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*Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,
Letters to the Editor, etc.*

Views and Opinions.

Wireless Religion.

THE protest of thousands of licence holders all over the kingdom against the use of the B.B.C. as a propagandist agency for Christianity still goes on, and the B.B.C. still continues its policy—its Christian policy—of evasion, unfairness and, one may add, untruthfulness, concerning it. At the very outset, when it commenced to give religious addresses, quite a number of people wrote asking that so long as addresses on religion were given, the public should be permitted to hear addresses on the other side, and that the B.B.C. should occupy a strictly impartial position. To this the B.B.C. made the silly and evasive reply that they could not permit this because, under the terms of their licence controversial subjects were not permitted; and in spite of the obvious retort that there was no other subject quite so controversial as religion, this reply was ground out with the monotonous unintelligence of a professional evangelist talking about the saving power of Jesus. Then the Government lifted the ban against controversial matter. So the B.B.C. tried a new line. This time they said that England was a Christian Country, and in a Christian country it could not be tolerated to broadcast opinions on Christianity that would hurt the feelings of Christians. Then, when it was pointed out that "Christian" here was nominal only, that 90 per cent of the people could not be got to attend Church on any pretext, and when letters got more and more insistent, the heads of the B.B.C.—lacking the intelligence to see that when one embarks on a policy of injustice the safest plan is not to give reasons—made the mistake of attempting a justification. It boldly proclaimed itself a Christian agency. It extended the time given to religious addresses, it added a reading from the Bible each week, it gave its full support to the Foreign Missionary Movement—one of the greatest of existing impostures, and it said deliberately that it was trying "to prevent the decay of Christianity." Thus the whole of its later policy and statements gave the direct lie to the excuses put forward at the outset. One almost might slightly alter Lucretius to suit the occasion:—

. . . Learn, thou, then
To what strange lies religion urges men.

* * *

Brer Rabbit.

I have been induced to recur again to this subject of wireless religion—in view of its quality one might with accuracy call it spineless religion—because of an article in the *Christian World* by Mr. J. C. Stobart, an official of the B.B.C., on "The Place of Religion in Broadcasting." The article makes it quite clear that the B.B.C. has now definitely committed itself to becoming the tool of the Churches and Chapels. Largely—as I have said before, I can say it on very good authority—the religious policy at the outset was without any religious conviction at all. I except Sir John Reith, the Director-General of the Corporation, who is the son of a Scottish parson, and appears to have a good deal of the Christian bigot in his make-up. But the rest treated it as just a matter of business. They wished to give music on Sundays. How was it to be done? The B.B.C. existed by charter, and nothing must be done to rouse opposition to its renewal. One way out that presented itself was to invite a talk on religion. This would disarm the opposition. The clergy saw their opportunity, and Freethinkers and others who objected were slow to make themselves heard. A few protests came in—at the commencement from Freethinkers—but the clergy organized their letter writers, and saw to it that the security hunters of the B.B.C. received outside support. A Committee of parsons was formed, the religious talk became a full service, then it had added to it a children's service, and then a week day service. Where it will end, the Lord only knows!

* * *

The Cost of Inactivity.

On the whole I am pleased that the B.B.C. has thrown off all disguise and now comes forward, in a religious paper, as the champion of Christian belief, backed up by the customary methods of Christian advocacy. It is an indication that the B.B.C. feels its financial interests will be best served by doing this, for there is not much room for doubt that had it felt otherwise it would have adopted a different tone. And for this Freethinkers are themselves much to blame. At the very commencement of broadcasting, when the "religious talk" only was on foot, we called attention to this new method of religious exploitation. Had only a quarter of the Freethinkers in this country protested, the B.B.C. would never have gone so far as they did. The same policy that led them to give way to the Churches would have led them to stand more aloof from them. But Freethinkers have so got it into their heads that it is the place of Christians to act unfairly, and that of Freethinkers to submit to the unfairness, that most of them took it as a matter of course. Even as it is, if every Freethinker in the country took the trouble to drop the B.B.C. a card,

that Corporation would have the surprise of its life. Mr. Stobart says that from the beginning, "despite the representations of certain listeners' organizations, who have made requests for more secular music on Sundays, the B.B.C. has refused to consider the broadcasting of any secular alternative to a religious service." Mr. Stobart is too religious to be accurate. The letters which the B.B.C. received, "from the beginning," came not from organizations, but from individuals. It was only recently that representatives of organizations waited on the B.B.C., and what transpired there threw a curious light upon the religious part of the business. The hiding of the fact that there were large numbers of individual protests received, before organizations began to take a hand, is quite understandable.

* * *

A Test of Faith.

The same religious twist which led to the suppression of this fact, also led to the statement that when the week-day service was instituted "an overwhelming volume of correspondence at once showed how very greatly this was appreciated." One wonders whether Mr. Stobart has such a bad memory as to forget two things. First, that this week-day religious service was unasked for, and secondly, instead of there being an overwhelming correspondence approving, it was announced in the *Radio Times* that the letters of approval had been so few, that unless a larger number were received, the service would be discontinued. Then, of course, the clergy saw to it that the letters were forthcoming. Even then I should hesitate to take the word of these religious propagandists on the matter. For it will be remembered that in the *Year Book* for 1929, the Rev. Mr. Shepard, one of the Committee that looks after the religious business, announced that in spite of the efforts of an anti-religious journal not more than twenty letters of protest were received. Afterwards he admitted to a correspondent, that he ought to have said two hundred. We fancy two thousand would be nearer the mark. But the whole defence of these services is farcical. Only ten per cent of the people attend church. Neither bribes, threats, nor persuasion can get the others there. But the B.B.C. asks us to believe that this ninety per cent are clamouring for a Church service over the wireless, and overwhelm the B.B.C. with letters of thankfulness when they get it! Does the B.B.C. think that the British public, even the moderately religious portion, are quite such jackasses as to swallow a tale of this description? Besides, if the people are overwhelmingly in favour of a religious service, what is the objection to an alternative service on Sunday? The only fear is that if it were offered the public would take it. Moreover, in the interview with the B.B.C. to which I referred, the representatives of the Corporation were asked whether they would be guided in their decision as to an alternative service by a plebiscite to be taken in a selected area. This was promptly refused. The overwhelming volume of approval could not stand the test of a statistical examination! And yet Mr. Stobart has such uncanny means of obtaining knowledge that he is able to assure the readers of the *Christian World*, that "almost without exception," the religious services "are listened to reverentially." Comment would spoil such a dazzling specimen of religious truth.

* * *

Our Rulers—the Priests.

There is no doubt as to the religious control that is being exercised over the B.B.C., and those who labour under the delusion that England is not a priest-ridden country would do well to note the facts. There is a

general Committee at headquarters made up of representative persons from different sects. There is another Committee made up in the same way in each of the local stations of the B.B.C. These men select the parson that is to preach the sermon, and this has to be written and pass the Committee. And so careful is Mr. Stobart not to affront the parson, that even when venturing the opinion that some of the sermons delivered are better than others, he does so with the assurance that this implies no "disrespect." On the other hand, with infinite daring, he declares the set policy of the B.B.C. to be that "if during Church hours there is no religious broadcast, there is no other broadcast of any kind." This means that the clergy have actually managed to do with the B.B.C. what it has been unable to do in other directions. For generations the clergy have been striving to stop everything on Sunday but religious services. They have been handsomely defeated in this. But they have managed it with the B.B.C. Here the rule is, no competition with Church and Chapel. And to its licence holders it says with supreme impertinence, "If you will not have a religious service, then you shall have nothing at all." In effect the B.B.C. becomes another Established Church, and makes all classes of the community contribute to its upkeep. And our liberty-loving Nonconformists, who do not believe in State-aided religion, support the arrangement with all their hearts.

* * *

Sermon Tasters.

Before I knew the arrangement that the B.B.C. had come to with its religious "bosses," and after listening to some of the sermons, I had a theory that the whole thing was arranged by a committee of Atheists, who wished to exhibit to the world the low level of intelligence that occupied the pulpit to-day. For, poor as my opinion of the clergy is, I should not have conceived it possible that grown-up men could have talked for fifteen or twenty minutes and have given such an uninterrupted flow of empty platitudes and unadulterated rubbish. Let anyone take down some of these sermons and judge whether I have overstated the case or not. But the Committee explains the situation. This collection of odds and ends of the religious world have to see that what is said is something with which all of them agree. The result is that if any clergymen happens to lapse into something approaching sense, or gives birth, by something like a Cæsarean operation, to a definite idea, the others are almost certain to object. So all that is left is blather about "Love," and the benefits of Brotherhood, etc., which to any intelligent listener would give a feeling very much akin to crossing the Channel on a rough night.

I do not believe that anything I have said will have much influence on the B.B.C. That body has probably got the impression that Freethinkers may be ignored with safety. Well, it remains for Freethinkers to show them they cannot be so treated, that they will not be lied about with impunity, and that they will not be denied common justice and remain silent. The clergy have shown that the B.B.C. is squeezable. Its whole aim has been to make its charter secure. They were afraid of offending the clergy at first, and now the clergy have made their position fairly strong. Still, the clergy once ruled the roost through the Roman Church, or through the Protestant Church. That rule was weakened to a very considerable extent, and here and there it was broken. And it is hardly likely that where the Roman Church failed the B.B.C. will succeed. "The B.B.C. is doing the best of services in preventing the decay of Christianity!" I leave off for a good laugh, and to recall the story of a famous old lady named Partington and her mop.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Throwing Up the Sponge.

"The last lesson that even a thoughtful Churchman can learn is that the all-embracing issue for educated and thoughtful people in these days is not, How can all creeds be sub-edited so as to give a minimum of offence? but, 'What is true?'"—*John M. Robertson.*

THE publication of a purely theological book is not usually a matter for extensive public comment, and most works of this nature have an inglorious finish in the "fourpenny" boxes outside second-hand booksellers' shops. An exception, however, must be made in the case of a work, issued with the sober title: *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture, including the Apocrypha* (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 16s.), which is the most extraordinary volume claiming to advance Christian knowledge that it has been our pleasure to handle.

This commentary on the Christian Bible has many claims on the attention of Freethinkers, for it is the work of over fifty Anglican theologians, under the editorship of Bishop Gore, and cannot be lightly dismissed as the opinion of an erratic heretical scholar. That the book will cause acute discussion is a foregone conclusion; but in this particular instance Freethinkers will be as much interested as Christians themselves. For the Christian Bible fares as badly at the hands of its clerical defenders as it did at the hands of sceptical scholars who were bent on exposing priestly pretensions, and bringing the Christian religion into contempt.

For instance, such long-accepted Biblical stories as The Creation, Noah's Ark, Jonah and the Whale, the Tower of Babel, and many another, are not only declared to be myths without any historical foundation, but to be unworthy and impossible of belief. Nor do these Christian theologians stop at the Old Testament, as did so many of their timid predecessors, but the four Gospels are criticized almost as freely as the earlier books of their Bible. We write the word "almost" advisedly, for these priestly writers make an exception of Christ's resurrection, for reasons which are almost too obvious. Otherwise, their criticisms must be very disconcerting to those simple folks who still pay their pew-rents in the belief that their passport to heaven is quite secure.

Indeed, the poor believer might well exclaim with the bereaved Macduff: "What! All my little chickens and their dam at one fell swoop." The theologians are as merciless as the inhuman inquisitors of old. "No scholar of any reputation," they tell us, "to-day holds that the Pentateuch, as it stands, was written by Moses." The miracles of the Old Testament are not only dismissed in detail, but the reader is reminded quite plainly that "Exaggeration is a Semitic habit." Even the stories of the New Testament are criticized adversely. The destruction of the Gadarene swine is described as "a difficulty"; and the raising of Jairus's daughter is said to be associated with coma, and not death at all. As for the gift of tongues at Pentecost, this is curtly dismissed as "a psychological phenomenon not particularly uncommon."

The appearance of such a book of 1,500 pages is a Christmas cracker for Christians. The writers are very distinguished ecclesiastics associated with the National Church, and they cannot be ignored, or suppressed. A generation ago Bishop Colenso was dethroned for a less offence, but the whole Anglican hierarchy cannot excommunicate Bishop Gore and half a hundred clergymen with the same ease and assurance in the twentieth century. The frank rejection of the supernatural element in both the Old and New Testaments by Christians of eminence is a matter of the highest interest, not only to believers, but also to Freethinkers the world over.

Disguise it as you may, this action of Christian theologians must mean, in the long run, the destruction of Bibliolatry, which, like so many other idolatries, has served to enchain and cramp the human intellect. Whatever object Bishop Gore and his clerical colleagues may have, the net result of their very candid views must be to discredit the Christian fetish-book. The Bible of the Christians must descend from its lofty pedestal and take its place among the sacred books of other and older races.

Freethought propaganda has justified itself. It is the fruition of a century's unceasing work. Indeed, nothing more momentous has taken place since the Renaissance. And, strangest of all, this intellectual lever, which will finally overthrow all existing creeds, has come among us so silently that many have scarcely noticed its approach. Opposition there has been, as there is to all new truths, but compared with the momentous issues at stake, the opposition has been more stealthy than noisy.

Silently and steadily for a hundred years Freethought has been resistlessly pushing its way till few educated men and women now attempt to contravene it. There has been no "bridal birth of thunder peals," while this "great thought has wedded fact." To the mass of the clergy and their quiescent congregations, whose innocence will not permit them to follow intelligently the course of intellectual thought, Freethought must appear like Banquo's awful apparition to the amazed Macbeth. They look up from their crosses, candles, and prayer-books, and see the awful shape in front of them. Adam and Eve, God and Devil, are driven out from the Garden of Eden, not by an angel with a flaming sword, but by a few score honest men with the more potent weapon, a steel pen.

How Bishop Gore and his colleagues reconcile their belated Freethought with their solemn consecration vows is their own concern. But what of their congregations? Will the Christian theologians start a new Freethought evangel, or bid their followers remain faithful to ignorance? The average believer no more understands Biblical criticism than he understands the rudiments of scientific knowledge. And there are plenty of priests always ready to prostitute their talents by pretending to reconcile the irreconcilable, religion and science. Most priests have the elastic dishonest minds of politicians, and as quick an eye in safeguarding their salaries. No commercial travellers could be more glib than these gentry in assuring innocent laymen that the great truths of scholarship and science are all in harmony with their fetish-book, and that all knowledge is a real assistance to the Christian religion.

All this Christian camouflage might succeed were it not for the fact that some priests "wear their rue with a difference." That these priests are merely echoing the words of famous Freethinkers is in itself the finest tribute to Freethought. Slowly, with lapses into its "loved Egyptian night," mankind is shaking itself free of the last desperate clutches of superstition. Bewildered by the new light, missing at first the guiding hands of the priests, it stands amazed on the threshold of the future. It is the ultimate triumph of the work of the Freethinker, which, sooner or later, will lead mankind to a happier, more consummate condition of life, and to loftier ideals. MIMNERMUS.

A great part of the life of a philosopher must necessarily be devoted, not so much to acquiring new knowledge as to unlearning the errors to which he has been taught to give an implicit assent before the dawn of reason and reflection.—*Dougald Stewart.*

One of the surest avenues to the attainment of peace is the proper teaching of history.—*Prof. Joseph Jones.*

A Sceptical Philosopher.

THERE is no word in the English language, with the possible exception of Atheist, which the average religious believer regards with such abhorrence as the word Sceptic. According to the dictionary, a sceptic is one who suspends his judgment until he has examined the evidence for any alleged truth. This is a method which every believer employs in his worldly affairs, such as the investment of money; if he did not, he would soon have no money to lose. But when it is suggested that he should employ the same method in testing his religious beliefs, he is quite shocked. According to him, you must believe first, and then the proof will follow. Advice which the sceptic declares would lead, and does lead, to believing in the crudest superstitions.

Doubt, which is the basis of scepticism, is the spring of all progress. If there were no doubt, there would be no investigation, and we should remain stuck fast in all the old beliefs. An exposition of the worth and value of scepticism, by Professor Bertrand Russell, under the title *Sceptical Essays* (Allen & Unwin, 7s. 6d.), will form a welcome addition to the Freethinker's bookshelf. We should like to see a copy of it in every home where English is spoken.

The Hon. Bertrand Russell is the second son of Viscount Amberley, and brother of Earl Russell. Educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, he took a first-class in the mathematical tripos, and remained at Cambridge University as a lecturer.

Like Voltaire, Bertrand Russell does not believe there is any virtue in inheriting a great name. The only great name worth having is the name a man makes for himself; and truly, Bertrand Russell has a European reputation as a mathematician. He is of the select company of Einstein, Poincaré, Jeans, and other masters in this science, and is, indeed, the leading exponent of the new school of Realists. Relativity is an open book to him, and he has written a work explaining it, entitled, the *ABC of Relativity*, which is, I regret to say, for my part, an explanation that needed explaining. However, the fault, if it is a fault, is doubtless mine rather than the author's.

The reader need have no fear as to the intelligibility of the present volume of essays. There are no headaching problems. The author has, metaphorically speaking, thrown his professorial cap and gown into the corner, and addresses himself to the man in the street, indulging not infrequently in good humoured satire—as when, after stating that the Chinese philosopher Lao-Tze, is said to have written his book at a custom-house while he was waiting to have his baggage examined—our author, in a footnote, makes the sarcastic comment: "The chief argument against this tradition is that the book is not very long." Or the following hit at the Bishop of London. One cause of unemployment was said to be due to the policy of the Bank of England in trying to increase the value of the pound note. To convert labour to this view, he observes, it would be necessary to show that directors of the Bank of England are hostile to trade unionism, "to convert the Bishop of London, it would have been necessary to show that they are 'immoral.'"

Of the different reception accorded to new truth by science and religion, we are given the following illuminating example:—

We have had, in recent years, a brilliant example of the scientific temper of mind in the theory of Relativity and its reception by the world. Einstein, a German-Swiss-Jew pacifist, was appointed to a research professorship by the German Government in the early days of the war; his predictions were

verified by an English expedition which observed the eclipse of 1919, very soon after the Armistice. His theory upsets the whole theoretical framework of traditional physics; it is almost as damaging to orthodox dynamics as Darwin was to Genesis. Yet physicists everywhere have shown complete readiness to accept his theory as soon as it appeared that the evidence was in its favour. But none of them, least of all Einstein himself, would claim that he has said the last word. He has not built a monument of infallible dogma to stand for all time. There are difficulties he cannot solve; his doctrines will have to be modified in their turn, as they have modified Newton's. This critical undogmatic receptiveness is the true attitude of science.

What would have happened if Einstein had advanced something equally new in the sphere of religion or politics? English people would have found elements of Prussianism in his theory; anti-Semites would have regarded it as a Zionist plot; Nationalists in all countries would have found it tainted with lily-livered pacifism and proclaimed it a mere dodge for escaping military service. All the old-fashioned professors would have approached Scotland Yard to get the importation of his writing prohibited. Teachers favourable to him would have been dismissed. He, meantime, would have captured the Government of some backward country, where it would become illegal to teach anything except his doctrine, which would have grown into a mysterious dogma not understood by anybody. Ultimately the truth or falsehood of his doctrine would be decided on the battlefield, without the collection of any fresh evidence for or against it. This method is the logical outcome of William James's will to believe. What is wanted is not the will to believe, but the wish to find out, which is the exact opposite.—(Bertrand Russell: *Sceptical Essays*. pp. 152-3.)

Bertrand Russell gives three incidents in his own life to show how heavily weighted the scales are, in this country, in favour of Christianity, and against all who are opposed to that religion. His reason for mentioning them is that "many people do not at all realize the disadvantages to which avowed agnosticism still exposes people."

The first incident occurred at the early age of three, when he had the misfortune to lose his father, who was a Freethinker. His father, wishing the child to be brought up without superstition, appointed two Freethinkers as his guardians: "The Courts, however, set aside his will, and had me educated in the Christian faith. I am afraid the result was disappointing, but that was not the fault of the law. If he had directed that I should be educated as a Christadelphian or a Muggletonian or a Seventh Day Adventist, the Courts would not have dreamed of objecting. A parent has a right to ordain that any imaginable superstition shall be instilled into his children after his death, but has not the right to say they shall be kept free from superstition if possible."

The second incident occurred in the year 1910, when he wished to stand for Parliament in the Liberal interest. The Whips recommended him to a certain constituency; he addressed them, and they expressed themselves favourably, and his adoption seemed certain: "But, being questioned by a small inner caucus, I admitted that I was an Agnostic. They asked whether the fact would come out, and I said it probably would. They asked whether I should be willing to go to church occasionally, and I replied that I should not. Consequently they selected another candidate, who was duly elected, has been in Parliament ever since, and is a member of the present (1922) Government."

The third incident occurred immediately afterwards, when Trinity College invited him to become a

lecturer, but not a Fellow. The difference being that a Fellow has a voice in the management of the College, and cannot be discharged, except for grave immorality. He says: "The reason for not offering me a Fellowship was that the clerical party did not wish to add to the anti-clerical vote. The result was that they were able to dismiss me in 1916, when they disliked my views on the war. If I had been dependent on my lectureship, I should have starved." He has been reinstated in his lectureship again, but, as he remarks: "These three incidents illustrate different kinds of disadvantages attaching to avowed freethinking even in modern England. Any avowed Freethinker could supply similar incidents from his personal experiences, often of a far more serious character."

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

Emile Zola.

II.—THE ROUGON-MACQUART NOVELS.

THE experimental novel—the novel resulting from "provoked observation"—received its apotheosis in France, chiefly in the works of Zola. These typical works are embodied in a long series bearing the general title, "*Les Rougon-Macquart, histoire naturelle et sociale d'une Famille sous le second Empire.*" His aim was to describe contemporary manners, those of the then-existing Second Empire. That régime had begun in blood, and had passed through some remarkable phases, which would provide him with appropriate backgrounds for a number of stories. And it followed that the series contemplated should be largely a record of social and natural degeneration, the degeneracy of the time being a commonplace of its literature; there could be little doubt that degeneracy was indeed assailing the nation. At the very outset of the scheme Zola's predisposition towards certain branches of science revived. The question of hereditary influence had already attracted his attention, and he decided that the members of the family in question would be influenced not merely by their actual environment, but also by psychological conditions coming from their progenitors. At first he had in view twelve volumes, but this number increased to twenty; and this colossal task he kept before him for as many years, completing it finally just as he had devised, and on the basis of his novelistic principles.

Already, in 1868, he had drawn up a scheme of his proposed family-history, even to the preparation of a genealogical tree, included now in the last volume of the series. He had in view an imaginary family, which in legitimate and illegitimate branches would find representatives in every class of society from all but the highest to the very lowest. The first volume, *Les Fortune des Rougon*, appeared in 1870, and pictured the origin of the family whose history he proposed to recount, and its first ignoble rise to position with the help of Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état*. Zola was most particular in the choice of names for his characters, and himself declared that he could judge a novel by the names accorded its characters. Not much knowledge of French is necessary to adjudge "Rougon" as a name of some dignity, and "Macquart" as one of vulgarity and coarseness. In them Zola united widely differing strains. The first Rougon possessed a degree of gentility, the first Macquart was an untameable brigand. Through this fusion a variety of disorders were transmitted to the descendants of the first Rougon-Macquarts. The scene of the first narrative was laid at Aix, or, as Zola called it, Plassans, his own early home, the Imperial régime being established there by craft and bloodshed. This is undoubtedly one of the best of the series, in its closely detailed descriptions decidedly reminiscent of Balzac, especially in its accounts of political jobbery in the provincial town.

Next came *Son Excellence Eugène Rougon*, in which an ambitious member of the third generation of Rougons is made to rise to the position of an all-powerful minister of state and the official corruption of the reign traced for several years. The third novel deals with a younger brother of Eugène's, Aristide Rougon. *La Curée* is the

story of the rush for the spoils of the new régime. A passion for money and enjoyment seizes on one and all, debauchery reigns in society, and a fever of reckless speculation is kindled by the Haussmannization of Paris. *L'Argent* formed the sequel to this—a story of the Bourse, with all its trickery and fraud.

So far the series might appear a mere record of roguery, vice, and corruption, but in each volume there are also many pictures of the better qualities of humanity. The injustice of the social system had always been manifest to Zola, but it was only gradually that he became the ardent reformer of it. Even then he did not preach or denounce; he contented himself with stating the facts; he confined himself to analysis, dissection and demonstration, and he used the novel as his vehicle, because the novel alone appealed to the great majority of people to whom it was necessary that the facts should be made patent if any remedy were to be applied.

In his fifth study, *Le Rêve*, he showed that he did not consider all to be vice, degradation, and materialism, by painting an immaculate member of the house of Rougon, though this is undoubtedly a slighter and less typical picture. His next work, *Le Conquête de Plassans*, reverted to Aix-en-Provence. It is a carefully planned account of middle-class society in this small town. In it two branches of the family merge by the marriage of the cousins Marthe Rougon and Francois Mouret, and the sequel is not a pleasant one. The two stories that followed this, *Pot-Bouille* and *Au Bonheur des Dames*, relate chiefly to one character, Octave Mouret, who first of all appears as a veritable Don Juan—but one stripped of all poetry—and afterwards, though still a sensualist, as a man of enterprise at the head of a huge departmental store.

We now come to the ninth "Rougon" novel, *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*. For this the scene again turns to the southern province, and the element of religion is again introduced. In Serge Mouret the form of the neurosis has developed into mysticism and made him a priest. The vow of celibacy demanded by his calling, however, proves too strong for him, and nature asserts her might, though he returns in fear to the dogmas of his creed. The next volume, *Une Page d'Amour*, supplies a companion picture to this. Hélène Mouret, who has hitherto led a blameless life, is swept off her feet by a sudden passion. A tragic sombreness attends the episode, but the book is one of Zola's minor efforts, despite its high, lyrical quality.

All the Rougons had now been dealt with, except the most rational of them all, Dr. Pascal, who was reserved for the summing-up in the closing volume; and the novelist turned to the irregular Macquart stock. The eleventh story, *Le Ventre de Paris*, deals with one of this plebeian line who keeps a pork-butcher's shop beside "Les Halles," the great markets of the French capital; it is instrumental in showing the sordid egotism of the shopkeeping and petty trading classes of the quarter. The next in the series, the ironically named *La Joie de Vivre*, is also one of the lesser-known of Zola's varied pictures of French life. The scene is carried to a little fishery hamlet, but tragedy is shown to be able to lurk there as easily as in the crowded city.

L'Assommoir is again one of Zola's typical works, one of the great pillars of the Rougon-Macquart cycle, and it must rank as one of the greatest pieces of writing ever published in the interests of temperance (Zola himself being one of the most temperate of men). He has now descended through several strata of society, and has come to the working classes, whom he paints with as unsparing a hand as ever; but a deep pathos lies beneath the picture he traces of them under the bane of drink. All the persons introduced here are not depraved, but for the most part they are utterly besotted, even to the point of madness. Yet it is recognized as the novelist's conviction that a fatal environment more than natural worthlessness has been the great cause of their wholesale degradation. In a special set of books within the stupendous series, the careers of the various children of one of the most unfortunate of these characters wrecked by drink are treated of. In *L'Œuvre*, the painful story of Claude, the painter, is unfolded. Again it is a record of downfall, but this time it proceeds more directly from an evil heredity than from environment and circumstances. The

hero—or "victim," as the central figure may be called—stands virtually on the border line that separates insanity from genius, but in the end, after a life of conflict and misery, heredity prevails. In the section under review, the march of degenerescence is perceptibly hastened; downfall follows downfall; the downfall of individuals at first, then the downfall of the whole régime under which they live. After *L'Œuvre* comes *La Bête Humaine*, the epic of the railway-engine, but in which a murderer appears among the Rougon-Macquarts, the victim of an appalling monomania. Next comes *Germinal*, the epic of the miners of the North, among whom Zola lived for many months. This sombre but magnificent contribution to the series recounts the degradation of the sweated toilers of the coal-pits, who are maddened by want to revolt. No palliation of Zola's absolute rigour of treatment is found in the following book, *Nana*, purchased today by the thoughtless as a piece of pornographic literature! In *Nana* depravity condescends. Here is the so-called "life of pleasure" of the world's most pleasurable city. In Zola's pages are witnessed not merely the ruin of the professedly profligate, but the reflex action of all pandering to temptation is indicated. From first to last this sadly-maligned book is a stupendous denunciation of the most rampant social evil.

La Terre completes the eighteenth of the long line of "Rougon" panels. The hero this time has escaped the atavism of his family, and is a sensible and hard-working small-farmer. Nevertheless, *The Soil* is perhaps the most terrible of all Zola's books, terrible in its inexorable realism applied to peasant-life that rises barely above animality. From *La Terre*, Jean Macquart passes into *La Débâcle*, for the time has now come for the great smash-up of that Empire "all tinsel without, and all rotteness within." War and invasion descend upon France, resulting in giant catastrophe on the field of Sedan, and culminating in the horror and excess of the Commune of Paris.

Le Docteur Pascal comes to close this amazing group of family portraits. Dr. Pascal himself sits in judgment on his family, ill-fated as that of Atræus. For himself, as for a sadly limited few, he claims "innateness," and is able to stand apart and study the tendencies of his various relatives, and so explain the whole theory of atavism underlying Zola's series. This book—one of the best of all—appeared in 1893, and did something by its explanation of what the whole series had accomplished to tone down the effect of some of the more unlovely single pictures. It was a fitting conclusion to what must be regarded as an unexampled achievement; one mighty work in twenty volumes.

In the Rougon-Macquart series we have a miniature world, though it is more self-contained than *La Comédie Humaine*, in which Balzac really followed no definite plan. Twelve hundred characters appear in these pages, characters of all classes, of all kinds. Zola was certainly at his best when dealing with a multiplicity of characters, not analysing the feelings and actions of a few. His greatest books all deal with massed humanity and by the stupendous nature of their conceptions have a vividness that leaves a lasting impression; Zola excelled in portraying the "crowd." This applies specially to *La Débâcle*, *Germinal*, *La Terre*, and *L'Assommoir*, which may be described as "the big four," though *Le Docteur Pascal* and *Une Page d'Amour* must be regarded as more pleasing studies.

As Zola contended against so many generally accepted opinions, it was perhaps inevitable that both his work and his purpose should have been gravely and generally misjudged, but it is slowly being realized that no writer ever wrote less for mere amusement. In Zola there was neither the laugh of the cynic nor the lewd mind, nothing but the zeal of the strong and detached reformer. As he himself said, "I have, in my estimation, certain contributions to make to the thought of the world on certain subjects, and I have chosen the novel as the best means of communication. To tell me that I must not do so is nonsense. I claim it as my right . . ." Nothing could be more contrary to the facts than the oft-repeated assertion that he confined himself to portraying the ulcers and sores of life. He undoubtedly found more evil than good in the community, and he emphasized the evil because it was that which required remedying. But he blamed

nobody for extolling the higher side of life, nor did he hold that mankind was naturally evil. He attributed its blemishes to its social systems, its superstitions, the thousand fallacies amid which it was reared; and his whole life was a battle with those fallacies, those superstitions, and those systems. J.A.R.

Acid Drops.

The *Daily News* has commenced publishing a series of articles on Spiritualism. Judging by those that have appeared, the articles will not be very helpful to an understanding of the subject, since none of them really touch it. They resolve themselves into one set of writers saying they believe that communications with the dead can be held, and others saying they do not. That everyone knew already. But they do not come within speaking distance of what often takes place in the seance room beyond the quite ineffective assumption of fraud. And on that ground of debate, the Spiritualist wins easily. As we have often said, the best friends that Spiritualists have are those who talk of nothing but fraud. That is one reason why Spiritualists are always ready to discuss with those whose only card is fraud, and very, very loath to enter into a discussion with those who, taking the common ground with Spiritualists that fraud exists, offer a scientific explanation of the residuum after fraud has been eliminated. We may deal with the subject at length in a later issue.

Mr. James Douglas writes in a recent issue of the *Daily Express* on the "Battle of the Books," and the article is illustrated with two portraits—one of Mr. Douglas, the other of *Dean Swift*! Dean Swift and James Douglas! Ye gods! Could impudence go further than that? We wonder what Mr. Douglas would have done with *Gulliver* had it come into his hands for review? And we wonder, oh, we wonder, what Dean Swift would have done with the great "Jimmy" had he had the handling of him? But Dean Swift bracketed with James Douglas! The *Express* will never beat that.

The leader writer of the *Morning Post* had to write something on the speech of Sir William Robertson on the next war. In the matter of smashing up countries and cities there was nothing in the speech not known to anyone capable of adding two and two together. Accepting the General's figures, 10,000,000 men and boys—largely boys—were killed, we fail to see, in the words of the leader writer mentioned above, that Christianity teaches the "infusion of a generous, frank, and trustful spirit." The last war was a religious war—as religious as it possibly could be made by bishops, army chaplains and paid speakers in support of it. In the next war, if it does come, this army of fomenters will not have a chance to get going, as it will be over in a few days, leaving the victors, if any, in full possession of countries turned into cemeteries.

An amusing comment on the *Daily News* controversy about Spiritualism appears in the current issue of the *Universe*. It is funny without being vulgar, and in all its beauty here it is:—

To Catholics Spiritualism is not on trial, but is condemned. The articles, however . . . present the debate from all points of view . . . It is useless to pretend in these days that the Catholic living in the world will not come into contact with heresies of every kind. He should be in a position to know what is alleged on both sides in order that he may be the better able to rebut falsehoods and maintain truths.

It will be noticed that the existence of heresies is accepted, presumably because Roman Catholics are not in a position to burn three quarters of the world's inhabitants. We are extremely obliged, and hope that the Catholic will maintain "truth" and not Catholic truth, which is another brand.

Canon J. Sturdee, rector of Aylestone, Leicester, has a will of his own. He will not in future allow the throw-

ing of confetti at weddings. Perhaps some of those in his parish will not allow their weddings to take place at his church, and may prefer the Registry Office which, for sensible persons, answers all purposes for good citizenship.

The Wesleyan Central Hall at Bridgeton is within a stone's throw of Glasgow's worst slums. "No man," says a pious reporter, "could see those crowded tenements and fail to realize that living Methodism is in the right place here." Seemingly, for this sylvan state of affairs, religion is regarded as the proper cure. The old Christian fallacy that poverty and sluminess are the result of "sin" and lack of religion is deuced hard to drive out of pious minds.

Newspapers report wild scenes in a Frankfort theatre. A piece was being performed in which there occurs a "dialogue in heaven." During this scene God appears in a golf dress, St. Peter in everyday clothes, and a "saint" in fashionable attire. So a section of the audience protested, and threw smoke bombs, and prevented the carrying through of the play until they were forcibly ejected. And we can quite imagine every British Christian saying "serve them right!"

Perhaps! But after all, St. Peter, if he ever lived, must have worn the clothes of his period, and there seems no greater "blasphemy" in putting him into the clothes of to-day, than in the clothes of a couple of thousand years ago. He could hardly be presented without clothes. The same is true of the Saint. Moreover, if our Second Adventists are right and Jesus comes again, we imagine he will also wear some kind of clothing. British Christianity would hardly tolerate a naked Messiah. Even "Jix" would kick at that. So we are left with the case of God. But if we think of deity as a "Him"—or in these days of sex equality, as a "Her"—we can hardly think of him, or her, as unclothed. Let any Christian try to think of him as going about without clothing, and he will realize what kind of a fix he is getting in. One can hardly denounce those people who wish to go about naked on earth, and yet claim that they will dispense with clothing in heaven.

Why then object to these heavenly characters appearing in clothes? The answer is that clothing gives the game away, so far as it helps the believer to realize what he is talking about. God, St. Peter, etc., as mere words may pass muster because people never ask themselves what they mean by the words they use. But to see the thing brought before their eyes visibly is quite another matter. Yet while people really believed this kind of thing, it never shocked anyone. In the old miracle plays no one objected to God being depicted as an old man wandering about the stage with a lantern before he said, "Let there be light." In the old Bibles, no one complained when God was depicted, in pictures, as an elderly gentleman creating the world with a whole set of carpenter's tools round him. But then people really believed. Now they have to fool themselves into believing they believe by a host of vague phrases that help to hide from themselves the fact that they really do not believe. That is all there is at the bottom of the modern convention, which says that "sacred" personages shall not appear upon the stage. The less we realize what belief in them means, the less likely are we to laugh at them.

It seems quite clear that the word has gone round clerical circles to attack Secularism. We have already quoted from several of the leading churchmen of this country that the real enemy Christians have to fight is Secularism, and now the Vicar of Clithero, Canon Wrigley, follows on by saying in his parish magazine, that the growth of Secularism proves that the whole future of religion is at stake. He asks: What difference do the quarrels between Catholics and Protestants make, when the great question at issue is the growth of Secularism? We agree, none at all. It is Secularism that is the enemy of all, and it is the enemy that is making rapid progress. We appreciate the belated

testimony to the success of our propaganda. And we call attention to the decline of superstition. We may also call attention to the fact that the clergy did not know of this progress—at least they pretended not to know it—until yesterday.

The Lord's Day Observance Society is appealing for £8,000 to forward the godly work of interfering with other people's liberty on Sundays. The Society doesn't speak so frankly as that. It merely whines about "Saving Britain from the Continental Sunday"—which, you must understand, is the very limit of unspeakableness.

Dr. Crichton Miller says: "Education conducted on lines of mere authority is of very doubtful value." This puts religious education in the doubtful value category. For the basis of it is always mere authority—the authority of either a Church or a Sacred Book expounded by divinely authoritative priests.

Says the Bishop of Winchester:—

Our progress in knowledge in the last hundred years is equal to the progress of the previous thousand, if not three thousand years.

The reason for this—in case the Bishop hasn't thought of it—is that during the past hundred years the mind of man has been freer than ever before. It has steadily been shaking itself free from religious institutions, religious superstitions, and religious prohibitions.

According to a scholastic weekly, schemes for reorganizing education in the State schools are being put in operation shortly. The result will be that children will receive education along lines which will fit them for both their livelihood and their life. If that be the aim of the new schemes, there seems no use in retaining the Scripture lesson; for the memorizing of Biblical data does nothing to fit children for either particular. The main object of the Scripture lesson is to make clients for some Church or other. And with that object the State should have no concern whatever.

The eruption of Mount Etna, says a pious journal, must have reminded readers of how greatly assistance is needed for populations that fall victims to such disasters. Quite so. It might also remind them of that profound saying, "He doeth all things well," and of the Christian theory of a special Providence going about succouring the afflicted. And if they think about such disasters at all deeply, they may note that invariably it is sympathetic human beings who try to rectify the malevolence or the blunders of the Almighty.

Begging for £ s. d., the Rev. C. W. Posnett, a missionary, quotes "one of the most successful Governors of India" as saying to him: "Your work is the great hope of the future . . . The old order is passing away . . . India is torn by the jealousy of Hindus and Mohammedans, and we must look to the Christian Church as the only hope of the future." What a hope! The suggested cure for religious squabbling in India might be called a homeopathic one. Here is a cage of heathen wild cats furiously fighting. To stop the conflict, it is proposed to introduce into the cage a bunch of sectarian wild cats of the Christian species. An excellent remedy!

A weekly paper addresses the new Archbishop of Canterbury thus: "From without, the country is crying out for strong, noble leadership in things spiritual. There are empty churches and empty hearts to be filled." To be able to hear this "crying out" of the "country," our contemporary must have ears as large as those that adorned Balaam's chatty companion. Most clerics keep on complaining that "the country" cannot be made interested in things spiritual. That accounts for the empty churches. Does our contemporary really believe that a brave gentleman in fancy dress will be able to fill those empty sheds?

In seventy years Mr. Wm. Robinson, of Mansfield Woodhouse, Notts, has walked 20,000 miles to preach 5,000 sermons. And in all that time he never thought to ask the good Lord to provide him with a new pair of boots. But we daresay he is expecting the Lord to one day provide him with wings.

"The Saving of a City" is the heading to an interview with the Rev. C. Ensor Walters, in the *Methodist Times*. The interviewer, a little uneasy as to the truth of his heading, says it "sounds ambitious to the point of presumption; for no Church is yet saving London—not all of them put together." Nevertheless, "no Church is doing more than Wesleyan Methodism to win London for Jesus Christ." This is the moment, of course, when all brave Methodists stick out their chests and give praise unto the Lord. The vast majority of Londoners (heathen, all-too-heathen!) are no doubt pleased to know how altruistically Methodism is working to "save" them from something. But whether the "something" is a plain unadulterated hell or no-one-quite-knows-what, the heathen Londoners are quite cheerfully unconcerned about it. That must be rather disconcerting to the assiduous labourers in the Lord's vineyard. The only thing that Londoners are anxious to be saved from at present is the Sabbatarian with his stupid restrictions and prohibitions.

Madame Tussaud's Waxworks Exhibition intends opening on Sundays, commencing on December 16. The Lord's Day Observance Society is greatly perturbed about it. The 3,500 shareholders of Tussaud's have been sent a personal appeal, imploring them to influence the Directors to reverse the Sunday opening decision. A memorial has also been sent to the Home Secretary, requesting him to ban the Sunday opening of the Exhibition, as was the case with the Wembley Exhibition four years ago. What frightens the Lord's Dayers is that Tussaud's will provide a counter attraction likely to harm the good work of the Sunday Schools. If that is so, if the influence of Tussaud's is evil, the Lord's Dayers would do better to agitate for the closing of the Exhibition on week-days as well as Sundays. Surely, six days of counter-attraction to Sunday School work is highly undesirable? Poor Jesus! Once proclaimed as the All-conquering Saviour, he cannot nowadays put forth enough 'fluence to keep a pack of Sunday School scholars away from a Waxworks Exhibition! That is what the Lord's Dayers are telling the world.

A witchcraft case is reported from the United States. In York County Penn., three men engaged in the witch business are charged with the murder of another in the same trade. There appears to be no question of the genuine belief of both the murdered man and his murderers to work spells, and the *Daily Express* reports, with great surprise, that in that part of America there is a fixed belief among the inhabitants in spells, and charms, and the like, and, above all, the reality of witchcraft. We are duly shocked, but looking about for a cause, we may present the hypothesis that perhaps they have been reading the Bible, which commands that all witches be put to death, or studying the New Testament, and so have got it into their stupid heads that when "Our Lord" spoke of the reality of demons and their activities within the human body, he really meant what he said. Perhaps Mr. Douglas will write one of his touching articles on the subject.

If he is in need of material, we would point out to him that fairly considerable trade is done in this country in spells and charms, and prayers. Parsons still talk of the power of Satan, some of the Churches still preach hell, and Roman Catholics believe that crosses carried on the body will protect the wearer from evil, and that water blessed by a priest takes on a quite marvellous property. There are plenty of people who have quite earnestly and quite honestly prayed for the recovery of the King, and between getting a man better by praying, and getting him worse by cursing, there does not seem a difference

great enough to go to war over. We really think that a dare-devil like Mr. Douglas could write a very informing article along these lines—unless he bethinks himself that a large number of his readers are Christians, and it might affect the circulation of the paper. Then we expect he will not.

The Bishop of Middleton is convinced that a great deal of modern religious teaching is out of focus, because it does not give sufficient emphasis to the Christian belief in a future life. This, he thinks, may be partly due to "a healthy reaction from the exaggerated "other worldliness" of the teaching of an earlier generation, which sought to lead people to despise, and even neglect, the concerns and interests of life here on earth, in order to qualify for the life of the world to come." The Bishop is right in speaking of the reaction as a healthy one. But his reference to the unhealthy teaching as being by "an earlier generation is misleading. That teaching commenced with the Early Christian Church, and was disseminated for hundreds of years until comparatively recent times. And the revelation of its unhealthiness was made, not by Christians, but by Freethinkers. That is another good service Freethought has rendered to the world—and to Christians. A vote of thanks for it is long overdue.

Some people asked a Secretary of a missionary society what gifts they could send missionaries. They were advised to forward *Punch* each week. Happy thought! Most missionaries would appreciate a little light nonsense after talking solemn nonsense all the week.

The Rev. J. Kinchin Smith, vicar of Studley, Oxford, has offered to marry free any young couple in the village of Waterperry, where no wedding has taken place for four years. Evidently one cleric knows the true value of an ecclesiastical marriage ceremony.

Most people, nowadays, says Sir Reginald Blomfield, do not wish to stay at home. Especially on Sundays—and neither do they wish to go to Church. Hence the doleful cries from the pulpit.

In *Service*, the organ of the Marylebone Spiritualist Association, Dr. De Graft Johnson, who is apparently an African, says:—

As we gather together in our assemblies the oldest present would pour out a libation, and invoke the presence and assistance of our departed ancestors . . . But the missionary does not understand this; he terms it fetishism, witchcraft, priestcraft. Thus, in introducing his religion, he deals a death blow to the very beliefs and practices of the people which would lay a solid foundation for acceptance of the teachings of Christianity.

Service has our cordial support, so far as the latter part of the passage is concerned. All our life we have said that so soon as you cut Christianity off from the practices of savages, you rob it of all intelligible basis. The beliefs of savages are the only things that can explain Christianity. That is why we have no great disbelief in some of the tales about savage races gladly accepting Missionary religion. It is the kind of thing we should expect uncivilized people to do. We are surprised only when civilized folk say they accept it.

According to a pious weekly, China is asking for more missionaries. The request, sent to the Conference of British Missionary Societies, came from the National Christian Council of China assembled in annual meeting at Shanghai. This Council, we are told, contains a large majority of Chinese, although many leading missionaries are also members. The constitution of the Council probably explains the request. The majority of the Councillors are no doubt dependent or partly dependent on missionary funds, and some pretence of expansion of business is necessary to keep subscribers up to the mark.

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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.

H. EVERTS.—Much obliged for cuttings.

J. CORINA.—We are sorry to hear of the death of Mr. Wakefield. Our first meeting with him was over thirty years ago, we fancy. You do not overpraise him in your memoir. The present generation know but little of the debt they owe to these old stalwarts.

TAB CAN.—Charles Wesley was the hymn writer and brother of John Wesley. Not so *great* a man as John, but a much better individual. There is a good novel dealing with the Wesley family—*Hetty Wesley*.

F. PRESTON.—Thanks. Next week. Pleased to hear from the son of one who has taken in the paper from its first issue.

J. BROWN.—See "Views and Opinions." Mr. Cohen will probably be in Belfast towards the end of January, and will look forward to meeting you.

H. MASON.—You can inform your friend that we distribute a quantity of literature every year without even asking for the postage, and would distribute much more did funds permit.

C.F.R.—Why not carry out your good intentions and give 61 a call. We should always be glad to see you.

G. SPILLER.—Many years indeed. But the lapse can easily be made good.

D. MARVIN.—No biography of G. W. Foote has been issued.

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

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

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Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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.

Owing to the Christmas holidays we shall go to press a day earlier than usual with the issue dated December 23, while the one for December 30 will be closed on December 20. This means that the last day for sending in items of current news will be December 17 and 20 respectively. Branch secretaries and others will please note.

The weather of Sunday last, accompanied by fog, was probably responsible for the smaller attendance than is usual at Mr. Cohen's meetings at the Stratford Town Hall. Still, the large hall was about three parts full, and in the circumstances that must be considered satisfactory. Mr. Rossetti occupied the chair in his usual

efficient manner, but we wish his efficiency extended to keeping away from the meetings a religious lunatic who insists on singing hymns directly the chairman closes the meeting. But we suppose that nothing short of an act of God would do this.

The *Harrogate Herald* gives a good and lengthy notice of Mr. Cohen's last volume of *Essays in Freethinking*, in the course of which it says: "Mr. Chapman Cohen shows himself to be at once a better writer and better reasoner than the average run of Rationalists. He deals very acutely with a number of present-day problems. As usual with the writers of this persuasion, it is a strongly worded if not passionate appeal for outspokenness in religious or anti-religious questions."

While we are on this subject, we may take the liberty of quoting from a private letter. We do so because of the high standing of the writer. "Thanks for your last volume of *Essays*. It is well up to the level of the other two, and all occupy a very honoured place on my shelves. Whenever I require a pick-me-up, which is not unusual in the course of a busy professional career, I can safely turn to them for a bracer. However old the topic, there is a freshness of treatment about your handling of it that is delightful and suggestive. I hope the series is not yet at an end."

Mr. Whitehead's debate with a Unitarian minister at Swansea appears to have been quite successful. The hall was crowded, and a good report of the discussion appears in the *Cambria Daily Leader*. Both sides appear to have acquitted themselves well, and the paper notes the crowded hall as disproof that men take no interest nowadays in religion. We agree, but we would also point out that the attitude of the audience towards the Freethought speaker shows how very considerably the interest runs in his direction.

Mr. Mann paid his first visit to Plymouth on Sunday last, and we are pleased to learn that the lectures were much appreciated. To-day (December 16), Mr. Mann visits the North of England, and will lecture in the afternoon, at 3 p.m., at Houghton-le-Spring, and in the evening, at 7 p.m., at Chester-le-Street.

The following is from the *Daily Express* :—

Sir,—It is remarkable how so many of our elderly bishops, ex-bishops, and deans seem to be going through the stage which most of us passed through between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four.

They appear to have read Voltaire, Renan, and Colonel Ingersoll recently for the first time and to have been extraordinarily impressed by them..

H. CAMERON KIDD, M.B.

We wonder how many of even these would have admitted all they have admitted during recent years if the *Freethinker* and the National Secular Society had never existed? The truth is that Freethought propaganda has made the holding of the original beliefs next to impossible. They would hold to them if they dared, but they see that without making some concessions they will lose ground more rapidly than ever. Men like Bishop Barnes and Dr. Gore do not confess their indebtedness where it is due, but if one takes the attitude of the clergy where Freethought is not active, the difference will soon be noted.

We have received a copy of the Ethical Calendar for 1929. It is a block calendar with an apt and thought provoking quotation for every day in the week. The price is 2s. 6d. Half a crown for 365 quotations does not seem at all dear. It is a little over a penny a dozen. It is issued by the Ethical Church, Queen's Road, W.

The best prayer at the beginning of the day is that we may not lose its moments; and the best grace before meat is the consciousness that we have earned our dinner.—*Ruskin*.

A Bolshevick Archbishop.

We hope that we shall not bring ourselves within the law of libel, but we feel it to be our duty to the National Church, which is supported by all right minded men—who support it, and towards Christianity, which is accepted by all good men—who accept it, to call attention to a remarkable passage in the enthronement sermon of the new Archbishop of Canterbury. Lifting up his voice, and standing in full view of the people, he distinctly and deliberately exhorted them to practise thinking, not shouting.

The advice was so startling, coming from an Archbishop, that the newspapers very properly called attention to it in large headlines as being a "remarkable address." And as the Archbishop was talking about religion there was no escaping the fact that it was about their religion they were to think. No wonder the papers called it a remarkable address. We go further, and say it is the most insidious, the most diabolical attack made on Christianity of recent years. It is equal to Mr. Maxton telling his followers that the time had come for shooting, not voting. We should not be surprised to discover that the Archbishop is a Bolshevick in disguise, that his very robes may have been purchased with money from Moscow. It is time that all true-blooded Protestants went into action.

Look carefully at this advice of our new Archbishop. What Scriptural warranty has he for the advice? None at all. Nowhere in the New Testament are we told that man is to be saved by thinking. Our Lord did not say that "All things shall be given to those who *think*," but to those who *believe*. To be saved by thinking is, on the face of it, impossible. For the act of thinking might impose limitations on what we ask by showing the absurdity of some of the things we desire. It is by belief that man is saved, and we know that if you begin by believing that what you ask for will be given, and continue by believing that what you asked for has been given, there could be no doubt as to the efficacy of prayer. It is by faith that great things are done; and it will be recalled that even our Lord could do no great works in certain cities because the people there did not believe. Had they believed that Our Lord could do great works, and also believed that great works had been done, the waves of unbelief would have beaten vainly against them. I have no doubt that in these cities the people had given themselves up to thinking, and so nullified the work of the world's great teacher.

There is nothing in the enthronement of the Archbishop of Canterbury that has reference to thinking. He was not elected because of his capacity for thinking, but for his power of believing. Never is the appointment of a clergyman determined by thinking. The only thing asked in such cases is, what does he believe? When Bishop Barnes was objected to in Birmingham, the chief offence alleged was that he had been thinking. The official creed of the Church the Archbishop is sworn to protect does not lay it down that to be saved a man must think. It says that the only thing that will save a man is belief. About this there has never been a shadow of doubt in any of the Churches. It is the one thing on which there has been complete agreement. It is the one thing that has proved that Christianity believed in the absolute equality of man. It saw no distinction between the fool and the philosopher. It placed them on the same level. It paid no regard whatever to what they thought, the sole question was, what did they believe?

Christianity is a democratic religion, and in the world of thought democracy has no existence.

Thought is of all things the most aristocratic. It laughs at the doctrine of the equality of man, and establishes divisions that are easily recognized. And never in the history of the Christian Church has thinking been made the condition of the receipt of honour. In the history of the Church there is not a single saint in the calendar who was canonized because he thought. Take any list of alleged portraits of the saints, and see if this is not true, on the face of them. Men have been evicted from the Church because they thought too much, but never because they did not think enough. In heaven, thinking is not one of the depicted occupations. Its inhabitants sing, dance, laugh, spend an occasional hour in watching the torments of the damned, but in heaven they do not think.

It is in hell that the thinking is done. For we are told that the damned sit there *thinking* of the eternity of their tortures, and the impossibility of escaping from them. According to the Christian scheme of salvation, men are saved because they believe certain doctrines. If they could not be saved until they understood them, their damnation would be certain.

The Archbishop tells us that what the Church needs most is peace. How is thinking going to secure this? When has thinking brought peace to the Church? The seed-plot of all the heresies that have troubled the Church of Christ is thinking. What is the classic characteristic of Satan but pride of intellect, thinking setting itself against the decrees of the Almighty? Had Satan never thought, he might still be in heaven. There was a recognition of this truth when orthodoxy met revolutionary thought with the epithet "child of the Devil." When men applied their unlawful thinking to astronomy, the planetary system upon which the Church relied was destroyed. And if one takes the disputes between Christians and scientists ever since, it will easily be seen that, had these scientists believed more and thought less, the number of unbelievers would to-day be smaller than it is.

It was thinking that destroyed the flat earth upon which Our Lord relied, the demons which our Lord taught caused all disease, which has almost destroyed the fear of hell, and greatly diminished the attractiveness of heaven. How did Paul become the follower of Christ? Not by thinking. So long as he thought he was its bitter enemy. It was when walking along a road on a hot day that he suddenly saw a great light, fell down unconscious, and arose a Christian. Even then, thinking might have destroyed the spiritual benefit of this message by taking it to be a case of heat apoplexy. But to Paul it was no such thing. He did not say, let me think about what has happened to me, but, let me believe.

Religious truth has come by illumination, by sudden inspiration, never by thinking. The lives of the most saintly characters teach this. Their prayer was never, "O Lord help my thinking," but "O Lord help thou my unbelief." Make me believe, not make me think. And in one religious autobiography after another you will see how the Lord answered their prayer. When he made them believe he almost stopped their thinking.

And now we have an Archbishop urging this revolutionary, this incendiary doctrine upon his followers. Nothing like it has occurred before. Beaten in the attack on the Prayer Book, the enemy has now turned his attack in a new direction. I discern the hand of atheistic Russia in this. I suggest that an inquiry be held as to the Archbishop's antecedents. Is he Scotch or is he Russian? Has he any undisclosed sources of revenue? Darkest thought of all, is he really Cosmo Gordon Laing, or have the

emissaries of Moscow murdered him, hidden his body, and then sent one of their representatives to masquerade in his stead? The subject is surely worthy of serious consideration. ALPHA.

Canon Wilson on Evolution.

DESPITE the almost universal acceptance of evolution in cultured circles, myriads remain among the general population who hint a doubt and hesitate dislike concerning its truth. The leaders of all but the most benighted religious denominations have long since acknowledged development as the law of organic nature. Nevertheless, as the sacerdotalists fully understand that, to all truly logical minds, evolution is utterly fatal to all theological pretensions, the clergy and religious laity alike eagerly welcome any rumoured discovery alleged to cast doubt upon its truth.

Evolution, then, is accepted by all who count in the world of thought. Still, the vast mass of the community, even in England, remain alien to its teaching. If the country were polled to-morrow the evolutionists would be greatly outnumbered. Some shrewd observers of the tendencies of the times are of opinion that the powerful obscurantist interests now prevalent in America may succeed in banishing modern biological teaching from the seats of learning in that remarkable republic.

In their modern forms evolutionary science and philosophy were mainly English in origin and development. As the celebrated psychologist, Prof. William McDougall, F.R.S., justly states in a recent essay, "Mental Evolution," in *Evolution in the Light of Modern Knowledge* :—

But it was not until the work of Darwin and Wallace had convinced the scientific world of the gradual evolution of the bodily forms of animals, and had shown that man's body could not be excepted from this great generalization, that the problem of man's mental powers was seriously proposed.

About the same time, and indeed a little before Darwin had made clear this implication of the theory of evolution, Herbert Spencer had independently begun to teach the same doctrine, as a part of the all-comprehending theory of evolution to the development of which his life was devoted. It must always remain one of the glories of English science that the theory of mental evolution was first given definite form and currency by the work of these two great men.

Canon Wilson, a broad-church veteran, who in 1859 was science master at Rugby, and who became an early convert of Darwin, in a chapter in the volume just quoted, has discussed evolution in its influences upon theological beliefs. Naturally, he is anxious to save all that can be salvaged from the wreckage of the Christian faith. He succeeds in saving nothing. Religion, he admits, is moulded by its environment. This, indeed, is implied by the title of his essay. With commendable, if unusual sacerdotal candour, the Canon states that in their early stages Christian morals, faith, and worship were undeniably influenced by the ethics, speculations and modes of worship of the Pagan and Hebrew worlds. Moreover, he declares, "They were manifestly affected in later centuries by Roman Imperialism, by the obscuration of the Dark Ages, and by the Renaissance, and still later by the extension of the knowledge of nature; by the study of other religions; by advance in philosophy; by historical criticism."

This is an immense advance since the days of the universally orthodox dogma of God's never-changing revelation. And then we constantly meet with the ignorant sneer at the "ephemeral theories of science." Canon Wilson reminds such superficial

scorners that there are passing theories in theology as well as in science. Science, in terms of observation and experiment, must grow from more to more.

"No one dreams that evolution should be taught in the pulpit," says the Canon. But why not? The Canon looks forward to the day—a very distant day, doubtless—when science and philosophy "in their single-eyed pursuit of truth," shall serve as a "bulwark of faith in God, and in Christ as his revealer; and an inspiration to man to work for the kingdom of God on earth." Surely, if evolution be true, it should be proclaimed everywhere. When we reflect upon the light which this majestic conception has conferred upon man as a physical, ethical, and social creature, what nobler task for the enlightened clergy than the fostering an inspiration among their flocks to ponder those problems of life and mind whose solution is essential to the worthy maintenance and development of civilized societies?

"No physical evolution explains the origin of mind," the Canon comments. "Evolution is very far from divesting life of its mystery." Well, so far as mind has been explained in terms of brain and nervous function, the explanation is purely physical and chemical. Innumerable so-styled mysteries have ceased to be mysterious with the progress of science. Countless diseases once ascribed to malign divinities and demons are now traced to the morbid activities of micro-organisms. Every scientific discovery invades the realms of mystery and mystification. It seems safe to infer that those complex phenomena in whose shadow the clergy seek refuge will some day yield their secret to the students of Nature. Scientific materialism has not explained everything, but it certainly has explained everything that has been explained.

Despite his avowed heterodoxy, Canon Wilson pleads for orthodoxy as an essential to progress. "It embodies," he argues, "our invaluable continuity with the past. It is also the fly-wheel of the machine; it keeps the pace of progress steady. . . . It keeps the Church together while it moves on at a pace which frightens some and disappoints others. Orthodoxy is a great stabilizing and uniting element in the evolution of theology. In fact, no evolution in theology would be possible without it, for it is orthodoxy itself that is evolving."

We readily agree that orthodoxy chains us to the past. Its history potently declares its innate conservatism. It has successfully obstructed, sometimes for centuries, every effort of the religious reformer to humanize the world. Nor has its resistance to change ever been distinguished by fair treatment of its adversaries. Pitiless persecution, judicial murder, torture, and the most diabolical modes of imprisonment have been employed almost universally throughout Christendom in orthodoxy's conflict with science and humanism. No mere fly on the wheel of progress the heresy-hunting and martyring orthodox Roman and Protestant Churches! As Lecky noted, the sanguinary struggles between Catholics and heretics were sometimes so decisive that the triumph of the Roman Church has effaced all memorials of the contest. Presumably in this manner, orthodoxy kept "the pace of progress steady."

Canon Wilson acknowledges that the mental emancipation of himself and his modernist contemporaries resulted from the study of Nature, and decidedly not of theology. "I not only at this time learnt more of the facts," he writes, "but I also began to realize the amazing order and significance of Nature, to which I must have been blind before." The study of Humboldt, Lyell, Lamarck and others opened the Canon's eyes to the truth of the orderly develop-

ment of the cosmos, the absurdity of the Hebrew traditions, to the conclusive evidences of man's antiquity, and the infantile current conception of a manlike divinity.

There still lingered the yearning for a faith in God, but, like Cardinal Newman, he failed to find evidences of divine ordering in the stage-play of human life. Darwin assumed natural causation in all the phenomena of organic Nature. The Canon on a second and even third reading of the *Origin of Species*, found Darwin's postulates unanswerable.

The common misconception that morals repose upon religion impairs the Canon's judgment. Speaking of his early experiences he says, "I did without the thought of God for a time; and strange to say I do not think my life deteriorated in any way, nor did I miss it much. I hoped, though scarcely expected, that the eclipse was only for a time." Comfort was restored with the later reflection that the claims of religion would ultimately rest on psychology rather than reason. And yet Canon Wilson calmly assumes that coming generations will possess nobler conceptions of the deity than their ancestors. How these exalted conceptions can arise apart from the sounder reasonings necessitated by the progress of scientific discovery and philosophic thought he leaves unexplained. Psychology, so far as it is scientific, must repose on the observation, comparison, and experimental study of living things.

The Canon's rejection of a personal deity induces him as a theistic churchman to reinstate God as an indwelling spirit of the human form divine. In the Canon's esoteric doctrine, Pantheism finds no place. He claims that, "The thought of a Transcendent God is not banished by the knowledge of the gradual evolution of life; but that knowledge carries with it the conviction that God is not to be found by us in nature apart from man, but only as the spirit dwelling within us."

These then are the leading views of a highly educated dignitary of the Church of England. Even when he discusses immortality the scientific case is practically conceded. But in company with the Bishop of Birmingham and many other outstanding men in the Establishment, Canon Wilson is constrained by his position to retain all that can be retained of an obviously exploded theology. From the clerical standpoint some reason, however metaphysical, must be presented by men who have abandoned all real belief in the fundamentals of Christian theology if they are to continue to enjoy the revenues and social prestige of a State Church. Truly, it may be urged that modernists are leavening the orthodox lump from within.

Canon Wilson and a few other intellectuals shine in comparison with the mass of religionists who vilified, as some of the most backward pietists still vilify the great apostles of evolution. Science is now victorious all along the line of battle to all instructed minds. When the general religious outlook throughout Christendom has risen to that of Canon Wilson, the mischievous and malign creed of Fundamentalism—logical as it is from any real Christian standpoint—will not merely be dead but damned.

T. F. PALMER.

He who thinks, and thinks for himself, will always have a claim to thanks; it is no matter whether it be right or wrong, so as it be explicit. If it is right, it will serve as a guide to direct; if wrong, as a beacon to warn.—*Bentham*.

The enemy we have to face is not the tiger in man, but the lack of imagination and vigorous thinking.

Prof. Gilbert Murray.

A Heathen's Thoughts on Christianity.

(Continued from page 795.)

OLD TESTAMENT "HISTORY."

THE discovery of inscribed tablets in the ruins of ancient Babylon, which carry us back as far as 5,000 or 6,000 years B.C.E., long before the supposed date of the "creation," prove that this and other similar stories were derived from older Babylonian legends. The story of the Flood is there, including the sending out of the dove and the resting of the ark on a high mountain.

It is, indeed, a matter of doubt as to whether the greater part of the Old Testament record is not a complete fabrication. Had the early Israelites ever a country, or a kingdom, in Palestine or elsewhere? Palestine was always an appanage of Egypt, with brief occupations by the Babylonians or the Assyrians. It was not conquered by the Romans, but they took it over upon their conquest of Egypt. Were the Israelites ever anything else but slaves or bondmen of one or other of these great powers? The numerous absurdities and exaggerations, of which I have only space to give a few examples, would seem to prove that the story of a glorious kingdom of Israel is a pure romance. The nature of the country was then, as it is now, not such as could have supported such a State. Its inhabitants could not have been other than a few tribes of nomads, or people living in mud walled villages, very poor, ignorant, and more than half savage.

It is estimated that, at the "exodus," six million Israelites, counting women and children, vacated Egypt in a single day—six times more than the population of Palestine to-day! There is no reference to so gigantic an event in any Egyptian record, as there assuredly would have been had it taken place. The Pharaoh who reigned at that time is now known not to have been drowned in the Red Sea or anywhere else, nor is there any record of such a catastrophe to his army.

But this is not all. Abijah is said to have set in battle array 400,000 *chosen men*, and Jeraboam had against him, 800,000 *chosen men*—over a million between them! In addition there were "seven nations greater and mightier." Palestine, at this rate, must have had a population of somewhere about 21 millions. The area of Palestine is only 12,000 square miles, about half as large again as Wales. The density of population was therefore greater than that of England, in a country most of which was, as now, barren, sterile, without manufactures, trade or commerce!

One further illustration of the absurd statements which we are asked to accept must suffice. To it many others, equally striking, could be given, but these are enough to show that the Old Testament is not authentic history.

King Solomon is said to have spent 100,000 talents of gold, and a million talents of silver, on his temple; that is 5,848 tons of gold, worth £600 millions sterling, and 52,232 tons of silver, worth about £400 millions; or over £1,000 millions altogether. King David and his chiefs are further stated to have subscribed over £60 millions in gold and silver to the temple. Further, David is said to have prepared £720 millions for the same temple, and £450 millions in silver=£1,170 millions. This is more bullion than the whole civilized world possesses to-day! Solomon is said to have received 666 talents of gold as tribute a year. A talent of gold is valued at £7,200. Thus the chief of a petty, barren district in Asia Minor, without arts, manufacture or civiliza-

tion, received £4,795,200 a year in gold, not to mention silver and precious stones!

Canon C. H. Robinson, in his book, *Studies in the Character of Christ*, writes as follows: "The Old Testament is the history of a people insignificant in numbers"—thus allowing that what has just been quoted is a gross fiction—"occupying a country about the same size as Yorkshire,"—the area of the supposed Israelitish kingdom—"remarkable neither for their superior learning, civilization, nor military power; remarkable, if anything, for their obstinate, grasping, usurious character; who, nevertheless, were chosen out of all the nations of the world to be the recipients of peculiar blessings and favours." The last twenty words of this paragraph illustrate the strange mental attitude of the Christian that is so baffling to those of other religions who take a wider view of the human race, its origin, history and destiny. This curious obsession in the matter of the Israelites, and nowadays the Jews, seems to be an insuperable obstacle to any kind of extended, or even sane, attitude on the part of the Christians in relation to the rest of the world.

That might, perhaps, have been the character of the Israelites, though it does not sound very flattering! But what are we to think of a god who would make such a choice? And what "peculiar blessings and favours" have the Israelites received from their god? He never seems to have brought anything but calamities and disasters upon them, such as may cause other peoples to be profoundly thankful that he did not choose them!

What is there about the Jews that it should lead Christians to take so superstitious a view? They are tenacious, it is true, and they have retained their racial identity for a long time. The explanation of this is most likely the bitter and extraordinary cruel persecution and ostracism to which the Christians have subjected them for centuries. There is, certainly, something admirable about the way the Jews have survived it. The day is not far distant, perhaps, when they will realize that their old, tribal god is an obsolete nuisance, and get rid of him. But then, of course, there is "Anglo-Israel," which raises another absurdity!

The Jews, or rather the Israelites, were early monotheists, but they did not deny the existence of other gods. They merely insisted that their own, special, tribal deity was peculiar to themselves, and had nothing to do with any other tribe. There is, however, definite proof that the educated Babylonians were monotheistic 700 years before Moses. There is a tablet of 2000 B.C.E., which states that the other gods were merely aspects of the Great God Marduk. The same thing may be said of the educated Hindu Brahmins. They believe only in one god, the others are merely personifications of his various "powers" or aspects. That the ignorant and illiterate populace worship these aspects as separate, personal gods, is just as true as that ignorant, or even educated, Roman Catholics worship the Virgin and the saints. Indeed, this phase of Christianity presents an iconographical polytheism as rich and varied as that of any "idoltrous" religion. But, of course, it is beneath the dignity of the Christian to try to understand the religions of the Heathen in their blindness, who certainly do not bow down to wood and stone in the sense implied, any more than do the Roman Catholics.

Jewish monotheism was undoubtedly derived from the Babylonians, but there can be no doubt about the disposition of the Israelites to go "a-whoring" (to use an elegant Biblical expression) after all manner of gods. The emphasis of Jewish monotheism is due solely to the late writing and compilation of the

books of the Old Testament by the priests, who sought to show that it has always been distinctive of the Israelitish people, which it certainly was not.

The peculiar racial characteristics of the Jews are not nearly so remarkable as that of the Chinese, who have preserved their identity for a longer period, and have multiplied to a much greater extent. In a sense they consider themselves to be a "chosen people," for their Emperors were always regarded as "Sons of Heaven," and their country as the "Celestial Empire." They have certainly been "preserved," and they flourish exceedingly wherever they go. The curious thing is that they have no idea of "God" in the Christian sense, so that the missionaries had some difficulty in finding a word for "God." There is a lively belief among the illiterate in a multiplicity of "spirits," mostly of an impish character, that need to be guarded against. But these imaginary beings are no more than the fairies, gnomes, and other bogeys which scare the rustics in rural Europe. And, with the cult of "spiritualism" in our midst, there is little need to look down on the Chinese on this account. The two leading religions of China, Confucianism and Taoism, are at root Agnostic and Rationalist, and what is said here will doubtless appeal to the humour of their adherents when it reaches them. E. UPASAKA.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

A STARTLING CONTRAST.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—You never did a thing more commendable in the interest of truth than in advising your readers to procure copies of *Buddha the Atheist*; though I was myself late in complying with your advice owing to the inconvenience of remitting small sums. Until I read it, it was impossible to realize the significance of the advice. I am pleased to say that reading the book was like breathing the invigorating air of a mountain top overlooking the sea. There is an atmosphere of sanity in it from cover to cover. Its perusal was a delight, and not a disagreeable task, as was the ordeal of trying to wade through a book on the meaning of life which I attempted recently—page after page of which created a sense of disgust. Its perusal had, however, one valued effect: it made me realize that the colossal octopus of *reaction*, which holds Christendom at present in its vile grip, possesses one more tentacle than I was aware of—*viz.*, the reaction to Athenian sophistry. Lo and behold, the Sophist has returned to life! Moreover, this modern Don puts his notorious prototype far in the shade as an obscurantist, who can not only prove black is white, but can make the existent vanish and create something out of nothing! Did ever a conjurer use his wand to better effect? His bizarre tactics I hope one day to comment upon in these columns.

The Atheistic nature of Buddhism was to me a most agreeable revelation. Moreover, the forceful directness and the palpable cogency of the author's logic was a delectable surprise.

When I am again asked, "What can we put in the place of Christianity?" I will reply: If we must have a religion at all, let us espouse Buddhism; it will be a million-fold better for the individual and the race than to inhale throughout life the miasmatic effluvium of metaphysics.

KERIDON.

CHRISTIAN HATRED OF PLEASURE.

SIR,—Christians nowadays are apt to be ashamed of the most diabolical quality of their religion, the hatred of pleasure because it is pleasant. They even deny it. Therefore I would like to quote Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, book 1, chapter 27; page 49 of Bohn's translation. St. Augustine, A.D. 597, has sent nine questions to be decided by Pope Gregory. Most of them show the peculiarly nasty and morbid interest in sex which Christians have generally shown, and the corresponding

lack of interest in more important regions of morals. Incidentally we find the infallible Pope telling Augustine that "we have found by experience that no offspring can come of the wedlock of cousins." But the point to which I want to call attention, is the reason which Pope Gregory gives for forbidding a man to enter the church if he has lately enjoyed conjugal pleasures with his wife.

"Forasmuch as lawful intercourse cannot be had without the pleasure of the flesh, it is proper to forbear entering the holy place, because the pleasure itself cannot be without a fault." Three pages later: "When the flesh begins to be delighted, then sin begins to grow. But if it deliberately consents, then the sin is known to be perfect."

Can there be clearer proof that in the eyes of at least one infallible pope, pleasure is itself a sin? It does not seem to be recorded whether Gregory and Augustine went waterless in hot weather because a drink of water would give keen sensual pleasure. Heinrich Suso did, but few Christians are so consistent.

The attitude of the Churches to birth control, against which J.A.R. was so rightly indignant in your issue of October 21, is a logical result of the basic principle that all pleasure is bad. The same principle appears wherever natural kindness is not strong enough to repress Christian malignity. For instance, the strongest of the Churches forbids flesh-eating in Lent; but this is not because they wish to lessen the pain of animals (they care not a scrap for that); it is because they wish to lessen the pleasures of men. The proof is that when people abstain from flesh because of the pain to animals, as some Buddhists do, Christian missionaries treat it as a heresy. They order converts from Buddhism to kill and eat animals to show that they are Christians. Christians cannot deny this; I possess a letter from one missionary boasting of it; and another boasted of it in print only two months ago.

CALDWELL HARPUR.

THE DELUGE MYTH.

SIR,—“There never was a Deluge, for the Bishops tell us so.”

I may say, if there is one deduction in physical science which is capable of complete demonstration, it is that, as surely as two and two make four, if a glacial epoch took place in the higher latitudes of both hemispheres, then a Deluge in the lower latitudes follows as a necessary consequence.

A person who denies the above conclusion has no knowledge of the elementary data relating to water in its solid, liquid and gaseous forms; and should he attempt to prove the contrary, he has my sympathy and compassion. Bishop Gore and those who assisted him are merely the blind leaders of the blind. They, like others, have been misled by the astronomers who have dogmatically asserted there never was a Deluge, and who have themselves so often burnt their fingers when writing on the Glacial epoch, that their opinions are of very little value, because it is evident they know nothing of its causes.

Readers of this paper may remember that I pointed out the cause of the Deluge was the bombardment of the earth by aerolites. This statement has been to some extent confirmed by recent research. An analysis of the metal weapons and ornaments used by the Sumerians shows that they always contain nickel, a metal not found in the vicinity, but which is always associated with copper or iron in aerolites.

WILLIAM CLARK.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Mr. George Saville—"A Critical Survey."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Station): 7.15, Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, B.A.—"The Youngest of the World's Religions."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): Free Sunday Lectures at 7 p.m. R. Donald Price—"The Ethical Attitude Towards Poverty."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, H. W. Nevins—"A Glimpse of the Near East."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY ("The Orange Tree Hotel," Euston Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Debate on "Should We Follow Jesus?" *Affir.*: Mr. C. B. Ratcliffe. *Neg.*: Mr. F. A. Ridley. Carnival Dance at above address on December 27, at 7.30.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Eclipse Restaurant, 4 Mill Street, Conduit Street, W.1): 7.30, A. H. Hyatt—"Our Hope is at Calvary."

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. (I.L.P. Hall, 48 York Street): 3.30, Debate on "Spiritualism."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Stills' Restaurant, Bristol Street): 7.0, Mr. J. G. Dobson—A paper.

BOLTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Borough Hall, Corporation Street): Every Sunday at 6.30. Will Sisson—"Can a Socialist be a Christian?" Discussion.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S. (Miners' Hall, Houghton-le-Spring): 3.0, Mr. F. Mann (Secretary N.S.S.): "Religion—the Enemy." (Co-operative Hall, Chester-le-Street): 7.0, Mr. F. Mann—"Religion and Life." Music will be rendered before evening lecture by Mr. Jos. and Miss Chapman of Gateshead.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. D. S. Currie—"The Story of Adam and Eve." Discussion Circle, Thursday, December 13 at 8 p.m. It is hoped all interested will endeavour to attend.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. H. B. Lowerison—"Devils."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street): 7.30, Discussion. All welcome. Here is the chance to discuss that religious problem you may have. Important committee meeting after.

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