

A COMMISSION ON SPIRITS.

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Views and Opinions.

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A Commission on Spirits.

The *Daily News* gives its articles on Spiritualism the imposing name of a Commission of inquiry. The title is not exactly a wrong one, but in the light of the nature of the inquiry it is at least curious. What has been done is to collect a number of opinions, for and against, all of which might easily have been done without any "Commission" at all. All the wonderful stories of experiences with the dead were already in print, and are well known to one who knows anything at all about the history of Spiritualism. All the allegations of fraud and want of proof had already been made, and no fresh light has been cast on the subject from that side. The "Commission" may be valuable from the point of view of getting an increased sale for the *Daily News*, but I quite fail to see what other end can be attained. What, for instance, is to be done with a case such as that of Lord Gorell, with whom an interview formed one of the series? Lord Gorell says he is a Spiritualist, but he has never attended a professional medium in his life. All his "evidence" has been secured inside his own family circle, and with members of his own family and intimate friends. The theory of fraud will not fit here. One can hardly say, either, that Lord Gorell is deliberately lying to the public. What actually happened with himself and the members of his own family? That is really a question to which a genuine "Commission" of inquiry might address itself; and the case of Lord Gorell is the case of thousands of others who have reduced themselves to the mental level of savages when faced with occurrences, the nature of which they are entirely ignorant.

* * *

Some Desirable Members.

Now if I were forming a genuine commission on the subject of Spiritualism, I would start by considering

the qualifications of those who were to compose it. Eminence, as such, would not trouble me very much. It would be a question of in what were men eminent. Fraud, in the ordinary sense of the word, would not concern me much either. Just as I should not wish the members to sit expecting everything out of the way to be pure deception, so I should not desire them to count everything they could not explain as due to fraud. I should suspect that the theory of conscious fraud could no more account for the world-wide belief in communication with the dead, ranging over every culture stage, than I could hope to account for the perpetuation of religion as due to sheer imposture, or deliberate invention. (It will be well known to readers of my *Religion and Sex* that I wrote a big book to prove that just as religion began originally in a misunderstanding of perfectly natural happenings, so it had been mainly perpetuated by the same means). I would be careful against stocking the Commission with ordinary scientists—physicists, chemists, etc.—for while these would be the easiest on whom to impose, their eminence would not be of great use. Lawyers could be dispensed with altogether, because it is not at all a question of legal evidence or court procedure. Business men, "hard-headed business men," need not be troubled about, because there are few others who are so easily fooled. Of course, I do not mean that any of these men would be barred, but they would not be there in virtue of their vocation. They are good enough for newspaper window dressing, but they are not of much use for the purpose of investigating Spiritualism.

As a further precaution, I think I would eliminate from the evidence taken all that came from professional mediums, or from people whose evidence was based on professional mediums. Both these could be dealt with later, and by that time the Commission would be in a position to deal with them. Their exclusion, by the way, while eliminating certain kinds of proof, would not materially reduce the bulk of the evidence on behalf of Spiritualism. I would restrict the evidence and experiments to men of the Lord Gorell type; men who do not go about seeking signs and wonders, and pay for them, but who have begun to believe in Spiritualism because of unaccountable happenings to themselves, or to members of their own family—their wives, their daughters, their sons. Next, I would see to it that some members of the Commission were really acquainted with the pathology of hallucination in all its forms. Also that it numbered among its members authorities on pathological and abnormal psychology, and on up-to-date experimental psychology, which would entail a knowledge of such forms of automatism as "crystal gazing" and "spirit writing," and who would therefore know how frequently these things are done in psychological laboratories all over the world. And all the members should be acquainted with such classes of works as are represented by Boris Sidis, Morton Prince, Jung and

Freud, with others of their order, and if possible a working acquaintance with Psychological Medicine—not the bastard and absurd thing that does duty with Spiritualists and quacks, but the genuine thing. There are other things, but it would at least get rid of the foolish notion that a man can form an authoritative opinion on a subject without knowing anything about it. Where the case of a medium is under consideration, the life history of the person should be taken into account. A record should be made of actual disease, liability to delusions in early years, anemia, state of health during adolescence, etc. The terribly crude way in which mediums of note have been handled is seen in the fact that this has hardly ever been done, and all one can find out on this head is by incidental and unintentional remarks. And yet Spiritualists proclaim the fact, that men of science have been converted! So far as bringing the right kind of science to bear on what was going on is concerned, they might just as well have been street-sweepers.

* * *

Is Seeing Believing?

A Commission formed in this way would be quite aware that seeing is *not* believing, hearing is not proof, touching is not conclusive. They would know that there is not one of the senses that can be wholly trusted, but that all have to be checked, controlled, verified, before their testimony can be accepted. Wonderful experiences would not impress them very much because they would know that when a man is telling a story, whatever its nature, he is telling it to produce a desired effect, and to that extent is "dramatizing" his narrative. The curious thing is that all these stories of experiences of the dead are accepted without the least criticism or examination—unless the unsatisfactory one of deliberate lying is adopted. Mr. Blatchford says he had "overpowering" proof; Lady Crespigny says she had a full demonstration, and it never seems to strike those that are impressed by the tales told that what is complete and overpowering proof to one may turn out quite flimsy and trivial to others. Few seem to bear in mind the quite unreliable character of testimony where the unusual is concerned, or where the desire to produce a particular impression is present.

In spite of the saying of Holy Writ that "All men are liars"—said, it is explained, in haste, but repeated by many moderns at leisure—it is not true that the man who tells an inaccurate or misleading story is of necessity lying. He is simply at the mercy of his desires. Almost every person who tells another a story that is in any degree out of the ordinary—it may be a story of wrong done him, or a brave act witnessed, or the reverse, or of a startling experience of any kind—is telling the story to produce a desired result. He is consciously aiming at making a particular impression on the mind of his listener. And quite unconsciously, certain features will be toned down, others over emphasized, some otherwise distorted, until what finally emerges is entirely misleading, and bears no accurate relation to what really occurred. Set any half-dozen men describing an incident of this kind, and the truth of what has been said will at once become apparent. It may be that there is no particular point on which one can lay one's finger and say definitely, "that is wrong." The whole thing is wrong. The listener is being misled just as surely as though a deliberate lie was being palmed off on him. That is one reason why, when at my meetings I am asked by some Spiritualist in the audience, "Can you explain?" this or that experience, I always reply, "No, because as the story is told only one answer is possible, and that is the one required."

How Myths Grow.

There are other forms of error to which a really capable Commission would be alive. One would be the love of the untrained mind for the marvellous and the pseudo-supernatural. Look at the travellers' stories of the wonders they see in the East—the mystic, magical East. Even at the cinema and in novels the Chinaman and the Indian is given credit for unbelievable cunning and subtlety, when the real Indian and the real Chinaman is not on the average much different in these respects from the Westerner. Look at the number of people who have returned from India—people, too, in position—who have told the story of seeing a fakir throw a rope up into the air so that it stood as stiff as a pole, then sending a boy up the rope, and the boy afterwards drew up the rope, both of them disappearing. And yet those who have looked carefully into the stories find they have no basis in fact. These people never did see such a thing, no one ever has seen it; and when pressed it is admitted that they did not actually see it, but a very reliable friend saw it, etc. As a matter of fact these wonderful Eastern jugglers would be hard put to it to get a living on an English music-hall stage.

It is not twelve years since we had the incident of the Mons Angels. The story was deliberately invented, the writer never intending it to be taken for truth. But it got into circulation, the Bishop of London swore to its truth, Dr. Horton and scores of other parsons did the same, they produced soldiers who saw the angelic host fighting on behalf of the British, and it is certain that in a less critical age the story would have been handed on as actual history. And the Russian army that crossed England! Who began that? No one knows. But once set going, there were hundreds of people who either saw that army or had friends, on whose word the utmost reliance could be placed, who had seen and spoken to the Russians, given them cigarettes, sweets, etc. And there is not a ghost story that gets about, not a haunted house that is discovered, for which plenty of evidence cannot be found to prove the existence of things that have never been, and of sounds that have never been heard.

* * *

Spiritualism and Religion.

Finally, this Commission, if it carried its labours far enough afield, would find itself in touch with the whole field of religion. It would see that these stories of voices heard, of spirits seen, of the hand writing messages without the will of the writer, of "mediums" in a state of "trance" giving accounts of places and peoples, or of matters which they once knew and have forgotten, of chance expressions, or stray readings that have been buried beneath their conscious life coming again to life, that all these things can be seen narrated in the lives of the saints, and have gone to build up the structure of religious belief. They would be able to relate these to the practices and experiences of modern Spiritualists, and they would be able to trace them back through the history of the race, and find them rooting themselves in human ignorance of abnormal and pathologic mental and bodily states.

And when the Commission had done this, had sifted the cases of deliberate fraud from the genuine ones, they would be able to appeal to their genuinely and relevantly scientific experts, for evidence that there was well within the grasp of modern science enough actual and verifiable knowledge to explain all that was genuine in the experiences of Spiritualists. They would certainly agree with Dr. Hyslop, himself a believer in some form of Spiritualism, but who says, referring to Dissociation only:—

There is such an enormous mass of (Spiritualistic) phenomena that is undoubtedly the result of secondary personality, and so many more are explicable by it that the medium who gives evidence of the supernatural is very rare . . . The layman is not aware of the tremendous difficulties involved in quantity and quality of the matter that is produced and producible by secondary personality, that can neither be attributed to spirits, nor demands explanation by fraud.

But believers like Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Lord Gorell, and Lady Crespigny, do not appear to be aware of the existence of such evidence. At any rate they do not notice it. They will have their ghosts at any cost.

Once before, I managed to drive the *Daily News* into doing a little of the right thing in connexion with a religious controversy. Here, I offer them a suggestion for a real Commission on the subject of Spiritualism. I wonder whether they will take this advice also? It would, of course, mean scrapping their present ridiculous plan, but it would show some kind of awareness of the way to go to work.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Lords' Offensive.

"Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?"

"No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you sir; but I bite my thumb, sir."—*Shakespeare, "Romeo and Juliet."*

THE question of the abolition or reform of the House of Lords is one that concerns all Freethinkers deeply, because the Bench of Bishops in the Upper Chamber forms the last stronghold of Ecclesiasticism in this country. This is not a mere expression of opinion; it is a fact. The votes of the Anglican Bishops have determined the fate of many democratic measures; and their hostility to all forms of progressive legislation is historic. They voted against equal franchise rights for women with the same zeal as they voted against the provision of seats for poor shop assistants. They shot at all things democratic with the same impartiality.

This known hostility to Democracy was, in the very nature of things, bound to cause a conflict sooner or later. The advent of the Labour Party has precipitated the issue, and, with the prospect of a general election in the near future, some move was to be expected from one side or the other. That move has come from the Conservative ranks, and it is a very clever piece of camouflage which requires the close attention of all who have the cause of Democracy at heart.

The House of Lords recently placed on record its conviction that its present organization requires bringing into line with the twentieth century, and modernization was to be the order of the day. It was stated quite frankly that the present Upper Chamber does not provide adequate representation for the Labour Party, and that immediate steps should be taken at re-organization so that the House of Lords should be in harmony with the House of Commons, a sort of heavenly twins.

This is indeed a sign of the times, for it is a rare transformation from the Olympian, high-sniffing attitude which has distinguished the Lords Spiritual and Temporal from time immemorial. What has caused this change of heart? Why has the hard-hearted Mr. Hyde of politics suddenly changed to the benevolent Dr. Jekyll, too hastily assuming that all and sundry will rush to be enrolled on his panel. The present position must be graver than it appears on the surface, for the Lords Spiritual and Temporal do not frequently forsake their nectar for the hurry-scurry of ordinary, practical life.

The answer is that the House of Lords has suddenly become aware of the impending conflict, and is trying to bamboozle the official Labour Party, which, in view of Mr. Ramsay Macdonald's admiration for Royalty, and Mr. Henderson's fulsome piety, may not be an altogether impossible problem. Indeed, a reformed House of Lords would suit the present governing classes very well. Once reformed, and a nice, new stucco Democratic frontage placed in front of the present Tory organization, the Second Chamber could continue its pleasant occupation of hampering all serious progress for yet another century, and perhaps longer.

Real Democrats must see to it that the House of Lords is abolished, and not merely re-upholstered. In a few months' time the Labour Party may be returned to power, and it would not be in office long before it would have ample grounds for justifying a demand for abolition of the House of Lords in one clean sweep. This suggestion of a smaller House of Lords, leaving the relative positions of the two chambers untouched, is a very clever piece of strategy. That the Peers have actually voted for their own reduction is no proof whatever that their Lordships have joined the Suicide Club. On the contrary, the whole move is actuated by a very real sense of self-protection. Democrats must see to it that they are not deceived by this belated zeal for reform on the parts of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and we look to the left wing of the Labour Party to see that when it is a case of really lightening the load of aristocratic and priestly domination, the Party itself shall remain true to Democratic principles.

Lord Russell said in the Upper Chamber, that he thought it would be comforting one day to have Lord Silvertown, better known as Mr. Jack Jones, at his side when facing the Tory Army in the House of Lords. Perhaps so, but Lord Russell's present position of outpost duty is of little consequence. Even if he had the further companionship of Lord Barnes and Lady Susan Lawrence, or Lord Harry Snell, disguised as "Lord Woolwich," the question of ecclesiastical and aristocratic domination would be relatively untouched. For the present governing classes would still be in a majority in the Second Chamber of this country, and hinder, if not destroy, all advanced attempts at legislation.

Democrats will do well to leave the matter of reforming the House of Lords alone, and to concentrate on its abolition. A glance at the Parliamentary records for over a century and a half is a sufficient proof, if it was needed, as to the undemocratic character of the present Chamber. It exists simply to perpetuate the Feudal System, and ensures continued longevity to many belated survivals from earlier centuries. It bestows a spurious glitter on "our old nobility," many of whom are not so old, nor so noble. It helps to perpetuate a tyrannical clerical caste in our midst, and, above all, it imagines that the proper functions of statesmanship is that of hostility to all forms of progress.

It is said that a Chinese brigand imagines that he is civilized if he is the proud possessor of a stolen Ingersoll watch. It may be that some of our Labour leaders suffer from the same delusion when they masquerade in Court dress at Royal functions. That sort of thing may be permissible in guinea-pig politicians seeking office at any price, but when real fighting comes, it is highly inconvenient to be caught wearing the enemy uniform.

The House of Lords is synonymous with aristocratic tyranny. As a body it never had the slightest sympathy with Labour or Democracy. It showed its unmistakable hostility against the removal of civil disabilities from Roman Catholics, Jews, and Free-

thinkers. It was hostile to Free Education, and it took over a century to convince these aristocrats that woman was a human being. Even such humanitarian measures as the abolition of flogging women in public, flogging women in prison, or the use of the lash in the Army and Navy were too revolutionary for their lordships, spiritual and temporal. Scores of measures for the bettering of the condition of the working class have been opposed by these medieval and reactionary aristocrats, and their political record is sufficient to carry its own condemnation.

This clever bid for another century of power on the part of the House of Lords is, we hope, foredoomed to failure. Few worse misfortunes can befall any people than this of possessing an aristocratic institution in its midst that constantly hinders and hampers the wheels of progress in the way that the House of Lords does. It is a survival from the past, and the enemy of Democracy, and must be abolished altogether. And if the official Labour Party is too diffident to undertake the long overdue task, the job must be left to the stalwarts of the left wing of the Democratic Army.

A story is told of a Mexican outlaw abducting an American lady, who duly protested that she was married. "It does not matter that you have ze husband, for he will not be asked. Love is more stronger than the law," retorted the Mexican. So, with the feudal house of aristocrats. It will not be asked to continue its antediluvian activities.

MIMNERMUS.

From Spiritualism to Freethought.

(Concluded from page 827.)

It has always puzzled me—and will probably always do so—whether even the *best* of men and women are honest with us and with themselves? Does Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, does Mr. Hannen Swaffer, and does Mr. Robert Blatchford (I choose the three best brains in the Spiritualistic movement to-day) actually *believe* in the Glory Land? If they whole-heartedly had faith in a beautiful, happy, painless abiding place for the dead, waiting to receive them the very moment they expired, don't you think they'd be dreadfully in earnest to get there?

I would!

Life may be sweet enough—it is!—but is it not a little too materialistic for most of us? We could quite gladly dispense with the body, and its tedious need of two or three square meals a day. Think of its trivial but deucedly annoying ailments—even when we are reputed to be in normal health! When I front the mirror each morning to shave, and when the safety-blade is not up to concert pitch of a cutting edge, I'd like to be in a land where hair does not grow in undesirable places.

All joking apart, the man or woman of culture and education—Messrs. Conan Doyle, Swaffer and Blatchford being these, in a marked degree—realizes that the keenest and most satisfying joys of life are *mental*. To the being of poetic nature "dreamland" is oftener more real and compensating than the actual waking and working hours.

That fact once being admitted: if we believed, heart and mind, that death ends all pain and want: that our dearest friends are waiting to welcome us: that the body will cease to annoy and irk us: that we shall with death be "pure spirit": why, oh why do we wait one week, one day, one hour, one moment for the end to come?

Is it that this belief is *NOT* belief—but only *hope*?

That would be, at least, my solution of the contrariness of human conduct. If Mr. Robert Blatchford

—for whom I have the warmest affection—lost the sure hope of meeting his wife "over there," he would inevitably lose his belief in the immortality of the spirit. Cause would at once work its natural effect. For in his inmost heart *every* mortal knows, whether he label himself Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Spiritualist, Theosophist or Rationalist, that there is no *incontrovertible* evidence of any Glory Land at all! Christian and Occultist alike live by faith alone.

Suppose you now that, instead of allowing the missionaries to have had full sway over the spiritual destinies of the West African negro, Government had from the first prohibited all teaching of religion? I can imagine the hard-cased trader, cynical and (whatever his infant training may have been) thoroughly sceptical about the soul, laughing away, through the long and patient years, every one of the native's images of wood and stone. The black man would have been weaned from superstition. He would have been taught that there is no actual evidence of spirit functioning after death—that there is not a scrap of proof that the "phantom-being" exists, once the body has gone back to its natural elements. By this time, the West African native might have been well on the way toward an honourable rationalism. He would have been one of the sanest-minded beings in a more or less insane world.

But along comes the missionary. And what happens? He makes utterly unsupported statements—his foundations of belief being a "book," which, his friends have had translated at tremendous expense into hundreds of African dialects. This book has been given to missionary and mummer as the source of all knowledge . . .

So alas! the Bible takes the place of Wisdom: and as the native cannot possibly be developed into a freely reasoning being until his position ceases to be a "subject" one, he takes the Bible to heart—to his own undoing!

One thing, howbeit, is very certain. I have never met, in nearly thirty years of West African residence, the black man, educated or ignorant, who will credit "the resurrection of the body." He laughs at the absurdity of the notion. He knows that dust returns to dust—and he has not so very long ago enjoyed his *pièce de resistance* of human flesh. Yet he cannot help but believe (until he is scientifically trained) in the "astral" body. In dreams and visions he is visited by the friends who are dead—and he has yet to be taught that these are the workings only of the brain-cells, which have recorded past events, and hence which cannot obliterate them, while the brain remains alive.

But in real essence the black man remains an animist. That which the Occultist calls the spirit, and the Christian calls the soul, and which is an entity separate from the body, is seen by the African in every form of life. He would not deny immortality to his dog—nor would he deny a "spirit" to thunder and lightning, to torrent and forest and fire. Once let the black man realize that each individual life, on every plane of being, commences with the union of two cells (neither of which by any stretch of imagination can be called a soul) and he will pointedly ask: "And now, friend, how did two soulless cells make a soul?"

He will reason—and rightly—that there is life in *everything*: and that life is simply force and movement. Hence he will see that it is quite impossible to draw a line between the simpler and higher forms of life and say of the one "No soul!" and of the other "Soul!"

A Roman Catholic doctor, with whom I used to parley a year ago here, was wont to thump the table in a ten-knot gale of scientific rage at me, and cry: "Don't tell *me*, sir! A man has a *soul*! An animal

has no soul! No soul, damn you! *There's* the difference! Jesus—God has told us so!"

And to all my mild probings for the resting-place of that soul—pineal gland, liver, heart, lungs?—he would frown an awful admonition, the while he raved: "I can't discuss such questions with you, sir. You are neither a scientist nor a Christian! You will know when you die!"

Could anything be more ambiguous? Or less satisfying?

But what then do I believe to-day? That life is utterly futile? That man is the product of uncontrollable forces—forces which he, himself, had no hand in making? That his obscure origin, his nebulous end, his present very real sorrows and very real joys are quite beyond his control? That not all the intensity of his thought, not all the energy of his will, not all the purity of his aspiration toward goodness can preserve his life, his individuality, beyond the grave?

Assuredly!—with wide reservations! Moreover, that his infinite labours in art, literature and science must suffer eclipse when our tiny universe has fallen into ruins?

Again, assuredly—but with even wider reservations!

For . . . inside the chilly walls of this prison of apparent hopelessness, and upon the foundations of this seeming despair, man's indomitable spirit can build, has built, and will go on building his mundane happiness. He has no need of the celestial variety. The more unyielding the pang, the more exalted the thrill of release from the pang. Hence man to-day, emancipated from the shackles of superstition is growingly aware of his inherent powers—his skill in criticism, his imagination in creation, his power to manage his own destiny for good or ill. In this self-appraisal lies his sense of superiority: that is his alone. Nature is not blindly and resistlessly forcing her way into utterance: but that he, and he only, among the creatures that live, is able to control his presence on the earth.

That Man, in the mass, is partially ignorant of this mighty truth, does not make it any less a truth. The necessary power will arrive as self-knowledge becomes more general—and in that hope the Rationalist and the Freethinker goes proudly on his way. For the humanity now emerging from the welter of the past is more joyous, more confident, more "poised" than ever before. And we may confidently look forward to a nobler type still—more sensitive to beauty, more gaily self-confident, more lightly creative, more healthy, more sane.

The past will then be seen to have made us serenely efficient; and our handling of the present will render us splendidly courageous in facing the future.

What could be healthier as a Credo?

Such human perfection, thus portrayed, is obviously not easy of achievement. It comes only slowly. But one fact stands forth robustly apparent—the courageous man, the potentially perfect man is he who feels his own "ego" to be but a small part of world consciousness. Yet this pseudo-despising of himself is the real keynote of his high valuation of all that is good in *others*! Death to such a spirit appears quite a trivial thing, since life itself is so full of glory.

Meanwhile, I am content to go my way, "singing."

And my song is one of both acceptance and resignation!

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

If you can convince me of an error, I shall be glad to change my opinions; for truth is my business, and right information hurts none. He that continues in ignorance and mistake is he that suffers harm.

Marcus Aurelius.

The Tardy Recognition of the Rights of Animals.

ONE still occasionally meets with people who deplore the passing of the good old times when George III was king. All the vaunted progress even of the nineteenth century is to some a delusion and a snare. Still, although the old world stands sadly in need of amendment, it has made amazing advances in many directions.

Improvement is noteworthy, for example, in modern man's attitude towards the lower animals. Formerly despised as mere brute beasts, specially designed by God to minister to man's pleasure and profit; the now admitted relationship of humanity with apes and monkeys, emphasizes the right of animals to kind and considerate treatment.

Yet, even in England, where the lower animals are better cared for than in most foreign lands, justice to animals is of comparatively recent growth. During several centuries a few bright pioneer spirits protested against man's inhumanity to "the beasts that perish." But they seemed solitary voices striving in vain. Pepys and Evelyn, the famous diarists, expressed disgust at the sorry spectacles presented by bull, bear, and horse-baitings, cock and dog-fighting, with other demoralizing popular amusements so widespread in the seventeenth century. The humanist thinker, John Locke, in his *Thoughts on Education*, stressed the importance of training children in humane principles. "Children," he writes, "should from the beginning be bred up in abhorrence of killing or tormenting any living creature."

In the eighteenth century Dr. Hildrup published his work *Free Thoughts Upon the Brute Creation*, and the splendid painter, Hogarth, in his "Four Stages of Cruelty," tried to teach his contemporaries that maltreatment of animals makes men callous to the sufferings of humankind. "If," asserted Hogarth, "my pictures have the effect of checking cruelty to dumb animals, I am more proud of being their author than I should be of having painted Raphael's Cartoons."

Various reformers from time to time sought to enlighten the people, but they were usually dismissed as visionaries. In 1772, the Rev. James Granger, an Oxfordshire vicar, preached a sermon against cruelty to animals. The vicar tells us how two large Christian congregations received his message. "The mention of dogs and horses," he states, "was censured as a prostitution of the dignity of the pulpit, and considered as a proof of the author's insanity." "It is strange that beasts," continued the clergyman, "especially those of the most useful kind, that do so much good for, and suffer so much from man, have never, at least to my knowledge, had an advocate from the pulpit, although they have so just and urgent a claim to it, and cannot speak for themselves."

In commenting on this experience, Edward G. Fairholme and Wellesley Pain in their interesting and instructive volume, *A Century of Work for Animals*, pertinently remark: "From this we may fairly infer that the clergy had overlooked the subject, and that fact is certainly 'strange,' as the preacher suggested, although many thousands of sermons on kindness to animals have since been preached, the subject is not a popular one with the clergy even in our time."

Animals at this period enjoyed no legal protection. An animal was regarded as property, and a man could do what he pleased with his own. A person prosecuted for injurious treatment of animals was liable to penalties only for malicious damage to his master's or neighbour's property.

A case cited to illustrate the then legal position is that of a ruffian who appeared at Bow Street, in 1790.

charged with the horrible offence of savagely beating a horse, and tearing out the poor creature's tongue. The evidence was conclusive, but as "malice" could not be proved, the magistrate was unable to convict.

The great utilitarian sage and jurist, Jeremy Bentham, like his friend and fellow criminal law reformer, Sir Samuel Romily, was an animal lover. Bentham insisted that cruelty to animals should be subject to the criminal law. He stated, in his *Penal Law*, that "We have begun by attending to the condition of slaves; we shall finish by softening that of all the animals which assist our labours and supply our wants."

Thomas Young's *Essays on Humanity to Animals*, Mrs. Trimmer's *History of the Robins*, a book for children, 1786, and a little later, the Freethinker, Mary Woolstonecraft's *Elements of Morality*, all assisted in awakening the moral sentiments of the time.

In 1800, Pulteney introduced a measure in Parliament to prohibit bull-baiting. This appears the earliest endeavour to legislate in favour of animals. Nearly every centre of population possessed its bull-ring, right down to recent times. An old and favourite pastime dating back to Plantagenet, and probably Norman days, its suggested suppression was deeply resented. Although Pulteney's Bill was supported by Sheridan, the great playwright, in Parliament, it was badly beaten. Windham saw no necessity for reform. Canning, enlightened as he was in other directions, wished the measure rejected. He told the House that he considered the amusement most excellent. "It inspired courage and produced a nobleness of sentiment and elevation of mind."

In 1802, another attempt was made to legislate on the question, but without success. In 1809, Lord Chancellor Erskine, who, when at the Bar had defended Thomas Paine, now introduced a Bill in the Upper Chamber for "Preventing Wanton and Malicious Cruelty to Animals." This measure passed the Lord's, but failed to secure a majority in the Commons.

A society was then formed in Liverpool for the suppression of cruelty to animals, but soon expired. This body was powerless in the absence of any legal penalty on those who mistreated animals.

Richard Martin, in 1821, brought in a Bill to penalize the wanton cruelty, so prevalent, to horses. The House of Commons jeered at the measure, and fifth-rate jokes at its expense were greeted with tumultuous merriment. With mock solemnity it was suggested by members, that dogs and cats, or even asses ought to have been included within the scope of the measure. This almost incredible clowning was, at the time, regarded as the proper treatment for such preposterous proposals.

Martin, however, was a bonny fighter, and he gave his critics as good as they sent. Moreover, he persevered in his humane crusade. In 1822, his labours were crowned with glory, and the first legislative enactment in any modern State for the protection of animals (3 Geo. iv. Chap. 71) was placed upon the Statute Books of England. Martin also attempted to abolish the death penalty for forgery, and to secure counsel for prisoners charged with criminal offences. These reforms he failed to accomplish, but he prepared the way for the victories of his successors.

The Act of 1822 was Martin's sole legislative achievement. He later attempted to prohibit bull-baiting and dog-fighting. When, in 1824, he strove to prevent cruelty to monkeys, dogs, cats, and other mammals, he was facetiously advised in Parliament to include rats and other vermin.

The founder of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was not Martin, but Arthur Broome. For some years the Society was seriously

incommoded through lack of financial support, and Broome suffered the indignity of imprisonment for debt on its behalf. He died in 1837. It seems strange, but we are assured that, "His death is not referred to in any report of the Society, and all efforts to discover his grave have failed."

Commencing in a humble way, in 1834, in an organized form, the spirit of justice to animals has made gratifying strides. Societies for the protection of animals now exist in every European State, and in many Asiatic territories. In the United States, Canada, Australia, South Africa, Egypt, India, Japan and other lands, the movement has spread and has long exercised considerable influence on public sentiment.

For centuries it was the heartless custom in rural Scotland and Ireland, to attach animals to the plough by the tail. Ultimately, after the sullen obstinacy of the peasantry had been slowly overcome, harness was attached to the shoulders of beasts of burden.

At one time, if a London street-boy saw a sparrow he was not happy unless he threw a stone at it. Now, children are encouraged, both in the home and the school, to love and cherish furred and feathered things. Much remains to do. Yet, when we glance back over the past century, the marked progress made fills us with faith for greater humanity in the future of the world.

T. F. PALMER.

Acid Drops.

Mr. H. Hollingsworth recently offered the Borough of Lowestoft the gift of a public park, one of the conditions being the provision of reasonable facilities for games on Sundays. Of course, the business interests of the clergy were aroused, and the Council was urged to reject the gift unless this provision was withdrawn. On the Council itself some of the members ventilated the usual nonsense about the feelings of Christians, defence of the day of rest, consequences on character, etc., oblivious of the fact that there is not a town where Sunday games have been allowed where the consequences have not been found to be altogether beneficial to everyone—except the parsons. In the end, the Council decided to accept the gift by a vote of nineteen to fourteen. Mr. Hollingsworth had informed the Council that if it did not accept the gift, he would develop the park as a commercial proposition and still have Sunday games. Bravo! Mr. Hollingsworth.

Anything seems good enough for a parson to repeat so long as it is something of a religious character and sufficiently idiotic. Thus Canon Newbolt revived, the other day, the story of the sailor who was swallowed by a whale, and afterwards rescued. The following appeared in the *Daily Mail* for December 15:—

Mr. A. S. E. Ackermann, an engineer, of Victoria Street, Westminster, has written to Canon Newbolt, of St. Paul's Cathedral, challenging the accuracy of what is known as the Bartley whale story.

Canon Newbolt, in his sermon on Sunday last, referred to the story as related by the late Sir Francis Fox in his *Sixty Years of Engineering Science and Social Work*. He was referring to the repudiation of the story of Jonah and the whale in Bishop Gore's new Biblical Commentary.

The narrative of Sir Francis was quoted in the *Daily Mail* yesterday. It states that a seaman named James Bartley, while on a whaling expedition off the Falkland Islands in 1891, was swallowed by a whale and next day found alive but unconscious in the whale's stomach.

Mr. Ackerman, in his letter to Canon Newbolt, says:—

If you had read Sir Francis's account in a critical manner you would have found it open to many grave objections. In 1925 I put a query in *Notes and Queries*, with the result that on January 15, 1926, Canon A. Lukyn Williams replied as follows:—

"In 1906 I investigated this and got as far as the then owners of the ship and the widow of its captain

at the time that Bartley was supposed to be swallowed. As neither the owners nor the widow had ever heard of the incident, I think we may safely assume that it was a *canard* pure and simple. See the *Expository Times* for August 1906 and February 1907."

And in the *Daily Telegraph* of February 27, 1928, the following letter appeared:—

"Jonah's Fish. Sir,—If you think it of sufficient interest to your readers to mention the fact, it should be known that in the issue of the *Expository Times* for February, 1907, there is to be found a letter from the wife of the captain of the *Star of the East*, who states that she was on board that vessel during the whole of the whaling expeditions, and that the story of James Hartley's being swallowed by a whale is untrue from beginning to end.—(Sgd.) Albert R. Stegall, Holy Trinity Vicarage, South Shields. February 22."

Canon Newbolt said to a *Daily Mail* reporter yesterday that he had received many letters, mostly giving support to what he had commented upon. "It is a very old controversy," he added. "I knew the late Sir Francis Fox as a man worthy of credence. I am afraid I have never heard of Mr. Ackermann."

Canon Newbolt seems determined to have his yarn, and it is hard to suppress the suspicion of deliberate trickery. Thus, he says he knew Sir Francis Fox as a man worthy of credence, but he does not know Mr. Ackermann. The implication is obvious. But it may be pointed out that the real contradiction comes from Canon Williams, and a South Shields clergyman, both evidently of a more straightforward type than is Canon Newbolt. Honesty in the pulpit is very, very, rare.

Sir Josiah Stamp recently lectured on the "Economic Background of the Gospels." Very interesting, no doubt; but even more so would be a lecture on the economic background of the Christian Churches and of Foreign Missions, revealing what a wonderfully successful commercial undertaking is the saving of souls. The business having been started by a Nazarenic tramp would make the narrative especially interesting to young Christian business men, and to Lord Birkenhead.

The Rev. Dr. H. B. Workman, illuminated by the *Light of Modern Thought*, tells the world something very precious. The object of the Bible, says he, is not to save the human brain nor to think out great problems, but to evolve a God-consciousness. The rev. gent. is right in saying what the Bible doesn't do. The chief thing that the Bible has done is to addle human brains. "To evolve a God-consciousness" may be a pretty name for the process, but it is not quite so revealing as the name we have given it.

Christmas comes but once a year, and when it comes it brings—a little more profit to the myth-mongers. "O come, let us adore Him!" But please remember, brethren, to make your adoration as substantial as possible.

A Christian contemporary thinks that a most acute problem is how to revitalize the prayer life of the Churches. "How can the practice of prayer be revived?" it asks. What a curious conundrum to offer the world, when the *Daily Express* has so recently proved that people of all sorts believe in and practice prayer!

Full-blown commissioned officers of the Salvation Army are to gather together in holy council shortly, to decide whether 'tis the Lord's desire that the entail of the Booth autocracy shall be broken. Rumour has it that there be men in the "Army" who disbelieve in the divine right of Booths.

In a woman's journal, Kathleen Norris asks: "Are Wives as Important as Their Husbands?" That such a question should be asked at all, shows how far the world has travelled since the days of the pious Early Victorians. Still, no Christian person should have

difficulty in finding the correct answer. It is quite plainly recorded in the inspired writings of St. Paul.

The B.B.C.'s taboo on entertainment during Church hours doesn't now prevent users of the larger wireless sets from getting amusement. Hilversmar, a Continental broadcasting station, is catering for the non-pious English listeners. Messrs. Brandes, organizers of the entertainment, received last month 1,300 appreciative letters. This suggests to us that it would not be difficult for listeners' associations in England to organize a huge petition to the B.B.C., asking for better consideration of the desires of non-religious listeners on Sunday.

From *Wonders of Animal Life*, we extract the following, which may possibly be useful to Christian Evidence lecturers expiating on the loving-kindness of Deity:—

Finned Death that Moves in the Twilight Under the Waters. Out of the dimness of the sea there comes suddenly an evil shape, built for power and speed. The head ends in a point like the blade of a spear, and at its base are two eyes that never change from their one fixed expression which means hunger. Beneath comes the mouth, furnished with ghastly sets of teeth to serve this thing which seems made only for horror.

Everything in the world was once a thought in the Universal mind.

Bishop Fiske, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, very unfairly blames the pew for the puerilities of the pulpit. "The laity are responsible," he says in his *Jeremiad*, "for the clergyman's loss of faith." Mr. Gordon King (author and dramatist) gives a frank answer to the Bishop in the *Forum*. Mr. King, trained for the Baptist ministry, is a young Freethinker of splendid promise. His article is the answer of science, and particularly psychological science to the episcopal grumblings. Mr. King echoes the prediction of Charles Bradlaugh by saying:—

"In so far as we remain in any sense a Christian country, the indications are that we shall presently become a Roman Catholic country like France, with a huge Agnostic opposition upon whom the real burden of our intellectual virility will rest."

The Forum is to be congratulated on its admission of so uncompromising an attack on religion.

Dr. Downey, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool, in his first Pastoral Letter, makes it quite plain that so long as people grow up faithful followers of the Roman Church, nothing else matters much. He is particularly down on what he calls the idolatry of health, which makes the securing of a healthy body the first consideration. The following, which we take from a report in the *Liverpool Mercury* for December 10, is worth noting:—

The Catholic citizen cannot well acquiesce, even in the name of hygiene, in the building of palatial schools at a cost prohibitive to the Catholic purse, if this means the ultimate disappearance of our own schools, with that Catholic atmosphere which we have hitherto maintained at so great a price. Nor is a Catholic at liberty to advocate, on grounds of improved sanitation, physical culture or social betterment, lavishly equipped denominational schools for children who have not yet attained to the use of reason. To take an infant, at the most impressionable period of its life, and deliberately cut it off from all religious influences in its education, for the advantages of brighter environment, would indeed be to scandalize one of the little ones, by subordinating its spiritual wellbeing to its physical welfare.

Which means that the chief thing is to see that children grow up just as stupid as were their parents, and so become faithful followers of the Church. The Archbishop would rather have a Catholic mind in a diseased body than he would have a non-Catholic mind in a healthy one. And that, we suppose, is good sound Christian doctrine. But it is only Roman Catholics who are honest enough to say so. The other brands of Christians think the same kind of thing, but are too hypocritical to admit it.

From the *Schoolmistress* :—

A letter from a correspondent assures me that the use of the "tawse" upon girls in Scottish schools is not by any means unusual. "It is used both as a corrective and a stimulant." She had a little relative from a Glasgow school staying with her . . . and I quote below some of the things the child said :—

"You get it for inattention, for sleepiness, for glancing up from your work when the head-master comes in, for nervousness at the sight of a test paper, or during mental arithmetic. You fear it when you are lying awake at night, after a test, when you know you have done badly; or when you have to return to school after a holiday and have got soft; or when you have had ten strokes in one day, all on one hand; or when the order goes forth for left-hand strapping because the next lesson is writing—you see, the left hand is so much weaker than the right, and the tawse is very sore."

The Scots are notoriously a pious people, with an inherited tradition of Calvinistic stern discipline. Scottish children evidently being full of "original sin," quite naturally the method employed for exorcising it should take the form of beating it out with a thick leather strap. What some Scottish educationalists appear to need is educating into gentler ways of imparting knowledge.

The following excerpts from *Contemporary Portraits*, by Frank Harris, describing an interview with Thomas Carlyle, will interest all Freethinkers :—

"Curious," said Carlyle, "that none of the old Jewish writers or prophets had any humour: they were all too serious."

"Do you think Shakespeare greater than Jesus?" I asked. "Indeed, I do," was Carlyle's emphatic reply, "and so do you." (I shook my head but he persisted). "What do we know of Jesus? Just nothing! I prefer Shakespeare; he was larger, richer. Jesus had no humour. He had no Falstaff in him; I wad na gie up the ragged company for all the disciples."

"But Jesus went deeper," I replied.

"I don't admit it," Carlyle persisted. "All the Jewish morality was tribal, narrow, an eye for an eye, stupid pedantic formula, and the Christian 'turn the other cheek,' mere absurdity. I see no greatness in any of it. All the best phrases put in His mouth were old sayings of Jewish sages, and the testimony of the gospels is of the weakest—altogether untrustworthy."

And when Harris talked to Carlyle about the unhappy history of Jane Welch Carlyle, the old man wept tears of regret that he had so seriously misjudged and wronged :—

"My girl, my puir girl . . . and the worst of it all is, there is no other life in which to atone to her—my puir girlie."

Christian legends about the piety of American Generals during the late war are going the way of George Washington's fabled little hatchet. It seems that Captain Jack Phillips's last words were less pious than was at first reported. He really said: "Belay that god-dam racket," and not, "To-day I shall be with God." And now Sergeant McClure explains what is meant by the yarn that General Lawton "died with the name of God on his lips." Yes, his last words were, "Jesus! I'm shot!"

Bishop Howells, of Nigeria, is quoted by a missionary Society as saying: "A nation cannot rise above its womanhood." True; and the comparatively low culture level of the masses in Christian nations reveals the truth of the Bishop's assertion. Seeking a cause for this, we discover that the Christian Churches have, for 1900 years, been disseminating Old Testament notions and Pauline precepts that are mainly responsible for the subjection of woman.

At an Exeter meeting of Wesleyans, a Mr. G. P. Dymond said that Methodists "need to recapture the note of joy and victory in our Methodist witness." This recapturing business is none too easy in these days, when fear of hell-fire is rapidly disappearing. Modern Metho-

dists find it hard to squeal for joy now that they are hazily uncertain about what they have been "saved" from.

The Rev. Dr. R. J. Campbell, after quoting a prayer by William Canton, remarks in a weekly paper :—

Could we pray a better, simpler prayer than this, that the All-wise and All-good Who has brought us into life will guide us through to the end, holding us as it were by the hand? It is a prayer we cannot outgrow.

Thousands of men and women who are now Freethinkers have outgrown the weakling's craving for supernatural support. Freethought has taught them to stand erect without expecting aid from heavenly hands. Dr. Campbell's readers, it seems, have not yet grown to mental adulthood.

A pious reporter specializing in "Peeps at Living Methodism," has taken a peep at the Wesleyan Church, Jackson's Lane, Highgate, and seems to have found it, not living but almost dying. The pastor, it appears "has done every mortal thing he can to solve the problem of filling the church." But the problem remains. The "outsiders" refuse to be herded into the Wesleyan pen, despite the thrilling attractions of "most helpful and inspiring services," and brotherhood—not to mention all the latest scandal after the service is over. Last year, we are told, the church organized a house-to-house visitation, the whole suburb being circularized. But the majority of Highgate people still refuse to patronize the Wesleyan kind of Jesus. The "peeping" reporter, however, knows the answer to the problem—the character of the neighbourhood is largely responsible. Highgate people are the sort "who go in for golf, motoring, tennis, Sunday concerts, Sunday evening 'listening-in.'" You know, the kind who simply crave for their Sunday dose of broadcast spiritual tonic—or so the B.B.C. would have us believe. Of course, nothing can be done with "outsiders" of that type. Now, if only they were poor, half-starving and ignorant slum folk, there would be some hope of catching clients—especially if food and clothing were judiciously distributed.

Nearer, my God, to Thee.

Old saying: "The poor are nearest God."

NEARER, my God, to Thee!
Nearer to Thee!
Only a meagre purse
Falling to me.
True if that saying be,
Poor folk are nearest Thee,
I'm near to Thee.

Though, ere my wings be shed,
My sun go down;
Poverty shadow me,
Ever in frown;
I in the barren time
Whistle that little rhyme,
Nearer to Thee!

Promises broken; friends
Cold or remiss;
Fortune, my golden-hair'd,
Gloomy as Dis;
Never a look she throws
Sweet as an autumn rose,
Never a kiss.

Forward, the darkening day
Only I see;
Treading the heavenward track,
Nearer to Thee.
But, my old Deity,
Thine is rough company,
Good though it be.

H. BARBER.

Freethinkers' Annual Dinner.

THE Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society will take place this year on Saturday, January 19, at the Midland Grand Hotel, St. Pancras. There will be the usual high class musical entertainment, interspersed with speeches, and if the function is not of the most enjoyable kind, it will be something new in the history of N.S.S. dinners. The price of the tickets will be 8s. It is expected that, with the week-end rail-fare in universal use, there will be many visitors from the provinces. This will give an excellent opportunity for London and Provincial friends to meet.

Tickets are now on sale at the N.S.S. office, or at the office of this paper, and we venture to express the hope that application will be made for these as early as possible. The arrival of numbers of visitors at the last moment means extra trouble to those responsible, and some little disorganization. May we seriously press this point upon all interested? We should like to see the 1929 dinner establish a record for attendance.

CHAPMAN COHEN,
President, N.S.S.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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

J. BRIGHTON.—Your letter, with those of other Branch Secretaries, arrived one day too late. We are glad to hear that Mr. Mann's lectures made so excellent an impression, and that the audiences were good, in spite of the wretched weather.

A.T.A.—Thanks for cutting. A much greater Christian than the lady in question claimed to believe Christianity because it was impossible. There is really no credit due to one for believing in anything that is credible. It is, for instance, considered a proof of profound religious devotion to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him"; which is about equal to saying, "Though I know the man is a liar, yet will I believe him to be truthful."

A. CLARK.—Mr. Rosslyn Mitchell is evidently annoyed, but he does not meet our criticism, if it is us he has in mind. To be quite plain, we should dearly like to have the name of the lady friend of his who, after suffering from an internal growth of some years' standing, on the eve of an operation prayed to God, and the lump had disappeared the next morning. Mr. Mitchell is quite at liberty to think what he pleases, but statements of fact are on a different footing. There is no rule of controversy, or even of honesty, that gives a man the same freedom in that direction.

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.

The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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

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

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

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

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.

In spite of our notice, we received a batch of announcements of lectures on Tuesday morning, one day after we had gone to press. Some people appear to read notices only to ignore them. That is, if they read them at all.

Here are a couple of letters from two readers, Bedford and Birmingham, which explain themselves:—

No. 1.

Your article on the subject of the B.B.C. in the issue of the *Freethinker* for December 16, is on your usual scale of excellence. But are you not "fanning the air?" You write as if you were addressing a decently reasonable Corporation, which is desirous of rendering a good service of news, or any matters of interest, to the British public. Nothing of the sort. It is a commercial proposition backed up by the Government, whose whole idea is to make money, never mind how. Any arguments, therefore, based on principle are out of place. If you have any considerable backing, why not advise your readers to have nothing to do with the B.B.C. until it has some sense of fairness and decency --(if ever!) Loss of revenue will soon bring about the desired result. Nothing else will.

No. 2.

After bombarding the B.B.C. with letters and news cuttings, respectful and otherwise, without effect, I scrapped my set, and bought a gramophone. Now I have a programme at my own convenience, and better than any broadcasted by the B.B.C. I know of quite a number of other people, not Freethinkers by any means, who are buying gramophones because they are disgusted with the B.B.C. programmes; thought all have not yet scrapped their sets.

If the B.B.C. receives a thousand such letters, it will probably acknowledge having received two or three. We remember the Rev. "Dick" Sheppard's twenty, which under pressure he discovered should have been 200.

Mr. George Schilling, speaking at a meeting recently, recounted how sympathetically Robert G. Ingersoll had expressed himself with the Chicago anarchists, the seven who were sentenced to be hanged. When the Freethinker Governor, Altgeld, "pardoned" the survivors then in jail, he demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt, that a grave miscarriage of justice had happened. Ingersoll gave good advice, unfortunately not heeded at the trial, in regard to challenging jurors. "Don't be afraid of millionaires on the jury. They are far more likely to be fearlessly just than a subordinate who thinks he will lose his job if he gives an unpopular vote. When the Great Day of Judgment arrives, Schilling, I'm hoping I shall have to face the Lord God himself. I know perfectly well He will say, 'Why Bob, old man, I think you did quite the right thing.' But if God Almighty is busy, and hands me over to one of his clerks, I'll be in hell for all eternity."

The West Ham Branch has fixed up Saturday, December 29, for a visit to the South Kensington Natural History Museum. There are still several vacancies in the party, which will be a limited one, and those joining will meet in the entrance hall to the museum at 3.30. We can conceive many worse ways of spending an afternoon than going through part of that magnificent building under expert guidance. It would take a month to go through it thoroughly.

A Heathen's Thoughts on Christianity.

(Continued from page 822.)

WHAT IT WAS ALL ABOUT.

THE extraordinary thing is that the events recorded in the Gospel narrative appear to have made no impression at the time, despite the prodigies said to have accompanied them. No one seems to have known anything about them. There was a number of contemporary historians and philosophers who lived about then, yet none of these makes the slightest allusion to the astonishing phenomena alleged to have occurred in Palestine.

The Gospel writers cannot be cited as witnesses, for it is not known that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote the works attributed to them, or whether these gentlemen really lived. Paul—if he ever lived—never saw Christ. No one knows whether Paul wrote anything. The writings which bear his name are borrowed from the so-called "Acts of Paul," written no one knows by whom or when. It is the same with all the rest of the New Testament.

There are no Jewish witnesses. The Jews seem to have known nothing about it until long after the time when the Christian Church began to assert itself. There are certain references in the Talmud, but these were all written long after the appearance of the Christian literature. There are twelve lines only in the Jewish historian Josephus, a Roman citizen, and these are, by the admission even of Christian authorities, a late forgery, an interpolation, as the condition of the MS. plainly indicates. There are eight lines in Tacitus' Annals, also strongly suspected of being an interpolation. These are the only non-Christian references.

Justin, writing in the second century, when the story was evidently beginning to circulate, but not yet written down in the form we have it, makes a Jewish disputant say: "Ye follow an empty rumour, and make a Christ for yourselves. If he were born and lived somewhere, he is entirely unknown." Thus there have always been Jews who denied (when they dared), and, as I have instanced, who deny to-day, that anything of the kind ever occurred in Palestine, or that such a person as Jesus Christ ever lived.

But, what was it all about? The Jews certainly did not know. They had no idea that the legend of the Garden of Eden involved such a catastrophe as the "fall" of man from a state of perfection into a state of total depravity that merited their god's eternal wrath and damnation. And it is quite certain that the larger Heathen world outside Palestine did not, for they were unaware of this particular, small, tribal god.

It was not until the Christian Church took shape and adopted the Jewish Jehovah, that the idea of the "fall," and all the rest of it, became gradually established. Exactly how, or why, this came about, we shall probably never know. It was undoubtedly some Jewish fanatic who started the movement. Paul is blamed, but since there is no better evidence for his existence than there is for that of Christ, we cannot be sure. It is doubtful whether anyone really "began" it in the sense that, say, Madame Blavatsky vamped up Theosophy. The Christian movement seems to have been a growth of a new species of plant, as it were, from seeds that were already there. It may even have been taking shape long before the year "One" of its era. We shall probably never learn the history of its earliest stages. Had the Alexandrian Library not been destroyed by the Christians in the fourth century, we might have known something more definite.

What Christianity was like in the earliest days we

thus do not know for certain, but we can guess pretty well from its subsequent history. We do know, however, that there was no kind of unity even at the start. There was sectarian fighting all round before any of the books of the New Testament were written. We read of it in the Epistles and the Acts. The early conflicts were between the rival followers of Peter and Paul, or over doctrines associated with their names, faith as opposed to good works, resurrection or no resurrection, and other matters incapable of settlement because divorced from reason and common sense.

Among these questions were: whether the god they worshipped consisted of three persons or only one (second century); whether Christ had one composite nature, or two distinct ones (fourth century); whether, after the incarnation of Christ, all that was human in him became merged in the divine (fifth century); whether Christ was the actual or only the "adopted" son of the god (eighth century). And so on, and so forth, right down to modern times, scores of jangling sects, divided over idiotic, meaningless, hair-splitting imbecilities, and always ready and willing to cut each others' throats. The only thing upon which they would, then as to-day, temporarily unite was in the persecution and murder of sane and rational-minded men who realize the frantic folly of Christianity in all its manifestations.

The nature of these conflicts is evidence that Christianity did not grow, as a tree grows, from a single seed, that is to say from the definite, concrete teachings of a single person, and then branch out into exotic sects, as from a well-defined "trunk," as is the case with what is called "Northern" Buddhism. It formed gradually, as a mist or a fog forms, out of common elements over a wide-spread area. The old religions, and the gods of Egypt, Greece and Rome, were dying, or rather, were undergoing a kind of metamorphic fusion. Rome was the centre of civilization in Europe and parts of Western Asia, practically the whole of the vast Asiatic continent, and the whole of Southern America, being left out of account as unknown.

When the Roman secular power allied itself with the predominant Christian sect in Rome, in the third century, this sect naturally gained the upper hand, and was not long in asserting it, and so we got the Roman Church, as we have it now, overshadowing all others. The one exception was the Greek or Eastern Church, which had never accepted the Pope's supremacy, and it differs from the Roman Church in some important doctrinal and ritualistic particulars; and, of course, it maintains that it is the "only true Church of Christ." These hair-splitting differences over incomprehensible absurdities need not concern us here. It is with the Roman Church, which bulks more largely in the world's history, that we have most to do.

E. UPASAKA.

(To be continued.)

The priesthood in all religions sings the same anthem. First, the abuses are stoutly defended; but when the ground is no longer tenable, then these abuses form no part of the holy faith. If, however, they are always found in its company, you may as well say that the cat's skin is not the cat; the creature will make horrible cries if you attempt to strip it off, and perhaps will die of the operation.—W. S. Landor.

I sent my soul through the invisible,
Some letter of that after-life to spell,
And by-and-bye my soul returned to me,
And answered—I myself am Heaven and Hell.

Omar Khayyám.

The ignorant call him a heretic whom they cannot refute.—Campanella.

A Great Injustice.

THE appeal against the order of Sir C. Biron, the Bow Street magistrate, that copies of Miss Radclyffe Hall's novel, *The Well of Loneliness*, seized by the police, should be destroyed, was dismissed by Sir R. J. Wallace, who presided over a bench consisting of twenty-two magistrates, including two women. Sir R. J. Wallace described the book as "disgusting" and "obscene," and "prejudicial to the morals of the community."

We are not surprised. London magistrates are very carefully selected for their positions. No candidate with the least suspicion of advanced ideas would stand a chance of selection. Only safe men, and women, are chosen, who can be depended upon to stick to the old conservative ideas; special stress being laid on *safe* opinions in sexual matters. Any one who wishes to enlighten the public upon matters of sex will find himself up against the stone wall of the London magistrates. For our part, we should prefer to be tried by a committee of the House of Lords than by a Sanhedrin of magistrates.

Fifty years ago, Charles Bradlaugh was prosecuted for trying to enlighten the people upon the subject of Malthusianism—and it is entirely due to him that it is now legal to publish information concerning birth control. The wealthy Corporation of the City of London employed the best legal skill available, and at enormous expense, in the endeavour to throw him into prison. But Bradlaugh was a matchless fighter, he beat all the best lawyers of his time at their own game; he never made a wrong move, and emerged from the unequal combat victorious. Would that he were alive to-day to take part in the present fight for freedom.

And what has our noble and glorious free press done in the matter? Of the London daily papers, only one, the *Daily Herald*, has made any protest against this outrageous verdict! The fact is, they were afraid of offending those obsessed with the old prudish Victorian ideas by defending the book. And, on the other hand, they were afraid of offending the new and enlightened generation, led by our most distinguished writers and thinkers, by condemning the book; so they remained ingloriously silent, merely reporting the police court proceedings without comment. The cowards.

Three men are responsible for the present position of affairs: Mr. James Douglas, the Editor of the *Sunday Express*; Mr. Jonathan Cape, the publisher of the book, and Sir William Joynson-Hicks, the Home Secretary. It was Mr. James Douglas who started the attack on the book as a press "stunt." We have recorded our opinion of Mr. Douglas in a previous article; suffice it to say that he loudly professes himself a Christian, and a strong advocate of "the view of life revealed by Christ," and yet edits a Sunday paper which would be more appropriately named the "Gazette of Vanity Fair" than the *Sunday Express*, for every page of it is a denial of every ideal and aspiration of the Christian creed; and a defiance of the Christian mode of life, as depicted in the Gospels and taught by Luther, Bunyan and Wesley; and if that does not constitute rank hypocrisy, then we do not understand the meaning of the word.

But it was Mr. Jonathan Cape who made the fatal error. Stampeded into a panic by the fulminations of the pseudo-pious Douglas, and playing for safety, he submitted a copy of *The Well of Loneliness* to the Home Secretary for his consideration. As the writer on "Life and Politics" in the *Nation* (October 27) observed: "Our inimitable 'Jix,' who is the fine flower of cheerful Philistinism . . . ought never to have been allowed the opportunity of interfering, with

his characteristic pose of the horrified elder, with the circulation of *The Well of Loneliness*. It was, I think, a calamity, that subservience to a vulgar Sunday paper 'stunt' made his interference possible."

Every one but Mr. Jonathan Cape must have known what the result would be. For Sir William Joynson-Hicks is an Evangelical Churchman—which is to say, a puritan—and opposed to all discussion of sexual problems. He was the leader, in the House of Commons, of the party who defeated the attempt to alter the Prayer Book in favour of the Ritualists and the High Church party. He has written a book entitled *The Prayer Book Crisis*. Holding the old prudish ideas upon sex that he does, it was a foregone conclusion that he would condemn the book. It would have been a miracle if he had not. If Mr. Cape had taken no notice of the neurotic ravings of Mr. Douglas, we do not believe the book would have been proceeded against, but Mr. Cape's action left the Home Secretary no option; he had to give an opinion, and, of course, as an evangelical puritan he condemned the book.

Mr. Rudyard Kipling and Sir William Willcox, the pathologist, attended at the proceedings to give evidence in favour of the book. They were not allowed to testify. At the previous proceedings at Bow Street, there were thirty-one witnesses, eminent in literature and science, in attendance to give evidence in favour of the book, including Miss Shiela Kaye-Smith, Miss Rose Macaulay, Mr. Hugh Walpole, Mr. Ashley Dukes, Mr. Con. O'Leary, Professor Julian Huxley, Dr. Norman Haire, Mr. Desmond McCarthy, Mr. Caradoc Evans, and Mr. Arnold Dawson. In addition to these, G. B. Shaw, Arnold Bennett, H. G. Wells and many other novelists have protested against the condemnation of this book. Can any one in their senses believe that all the greatest writers of our time have banded together to praise a book if it is really "disgusting" and "obscene" as these magistrates declare? The very idea is ridiculous.

These puritans always urge that they wish to protect the young from corruption. Sir Joynson-Hicks himself, speaking at a meeting of the London Diocesan Council of Youth at the Central Hall on October 15th last, declared: "There must be some limit to the freedom of what a man may write or speak in this great country of ours. That freedom, in my view, must be determined by the question as to whether what is written or spoken makes 'one of the least of these little ones to offend.' That is the criterion." So it comes to this, that all our literature must be written to suit the smallest child! As Arnold Bennett pointed out, if Shakespeare and the Bible were published for the first time their publishers would be prosecuted. Mr. J. C. Squire, who is a great admirer of the Bible, in his review of *The Shorter Cambridge Bible*, in the *Sunday Observer* (December 16), observes truly: "The Old Testament is full of dreadful stories: the disgusting legends or histories of primitive tribes." Yet this is the very book that Sir Joynson-Hicks and Mr. Douglas would force into the hands of every child in the kingdom! No one wishes to place *The Well of Loneliness*—which contains nothing like the filth in the Bible—in children's hands, yet to hear these people talk, one would think that there was a conspiracy of wealthy people to buy 15s. books—the published price—on purpose to throw them into the hands of the first innocent children they meet. Such is the sex-bedevilled imagination of the Christian puritan.

W. MANN.

What light is to the eyes, what love is to the heart, Liberty is to the soul of man. Without it, there come suffocation, degradation, and death.—*Ingersoll*.

Emile Zola.

III.—THE REFORMER.

Few men were so self-reliant and so susceptible as Zola. But from much of the criticism levelled so loosely at his work, it might appear that he was a totally hardened and unfeeling writer, one who wrote of baseness and depravity because he revelled in revealing distressing and displeasing phenomena as such, and not at all as one touched to the core by the sight of the world's social and economic chaos. To anyone reading with serious intentions the perhaps-unsuspected hideousness in the life so revealed, there can be no thought of a pornographical enjoyment, but only an infinite pity that such things can exist in the civilization of which we make so proud a boast. It has been said that Zola never smiles, and it is true also that his readers can scarcely escape the task vested in them, of forcing themselves to think along with the author. Courage, as well as solicitude for hearts not altogether searched out by their own weakness, is necessary, for we must attempt to see truth face to face, "even if it slay us." Like Zola, then, the reader must have a humanitarian susceptibility; but he must additionally be self-reliant; understanding and pitying, but neither overcome by the abstergent process nor overborne by the fuliginous details. The reader who adopts this attitude pays indirect tribute to Zola, for it is thereby apparent that these books of his were far from the easy, almost effortless, creations of an idle mind designing the satisfaction of a morbid and vulgar curiosity that they are held so often to be, but that they were instead "iron wrung from human strife," the product of a supremely strong mind. As it requires in the readers the exercise of strenuous concentration to stand up before their remorseless logic, so it required in the writer the possession of unique gifts of mind and heart and will, for undoubtedly Zola's descent into the mire to find most of his characters left him not coldly unaffected but bearing the impress of the horror which he was able to impart to others at second-hand though in scarcely reduced form.

When Zola parted company with "art for art's sake," a broad humanitarianism gradually entered into his literary conceptions. From the commencement of his literary career the novelist and the reformer were more or less at variance, but he regarded himself at first essentially as a literary man. With the lapse of the years, however, the reforming instinct became more and more powerful. It gathered increased strength in works like *La Terre* and *Germinal*, until at last the humanitarian feeling triumphed over everything else and trampled unrestrainedly upon all literary canons. Just as his first works were hypocritically spurned by the prejudiced, the purblind, and the foolish, who, without seeking to understand the principles on which they were constructed, attributed a degraded partiality for filth to their author, so his later works were held to have sunk below the level of literature altogether. Zola was accused by the critics of having sacrificed all pretension to artistic expression, and of having returned to the old "heresy of instruction." Reference has been made already to his conception of the novelist as an exponent, an analyst, a dissector, of human life, and certainly if art—whatever is understood by that—interfered with this function, Zola was prepared to do without it. The persistence of critics in denying him the title of artist was a confusion entirely of their own making—Zola, on his changed conception of the novel, never pretended to any such claim. And yet, somehow, his books continue to be read mainly as novels—for social, more than for moral, instruction!

On concluding the Rougon-Macquart series Zola at once started on a new but much shorter series, *Les Trois Villes* novels, which, with a final trio, reflect him specifically as the reformer. The writing of the first set was inspired by the trend of French literature, and also of opinion in France at that time, which seemed to show mysticism on the increase. The famous Lourdes pilgrimages represented a notable phase of this religion ferment, and Zola, who had attended them on two separate occasions—as a spectator, of course—found in them some illustration of the first of the Christian virtues, Faith. It thereupon occurred to him that Rome would illustrate Hope—the hope of those who desired to see the world conquered by a rejuvenated Catholicism—while Paris

ought to afford abundant illustration of Charity in its various senses. On the practice of these great virtues, argued Zola, ought to depend the question of whether religion might flourish anew in France. Was the faith of Lourdes justified, was any real hope to be looked for from Rome, was the charity of Paris adequate or not? Through the person of his hero, a priest into whose mind stray particles of doubt had entered, Zola returned a negative answer to all these questions.

This series he decided to supplement by a further one, which would enunciate the principles in which, as a Positivist, he himself believed—Fruitfulness, Work, Truth, and Justice. This series he intended to call "Les Quatre Evangiles"; but only the first three were completed, death intervening just as he was about to begin the fourth. In these he showed himself an even more constructive writer than in *Les Trois Villes*. He had at first considered—as Dickens did always—that remedial measures were not of his province, that he had no call to go beyond an exposure of the abuses which required redress; but now, while continuing his destructive work, he made a systematic attempt to couple re-construction with it. The tendency of these books was excellent—healthful in *Fécondité*, pacific and calming in *Travail*, and clarifying in *Vérité*; but they were not so much novels as combinations of sermon and pamphlet. Zola, who had everything to gain by writing livelier and shorter books, regarded them, however, as the fulfilment of a duty, since in them would be indicated what he proposed to set in place of Faith, which was expiring, Hope, which was a delusion, and Charity, which was dead. The purpose of these books was very ostensible, but it cannot be gainsaid that the "new" principles they enunciated continue to make headway.

Zola, like Thomas Hardy—who at least occasionally worked on parallel lines—is often accounted a pessimist. Nothing could be further from the truth. Hardy, the "pessimist," makes his picture of this "show God ought surely to shut up soon," a thing of grandeur, "its pettiness transmuted into dignity, its business ennobled"; Zola, the "pessimist," believed fervently that the whole world is tending slowly but surely to better things, that with increase of knowledge will come increase of truth and equity, that science will yet confound all superstition. His ideal was to set up heaven in this our planet. It would be idle to contend that he stamped out vice in France—where the State and the Church have failed. But it can be said at least that he was all sincerity, and with his brain and his pen as his sole weapons did his utmost, according to his lights. J.A.R.

Every Man His Own Ghost Provider.

I DO not know why anyone should be afraid to meet a ghost. To fear meeting some men in the flesh is quite understandable. They are solid, and there is an unaccountable factor in human nature which makes what a man will do rather uncertain. But a ghost is impalpable, and never does anyone a serious injury. For a reasonable "purse" I would fight a dozen rounds with the ghost of the greatest boxer that ever entered the ring. But it would be quite another thing if I were asked to meet the tamest of professional bruisers down in "Wonderland."

All the ghosts of whom I have read of are harmless. They usually come out when other people are in bed; if they are permitted to wander about, giving a groan now and again, or harmlessly rapping on walls, after a little while they go back to bed—or wherever it is ghosts rest—and no one is any the worse. Apparently they like mortals to give an occasional shiver, or perhaps shriek; but then, no one cares to go through a performance without an audience, and an audience that does not act up to its part is very unsatisfactory. Poor, sensitive creatures! For my part, I made up my mind long ago that if a ghost came to my house I would treat him as I would an honoured guest. He shall have any room he desires, and if he wants shivers, I will try and shiver to the best of my ability. The poor things! Why, one can walk through them! One can even see through them.

Now I find from an advertisement in the *Two Worlds*, that a good time for ghost lovers is at hand. A profes-

sional ghost-finder is no longer necessary. For the small sum of one guinea, every man can be his own ghost-finder—at least, ninety-five out of every hundred can. He can see the "aura" which forms the halos round the heads of saints. He can feast his eyes on "etheric" bodies, and "psychic organisms," while full-bodied ghosts may become as familiar to him as tax collectors. And all for the price of twenty-one shillings! Never have ghosts been offered at so low a price. The whole ghost world is open to ninety-five people out of every hundred for a guinea.

The man who has given this boon to humanity is a Dr. Kilner—now a ghost himself. While on this mundane plane he discovered a "mechanical method of adjusting the focal range of the eye so that previously invisible forces can be seen." The fact of having enabled a man to see a force is given without comment, the lesser wonder being overshadowed by the greater. Dr. Kilner made an instrument which consists of optically perfect glasses cemented together, enclosing a specially compounded solution of alcoholized dicyanin," and by looking through this, the ghosts are made visible, the aura becomes tangible, and the ghosts are there for ninety-five per cent of the people to see. Some people, says the advertisement, can see all these marvels at once, others have to wait for the vision to develop; and it will—if they wait long enough.

On second thoughts, it occurs to me that Dr. Kilner is not the only Richmond in the field. I have read of other alcoholized preparations which also have the power to make those who use them see things that are invisible to other folk. The conditions of seeing things by the aid of this other preparation are not exactly the same as those recommended by Dr. Kilner; but, as Spiritualists say, we must not object to the imposition of conditions if we are genuine inquirers. And, if my memory serves me well—I have not this other advertisement by me—there was something in it about Black and White. This, I take it, has something to do with white and black magic, concerning which Mrs. Besant and other occultists talk so learnedly. But I am certain that it was an alcoholized preparation, the proportion of alcohol being actually stated. And there is a mass of testimony from people in all classes of society, and from all parts of the world, that many who have taken this mixture have acquired the power of seeing things which were invisible to other people. As Dr. Kilner would say, the focal range of the eye has been so rearranged that things could be seen which were previously invisible. Also, the new power of vision did not come at once. Some had to persist for years before their perceptive powers developed. I do not think that the users of this Black and White preparation saw all that Dr. Kilner's glasses enable people to see, but I think the "aura" was all right, for these "sensitives" distinctly say that things became "cloudy," and this might very well stand for a novice's description of a halo.

I also distinctly remember seeing an advertisement of this preparation which depicted a man holding a glass up to the light—I do not know whether the glass was optically perfect or not—and just behind the man was the ghostly, or "etheric" figure of an ancient Highlander. It is evidently a spirit portrait, and, as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle would say, the camera cannot lie. The picture obviously was intended to show the kind of visions seen after using the mixture advertised.

I am quite unable to give an opinion as to the relative values of these two ghost-finders. Probably both are good in their way, some finding one effective and some the other. I believe the black and white magic mixture claimed to have its origin in the Scottish Highlands, and readers of occult lore are aware that cases of clairvoyance, the power of seeing things invisible to ordinary mortals, are quite common in the Highlands. Readers of Scott's novels will recall many such instances. There is one advantage, an economic one, enjoyed by Dr. Kilner's glasses. It would seem that his guinea's worth lasts an indefinite time. The other ghost finder has to be renewed constantly, and, at 2s. 6d. per pint, will not suit everybody's purse. On this score, other things equal, the advantage lies with Kilner. But the great thing is that we have here a truly solid method of seeing ghosts when and where we like. An alcoholized preparation will unlock the door of the spiritual world. The present

is an age of startling discoveries and wonderful inventions. Among these, the placing within reach of all—particularly at the Christmas season—of a method of getting an unlimited supply of ghosts, to make "auras" as common as mince pies, and "psychic organisms" as plentiful as roast turkeys, is one well worth recording.

ALPHA.

Drama and Dramatists.

INTO a world of sunshine and comedy you may be transported by going to the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith. Sir Nigel Playfair touches nothing that he does not adorn, and the English version of "El Centenario," presented as "A Hundred Years Old," is no exception to his unerring good taste. It is a modern Spanish comedy, bright, witty, light and amusing. There are subtle jokes, broad humour, pious oaths, colloquial piety, and Cervantes jogs your elbow. In fact, you would not be surprised if Don Quixote himself walked on the scene at any moment. Papá Juan is nearing his hundredth birthday, and he is not tired of life. He has been looking forward to the celebration, and it has kept him going. His ambition was to have present at his centenary all his relations, and the two of the three acts are occupied in showing the process of gathering together the scattered members; it is like trying to mix oil and water. His task was not easy, but he had "grown up," had reached the age of indulgence for all, and could resolve mysteries. In fact, he was anxious to see his great, great grandchildren, and counselled wisely an eligible couple to "see to it."

If we may take the comedy as a brief extract and chronicle of our times, there are ideas stirring even in Spain. There may even be a surfeit of bull-fighting and onions, and we are entitled to hope for the best although a country like Spain had no use for the mild ethics of Ferrer. A naughty joke about priests has crept in; in reply to his wife's request to give up railing at priests, the market-gardener would have none of it. "Had not one married him to her?" This is almost as advanced as a theological joke in "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," and is perfectly permissible where a celibate priest may be addressed as "father."

A jangling pair of relatives is the occasion for two fine expressions of emphasis. To the invocation of "in the name of the twelve apostles," the tetchy husband replies: "In the name of the eleven thousand virgins," and although the good lady had made every arrangement for visitors to view a shrine, not one was interested in the Holy Virgin. Doña Filomena, as the woman who attends the party, has quite made up her mind; she has not come to make herself pleasant, and signalizes her appearance by spitting on the doorstep and treading it in as the translators have it. On the appearance of Papá Juan, one of the characters greets him as a sight for sore eyes; bravo! Dickens, even Spain can plunder you—and it can cut and come again, for Shakespeare supplies Papá with a remark that may be found in "Pericles." The market-gardener, Antoñón is Mr. Eden Phillpott's "Churdles Ash," and Spain now might set about erecting a statue to Ferrer as payment for the purloining of a little Northern commonsense; it should certainly have the capital if not the will, as its import duties are in the region of 800 per cent on some articles.

The impression gathered from this comedy is that of growth of the modern spirit. The authors Serafin and Joaquín Alvarez Quintero appear to be struggling in the same manner as Ibsen did in 1870. They have something very definite to say, and say it laughing—perhaps in order to seize the only opportunity available. Freethinking is mentioned; that wicked word Atheist also slips out, and in another thousand years, when the word as a term of abuse is dead, a miracle may take place: some few may want to inquire the meaning.

Horace Hodges, as Papá Juan, provides an exquisite picture of an old man, sweet, mellow and unspoiled by all that he has seen and heard in his long life. It was a pleasure to know that the authors do not make him die in the last act. Miss Angela Baddeley, as Currita, carries on the old tradition of good acting together with superb elocution, whilst Mr. Herbert Ross, as Antoñón

the market-gardener, does not waste the value of one word or action. Nigel Playfair, as Alonso, has some good, burlesque lines, and the comedy has every appearance of a finished work of art.

In these notes, there is always the feeling that they are, to be Irish, almost provincial. That is to say, they are mainly about plays, with few exceptions, that reach the stage of going on tour to the big cities in the country. "A Hundred Years Old," is published in book form, price 2s. 6d., post free 2s. 8d.; "Love in a Village," is also at the same price, and both comedies would bear examination by any amateur theatrical society. They can be obtained from the Lyric Theatre, London, W.

"A Hundred Years Old" made us renew acquaintance with Cervantes, who was an antidote to the Spanish national dramatist Calderon. And this revisit turns the scales in favour of the young Spanish authors of "El Centenario," and bids us hope. Papá has grown up. In a B.B.C. guillotined address of Mr. George Bernard Shaw, our own Aristophanes stated that to-day persons not yet "grown up" possessed enormous fortunes. The "grown up" idea was mentioned years ago in these notes, and if, as a race, we did "grow up," the consequences might be fatal to encouraged stupidity, that has, at the back of it, an interest that may be exterminated by logic or laughter. And to loads of theological bunk, the reply might be in the words of Cervantes: "In last years' nests there are no birds this year," because we have grown up.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Correspondence.

BUDDHA, THE ATHEIST.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—“Keridon’s” appreciation of *Buddha, the Atheist* will doubtless lead many readers, who have not already done so, to obtain a copy. Only, I would advise them to be careful to whom they pass it on; that is, unless they are persons of leisure, and are looking for a little mental exercise. I innocently lent it to a friend, of whose mental whereabouts I was not quite certain, with the result that I have been obliged to answer some seventy-five pages of correspondence, upon the various issues raised by “Upasaka.” Fortunately, Buddhism has always been a favourite study of mine, and I had the answer to all my correspondent’s arguments ready to hand. But, if I continue to lend it out with the same result, I might have to appeal for subscriptions to cover the cost of paper and postage.

The story of the Buddha, as told by Fielding Hall, in *The Soul of a People*, is one of the most beautiful things in literature. While John Jardine’s “Introduction” to Father Jangermano’s *History of the Burmese Empire*, is a study of the ethical results of Buddhism among uncivilized races, that deserves to be printed and circulated by the million among the barbarians of the West.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

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LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Station): 7.15, Mr. “X”—“Problems for Freethinkers.”

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—“The Genius of Thomas Hardy.”

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (“The Orange Tree Hotel,” Euston Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Debate: “Is Secularism Unsound?” *Affir.*: Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe. *Neg.*: Mr. F. A. Ridley.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Eclipse Restaurant, 4 Mill Street, Conduit Street, W.): 7.30, Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, B.A.—“The Youngest of the World’s Religions.”

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.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Dramatic Performance by the Secular Players: “The Shoemaker’s Holiday.” A Comedy by Dekker. Silver Collection.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S.—Sunday, January 6, at 3.30 and 7.30 p.m., Miss Stella Brown of London. Details in this column later.

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