in Wolverhampton in the person of Mr. W. Pratt. And, fortunately, Wolverhampton boasts a really liberal paper in the *Express and Star*. The combination of the two has resulted in some very good and some very plain spoken letters from Mr. Pratt, and which have in turn led to a lengthy correspondence. We congratulate Mr. Pratt on his letters, and the editor of the paper on his liberality in publishing both sides, and behaving with strict impartiality. Of course, this is no more than the editor of a paper ought to do, but there are so few of them do it.

Vol. 3 of Mr. Cohen's *Essays in Freethinking* is now on sale. The price of the volume is 2s. 6d. (by post 2s. 9d.), or the three volumes post free for 7s. 6d. The essays deal with a variety of topics, and the volume contains some of the best writings of the author.

The Annual Dinner of the N.S.S. will take place this year on January 19. The place of meeting will be, as before, the Midland Grand Hotel, St. Pancras. The price of the tickets will be 8s. We hope that London and provincial Freethinkers will make a note of the date. We are expecting a good muster this year of provincial friends who can all avail themselves of a week-end ticket.

On December 6, Mr. G. Whitehead will debate with the Rev. J. Hall, in the Central Hall, Swansea, on "Can the Teachings Attributed to Jesus be Accepted as a Rule of Conduct?" We hope the debate will be well attended.

Although this paper is dated for Sunday, it is in the hands of its London readers, at least, in time for them to make use of the announcement that the West Ham Branch is holding its "Social" on Saturday, December 1, at Earlham Hall, Forest Gate, E. There will be the usual, games, dances, etc., and admission is free. All Freethinkers and their friends are heartily welcome. The function will commence at 7 p.m.

The speaker to-day (December 2), at the North London Branch of the N.S.S., St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., is Mr. F. Mann. His subject will be, "Oliver St. John, Freethinker." North London friends will please note.

The Voice of Authority: Its Genesis, Power, and Effect.

COMMUNICATED knowledge is the offspring of self-consciousness and the power of speech; but as self-consciousness is the basis of all things human, I will assume that fundamental awakening, and say that communicated knowledge is the characteristic outcome of human speech; and is, in consequence, as semi-artificial as speech itself. Language is natural to the extent that there is a speech centre in the brain without which it would be impossible to acquire it. But it is artificial in so far as you have to be taught to acquire it; and to realize the extent of its artificiality one has only to bear in mind that the language you do acquire depends on where and when you are born, as there are always as many languages or dialects as there are distinct peoples on the face of the earth, which, moreover, change with time.

Speech, in the first place, acts as a receptacle of knowledge; with the aid of memory it stores it within the individual as a cup or a pail holds liquid. But it also plays the part of a spout by which this stored knowledge can be conveyed from one human vessel to another. In virtue of this double capacity of speech, the experience of the community becomes potentially the experience of each one, and teaching or pedagogy is the name given to the process of transferring it. The invention of writing and, above all, that of printing provided a reservoir, more or less permanent, for overflows from individual human vessels. These written or printed accumulations are known in the mass as literature.

Now, communicated knowledge or learning has an attribute peculiar to itself: it may be *true or false*. Truth or falsity is an inseparable characteristic of all that is conveyed to us through the channel of speech.

Illusions galore obtain in the sub-human world: the lion sees his image in the pool as he takes his drink and pussy sees another pussy in the mirror. Indeed mimicry has played a big rôle in the evolution of animal forms. These are mere errors due to resemblance and differ *toto calo* from falsities—myths, legends, miracles, and dogmas—implanted as eternal verities by the voice of authority in a self-conscious mind. It should be observed that there are two orders of authorities which implant alleged truths in the human mind.

1. The authority that ultimately rests upon the testimony of the senses or upon the verdict of the reason based thereon. All scientific testimony is of this kind. What scientists declare to be true must be verifiable, that is, susceptible to be checked at any time by any competent person. With that order of authority we are not concerned in this article.

2. In the realm of religion, on the other hand, the voice of authority derives its power of engendering belief from the presumptive claim that the message it delivers is "the word of God."

It is meet therefore, to inquire into the credentials of this claim. It rests solely and absolutely on *tradition*—that in the long ago someone had or claimed to have had an interview with God; or had had a vision in which God had spoken to him—a claim that found expression among the Hebrews in the famous proclamation of the prophets, "The word of the Lord came unto me saying." When such a claim is genuine it indicates a state of neuropathy. Such neuropaths have never been lacking in any human community the world over, and their activities have greatly and gravely affected the destiny of mankind, for every religion that ever flourished had its birth and being in such neuropathy.

It is imperative for the priesthood at all times to uphold such traditions whatever obscurity shrouds their origin, for its very vocation is based on it. If the tradition is allowed to go, the very foundation of their temple vanishes. In the absence of any possible evidence to support it they declare the tradition sacred. This priestly device takes the place of proof. The only way that myths, legends, and the miracle wrought by magic can be made credible, is by sanctifying them.

Now, in the case of a new cult this process of sanctification is not an easy or a peaceful task, as the establishment of Christianity and Islam abundantly proves. The difficulty arises from the fact that you are dealing not with the child's mind, but with that of the adult in whom the faculty of reason is developed and, to some extent at least, functioning. A brief glance at Christian origins will make this clear.

Had the Christian contention a scintilla of truth in it—*viz.*, that Jesus of Nazareth was verily a God incarnate, there should be no difficulty whatsoever in proclaiming a message or propounding a creed that would obviously, in very truth, be "the Word of God."

If such a stupendous miracle as the virgin birth could be performed in order to bring about this incarnation, surely another miracle could be wrought, to leave a permanent, indestructible record of God's message to mankind; not only it "could," but it should have been made to prevent the first miracle from eventuating as a colossal fiasco.

Now, assuming for the sake of argument that about the beginning of our era a person who came to be known as Jesus of Nazareth flourished in Palestine—an assumption, however, that is fraught with gravest doubt.

Though Jesus had become incarnate for the express purpose of revealing God to mankind, there is not, according to the Gospel, a single sentence of a personal message left by him for the enlightenment and guidance of the race.

What is more unaccountable still is the fact that he did not even associate himself with those who could take down at least a parchment record of his messages—*viz.*, the Scribes and the Rabbis. Indeed, he kept himself aloof from these, and associated himself with the most illiterate in the land—the fishermen who plied their trade on the lake of Galilee. To crown this fiasco, his life is virtually a complete *blank* till he is twenty-nine years old. And of the twenty months or so—the length of his recorded "life"—no sort of record was made for at least two or three generations after the time he is supposed to have lived.

What then of the record; does it bear the hall-mark of being "the Word of God"? If so, God's mentality is on a level with that of primitive and uncivilized man. This record is replete with the crassest ignorance and superstition of the age!

Its cosmology, its history, its anthropology, and its eschatology (the doctrine of what was awaiting man after death) was stamped with primitive and barbaric ignorance. Every myth and dogma is derived from pagan cults. Even its ethics is a mixture of sane and insane maxims. The sane ones had been proclaimed from time immemorial by moralists all over the world, and couched in language free from hyperbolic extravagance. His so-called life is a heterogeneous medley of tales, legends, and miracles of medicine-man order without a trace of even a superman in either message or behaviour, let alone a God.

How was this composite medley of physical falsities and metaphysical absurdities to be made "acceptable as 'the Word of God' "? It was no easy task, but it was accomplished. To effect it, they had to

have recourse to a bizarre principle—the miraculous conductivity of personal contact. If two persons came into touch during their lives, divine inspiration or grace flowed from the one to the other, just as a current of electricity flows round the circuit if all the wires are in metallic touch. So this wonderful agency or law may be denoted as the "principle of contact." If tradition whispered, however indefinitely or hesitatingly, that the author of a script or document purporting to give a biographical sketch of the Founder of the cult to be a disciple of Jesus, or even if he bore the name of a reputed disciple, however fictitious, like that of the fourth Gospel, the document in question was declared *inspired*. Even a tradition of indirect contact, however tangential, was considered quite sufficient to establish the claim, as in the case of Mark and Luke.

In this way a selection was finally made from the multitude of scripts scattered around Asia Minor, giving a résumé of the legends that had gathered round the name of Jesus. Doubtless the selection was made on the ground of literary merit, and by the doctrines endorsed therein, but it was the principle of contact that made the collection an inspired New Testament—the Word of God.

Concurrently with the gestation and birth of the New Testament, the scattered communities of the new cult were in a like manner united and organized; and so a voice of authority, under the name of the Catholic Church, came into being. The flow of divine grace in the succession of priests is governed by the same principle of contact, as is evident from the ceremonial of "laying on of hands" implied in all grades of ecclesiastical succession, from the induction of a priest to the enthronement of an archbishop.

It must not, however, to be supposed that this double achievement was a peaceful victory. Far otherwise, it was a prolonged struggle—bitter, fierce, and often ending in bloody conflicts, after the manner of a civil war.

When by a majority vote or by force of arms these two—the credal doctrine and the personnel who were to function as the voice of authority—had been, more or less, settled, the mechanism of the cult was ready for use. Its application, however, was still far from being easy.

In order to create beliefs of a new order, the voice of authority needs something besides mere access to the child. It requires an atmosphere in which its dogmas are accepted by the adult population as axiomatic truths, never to be called in question. To evolve such an atmosphere would take several generations. It would not be attained until all the adults, in whom reason was awake and functioning, had died out. Not till then would the priest's voice be omnipotent. When that state is realized the voice of authority attains its maximum power. Henceforth, to perpetuate a creed is plain sailing. The voice has only to take what is accepted by all as eternal verities and to implant them in the child's mind where they will remain as absolute truths to the end of its life, be they infinitely grotesque and permeated with falsities and contradictions.

The characteristic of truth attached to these credal elements is as inseparable and persistent as the characteristics of a gramophone record. If it be a musical one, you can never detach from it its musical character. If it be an address delivered in French, to detach it from that language is obviously impossible. So is the attribute of truth of a religious doctrine.

This persistency is seen in the way pioneers of science acted when confronted with the discoveries of science. With but few exceptions, instead of espous-

ing the new truth and repudiating the religious myth or dogma with which it was in direct conflict, they almost invariably exhausted their ingenuity upon the task of trying to reconcile them and save the dogmas from being put down as falsities. A noted instance of this attitude and policy was made by the devout Hugh Miller in his efforts to reconcile Genesis with the facts of Geology, of which he was a famous pioneer. The mental effort of trying to prove the cosmology of the primitive savage to be "the Word of God" possibly affected his mind to such an extent as to drive him to commit suicide.

In conclusion, let me say that what is known as the Dark Ages, a period during which Christendom was swamped with grossest ignorance, was the direct outcome of sanctifying the false and the grotesque into "God's Word." Mentally it was a period of total eclipse. And what wonder: science was decried; wisdom insulted; ignorance and superstition enthroned; persons of judgment and learning eschewed and hated; while the paramount maxim of conduct was, "prove not; only believe and thy faith shall save thee." The mind was thus drugged into impotency and was kept in that state of coma for the best part of 1,000 years.

Since the advent of science this policy of sanctifying falsities into truths has been reversed. Civilization, in so far as it applies and builds upon scientific truth, just reverses the Christian practice, for it irresistibly tends to *de-sanctify* the sacred and holy—to secularize all social institutions and functions. No wonder the Roman Church is frantically distracted the world over, and that the Jesuits are moving hell and earth to retain its vulturous grip upon the child. Freethinkers should note this fact and act accordingly.

KERIDON.

Emile Zola.

I.—THE NOVELIST.

EMILE ZOLA, the great French novelist, was, as his name indicates, of Italian origin. His father was a native of Venice who, after serving for many years in the Italian army, settled at Marseilles and practised as a civil engineer. He had extensive plans for the improvement of the town and harbour, but these were constantly shelved by the authorities. After a time he quitted Marseilles for the old Provençal city of Aix, twenty miles inland, having observed how greatly this place suffered from a lack of water, and having far-seeing ideas for correcting the deficiency by means of a canal from the mountain gorges. In 1840, he repaired to Paris in connexion with a scheme for the fortification of that city, and it was there that Emile Zola was born the same year. His mother belonged to the great grain-producing plain of La Beauce, and this fact, together with his Paris nativity, made the novelist regard himself as a Frenchman. This, of course, he might well do in any case, in view of his contributions to French literature, and the fact that he was never able to speak Italian (paying but one visit to his father's country and that primarily for the purposes of his book, *Rome*).

In 1842 the Zola family removed to Aix, and it was in the old Romanic city that he grew to manhood. His father died in 1847, but despite the lawsuits that thereupon ensued to secure some monetary recognition of the Zola Canal operations, Emile was sent to the College of Aix. There he made good progress, but dwindling fortunes forced him to become a half-boarder, then an *extern*, and finally, in 1857, having reached the second class (French classification in this matter reversing our own) he was

obliged to relinquish his studies at the College altogether.

His mother had gone to Paris to press her legal claims, and thither Zola now followed her. At first the metropolis struck him as a horrible place, its gloom after the sunshine of Provence giving him his first dread of life. He never ceased to remember Aix, dreaming often of his youthful rambles in its picturesque environs, and later his innumerable impressions of the quaint cathedral and university city (which ardent readers of Scott will recall is described in *Anne of Geierstein*) came to be recorded in several of Zola's stories (in which Aix figures as Plassans).

His mother having been assisted by some friends, Zola was able to continue his studies, which he did at the Sorbonne. At the end of two years, as his mother's position was as precarious as ever, he decided to offer himself as a candidate for the degree of bachelor in sciences. Against all predictions of friends and professors, however, he was unsuccessful, passing with ease in the scientific subjects, but collapsing utterly in literature and modern languages! He determined to submit himself again, but at Marseilles this time. Here the defeat of the future man-of-letters was even more decisive, and this inability to secure the diploma necessary for regular employment threw him into straitened circumstances for many years.

Set-back after set-back followed, and in 1862 he was glad to accept a humble position in the establishment of the famous firm of Hachette, first as a packer of books. With the indefatigable industry that characterized his entire life he soon began to occupy his evenings by writing for a variety of newspapers. His first book, *Contes à Ninon*, also appeared in this period, and in 1865 he ceased his daily, systematic drudgery at Hachette's, where, in any case, the revolutionary nature of his writings made his position increasingly difficult, and plunged whole-heartedly into journalism. His first publications under this changed order were not conspicuously successful, and for a time his financial position was again a declining one.

Zola had made deep studies of Balzac and Flaubert, and their influence now began to make themselves felt. *Madame Bovary*, which on its appearance was regarded largely as a *succès de scandale*, profoundly stirred him—he felt that a literary revolution was at hand. It made apparent the struggle in himself between romanticism and realism, the former mode favoured by his southern temperament, and the latter by his inclination towards scientific pursuits. Balzac finally won him over to naturalism, as realism came to be called in its later stages. The repeated perusal of *La Comédie Humaine* gave him the idea of a series of novels leading skilfully one from the other; this was the genesis of his chief body of work, the celebrated Rougon-Macquart novels, by which Zola made himself the Balzac of the Second Empire.

So much preparation was demanded for his gigantic scheme, that for a number of years yet he remained in comparative obscurity. After the Franco-German war, however, Flaubert became one of his neighbours, and the two soon became the firmest of friends. In this way he became the intimate likewise of Flaubert's greatest friends, notably the brothers Goncourt, Alphonse Daudet, Ivan Tourgenieff and Guy de Maupassant, and it became their habit to meet at a monthly dinner held in different restaurants, as well as each Sunday evening at Flaubert's house. These dinners Flaubert named the dinners of "The Hissed Authors," on account of the opprobrium that had fallen on certain of their works. Zola continued to work steadily at his novel-series and though keen controversy surrounded the publi-

cation of each one of them, he continued to work on the lines he had marked out, undeterred by public opinion and organized campaigns of vilification.

In 1877 he settled at Médan, a village overlooking the Seine, and not far from the capital. Here he in turn gathered round him a group of young admirers, though he denied that it was ever his intention to effect their complete allegiance to his literary and social principles. His application to writing continued unflagging throughout the next twenty years, but he was still the victim of much wilful misunderstanding of his purpose and methods, which not all his repeated and emphatic denials of pornography could dispel. So relentless was the persecution that not even the official recognition, by the conferring of the Legion of Honour, of the absolute purity and worthiness of his motives caused it to abate appreciably. Yet this honour came after the publication of his most realistic work, *La Terre*. J.A.R.

(To be continued.)

A Heathen's Thoughts on Christianity.

(Continued from page 764.)

WHO WROTE THE BIBLE?

I VERILY believe that there are many Christians who imagine that the Bible was originally written in English. Indeed, I have met some who stared uncomprehendingly when I spoke of the Hebrew language. They did not seem to have the least idea as to what Hebrew might be, unless perhaps some kind of a drink, in view of the second syllable of the word! Greek also was something quite outside their ken as entirely incomprehensible and far-fetched. It is indeed the fact that the Christians, as a rule, know next to nothing of the book about which they have so much to say. I think that the majority of them have never even read it carefully through in the English translation. Or if they do, they have not the slightest idea as to what is meant by critical perusal. What they would dismiss as palpably absurd if read in another book, they pass over here as though it must be accepted without comment. It is difficult to know what to say in face of this owlish attitude.

The earliest manuscripts of the books of the Old Testament are written in the Hebrew language, with this difference, that it is unvocalized. That is to say, the words contain no vowels, and there is no punctuation. Moreover, the words are run into one another without divisions between them.

Imagine a long document, in a little known, "dead" language, with unfamiliar characters, containing idiomatic phrases, names, and so forth, relating to an unknown subject, or series of events, often obscure in its meaning, and we can get some idea of the difficulty confronting the translators. In addition to this the manuscripts are very old, frayed and faded. In many places it is quite impossible to decipher words, or even whole passages, so that these have to be guessed at with reference to the context. The presence of such gaps makes interpolation easy, and when the translators have "an axe to grind," or, in other words, a doctrine to justify, or a convenient prophecy to find, the opportunity thus afforded is too good to be missed.

The *Encyclopædia Biblica* states that Hebrew was impossible as a speech used daily. It could not be pronounced or spoken. Its meaning is often unintelligible. It is so complicated that passages may be translated in different ways. Scholars admit that hundreds of words and passages are capable of many meanings and renderings, and that there are hardly two of them who would translate half a dozen pre-

viously unseen verses alike. If the Hebrew language thus lends itself to various renderings, interpretations and contradictory translations, it is a most perfect instrument for the fraudulent practices of priestcraft.

The *Encyclopædia Biblica* is a standard work of reference, compiled and edited by Christian scholars. Most of them were clergymen, and all are recognized authorities. They tell the truth about the Bible, and it is deadly to the claims which even they make for it. It completely destroys the theory of verbal or any other kind of inspiration.

The *Encyclopædia* says: "By a comparison with the cognate languages, we frequently obtain nothing better than an interpretation which is barely possible." "The supposed marks of historical accuracy and dependence on authentic records are quite out of place in such a narrative as that of the Pentateuch, the substance of which is not historical but legendary. This legendary character is always manifest both in the form and in the character of the narrative," the "stories of the patriarchs and of Moses are just such as might have been gathered from tradition." The scholar "Noldeke followed Colenso . . . and determined the value and character of the priestly narrative by tracing all through it an artificial construction and a fictional character." "The fictitious character of the list (of names) plainly shows itself." "Some of the personages had no existence." "A considerable number of names in the Old Testament must be regarded as fictitious. Not to mention the lists of mythical patriarchs down to Abraham, who are perhaps, in some cases, of non-Hebrew origin, we meet various names which were invented in order to fill gaps in genealogies and the like. Such names appear in the middle books of the Pentateuch, and are particularly numerous in Chronicles."

Are these facts, and those which I shall give presently, known to the majority of Christians? They certainly are not. On one occasion, I was "cornered" in a railway train in India by two missionaries. I knew what that would mean, but there was no immediate chance of escape! Usually I avoid discussion of these matters with professional exponents of Christianity. I know from observation, and also from personal experience, how bitterly vindictive they can be, given the opportunity. The will to persecute is just as strong in them as ever it was, and they exert it whenever they get the chance!

I set forth some such opinions as I am writing here. I was met by a blank denial of these facts, acknowledged as such by competent authorities, and I was told that all those *Christian* scholars who are honest enough to admit the truth, and myself with them, were candidates for hell-fire! At the next station I escaped and took refuge in another carriage. The only conclusion that I could come to was that these missionaries were either very ignorant or very dishonest. These are the kind of people who are allowed to go about in heathen countries, insulting everyone who prefers to keep to his own religion, who does not desire to interfere with theirs, and who ventures to disagree with them and tell them what their own scholars have admitted. Is it surprising that there are feelings of antagonism aroused among the heathen? Such missionaries are not permitted to enter Nepal or Tibet proper. It is to be regretted that they cannot be kept out of other countries. There would be less ill-feeling if they were.

Who wrote the books of the Old Testament, and when? No one knows. It is, at any rate, perfectly certain that the authors were not those whose names appear as such.

E. UPASAKA.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

"THE MEANING OF LIFE."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Being a convinced Materialist, and having just read Mr. Joad's little book on *The Meaning of Life*, it will hardly be surprising if I confess to a friendly but none the less spirited desire to do battle with him.

"Proceeding on these assumptions" (*i.e.*, that mental events proceed from material stimuli), he says, "let us consider the case of foresight or expectation. I am sitting in my chair after dinner and thinking, let us say, of a lecture I am to give next week. The thought of it makes me feel nervous and apprehensive . . . Here, then, are bodily events which, to a common-sense view would appear to be caused by a mental event. We think . . . of next week's lecture, and the thought makes us feel nervous."

Mr. Joad then goes on to ask: "What, then, is the stimulus here?" and proceeds by way of answer to remark: "Clearly it must be a material stimulus, since, on the view we are considering, matter alone exists; and clearly also it must be happening in the present, since the body cannot be influenced by what happens in the future." No, but one may venture the suggestion that the body can be influenced by a reference, mentally, to what has happened in the past. But Mr. Joad will not have it so. For he continues, as if impelled by the edict, "Look not behind thee . . .": "The only external stimulus of which I am aware is the pressure of the chair against my back and legs."

Mr. Joad, in projecting his mind into the future and letting it remain there, reminds me of an old soldier acquaintance of mine during the war who, when preparing for parade, cleaned and polished only those parts of his boots which were directly visible from a frontal inspection. On drawing his attention to this fact he coolly remarked, "A good soldier never looks behind."

But had Mr. Joad, after projecting his mind into the future, allowed it a look into the past, he would, I feel sure, have found that the anticipated lectures constituted at least one of the factors of causation. And it may be stated here that the reason why a Materialist will consider Mr. Joad's exposition of the case as untenable is simply because he fails to carry the analysis even to a reasonably satisfactory decimal point. By restricting himself to the thought of the anticipated lecture he has, to complete the simile, merely proceeded to the insertion of the decimal and then resolutely declined to go further. But this obviously will not do. If the correct answer is to be found, the decimal points must be inserted.

Mr. Joad, when envisaging the anticipated lecture, confesses to a distinct feeling of nervousness and apprehension; and, since he quite clearly perceives that these qualities cannot be referable to the future alone, proceeds to posit their causation in something—is it Vitalism?—in the present. To Mr. Joad it may suffice to acknowledge the location of causation in Vitalism, but to the Determinist such an intangible abstraction can serve only as "an asylum for ignorance."

If, then, the cause of the phenomena of nervousness and apprehension to which Mr. Joad acknowledges susceptibility is not to be found wholly either in the present or in the future, but is to be sought in their combination with other factors, the question necessarily arises as to what those other factors are.

I submit that this feeling of nervousness and apprehension will be found to have its roots in the soil of the past. For instance, a person may have been previously subjected to hostile criticism, severely heckled, or possibly subjected to physical violence. Or it may be that a person is decidedly apprehensive merely because any of these are probabilities. Or, again, though he may have experienced none of these incidents personally, or is hardly likely ever to do so, though in the calling which Mr. Joad has chosen, complete immunity can hardly be hoped for, there yet remains a consciousness of the possibility, arising from a knowledge of the experience of others, that one may at any time fall a victim to stage fright, sudden and protracted loss of memory at a

crucial moment, a dread of one's ultimate inability to sustain a serviceable argument against an opponent in debate; in fact there are a hundred and one anticipations which may present themselves to the mind to produce the previously suggested state of discomfiture, all of which, I submit, are referable to known conditions.

It may not be inexpedient to remark that I, too, when contemplating in the abstract this criticism, and its possible ultimate appearance in print, felt decidedly apprehensive. And I would account for my own state of discomfiture, not by a reference to an intangible something in the present, but rather to the mentally projected criticism, and thence to a vague dread arising from a consciousness of my own insignificance in comparison with the high prestige of Mr. Joad as a writer on Philosophy, and finally, to a fairly clear recognition of the fate which awaits me at the hands of Mr. Cohen should I, for no more satisfactory reason than the gratification of my own vanity, ultimately prove to have unwittingly sold the pass.

ROBERT DODD (Jun.).

POVERTY, CRIME AND BIRTH CONTROL.

SIR,—I heartily agree with you that "the advocacy of the sterilization of criminals and paupers as tending to purify the race, is advice that needs serious qualification."

The population of New South Wales, Tasmania and Western Australia is to a very great extent descended from convicted criminals, yet it is probably as good stuff as any population in existence. Dean Inge says that "Tasmania, in which more than 40,000 convicts were landed between 1840 and 1844, is now the most orderly and conservative of all the Australian colonies."

The fathers of Shakespeare, Burns and Dickens, if not actual paupers, were at least deep in debt, and hopelessly incapable of making ends meet financially. Shakespeare's father was for many years constantly sued and distrained upon for debt, while the father of Dickens was imprisoned for debt in the Marshalsea.

R. B. KERR.

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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, Mr. F. Mann—"Marginalia, Oliver St. John—Freethinker."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Station): 7.15, Mr. F. P. Corrigan—"What?"

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2.): 11.0, John A. Hobson, M.A.—"Wealth and Welfare."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY ("The Orange Tree" Hotel, Euston Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Mr. E. C. Botting—"Should Capital Punishment be Abolished?" Social Evening at above address on December 6, at 7.30.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Social Evening at the Earlham Hall, Forest Gate, London, E., December 1, at 7 p.m. Songs, dances, games, etc. All Freethinkers and friends welcome. Admission free.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Eclipse Restaurant, 4 Mill Street, Conduit Street, W.1): 7.30, Mr. W. P. Campbell-Everden—A Lecture.

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.

WOOLWICH (Market Place): 7.30, Each Thursday—Mr. F. Mann—A Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BELFAST (Proposed) Branch N.S.S. (48 York Street): 3.0, Mr. D. Thompson—"Freethought and Its Influences."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Stills' Restaurant, Bristol Street, opposite Council Schools): 7.0, A Lecture.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH.—No Meeting: Mr. Chapman Cohen at Gateshead (Co-operative Hall).

GATESHEAD (Co-operative Hall, Whitehall Road): Mr. Chapman Cohen, at 3 p.m.—"Do the Deal Live?" at 7 p.m., "Why Christianity is Not Worth Preserving." Admission free. Doors open at 2.30 and 6.30. Each lecture will be preceded by music. Teas provided at hall for distant friends, 9d. each.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall): 6.30, Mr. Handel Lancaster—"Musical Evening. Discussion Circle (The Hall, 83 Ingram Street): 8.0, Mr. W. H. MacEwan—"Battling with Words."

HOUGHTON (Proposed Branch): Tuesday, December 4, at 7.15, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Germis, Diseases and Remedies."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. W. H. Williamson—"Belief." Admission free. Collection. Questions and discussion.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street): 7.30, Dr. C. Carmichael (2nd lecture)—"Why are we Moral?" (Lovely's Cafe, 1 Park Street, Entrance Mann Street): Monday, December 3, at 8.15, Mr. E. E. Stafford—"Early Christianity."

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (1a Sloane Street): 7.30, Branch Meeting. (Central Hall): Thursday, December 6, at 7.30—Debate between Mr. Geo. Whitehead (*Neg.*) and Rev. R. J. Hall (*Affir.*) on, "Can the Teachings attributed to Jesus in the New Testament be accepted as a Rule of Conduct To-day?"

OUTDOOR.

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



"There is no more sure tie between friends than when they are united in their objects and wishes."

—Cicero.

Where Charity Begins.

WE are told charity begins at home—it certainly ought to do. Home is where our nearest and dearest are, and near and dear objects can be things as well as persons. The nearest and dearest thing to you and to us is Freethought. We hope this is indisputable, because it is our explanation of our advertising here and of your reading this.

When we concluded to spend capital on advertising, we resolved that our whole expenditure would benefit our nearest and dearest, therefore our "charity" began at home—in the *Freethinker*. For eight years we have thus steadily spent, and have been enabled to do so by the support of those good Freethinkers whom we here gratefully thank. They helped us, we have their assurance that we gratified them, and both of us together undoubtedly helped the *Freethinker*. You will, we are sure, agree that the cause is worthy. Why not join us? Remember you cannot lose by it. You are not asked to send us money, nor expected to buy from us, unless we can convince you that it is to your advantage to do so. We guarantee satisfaction, but, in the first instance, we ask only for the bare chance of showing you what we have to sell; to send for patterns, etc., and for those only. You are fond of saying you prefer to deal with known Freethinkers, because you have found them, on the whole, more upright than Christians: here is your chance. Please read again very carefully page 767 of last week's *Freethinker*.

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