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Views and Opinions.

Freedom and the Roman Church.

On Sunday, February 10, the Centenary of the Royal Assent to the Roman Catholic Relief Bill was celebrated at the London Coliseum. The Roman Catholics, prior to the passing of this measure, had been getting a dose of the same medicine they had, while they could and where they could, served out to others, and, naturally enough, they did not like the taste. To the Freethinker, it was just one phase of the endeavour of every Christian sect to oppress other Christian sects whenever it had the opportunity. And like every other Christian sect, Roman Catholics have never learned much from their experience under Protestant rule. Given the opportunity, the Roman Church would be to-morrow as bad as it has always been.

The principal speaker at the meeting was Monsignor Howlett, the Administrator of Westminster Cathedral, and it was curious to hear this gentleman delivering an address on behalf of freedom of conscience. In this he was chiefly concerned with the King. He is troubled about the King, who

is denied the freedom of conscience which is accorded to the humblest and poorest of his subjects.

If ever that stain on the statutes, that solitary and impertinent dictation was to be wiped out, he looked for the remedy in the common sense and love of justice inherent in the British people.

It is quite touching to find a Roman Catholic dignitary so concerned about the King having freedom of conscience. I agree, of course, that the King should be at liberty to choose whatever religion he pleases, instead of him having it selected for him, but that is because I believe in everyone having that liberty. But does the Roman Church believe that? Suppose the King—I do not know what his private opinion about religion is, nor does it matter—suppose the King were given freedom of choice in the matter of religion, and suppose that he decided in favour of Atheism. Would Monsignor Howlett support him in

his choice? Somehow I have got it in my mind that the Roman Catholic Church would join with all the other Churches in shouting that such a thing could not be tolerated for a moment. And I fancy that what he really means is that the King should have liberty of choice in the matter of religion because in the present case the law selects his religion for him, and that selection is not Roman Catholicism.

* * *

Christianity and Character.

The Roman Church will not permit liberty of thought in the case of the humblest of its members; what is it likely to permit in the case of the foremost official in the country, assuming it had the power to decide? The last thing would be "freedom of conscience." No less a person than Cardinal Newman, the last theologian of genuine ability that this country produced, said:—

The Catholic Church claims, not only to judge infallibly on religious questions, but to animadvert on opinions in secular matters which bear upon religion, on matters of philosophy, of science, of literature, of history, and it demands our submission to her claims. It claims to censure books, to silence authors, and to forbid discussion.

That is quite plain; it indicates the kind of freedom of conscience the Roman Church is ready to give, and it was put plainly because Newman was both an honest and an able man. The practice, the logical consequence of this claim, was well expressed by Mr. Hilaire Belloc, when he said that so far as he was concerned, and speaking as a Catholic, "I accept what she [the Church] teaches, and trust her more than I do the evidence of my senses. Whether I can imagine the thing believed or not, is to me of no intellectual consequence whatever." We have also to bear in mind that the Roman Catholic Church still claims supremacy over the civil powers, and claims that in all cases where the two are in conflict, it is the civil power that must give way. I do not know anything of Monsignor Howlett besides this report of his speech, but I am quite ready to give, for what it may be worth, my testimony to him as a true son of the Church, and therefore not to be trusted to speak the truth, or to act justly where the interests of his Church are concerned. As a Freethinker, I would give George, King of England, the same freedom of choice in matters of religion that I would give George the dustman. At present he is not allowed to exercise that right. And that is because other Christians declare that if he gave his adherence to the oldest and the most powerful of the Christian sects, he could not be trusted to carry out his duties to the country honestly and faithfully. It is not I who, in this instance, offer this fine tribute to the effect of Christianity on character, it is the overwhelming majority of Christians in Great Britain.

What Would the Church Do?

On the same day that Monsignor Howlett's artfully dishonest speech was being delivered in London, the following passages from a letter by Cardinal Bourne were being read in every Roman Catholic Church in the country:—

There is no need to dwell upon the endless variety and strange contradictions in the forms of Divine worship in this England wherein once in every church of the many thousands which adorned it the same form of worship was offered to God throughout the year.

Unity was first abandoned; then uniformity became a hopeless search. To-day faith in the primary truths of Christianity is weakening and waning. The inevitable moral consequences can no longer be averted.

The sacredness of Christian marriage and its permanent character, and the holiness of the married state and the natural laws which govern it are no longer recognized, even by many who hold themselves to be Christians.

Age-long traditions of Christianity in these matters, which are the foundations of our civilization, are disregarded and set aside.

If this means anything at all it means that the Catholic Church would seize the first opportunity of restoring that unity of theological teaching which it declares to be the foundation of civilization, and to the loss of which Cardinal Bourne attributes the evils he laments. In the heyday of its power the Roman Catholic Church compelled civil governors to seek out heretics, arrest them, seize their goods, and deliver them over to the Bishops for trial and punishment. How long would it be, if the Church could regain its old powers, before it adopted the same plan over again? The Church has never admitted it was wrong in thus acting, it has never withdrawn the claim to direct the conscience of civil authorities, it has simply lamented that the direction of civilization has in many instances passed out of its hands. It tolerates only where it is unable to suppress. It still claims, in the words of Cardinal Newman, to censure books, to silence authors, to forbid discussion, and the mouth-piece of a Church that does this claims, on behalf of the King of England, freedom of conscience! Well, there is one practical way in which it may do this. There are the blasphemy laws, which do forbid freedom to every Freethinker in the country, unless he attacks Christianity in a way that is not offensive to Christians. We invite Monsignor Howlett to give, publicly, his name to the movement for the repeal of the blasphemy laws. By all means, let the King have freedom of conscience. But let the Church abandon its Index which forbids its followers to read certain books for fear their conscience should become too enlightened to believe in the doctrines of the Church. That would be a very good starting point.

* * *

A Lesson from the Past.

In the first year of the seventeenth century, Giordano Bruno was burned in the Campo dei Fiori in Rome. In June, 1889, a statue to him was erected on the place where he met his death. The Church burned him; and the Church, 289 years later, was so far from regretting its action that it saw in the erection of the statue a deadly insult to the papacy. Immediately after the erection of the monument, the Bishop of Salford—later Cardinal Vaughan, I think—issued an appeal for funds for "The Sacred Heart of Jesus," and in the pamphlet asked Catholics to contribute well as an expression of sympathy towards the Pope on the gross insult that had been offered him. After saying that the erection of the monument was the "perpetration of a deed of iniquity worthy only

of the impure and anti-Christian revolution, and of the powers of hell," this follower of Jesus said of Bruno:—

He is the chosen idol and pattern of the Italian Revolution because, as they tell us, he declared war against all who would impose any restraint upon the mind or will of man. The mind and will of man, he proclaimed, were absolutely free; whosoever checks or controls them in their action, either by law or force, is a tyrant and enemy to be destroyed. . . . His morals were on a par with his blasphemous infidelity and atheism. . . . He wrote the most impure and obscene plays imaginable, openly proclaiming the nullity of marriage and the lawfulness of the most shocking excesses. . . . He received his deserts by having been publicly burnt for his crimes in Rome in the year 1600. . . . The Catholic world has been profoundly shocked and grieved by the crimes thus publicly committed and officially boasted of in the City of Rome. The Holy Father has received thousands of telegrams, messages, and addresses of condolence from all parts.

And all because of this statue to Bruno! The venom and the dishonesty of this Bishop of Salford would be unbelievable if one knew nothing of Christian history. It is a lie, and the Bishop knew it was a lie to say that Bruno wrote indecent plays, or pandered to the pornographic tastes of men and women. It is a lie, and the Bishop knew it to be a lie, that, even if he did so, to say that his condemnation and burning had anything to do with that. The Roman Church never yet burned a man for indecency, and the papal court with its crowds of prostitutes was not likely to be seriously hurt by indecency. Bruno's declared offences were that he had taught heresy concerning the persons of the godhead, the incarnation of the Word, the nature of the Holy Spirit, the Divinity of Christ, the eternity of nature, the transmigration of souls. There was no charge of indecency. He was burned as "a damnable and obstinate heretic."

The Church does not forget; it does not forgive—the heretic. It will forgive the thief, the adulterer, the murderer. It is the unbeliever for whom it has no forgiveness. And it is a representative of that Church which asks for freedom of conscience for the King of England, because the law of this country selects a Protestant form of Christianity for him, and forbids him to believe in any other. It is absurd to select a religion for any man, it is wrong to forbid him to throw it overboard if he feels so inclined. I, a Freethinker, can say so. In the mouth of an official of the Roman Church a plea for the conscience of the King becomes a piece of deliberate hypocrisy.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Life's Litany.

A little hope, a little dream,
A little prayer the heart to cheer;
A little joy to shed its gleam
Upon a pathway, else too drear—
And life is sweet to me!

A little doubt, a little pain,
So that my soul may know the peace
Of happiness, when once again
It wins a way to glad release—
And life is sweet to me!

A little skill in all I do,
A little praise, lest labour pall;
A little strength to carry through,
And someone's love to crown it all—
And life is sweet to me!

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

Papa's Playground.

"Clericalism is the enemy."--*Gambetta.*

"A creed is a rod,
And a crown is of night;
But this thing is god,
To be man with thy might,
To grow straight in the strength of thy
Spirit, and live out thy life as the light."
Swinburne.

THE Pope of Rome, the spiritual head of the Roman Catholic Church, has again become a temporal sovereign. That is a piece of interesting news that comes to us from Italy. Fifty-nine years ago the news would have been thrilling, but, during the lengthy interval, so much has happened which discounts its present importance. Thrones are very much cheaper to-day than they ever were, and many once-powerful royal families are actually in exile, eating the bitter bread of banishment.

It is an ironic comment on Papa's alleged infallibility that he should choose this twilight of the gods, and the "god-anointed," for what our American friends call "a come back." For the patrimony of Saint Peter has been restored through the agency of Signor Benito Mussolini, whose ideas on Royalty once resembled the forthright opinions of Thomas Paine. It seems, however, that Papa, with becoming Christian humility, is too grateful to look a gift-horse in the mouth. He takes the dole, like many others, as a gift from high heaven, and does not criticize the donor too harshly! Poor papa! After interfering in serious politics for so many years with the noise and insistence of a carpet-sweeper, he settles down as a tin monarch-on-wheels in his own right. After flirting with Radicalism, Republicanism, and even Socialism, he suddenly assumes fancy dress, and, with a cardboard crown, surveys the world gravely from China to Peru. It is, indeed, a divine comedy, which borders dangerously on burlesque, or even harlequinade.

Once Papa, or, rather earlier Grandpas, ruled Italy and part of Germany with a heavy, mailed fist, whose reverberations shook the world. Now, Papa is no longer the king of kings, but a tinsel imitation of royalty, beside which the coffee-coloured Sultan of Zanzibar and the dusky Emperor of Abyssinia seem big brothers, and of real importance in the world.

Hark, yet awhile! The Vatican State is almost like the real thing. It has its own currency, postage stamps, wireless station, and enough soldiers to fill the Albert Hall comfortably. It has no navy, for the same reason that the republic of Switzerland finds little use for admirals. Indeed, the tiny kingdom is under a square mile in extent. The whole affair would be a travesty, below the Principality of Monaco in dignity, were it not that the kind-hearted Signor Mussolini started Papa's State with a cheque for a few millions, waggishly termed an indemnity for a tram-track to nowhere.

Anyhow, Papa is among the millionaires, even should he join presently the many other kings in exile. There will be no question yet awhile of fragments of the true cross, or toenails of St. Peter, or other Vatican treasures, being put up for auction, or taken to the pawnshop. If the worse times come to the worst, Papa can skip off to the United States, where he should be assured of a welcome from so many of Italy's sons who left their country for its good.

"What a fall is here, my countrymen!" This so-called patrimony of St. Peter has shrunk to the tiny dimensions of a mere pin-point on the map of Europe. In playing the sedulous ape to royalty, Papa has made himself the playboy of Europe and

brought one of the chief Christian bodies into contempt and derision. To command a purely spiritual allegiance from millions was a dignified gesture. Even to enact the part of old Lear surrounded with thankless children was not without pathos. But to pose as a tinsel monarch in a territory scarcely larger than Hyde Park, with a population of seven hundred, is to invite inextinguishable laughter.

Recent events show clearly enough the ebb-tide of the political power of the Papacy, and the bitterest comment on the very artful diplomacy, which, under Cardinal Rampolla, Papal Secretary of State during two decades, sought for the means of putting Papa once more in the sun. It was Rampolla who suggested the Catholic Church's flirtation with Republicanism and Socialism, which has ended in an absurd and inglorious pantomime of royalty. It is fitting that such dishonest diplomatic tactics should crumble into nothingness, and destroy once and for all the hopes of the greatest of the Christian Churches of the conquest of Democracy.

The curious thing is that, as belief has waned in this country, the English State Church has sought more and more to imitate the sorry medievalism of the Romish Church. Maybe Anglo-Catholics have not yet done all that was dreaded by timid Nonconformists, but they rule the ecclesiastical roost, and the two archbishops and the bench of bishops are as powerless as tame rabbits. At this hour there are covered by the banner of the English State Church, men who hold the extremist doctrine of the freedom of the individual, and anæmic creatures who are willing to submit to the utmost doctrine of priestly control.

That a large number of Anglican clergy were coquetting with Rome caused, some years ago, attention from the Catholic Church, and a former Pope had an idea of reconverting England, and of reimposing the yoke which our ancestors threw off. But even Popes cannot force the clock back, and English people still, as a nation, refuse to acknowledge Papal (and Italian) supremacy, and bear with the known evils of the present State Religion. Priestcraft had not a safe seat on English shoulders in the old Ages of Faith even before the days of the Reformation. It is an impossible dream now that there is an organized Labour Party which has inscribed on its banners the stirring words: "Government by the People, of the People, for the People."

MIMNERMUS.

Freethought Fundamentals

MR. CHAPMAN COHEN'S new book* is really the series of four lectures he recently delivered in Leicester. So well received were they that, in response to many appeals, he decided to write them up from his rough notes, and the reader has an almost verbatim report of the originals. This makes the book in many ways unique, as it is the first time (I believe) that its author has thus published some of the many thousands of lectures he has delivered all over the country.

The extraordinary thing about these essays is that Mr. Cohen has found something new to say about such well known subjects as Freethought, God, Death and Morals—all from the point of view of a militant Freethinker. Take this last word as an example. How many times have all of us been faced by the argument that, as Determinists, it is silly to call ourselves "Free" thinkers. If everything is "determined" how can anything be "free"? Here is, then, a fundamental question, and I refer the reader

* *Four Lectures on Freethought and Life.* By Chapman Cohen. (The Pioneer Press. Price 1s.)

to Mr. Cohen's splendidly lucid analysis of the position, and his triumphant defence of the word "Free-thinker" in the first lecture. No one, no matter what he has read or thought out for himself on the subject, can afford to miss the argument which is made intensely interesting as well as logically impregnable.

Again, take the lecture on "Freethought and God." I don't know how many books and essays God has been responsible for. Quite possibly 1,730,459, and there are plenty more to come. Some hundreds of thousands must have dealt with the design argument, that most crushing and annihilating refutation of the claims of Atheism. It is also impossible to talk or hear about God without design being brought in somehow, even if entirely out of place, and it is the one great "stand by" of all good Christians in or out of the pulpit. Yet Mr. Cohen has thrust his rapier up to the hilt right through it with a dexterity and sureness of aim that must surprise even his greatest admirers.

"Now the root objection," he says, "the completely irremovable objection to the argument from design is that, first, it involves a gross fallacy, and second, it is completely irrelevant."

And he then proceeds, in simple language, to show you where the fallacy is, and why the design argument is so irrelevant. You have no need of a special vocabulary either. There are no difficult metaphysical terms here requiring special definitions, which in turn require explaining. The argument is put so simply and so surely that he who runs may read. Obscurity is not profundity. No special sense is needed to see the Freethought standpoint—at least as put by Mr. Cohen. And in nothing that I have read of his, is the gift—which he shares with George William Foote—of putting sound philosophical argument and logic in a simple way better shown than in this work. But it is not merely the design argument that he deals with. The whole concept of God is treated from new angles, from a point of view which only a thorough knowledge of the problems raised, can give. And not always in a serious vein either. Often there comes a whimsical way of looking at things which I, in spite of Biblical injunctions, envy from the bottom of my soul. As this:—

To the modern believer, for example, it would be repulsive to talk of God having a body, and blasphemous to speak of him as having red hair and side whiskers; yet we are allowed to speak of him as having intelligence, and will, and personality. But these qualities are as distinctly human as are arms and legs and whiskers. Why do we retain the one and reject the other?

Alas, why do we smile when we think of God having side whiskers or perhaps an imperial? Even the most hardened Theist has to resist the birth of a smile when he is called upon to answer once for all, is God a beaver or not? It is, of course, rank blasphemy to speak like this, but why?

So with the other subjects dealt with: each has the clarity of thinking which pervades all Mr. Cohen's work, each has some humorous and witty reflections on the ponderous platitudes which have so long done duty as profound philosophy.

I hope I have said enough to show cause why this small book of nearly 100 pages should be on the shelf of every reader of this journal. The subjects treated are subjects we all have to deal with. The questions answered are questions we all have to face at some time or other. The fight is not over by a long, long way. We must use the best weapons we can as effectively as we can. Here is an armoury with which to do battle. Let us use it for Freethought. I hope to hear that these *Four Lectures* will soon be in their second edition.

H. CUTNER.

The Evolution of Life.

(Concluded from page 100.)

It is highly probable that there is only one stage in the evolution of a world when the conditions prevailing are suitable for the production of life. Recent research makes this view highly probable, and provides an answer to the question: Why does not life arise spontaneously to-day?

Professor J. B. S. Haldane, the biologist, speculating upon the origin of life upon the earth, points out that after the surface of the earth had cooled sufficiently for the vapour in the atmosphere to condense into rain and form the primitive seas and oceans, the atmosphere must have contained little, or no oxygen. On the other hand, all the carbon now deposited in the earth in combination with chalk, limestone, and coal, once existed in a free state in the atmosphere, as carbon dioxide, and from which it has been withdrawn through the agency of vegetable and animal life. As there was no oxygen in the atmosphere, the chemically active ultra-violet rays from the sun could penetrate to the surface of the land and sea, instead of being cut off, for the most part, by the ozone in the upper atmosphere as is now the case. Professor Haldane goes on to observe:—

Now, when ultra-violet light acts on a mixture of water, carbon dioxide, and ammonia, a vast variety of organic substances are made, including sugars and apparently some of the materials from which proteins are built up. This fact has been demonstrated in the laboratory by Baly of Liverpool and his colleagues. In this present world such substances, if left about, decay—that is to say, they are destroyed by micro-organisms. But before the origin of life they must have accumulated till the primitive oceans reached the consistency of hot dilute soup. To-day, an organism must trust to luck, skill, or strength to obtain food. The first precursors of life found food available in considerable quantities, and had no competitors in the struggle for existence. As the primitive atmosphere contained little or no oxygen, they must have obtained the energy which they needed for growth by some other process than oxidation—in fact, by fermentation. For, as Pasteur put it, fermentation is life without oxygen. . . . The first living or half-living things were probably large molecules synthesized under the influence of the sun's radiation, and only capable of reproduction in the particularly favourable medium in which they originated.⁵

All living bodies are built up of cells. This is true of vegetable, animal, and human life. The ultimate unit of life is the cell. Cells are minute bodies, microscopic in fact. The cells of which the human body consist, range, in size, from the one hundred and twenty-fifth of an inch, to the one five thousandth of an inch.

It was not until Schleiden and Schwann, about 1838, had established this fact, and Cohn, in 1858, had shown the essential similarity between the vegetable and animal cells, followed by Schultze, Dujardin, and Van Mohl, who showed that the cell was composed of protoplasm, that any advance could be made towards the natural explanation of the mystery of life.

As Professor Haldane further explains:

The cell consists of numerous half-living chemical molecules suspended in water and enclosed in an oily film. When the whole sea was a vast chemical laboratory, the conditions for the formation of such films must have been relatively favourable; but for all that, life may have remained in the virus stage for many millions of years before a suitable assoc-

⁵ *The Rationalist Annual*. 1929. pp. 7-8.

blage of elementary units was brought together in the first cell. There must have been many failures, but the first successful cell had plenty of food, and an immense advantage over its competitors . . . As the primitive organisms used up the foodstuffs available in the sea, some of them began to perform in their own bodies the synthesis formerly performed at haphazard by the sunlight, thus ensuring a liberal supply of food. The first plants thus came into existence, living near the surface of the ocean, and making food with the aid of sunlight as do their descendants to-day. It is thought by many biologists that we animals are descended from them.

The "virus" alluded to in the above quotation, is a product of the bacteriophage discovered by d'Herelle, and is the cause of a disease, or process, destructive of bacteria. Now bacteria are the lowest forms of plant life, and play a very important part, both for good and evil, in our lives and in life in general; they are micro-organisms smaller even than the cell, and it is only since the improvement in optical instruments by the invention of the compound microscope which magnifies to more than a thousand diameters, that biologists have been able to study these minute forms of life. So minute are they that it would require twenty-five thousand placed side by side to stretch the length of an inch! Or, comparing them with an ordinary cell, eight or ten of them could be placed in a row along the surface of a red blood cell. The bacteriophage is even smaller than that, and d'Herelle found that if a culture in which the bacteriophage had destroyed the bacteria was passed through a filter fine enough to keep out all bacteria, the filtered product could infect and destroy fresh bacteria. The virus must be exceedingly small and cannot be seen even by the ultramicroscope; they can pass through even the finest porcelain filters, and they are known as filter-passers. It is among these ultramicroscopic micro-organisms that Professor Haldane believes the secret of the origin of life will be found.

Scientific workers are working at the subject all over the world. Professor A. L. Herrera, who is the Director of the Government Biological Institute in Mexico City, South America, has been at work on the problem for thirty years, and has made nearly 6,000 experiments, during which he has succeeded in imitating many organic structures by means of chemical substances. He has succeeded in obtaining on his microscope slides, structures resembling cells, spores, streptococcus chains, bacteria, protoplasts, and other products of organic nature. As he observes: "The reproduction of such structures and their identity with the morphology of living protoplasm and living cells indicates that the physical basis underlying the two must have much in common. And I believe the parallelism exists from the chemical point of view as well." ⁶ In a letter to the present writer, Professor Herrera, who describes himself as a "materialist and atheist, ever at war with the ancient ideas," says that he is preparing a voluminous book on *Silica and Life*, giving the results of his many years of research work. With so many earnest workers in the field, the question of the origin of life is bound to be solved sooner or later, like so many other problems that the theologians declared to be unsolvable by science.

W. MANN.

PROPHECY.

My light is out, yet will I prophesy
Men still unborn will show more light than I;
And am content that other men in turn
Against my darkness shall the brighter burn.

Margaret Sackville.

Mussolini and the Pope.

THE agreement between the Papacy and the Italian State—in this instance, Mussolini—is now complete. The Pope is to wield the recognized powers of an independent sovereign in his own State, with about £20,000,000 in compensation for "seizure" of papal territory. There is no telling what the Italian people think of this arrangement as they have not been consulted, and are not allowed to criticize. They are dumb, and will remain dumb until the inevitable end, which comes to all autocracies sooner or later, arrives. Then it may be found that the people of Italy will have again to do what others have been compelled to do, place a restraining hand on the activities of the Church. And by "the Church," we mean any Church, for no State has been able to permit a Christian Church to exercise unlimited power without riding for its own downfall.

The clash between the allegiance which an individual owes to the Secular State and the claims of the Pope can only directly arise in Italy. In other countries the position remains as before—the Papacy claiming supremacy in "spiritual matters," and only when the claims of the State conflict with religious orders does it counsel resistance. So far the Papacy simply presents a complete form of a conflict which arises in every country. We have seen this with the Nonconformists and education, with the extreme Church of England section and the question of divorce, and it would arise in any situation where the decrees of the State ran counter to the teachings of this or that sect. In this respect the Roman Church stands for an evil that is present with all Christian bodies to the exact extent of their power and opportunities. In religion—as in disease—a state of virulency is usually normal activities raised to a point at which they become dangerous to the general health.

As has been said before, the Church has no politics, and Mussolini has no religion. It is in this that the significance of the concordat lies. Mussolini is evidently anxious to not merely preserve his rule while he lives, but to perpetuate it after he is dead, and to do this he has to find some power that will work on other lines than that of open force. He has already come into conflict with the Papacy over the question of the control of education, and one may assume that he has not emerged unscathed from the fight. An agreement with the Vatican will, therefore, give him the assistance of a power that still has enormous influence in Italy, and will also help him to the extent that the Papacy can influence people in other countries. He has discovered, as so many others have discovered, that to get a blind and unreasoning support, to sanctify the use of brute force, and to silence opposition, there is no better ally than religion, and among religions, none more serviceable than Roman Catholicism with its hordes of unreasoning and credulous followers.

What we have to note is that a similar agreement is possible in most countries in Europe, and elsewhere. The form may differ but the essence will remain the same. The Roman Catholic vote is everywhere the least intelligent, the least independent, and the most docile in the world. All over Europe there are new States, or new forms of government, coming into existence. Some of these can obviously maintain themselves only by a policy of repression. Where this is not the case we have the conflict of political parties, never too much addicted to principle, and with a too-great readiness to sacrifice principle for some immediate advantage on the lines of "Après moi le déluge." To gain advantages for the Church, the Papacy will be willing to ally itself with any form of government, the only condition being that it must gain from the alliance. And political leaders, recognizing the benefit of the "block" vote, or the support of a solid body where the vote has either no existence or no power, will be willing to sell advantages to the Church in return for its support. Mussolini, in what he has done, was only imitating certain political parties in this and other countries; these will be confirmed in their policy by Mussolini's action.

Prophecy is always a dangerous occupation, but it would seem that either the present situation in Italy

⁶ *The Literary Digest*. January 12, 1929.

must continue, or the Papal State will react to the injury of the Church. The new independent State is not a country, it is not even a town. It is a small piece of land in Rome. Within this strip the Pope rules supreme. The Church of which he is the head will continue to exercise the right to say what men shall believe, what they shall not read, to demand that its followers shall not merely believe what it teaches today, but also whatever it cares to teach to-morrow. It also will continue to exercise the right to suppress opinion, to stop discussion, and to silence authors. But unless the rest of Rome, at least, falls in with this, the people of Rome will see one side of a street suppressing books and silencing discussion, and the other side permitting it. How long will such a farcical state of things continue? Liberty, after all, is catching. And the Papacy in thus advertising—immediately to the people of Rome, and ultimately to the people of Italy—its own intolerance, will go far towards ending both Mussolini and itself. We are not at all disturbed at seeing the new Papal State created. On the whole, we think it brings the Church a step nearer the end. After all, Mazzini and Garibaldi were both Italians.

There are two points of immediate interest in connexion with the Mussolini arrangement. The first is that it has been agreed the Italian State now recognizes matrimony as a Sacrament regulated by Canon Law in its relation to civil law. This means that only religious marriages are possible in Italy, and no divorce is to be permitted. The last does not alter the existing condition of things. But the only legal marriage in Italy will be one performed by a Catholic priest. It will be remembered that Mussolini first wished to have all schools under his control. But he has been compelled to bend to the Church, for in future the Catholic religion is to be taught in all schools, and the programme is to be settled by agreement between the Pope and the Italian State. This definitely puts Italy, so far as marriage and education are concerned, among the most backward of the European States. We commend these things to those who think Christianity is played out, and the work of the *Freethinker* unnecessary. Christianity is always a refuge for hard-pressed reactionary governments.

C.C.

Acid Drops.

We have not been bothering much about the Salvation Army hubbub, because whether it had Booth, or Higgins, or Jones or Robertson at the head of the Army was no business of ours. The proceedings have not been without their farcical side. The religious cant of being guided by God, and trusting in God, has boiled down to a series of intrigues to retain or to capture the leadership of the Army, with an ultimate appeal to the Courts, and to lawyers arguing before the Council, with God put in the background. General Booth said he was asking God to direct him; and God, apparently, told him that he could do nothing unless he got the secular Courts on his side. Then a series of accidents happened to some of the leaders, and we expect that cheered the General by showing him that God was perhaps taking a hand. Next, Eva Booth had a "revelation" from God ordering her to go to see her brother to induce him to give way. But God had forgotten to give a revelation to the General to receive his sister, because when, after travelling all night, she got there, the General refused to see her. So carelessly does Divinity manage things!

The curious thing about this Salvation Army bother, as the *New York Nation* remarked, is the attitude of the press, in both England and America, concerning it. It has been accepted as a really important social agency, and no one has questioned either its crude theology or its value as a social force. The Army has been taken at substantially its own valuation, and if the spirit of the old showman who founded the Army could be brought back to some Spiritualist gathering, one could imagine him doing a ghostly wink at the way in which he has managed to impose his organization on the world. To cite the *Nation*, the "Army uses doughnuts, coffee, and beds to the end that hungry men should

accept its view of the cosmos and morality." That is, as a matter of fact, the most favourable view that could be taken of the Salvation Army and its work; and even on that basis it might be said that no one bothers about it because it is all done in the name of religion, and any scandal connected with religion is avoided for fear of its reaction on Churches and Chapels generally.

Consider the situation. Here is an organization preaching a religious doctrine of blood baths and hell-fire of so crude and so ignorant a character that there are not a dozen educated Christians of standing who are not ashamed of it. In order to subsidize this campaign—to put the matter on the most favourable footing—it secures money, not from its own followers alone, but from the public generally, on the ground of its performing a valuable social work. Those who give take the Army's own account of its work, and by the publicity methods it uses it has always managed to palm off on the public its own stories as quite independent testimonies to the value of its work. On the best view that can be taken, the main work of the Army is to subsidize a grossly ignorant form of religion with money raised for quite other purposes.

In its appeal for funds, the Army tells the public it has supplied so many million meals. Naturally, the public thinks this means so many millions of meals given away. But an overwhelming majority of these meals are paid for, and most of the shelters actually yield a profit. Beds provided come under the same criticism. A charge is made, and in the appeal for funds nothing is said about it. It begs waste material from the public, and pays social derelicts a starvation wage for work on sorting, etc. It tells the public that it has sent so many thousands abroad, but does not say that these emigrants pay their own passage money, generally advanced as a loan—or part of it is so advanced—and that it is nearly all repaid. Nor does it say that on account of these loans it collects capitation grants and steamboat and train commissions. Some years ago when a scathing exposure was made of its methods by Mr. Manson, the Army took refuge in silence, knowing that the public has a short memory, and in time the scandal dropped out of mind. Nothing but a religious agency could have stood up against it.

When the Darkest England scheme was propounded—and without it the Army would never have bulked in the eye of the general public, save as a crowd of ignorant religious fanatics—General Booth promised great things in the shape of the decrease of poverty, diminution of prostitution, social salvation of the bottom dog, etc. It was a gospel of social salvation that was promised. Nearly a generation has passed, and one may well ask whether the Army has had any special or memorable influence in any of these directions. Everyone knows it has not. So far as these evils are concerned, the Salvation Army might just as well never have existed. It is true it parades a certain number of converted drunks, etc., but this has always been the case with every religious agency in the country, and if they were tabulated, quite as many cases of men and women saved would be gathered from the quite unorganized and frankly human efforts of ordinary folk with their neighbours, and without any possible connexion with religious teachings. Give me money, said General Booth the first, and I will affect a social revolution. Well, he had the money, and the social revolution has not arrived. We know what would be said of any other movement that made the same promises, received the same public support, and ended in a similar failure. But with religion in this country anything is possible, and anything may happen.

"In all history," says Lord Shaw, "the first true gleams of the light of toleration are in the hesitations of Pontius Pilate." There are two questions to be asked about this statement. Are the alleged "first true gleams" recorded in history—real history, verifiable history? And, assuming they were, are they the first? To decide this, one needs to be acquainted with the ancient history of many other races other than Israel-

ites and Romans. There's another point worth mentioning. Assuming what Lord Shaw says is true, it was a pagan Roman who had the first gleams of true tolerance, and not a Hebrew or Christian religious fanatic. One thing is certain, no intelligent student of history would dream of claiming Jesus—the Great Exemplar!—as the pioneer of tolerance in regard to religion. Jesus cursed and slandered his religious opponents, and "imitation of Christ" in this respect has been the rule among Christians ever since.

The Editor of *Joyful News*, the Rev. Samuel Chadwick, seems none too joyful at present. Says he, there is something in modern Methodism that is sterilizing evangelism. Wherever he goes, people tell him that the witness of "our fathers" leaves the present generation cold, and that "the faith that saved England in the eighteenth century" is an exploded enthusiasm. The passion for evangelical preaching is rare, and the antagonism against evangelical methods is cynical and obstinate. The Sunday night prayer meeting has gone. Methodist chapels are no longer known as "converting furnaces." Mr. Chadwick says he is not a pessimist, but he is dissatisfied with the new ways in the Church. Mr. Chadwick dislikes the change that has come upon his denomination. He asks:—

Is the Biblical doctrine of God and man, Sin and Redemption, Conversion, Sanctification, true to fact, or is it discovered to be either a folly or a fraud? Was the assurance of the Methodist a psychological delusion, and its evangelism an emotional frenzy? Were our fathers mad? . . . Methodism has caught the craze of comprehension, accommodation, and compromise. It is the reaction of the age against convention, tradition and authority.

Apparently, this progressive reaction has made rather a mess of religion, although it has proved advantageous in other matters.

A further complaint of Mr. Chadwick's is that evolution, education, and self-culture assume potential salvation as the common inheritance of human nature. Conversion is regarded, not as a miracle, but as a process of psychological sublimation. Christ, says Mr. Chadwick, is set forth not as "an Atoning Redeemer, or a miracle-working Saviour, but as an Ideal, an Inspiration, an Example, a Chum, and on the whole 'a very Good Fellow' to know and help." And the rev. gent objects to this very much. He is out to reform the Methodist Church—backward. And, we gather, he won't be really joyful again until he recovers for his Church, Jesus the wonder-worker, God the Big Bogey, and a Red-hot Hell. As so many leaders of his Church have outgrown these things, he had better apply for a commission in the Blood and Fire militia. It has all the joyful things he delights in, full measure and running over.

Canon Elliott, of St. Paul's, says that the attitude of people, "I suppose there is a God," is ruining England. We are not sure about the ruining, but we will agree that it does harm. That being the case, and there being this measure of agreement between ourselves and the Canon, suppose we both advocate the attitude: "Suppose there is no God," and see what happens. We don't suppose it will make any difference for the worse to the weather, or the state of trade, or anything else—except Canon Elliott and his fellow clerics. Anyway, people have gone on, for thousands of generations, supposing there is a god, and if they have not yet reached beyond the stage of supposition, it looks as though no one has discovered evidence that would lift it beyond that phase.

Ever since Professor Eddington's *The Nature of the Physical World* appeared, we have been intending to write on the book, but it is not one that can be written on in a hurry, or in a cramped space. And we do not care to fill the whole of the *Freethinker* from our own pen. We intend dealing with it the first time we have a chance, and we note it now in connexion with an article which appeared in the *Observer* from the pen of Professor A. Wolf. Quite a number of readers of this paper have sent us the cutting, and we note one or two

remarks of Professor Wolf in response to the implied request of the senders.

Professor Wolf thinks that the change that has taken place in mechanics has helped to discredit "the old fatalistic determinism that used to go with it," and I think the following expresses his point of view:—

While admitting the wisdom of pursuing mechanical modes of explanation as far as possible, it has been felt with increasing urgency that something more is required to account for biological and even chemical phenomena. Biologists like Professor Lloyd Morgan insisted that these phenomena show abundant evidence of "emergence," meaning by "emergence" the appearance of something that cannot be regarded as a mere resultant of its mechanical constituents. The conception of "emergence" is, of course, opposed to that of thorough-going mechanism and determinism, but it has found acceptance among various scientists.

We cannot in a paragraph go minutely into this, and still less can we criticize here the chapter in Eddington's book on which this statement is based. But so far as Professor Wolf is concerned, we have no hesitation in saying that he quite mistakes the character of and significance of "emergence," which does not in the least run counter to the strictest determinism. When a result "emerges" from a process, on what ground can we say it cannot be regarded as a "mere resultant" of what has gone before? The only way in which we could disprove it would be by showing the resultant without the process, or a different resultant with the same process. The fact is that the "emergence" of a "new" thing from a combination of factors is what is seen in every case of cause and effect. The only way we know that oxygen and hydrogen are the cause of water is by seeing that water registers the combination of the two. And we have exactly the same warranty of saying that water cannot be regarded as the "mere resultant" of oxygen and hydrogen that we have in any case of biological or other causation. Familiarity has blinded some people to the fact that the two cases are substantially similar.

With regard to Professor Eddington, we should not, of course, venture to pit our knowledge of physical science against his, but given his facts, and anyone is at liberty to check his reasoning and his deductions. For the moment we have room for one illustration, but as it is the kind of thing upon which writers like Professor Wolf build, it is, in a sense, crucial. Professor Eddington is arguing against this strictly casual nature of certain phenomena, and says—we must omit the reasoning leading up to it—it is not possible to hold that the laws of causation hold, "because there is nothing in the physical world, *i.e.*, the world of pointer readings, to pre-determine the decision; the decision is a fact of the physical world with consequences in the future, but not casually connected with the past." All we can say of this is that it is shockingly bad reasoning and ends in mental suicide. Observe, *A* is followed by *B*, but not in terms of causation. But *A* can, says Professor Eddington, be traced forward to *B* as its consequent. But if *A* can be traced forward to *B* why cannot we trace *B* backward to *A*? If two things are connected, they remain connected whichever end we start from. There is really nothing in Professor Eddington's arguments in this direction that involves more than the familiar argument from ignorance expressed in very learned language. Anyway, we fancy that Determinism will survive Professor Eddington's onslaught as it has survived the onslaught of others.

Just one other sentence from Professor Wolf. He says: "Galileo, Boyle and Newton were not materialists. They were deeply religious, but did not allow their mechanics to encroach on their theology." The italics are ours; and we have to thank Professor Wolf for so clearly stating the cause of the religious beliefs of the men mentioned. And it may perhaps be that as Professor Eddington was delivering the Gifford lectures—a lectureship which was founded for the purpose of having religion examined by all sorts of people, including Atheists, but which has never yet invited an

Atheist to lecture—it may be that this fact was responsible for his attempt to provide religionists with some sort of a foothold.

A lackadaisical interest in the welfare and prayers of the Church leads nowhere, says a writer in a Nonconformist weekly. He deplores the fact that the Church's spiritual leaders get no help, and that their calls for eager young evangelists are ignored. Well, if interest in religion is, as this implies, so weak among church members, what hope is there of arousing the interest of "outsiders"! Whatever effect newspaper boosting of religion may have had on the non-churchgoer, it obviously hasn't affected the Church's clients in a way the parsons desire. That much heralded revival of religion seems very shy of revealing itself.

The inspiration of one Methodist generation becomes the depression of the next. Or so we gather from the criticism now being voiced about Methodist hymn-books. Perhaps it is a sign of mental health—or, shall we say, convalescence?

Dr. Cyril Norwood says: "Teaching is not a craft but an art, and the exercise of art must be based on freedom." This may be true of the teaching of ordinary matters. But when the imparting of religion is in question, there's no room for freedom. Teachers are required to say what the parsons tell them to say. That's one of the drawbacks of being the parson's lackeys.

The rector of Sherringham is "terrified lest in twenty years' time all children should talk like little (B.B.C.) announcers. There's one thing he can also be terrified of—they won't be talking like little Christians, despite the good offices of the B.B.C.

Sir Gerald du Maurier doesn't like jazz music. He would like to return to the days when people did not have to dance "to time played on coal-scuttles and tongs." He should be thankful for small mercies. If the people called Methodists had conquered England, he would get no dancing whatever.

A pious weekly, reviewing a recent book, says that John Wesley was not only the greatest but in many ways the most representative Englishman of the eighteenth century. Other papers will please repeat the modest claim. The more often a statement is repeated, the truer it becomes. At least, that seems to be the notion among the admirers of the "new journalism."

Apropos of the Bombay riots, said to have been caused by a rumour that Pathans had been sent to procure young boys for a sacrifice in connexion with the foundations of certain large buildings in Baroda, the *Methodist Times* says that in these terrible scenes of frenzy and bloodshed which have brought a great Indian city to a standstill, one can see the state of things that existed centuries after Christianity had invaded Europe.

The *Methodist Times* supplies the following facts. So late as 1843, in Germany, when a new bridge was built at Halle, a rumour was abroad among the people that a child was wanted to be built into the foundation. When a Dutch dam was being repaired, in 1463, the peasants, acting on the advice to throw in a living man, are said to have made a beggar drunk and buried him there. According to a legend, a child was purchased for the purpose of making the castle of Liebenstein impregnable. According to tradition, a little girl was placed in a vault with her toys, and some cakes, at the base of the city wall of Copenhagen, the masons closing her in as she played and ate. Italy, Serbia, Scotland and other countries tell of similar incidents concerning the superstition that human sacrifice was essential in connexion with the building of a wall or bridge or church. We hope modern Christians will not be astonished that primitive superstitions persisted long after Christianity was adopted. The Bible, with its tales of gory sacrifice,

was undoubtedly instrumental in keeping alive earlier superstitions, practices and beliefs.

The government has refused to consider the question of liberating the hospitals from the payment of rates. If laymen had not been so "grabbing" as Churchmen they would have seen to it that these were placed on the same level as churches and chapels which have never paid rates at all. We suggest that those members of parliament who profess to be interested in the question should now concentrate on getting churches and chapels to pay their share of rates and taxes, instead of making the community in general pay the amount of which places of worship are relieved. It is one of the many public scandals connected with religion in this country that any miserable little tin tabernacle can be relieved of the payment of rates and taxes, while institutions such as hospitals, which serve the community irrespective of colour or creed or station, are compelled by law to meet their obligations in this direction. We suggest that a question for all candidates at the forthcoming election should be: "Will you support a Bill to compel places of worship to pay rates and taxes on the same conditions that govern payment by other institutions?"

Dr. J. D. Jones, of Bournemouth, thinks that wireless has told unfavourably on attendances at church. He thinks people make listening in an arm chair an excuse for not attending church. Of course, this does not suit Mr. Jones. If it is true, and we very much doubt this as an explanation of why people do not attend church, one parson may attend to hundreds of thousands at the same time; and what will the clergy do then? You see, it is not listening to sermons the parsons are anxious about; it is coming to church. Substitutes for boots will not keep the shoemaker busy.

The other side of the Atlantic, Dr. Jefferson, of Broadway Tabernacle, says that listening to a broadcast sermon is not enough. "A Christian owes it to the community to move through the streets on Sunday towards the House of God." In other words, it is not enough to use Dr. Jefferson's Syrup for Sinking Souls," a man should advertise Dr. Jefferson to the general public. It may bring other customers. Dr. Jefferson evidently believes in advertising.

It was a Dean of St. Paul's, Sidney Smith—who once told the Chapter that they might easily solve the question of putting a wood pavement round the Cathedral if they would only put their heads together—who divided human beings into three sexes, men, women, and clergymen. The government was hardly more complimentary to the clergy during the war when it explicitly relieved from military service, women, unfit persons, and parsons. An American magazine just to hand, the *Pictorial Review*, does not adopt Sidney Smith's three sexes, but it definitely puts the parson in the women's department. In its paper pattern section, along with drawings of ladies' dresses and knickers (if Joynson-Hicks and Mr. James Douglas will permit the reference) there is contained a full length drawing of a parson in a cassock, with offers to supply the pattern, "the lines of which are unusually good," and "buttons all the way down the front," for forty-nine cents. We should say that the parson looks quite in his proper place among the other drawings. All the same we do not think an English paper would thus venture to put the clergy in a similar gallery.

Wilberforce preached to the poor contentment with their lot, on the ground that it was the state of life which God had willed for them. Similarly, our fathers comforted the sick and the bereaved with the cheap faith that it is the will of God. The Rev. J. W. Edmondson tells the world this in a religious paper. He might have added that there was and is nothing anti-Christian about such teaching. And the aristocracy, the squires of the villages, and the big employers of labour found such teaching mighty useful. But Christian notions always have been helpful to the "top dog."

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DR. R. K. NOYES (Boston).—Thanks for cuttings. When are we to have the pleasure of again meeting you this side the Atlantic? Will attend to the other matter.

F. HAMPSON.—We do not care very much for that kind of thing either. Sorry we could not see you on Sunday, but it was just as well to exercise care in the present circumstances.

L. R. CLARK.—We are delighted to learn that you have derived so much satisfaction from reading this paper. Shall hope to have you as a regular reader for many years.

H. B. DODDS.—Thanks. We value your appreciation of the *Four Lectures*. If we have managed to throw fresh light on old subjects we are content. What we should like is to get the lectures into the hands of a few thousands of enquiring Christians. Perhaps our friends will help in that direction.

P. JACKSON.—Mr. Mann's *Religion of Famous Men* will give you something on the lines you require. It is published by the Pioneer Press at 1d., post free 1½d. Mr. Cohen is too busy to compile the list for which you ask.

H. B. DODDS.—We are surprised, with you, that men of ability do not recognize that "Indeterminacy" is only another word for want of knowledge. But there is a cant of science as there is a cant of religion, and both take some shaking off.

J. HAMPSON.—Pleased to have your good opinion of the substitutes for Mr. Cohen at Bolton on Sunday last.

R. R. WHITCOMBE.—Don't be surprised by the opinions of certain people that the *Freethinker* is a mere "rag." If you know of any journal in this country which has given the public more brain work we should like to have its name. There is neither moral courage nor intellectual strength in being afraid of other people's opinion about anything. We do not agree with you that morality is in danger because religion is breaking down. To think so is to confuse the form with the fact. If morality is the expression of social relationships, it is only the destruction of social relationships that can injure morality. Change in form is not destruction, and unless morality is based on religion, the removal of the latter cannot well injure the former. And moral preaching is about as effective in saving the world as religious preaching has shown itself to be.

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

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—

One year, 15/-; half year 7/6; three months, 3/9.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen did not go to Bolton, as arranged. He had not completely recovered from his dose of the 'flu, and he took the doctor's advice and remained at home. It may be necessary at times to die for Freethought, but generally it is more serviceable to live for it. Mr. Cohen's place was taken at short notice by Mr. Mann and Mr. J. Clayton. We are glad to learn that the audience was a good one, and that both speakers delighted the audience. Mr. Cohen is obliged to both for their ready services.

Mr. Cohen visits Glasgow to-day (February 24), and will lecture in the City Hall, Saloon, at 11.30, on "What are We Fighting For?" and in the evening, at 6.30, on, "Christianity's Crowning Crime." Both lectures should be of interest to Christians as well as to Freethinkers, and we hope to see the latter crowded out by the presence of the former. Mr. Cohen likes to meet all his old friends when he visits Glasgow, but it is part of his work to make new friends for the Movement, and that can only be done through the process of "conversion."

Mr. Mann visits Plymouth to-day (February 24), and will speak in the Co-operative Hall, Courtenay Street, at 3 and 7 p.m. This is Mr. Mann's return visit to Plymouth, and we hope to hear of good audiences.

We are asked to call the attention of Liverpool readers to the visit of Mr. George Whitehead to Liverpool to-day (February 24). He will be speaking in the hall at 18 Colquitt Street, at 3 and 7 p.m. Admission is free, but there will be a silver collection. Titles will be found in our "Guide" column.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti will also travel North to-day (February 24), and will lecture in the Engineer's Hall, Rusholme Road, at 3, and 6.30 p.m. His subjects are "The Churches and War," "Spiritualism and Science." Mr. Rosetti usually has good audiences at Manchester, and we trust the present visit will offer no exception.

Mr. Cohen has received a number of very congratulatory letters on the publication of his *Four Lectures on Freethought and Life*—the first of his lectures that have ever been published. Most of these are too complimentary to be published in the *Freethinker*, however suitable they might be in some other journal. But a break in compliments occurs in the *Harrogate Journal*, and we have no objection to publishing that. The reviewer admits the lectures are "quite clever," but complains they are written under an obsession. The obsession is that of a desire to "destroy everything in everybody's mind that the writer does not think is absolutely true." We suppose that is just another way of saying that Mr. Cohen has made up his mind to expose falsehood whenever he sees it. Most of his friends will overlook this "obsession," and even some of his opponents might even regard it as an amiable weakness. All we can say is that he has laboured under this "obsession" for so many years that we are afraid he is almost incurable.

The writer of the review is specially angry that a "destructive" criticism should be levelled at the belief in immortality. There are some exceptions to this. For instance:—

Sir Arthur Keith is allowed—if not morally obliged—as a leading scientist, to say what he thinks about it. . . . Samuel Butler knew what he was talking about when he told us to beware of earnestness in such matters.

Well, well, one lives and learns. Only we do not see on what grounds Sir Arthur Keith should be morally obliged to say something about immortality, and Mr. Cohen denied the same freedom. After all, if it had not been for the work of Freethinkers such as Mr. Cohen, scientists of the standing of Sir Arthur Keith would not have been very likely to have said as much as they have said on such subjects. It is the unfashionable Freethinker who has created an atmosphere so that scientists, if they wish to do so, may express them-

selves with freedom on matters of religion. Science has, it is true, supplied the weapons without which Freethinkers could never have done what they have done. But it is the Freethinkers from Paine to Foote, and papers such as the *Freethinker*—all labouring under the obsession that if they thought religion to be a lie, it was their duty to say so, plainly and without equivocation—that has created the social atmosphere which has encouraged men of the standing of Sir Arthur Keith to be honest if they will. And even now the work is not so completely done that all of them will speak out. For one who speaks there are a dozen who are afraid to do so. There is still room for the work of those who are obsessed with the mania to speak the truth as they see it.

It is some considerable time since Mr. Cohen lectured in Swansea, but he is paying that place a visit on March 3. The meetings are being arranged in rather a hurry, and full particulars will appear in our next issue.

The Greatest of the Gods.

THE gods and heroes of classic Greece still command the study of poets and scholars. The singers, sages, and artists who adorned that tiny Hellas of antiquity commemorated with immortal success the stately pantheon of their race.

Apparently, out of a host of local divinities, at last emerged a deity who became sovereign lord of all. This god—the Zeus of the Greeks, and subsequently the Jupiter of Rome—seems to have superseded more ancient and savage divinities.

The earlier sky-god Uranus, although scarcely acknowledged as a God by the later civilized Greeks, remained a leading figure in Greek mythology. It was said of old, that when time began Uranus espoused the Earth-goddess who, in due season, became the mother of Cronus, Rhea, Ocean and other primitive deities. The progeny of Uranus and Earth became the Titans.

Uranus was a ferocious parent, who imprisoned his offspring in the bowels of the Earth-goddess, where they languished in endless night. Uranus gloried in his wickedness, but the Earth-goddess, maddened by the torture occasioned by having all her children thrust into her bowels, determined to avenge the wrongs of herself and offspring. She procured a flint sickle and urged her children to emasculate their unnatural father. But they shuddered at the impiety, and shrank from the danger of the deed. Cronus, however, the boldest and most youthful of the Titans, promised to obey his mother. Earth then gave her son the sickle and hid him in ambush. At night, when Uranus was embracing his wife, Cronus mutilated his father with the sickle and threw the severed generative organ aside. The blood that flowed from the wounded Uranus fertilized his spouse, and the Earth-goddess thus became the mother of the giants and furies. The genital member of his father, Cronus afterwards cast into the sea where, caressed by the ocean wave, sea-foam encircled it, and from this the beautiful and seductive goddess of love—the Aphrodite of the Greeks and the Venus of the Romans—was born. Cronus now dethroned his father, and with the aid of his brother deities assumed the sovereignty of heaven.

Time rolled away, and at last retribution was visited upon the guilty Cronus by his own descendants. Cronus wedded his sister Rhea, and she gave life to the gods Pluto, Poseidon and Zeus, as well as the goddesses Hestia, Demeter, and Hera. But Cronus was warned by an oracle that his reign was endangered by the ambition of his son. Now, to nullify the prophecy, Cronus swallowed his children as soon as they were born, but when Rhea was on the

eve of delivering Zeus, she implored her parents, Uranus and the Earth, to assist her in hiding her babe. So she journeyed to Crete, and when the infant arrived she concealed him in a cave, and covering a stone with baby garments, she persuaded Cronus that when he engulfed the stone he was immuring the new-born god.

Cronus, momentarily like Macbeth, felt himself secure against all pretenders to the mastership of his realm.

Zeus, the all-conquering hero, was, of course, a marvellous boy. When he reached the full status of godhood, he took into partnership the daughter of Ocean, the dark and sinister Metis who administered to Cronus a drastic emetic. The unsuspecting Titan swallowed his dose and was immediately seized with an agonizing vomiting. Sadly sick, he spewed up the stone he had so recently swallowed, and then in succession, Pluto and his companions, who had been so long securely confined within his bodily framework.

His restored brothers and sisters Zeus now led in an attack upon his father Cronus and his satellites the Titans. Like the siege of Troy, the campaign lasted for ten long years. The Cyclopes were the munition-makers in this ancient warfare. Thunder and lightning became the weapons of Zeus. Poseidon was furnished with a trident, while Pluto's helmet proved invincible. The younger gods overcame their adversaries, degraded them to the level of Titans, and dispatched them to the dreary depths of Tartarus, a horrible dungeon from which there is no hope of escape. Having won the war and profited by the peace, the victorious triumvirate Zeus, Pluto and Poseidon proceeded to cast lots for the succession to Cronus' crown. The dominion of heaven was conferred upon Zeus, to Poseidon was granted the sovereignty of the sea, while over the infernal regions Pluto reigned.

Zeus, now enthroned in heaven, took Ocean's daughter Metis as his bride. This Metis was endowed with craft and cunning which much surpassed that of the most sophisticated gods or men, but the watchful Earth and Sky warned Zeus that his spouse's coming son would prove more powerful than his mighty self and usurp the heavenly throne. More masterful than his sire Cronus in meeting this menace, Zeus determined to swallow his wife before she brought this coming competitor into the world. Metis, therefore was engulfed by her holy husband with quite gratifying results, and Zeus retained an undisputed lordship over the Greek pantheon until the arrival of the Christian god who still reigns in his stead.

In modern Christendom the barbarous and blood-thirsty deeds of the old Jewish deity have been evaded or refined by theological sophistry. So in Hellas the crude traditions of the Olympian gods were poetized and made metaphorical by the more exacting demands of an advancing civilization and culture. The poets and philosophers helped to humanize their primitive and savage divinities.

Zeus was the sky-god and the sender of clouds and rain, and in rural Greece ancient superstitions with their rites and ceremonies for centuries persisted after the educated classes had abandoned all real belief in the ruder aspects of Paganism. But, as Sir James Frazer reminds us in his *Worship of Nature*: "The persistence of such a primitive worship . . . among the peasants long after the great sky-god Zeus had been enshrined in stately temples, and adored with pompous rites, is very instructive; it reminds us of the old truth, which we are too apt to forget, that contemporaries in our time are often very far from being contemporaries in mental evolution. The philo-

sopher and the savage rub shoulders in civilized society to-day as they did in Greece of old; for when farmers and vinedressers were offering their blood to the clouds at Cleonae, Seneca was philosophizing at Rome, and Jesus had already preached and died in Judea."

The lightning and the thunder-stone were controlled by Zeus, who communicated with mortals by means of the lightning flash and the thunder's roll. It was with these instruments that Zeus overthrew the Titans, and then became the supreme ruler of the world. As Zeus the Descender, the deity was adored in many places where the lightning had smitten the earth. The god had come down in the lightning flash, so altars were set up in the sacred enclosures and sacrifices offered to his clemency. Athens itself possessed several such shrines.

In the more developed stages of Greek thought Zeus was conceived not as a merely limited personification of the arching heavens, but as the Supreme Power who created and sustained the infinite universe.

At an earlier period, however, in the palmy days of Pericles, before the intellectual decline which overtook Greece had set in, that majestic sculptor, Phidias, poured forth his genius into his chiselled masterpiece of Zeus at far-famed Olympia. This was universally acclaimed in antiquity as one of the wonders of the world, perhaps its most stupendous achievement in plastic art. Æmilius Paulus, the Roman conqueror of Macedonia, we are told "was deeply moved by the sight of the image; he felt as if he were in the presence of the god himself, and declared that Phidias alone had succeeded in embodying the Homeric conception of Zeus." Cicero regarded this statue as a work of intensely creative genius, almost beyond compare. One of the Greek poets protested that either Zeus must have appeared to Phidias in person, or the sculptor must have entered heaven to gaze upon the form and features of the god. Quintilian opined, writes Frazer, that "the beauty of the image served to deepen the popular religion, the majesty of the image equalling the majesty of the god."

When the glory that was Greece succumbed to Roman aggression, the Hellenic pantheon was adopted by the conquering race. Jove or Jupiter is simply Zeus renamed in the Latin tongue, and Jupiter was worshipped as the supreme god of Rome. He was the monarch of meteorology; hail, rain, storm, thunder and sunshine were his manifestations. Jupiter the rainy sent the fertilizing showers, while Jupiter the serene, by his power in dispersing the clouds at a glance, displayed the deep blue vault of heaven in which the sun shone in cloudless splendour. In times of drought prayer is still offered in Christian conventicles for rain. So in ancient Rome the women marched in procession barefooted and with streaming tresses to the Capitol and supplicated the deity to send rain. Jupiter promptly answered their prayers, and the torrent fell so heavily that the suppliants were soaked to the skin.

As manipulator of the lightning flash and hurler of the thunderbolt, Jupiter remained the highest of the Pagan gods. In the name of the Best he was revered as the beneficent father of the people, while as Greatest he was worshipped because of his unspeakable potency. As Sir James Frazer finely says, "He was indeed the divine embodiment of the Roman Empire; and when the Emperor Constantine abandoned the old for a new religion, it was fitting that he also abandoned the ancient capital for a new seat of empire nearer to the birthplace of the Oriental faith which he had borrowed from Judea."

T. F. PALMER.

A Queer Case.

WE have a saying in the North that "there's nowt so queer as folk"; only, some folk are queerer than others. There is, perhaps, no very strict definition of queerness; for, just as one man's meat is said to be another man's poison, so one person's "queerness" may be another person's rationality. What were the peculiar characteristics that led to the rise of such a popular saying cannot now, perhaps, be determined, but it must have been some traits of character that were unusual and striking. Just as human life is a mixture of good and evil, so queerness and rationality are sometimes curiously blended in the same individual. A friend of mine was shown into the waiting room of a lunatic asylum, where a gentleman was sitting by the fire reading a newspaper. They got into conversation, and had a long talk on matters of general and intellectual interest. My friend wondered who he might be, and concluded that he was either an assistant doctor, or some responsible official of the institution. Presently, he leaned forward, and indicating an individual at the far end of the room, said in a whisper: "See that chap over there! Well, he thinks he's Jesus Christ! But, of course, he isn't; because *I'm Him*." My friend got such a shock that it took him some time to realize that the man was daft. He even began to have some doubts as to his own sanity.

On several previous occasions, I have introduced to the readers of the *Freethinker* some strange and curious specimens of humanity whom it has been my lot, at one time or another, to come into contact with. And the subject of the present sketch may not be without interest. My mind goes back to the time before I knew anything of the historic struggle for intellectual freedom, or the new view of the universe to which the theory of evolution gave rise. My early upbringing was strictly religious; my mental diet consisting of the Bible and the Shorter Catechism. But I early revolted against the doctrine of hell as taught in the Presbyterian creed, which some Christian apologists even then were trying to prove had no scriptural sanction. But the rejection of this horrible dogma, at that time, placed one outside the pale of orthodoxy. I was the member of a Christian Evidence Society, composed mainly of factious elements from the various denominations. One of the members was a certain unobtrusive old man, and as we lived near to each other, we often walked home together after the meetings. As neither of us were strictly orthodox, we had something in common, and although I was a boy compared to him, we got on very well together. He used to expound his peculiar views to me, but I cannot really say that I ever grasped their import. This was perhaps not altogether my fault, as the old man's ideas were a bit chaotic, and his conversation of a somewhat rambling nature. He used to keep saying that if he could only get about a dozen bishops together, in order that he might acquaint them with his prophetic discoveries, they would see Christianity in a new light. He had approached several of them for this purpose, but they evidently did not want any unauthorized person inquiring too closely into their sacred mysteries. Or, perhaps, they thought the prophecies were the special department of men like Dr. Cummings or Baxter. One night, at his invitation, I accompanied him to his lodgings (he lived in a single room) for the purpose of hearing his views at length. One of the walls was almost entirely covered by what appeared to be a map; or rather, it was like an architect's plan of a huge estate sketched out for prospective development. It was intended as a picture of heaven and the mansions in the skies, according to his reading of the prophecies. Here and there in the foreground were studded the little cottages, each having a little garden patch, containing all the flowers that bloom in the Spring, as well as a few potatoes and other vegetables. Away in the distance could be seen the Great White Throne, surrounded by the four-and-twenty seats, upon which sat the four-and-twenty elders, when they were not bobbing up and down before the throne. It is probable that it was these four-and-twenty elders that suggested the nursery rhyme of "four-and-twenty blackbirds baked in a pie." Above the throne was a great white

cloud, which, he said, represented the "ten thousand times ten thousand" angels, who did the bidding of the Most High. There was also to be seen the one hundred and forty-four thousand, with His seal upon their foreheads, of those immaculate persons who had never defiled themselves with woman. These represented twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes of Israel; but of the fate of all the other respectable married Jews the prophecies are silent. Then there were the four angels who held up the four corners of the earth. How they had accomplished the feat of getting hold of the four "corners" of a round globe, I did not learn.

There was also the seven golden candlesticks, and the seven angels with a corresponding number of trumpets and vials. But the most curious things of all were the "beasts." There is nothing like them in the Zoo, and T. P. Barnum would have given untold wealth for such a collection. One of the beasts had seven heads and ten horns; and my old friend had great difficulty in producing a representation of this strange creature. It was an arithmetical puzzle as to how to distribute ten horns upon seven heads. If there had been ten and a half horns, this would have been one and a half for each head; and although it may be true, in some instances, that two heads are better than one, the combined efforts of my friend and I failed to find a solution of the problem. He said he would leave it for a further consultation of the prophecies. Then there was the difficulty of getting seven heads upon one beast. It was a question as to whether he should attach them all to one stem, like a bunch of bananas, or place them along the beast's back, and connect them with the spine. This reminds me of a *Punch* cartoon at the time of the Zulu War. At its outbreak, Britain was already involved in some seven or eight tribal "punitive" expeditions, and the cartoon represented a bull with a member of each of these petty nationalities seated along its back. And high up, on the top of the tail, was a little Zulu, saying "Dar's jes room for me." The cartoon was not at all incongruous; so that if my old friend decided to place the seven heads along the beast's back, it would not look nearly so odd as it would if they were all protruding from one neck. I have asked several of my Christian friends lately if they had ever read the book of "Revelations," but none of them had any knowledge of the wonderful beast with seven heads and ten horns.

The Apocalyptic menagerie is altogether unique in having four beasts that could say "Amen." Other menageries have had laughing hyenas, and parrots that could swear, and say Damn, but the scriptural show is the only one with wild beasts that could chant the Psalms and repeat the Amens. The circus horses, too, were rather an interesting group. There was a white horse, like the steed of Lady Godiva: a black horse, reminding one of Dick Turpin's Black Bess; a red horse; and a pale one that was ridden by Death and followed by Hell. My old friend was in another difficulty as to what colour he ought to paint the "pale" horse. I think he had a notion of painting it either the colour of Pale Ale or Palethorpe's Sausages. Then there were the four beasts who never needed to turn round, as they could walk with equal facility either backwards or forwards, "being full of eyes both before and behind." Also the four beasts, each with six wings, and the lamb with seven horns and seven eyes. The horns and eyes in the Apocalyptic vision are about as numerous as the hooks and eyes in a draper's shop.

About the middle of the picture were some lions lying at rest, and a few lambs playing peacefully beside them; while in the foreground were a number of cats and mice having a kind of social picnic, the old enmity of their earth-life apparently being forgotten. But I think in this latter scene my old friend must have been drawing upon his imagination, as cats and mice, so far as I know, are not scriptural animals. The cottages—or mansions, to use the scriptural phrase—were arranged after the manner of modern Council Houses, and designed according to the mysterious results arrived at by a prolonged study of the prophecies of "Daniel" and "Revelations."

If you took, say, the ten thousand times ten thou-

sand, and divided it by the one hundred and forty-four thousand, and added to the result the number of the mark of the beast, which is 666, and then subtracted "a time, and times and half a time," you could tell by this means whether the woodwork of the cottages had to be dovetailed, or fastened together with nails or screws. At least, the old man could, but I was not sufficiently experienced in these prophetic mysteries to verify the result. By a different manipulation of these figures you found out whether the bedrooms had to be carpeted, or only covered with oilcloth; and whether the lighting installation was to be gas or electricity.

The reader must not think that I am trying to ridicule my old friend. Far from it. There was quite a different side to his character, which made him all the more interesting as a human study. I once picked up, on a second-hand bookstall, a work that he had published on *The Social State*. It was a series of somewhat disjointed essays on social subjects, treated, of course, from the religious point of view. They were frankly socialistic, anticipating the claim of later Christian preachers that "the ethics of Socialism and Christianity are identical." It was probably this book that first excited my interest in subjects of a social nature. And besides being a social student, he had also devoted some time to the study of ethics. He had come to the conclusion that all trade was ethically wrong—which, of course, it is—and he had acted on his conviction. The old man—Joseph Franks was his name—had, I believe, been in the cattle trade, but he had relinquished it, and lived for the remainder of his life on a mere pittance. We may think the act was not a sensible one, but, at least, we can admire him for his sincerity.

His prophetic vagaries, I think, are easily understood, as the prophecies at that time occupied a position in Christian thought and propaganda very different to the neglect into which they have fallen at the present day. The reader may choose to regard him as a crank; but, at all events, he was not a bigot, and his quiet, unobtrusive nature and kindly disposition will always endear him to my memory.

I did not see this prophetic picture of heaven in its completed state, and did not learn whether he ever got the ten horns suitably adjusted on the seven heads of the beast, or what colour he ultimately chose for the "pale" horse. Because, shortly after this, the Christian Evidence Society, where we used to meet, and which had been formed for the purpose of fighting the sceptic, ingloriously ended its earthly career in a free fight among its own members. And so the old man and his picture passed out of my life, only to remain in memory as a human curiosity in which queerness and sanity were strangely blended.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

The Burden of Pessimism.

"To endure is to conquer our fate.—(?) Lord Lytton.

THIS burden of pessimism, as I apprehend and often feel it, is apt to be a cumulative one as the years pass, wisdom grows, and illusions fade; and this most in the intellectual, affective, and humane aspects. When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things. Happy, happy, enviable condition. Why so hastily put away childish things? In the wider view, perhaps man's ancient simplicity, or savagery, had in it more of happiness than modern sophisticated barbarism. Schopenhauer—as a Mr. W. W. Thom of the Glasgow N.S.S. assures me in his pamphlet—a quintessence, no doubt, of wide and profound study—was metaphysical, *i.e.*, thinking beyond material relationships and coming round at last to something very like religion! putting out of date *The Origin of Species*, Leopardi, Spencer, etc., with only a provisional Einstein and relativity! He (Mr. Thom) and the "Master" may be on the right track and all the rest astray, and "The Will to Live" be all in all, but my pessimism only deepens here and, like good old Dr. Young:—

"I'm still quite out of sea, nor see the shore,"

or peradventure, in the clouds. Leopardi, on the other hand, is so absurdly simple and matter-of-fact that he who runs may read, and yet no small philosopher, ignoring Beginnings and Ends, and all transcendentalisms, perhaps just lacking that "obscurity" in writing so desired by Remy de Gourmont. As for my wretched self I await—I fear in vain—a loftier wing to search immensity. Content indeed to make the most of the five material senses on this earthly plane.

The Christian pessimist, also soaring beyond sense, and modelling the feelings of others on his own, exhorts his fellow mortals to lay down their burden of sin at the atoning Cross, as in Bunyan's allegory. What facile redemption for imaginary sins, for wickedness inevitable, the "calamities" of Leopardi, which God needs not forgive, but for which he needs forgiveness—Omar and Buchanan have told him so in no uncertain terms. "Of man's first disobedience" (sin) sings Milton, without a thought, it would seem, of the calamities inseparable from man's creation and existence here, these convicting the Original Sinner. But suppose "human infelicity was first born from the iniquities of men and their offences against the gods"; and suppose, further, man's black record could be expunged and razed "at the foot of the Cross," would there not still remain for the thinker—humanist, the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world? And Browning's "God's in his heaven, etc.," is not consolation, but musical mockery. How thin is the Christian scheme that saves from nothing in this world—the world that matters most, even to the Christian. But of Beyonds we know enough, for, apart from remediable evil, truth is not beautiful, more of it might be terrible, but never so hopeless as the Christian's Hell, or his Heaven either. In the purely rational view, the sweeping euphemisms of Browning, beloved Keats, and Tennyson, and the windy emotionalism of the wireless pulpit, must yield to Carlyle's grim, despicable, hammered actual—which, fully admitted by, has yet not soured the world's greatest spirits, but only placed them at "the top of sovereignty"; an altitude of spirit enviable as innocence, the chart of life, giving assurance, calm, cheerfulness, even happiness; even in that Truth that must live and conquer for evermore!—How wonderful are the mountains, rocks and streams, the furze and tufted grasses, the far-seen undulations of the earth; cot, farm, hamlet, town; solitude and the sky; thought and the spirit of man; the clear, strong spirit of pessimism; regret, remorse and shame; losses, bereavements; time wasted, time that is so fleet at last; age and retrospect, the present and its introspection, the future uncertain (in the mundane sense) all combined to form one richest reverie, resignation; defeat, which can be victory! Verily this is the true sovereignty. The windy wireless preacher I have just heard reiterating his only hero, *Je-sus Christ*, will subside like effervescence, sit sadly in his Manse, and greet a grey Monday morning, and be at that chastening moment on a "rock" more secure and solid than his wildly acclaimed "rock of Jesus Christ." But he keeps it up to the end of his "Service," and with steam-hammer unction, pronounces the parrot benediction. Follows some lovely singing by voices, not tuned in heaven, but on earth! Were I, myself, quite logical I would be a vegetarian. The shambles always shocks me, and, like Ingersoll, "I cannot look an ox in the face." Alas, my poor brother! These animals were not Christians or criminals, yet they "died for us." Then there was Byron's dog, and Matthew Arnold's, and yours and mine:—

In life the firmest friend

The first to welcome foremost to defend

... Denied in heaven the soul he held on earth ...

In sweeter, more exalted moments my heart is often pained to recall ingratitude, mine and thine, to loves alike canine and human. Doth God care for oxen? What wise, docile equines have I known, and remember with a sigh!—

"Hard was their fate, if mine still more unkind."

Dogs and men, dear little cagebirds, wives and weans, little urchins of the gutter, orphans, halfwits, neglected or deserted brats:—

Oh, what have sickly children done to share

Thy cup of sorrows? . . .

The angels thou hast sent to haunt the street

Are Hunger and Distortion and Decay.

Lord! that mad'st man, and send'st him foes so fleet,

Who will judge *Thee* upon thy judgment day?

Sentiment! but pure and noble and vigorous. Awake to reality, ye optimists; ye pessimists forget your gloom awhile, and mitigate as ye pass along, in some small degree, the sum of human misery. Such is the impulse of pity which is akin to love—and pessimism—pity bred on earth, not in heaven—the skies are pitiless, and if almighty power inhabits there, 'tis also pitiless.

To fully catalogue the contents of Time's wallet, the load of poor humanity, and still apart from remediable evil, were a doleful and unwelcome task. Let me touch it gently just a little more, shift the burden to another shoulder, or lay it down like Bunyan's bag of sin, and return to cheerfulness, to, at least, the meliorism of Freethought.

Virtue alone is happiness below, says one; but I have known the highest morality and intelligence resolve themselves into the profoundest pessimism. In the quiet back-waters of memory such a one is ever present to me; a Christ, a Buddha, an original Atheist: original, independent, indifferent, caring nothing for gods or men, or good or bad, "as generous as God," seeking not his own, coveting nothing of others; judging books by their contents, not the fame of their authors; never "enthused," never hitching his wagon to a star, but with light enough in his own clear breast to blaze another heaven; maudlin at the last, even morbid, but never debased—that impossible—around him many superior, executive people seemed to me but tinkling cymbals and sounding brass; here was the pure gold: here for me was the true Messiah: but I failed the guide, or he me, our plentiful illusions and enthusiasms faded into darkest pessimism—but the way to it was light! Another I recall and no more, not a sinner, ruggedly honest, self-centred, narrowed, yet a personality fit to abash and confound many of the poor foolish feeble folk of his station and acquaintance. He and I were always "distant" in our nearest relations; he has now been long in a distant land:—

He never writes to me, nor to him I,

Who far, alone, unloved, will pass and die,

Whose fate implores the tribute of a sigh.

This man never knew what it was to believe in a God; this did not depress him: he never trusted to luck, but ever sternly depended on himself, and was so far a pessimist.

Ah, but the years pass, friends die or fall away—Who hath not lost a friend? From thwarted light leaps colour's flame: sweet is the compensation, not sought, desired, but immanent in life and thought—strange, is it not, at what extremities pride and pleasure will creep in—and stay!

One more there was, that, "ceased to correspond,"

Not dead, but passed into a like Beyond;

What heart of gold, what Freethought spirit true—

Time's wallet weightier grows with thoughts of you!

So much is lost—would'st ask what yet remains?

Why, all that ever was! life's labours, pains,

Misfortunes past, calamities in store—

It has been, and so will be, ever-more.

ANDREW MILLAR.

Correspondence.

"WHY I AM NOT AN ATHEIST."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Both Mr. La Bern and Mr. Panton seem to reject atheism because it is too full of hard cold reason. I reject it because it is not full enough. I have no religious emotions at all, and never had any, so I cannot criticize Mr. La Bern and Mr. Panton; but, while I reject Christianity mainly on moral grounds, as a cruel and wicked faith, I reject atheism wholly on intellectual grounds. It implies that events can happen without a

personal will. That is to me inconceivable and wholly outside experience. Also all Atheists say that their perceptions of outside events, and even their generalizations therefrom, are knowledge and not belief. Now, if knowledge is different in kind from an unusually strong belief in the likelihood of something, then I cannot find any knowledge at all in my mind. Hence I reject Atheism as (like Christianity) demanding faith, a thing I do not possess; and provisionally I accept primitive savage animism as the most likely interpretation of the universe I have yet met.

C. HARPUR.

Society News.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

It was a pity that Mr. George Whitehead's lecture, last Sunday, on "Constructive Socialism" was not better attended. If ever a subject should have attracted a large audience, here was one; and Mr. Whitehead, though speaking unofficially, was as provocative and stimulating as ever. He dealt with Prohibition, Overpopulation and War, and gave us a mass of statements and figures, which resulted in a vigorous discussion. Mr. Whitehead was in great form, and evidently enjoyed his slashing reply.

To-day (Sunday, February 24), there will be a debate which should specially interest readers who have followed the discussion in these columns recently. The subject is, "Is Vivisection Unscientific and Immoral?" Mr. G. H. Bowker, of the National Anti-Vivisection Society, takes the affirmative, and Mr. T. F. Palmer the negative. Both disputants have great reputations, and they should attract a large audience.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH.

Mr. R. H. ROSETTI lectured to the Birmingham Branch on Sunday, February 17. The very cold weather naturally affected the attendance at the meeting, but those who braved the rigours of the frost were rewarded for their pains. Dealing with "The Churches and War," Mr. Rosetti outlined the historical attitude of Christianity, and presented an unanswerable indictment of its influence on society. The lecture was followed with evident appreciation, and a few questions were asked at the close.

The Birmingham Branch held a most successful social evening on Saturday, February 16, although the attendance of members might have been better. Mr. W. Simpson acted as M.C., and Mr. Ashford took a flash-light photograph of the gathering.—F.T.

WEST LONDON BRANCH.

AN interesting debate took place on Sunday evening at the Eclipse Restaurant, Mill Street, Conduit, W.1, on the subject, "That There is a God," the affirmative being Rev. W. H. Claxton, the negative Mr. W. P. Campbell-Everden. Chairman, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. The rev. gentleman's evidence was in support of the existence of Jehovah and Christ—the one Unity—as the God of his belief; and he certainly put forward as good a case as is possible for a man who, according to his opponent, has taken on "an impossible job." Mr. Campbell-Everden was a Christian for forty years, but, judging from his part in the debate, sometimes humorous—often incisive, he has bleached out quite ninety-five per cent of that black stain which, he complains, still besmirches his soul.

The audience, which was a packed one, gave an unusually polite and attentive hearing to both speakers, who were warmly applauded, and to whom a vote of thanks was proposed and seconded.—G.R.

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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, Mr. Joseph Wicksteed—"Impressions of Egypt, Palestine and Constantinople."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Debate on "Is Vivisection Unscientific and Immoral?" *Affir.*: Mr. G. H. Bowker. *Neg.*: Mr. T. F. Palmer.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Station): 7.15, Mr. Robert Harding—"Evolution as the Basis of a New and Rational Religion."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): Free Sunday Lectures at 7 p.m. Walter Hogg, B.A.—"The Psychology of 'Conversion.'"

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"Aristocracy."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (The Orange Tree Hotel, Euston Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Mr. Wattson—"What of Russia?" On Thursday, February 21, at 101 Tottenham Court Road—Social and Dance. Members and friends. Admission 1s.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Eclipse Restaurant, 4 Mill Street, Conduit Street, W.1): 7.30, Maurice Maubrey—"Faith and Its Evidences."

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. R. Smith—"Pilot's Question."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Still's Restaurant, Bristol Street, opposite Council Schools): 7.0, General Discussion.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S.—7.15, Mr. J. Keast (Newcastle Branch President)—A Lecture. Chairman: Mr. G. B. Swinburne.

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