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Views and Opinions.

Leaving Religion Alone.

The *Daily News* is proceeding with its alleged inquiry into the truth of Spiritualism, and, if the patience of its readers will stand the strain, one is inclined to think that it will end about the same date as the League of Nations abolishes war. Among the latest invited to express an opinion is Sir Arbuthnot Lane, the very eminent surgeon, well known also for his crusade in favour of a diet which will enable a man to live to be a hundred years old—and probably cause him to regret he did not die at fifty. On either surgery or diet, Sir Arbuthnot is entitled to be listened to with all respect, and even deference. On the question of Spiritualism it strikes one that his only justification for speaking on it is that he was invited to say something and was too good natured to refuse. He does not, at any rate, appear to have any knowledge of Spiritualism beyond having seen some spirit photographs, provided by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and, as he says, having taken part in some seances. But whatever he saw does not seem to have convinced him of the truth of Spiritualism. As a witness either for or against Spiritualism, Sir Arbuthnot Lane does not appear to be of much use to anyone.

But he does, of course, say *something*, and it is with this I wish to deal. His contribution to the symposium is to ask people not to attack Spiritualism. And his reasons for this are, to say the least of it, curious. First of all, he says:—

I am intensely opposed to the attack on Spiritualism because it is an intensive onslaught on the supernatural which forms the basis upon which almost all religions depend for support.

That may be quite true, I believe it is quite true, but what kind of a justification is that for not attacking religion or Spiritualism? Does Sir Arbuthnot mean that no one is to attack the supernatural because it may weaken religion? And he a doctor, too! What kind of progress would medicine and surgery have made unless it had attacked the supernatural? What

progress would sanitation have made without attacking the supernatural? If Sir Arbuthnot Lane will bethink himself of all he knows of the history of these things he will realize that the supernatural had to be cleared out of the way before any progress at all could be made. I need not supply him, or anyone else, with detailed references, but if any are needed, plenty will be found in Andrew White's couple of volumes on the *Warfare Between Science and Theology*. It is certain that Sir Arbuthnot Lane, the great surgeon, would never have existed but for the clearing out of the demonology of Jesus and the supernaturalism of the priest. I wonder whether Sir Arbuthnot was just pulling the leg of Mr. Philip Hewitt-Myring?

* * *

Playing the Ostrich.

Does Sir Arbuthnot Lane himself believe in any form of supernaturalism? I do not know, because he says:—

As to one's own belief, possibly I may quote the remark made by Disraeli when asked what his religion was: "All wise men hold the same religion"; and his reply when urged to disclose what that religion was: "Wise men never tell."

The statement was not quite as set forth. The remark was: "I am of the same religion as all sensible men"; and on being asked what that was: "Sensible men never tell"—which is not quite the same thing, nor was it made by Disraeli. It belongs to the eighteenth century. But that does not matter very much; it is only worth noting because it is one of those sayings that assume timidity and wisdom to be the same thing. They very seldom are, and in this case emphatically are not. Public men, in this country, when they believe in Christianity do not hesitate to say so. When they believe in any sort of a religion they will say so. But when a man makes the remark that Sir Arbuthnot Lane made, there is only one inference to be drawn, and this is that in his opinion the religion of all wise men, or sensible men, is not to have any religion at all. There is no other reason for a man being reticent on the subject. So that, as a matter of fact, the answer given tells anyone who reflects exactly what the inquiry is intended to elicit. It does not conceal the fact, it merely gains a little more consideration from certain people because, even though one does not believe in Christianity, one has not been guilty of such bad form as to have the intellectual straightforwardness to say so.

* * *

The Evils of Immortality.

The only reason why religious beliefs should not be attacked, apart from the one already given, is this:—

The vast proportion of religions believe in a future life, and that the happiness or unhappiness of the

future state depends upon the behaviour of the individual during lifetime. That this belief can only serve a useful purpose is obvious, and that it gives comfort and support to an enormous number of people, especially in periods of stress and misery, is familiar to all. On such grounds any attempt to dispel the beliefs of any creed is ill-judged.

The kindest comment on this curious output would be, "Cobbler, stick to your last," for it is obvious that skill in dissecting the human body is not associated with skill in dissecting, or even understanding, human beliefs. First, it is not correct to say religions teach that the happiness of man hereafter depends upon his behaviour here. One essential point of orthodox Christian teaching is that man cannot be saved by "mere morality," but only by belief in Jesus. To believe otherwise would be to teach that one religion is as good as another, provided a man lives well; which means ultimately that religion is of no consequence at all, and that pure Atheism will do quite well—even the foolish policy of those "wise men" who are afraid to say what they believe will do quite as well as a loudly proclaimed faith in "Our Lord and Saviour."

From the remark that the belief in a future life can only serve a useful purpose, I gather that Sir Arbuthnot has led too busy a life to pay much attention to modern anthropology, otherwise he would not have made a statement so grossly at variance with the facts. Neither in savage nor in civilized life can the statement be made good. Some of the worst features of primitive life, cannibalism, head hunting, human sacrifice, killing of the aged or the sick, may be directly traced to this belief. And with Christianity we have the doctrine of eternal damnation, with its evil reactions on social life. These things should be too well known to need more than mentioning by way of a reminder. But if proof be needed, I may refer Sir Arbuthnot to Sir James Frazer's published volumes on *The Belief in Immortality*, in which he will find hundreds of illustrations of the evil done by this belief, with the deliberate summing up that the belief in continued existence,

added a host of purely imaginary terrors to the real evils with which man's existence is naturally and inevitably encompassed; it imposed a regular system of needless and vexatious restrictions on social intercourse and the simplest acts of daily life; and it erected an almost insuperable barrier to the growth of science, and particularly to that beneficent branch of science which has for its object the alleviation of human suffering, since by concentrating the whole attention of the people on a false and absurd theory of supernatural agency, it diverted them from that fruitful investigation of natural causes which alone can strengthen and extend man's control over matter.

In addition to the evils indicated, one would like to know whether Sir Arbuthnot Lane really views the imposition on mankind of a priestly caste, expensive to maintain and dangerously reactionary in its influence, as an indication of the "useful purpose" served by this particular belief? Or must we count an open opinion on that point as a part of the wise man's religion about which, in his wisdom, he remains silent? It is a pity that when the wisdom induces silence concerning what may be said *against* religion, it does not also induce silence concerning remarks in its favour. Such one-sided reticence is apt to give rise to very unflattering judgments concerning those who exercise it.

* * *

Playing for Safety.

Sir Arbuthnot Lane expounds his policy of inaction—one-sided inaction, be it noted—by saying that:—

Only education and experience will serve to modify the views of people in the particular creed they hold, and we shall be wise in leaving the matter of Spiritualism and other creeds to the crude hands of time . . .

I would urge that each individual should consider what creed, if any, he prefers, and should leave that of others alone and free from criticism.

Now I wonder where the world would be if everyone acted on this advice? If one were to take Sir Arbuthnot Lane as meaning exactly what he says—which I feel sure is not the case, since much of his work is in entire opposition to it—his counsel would involve a complete repudiation of the social value of truth, and of the social responsibility of all to share with others whatever truth they see. I cannot believe that Sir Arbuthnot means what he says, for he belongs to a profession which holds that the truth which is discovered by one of its members must be given to the world, and not stored up as a private possession. I agree that only education and experience will modify the views of people on religion, and on anything else. But pointing out the error of certain opinions is surely part of that very education and experience. How else is change brought about? After all; "time" by itself does nothing. Tribes of people may exist for millenniums unchanged, merely because no one has come by to impress upon them the error of their ways. The advice given is not merely bad, it is impossible. An Atheist is a standing criticism of Christianity. A Christian is a living criticism of Atheism. One would dearly love from Sir Arbuthnot Lane a defence of his advice; but that I do not believe for a moment will be forthcoming.

The strange thing is that this kind of advice regarding the religious opinions of other people is only given by men whose own religious opinions are of the very haziest character. No one offers this kind of advice concerning art, or politics, or science. It is religion only on which one must not speak with honesty and courage. Is it because the danger of social ostracism and general boycott is greater when one dares to criticize religion, than when one plays the heretic towards any other form of opinion? And yet if all men occupying the position of Sir Arbuthnot Lane would make public their real opinions about religion, honesty might become as common in the religious field as elsewhere.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A Leave-taking.

BECAUSE all things must end,
Our parting comes, my friend;
All things, but one, must die,
So we must say, "Goodbye";
This severance should cause us few regrets;
One soon forgets.

Though naught of love remain,
Is that a cause for pain?
Love's self can never die,
And, doubtless, by-and-by
Will take again possession of each heart,
Though we now part.

All things anew begin;
If we but wait, we win:
The turning of Fate's wheel
New friendships will reveal,
And, it may be, a greater, finer love
Than we dreamt of.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

Prayer and Pushfulness.

"What fools these mortals be."

Shakespeare, "Midsummer Night's Dream."

"The world which turned grey with Puritanism has since turned black with Industrialism."

G. K. Chesterton.

IN a recent newspaper symposium on the subject of prayer, mention was made of an orphanage which was said to have been maintained for years entirely by prayerful means. The sweet uses of advertisement were, it was said, in this instance, entirely ignored, with the most satisfactory financial results to all concerned. It was a triumph of faith.

The reference was to the Muller Orphanage, Ashley Downs, Bristol. This was founded in the latter half of the nineteenth century by one, Herr Muller, who controlled its destinies during the earlier part of its career. A clever and an astute Teuton, Muller took a line of his own in the religious world, and made philanthropy into a business.

Victorian England was paved with philanthropic institutions, and their fervent appeals for financial assistance helped, in no small degree, to make penny postage a success. Amid such a welter of altruism, what chance had Herr Muller? To succeed he must wear his ruse with a difference. To this end he pretended that his orphanage was never advertised, and that he never even thought of the power of publicity. The whole thing was run entirely by prayer. If the orphanage needed coal, Muller had only to whisper his appeal to the Great Trunk Call, and the next day a coal dealer delivered so many tons, together with a receipted invoice. Should the institution lack meat, the matter had only to be mentioned in the same august quarter and the butchers' carts arrived as punctually as the ravens brought sandwiches to the favoured prophet in the Old Testament.

Just imagine the sensation such a story made in Victorian religious circles. The response from the credulous and kindhearted public should have made Muller the happiest man in England, although his portrait is far more like Don Quixote than Sancho Panza.

It is an excellent way to get a thing by pretending not to ask for it. Wives have made this method a fine art for many thousands of years. Soldiers and sailors try it on with invariable success. Here is a sample in popular demand in both Services:—

Dear Alice (Maud, or Mary),

I hope this finds you all right, I owe the canteen five bob, and I miss the *Christian World* very much. Don't forget the *Christian World*."

Yours, Tom (Dick, or Harry).

The epistle is almost "a dead cert" in the right quarters. Herr Muller must have been as pleased as Punch as he shook the cheques from the envelopes. It was so entirely good that it might even be better. Then things began to happen. Someone wrote and published a life of Herr Muller, telling folks how he arrived from his native Germany with an accent like the kick of a mule, a pair of carpet slippers, and a Bible. Incidentally, the book revealed the full story of Herr Muller and the Great Trunk Call. It told how scores of children were sometimes reduced to a larder of one doubtful egg, or half a stale loaf, and how the trembling little ones had to wait for their meals till the dear Herr had gone to his study to pray. These books got into circulation, and to help its distribution each orphan was presented with a copy of the great man's biography on leaving the institution.

Simultaneously, paragraphs began to appear in the newspapers and in religious periodicals, all insisting that Muller's orphanage was kept going by super-

natural agency. It was all very clever, and would have excited the envy of Sarah Bernhardt's press agent, who used to pen glowing accounts concerning the great tragedienne's weakness for snakes as pets, and her fondness for sleeping nightly in a beautiful gold coffin, studded with diamonds.

Who can deny Herr Muller's astuteness? If the Christian Religion be true, he has been long since joined the angelic choir, but his methods are still being copied, doubtless, with the same pleasant results that he himself experienced. That is why a disguised "puff" of the Muller orphanage managed to find its way into an alleged serious discussion in a newspaper on the subject of prayer.

Apparently, Christians never tire of supporting such institutions as orphanages, and other social activities too numerous to mention. What these well-meaning folks cannot see is that the very existence of such institutions is in itself a striking indictment of present-day society. Whilst charity is very good in its way, what the world wants is justice, not patronage. If the world were run on fair and reasonable lines, there would be no occasion for philanthropy to exist. Christian charity is not by any means unalloyed altruism. It is largely a bribe to the working classes to keep them in order, and to attract them into attending churches and chapels. In India and elsewhere the missionaries bribe the poor natives with medical dispensaries, and at home the clergy use the lure of coals and blankets, soup kitchens, children's day nurseries, Sunday school excursions, pleasant Sunday afternoons, and other purely secular attractions. The cash-box and the cassock have always been on the same side, and will be to the end of a bad chapter. So long as wealthy men have "surplus" thousands derived from underpaid and sweated labour wherewith to endow "charities," so long will such institutions exist and flourish in our midst.

Freethinkers are not hard-hearted monsters, insensible to humanism. If Freethinkers do their own thinking in religious matters, they also do it in everything else. Spiritual and temporal authority are brought under the same rules, and they must justify themselves. Freethinkers are thus social reformers, and they are almost to a man on the side of justice, freedom, and progress. To make a new world, no audacity contributes that is not, in the last analysis, intellectual. Man's great need is not charity, nor patronage, but boldly honest minds.

Christian civilization is largely a sham, and a make-believe. After two thousand years of a "religion of love," this country possesses a population of five millions dependent upon State doles and grants from relieving officers, whilst more millions are living sparsely from hand to mouth. In addition, the country is strewn with charitable institutions to relieve wholesale distress in manifold directions. Overcrowding and bad housing accommodation is the order of the day. Christians will never alter this state of affairs, for they are taught to believe that their god is a gigantic, ghostly relieving officer, and, in the hour of need, they cheat themselves with lies. The Christian Religion is a creed for flunkies, and suits the wealthy classes very well, for under its reign they continue to grow richer and more powerful. The "glorious, free press" darkens knowledge by supporting vested interests, and by gushing over pinchbeck celebrities. It counsels prudence where the need is for courage, and provides entertainment where it should give instruction.

MIMNERMUS.

The entire theory of the Church is antagonistic to any concentrated or consistent scheme for raising the earthly condition of the suffering masses.—*W. R. Greg.*

The "Bon Sens" of the Cure Meslier.

SOME years ago I saw, in a second-hand bookseller's catalogue, a volume entitled *Freethought Pamphlets*. Taking a sporting chance, I sent for it. I was well rewarded for my venture by finding that it contained, among other things, a copy of *Good Sense*; a translation from the French of the *Bon Sens* of Jean Meslier; a copy of which I had long been trying to obtain.

This pamphlet, which consists of 106 pages, was printed and published by B. D. Cousins, at Helmet Court, 337½ Strand, London. The date of publication is not given, although this may have been printed on the cover in which it was probably issued, the covers of the other pamphlets are also missing. This edition is a reprint of a translation made in America. I have not been able to trace B. D. Cousins; Wheeler's comprehensive *Dictionary of Freethinkers* does not mention him. There is no copy of this edition in the British Museum library; but there is an edition there of this American translation published by Richard Carlile (printed for the Joint Stock Book Company), dated 1826. The Carlile pamphlet is much larger in form, but in every other respect they are identical.

As to the authorship of *Bon Sens*, it is agreed on all hands that the priest Meslier, the author of the Freethought work *The Testament of Jean Meslier*, had nothing to do with it. It is in fact claimed to be the work of Baron D'Holbach, who wrote and published many Atheistic works under fictitious names.

Baron D'Holbach was a wealthy and benevolent Freethinker. His hospitality won for him the name of "maître d'hotel of philosophy," and his house was jestingly known as the "Café de l'Europe." He wrote, and employed many others to write, attacking the prevailing superstitions of the time, especially those concerning the ideas of God and the soul. His most famous work was the *System of Nature*, published in 1770, which, says John Morley, "gathered up all the scattered explosives of the criticism of the century into one thunderous engine of revolt and destruction."¹ The style, as he further remarks, "notwithstanding the energy and coherence of the thought, is often diffuse and declamatory. Some one said of the *System of Nature*, that it contained at least four times too many words." So it does, our copy consists of over five hundred pages of small print, and would be improved by cutting down to two hundred pages. Morley goes on to say that "Two years after the appearance of his master-work, he drew up its chief propositions in a short and popular volume called *Good Sense; or Natural Ideas opposed to Supernatural*," attributing it to Meslier—the work we have been discussing. This authorship of *Good Sense* is that accepted by all the best authorities upon the subject; even Wheeler, most careful of biographers, gives the same account in his *Dictionary of Freethinkers*. But, as we shall prove, if D'Holbach was the author of the *System of Nature*, then he was not the author of *Good Sense*; and in any case, *Good Sense* is not a condensation of the *System of Nature*, nor anything remotely approaching it. The fact is that these writers have all accepted a statement that has been handed down from that time, but it has never occurred to them to compare the two works, or they would have seen at once that the statement was not correct. The authority, in the first instance, appears to be Barbier, the French author of a *Dictionary of Anonymous Writers*.

There is a small anonymous pamphlet of fifteen pages, published by James Watson, in 1834, entitled

A Brief Sketch of the Life and Writings of the Baron D'Holbach. It contains a list of Holbach's published works obtained by Monsieur Barbier from Naigeon. There are forty-seven items in the list. Item number thirty, *Good Sense*, is described, on the authority of Barbier, as "A very well made abridgment of the *System of Nature*." Upon the *System of Nature*, the author makes the following remarks:—

Even Voltaire . . . was horrified at the *System of Nature*, and took every opportunity of decrying it: as *ex. gr.* in the *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, art. "Dieu and Style." He apologizes to Grimm (in a letter, dated November 1, 1770) for having thus written *against* philosophy. Hereupon Grimm remarks: "The patriarch will not give up his remunerating and avenging God . . . He argues upon this subject like a child, but like a delightful child as he is."

Nevertheless, when Voltaire came to Paris, in 1778, to triumph and to die, he received the Baron D'Holbach with the greatest politeness, saying, "I have long known you by reputation, sir; and you are one of the persons whose esteem and friendship I have most desired." Yet it may, I think, be doubted, whether Voltaire even then knew that D'Holbach was the author of the *System of Nature*. Very few persons seem to have been acquainted with the secret. [It was published as the work of Mirabaud, the Secretary of the French Academy, who had been dead ten years.] Indeed, I should suppose D'Holbach would have passed the remainder of his days in the Bastille, if he had ever been denounced to the government as the author of any atheistical works. Naigeon was generally the person who carried the manuscripts to Holland, where they were printed by Michael Rey, of Amsterdam. D'Holbach, either from modesty or from prudence, never talked of his literary productions; and it often happened that the first account he received of the publication of his MSS. was from some one or other of his guests, who offered him a copy of the contraband treatise, without at all suspecting that his host was himself the author. The additional reputation which D'Holbach might have enjoyed among philosophical literati, by letting it be known that he had written this most famous work, the *System of Nature*, never induced him to listen to the seductions of vanity.²

We will return to this account later on. In the meanwhile, let us compare the two works. The *System of Nature* consists of two parts; the first is divided into seventeen chapters, the second part into fourteen. *Good Sense* consists of 206 short sections, some consist of only a single short paragraph, seldom of more than two or three paragraphs. Each section is numbered and self-contained, and can be understood without reference to the other sections; quite contrary to the *System of Nature*.

The first part of the *System of Nature* consists of a description of Nature, of matter and its combinations, of the laws of motion. It then goes on to discuss the soul and immortality, education, morals, etc. The second part is occupied exclusively with a discussion of the origin of men's ideas of God and an examination of the proofs offered by the various apologists for religion, from Descartes to Newton, and a commendation of Atheism as a guide of life.

Good Sense, on the contrary, commences with the consideration of the idea of God, and the origin of religion, instead of finishing with it. On the other hand, the idea of the soul—dealt with in the first part of the *System of Nature*—is not dealt with until the hundredth section is reached. A large part of *Good Sense* is devoted to a trenchant attack upon Christianity; which the *System of Nature* does not deal with at all.

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

² *A Brief Sketch of the Life and Writings of the Baron D'Holbach*. pp. 11-12.

¹ Morley: *Diderot*. Vol. 2. p. 153.

Humanity.

It is frequently claimed, and more frequently insinuated, that Jesus Christ was the first cosmopolitan. "He came of the Jewish stock," it is said, "and yet he had no trace of the Jew in him." Certainly he has no trace of the Jew in him as he is painted by Christian artists and presented by Christian teachers to non-Jewish and even Jew-hating nations. But there is a very decided "trace of the Jew in him" in the New Testament. To the Canaanitish woman he said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." To the twelve apostles he said, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It was Paul who, finding he could not make headway against the apostles who had known Jesus personally, exclaimed, "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles." That exclamation was a turning-point. It was the first real step to such universalism as Christianity has attained.

But even in the case of Paul it is perfectly idle to suppose that his cosmopolitanism extended beyond the Roman Empire. The very fact of the Roman Empire was the secret of his cosmopolitanism. Moral conceptions follow in the wake of political expansion. The morality of a tribe is tribal; that of a nation is national; and national morality only develops into international morality with the growth of international interests and international communication. Now the Roman Empire had broken up the old nationalities, and with them their local religions. The human mind broadened with its political and social horizon. And the result was that a cosmopolitan sentiment in morals, and a universal conception in religion, naturally spread throughout the territory which was dominated by the Roman eagles. Christianity itself was at first a Jewish sect, which developed into a more cosmopolitan system precisely because the national independence of the Jews had been broken up, and all the roads of a great empire were open to the missionaries of the new faith.

When it is argued that the common brotherhood of man was revealed by Paul in his teaching of the common fatherhood of God, it is sufficient to say that this was disproved by Paul himself; for, in his sermon to the Athenians, he enforces his argument that all men are God's children by reminding them that "certain also of your own poets have said, For we also are his offspring."

The idea of "our common humanity" is not due to the Christian religion. Max Müller said that it is a purely Christian conception, and that there was no trace of it until Christ came. But his argument was really an etymological quibble. Certainly the Greeks knew nothing of "humanity," simply because they did not speak Latin. But they had an equivalent word in *philanthropos*, which was in use in the time of Plato, four hundred years before Christ.

Those are either reckless or ignorant who declare that the idea of human brotherhood owes its origin to Christ, Paul, or Christianity. To say nothing of Buddha, whose ethics are wider than the ethics of Christ, and confining ourselves to Greece and Rome, with the teaching of whose thinkers Christianity comes into more direct comparison—it is easy enough to prove that such defenders of Christianity are deceived or deceiving. Socrates being asked on one occasion as to his country, replied, "I am a citizen of the world." And that was four hundred years before Christ. Cicero, the great Roman orator and writer, in the century before Christ, uses the very word *caritas* which St. Paul adopted in his famous thirteenth of Corinthians. Cicero, and not Paul, was the first to pronounce "charity" as the tie which unites the human race. After picturing a soul full of virtue, living in charity with its friends, and taking as such all who are allied to it by nature, Cicero rose to a still loftier level of morality. "Moreover," he said, "let it not consider itself hedged in by the walls of a single town, but acknowledge itself a citizen of the whole world, as though one city." In another treatise he speaks of "fellowship with the human race, charity, friendship, justice." Where,

we ask, shall we find in the New Testament a cosmopolitan text as strong, clear, and pointed as these sayings of Socrates and Cicero—the one a Greek, the other a Roman, and both before Christ?

From the time of Cicero—that is, from the time of Julius Cæsar and the establishment of the Empire—the sentiment of brotherhood, the idea of a common humanity, spread with certainty and rapidity, and is reflected in the writings of the philosophers. The exclamation of the Roman poet, "As a man, I regard nothing human as alien to me," which was so heartily applauded by the auditory in the theatre, expressed a growing and almost popular sentiment. The works of Seneca abound in fine humanitarian passages, and it must be remembered that if the Christians were tortured by Nero at Rome, it was by the same hand that Seneca's life was cut short. "Wherever there is a man," said this thinker, "there is an opportunity for a deed of kindness." He believed in the natural equality of all men. Slaves were such through political and social causes, and their masters were bidden to restrain from ill-using them, not only because of the cruelty of such conduct, but because of "the natural law common to all men," and because "he is of the same nature as thyself." Seneca denounced the gladiatorial shows as human butcheries. So mild, tolerant, humane, and equitable was his teaching that the Christians of a later age were anxious to appropriate him. Tertullian called him "Our Seneca," and the facile scribes of the new faith forged a correspondence between him and their own St. Paul. One of Seneca's passages is a clear and beautiful statement of rational altruism. "Nor can anyone live happily," he says, "who has regard to himself alone, and uses everything for his own interests; thou must live for thy neighbour, if thou wouldst live for thyself." Eighteen hundred years afterwards Auguste Comte sublimated this principle into a motto of his Religion of Humanity—*Vivre pour Autrui*, Live for Others. It is also expressed more didactically by Ingersoll—"The way to be happy is to make others so"—making duty and enjoyment go hand in hand.

Pliny, who corresponded with the Emperor Trajan, and whose name is familiar to the student of Christian Evidences, exhorted parents to take a deep interest in the education of their children. He largely endowed an institution in his native town of Como for the assistance of the children of the poor. His humanity was extended to the slaves. He treated his own with great kindness, allowing them to dispose of their own earnings, and even to make wills. Of masters who had no regard for their slaves, he said, "I do not know if they are great and wise; but one thing I do know, they are not men." Dion Chrysostom, another Stoic, plainly declared that slavery was an infringement of the natural rights of men, who were all born for liberty; a dictum which cannot be paralleled in any part of the New Testament. It must be admitted, indeed, that Paul, in sending the slave Onesimus back to his master Philemon, did bespeak humane and even brotherly treatment for the runaway; but he bespoke it for him as a Christian, not simply as a man, and uttered no single word in rebuke of the institution of slavery.

Plutarch's humanity was noble and tender. "The proper end of man," he said, "is to love and to be loved." He regarded his slaves as inferior members of his own family. How strong, yet how dignified, is his condemnation of masters who sold their slaves when disabled by old age. He protests that the fountain of goodness and humanity should never dry up in a man. "For myself," he said, "I should never have the heart to sell the ox which had long laboured on my ground, and could no longer work on account of old age, still less could I chase a slave from his country, from the place where he has been nourished for so long, and from the way of life to which he has so long been accustomed." Sentiments like these were the natural precursors of the abolition of slavery, as far as it could be abolished by moral considerations.

Epicetetus, the great Stoic philosopher, who had himself been a slave, taught the loftiest morality. Pascal admits that he was "one of the philosophers of the world who have best understood the duty of man." He disdained slavery from the point of view of the masters,

as he abhorred it from the point of view of the slaves. "As a healthy man," he said, "does not wish to be waited upon by the infirm, or desire that those who live with him should be invalids, the freeman should not allow himself to be waited upon by slaves, or leave those who live with him in servitude." It is idle to pretend, as Professor Schmidt of Strasburg does, that the ideas of Epictetus are "coloured with a reflection of Christianity." The philosopher's one reference to the Galileans, by whom he is thought to have meant the Christians, is somewhat contemptuous. Professor Schmidt says he "misunderstood" the Galileans; but George Long, the translator of Epictetus, is probably truer in saying that he "knew little about the Christians, and only knew some examples of their obstinate adherence to the new faith and the fanatical behaviour of some of the converts." It should be remembered that Epictetus was almost a contemporary of St. Paul, and the accurate students of early Christianity will be able to estimate how far it was likely, at that time, to have influenced the philosophers of Rome.

Marcus Aurelius was one of the wisest and best of men. Emperor of the civilized world, he lived a life of great simplicity, bearing all the burdens of his high office, and drawing philosophy from the depths of his own contemplation. His *Meditations* were only written for his own eyes; they were a kind of philosophical diary; and they have the charm of perfect sincerity. He was born A.D. 121, he became Emperor A.D. 161, and died A.D. 180, after nineteen years of a government which illustrated Plato's words about the good that would ensue when kings were philosophers and philosophers were kings. Cardinal Barberini, who translated the Emperor's *Meditations* into Italian, in 1675, dedicated the translation to his own soul, to make it "redder than his purple at the sight of the virtues of this Gentile."

Marcus Aurelius combines reason with beautiful sentiment. His emotion is always accompanied by thought. Here, for instance, is a noble passage on the social commonwealth—"For we are made for co-operation, like feet, like hands, like eyelids, like the rows of the upper and lower teeth. To act against one another then is contrary to nature; and it is acting against one another to be vexed and to turn away." In a still loftier passage he says—and let us remember he says it to himself, not to an applauding audience, but quietly, and with absolute truth, and no taint of theatricality—"My nature is rational and social; and my city and country, so far as I am Antoninus, is Rome; but so far as I am a man, it is the world." In his brief, pregnant way, he states the law of human solidarity—"That which is not good for the swarm, neither is it good for the bee." And who could fail to appreciate this sentiment, coming as it did from the ruler of a great empire?—"One thing here is worth a great deal, to pass thy life in truth and justice, with a benevolent disposition even to liars and unjust men."

Here, again, it is the fashion in some circles to pretend that Marcus Aurelius was influenced by the spread of Christian ideas. George Long, however, speaks the language of truth and sobriety in saying, "It is quite certain that Antoninus did not derive any of his Ethical principles from a religion of which he knew nothing." To say, as Dr. Schmidt does, that Christian ideas filled the air, is easy enough, but where is the proof? No doubt the Christian writers made great pretensions as to the spread of their religion, but they were notoriously sanguine and inaccurate, and we know what value to attach to such pretensions in the second century when we reflect that even in the fourth century, up to the point of Constantine's conversion, Christianity had only succeeded in drawing into its fold about a twentieth of the inhabitants of the empire. Enough has been said in this article to show that the idea of our common humanity is not "a purely Christian conception," that it arose in the natural course of human development, and that in this, as in other cases, the apologists of Christianity have simply appropriated to their own faith the fruits of the political, social, and moral growth of Western civilization.

(Late) G. W. FOOTE.

Acid Drops.

The Rector of Hedgerley, Bucks, has resigned his post because his parishioners do not come to church. We must admit that this is unusually straightforward conduct for a parson although one does not expect a parson to decline to take payment for a work which he finds he cannot do. The usual policy is for such a man to go round to other religious meetings and talk about the great religious revival that is on foot, or on the way. Besides, look at the City churches, with their empty benches and fine fat salaries; at the many livings scattered up and down the country, where the congregations consist mostly of the parson and his attendant officials, with two or three others who are expecting something in the shape of a gift. Look also at the comfortable posts attached to the different cathedrals, for which there is simply nothing to do at all! If all parsons that are not earning their salaries are to come out of the Church, things will have come to a pretty pass.

We are glad to find the *Evening News* in substantial agreement with us on the undesirability of parsons acting with the same sense of honour as would rule members of other professions. Of course, the *Evening News* does not put it quite in our way. What it says is:—

The dwindling congregation is not uncommon. To the eyes of the clergyman it must be painful to see more and more vacant pews. He cannot bring in parishioners by force. But if every rector of a thinly attended church resigned his pulpit, where should we be?

Exactly! How could the people be got to believe in the revival of religion if on all hands parsons gave up their jobs because people would not attend church? The business of a parson is to stick at any cost, and prove that the fact of men and women not going to church does not prove they do not believe in it. We could quote numbers of parsons to prove that attachment to Christianity and to the Church is shown by their having nothing to do with either. And, in addition, one may cite the testimony of the truth-loving B.B.C. which will tell you that they have been overwhelmed by people writing to ask that Church services may be broadcast, and thanking the Corporation for it when it was given. Unless one casts doubt upon the evidence of the B.B.C., the most reasonable explanation would seem to be that people do not go to church because they are afraid of overcrowding, and so stay away to make room for those whose need is greater. It is an illustration of the way in which Christianity leads men to sacrifice themselves for the benefit of others.

A religious weekly speaks of 1928 as "a disappointing year." Since large consignments of prayer have been going up, throughout the year, asking for alteration in the state of things, our contemporary's phrase seems like a reproof to God for not obliging with something better. We cannot help saying that a reproof like this seems a poor kind of prelude to the next consignment of prayer on the same topic, which is due for dispatch in 1929. It cannot but be displeasing in the sight (or ear) of God. The right line for our contemporary to have taken was to offer up heartfelt gratitude for small mercies.

Of a young missionary who came to an untimely end in Southern India, an obituary notice says that surely "all the trumpets sounded on the other side." If the arrival of every parson excites a hullabaloo, heaven would seem to be no place for people who favour rest and quiet after a life of toil and turmoil. R.I.P. appears to have no meaning in heaven.

All Christians, says the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead, suffer from wandering thoughts in prayer; the mind runs away and has to be brought sharply back. The cause of this sad defect is, we presume, that prayer is not a strong natural instinct, but merely an acquired habit. We are glad to say that a very large number of people have to-day broken themselves of this vicious habit.

Mr. Weatherhead also says that the true answer to prayer is not in any immediate emotional effect, but in God's strengthening the sources of power in the sub-conscious mind. This, then, reduces prayer merely to auto-suggestion. Anyway, non-Christians claim to get somewhat similar results from auto-suggestion, without bringing God into it.

There has been a quick response to appeals for cash and goods for relieving the acute distress in the mining areas. Other appeals have been equally well supported; and most of the various charity organizations have had little to complain of in this respect. Lack of religious belief among the nation makes apparently no difference to the average man's sensitiveness to want and suffering, and his willingness to help. This may surprise Christians. The fact is, however, that charitableness is not a Christian-bred attitude, but merely a characteristic of the social animal-man.

In regard to the King's illness, the bombardment of God with prayer is to continue, *ab lib.* The *Methodist Recorder* says: "Her Majesty may be assured that, encouraged by her kindly message [to the Lord Mayor of London], fervent prayer will continue to rise for full realization of the hope all the nation shares with its Queen." Dear Christian people, have a little pity for the ear-drums of a poor God! The Almighty must feel grateful to Freethinkers for their considerateness. They never worry him to do or not to do what he has already decided to do. That, we like to think, will be recorded in their favour on the Day of Judgment.

A headmaster says: "Get your scale of values right." Good advice. But we would add that the best way to get one's scale of value wrong is to attend a Church. Everything is there distorted to accord with the alleged commands and wishes of an imaginary God.

Says the Headmaster of Westminster School:—

The Seven Lamps of Education are: worship, reverence, work, leisure, discipline, obedience, service.

The Headmaster is, we believe, a person in holy orders. This may account for the first two lamps being made prominent. We note that the Education he favours has no shelf for the lamps of intellectual inquiry and alertness and honesty and courage. Yet all these intellectual lamps are essential to real education. The educational systems of the schools, however, do little or nothing to light them.

Mr. J. B. Priestly has a timely suggestion for the world. He says:—

Humanity still possesses the barbaric virtues on a grand scale. It is time civilized virtues received more praise.

But perhaps this can hardly be expected yet awhile. The world is still too saturated with Christian notions.

The following comes from a daily paper's correspondence columns:—

The reason why citizens are deprived of reasonable and innocent recreation on Sundays, is that the veto on them is not placed in the hands of the electorate, but in the hands of licensing magistrates, who have little knowledge of the people in localities under their control. Why should not the densely populated towns . . . all around London be permitted to enjoy the same privileges on Sunday, as are enjoyed by those residing within the area under the control of the popularly elected London County Council?

There's no reason why they should not. But to get the privileges they desire they will need to fight for them, and to organize themselves to put up opposition to the kill-joy element influencing the magistrates.

Newspapers are much concerned at present about the "Peril of the Roads." Last year 5,000 persons were killed, and 150,000 injured by motor vehicles. Nobody, however, has yet suggested Prayer as a remedy for this appalling state of affairs. Even the pious *Daily Express*, though so assured of the power of prayer, has not mentioned its patent cure-all in this connexion. The suggested remedy is, not Prayer, but the very prosaic one of trying to prevent the causes of the slaughter from operating. Prayer cannot do that. Intelligent people appear to agree that the chief remedy lies in the direction of common sense regulations and common sense use of the roads by drivers of vehicles.

Radio Times has a short article on "The Jeweller Who Brightened Sunday"—R. M. Morrell—the pioneer of the National Sunday League. The writer of the article says the object of Morrell's League was "to promote intellectual and elevating recreation" on Sunday. This implies that this kind of recreation was not available on the Christian Sabbath. How unfortunately true that is! The writer also mentions that the League had a "long and bitter fight" to achieve its objects. We hope the younger generation will appreciate the fact that this bitter opposition came from religious organizations, which realized that so soon as intellectual and elevating recreation on Sunday became popular, there was likely to be an increasing neglect of the contrary kind of recreation to be found in the Churches. The article concludes with: "The work of the League is now almost complete; it is concerned now with maintaining rather than extending the liberty of the working-man's Sunday." We sincerely hope this is not the official view of the League. There is a vast amount yet to be done in the way of brightening the Christian Sabbath, by furnishing wholesome recreation from the millions who desire it. There is still considerable and influential opposition to this. And the League will perhaps realize that the best way of maintaining what it has gained is to be aggressive—to extend its activities. Freethinkers might do well to take a more active interest in the League with the object of inducing the League to complete that which it has merely made a beginning at. The present Christian Sunday is too demoralizing an activity to be left as it is.

The B.B.C. is getting into hot water in several directions. Some complain of the quality of the entertainment, others of the overdose of religion; others, that what is virtually a government institution should set itself as a propagandist agency of Christianity—a dishonest form of Christianity at that. Now the B.B.C. has caused fresh anger by its intention to issue a magazine, and use its powers of publicity to push it. As this is entering into competition with the ordinary publishing world, there are howls of indignation all over the place, and the good and pious *Daily News* joins in the chorus. Thus, in its issue for January 5, it says:—

It is an intolerable innovation that what is virtually a Government department should thus misuse its privileged position.

Hear! Hear! But it is a pity that the *Daily News* does not apply the same principle of criticism to the B.B.C. and religion. There is, apparently, nothing wrong in the B.B.C. using its "privileged position" to advertise sectarianism, or to push a religion—at the same time suppressing any attack on that religion; mainly, we imagine, because the religion thus advertised is one in which the *Daily News* believes, and because the policy of the B.B.C. here is broadly that of the *Daily News* itself. On the whole, we are rather glad to see these people who are now crying out getting a dose of their own medicine. One day, perhaps, the *Daily News* and others will recognize that honesty, even in matters of religion, is by far the best policy.

A reader of the *Daily Sketch* asks:—

Why is it that the verdict of a jury at an inquest on a suicide is invariably "suicide while of unsound mind," or "suicide during temporary insanity"? Great mental

strain may be there, but it can by no stretch of imagination be called insanity.

Undoubtedly, such verdicts need rephrasing in accord with modern medical discovery. They can do no harm to the dead, but they inflict unnecessary mental suffering upon the living. This point of view is not likely to appeal to Christians, whose ancestors buried the suicide at cross-roads, so that the wayfarers from every direction trod on his body.

The Rev. Mark Guy Pearce's New Year Message to Methodists is:—

Brave trust in God be thine alway.
So shalt thou rest
Infallible. If day by day
He have in all things His own way,
Thou shalt be blest
And good shall be yet more than good—
God's very best.

Query—what is the use of prayer? According to Mr. Pearce, the Christian has merely to wait for what God sends. Whether it seems good or bad it is God's "very best." Then why waste breath asking for anything? The philosophy of Mr. Pearce may be called fatalistic, morbid and torpid. It's thoroughly Christian, and entirely stupid and mischievous.

Wesleyan Home Missions Committee issue the usual cheering report. All the evangelical campaigns have been successful. Hundreds of decisions for Christ have been netted. The man in the street, though still shy of entering a church, has been present in goodly numbers, and so forth. One might almost expect from all this to learn of a startling increase in Wesleyan membership figures. But no, nothing like that has materialized. And rural Methodism has still a "problem"—that of trying to get obstinate villagers to patronize the right and proper sub-section of the Protestant Church. The gross income for 1928 amounts to £53,929, and the total expenditure to £55,212. This is mentioned just to remind us that the job of soul-saving is a very highly organized business on a truly commercial basis. Hallelujah! And the Wesleyans' Christ used to think himself lucky if his preaching fetched the price of a night's doss!

A contributor to this Report says: "What is the net result of it all? Who can say? The business returns of a business like ours are not tabulated on earth. One dares to believe that those same returns keep a big staff of angels busy in some heavenly office!" We should say the "business" results can be tabulated here easily enough. The trade of selling religion has given comfortable employment to an army of parsons. But the soul-saving returns are another matter. One little angel could compile these—despite the "cheering report."

"It is said," remarks the Rev. H. R. L. Sheppard, "that after the war eighty per cent of demobilized men and women visited their church or chapel, for they felt the need of some spiritual basis to life." We should dearly like to know where the rev. statistician gets his figures from. One remembers that it was this Rev. "Dick" Sheppard who gave the world the news that less than twenty people had protested against the religious policy of the B.B.C. His figures of the Church attendance after the war are equally mythical, and we question whether anyone would be quite silly enough to believe them—not even the man who supplied them. Mr. Sheppard is giving "A call to the People." May we suggest that part of the "Call" should consist in advice to speak the truth—and practise it.

Someone asks the Rev. W. B. Selbie whether a man who enters the Christian ministry should be conscious of a "divine call." To this Mr. Selbie answers, certainly; but, he explains, he does not mean by this call some supernatural voice from heaven, but "a divinely

implanted conviction" that God has called him. Of course that helps to explain things. One often wonders why certain people are acting as God's representatives on earth, but if it is true that God called them in this way, then the responsibility rests with God himself. Why, for example, was a man like the Bishop of London placed where he is? One explained it on the ground of his having had friends who looked after him. But one must not blame men if God did it. And we well remember asking a friend soon after he was appointed, why?; and he replied, "God only knows." He was better informed that we thought at the time. Presumably God had discovered the trouble it caused selecting men of ability to preach his gospel, and so had decided to have only "safe" men in the future. Men who will think, however little, have always been a devil of a nuisance in the world of theology.

The *Daily Express* published, the other day, a posthumous article by the late Stacey Aumonier. One passage in it is worth citing, and it was written in the last few weeks of his fatal illness:—

It is revolting to me to think of the thousands of millions of people who have inhabited this world going on indefinitely leading their separate existences—many of them insane, criminal, diseased, and pitiable; most of them dull, many of them sublime.

It seems to follow that in those factors that go to make up the individual unit there must be a constant readjustment of spiritual values. The individual passes, but ideas remain. *That which we call God* is that which is always changing in us, that to which we are ever striving to attain. [Italics ours.]

A Southborne preacher, the Rev. H. Brierly, said he was so sick of hearing about the Pilgrim Fathers that he could almost endorse the remark of an American preacher, that if instead of the Pilgrim Fathers landing on Plymouth Rock, it would have been a good thing had Plymouth Rock landed on the Pilgrim Fathers. We quite sympathize with Mr. Brierly. The Pilgrim Fathers were an awful lot of humbugs, and in a modern environment would have been as intolerable a nuisance as St. Paul or St. Francis. All the same, it was not an American preacher who was responsible for the statement quoted, but Colonel Ingersoll. Perhaps, however, it would not have done to have mentioned the name of the great "Infidel" in a Church. Religious humbug did not die out with the Pilgrim Fathers.

King Amanullah has been discovering things in connexion with his attempts to institute certain reforms in his very religious country. The chief opposition seems to have come from the priests, and he says:—

Most of the trouble in the world is caused by ignorant priests and Mollahs, who trade on the credulity of the masses to fill their own bellies. India can hope to make no progress unless it did as he did—repress these ignorant Mollahs for the good of the populace, as such Mollahs were a burden and a disgrace to the motherland.

We do not imagine that our own Mollahs will feel thankful for the lessons that Amanullah took back with him from the West. For priests are always the same, whether in India or in Europe, whether their skins be black, brown, yellow, or white, and whether they officiate in Christian or heathen temples. The colour of the skin, or the name of the "Joss," makes no difference whatever.

'Twould ring the bells of Heaven
The wildest peal for years
If Parson lost his senses
And people came to theirs,
And he and they together
Knelt down with angry prayers
For tamed and shabby tigers
And dancing dogs and bears,
And wretched, blind pit ponies,
And little hunted hares.

—Ralph Hodgson.

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.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—F. P. Beech, 5s.; Mrs. F. Richards, 5s.

MR. A. B. MOSS writes us in warm praise of the late T. Thurlow. Mr. Moss writes as a result of a very lengthy acquaintance with Mr. Thurlow, and speaks in high terms of his courage and devotion to the Freethought Cause. We thoroughly endorse all that is said on that head.

E. BALDY.—We are not surprised you were not able to get Mr. Cohen's books from Mudie's Library. But if you are a subscriber, you should insist upon your wants being supplied. The Times' Book Club has ordered some from time to time, presumably at the request of their clients. With regard to Smith & Sons, we can only say that the *Freethinker* is supplied them on sale or return. But we cannot control the arrangements between the head office and its branches.

R. VOSS (S.A.)—Thanks for good wishes for the New Year. We trust that you will have all the good fortune possible before it closes.

A FRIEND.—We cannot deal with anonymous communications. Names and addresses should always be enclosed, but not necessarily for publication.

C. M. BEADELL.—Thanks for good wishes, which we cordially reciprocate. We shall look forward to seeing you when you are next in London.

G. T. TOMLINS.—The case of human babies being born with an external rudimentary tail is an event of which there are many instances on record. As you say, it is laughable that this should have happened in Tennessee, of all places. Hitherto, the throw-backs to the simian state in that State appear to have been mainly in the matter of brains.

A. CLARK.—You will find an account in Draper's *Intellectual Development of Europe*, and other histories of civilization. The burning of the Alexandrian Library has been attributed to both accident and design, but there is no dispute as to the fact of burning.

S. MARTIN.—We should say that the majority of the members of the N.S.S. believe in Birth Control, and all of them believe in the legitimacy of the subject being discussed as one of great importance. But the National Secular Society itself is not committed to the subject in any way. It is outside its objects. Members are left free to make up their minds on the subject.

S.G.M. (Bangalore).—Received and shall appear at an early date.

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 connection 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.

This is the last opportunity we shall have of referring to the Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society. It will be held on the evening of Saturday, the 19th, at the Midland Grand Hotel, St. Pancras, in the Venetian Room. The President of the Society, Mr. Cohen, will be in the chair, and there will be many other speakers. We can safely say that the entertainment will be a good one, and unless this dinner gives the lie to all previous ones, we can promise a thoroughly enjoyable evening. All we have to add to what we have said is the request for all who are coming to send for their tickets at once—particularly those who are coming from the provinces—and we hope to meet many of our provincial friends there. A full advertisement of the function will be found on the back page of this issue.

Mr. George Whitehead will to-day (January 13) speak in the Co-operative Hall, Courtenay Street, Plymouth, at 3.0 and 7.0 p.m. In view of what we have to say below about the attempt of a clerical bigot to stir up feeling against the local Branch, the audiences should be good ones. We hope that all sympathizers will endeavour to be present.

What miserable cowards most Christians are where their religion is concerned! There is nothing original in the observation; it has been made many times before the present occasion, and will be made many times again. And the justification for its being said over and over again is its eternal truth. It was true when Christianity was in its youth, it was true of Christianity in its maturity, and it is true now it is sinking into the final stage of senile decay. The only argument which has been in constant use, and found universal favour with Christians, is that of force. The heretic cannot be argued out of existence, the only plan is to suppress him. The form of the suppression differs with time and opportunity, but it is the same in essence. King Louis the eleventh said that the only way to argue with an unbeliever was to plunge a sword into his stomach. So in each age the popular argument is one of suppression.

One more illustration in support of what has been said has just occurred in Plymouth. The local Branch of the N.S.S. is running a course of lectures right through the winter season. These lectures have been held in the Co-operative Hall, and they have been advertised in the trams. There has been no complaint about the quality of the lectures; indeed, a writer in the *Western Morning News* writing about the attacks made on the Church of England, says that of these the Roman Catholic attack has consisted of false history and exploded claims, the Nonconformist attack has been grossly offensive, "the Atheist attack has been the fairest of the three, for it has been open, apparently genuine, and not over elaborated of course." But the *Freethinker* has committed the unpardonable offence of making himself heard; and no Christian preacher in the whole of Plymouth has up to date had the courage of coming into the open and attempting to reply to these genuine, fair, and courteously expressed attacks. And no lay Christian appears to see anything wrong in this. He evidently does not expect his spiritual leaders to act with courage where the unbeliever is concerned.

But some Plymouth Christians are not inactive. There is a poor specimen of a man, although doubtless quite a good priest, in Plymouth, named Vodden, and Vodden is "Priest in charge" of St. Catherine's Church. So, in discharge of his priestly duty, Mr. Vodden wants Freethought meetings in Plymouth suppressed. First of all, the *Freethinkers* have committed the unpardonable crime of advertising their meetings on the trams. Mr. Vodden is amazed that this should be "openly" done. The poor man is not altogether illiberal, because from the wording of his protest he would not object if the

advertising on the City frame was not done "openly." Perhaps if they advertised under the floor boards, Mr. Vodden would be content. But he is "amazed" that the Corporation should tolerate such a thing. The thing must be stopped at once, and he calls upon Plymouth people to help in the good work.

In the second place, the meetings are held in the Co-operative Hall, and Mr. Vodden wants the Committee to refuse the hall for such purposes. The President of the Society told an interviewer that the question would come before the Committee, and we refrain from saying more on that head until we know what decision is reached. But we shall be surprised, bearing in mind that Freethought meetings have been held in Plymouth for very many years, and without any complaint of disorder, if the Committee does not tell this narrow-minded and funny person to mind his own business. Bigots do not change, and they do not learn. They are always stupid, for they learn none of the lessons that experience has to offer them. Persecution has never yet stopped the preaching of Freethought, and it never will. The Freethinkers of Plymouth are ratepayers and citizens, and have the legal rights of citizens and ratepayers. And Mr. Vodden never made a greater mistake in his misspent life than to imagine that he can stop Freethought propaganda in Plymouth or elsewhere by this pitiful exhibition of intolerance. If Mr. Vodden has any ambition to play the part of a man, we invite him to make the attempt of answering the Freethought attack on his religion. The weapon of suppression is worthy only of a blackguard and a bully.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti visits Chester-le-Street district to-day (January 13), and will speak at Houghton-le-Spring, in the Miners' Hall, at 3.0, and in the Co-operative Hall, Chester-le-Street, at 7.0 p.m. We hear this is Mr. Rosetti's first visit to these places, and we hope to hear that he has had good meetings.

The South London Branch has prepared a most attractive syllabus for the season ending with March 31, the lecturer for to-day (January 13) being Mr. F. Mann, who will speak on "The Philosophic Conception of Matter." The meeting commences at 7.15 p.m.

In North London, the Local Branch has for its lecturer to-day, Mr. H. Cutner, who will speak on "Malthus and Marx." There is almost certain to be a good and lively discussion following this address. Full particulars will be found in our Lecture Guide column.

A pleasing function took place at the Florence Restaurant, on January 3. Mr. A. B. Moss, who has now reached his seventy-fourth year, has been at work in the Freethought Movement as speaker and writer for over fifty years. A few of his friends having expressed the desire to mark their appreciation of his long and cheerfully given services to the Cause, a small committee was formed, of which Mr. H. Cutner acted as Secretary, and, on the date named, Mr. Moss was entertained to dinner, and presented with a cheque as some slight indication of the esteem in which he was held. The gathering was quite an informal one, and conversation, with reminiscences of the Movement took the place of set speeches. It was a very delightful evening, and we were glad to see our old friend carrying his seventy-four years so well, and as full as ever of interest in the Cause. Mr. Cutner had prepared a biographical sketch of Mr. Moss, with an account of the dinner, but owing to some vagary on the part of the post office, the "copy" did not reach us in time for this issue of the *Freethinker*. It will appear next week.

We may differ in this world, but when we get to the cemetery we are all on a dead level.

A Heathen's Thoughts on Christianity.

(Continued from page 6.)

A COMPOSITE FIGURE.

LET us next consider what proportions the figure of Christ had now assumed. He is overshadowed to a large extent by his mother in an association not in the least degree indicated or justified by the Gospel story.

When is Jesus Christ supposed to have been born? No one knows even this. Certainly not on December 25 of the year One! There were, and are, considerable differences among scholars as to the exact year. For several hundred years various groups of Christians celebrated Christ's birthday on January 6. Others fancied April 24 or 25. Some kept it in May. It was not until 254 C.E. that the Roman Church fixed December 25. Why? The Roman Church was then, with the aid of the secular power, trying to bring the whole Roman Empire under its power. December 25 was the great annual Sun festival throughout the Pagan world. It was the "Birthday of the Invincible Sun." Christmas Day was adopted, as a matter of compromise, from the older religions.

The worship of Mithra, the old Aryian sun-god, was widespread in the Roman Empire at that time. Evidences of it have been found in England. Mithra is supposed to have been born in a cave-stable on December 25. Some of the apocryphal Gospels place the birth of Christ in a cave-stable. The birthday of the Egyptian god Horus was also on December 25. He was born of a virgin mother, Isis. On that day a figure of the baby-god was laid in a manger with an image of his mother, Isis, beside it. The god Hermes, son of Zeus, the Greek "God the Father," and the virgin Maia (Mary) was also represented as a child wrapped in swaddling clothes and cradled in a manger. Long before the Gospel story was ever thought of, the manger-cradle of a divine child, born of a virgin mother, was one of the familiar objects of the older religions.

The Madonna and Child was a very old and widespread religious combination ages before Christ. It was one of the most familiar statues in all the countries round about the Mediterranean. The Shio Ho, or Kwin Yin (Holy Mother) of the Chinese and the Japanese, is commonly represented with a divine son. One of the religious emblems of India is that of the virgin-mother Devaki and her divine son Krishna. The priests describe her as a virgin, although she was a married woman like Mary the mother of Jesus. She is also supposed to have had a miraculous conception in the same way as Mary. The Romish dogma of the Immaculate Conception, which means that the mother of Jesus was miraculously conceived, free from any taint of sin, is thus not original.

In Mithraism there were seven sacraments, of which the most important were baptism, confirmation, and a eucharistic supper when the communicants partook of the divine nature of the god Mithra in the form of bread and wine consecrated by a priest, thus becoming the symbolical flesh and blood of the god. In order to account for this the Fathers of the Church had to refer to their old friend the Devil, without whose assistance, of course, Christianity could never have come into existence. Thus Justin Martyr, after describing the Lord's Supper (1 *Apol.*, ch. 66), goes on to say: "Which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithra, commanding the same thing to be done. For that the bread and a cup of water (it should be "wine") are placed with certain incantations in the mystic rites of the one who initiated, you either know or can learn." Tertullian intimates that "the devil, by the mysteries

of his idols, imitates even the main parts of the divine mysteries. He also baptizes his worshippers in water, and makes them believe that he purifies them of their sins. There Mithra sets his mark (the mark of Mithra was a *cross*) on the forehead of his soldiers; he celebrates the oblation of bread; he offers an image of the resurrection, and presents at once the crown and the sword; he limits his chief priest to a single marriage; he even has virgins and ascetics." (*Praescr.*, ch 40; Cp. *De Bapt.*, ch. 5; *De Corona*, ch. 15.) We have also the witness of more modern authorities. Professor Franz Cumont, in his *Mysteres de Mithra*, gives a photograph of a bas-relief, representing a Mithraic communion. On a small tripod is the bread, in the form of wafers, *each marked with a cross*.

In more remote and savage times, a human victim was sacrificed to the god, and the worshippers actually ate of his flesh and drank of his blood. This ceremonial cannibalism was practised in many parts of the world widely separated from each other. As men became civilized their religions grew less brutally realistic, their asperities were toned down, but the rite persisted in symbolic form. Thus the Spaniards found a thoroughgoing "eucharist" of this description in Mexico and Peru, to their great astonishment. The peoples of the South American civilizations had the complete thing, also associated with the sign of the cross, which is an almost universal sun-symbol. The Peruvians ate of a sacred bread called "sancu" sprinkled with blood, and the priest pronounced the solemn warning: "Take heed how ye eat this sancu; for he who eats it in sin and with a double will and heart is seen by our Father the Sun, who will punish him with grievous trouble." The bread was supposed to be the mystical body of God. In all the Mediterranean countries the bodies of the gods of agriculture were eaten by their votaries in the shape of cakes of bread and their blood was drunk in the form of wine. A similar form of communion exists among the lamas of Tibet to-day. Thus the Christians, especially those who believe in the doctrine of transubstantiation, or the *literal changing* of the bread and wine into the flesh and blood of Christ, participate in a rite that is nothing more than a survival of ceremonial cannibalism. How many of them, or even of their priests, are aware of it?

Another festival borrowed from the older religions is that of Easter. It was originally the celebration of of Eastre, the goddess of Spring and fecundity among the ancient Teutonic peoples, including the Druids of Britain. The Table to find Easter is based upon the calculations of a Pagan astronomer who lived 400 years before Christ, and there are no historical grounds for connecting this date with his death or resurrection.

From these and many other facts, it becomes obvious that the story of Jesus Christ cannot be considered as the history of any real person. The special characteristics assigned to him were common-places borrowed from the older religions. The Christian religion, in short, is a colossal imposture. The events narrated in the New Testament never took place. Jesus Christ is no more a historical character than was Jack the Giant Killer. Christianity is a "jig-saw" religion composed of superstitions commonly current in the ancient world, round about the Mediterranean 2,000 years ago, fitted together to make a new picture which does not differ very greatly from the old one. It is no more than the old Paganism set up in another frame. Being thus based upon forgery, fraud and plagiarism, Christianity was not long before it developed forms of imposture peculiarly its own.

I. UPASAKA.

(To be continued.)

Faith.

Most people accept, without question, the religious beliefs of the society into which they happen to be born, much in the same way as they accept their nationality. That this should be so with the unthinking crowd is but natural. Man is a gregarious animal. Instinct prevails and sends him with the herd—a vicious circle indeed, inasmuch as by joining he assists in creating it.

From infancy people are surrounded by the outward manifestations and phraseology of traditional religion. The current chronology, public holidays, place names, etc., all are reminders. In England most children are "christened," we live in ecclesiastical parishes, the New Testament is part of the appurtenances of our courts of justice, Parliament is opened with prayer, bishops bless battleships, while, as Lords Spiritual, they hold an exalted place in the national legislature.

Most English children receive definite religious instruction, and although in many cases it is accepted with the nonchalance of childhood, treated as just a part of the day's work, the remembered teaching, in its setting of quaint phrases, will come into use as a sort of talisman, later in life, should they encounter any doubts on the subject.

For these reasons, the average Englishman, if challenged, would claim to be a Christian. The claim would be made with a little hesitation, for the word has come to have a double signification. The strict observance of religion is frequently a cloak for infamy and fraud, while even when sincerity is undoubted, the religious man is often an unsociable person and a kill-joy. The "man in the street" does not wish to be suspected as coming under either of these classifications, and therefore does not take his creed too seriously. He will often express an opinion which is in direct opposition to it, *viz.*, that conduct is the only thing which really matters, while some of its more grotesque forms are subjects for his hilarity. But he "believes that he believes." He may display intelligence in politics, in business, in sport, but for religion—he just accepts the view already established. If he had been born in Turkey, he would have been a Mohammedan; in some part of China, a Buddhist.

This good-humoured unquestioning acceptance of the creed of one's country, unaccompanied by any personal sacrifice or effort, is not "belief" in the real sense. It is not upon such a weak and unstable basis that organized religion rests. The imposing number of nominal adherents may be compared to the façade of the building, but the foundation is composed of something much more solid.

There is a minority of real believers, men and women to whom religion is the greatest interest in life, and who view with horror the ever growing tendency, on the part of nominal Christians, to treat with levity the sacred Scriptures and to neglect public worship. I confess to a certain sympathy with these good folk. If the creeds are true, the salvation of souls should be the absorbing interest of us all.

The evangelist is usually to be found amongst the unlettered. He is not over-popular outside his own circle, for his literal interpretation of the Scriptures sets him apart from his fellow men, most of whom regard him as a nuisance. His methods, and crude statements of dogma, are justified as being the correct thing for the slums, but it is felt that for more refined people truth requires to be clothed in an æsthetic manner. In the ranks of the Church Militant the Fundamentalist is an important unit, but there is another, and more powerful section consisting of educated and intelligent people who appear to believe

sincerely. Their influence is the strongest factor in that vicious circle to which I referred.

How comes it that they are able to retain the form of a superstition so opposed to the facts of life and nature? They know that science has totally demolished the cosmic theory upon which the creeds are based, that research and criticism have exposed the unauthenticity of the ancient scriptures in which it originated. Yet we find them clinging to the old forms and symbols, giving to these a meaning totally different to that understood by the masses, finding in them an imaginary something which they call the "spirit," in contradistinction to the "letter" of religion.

They justify these mental gymnastics on the ground that essential truths are concealed behind the wrappings of the "letter"—realities beyond the power of unaided reason to grasp. In a word, they postulate FAITH.

Of course, if like liberty with the use of words obtained in ordinary life, we should exist in a bedlam of confusion. We simply do not permit it. In commerce it is called fraud and misrepresentation; in our law courts, false evidence and perjury. And yet many of the people who use such language in describing their religious beliefs and sentiments are not wilfully dishonest. I know this, because I have felt as they feel. "With a great price obtained I this freedom," and can therefore regard with a sympathy those who remain in bondage.

I know the terror which comes from smothered doubt—from questionings which one dare not face. The worst enemy to the soul of the earnest Christian is *unbelief*. To no one save his God may he admit the force of the enemy's attacks. To mention to another human being these dreadful doubts would be to play into the hands of the adversary.

There are periods of unnatural exaltation, of exotic bliss, when he believes and feels himself the "child of God" in a special sense, in close and intimate relationship with "the High and Holy One which inhabiteth Eternity," separate from the world of sinners. At such times:—

"Faith lends its realizing light,
The clouds disperse, the shadows fly."

But the terrible reaction follows, when the egoism of the position strikes him, when the very stars seem to look down with amusement and mock at his insolence and self-importance. He seeks relief in prayer: "Lord, I believe. Help Thou my unbelief."

Many Freethinkers, brought up in an atmosphere of rationalism, or—the next best thing—indifference to religion, can know nothing of such an experience. They are to be congratulated upon their inherited freedom, but they cannot possibly enter into the feelings I have described, and they should not press too far the charge of dishonesty.

Imagine a man in poor and hard circumstances, who believes himself heir to an immense estate. He dreams of the time coming, when he will possess a Rolls Royce, keep a great house, visit the beauty spots of the world in his yacht, be admired and courted. Even now he is in communication with the Great Benefactor, and although, for some hidden reason, he cannot be removed immediately from the present environment, he has the "blessed assurance" that he is a subject of constant care and interest.

He will forget his poverty, put up with inconveniences which he might alter even now. Why worry about the present, with the promise of such a glorious future? In the elation of anticipated greatness he will feel himself already a different being to the poor wretches around, who have no such hope.

And then doubts arise as to the validity of the title,

of the authenticity of the communications. Indignantly and without argument he will repel these at the first. When they are further pressed and assume serious form, he will try by all means to quieten his fears. Perhaps the inheritance will not be quite what he has anticipated, but there *must* be something in it: He cannot believe in the total negation of these high hopes, and "faith," the "substance of things hoped for," comes to his aid.

Let me here give, for my own experience, an example of the psychological process which takes place in the mind of the believer assailed by doubts. When a very young man, and an earnest Christian, I became acquainted with the story of evolution and the facts of "creation," as revealed by the earth's structure. My reason accepted the scientific view of human history, but it appeared to knock the bottom out of my creed. I was in deep distress. I knew that I *MUST* believe in Jesus Christ, and the Atonement. Salvation depended upon this. But St. Paul clearly shows why the atonement was necessary—"By one man sin came into the world, and death by sin." Christ was the "Second Adam." The Fall must remain a historical fact.

But one cannot believe to order. If I am told that unless I believe that two and two make five I shall be damned, I shall have to be damned. Surely God would not require the impossible—there must be some way of escape. I prayed earnestly for help, and it came.

It came from the realm of imagination. I saw that the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" was an allegorical reference to that period in evolution when man reached the point of self-conscious action. Previously he had been a non-moral creature, as were the beasts around him, now he could consider consequences, was endowed with the power to choose right or wrong action. The "fall" was simply the beginning of moral consciousness.

Eureka! The mystery was solved. To the simple people of ancient times God had revealed a profound scientific truth, wrapping it up in the symbolic story of the Garden of Eden, and the first man and woman.

Of course, I wonder now how it was that my own sense of "good and evil" was not revolted at the idea of a God who thus damned in advance the greater part of mankind, but the doctrine had been imbibed in childhood. One had the habit of believing that all God's ways are justified. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Certainly no doubts arose from that source—I was but desirous to reconcile the Word of God with the findings of science.

Symbolism and allegory once accepted, the Old Testament became less difficult. I saw in it a relation developing with man's capacity to grasp the truth, from the walking and talking God of Genesis to the spiritual and poetical conceptions of some of the Psalms, of the Book of Job, and of Isaiah.

I have referred to this experience for the purpose of impressing upon those Freethinkers who have never known the chains of a cruel creed, the importance of mingling charity with their condemnation of what must appear to them as imbecility.

It is a strange thing, this "faith," a mixture of inherited fears of ghosts and "the dark," of timidity and the herd instinct, of egoism and desire, and I strongly suspect that in some of its more fervent aspects, especially amongst adolescents and celibates, repressed sexual impulses form also an important ingredient.

We have to fight a creed which diverts man's attention from the only world of which he is sure, claims his service and devotion to a God who admittedly is not in need of them, while all around are men and women in want and ignorance. Gorgeous palaces are

erected to this God amid the slums of our cities, huge salaries paid to the chief priests and rulers of the cult.

Some day the service of man will have replaced the service of God, but a long and tedious journey lies ahead. Every sincere Freethinker is helping, although too many rest satisfied with the personal acquisition of freedom. If some of these earnest Christians who now oppose progress can be won to our side, bringing with them that same enthusiasm and activity, the pace will indeed be greatly accelerated.

To that end let us seek to understand their point of view, and give them full credit for honesty of purpose, while kindly but forcibly, on all possible occasions, pointing out the absurdity, the immorality, and the fantastic nature of their creeds.

A.H.M.

God and the Devil.

BOLD Lucifer once lounged in the vicinity
Of the great "I am-and-ever-was-and-will-be,"
But, not believing "Trinity," "Divinity"
Was expelled, and changed his Halo for a Trilby;
Commenced an "Opposition Show" in Hell
With a very influential Clientele.

At first, it is recorded, "Biz" was slow,
The "One-and-Only's" methods swayed Humanity;
The "Allelujah-stuff" remained "the-Go,"
And "After-death" Appointments, tickled vanity;
But, on the whole, affairs were bright enough,
And Satan grinned at God, and "Called his Bluff."

'Twas then, Divines divined fresh plans to check
The ductile machinations of the Devil,
Who snatched the best-bred people from the Wreck,
And left the C.3 Class for Saintly Revel;
Then Pope the Umpteenth said, "The one solution
Is to grant on 'Easy Terms,' full Absolution."

The "Lord's Work" then became a Bed-of-Roses,
And Satan gnashed his teeth, "Pished" and "Pshawed."
In Heaven, swarms of Saints sang through their noses,
And snuffled Hymns of Praise unto the Lord,
But, God perceived with growing indignation
That Nick was getting "Inside Information."

And so, at last, it leaked out in the Press,
That Scenery was shabby, up in Heaven,
Inhabitants admired it less and less
And longed to visit Somerset and Devon;
While everywhere was seen decline in Tone
And blasé Angels jazzing round the Throne.

In Hades, notwithstanding its dimensions,
Congestion complicates in every way;
Old Nick has just completed vast extensions
And arch-Archangels clock-in every day.
Things never were so gay since the Nativity
And Paradise is drained of all activity.

The time has come in Heaven, when its Host
Must Call-himself-together-in-Committee.
That is "The Father, Son and Holy Ghost"
Admit the "Three-in-one-stuff" was a pity;
Confess the "Virgin Birth" and "Resurrection,"
Munchausen Tales that failed to dodge detection.

ALOYSIUS PYM.

The constitution of man is such that, for a long time after he has discovered the incorrectness of the ideas prevailing around him, he shrinks from openly emancipating himself from their domination; and, constrained by the force of circumstances, he becomes a hypocrite, publicly applauding what his private judgment condemns.—J. W. Draper.

Correspondence.

A TARDY RECOGNITION OF THE RIGHTS OF ANIMALS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I should like to congratulate Mr. Braine on his good fortune in knowing so many Freethinkers definitely on the side of the animals and against their oppressors. Apart from shaking off religious beliefs, too many Freethinkers seem to be as much at home in the cultural standards of the Stone Age as do many Christians. Laughing at and getting rid of the gods isn't a very difficult matter these days. Modern knowledge makes religion really too silly. But many of the cruelties to animals not altogether unassociated with religious beliefs flourish enormously, and many Freethinkers would do well to examine just where they stand in these matters. I recall some remarks made not very long ago by our recently departed friend Mr. Hands, in the matter of candour, frankness, and plain speech in relation to beliefs and practices. Regarding the treatment of animals no less than in the superstitious beliefs of mankind, I do not hesitate to refer to people as little better, if any at all, than savages. I don't mean by this that I make a principle of insulting people, very far from it, but I do mean that in so many of our practices and beliefs we resemble savages as to be unworthy of a 20th century civilization. If we must continue to use the word "civilization," do not let us fail to say in plain terms how much a blood soaked, superstitious, cruelty-to-the-weak ridden civilization it really is.

W. WILSON.

SIR,—The great majority of Freethinkers have given little thought to moral philosophy, and I am therefore pleased to see that, in your issue of January 6, Mr. A. L. Braine raises the whole question of right and wrong. He says: "The Jesuitical argument that the end justifies the means is unsound."

To say that, is to condemn the utilitarian theory of ethics, which the great majority of Freethinkers have held from Hume and Bentham to the present time. According to that theory, the end is the one and only thing that justifies the means, and the moral quality of actions entirely depends on their tendency to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

I presume Mr. Braine also rejects the Christian theory that right conduct consists in doing the will of God. I should therefore like to know what is his criterion of moral values.

R. B. KERR.

"BUDDHA, THE ATHEIST."

SIR,—There is just a chance of all of us taking to the noble eightfold path of the Buddhists, if Messrs. Bryce and "Upasaka" are allowed to have all the say in portraying the religion of Buddhism. Their estimate is all too rosy. There isn't a system under the sun which merits the eulogy passed on Buddhism by the latter in *Buddha, the Atheist*. Gotama is presented as if there wasn't a doubt about his historicity; he goes through life exuding wisdom; never once making a mess of things; busy, as befits an Atheist, in building up a religion which, judging by the mass of its adherents, might just as well be any of the myriad others that cumber the continent of Asia. One is inclined to meet the two champions of things Asiatic by asserting that the Buddha is neither a man nor an Atheist, nor yet a religion builder. He is a myth, and his creed a conglomeration of misty speculation, good sense, in parts, and a hotch-potch of commentator's interpretations, drawn from every point of the compass.

Neither the "Enlightened One," nor his immediate successors left any documents, and the records that do deal with the Buddha's life are composed of the usual stuff found round about the making of a god. In the teaching, it is a case of paying your money and taking your choice, for there is a doctrine of no soul and another of transmigration; of no immortality and a succession of lives, which is a fairly good imitation of it; of

a belief in "the gods" and a refusal to discuss them and so on. And the "distinctive" marks of the Buddhist doctrine was common property to orders and individuals prior to the time of Buddha.

Atheism, if it be worth a tinker's curse, turns to man to make the most of this life, but the Buddha shunned whole slices of it. His attitude to women rivalled that of some of the Christian saints. He told his disciple Amanda to shun women. "Lewdness," he declared, "clings to women like filth." And the concomitant of that, hordes of idle celebrate monks fritting away their time with beads, are everywhere in evidence. The wisdom of founding the eightfold way—moral exhortation solely—on a basis of medicancy might be questioned also. An unwashed medicant with his begging bowl, and, as the Buddha prohibited the taking of life, with his lice, is a more accurate symbol of Buddhism than the label of Atheism.

H. B. DODDS.

Obituary.

MR. EDMUND PLOWMAN.

WE regret to report the death last week of Mr. Edmund Plowman, of Bethnal Green, London. Mr. Plowman, who was aged sixty-four years at the time of his death, was a Freethinker of many years' standing. He suffered a great deal through illness in his later years, but death came to him peacefully, and he died with calmness and resignation. In fulfilment of the wishes of the deceased, his body was cremated. A Secular Service was conducted at the City of London Cemetery, on Monday, January 7, by the General Secretary of the National Secular Society. Mr. Plowman leaves a wife and family, to whom we extend our most sincere sympathy.

MR. GEORGE SAUNDERS.

It is with the deepest regret that I have to record the passing of one of our members in the person of Mr. George Saunders. For more than thirty years he had been an ardent advocate of the Freethought Cause, and Edinburgh Freethought is the poorer by his death. For some time he had been afflicted with heart complaint, and passed away on January 3, at the age of seventy. Straight and honourable in all his dealings, he had gained, and retained, the respect of a wide circle of friends. He remained loyal to his opinions to the end. His interment took place at Sedgefield Cemetery, on January 5, and at his expressed wish, in silence. Mr. Saunders leaves a widow and son, to whom the most sincere sympathy is due. They have lost a loving father and husband, the memory of whom will do something to comfort them in their sorrow.—J. ROBERTSON.

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(Edinburgh University)

and Director of the Animal Breeding Research Dept.

Subject: "SEXUALITY AND SOCIETY—being a consideration of Some Human Biological Problems."

Questions and Discussion

Silver Collection.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8): 11.15, Miss Alison Neilans—"Does Legal Repression Promote Sex Morality?"

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Mr. H. Cutner—"Malthus and Marx."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Station): 7.15, Mr. F. Mann—"The Philosophic Conception of Matter."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): Free Sunday Lectures at 7 p.m. G. F. Holland—"Ibsen."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, H. W. Nevinson—"Some Writers I Have Known."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY ("The Orange Tree Hotel," Euston Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Mr. Thaker—"The False Moral Code."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Eclipse Restaurant, 4 Mill Street, Conduit Street, W.1): 7.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine—"Relief."

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. Every Wednesday at 7.30, Mr. W. P. Campbell-Everden. Every Friday at 7.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. The *Freethinker* is on sale outside the Park at all our meetings.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BELFAST (Proposed) Branch N.S.S. (I.L.P. Hall, 48 York Street): 3.30, Mr. A. McKimm—"Does God Care?"

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Stills' Restaurant, Bristol Street, opposite Council Schools): 7.0, Mr. Dobson—A Paper.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S.—3.0, at Miners' Hall, Houghton-le-Spring. Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"Nature, Man and God." 7.0, at Co-operative Hall, Chester-le-Street. Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"Is Christianity in Harmony with Science?" Music by Mr. Jos. and Miss Chapman.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall): 6.30. For particulars see *News* or *Citizen Supplement*.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street): 7.30, Dr. C. Carmichael—"Only Believe." Admission free. Questions and Discussion. In future, meetings will be held in room above lecture hall.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers Hall, 120 Rusholme Road, All Saints): 3.0 and 6.30, Guy Aldred (Glasgow), Subjects: "Seven Reasons for Atheism" (afternoon) and "Landmarks of Freethought" (evening).

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Courtenay Street): Mr. George Whitehead—3.0 p.m., "Secularism and Birth Control." 7.0 p.m., "Religion and Birth Control."

OUTDOOR.

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

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