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Views and Opinions.

Edmund Burke on Atheism.

EDMUND BURKE was unquestionably one of the foremost of English statesmen of the eighteenth century, and much of what has recently been published in his praise was well deserved. But he was a professing Christian, and he had, where religion was concerned, the drawback of his beliefs. It was to his credit that he fought in favour of the Toleration Act which was intended to relieve Nonconformist ministers from subscribing to certain of the Articles of the Church of England. One of the objections brought against this measure was that if it became law, attacks on the belief in God might be made under cover of Nonconformity. Had Burke been brought up in a more tolerant atmosphere, he might have replied to such criticisms as did the Emperor Augustus: "Let the gods protect their own honour." But Christians have never felt that their deity was quite safe if completely removed from police protection, and he took another line. He made a quite irrelevant and vicious attack on the Atheist. Perhaps we ought not to blame him very much for this, since, more than a hundred years later, many public men are still afraid to confess themselves Atheists, and shelter themselves from attack by disowning the name. So what Burke said in reply to the criticism offered, was:—

If this danger is to be apprehended, if you are really fearful that Christianity will indirectly suffer by this liberty, you have my free consent; go directly and by the straight way, and not by a circuit . . . point your arms against these men who do the mischief you fear promoting; point your arms against men . . . who by attacking even the possibility of all revelation, arraign all the dispensations of Providence to man. These are the wicked Dis-senters you ought to fear; these are the people against whom you ought to aim the shaft of the law; these are the men to whom, arrayed in all the terrors of government, I would say, you shall not degrade us into brutes . . . Against these men I would have laws arise in all their majesty of terrors

to fulminate such vain and impious wretches, and to awe them into impotence by the only dread they can fear or believe . . . The most horrid and cruel blow that can be offered to civil society is through Atheism. Do not promote diversity; when you have it, bear it; have as many sorts of religion as you find in your country; there is a reasonable worship in them all. The others, the infidels or outlaws of the Constitution, not of this country, but of the human race—they are never, never to be supported, never to be tolerated.

Greater men than even Burke—Locke, for example—in the act of making a still more famous plea for toleration, thought also that no toleration should be given to Atheists, since they threatened the extirpation of human society, so that one ought to be tolerant in turn of Burke's intolerance. Nor should it be forgotten that in substance, even though the language might be more guarded, probably half the clergy in the country would say the same thing to-day.

* * *

The Drag of Religion.

In a completely uncivilized society, the members of which might believe that offence given to the tribal Joss would endanger the crops, or the health, or the general well-being of the tribe, one could appreciate this fulmination against Atheism and Atheists. Only, the savage would have shown in this direction so much more intelligence than Burke that he would never have dreamed of saying that disbelief in the gods would degrade men into brutes, or refer to Atheists as outlaws of the human race. He would have said, quite plainly and distinctly, that the objection to the Atheist was that God would not stop at punishing him, he would stop the food growing, or would send a plague, or bad weather, or put out the sun, and so punish the whole of the tribe. He would have taken up the same attitude towards the Atheist that we do towards the man who is afflicted with a dangerously infective disease. We segregate him, not because we have any ill-will towards him, but in the interests of the rest of the community. But to educated men at the close of the eighteenth century that attitude was hardly possible. At all events, a man such as Burke must have known that disbelief in God had no effect on the weather, or on the beginning of an epidemic, or on the state of the crops. He knew too many unbelievers for that. And allowing for the action of the politician anxious to divert all possible opposition from the measure he had in hand, we have in Burke's diatribe an instance of the truth that when the original reason for a religious attitude no longer obtains, something very much like downright blackguardism often takes its place. Somehow or the other the old taboos and the old prejudices must be retained; somehow or the other a justification for them must be found. The state of

society no longer permits a reason for them in the shape of a restatement of the original belief. The only thing remaining is to make use of the more developed and the more enlightened social sense to keep them going. The Atheist degrades men into brutes, he saps the foundations of civil society—away with him. No one knows where Atheism has done these things, no one needs to point it out, since anyone who should ask such a question would himself be suspect. It is enough for the purpose that it is possible to conceal with a cloak of moral indignation a survival of pure savagery.

Our Anti-Social Religion.

The speech of Burke was delivered over a century and a quarter ago. Since then we have seen Nonconformists and Jews and Roman Catholics admitted to Parliament and given full legal protection in the exercise of their religious opinions. Atheists have also been admitted to Parliament, and to all the bodies mentioned nearly every office in the State is open. But the principle on which Burke based his extravagant opinion is far from dead. There are at least two living persons of distinction who in their own experience have realized that the English law still may express the opinion that Atheism puts one outside the pale of civilized usage. Mrs. Besant was forcibly deprived of the care and company of her child on the ground that, being an Atheist, she was unfit to have charge of its training. There was no suggestion that she was an "immoral" woman, a loose-living woman, or that she would have been a careless mother. On the contrary, the fear was that she would have paid too much attention to the education of her child. Had it been suggested that she might have been careless of the child's physical or mental or moral welfare, the judge might have said that no notice could be taken until the fault was actually committed. The sole ground of action was that she was an Atheist; that, therefore, she might train her child to be an Atheist, and that was against the interests of society.

The other example is that of Mr. Bertrand Russell. His father wished him to be brought up without superstition of any kind, and appointed by his will two Freethinkers to act as the boy's guardians. But the courts set the will aside and he was educated in the Christian faith. Again, the underlying assumption was that it was not in the interests of society that a child should grow up without religion. Any kind of religion would have done, no matter how stupid. As Burke said, "have as many sorts of religion" as you find, any kind of superstition will do so long as you have one. When stupidity is established by law and sanctified by custom, it is a reflection on the rest of the community to display common sense. And there are the blasphemy laws, the root of which, however liberally they may be interpreted and administered, is that the Atheist should be outlawed, completely if possible, but so far as the intelligence of the community will allow, in any case.

What Might Have Been Said.

Burke was speaking *in vacuo*. The world had had no experience of a Society of Atheists, and therefore could not point to it as an example. Such individual Atheists as had existed offered no ground whatever for any such declamation. Individually, they were certainly not worse behaved than Religionists. They were not more drunken, more sensual, more brutal than Christians. They did not fill the prisons nor make the administration of the poor law more costly. They were not worse hus-

bands, worse parents, or worse friends than Christians. In actual fact the balance was in their favour. One could not call Burke's outburst an expression of opinion, for there were no facts on which an opinion could be based. It was sheer, primitive prejudice.

On the other hand, religious societies are actual, historic facts. The consequences of religious belief on the family and on society generally are easily seen. Let us suppose that in reply to Burke some other member had risen and said:—

"We are asked to extend the principle of toleration to yet another sect of Christians. But before doing so I warn members to reflect upon what has been the history of Christian teachings. Society exists by the mutual good fellowship and mutual respect of its members. Any consideration that saps these, saps the foundation of civil society. But, from the very outset, the influence of the Christian religion has been to set up dividing walls between men. Whenever and wherever one sect has not been strong enough to forcibly suppress others, the consequence has been internal anarchy, the denial in practice of human fellowship, the prevention of that freedom of intercourse which is to society what freedom of exchange is to commerce. The religion we are now asked to extend has denied to men the right of property in their own thoughts, and not content with the infliction of punishment in this world, has feigned the existence of endless torments in some other. Against these factious men I would have the civil laws rise in all their majesty of terrors. This religion has denied to mankind its natural birthright of goodness and virtue. It has set its face against family life by holding up celibacy as the highest ideal, and has placed the celibate monk on a higher pedestal than the upright father of a family. It strikes at the peace of society by its intolerance, threatens the supremacy of the law by interposing between man and the community the fiction of commands emanating from another world, and has inflicted the most brutal of punishments whenever this fiction has been called in question. To these men I would say, you shall not degrade us to a state even lower than that of the brutes by denying to human nature the feelings and capacities that are to be seen in some form in even the animal world. The most horrid and cruel blow that can be offered to civil society is to encourage in its midst a system which denies to that society any value or any authority that may be based upon the natural qualities of men and women. I do not say this religion should be extirpated, we have it and we must bear with it, but I warn you against extending the power and increasing the privileges of a religion which has always sown the seeds of hatred, dissension, ill-will, and persecution, over which every government in the civilized world has at some time or another been compelled to exercise control, and the different sects of which can only live in outward amity so long as the civil power is strong enough and determined enough to say with effect, 'Thus far and no further.'"

If such a speech had been delivered, I wonder what Burke could effectively have said in reply?

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Eye.

(From the German of Emil Rittershaus).

THE Human Soul—a world in little;
The World—a greater human soul;
The Eye of Man—a radiant mirror,
That clear and true reflects the whole.

And as in every eye thou meetest
The mirrored image of thine own,
Such mortal sees his soul reflected,
In all the world himself alone.

CONSTANCE NADEN.

Innocence Abroad.

"All we now call supernatural is merely the normal imperfectly understood, but destined to be understood as knowledge widens."—H. G. Wells.

"To the solid ground
Of nature trusts the mind which builds for aye."
Wordsworth.

ALTHOUGH a Freethinker, I have a weakness for sermons. Do not mistake me. It is not the theology that attracts, but the unconscious humour so often displayed by the preachers. The humorists who contribute to *Punch* have got into a genteel groove, and their jokes have been more or less the same for many years. The jesters of the *Petit Journal pour Rire*, have got into another kind of rut, and in consequence their jokes may not always be printed in English. The preachers, however, are an unfailing fountain of fun, and, none the worse, because the humour is unconscious. This kind of drollery is often infectious, like the window-card lettered "Lodgings for a Respectable Gentleman," which is a quiet reminder that there is more than one type of aristocrat. Or, the notice of a "Conservative Mass Meeting" posted, inadvertently, on the side wall of a cemetery.

This morning I started the day in a mighty good humour, for I read a sermon by the Rev. F. B. Meyer, the celebrated Baptist minister. This precious effusion was not meant to be funny, but it made me laugh, and each sentence increased the hilarity. This is how Brother Meyer lays the law down for his fellow Christians during the awful season of Lent. For Easter is supposed to be the most solemn festival of the Christian Religion. Order, please, for his reverence:—

When a man reaches middle life, if he be wise he will get his physician to overhaul him. It may save him from a breakdown. No sane business man can afford to omit his annual stock-taking, nor will a sea-captain fail to take his midday bearings. Similarly, the men who drew the outlines of our national life—men imbued with the noblest enthusiasm—felt that there should be, each spring-time, a six-weeks' pause that each generation should have the opportunity of standing beneath the eternal constellations, and of listening to that music of the spheres which is too often drowned by dance music or the popular jazz.

Now, that plea for a "six weeks' pause" in modern business life deeply interested me. For being naturally of an indolent disposition, economic necessity has made me into a most industrious man. This has not, however, prevented my dreaming of lotus-eating, and a land where it is always afternoon. So, when I read that important people, such as "the men who drew the outlines of our national life," men "imbued with the noblest enthusiasm," advocated a "six-weeks' pause," I was with them every time, and all the time. Six weeks' holiday, not a paltry half-day, but half a dozen Bank Holidays, together with the weeks joining them together. It seemed a noble idea, especially in front of a general election, when political organizers are prepared to pay heavily for programmes to capture voters, male and female.

Furthermore, this beautiful suggestion has religious sanction of the most venerable and respectable kind. For, as Brother Meyer points out, Jesus Christ did this thing himself. Actually knocked off work, and spent forty days in the wilderness. There's precedent for you; superior even to patronage by royal persons or puffs from a newspaper.

I have always wondered why the legendary Jesus was more popular as a preacher than as a carpenter,

but this forty days' holiday clears up matters. No foreman carpenter would stand such treatment; in fact, one sturdy Trade Unionist, to whom I mentioned the affair, used language which is too lurid to repeat. The point of his objection was that its tendency would be to make life a "blooming beano," or words to a similar effect.

Ah! sad and strange that ideals get corrupted in a work-a-day world. Brother Meyer gets positively lyrical in bolstering this claim for a six weeks' pause. Song-birds, he reminds us, "cannot sing their sweetest notes until they reach their native woodlands." And the dictionary definition of "woodland" is not precisely the same as that of "wilderness," nor is there any mention in the Gospels of the alleged music of the spheres, or, indeed, of any band at all.

But, soft awhile, as Shakespeare puts it. Who are these philanthropists who first advocated this "forty-days' pause"? Who are the men "who drew the outlines of our national life"? These worthy fellows were priests, for no one else advocated a forty-days' pause in order to get men's gold into their own paws. I knew there was a catch in it, that there was something too good in this idea of a lotus-land. But there is something comical in Brother Meyer describing these priests as men of the "noblest enthusiasm," for he is a Nonconformist, and would have had short shrift from these same priests for being a hard-shell Baptist. Their noble enthusiasm would have provoked them to bake Brother Meyer like a sucking-pig for the greater glory of their Church. Brother Meyer is in no danger to-day, but he need not throw flowers at men who do not deserve them, and never did deserve them.

Brother Meyer is attempting to "out-Herod Herod." The fathers of the Christian Church, from whom these fantastic ideas emanated, were the finest band of lunatics that ever escaped an asylum. Neurotic and tommyrotic, they sought to cheat men of their lives in the name of religion. They were as mad as those Eastern fanatics who stab themselves until they resemble human pin-cushions. Ordinary people cannot fast for forty days, and have their "souls" spring-cleaned annually. To attempt such nonsense would land them in Colney Hatch or some similar institution for the ultra-pious.

The clergy, State and Fancy alike, insist that Sunday is a sacred day, and there are fifty-two of them in a year. Here is Brother Meyer suggesting a "six-weeks' pause" in addition, which means ninety-two days each year devoted to scraping one's soul. This, mind you, happens in a Protestant country. Brother Meyer's spiritual ideal is almost like that of Mexico, where every other day is a saint's day, and ordinary work proceeds with difficulty at the point of a revolver.

Brother Meyer is a bigger optimist than the Bishop of London, and that is saying something. Suppose I took him seriously, and decided on a "forty-days' pause." The nearest "wilderness" is Hyde Park, and that is filled with policemen and other exceedingly worldly-minded folks. Regent's Park is too near the Zoo and Madame Tussaud's to be quite appropriate. If I journeyed to the alleged "Holy Land" to find a suitable "wilderness," by the time I got to my destination it would be time to make the return journey. It is too bad of Brother Meyer to "keep the word of promise to the ear and break it to the hope." To promise such things in a daily newspaper is asking for trouble. Some office boys attend Sunday school, and one of them might line up "on the carpet" on Monday morning, and ask for six weeks' holiday in order to "follow his Saviour." The same paper which printed Brother

Meyer's sermon might have to record the murder of an innocent office boy.

John Milton, in his austere way, declared that "presbyter was but priest writ large." It is only too true. Priests may dress differently, but they all go the same way home. Here is the Rev. F. B. Meyer, who is a Nonconformist, writing as if he were an ignorant Roman Catholic priest. Before Nonconformists became respectable, they never wrote in this strain. Indeed, the early Nonconformists were heretics, and were treated in the same cruel way as Freethinkers. Priests are not philanthropists; that pleasant pastime is always left to laymen, and outsiders. As landlords, priests are the most reactionary of their kind. As employers, they are models of everything they should not be, as choristers, organists, and teachers in Church Schools know to their sorrow. Dealing with them in most cases is like dining with a man who wants all the pudding and two spoons. If priests wish men to have more holydays, it is in order that men shall attend church and contribute towards the support of the clerical caste. It is never done with the intention of increasing the sum of human happiness. They almost invariably act like the selfish boy with an apple, who, when his younger brother asked him for the core, replied: "Get out! There ain't going to be no core." MIMNERMUS.

Religious Fanaticism.

(Continued from page 149.)

AMERICA, in fact, became a dumping ground for all the religious cranks who were pitchforked out of Europe. And really, many of their ideas were so outrageous and even anti-social, that we cannot be surprised at some of them being exiled for their countries' good. Their proceedings, in several cases, could not be tolerated by the civil authorities even in America.

In reading Protestant accounts of the early "Pilgrim Fathers" who landed in America, we learn a lot about the Independents or Congregationalists, and the Quakers and Moravians, but they generally preserve a discreet silence, or pass hurriedly over, the more freakish, and sometimes scandalous sects that arrived both before and after the above-mentioned. Mrs. Strachey gives a very condensed account of a very few of the more prominent of these extraordinary sects and their deluded followers, of which we offer a few samples.

About 1719, the Schwenfeldians arrived from Denmark, and the Dunkers, or Tunkers, from Germany; like the Mennonites and Moravians, they settled in Pennsylvania. In 1804, shiploads of Rappites arrived, followers of George Rapp. They believed that the Second Coming of Christ would occur before the death of their leader. George Rapp himself was convinced of it; for on his deathbed, he declared that if he did not know different, he would think his "last moments had come." They had, and with his death the community began slowly to decline.

Another party of German peasants, named Separatists, and led by Joseph Bincler, arrived in 1817. This sect had been founded by a servant girl, Barbara Grubermann, who had received divine revelations while in a state of trance. They were a celibate community when they arrived, but had to modify their views on this point for the sole purpose of producing children to recruit their numbers. But it was found that when the children grew up it was impossible to keep them from the contamination of the outer world; and we are told: "Bicycles completed the emancipation of the younger members, and they

rode away, leaving only the old people to carry on the old faith; and in 1898 the community was, by agreement, brought to an end."¹

The next to arrive, in 1842, was the Amana Society, or the Colony of True Inspiration. They settled at a village they named Ebenezer, near Buffalo. They believed, with the early Fathers of the Church, that there was something peculiarly sinful in the female sex: "Fly from the society of woman-kind as much as possible," one of their precepts ran, "as a very dangerous and magical fire." They still numbered 1,200 in 1908.

These were followed, in the middle years of the nineteenth century, by the Bethel and Aurora Communities, "founded by a Doctor Kiel; who claimed to be the First Witness mentioned in the Book of Revelation—a book which has provided a happy hunting ground for innumerable cranks, humbugs, and mentally unbalanced people—and who was joined by small groups of poor and very dirty children." (p. 40.) These communities came to an end in 1881.

In 1846, the Bishop Hill Community, founded by Eric Janson, in Sweden, in 1830, arrived in America. They believed Janson to be a reincarnation of Christ, and expected him to build the New Jerusalem and reign over it for ever. Whether he would have done so we do not know, as he was unfortunately murdered in 1850, during a quarrel between a husband who wished to leave the community, and a wife who wished to remain.

In 1862, a group arrived from Southern Russia and founded three small colonies called Bruderhof Communities; but with their arrival the influx of foreign sects came to an end, for toleration was extending in Europe, and therefore there was no necessity to seek for liberty elsewhere.

All these sects were foreign, mostly German speaking, and remained foreign, and therefore gained few adherents among the greater population of English speaking inhabitants; and when their children grew up and came in contact with the outer world, the result was not the conversion of the English speaking people, but the decay of the foreign faith. The American Fundamentalists of to-day are the lineal descendants of the English Puritan sects who fled from England in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They have maintained their faith in the Bible unchanged. The stronghold of Fundamentalism is in the Middle-West, among the great farming population, the "Bible Belt," as it is contemptuously called by their more enlightened countrymen.

Mr. J. A. Spender, in his interesting book, *The America of To-day*, says that in "the Middle-West you are in the 'real America.' In this region you are out of the 'melting-pot' and among people who claim with pride to be of pure New-English descent, which means for the most part of old-English blood. Yorkshire is, I am persuaded, the spiritual home of large numbers of them." (p. 39.) Our Press made great fun of the Fundamentalists, but as the same writer points out: "The air of America in general to the Middle-West is that of the Londoner to the provinces, only more so. The Middle-Westerner is supposed to be out of the swim, a Babbitt, a rough uncultivated person who barely understands the language of polite society." (p. 42.) We must remember that they form a scattered population over immense tracts of farm land and, for the most part, lead lives of hard and unremitting toil from dawn to dusk. And moreover as Mr. Spender points out:—

To a large number of Americans the Anglican controversy about the revised prayer-book and the reserved sacraments seems as remote from reality as

¹ Ray Strachey: *Religious Fanaticism*. (p. 38.)

the Fundamentalist controversy does to the majority of Englishmen. The American who takes his stand on the authority of the Bible probably thinks himself more emancipated than the Anglican who stands on the authority of his Church. The difference between the two countries is that, whereas only a small minority of Englishmen take an active interest in these controversies, there are large parts of America in which immense number of Americans think them of vital importance. And in America these are not kept within bounds by that nucleus of leisurely, reading and thinking people who, in England, have kept pace with modern speculations and insensibly brought the general level of opinion up to them. In large parts of America the scientific ideas to which theology has had gradually to adjust itself in England are unknown or as novel and dangerous as they seemed to the orthodox English in the 'sixties and 'seventies of the last century. (J. A. Spender: *The America of To-day*. p. 127.)

As he further observes, all their energy and thought is absorbed in the practical and material business of life, and they obediently accept beliefs and opinions from authority, which enlightened people had discarded fifty years ago.

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

The Black International.

If I begin by referring to Karl Marx, I hope our watchful Editor will not start reaching for his blue-pencil. It is not my intention to discuss Socialism, but to refer to Marx's teaching known as the "materialist basis of history." These words almost explain his thesis, namely, that all the great, outstanding events in history are effects which have their origin in material, or economic, causes. This theory has met with much opposition, and some derision, but, without professing to a thorough knowledge of "Marxism," I fancy that this is the one tenet of Marx that has best stood the test of time. Assuming, at any rate, that Marx was right in this particular, I wish to examine briefly in the light of this doctrine the recent growth in this country of the Roman Catholic Church. For, whatever may be the case of other countries, I think that no thoughtful observer can deny that in influence, if not in numbers, that Church has made considerable strides here in the last quarter of a century.

Before dealing with my main subject, let me devote a few words to the criticism of the materialist view of history. I imagine that the chief objection to this view arises from the innate desire of man to think well of himself. While ever-ready to secure all the material advantages that he can, he likes to feel that he is above such desires, desires which he shares with the brute creation. In a word, he likes to feel "soulful." This wish to be thought superior to creature comfort is pathetic and not wholly to be contemned; the new psychology has familiarized us with many similar examples of man's desire to appear noble to himself. It is a natural phenomenon calling only for our understanding, with perhaps an occasional smile, but this understanding will certainly point to the underlying cause of the objection to the materialistic view.

Not all unwillingness to accept Marx's view on history should be attributed to this romantic outlook. Mr. H. G. Wells is a romancer—it is his trade, but I doubt if he can fairly be called a romantic. He has had a scientific training at least. In his admirable *Outline of History*, he has expressed himself in vigorous terms contrary to this materialist view of history. He instances the case of the siege of Troy. Rather a legendary and obscure example

to choose out of all history one would think, but let it pass. Let us assume that Homer's poem represents historic actuality. Mr. Wells pooh-poohs the idea that Troy was sacked about half a dozen times because that city was in a key position on the main trade route between Europe and Asia. He says that probably the Greeks attacked the Trojans because they were thoroughly annoyed at the kidnapping of their women, including the fair Helen. But if all this is true (and why should one doubt it?) the one fact does not preclude the other; and surely, in those days, women and slaves—much the same thing—had a great economic value. Slave-raiding is certainly an economic event.

Even when it is claimed that the cause of war is non-materialist—the Crusades are often urged as an example of this—it can be shown that within a brief period a material objective has soon ousted the non-material aim. The late war is a standing example of this, and it is so patent, that here I need go into no detail. But returning to the Crusades, and again accepting, for the sake of argument, their idealistic aim, the recovery by Christendom of the Holy Sepulchre, it is to be doubted if the dispossessed Byzantine emperor regarded the western hordes comfortably and apparently permanently settled in Constantinople during one of them as animated by a pure idealism.

With sheer hypocrisy, or the conscious alleging of an idealistic aim for a material purpose, also, I will not deal. The history of mankind, on whatever theory it is based, has taught us to expect that, so, just reminding ourselves of it, we pass on.

Since the close of the eighteenth century, as everyone knows, the national economy of these islands has undergone a complete change. During all the centuries prior to the nineteenth, trade was primarily a matter of the exchange of commodities between town and country. With the advent of the mechanical revolution in the nineteenth century, this time-honoured rhythm between town and country was largely superseded in Great Britain, although, of course, not entirely abolished. Agriculture began its long decline into its present shrivelled state. The peasants flocked into the towns and became factory-hands. As each countryman deserted his village the home market for the products of the towns contracted. At the same time the new machines and the new town workers (the ex-countrymen) multiplied town production ten-fold. The market for this expanded town industry had to be found abroad, if anywhere. This is indeed what happened: Great Britain became the "workshop of the world," a position not seriously challenged to the end of the nineteenth century. John Bull had come to depend for his livelihood on foreign trade.

Now let us consider what qualities are required in dealing with new, *i. e.*, strange, customers, and, moreover, customers drawn from all quarters of the world. These new customers of John Bull, the merchant, were of all races, religions, and customs; all stages of culture; ranging from the savage trading his ivory for beads and brandy, to the Swiss buying locomotives with ribbons. It is obvious that the quality, *par excellence*, required of the merchant is tolerance of his customers' tastes and beliefs. Not his to concern himself in his customers' religion: Jehovah and Juggernaut, Ju-Ju and Jos, are all one to him. This makes for liberalism in the salesman's psychology, and the nineteenth century was characterized in this country by a merchanting commerce in economics and liberalism (in the widest sense) in politics and religion.

Time has moved on into the twentieth century and the Great War has taken place. The Victorian mer-

chant has become the present-day "Captain of Industry," the director of vast trusts and combines, the Lords Melchetts, Ashfields and Leverhulmes of our time. The great industrialist is the man of the present century. The old-fashioned "merchanting" London Chamber of Commerce is very small beer beside the great new "industrialist" Federation of British Industries.

D'autres temps, d'autres mœurs, or, as an English poet has it, "New occasions need new duties." The problem of the present-day director of "Big Business" varies not only in degree but in kind from the Victorian merchant. He has, of course, his markets to consider, but these have often been settled by selling agreements between large combines. The main problem of the new industrialist is production—mass production. Mass production spells standardized production. Standardized production involves labour problems. The labourer engaged in standardized work suffers from boredom; being bored he is joyless; joyless he is unhappy; unhappy he is discontented, and prone to revolt against his working conditions. But mass production cannot face the dislocation of the slightest "labour unrest"; the machine must work smoothly, or not at all. Therefore the directors of large scale industry seek above all things, "docile" labour, and all their energies are directed to disciplining and regimentation. The very phrase, "Captains of Industry," self-given, gives us a clue to this concept.

At long last we return to our mutttons, the Roman Catholic Church in Great Britain. I have altogether failed in my argument if I have not led my reader on to the point where he makes the deduction I would wish him to make. The captain of industry in his search for all those agents that will keep his labour force contented, or, at least, docile, must, assuredly, find in Christianity, and especially in its oldest, most authoritarian, branch, the greatest agent for his purpose. I need not quote here those biblical texts and priestly precepts which counsel, nay, command servants to obey their masters, nor those specifying the rewards, not here at the industrial directors' expense, but in a future life, that the submissive labourer will receive. In a word, to head off the Red International, the directors of our present-day national economy must, willy-nilly, back the Black International. But at the words Red International, the blue-pencil is again in agitation, so I must hastily drop my pen.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

Acid Drops.

There is a thoroughness in the censorship of books in Tralee. This downrightness is calculated to leave our own Home Secretary breathless—and jealous. According to the *Irish Statesman*, books coming under the ban are as follows: Renan's *Life of Christ*, Maeterlinck's *Treasure of the Humble*, and *Wisdom and Destiny*, all Synge's plays, all W. B. Yeats' works, Ouida's *Two Little Wooden Shoes*, Herbert Spencer's *Sociology*, Meyer's *Human Personality*, Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Wells's *Modern Utopia*, Byron's *Poetical Works*, Stout's *Manual of Psychology*, and Conan Doyle's *Coming of the Fairies*. Readers of Voltaire will remember his caustic quotation from a Gallic author, after he had given a catalogue of Constantine's butcheries, "he loved to make a clear house." This is pretty good going, and the *Irish Statesman* very logically states "The inference we draw from the censoring of books in Galway and Kerry is that thinking is undesirable." We make a present of this Acid Drop to all those who counsel us to leave religion alone; the sottish ignorance of the meddling priest under orders from Rome can be plainly seen at work. Catholicism can only be perpetuated,

given an atmosphere of ignorance and fear; when these two conditions are absent, the flummeries of dressing up, bowing and scraping, cake eating and blood drinking in war phraseology "go west." And the chief performers know it.

There is a world-wide hunger for education, and the Bishop of Salisbury thinks that therefore the Churches have wonderful opportunities. What, he asks, is the Churches duty in this matter? Obviously, says he, to accept and welcome the desire for education, but also to see that it is turned in the right direction. There are several inferences to be made from the Bishop's statements. One is that the Churches have little or nothing to do with creating the desire for education. Another is, that the Churches are unable to check the desire; so they will try to make the best of it—by nobbling it, by doping it so that it is harmless to Christian faith. Unfortunately for the Churches, knowledge cannot be "turned in the right direction" so easily nowadays, since the power of the Churches to suppress and dope knowledge has been taken from them.

The Bishop is very grateful to the Colonial Office for taking an entirely Christian course in the matter of education. The Colonial Office has an Advisory Committee on which the missionaries are strongly and definitely represented. No wonder the Bishop sends up prayers of gratitude! He can be sure the "education" dispensed by the Colonial Office will be turned in a direction helpful to the Churches.

"Religious education," said the *Times* educational supplement recently, "is part of the essence of all education, and it is certainly not a less important part of the curriculum in provided elementary schools, central schools, and all types of secondary schools than it is in the voluntary schools." The *New Chronicle* (a Sunday-school weekly) adds:—

But the public day school neither can nor should be required to do the work of the Sunday School, the Church, and the home. The syllabus of religious instruction upon which it is found possible for the Churches to agree affords a sound basis in weekday teaching for the further education in faith and conduct which specifically religious organizations are constituted to give.

The unfair fact that this religious instruction in the schools has to be paid for by a majority of ratepayers who, by no means, can be called Christians, doesn't worry our contemporary. With the squint-eyed view of a Christian it can only take in the fact that the schools ought to be used for manufacturing little clients for the Churches.

A well-known architect, Mr. Page L. Dickinson, has, in his book *The Dublin of Yesterday*, recorded a phenomenon well known to Freethinkers, who do not accept all the rosy stories circulated by reverend gentry about their own business. It is encouraging to see that authors are beginning to notice the elementary truths of Freethought. Perhaps the writer could have added Liverpool, with qualifications, to his collection in the following:—

Dublin to-day can only be compared to the half-dead cities of Spain. It has amazing features in its moral and social life. Where are there two cathedrals and two universities and such broad acres of slums found in so small an area? Where else, outside Spain, do people talk and talk of politics while their half-ruined city rapidly disintegrates?

Miss Christabel Pankhurst has a book *Seeing the Future*, which perhaps is as good a title as "Hearing the Past." A reviewer, in noticing her work, states she says "seeing is believing, and hence the absurdity of a conflict between science and religion." This is hall-marked reasoning which is a gift acquired by constant practice in the use of Christian metaphysics. One may suggest that the world of bluster and brawling over "Votes for Women" was too hard for her, and she has reached that age, described by Byron, "when men

turn good." In passing, and as an ironic comment, the day of compulsory voting may not be far distant, and then the political world may be seen for what it is worth.

The Book of Revelation, says a reviewer, has many interpreters, and those who regard it as a prophecy of the history of the world, to which they have the key, are often voluminous rather than convincing. This is apropos of a book called *The Unveiling*, which the reviewer says is "an exposition in more than 600 pages of one short chapter." The attitude of the author is expressed thus:—

With the aid of the Book of Revelation all human history may yet be reduced to an exact science.

Well, assuming the author's view of the Book of Revelation is correct—that Revelation states what has happened and what will happen to the nations of the world—everything in the world, good or bad, has been fore-ordained by God. In other words, "what is to be will be," and men of affairs are merely passive instruments of God. If that be the case, what value is the Book of Revelation? All that men can do is to "wait and see"; they can do nothing to alter events. Therefore, if the Book had never been written no one would be worse off. Incidentally, we wonder how the Protestant believers in this Revelation twaddle manage to square their beliefs with the Christian "free-will" doctrine.

We see that the Pope is to have three motor cars, and a garage capable of holding twenty. There must be a catch in this "following Jesus" business somewhere, but if Mr. Hilaire Belloc trusts what the Romish Church teaches, and trusts her more than he does the evidence of his senses, what chance of seeing it is there for those lower down in the intellectual order of blind followers? We pause for three thousand years for a reply.

There does not appear to be much religious guff about President Hoover's inaugural address. He spoke about lowering tariff walls, from which we assume that such matters as the kingdom of heaven can wait.

Several Peers in the House of Lords forced the Government to limit the powers of the Ministry of Health under the Local Government Bill. We trust that their activities will continue, and eventually affect the complex of Sir Joynson-Hicks, who thinks we are living in the twelfth century.

Perplexities of Faith is the speciality of the Rev. H. C. Carter in a religious weekly. As regards the Virgin Birth, Mr. Carter has been asked why Matthew and Mark should carefully trace out the ancestry of Joseph, since he was not the father of Jesus. Surely, says the inquirer, they should have concerned themselves about Mary's genealogy. Mary was told that her son would sit upon "the throne of his father David," says Mr. Carter. But as there is a suggestion that Mary belonged to the tribe of Levi, and as Joseph was not the father of Jesus, it seems impossible to reconcile this with the promise given to Mary. Mr. Carter thinks the whole matter very perplexing, and he gives it up as a bad job. Mr. Carter finishes with:—

Personally, I do not think the Virgin Birth of Jesus can ever be proved by historical testimony. If we believe in it, it will be on philosophical and religious grounds which add probability, in our minds, to what remains insufficiently attested by historical evidence alone.

The Virgin Birth fairy-tale is only one of many puerilities that religion has set men wasting time and mental energy over. Religion has much to answer for. We like that latter portion of Mr. Carter's statement. Undoubtedly one could never believe in a Virgin Birth on commonsense and logical grounds. But no one would doubt that Christian philosophy and Christian religion would furnish ample grounds for believing in it!

"Craving for excitement," says Dr. G. H. Green, "is merely the creative urge wasting itself wantonly

because it is undirected." Change the word undirected into misdirected, and the statement may serve to explain why a certain kind of pious people delight in revival meetings.

What a lot of up-to-date people are engaged on some of our newspapers! Take the following from the *Sunday Chronicle* of February 24. It quotes a leading American clergyman, Dr. H. E. Barnes, as saying:—

Modern science has shown it difficult to prove the very existence of God, and to be even more of a problem to show any direct solicitude of God for humanity.

The Bible cannot be looked upon as revealing the will of God.

Sin is indefinable and unknowable.

"Theology must be supplanted by mental hygiene," Dr. Barnes states. "Sociologists must unite to work out a valid basis for new rules of conduct that will rest squarely upon scientific foundations."

The *Sunday Chronicle* calls this "One of the most amazing challenges to the Christian religion and the Bible ever made." It is hard to believe that anyone to-day can really be so ignorant as not to be aware that this teaching could have been found among Freethinkers at any time during the past 140 years, and it has been a commonplace in educated circles for the past two generations. Such things make one ask what kind of a person is it who writes these articles in the papers? We know the kind who read them and are impressed by them.

Mr. James Kelly, M.A., the new General Secretary of the World's Sunday School Council, says that the work of this organization is larger than that of merely developing schemes for religious instruction. Its aims are to eradicate the antagonisms between peoples, and to establish ideals of peace through international and inter-racial brotherhood. These be excellent aims, no doubt. But noting the way in which people with the religious germ well developed enjoy squabbling among themselves, we shall want a lot of convincing that they are the right persons for establishing the aforesaid ideals. Mr. Kelly should have waited a little longer before yapping in that way. The Prayer-Book dog-fight is still fresh in the public memory..

The "Plight of the Sunday Schools" is how a religious journal refers to the decline of 75,000 scholars in Sunday Schools during the past twelve months. These figures take no account of Roman Catholic and Salvation Army Sunday Schools. Since 1923 there has been a decrease of more than 1½ million scholars. There's a silver lining to every dark cloud. Thousands of children will start life in a mentally healthy manner, by being spared the superstitious fears and the self-torturing which poisoned the existence of former generations.

The British and Foreign Bible Society says, "there is nothing more sacred in the home than a Family Bible in regular use." Alas! what a large number of non-sacred homes there are in this England. Yet no one seems a penny the worse. Crime is diminishing. People in the main are more kind to animals and children, more temperate, more tolerant, and more human.

Of a certain Free-Church parson who often discards his uniform, a pious weekly says: "He cares very little how he is dressed. The Almighty can commune with His servants just as well when they are dressed for sport as when they are dressed with the clerical suit." We suggest that the parson has another reason. He is averse to advertising the fact that he is a social parasite, kept by those who accept his unverifiable claim of being ordered by God to teach and guide them. The dissemination of secularistic notions is making some parsons rather sensitive regarding the non-producer taunt.

A reader of a religious paper is puzzled to know why he, a Fundamentalist, is regarded by his Modernist brethren as "behind the times." He writes:—

Yet Jesus Christ is preached by them as the Saviour of the world; but of the record of man's creation in

innocence and purity, and his fall from that estate is not true, what does Christ save men from? and what need of a Redeemer?

Now that "original sin" has fallen overboard, the only saving Christ does now is to save tens of thousands of priests from earning their living like ordinary men—by the sweat of their muscles or brain.

Writing from America, the Rev. A. McNeal says:—

I won't be foolish enough to argue whether Prohibition is a success or not. There are holes in it, as everywhere else, but the thing is clearly, to every unprejudiced observer, the greatest and most successful moral achievement of any nation in recent history.

A temperance minority has deprived millions of moderate drinkers of the pleasure of alcoholic stimulant, and the deprivation is extolled as a "moral achievement"! Perhaps the "moral achievers" will tell the world what virtue there is in compulsory abstinence.

The Rev. Wm. C. Jackson, Connexional Chapel Secretary of the United Methodist Church, contends that the erection of a church in a new neighbourhood increases the value of house property. Builders recognize this, he says, and it is often possible to get a site for a new church given, and sometimes also a donation towards the cost of building. He instances a new locality in Essex, where the builder, not a churchgoer, visited a layman of the United Methodist Church, and requested that his church should build in that neighbourhood. This layman replied that no doubt his Church would be willing to do so, but the builder himself would be expected to give the land and also a donation. The layman also indicated the size of the plot and the amount of the donation; both were readily promised. Thinking the matter over he felt he had not asked enough. So, next day, he told the builder that he would be expected to double the size of the plot and the amount of the donation. Again—he obtained a ready promise. The land was given, the donation paid, and the builder immediately added twenty pounds to the price of each house on the estate. The *Methodist Times*, which supplies these details, adds that this fact needs no comment, and is a very pertinent answer to many who are inclined to criticize what they call "the ineffectiveness of the Church." The builder, a wise man, says our contemporary, knew the value of the Church.

The *Methodist Times* and Mr. Jackson haven't quite got the right of it. What is obvious is that the builder thought he saw a chance of securing a contract to build a church. And he increased the price of the house property to cover the cost of the church plot and his donation.

Mr. Bernard Shaw has reached that delightful stage mentioned by Voltaire—"the consolation of this life, is to say what one thinks." Harrods have published Mr. Shaw's answer to their request to lend his influence in the cause of business. His reply is worthy of Bolingbroke: "For such an author to accept payment from a commercial enterprise . . . would be to sin against the Holy Ghost." Those who know Mr. Shaw will say "Go on!" those who don't might say that a sin against the Holy Ghost could not be proved in an English Court of Law. Mr. Shaw cannot prevent Harrods from making use of his reply, and the whole affair may be advertisement in its most subtle form. His preface to *Androcles and the Lion* may also help to test the sincerity of his remarks on one member of the trinity. Those interested might read the chapter under "Christianity and the Empire."

The Rev. Dr. J. D. Jones, in his book of sermons *The Inevitable Christ*, says, according to a reviewer, that Christianity is not an easy thing, but it is essentially a simple thing. To explain the simplicity he says:—

It is so easy to cumber up our Christianity, . . . to obscure it . . . We have ourselves been not altogether guiltless of magnifying non-essentials . . . the essential

thing in Christianity is just acceptance of Jesus as Master and Lord and Saviour. What makes a man a Christian is not the understanding of Christian doctrine, not membership in some particular church . . . [but] this single-hearted faith in, and allegiance to, Christ. Everything else is secondary and non-essential. This is the one thing needful. "Lovest thou me?" "Follow me." This is the thing that saves; this simplicity, this single-hearted devotion, which is toward Jesus.

In other words, a man need only believe in Jesus and he is sure of being "saved," and of a seat in Heaven. He need not even understand what Jesus meant as recorded in the New Testament. Like the thief on the Cross, and like the murderer who knows he will hang, he need only affirm his belief in Jesus, to be sure of a "P.S.A." for eternity among the best-living of Christians. Conversely, of course, decent-living and kindly non-believers and Freethinkers, lacking this simple belief, have no hope of the pleasures of Paradise. Christianity, as stated by Dr. Jones, assuredly is a simple thing. And certainly it is not an easy thing. For can a man get that simple belief while his intelligence rejects both the "reasons" Jesus gave for believing in him to be what he said he was, and the grounds he gave for the necessity of seeking "salvation"?

Dr. Jones appears to suggest that doctrines are non-essentials of real Christianity. He cannot get rid of them so easily as that. Doctrines and dogmas are the outcome of individual interpretation of what Jesus meant and desired men to do in regard to belief, conduct and worship. If that be admitted, it follows that every one anxious to become a Christian must be acquainted with some one interpretation or other to know what he has to believe. This being the case, is Christianity so simple a thing as Dr. Jones would try to persuade people it is?

A writer recalls the fact that the Rev. F. D. Maurice was driven from his chair of theology in King's College, London, for teaching that Heaven is a state, not a place. Well, in the Salvation Army to-day, Maurice's daring heresy would probably mean expulsion for the hero who openly professed the same belief.

Says the Abbe Moreux (a weather prophet): "The best way to predict next season's weather is still to toss up." We should have thought the best way to get the information was to ask God about it. Thousands of parsons are in direct communication with the Most High, and they know exactly what God wants men to do. Surely, to oblige, they could find out next season's weather for certain. The knowledge would make millions of people happy. If details could be elicited, people could more happily plan their Sabbath joy rides, games and picnics.

Rome, says a reverend writer, gave the modern world law and order. Greece gave culture in manifold forms, and Judea gave religion. Well, the modern world is properly grateful to ancient Rome and Greece for what these have given. And the world has rejected very little of their gifts. But by the look of things, the world is beginning to regard the gift of Judea in the way the gifts of the spiteful fairy in the old story were regarded. It thinks it could have had a happier time without the Judean present, which has merely addled man's brains.

If religious education, says a Sunday school journal, is less fruitful nowadays than it ought to be, the reason is in part that teachers are so often ill-equipped with the historical knowledge that enables them to present the Gospel in its true and actual setting. Perhaps our contemporary will explain how it is that the "ill-equipped" temporary of a past generation made many clients for the churches, yet the same type of ill-equipped teacher nowadays cannot do so. We suspect that all that is meant is this—that ignorant but pious teachers make no impression on the better educated child of to-day.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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

J. E. ROOSE (Johannesburg).—We have no desire to defend the publication of really indecent books. Our taste runs neither in reading them, writing them, hunting for them, nor for defending them. We are merely suspicious of any censorship of the press, or of publications, or of policemen being set up as judges of what should or should not be issued to the public.

W. R. DAVIES.—Sorry we did not have an opportunity of a chat with you while at Swansea. Another time.

T. M. MOSELY.—Pleased you like the *Four Lectures*. They are selling well. We agree with you that the Infidel death-bed legend was killed in this country mainly by the efforts of G. W. Foote. It is not often talked about nowadays.

W.P.B.—We did not hear the speaker on the B.B.C. programme who found out that Secularists were usually sincere and upright men. If we had we should have felt inclined to say, "Damn your impudence." We object to the patronage of Christians even more than to their religion. Thanks for cuttings.

S. WESTROPE.—Thanks for booklet. It is astonishing where the money comes from for the idiotic stuff issued by the Judge Rutherford gang.

A. W. COLEMAN.—Pleased to have your congratulations on our articles in the *Controversialist*. We hope they will do good.

W. COLLINS.—After all, we got over the 'flu very much quicker than some of his favourites appear to have done. But we agree that it is a terrible thing to find the Lord taking a special interest in one.

"JERRY."—Every man must decide for himself in what way he can help Freethought. The great thing to realize is that everyone can do something. We have been asked by several readers to put "Leaving Religion Alone" in leaflet form. We may do so when we can find the time.

T. ABSALOM.—We fancy your friend had in mind no more than the distribution of alms. Men like Paine, and Bradlaugh, who fought for justice to man, and for a better state of society, did more to relieve poverty, privation and suffering than all the alms-givers that have ever lived.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

To-day (March 17), Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester. His subject will be "The Crowning Crime of Christianity." We have no doubt but there will be the usual good attendance.

The financial year of the National Secular Society ends on March 31. This is an item of news mentioned for the special purpose of inducing those who have not yet forwarded their subscriptions, to do so before the financial year closes. We hope to hear that this reminder has brought good results.

Judging from Mr. Cohen's audiences in the Ulster Hall, there is plenty of material for a good Branch of the N.S.S. in Belfast. The audiences on both evenings were good, and the interest in the lectures was most marked. Belfast is a priest-ridden centre, it being apparently a question of whether the ruling priest shall be of the Presbyterian or the Roman Catholic variety, and this should create a strong reaction in favour of Freethought. The difficulty, there as elsewhere, is to bring the scattered Freethinkers into combination, and so to make their presence felt. Mr. Knox occupied the chair on both occasions.

From a local paper we see that a wreath placed by the widow on the grave of Thomas Drage—an obituary notice of whom appears on another page—bore the inscription "His last words to me were, 'My darling, I am prepared to pass over. Always remember Truth is Beauty. Nothing else we know or need to know.'" No man ever had a finer epitaph than that.

The Pioneer Press has for sale a limited number of copies of Mr. F. J. Gould's *Life of Thomas Paine*. The book was published at 4s. 6d., and is being offered at 2s., postage 3d. extra. Those who wish to secure a copy should send before the stock is exhausted.

A new edition of Colonel Ingersoll's *What is it Worth? A Study of the Bible* is being issued by the Secular Society Limited, the previous very large edition being now exhausted. This is a very useful pamphlet to circulate among Christians, and is published by the Society only. It appears in the complete edition of Ingersoll's works only, and has never been separately printed. The price is one penny. Twelve copies post free is.

Prohibition is likely to be one of the issues at the forthcoming general election, we are certain to have a lot of religious nonsense talked about Christianity being a champion of temperance. Bearing this in mind, the Secular Society, Limited, has in the press a new edition of the late G. W. Foote's very effective pamphlet *Bible and Beer*. The pamphlet is crammed with information, and written in the author's raciest style.

In a notice of *Zoc*, by Geraldine Jewsbury (Chapman and Hall), a little extract caught the eye that showed the critical spirit at work. The novel was originally published in 1845, and at that period attacks on Christianity could not be made so easily and openly as at the present. She wrote:—

"How much better to do right without religion!"
"Oh! if they really believed all they preach, how would any priest or preacher be able to sleep in his bed!"
"Insincerity has crept into the heart of the most sacred things." "Weakness is the only state for which there is no hope." "To love rightly is the highest morality of which mankind is capable."

That reads good. The first sentence will give all Christian critics something to go on with. It mystifies them as they are incapable, through their training, to understand personal responsibility and a polite request to stick Christian rewards in heaven on the shelf.

The Manchester Branch is holding a Social Evening on Saturday, March 16, in the Milton Hall, Broad Street, Pendlebury. The Social will commence at 6.30 p.m., and a hearty invitation is extended to all Freethinkers and friends. Refreshments will be provided, and admission is free. A collection will be taken to defray expenses. Freethinkers living at some distance can easily get to the Social by Swinton or Pendlebury trams, which pass the door of the hall. We are quite sure that all who attend will have a most enjoyable time, and we hope to hear of a record turn-out.

"Do the Dead Live?"

In publishing the series of articles on "Do the Dead Live?" the *Daily News* has rendered a service to the Cause of Freethought. It is a good thing to take stock, especially in intellectual matters, and the articles in question enable us to appraise in some degree the present state of Christian thought. The whole series justifies the militant Freethinker in his belief that it is still necessary to fight hard in the cause of enlightenment.

Even the two scientific writers whose articles are most in line with modern thought are very unsatisfactory on the subject of Materialism, but we need not concern ourselves with them, as most of the articles are from religious writers. It is noteworthy that all of these reveal the fact of the Materialistic philosophy being either misunderstood or deliberately misrepresented.

It seems impossible to get the anti-Materialist to realize that while the Materialist cannot explain everything in the universe, all the explanations that are worth anything are in terms of a materialistic philosophy, with regard to both the inorganic and the organic.

The assumption of a soul as the centre of human activity does not explain anything, and not only does it fail to clarify human thought, it needs more explaining than does the phenomena which it is put forward to explain.

The introduction of a soul does not fill up what would otherwise be a gap in our knowledge; it stands for ignorance, and makes confusion worse confounded when it is treated as something more than a meta-physical creation.

This is seen to advantage in religious thought. No definite, clear, and generally accepted idea of the soul exists in the minds of religious people. A fact that is proved by the *Daily News* articles and letters. There is more fog than thought. The tragedy of the situation lies in the fact of those who claim to know most about the soul being most confused. With the introduction of divine light comes the greater darkness.

To suggest that the Materialist is defeated because he fails to make an organism, after the scientist has analysed living matter in terms of chemistry and physics, is to indulge in mere rhetoric. It is the outcome of a misunderstanding of the whole situation. The scientist may analyse the products of nature, but that is no reason why he should be able to reproduce like things. One might just as well expect a scientist to reproduce a "sun" and complete constellation of stars, because he can describe their chemical and physical compounds, as expect him to reproduce a lowly form of life. There is no intrinsic reason why the scientist should reproduce the natural object which he has analysed. It is a question of conditions. The scientist is not working at the beginning of things, and if the evolution of the universe has made impossible the reproduction of the necessary environment for producing new forms of life, it is asking the scientist to do the impossible, when calling upon him to make something for which the essential conditions of reproduction are absent. Perhaps those conditions will some day be found, and it will then be possible to reproduce fairly complex forms of life, but it must be remembered that even then the scientist will not have silenced critics. They will say he has reproduced it only out of existing elements. Creation is impossible, and the sooner the religionist gives up the silly habit of calling upon the scientist to do the impossible, and then taunting him because he is unable to do it, the better for the cause of truth; and the religionist—he will be the more honest.

If a new organism never is reproduced by the

scientist, the Materialist will not be vanquished, as enough is known about the structure and function of both the living and non-living to make Materialism an intelligible interpretation of the universe; and the assumption of a soul a useless myth.

There is one fact which the anti-materialist forgets. Materialism does not depend upon a particular conception of matter. Whether it is made up of atoms, electric sparks, or strains in the ether does not count. The main fact that everything, including mind, is determined, and that no thought is possible without a material organism capable of functioning in a thought-producing manner holds good whatever our final analysis of matter may be.

To put the case as strongly as possible, this would be so even if we were able to analyse matter into its ultimate element, and find that to be "spirit." It would still be a fact that "spirit" as such is unable to think, and we must have a material organism if we are to have the consciousness and intelligence. Nobody has ever had the experience of two immaterial, disembodied spirits having a talk together.

When the religionist makes the oft repeated statement that the soul cannot be found by the physiologist and the anatomist because they are not equipped for doing so and are searching in the wrong field, the religionist is simply side-tracking and begging the question. He is unable to find the soul himself, and consciously or unconsciously seeks to cover his own impotence by under estimating and discounting the methods of investigation employed by those who work on secular lines.

Now, if the soul is a distinct entity, and if it is of primary importance to human life, surely the physiologist and anatomist should come into contact with it, if only as an obstacle to their understanding of human make-up and activity. Yet the sciences of physiology and anatomy have actually been built up without their exponents ever taking the trouble to acquire a real understanding of the so-called most important factor in the human organism.

Surely anatomy and physiology ought long ago to have fallen to pieces if the soul is the greatest thing in the make-up of a human being, yet the structure and the functions of the human organism have been described, and our knowledge in the spheres of physiology and anatomy has increased without lack of soul-knowledge making progress impossible. Even doctors have been able to prescribe medicine without consulting the so-called directive principle of human life. Not only so, the psychologist has never yet found the assumption of a soul to be of any service in exploring the workings of the mind. Whatever is of value in modern psychology simply ignores the existence of a soul.

In order to bolster up the idea of survival after death, it is often claimed that the universe is rational, as if a rational universe could not possibly cease to be rational, which implies consciousness, and therefore must have produced some forms of life capable of understanding the universal rationality, and thus making the purposiveness of the universe eternally worth while.

One writer says: "the more the structure of the universe is studied, the argument runs, the more clearly is it revealed that it rests upon a system of order and of evolution. This is, in fact, where science appears to make its great contribution to the evidence in favour of survival. All its evidence is that nature is purposive. She does nothing without reason."

Perhaps one might think there is something in this theory of the purposiveness of nature, if she had not produced so many minds capable of working on lines as near to the irrational as possible.

To give to nature such attributes as "purposive-

ness," "consciousness," "rationality," etc., is to think on the same anthropomorphic lines as when one creates a god in the image of man.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

(To be concluded.)

The Characteristics of the Modern Press.

NEWSPAPERS have become, like Bank Holidays and Association Football, a national institution. Their readers are, in number, as the sand on the sea-shore, and many people read nothing but their voluminous sheets of potted wisdom and highly entertaining tit-bits of information.

The Fourth Estate of the Realm, indeed, wields a power with which no wordy Member of Parliament, masculine or feminine, no eloquent churchman, or even idolized movie-star can hope to compete.

Like all other human institutions, though, this wonderful and powerful suffragan of the man in the street has its limitations. Just as a famous soap won't wash clothes, so (greatly to the annoyance of Sir Thomas Beccham) the Press cannot make us all musical, for instance. Neither can it make us fond of cold baths, Milton's poetry, or folk dancing, if we don't already care for these excellent things.

It is, in fact, up against much the same thing as was Peter the Great when he tried to educate his benighted people—either because the ground is not ready for the good seed, or is not yet acclimatized to its growth—with apologies to Weston, of *White Cargo* fame.

But what a "busy map of life" a modern newspaper is! It tells us who and what has won the Derby; the price of milk in Wigan or Tonypany; what Winston is going to tax next; who is the latest to think she has swum the Channel; how much Blackpool's illuminations cost, together with bright and breezy accounts of the latest murders, political controversies, fires, weddings, film-stars' divorces, and other lamentable but interesting topics.

Then, too, for the modest sum of one penny (or maybe twopence) one may be insured for vast amounts; you stand a chance of winning thousands of pounds in the numerous and highly diverting competitions. Expert advice may be had upon matters matrimonial, educational, sporting, and a thousand and one other things, together with highly reliable forecasts of weather conditions for the next twenty-four hours.

When I think of all that a newspaper can tell me, I open its large (and sometimes beastly awkward) pages with humble gratitude. When I reflect on the marvel of organization, the speed of its mechanical operations, and a newspaper's ridiculously low price, I gaze upon it with wonder and awe.

What a marvellous thing it is to please, instruct, and generally cater for the intellectual needs of so great and varied a public! Verily, it is no mean feat to supply every one of so great a number with at least one item to his or her taste daily!

But stay! There is one who never figures in its pages—the poor, benighted Freethinker, what? Shame it is to see every shade of religious thought from that of the Roman Catholic down to that of the Plymouth Brother finding "room enough" in the Press to air its views and chronicle its doings, but ne'er a line to the Freethinker.

Now, for Fair Play's sweet sake, where is the editor brave enough?

PETER COVENTRY.

My Pal Harry.

THE classical example of male friendships is, of course, David and Jonathan, whose affection for each other is said to have exceeded the love of women. The intimacy between Harry and myself did not perhaps reach to such a sublime height, but I am sure that nowhere could one have found a better pal. The friendship, begun in boyhood, has continued for nearly half a century; and the old boyish feeling for each other still persists, wherever we chance to meet. As very young men, we were both members of a large Bible class, numbering thirty or forty, held in the mission hall of a Presbyterian Church, and conducted by one of the elders, who was a schoolmaster. He was not what one might call a typical elder, but one of an active, evangelical type, who not only believed in hell-fire, but preached it with the vigour of a Salvationist. As stated in a recent article, I had early revolted against the doctrine of hell, and one Sunday afternoon, for some reason or another, in the course of the lesson he put some question to me relating to the condition of the soul after death. My eschatological views had, of course, been undergoing some change, and my answer sent him into a kind of fury. He stood up, and denounced me before the whole meeting, warning the class of my heresy, and advising them to have no further conversation with me. The young men, I am pleased to record, did not act upon his advice. They were nearly all of the passive type of mind, and doctrines of theology did not much trouble them. They were there to listen to what might be told them, but I never knew any of them exhibit any active or intelligent interest in questions of a religious nature. Least of all, my pal Harry. Never at any time do I remember him expressing either conviction or doubt in connexion with any religious subject. As for the class leader, Providence rewarded his zealous religious labours in a very ungrateful and cruel manner. He dropped down dead one Sunday morning in the street, while on his way to conduct an evangelistic service.

The time came when the close companionship of our boyhood was interrupted by life's later interests. Residential changes and matrimonial concerns interfered with the regularity of our meetings. In the meantime, religious questions continued to occupy my attention, with the result that most of the doctrines of theology went the way of the belief in hell. Some years must have elapsed when, one day, I came across my boyhood's chum, but, strange to say, he was not the old pal I used to know, with his indifference to matters of religious or intellectual interest. He had acquired the gift of tongues, and the marvellous fluency of his language was not more surprising than the subject matter of his harangue.

A rev. gentleman was discoursing here recently upon, "Is conversion a reality?" There was no question as to Harry's conversion being *real*; that is, if there is anything such as "reality." I listened for a considerable time as my old pal held forth about the unreality of the real, and the reality of the unreal; about sickness and disease and death all being illusions of mortal mind; of mortal mind itself being an illusion, as nothing existed but infinite mind; of matter being incapable of experiencing any sensation, and pain being imaginary; and definitions of God, and interpretations of the Scriptures that would have sent the old class leader into a fit. On asking where he had unearthed all this kind of stuff, I was told that it was called "Christian Science," and that its founder and discoverer was Mary Baker G. Eddy, and that it was found fully explained in *Science and Health, with Key to the Scriptures*.

If he had been a stranger, or a mere acquaintance, I might have looked upon him as a crank, and thought no more about the matter; but to find my old pal fallen into such a mental quagmire, gave me food for thought. Whether I knew anything of Christian Science at that time, I don't remember, but I lost no time in procuring a copy of *Science and Health*, and in the course of a few months, I must, like Mark Twain, have read "acres" of Christian Science literature. Paying my pal a visit, some time later, I said: "As I understand Chris-

tian Science, life and mind are quite independent of material conditions for their existence and continuance." He said I had interpreted the teaching aright. "Well then," I added, "seeing that we eat only for the purpose of supporting life—and mind, according to your principles it would not be necessary to eat to live." I thought this would help him to see the absurdity of the implications such a doctrine involved. But judge of my surprise when I was calmly assured that Christian science had this end in view. A friend said to me recently, that he had come to the conclusion that there was no limit to what people would believe. A son of his, who had become a Christian Scientist, seriously informed him that there were no such things as shipwrecks at sea, or railway disasters—these were only illusions of mortal mind!

About a year ago, my old pal was very ill. Whatever their beliefs, Christian Scientists are no more immune from sickness and disease than other people. I went to see him, but no amount of persuasion would induce him to call in medical aid. Some time later, I met an elder brother of his, a man who has passed the threescore years and ten, and who, from his healthy appearance and buoyant step, seems likely to live for many more years to come. I mentioned the fact that I had been to see his brother, the Christian Scientist. He smiled a wry kind of smile, "Funny thing," he said, "our Harry is the only member of the family who ever ails anything. He calls his religion 'Science and Health,' but if he is to be taken as a sample of the fraternity, I think it would be better described as 'Science and Sickness.'" And it is a curious fact, but, since the time he became a Christian Scientist, his life has been one long chapter of accidents and illnesses.

Some time ago, he had an accident to one of his fingers in a machine he was working. And, in accordance with their practice, he began to apply the Christian Science "treatment"—whatever that may be. From the time of the accident to the time the wound was finally healed was two days, three hours, four minutes, and five seconds. They keep an accurate record of these "cures." I remember the figures, because you will notice the numbers are consecutive, 2, 3, 4 and 5. When he was telling me of this healing miracle, I said I did not see anything remarkable about it, as the wound, in the ordinary way, would probably have healed in equal time. "Ah, but," he replied, "without the science, it would have taken two days, three hours, four minutes, and six seconds." Truly a marvellous achievement!

I have given up all hope of ever restoring my friend Harry to anything like a condition of normal mentality. Indeed, a person with serious bronchial trouble, who will cough till he is nearly black in the face, and as soon as he gets his breath will tell you that sickness and disease are only illusions of mortal mind—well, one may be forgiven for regarding such a person as being past mental redemption. In the early days of his enthusiasm, when he invited me to attend a Christian Science service, in my ignorance I enquired if I would be permitted to ask a question. Horror of horrors! Ask a question at a Christian Science meeting! You would be immediately cast out into outer darkness. The Christian revelation, under the stress of modern criticism, has been claimed to be a "progressive" one. But Christian Science is not progressive. The revelation vouchsafed to Mrs. Eddy is final and complete; and woe betide the person who either adds to or takes away one jot or tittle from the words of the "little book." There are no questions, no expositions, and no commentaries, permissible upon its contents. It is a most soul-destroying creed. There is no system of philosophy or religion that tends to restrict human thought to such narrow confines as does Christian Science. The Catholic Church itself does not exercise a more vigilant tyranny over the minds of its devotees. Mark Twain reproduces one of the by-laws of the Christian Science Church, which he entitles, *The New Unpardonable Sin*. It is as follows: "WORKING AGAINST THE CAUSE (Sec. 2).—If a member of this Church shall work against the accomplishment of what the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science understands is advantageous to the individual, to this Church, and to the Cause of Christian Science"—out he goes. Forever. "The member may think," says the great American, "that what he is doing

will advance the Cause, but he is not invited to do any thinking. More than that, he is not permitted to do any—as he will clearly gather from this By-law. When a person joins Mrs. Eddy's Church, he must leave his thinker at home. Leave it permanently. To make sure that it will not go off some time or other when he is not watching, it will be safest for him to spike it. If he should forget himself and think just once, the By-law provides that he shall be fired out—instantly—forever—no return."

"It shall be the duty of this Church immediately to call a meeting, and drop forever the name of this member from its records."

"My," says Mark, "but it breathes a towering indignation! There are forgivable offences, but this is not one of them; there are admonitions, probations, suspensions, in several minor cases; mercy is shown the derelict, in those cases he is gently used, and in time he can get back into the fold—even when he has repeated the offence. But let him think, just once, without getting his thinker set to Eddy time, and that is enough: his head comes off. There is no second offence, and there is no gate open to that lost sheep, ever again."

If my pal Harry had remained a common garden Christian, there might have been some hope of the rationalizing influences of modern thought ultimately piercing the armour of his orthodoxy. The pages of the *Freethinker* bear witness to the fact, that Christians of all denominations, even Roman Catholics and Spiritualists, often throw off the shackles of their creed to fearlessly face the facts of life and nature in the light of reason. But the steel shirt of Christian Science is almost impenetrable. Indeed, the poor Indian, whose untutored mind sees God in trees, is not a more pitiable object than the benighted Christian Scientist, who appears to see God only in wounds and bruises and putrifying sores.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

Sunday School Teaching.

"Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold a sheep hook!"—*Milton*.

"By education most have been misled."—*Dryden*.

"As the twig is bent the tree's inclined."—*Pope*.

"Delightful task to rear the tender Thought

To teach the young idea how to shoot."—*Thomson*.

DURING the European War I was attending a Wesleyan Church, and as I had reached the ripe and venerable age of sixteen years, the powers that were asked me if I would like to become a Sunday school teacher.

I saw no harm in it, and was assured that I should be doing the Lord's work, taking the place of men who had joined up to serve the Prince of Peace by killing their enemies. I was an enthusiastic Boy Scout and this seemed quite in keeping with my desire to do a good turn.

I became a teacher. Nobody asked what my beliefs were; no test was made to see if I had the ability to tell the old, old story to children in an interesting and convincing manner; and no questions were asked regarding my knowledge of the Bible.

Public recognition was made of my becoming a teacher by the official presentation, by the minister, of a Bible costing seven or eight shillings. Incidentally, some years later I suggested that new teachers convinced they were doing God's will, did not require a gift, but I was howled down, and told that it had always been done, and would always be done.

However, a teacher I was, and being aged sixteen I was put in charge of some healthy youngsters of twelve years of age.

Full of enthusiasm for my task, I eagerly read the *Sunday School Magazine* and studied the appointed lesson for the following Sunday. On the Sunday morning I sat before a gaping group of boys and let them have it. One boy stirred uneasily, but on my glaring at him, he froze, and I got through the lesson safely. It was the same in the afternoon, and when during the week one of the pillars of the church came to me and shook me warmly by the hand, I was very pleased with myself.

But as the boys grew more familiar with me, I found them less attentive to what I had to say, and then one day I dropped the *Sunday School Magazine*, and talked to them in a friendly manner about being decent and honest and kind. I sprinkled my remarks with one or two illustrations of what I was trying to get at, and they seemed interested. On the following Sunday, when we had settled down for lessons, one of the boys piped up "Please don't tell us anything in the Bible. Tell us some more tales."

I told them some more tales, and hardly mentioned religious matters at all. All the tales were tales of what we should now call "uplift," although, young as I was, I had the sense not to stress the moral.

Gradually I noticed a tendency for my class to swell, and I discovered that other boys were leaving their proper classes and were creeping into mine. Teachers objected, and I drove them out.

By this time I had been a teacher for some years, and I began to ask other teachers how they did their work. Some, I found, sat down and read the lesson and the notes from the *Sunday School Magazine* exactly as it was printed. One kept his class in a vestry, and was engaged chiefly in cuffing their heads to keep them quiet. One read the Bible and talked, oblivious of the din made by her girls, and thankful when the superintendent rang the bell as a signal that lessons were over. Another was reading Dickens' *Tale of Two Cities* in instalments.

And one confessed that she let the youngsters talk among themselves, and tried to drop a word or two here and there which was likely to bear fruit.

One or two of the children in the school happened to have brothers and sisters who mentioned at home some of the remarks made by their teachers. One elderly lady was reported to have told her girls that no one who was goodlooking or beautiful was good, because a fair outside often hid a black heart. An old gentleman babbled serenely on about the "lions in the Canadian prairies."

At the Sunday School Council, which met periodically, I raised the question of the appointment of new teachers, and asked that some standard of efficiency be found in a would-be teacher before making the appointment. I was squashed with the retort that no one can tell by educational tests whether a person had been called by the Lord to bring the children up in the way they should go!

Towards the end of my career as a Sunday school teacher, I gave up all attempts to teach my boys doctrine, theology, or religion. I used to talk to them frankly about the kind of things they were likely to come across in the world. I had a class, at this time, of boys who were leaving school, and I talked to them about factory life, and office life, and tried to teach them that straightforwardness and clean living were worth observing for their own sakes. It seemed to me that to ask children to do certain things so that they could enjoy a doubtful bliss in a problematic other world was the height of folly.

Even now, as a Freethinker, I like to think that some of the things I told my boys have been useful to them, and I know from the greetings I receive from them, that they still have a slight affection for me.

One day I was talking to a fellow teacher, one who sometimes deputized for the superintendent, and who was regarded as a coming light. I said that teaching didn't seem to be much good where boys and girls were concerned, and he said: "I agree. In fact, if the authorities knew the kind of things I tell my boys they would be horrified. I go on teaching because I like the youngsters, and because it has developed into a habit. I should be at a loose end on Sunday if I didn't teach."

That settled it. If a future pillar of the church, one of whom no man spake evil, was sceptical in that manner and could still appear before the church people as a saint, then the church was no place for one who was teaching boys to be honest and straightforward.

On the last Sunday I attended the Sunday school, I had occasion to call at the infants' department, and found that the two girls put in charge of the youngest children of all, were two fifteen-year-old girls who were,

and who still are, if observation does not mislead me, the most frivolous and empty-headed girls in the district.

I left. For a time my Sunday seemed strange, but as I grew accustomed to the absence of church going, I began to see that Sunday as a day of rest was full of possibilities. Now it is one of my best days, but the nearest approach I make to religion is when I read the *Freethinker* on the Lord's Day.

NECHELLS.

The Constitution of Man.

A LITERARY EPISODE.

It was a wintry night and the audience was small but select. The intense cold penetrated the cosy room to the circle round the fire. Long ago on such a night in another town, I recall a lecture by G. W. Foote, entitled "An Hour in Hell," who began: "Mr. Chairman and Friends, It is a very cold night, and, by way of compensation, we have a very warm subject!"—austere but splendid past! Admirable unforgettable man, this tribute to your memory! On this lesser, later event the Essayist was a continental gentleman, native to French and Dutch, and making a very creditable show with the English language. His argument followed the lines of the late George Combe. Quite a fine philosopher within the limits of his culture and creed.—Man was pre-eminent among animals and something more; designed for progressive, infinite improvement by a Great First Cause; he was full of heterogeneous, conflicting qualities; he was demon and god, but in the clash of evil and good within him the original divine purpose was slowly but surely emerging. The "lower" animals had instinct only, they were more constant and consistent in their activities, did not reason, reflect, moralize, and provide like the more gifted "paragon of animals." This human—and divine—superiority warranted us in saying . . . that the future may exhibit man assuming his station as a rational creature pursuing his own happiness with intelligence and design, and at length attaining higher gratification to his whole faculties than he had hitherto enjoyed . . . Surely, quite a justifiable hope, and certainly, a charming conclusion.

As a reader of the *Freethinker* and kindred literature, the "Leading Critic" was on familiar ground, and quoted Hamlet's, "What a piece of work is a man," etc., and followed up with a passage from Meredith's *France* (providentially recalled!):—

"Lo, strength is of the plain root virtues born—the offspring of the modest years . . ."

Could France accept the fables of her priests . . . on to that noble line:—

"When the whole tragic tale hangs on a broken blade?"

A great first cause, like a limited freewill, was unscientific, nonsensical. Man had learned, or would learn, prudence through calamity. But "perfection" at any stage of life and culture was alien to nature. Plague, fire, flood, storm, arctic cold or tropic heat, hunger, passion, were so far remediable, or avoidable, but ills must remain that even the Essayist's all wise Providence can never eliminate—except by death.

Another modest, reluctant, but sapient critic referred to man's unanswered question through the ages, and to the fears that often haunt the death-beds of the good and the religious. The late Principal Caird had left this comfort with a dying lady friend: "There is nothing to fear." (*Vide* Ingersoll: "I beg of you to throw away all fear.")

The "blessed assurance" was afterwards engraved on the lady's tombstone. The late Lord Haldane had early wrestled with religious doubt, but found peace in the IDEAL of Leibnitz. Then, a young man with his original impress quite unmodified—but perhaps on the point of change?—apologized (quite unnecessarily) for quoting Scripture, and ran right off the scientific and logical rails in untenable inferences. Another referred to the

soldier and civilian "conscience," the contradictory religious teaching of peace and war, both simply results of special training; mundane, expedient, temporal, provisional; nothing to do with a divine plan of the ages!

The worthy chairman gave his casting vote in the minority of two to ten! Altogether the most live and hopeful night of the Session. And set down here to show how the virus of reason is o'ercrowing the virtue of religion even in a Literary Society such as ours.

ANDREW MILLAR.

Obituary.

MRS. ELIZABETH HALL LANCASTER.

It is with regret that we have to record the death of Mrs. Elizabeth Hall Lancaster, the wife of Mr. S. Handel Lancaster, the prominent Glasgow Musical Director and well-known member of the Glasgow Secular Society. Her death took place on the 1st March, at the age of forty-eight. Subscribing to the Secularist creed, she had neither fears nor vain hopes of the beyond. Only the regrets at leaving her own, "too soon," for she was but in the prime of life. Her remains were cremated on the 5th inst., at the Western Crematorium, when a Secular Burial Service was delivered by Dr. H. G. Farmer, an old friend of the family, whilst Mr. W. D. Aitken presided at the organ.—H.G.F.

MRS. MARY JANE THURLOW.

On Saturday, March 9, a Secular Ceremony was conducted at the City of London Cemetery, in connexion with the death of Mrs. Mary Jane Thurlow, the widow of Mr. Thomas Thurlow who was the subject of an article in the *Freethinker* a few weeks ago. The deceased was aged seventy-five years, and at her request was cremated at the above-mentioned crematorium, Mr. G. Whitehead officiating at the service. Owing to a last-minute and necessary alteration of the funeral arrangements, a number of members of the Society, and of the West Ham Branch in particular, were prevented from being present at the ceremony.

MR. THOMAS DRAGE.

With deep regret, we have to report the death of Mr. Thomas Drage, of Wellingborough. The deceased died of influenza on Tuesday, March 5.

Mr. Drage was Secretary of the National Federation of Building Trades' Operatives, No. 7 District, Midland Area; he was one of the founders and a past chairman of the local Branch of the Independent Labour Party, and a member of the Divisional Executive of the I.L.P. The many letters of sympathy received by his widow from Secretaries of organizations, and from townspeople, show how much the deceased was respected for his high character and his unselfish devotion to all movements that have for their aim the improvement of the mental and physical life of man. The deceased, who knew he was dying, faced death with calm courage; nothing in his well-spent life is more worthy of admiration than the manner in which he devoted his last hours to the consolation of his wife, to whom he had been married only eighteen months. At the request of the deceased, he was buried with a Secular Service, which was conducted by the General Secretary of the N.S.S., in the presence of relatives and a number of comrades who came to pay their last tribute of respect and affection. All Freethinkers will extend to Mrs. Drage their sympathy in her bereavement.

Some Pioneer Press Publications—

- SOCIETY AND SUPERSTITION, By ROBERT ARCH. A Commonsense View of Religion and its Influence on Social Life. 4d., postage ½d.
RELIGION AND SEX. By CHAPMAN COHEN. Studies in the Pathology of Religious Development. 6s., postage 6d.
THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH. By COL. R. G. INGERSOLL. 1d., postage ½d.
WHAT IS RELIGION? By COL. R. G. INGERSOLL. Contains Col. Ingersoll's Confession of Faith. 1d., postage ½d.

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. Harry Snell, M.P.—"Whither Mankind—To Disaster or Development?"

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Mr. Leonard Ebury—"Christ—the Communist."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Station): 7.15, Mr. F. Mann—"Spiritualism and Witchcraft."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): Free Sunday Lectures at 7 p.m.—Arthur Linecar—"Tess," by Thomas Hardy."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, Dr. Stanton Coit—"The World Crisis in Religion and Ethics To-day."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (The Orange Tree Hotel, Euston Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Debate on "Is Determinism Sound?" *Affir.*: Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe. *Neg.*: Mr. Wheale. On March 21, at 101 Tottenham Court Road: Social and Dance. 7.30 to 11.30. Admission 1s.

OUTDOOR.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrols Road, North End Road, Walham Green): Every Saturday at 8 p.m. Speakers—Messrs. Campbell-Everden, Bryant, Mathie and others.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. F. Mann—"The Nature of Morality."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12 noon, Mr. James Hart. 3.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 7.0, Messrs. James Hart and W. P. Campbell-Everden. 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 SECULAR SOCIETY (I.L.P. Hall, 48 York Street): 3.30, Mr. J. H. Hewitt—"Censorship."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Mecca Cafe, Waterloo Street): Saturday, March 23, at 6.30. Whist and Social. Members and friends are asked for their support. Sunday, March 24 (Bristol Street Council Schools): 7.0, Mr. E. C. Saphin—"Religion and the Ritual."

BOLTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Borough Small Hall, Corporation Street): 6.30, Annual Meeting and Statement of Accounts.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S.—7.15, Mr. Vincent Wheatley—"A Materialistic Conception of History." Chair taken by Mr. Wm. Jefferies.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. Hale—"Some Evidences for Spiritualism."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen—"The Crowning Crime of Christianity." Questions and Discussion.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street): 7.15, Mr. G. H. Cowin—"The Case for Spiritualism." Admission free. Discussion.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Milton Hall, Broad Street, Pendlebury): March 16, at 6.30. A Social Evening. Refreshments provided. Admission free. Swinton and Pendlebury cars pass the door.

OUTDOOR.

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

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JESUS CHRIST: MAN, GOD, OR MYTH? By GEORGE WHITEHEAD. With a Chapter on "Was Jesus a Socialist?" Cloth, 3s., postage 2½d.

A GRAMMAR OF FREETHOUGHT. By CHAPMAN COHEN. A Statement of the Case for Freethought, including a Criticism of Fundamental Religious Doctrines. Cloth Bound, 5s., postage 3½d.

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