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Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,

Letters to the Editor, etc.

Views and Opinions.

(Continued from page 434.)

"Giving 'em Hell."

The sixth article in the *Daily Telegraph* series on Hell, is by a Roman Catholic, Abbot Butler, who is announced as a leading figure in the Catholic literary world. In any case, it may be taken as representative, for the rule that guides Roman Catholics is well set forth by Mr. Hilaire Belloc, which is that once the Church has declared a doctrine to be true, whether it appears reasonable or otherwise is of no intellectual consequence whatever. That being the case, one need hardly ask what it is that a Roman Catholic teacher believes, all we need know is what he is ordered to believe. Anything like intellectual dignity or independence is quite out of place. It is neither allowed for nor tolerated. It is Christianity in its purest form.

The Roman Church will have no paltering on this doctrine of eternal torment. It does not apologise for the duration of hell or for its temperature. When it says eternal it means existence without end. And when it talks about the fires of hell, the only qualification it makes is that while it may not be the same kind of fire as we know here, it is certainly something hotter or more painful than can be inflicted by any fire with which we are acquainted. The "fundamental truths," taught by the Roman Church, says Abbot Butler, are:—

Every man has a soul that is a spirit, that will survive death, and will have personal immortality; it will not be absorbed in any pantheistic deity, or in the great ocean of being, or in the great unconsciousness; nor will it ever be annihilated or allowed to sink out of existence; each human soul will exist individually everlastingly, for all eternity.

At death this soul will go either straight to heaven or hell, or to purgatory for a longer or shorter period. Now, there is the Roman Catholic doctrine, and its advocates have the advantage over the Nor-

wood type of preacher of being quite clear as to what they mean, of being in line with historic Christianity, and under no risk of being charged with mental crookedness in saying part of the truth and suppressing the rest. Moreover, when we listen to certain preachers denouncing the doctrine of eternal torment as brutalizing, a lie, etc., etc., it is advisable to bear in mind that this brutal doctrine is still taught by the largest and the most powerful church in Christendom, a church which is demanding increased support and increased privileges in the schools, and with which each political party appears to have done some underhand bargaining in return for a promise of votes.

* * *

Hell for the Kiddies.

I have before now given readers of the *Freethinker* samples of the kind of teaching which the Catholic Church gives to children, and anything more brutal or more ferocious it is impossible to conceive. But here is one more specimen from a little booklet specially written for the use of Children, and published by authority. The reader is asked to go with his teacher, in imagination, through hell:—

Look into this little prison. In the middle of it there is a boy, a young man. He is silent; despair is on him. He stands straight up. His eyes are burning like two burning coals. Two long flames come out of his ears. His breathing is difficult. Sometimes he opens his mouth, and a breath of blazing fire rolls out of it. But, listen! there is a sound just like that of a kettle boiling. Is it really a kettle which is boiling? No; then what is it? Hear what it is. The blood is boiling in the scalded veins of that boy. The brain is boiling and bubbling in his head! The marrow is boiling in his bones! Ask him, why he is thus tormented? His answer will be that when he was alive he had it in his blood to do very wicked things . . .

Perhaps at this moment a child is just going into hell. To-morrow morning at seven o'clock, go and knock at the gates of hell, and ask what the child is doing. The devils will go and look. Then they will come back and say the child is burning. Go in a week and ask the same question and you will get the same answer—it is burning. Go in a million years and ask the same question; the answer is just the same, it is burning. So if you go on for ever and ever you will always get the same answer—it is burning in the fire.

There is plenty more of this kind of thing, but the sample will help readers, at a time when Christianity is but a shadow of what it was, to appreciate the kind of moralizing influence it had upon its followers. The obscenity of the mind that could create such pictures, the villainy of a Church that could authorize such teachings to children beggars description. The man who ill-treats a child's body is imprisoned. The man who in the name of Christianity tortures a child's mind escapes condemnation, he may even receive praise.

Right and Wrong.

The Church, says Abbot Butler, "can no more tolerate any explaining away of hell, than she could tolerate the explaining away of heaven." That is logical and historically correct, and it is worth noting that in these matters the logic and the straightforwardness of thought and expression is with the more ferocious teaching, not with the apologists who are too civilized to champion the old ideas, but not strong enough to discard them altogether. Heaven and hell work together as do the two halves of a pair of scissors. One is the reverse of the other; and no one could ever have desired the Christian heaven but for the fear of the Christian hell. The book from which I have already quoted, and which Christian brutality thoughtfully prepared for the terrifying of childish minds, makes Jesus say that hell must be eternal, and there can be no relief. "There must be millions in heaven who would not have been there but for the everlasting pains of hell." Both statements are logically correct. Eternal heaven or eternal hell, these are the basic conceptions of the Christian faith. Remove the one and you rob the other of its attractiveness or its terror. The idea of hell, says Abbot Butler, in all seriousness, "is a beautiful and a dignified, and an elevated, and a spiritual, and a truly religious conception, conformable to Christian ideals and to natural ethical sense." A quite religious conception it may be, a truly Christian conception it certainly is. But to say that it is in conformity with ethical sense, is to make that sense equivalent to Christian belief, and that is just about as false as a statement can well be.

Abbot Butler takes it as an unquestionable truth, "that sin, unrepented of, should be punished proportionately to its gravity, is an idea that commends itself to all sense of justice and right." It might be correct to say that such an idea—involving as it does here the belief in an eternal hell, commends itself to a mind saturated with Christianity, but it will hardly commend itself to others. Right-thinking, humane men and women are not concerned with the idea of punishment. I, certainly, am not greatly concerned with seeing anyone punished for what he has done, however bad it may be. I am not even anxious to see the writer of that horrible booklet published for children punished for thus outraging infancy. Mere punishment may gratify a blind feeling of resentment; one may feel a certain gratification in thrashing a brute, but it cannot undo what has been done. It actually benefits neither society, nor the one who is wronged, nor the one who does the wrong. Among the more civilized section of society, the only justification for "punishment" (the very term should be eliminated from a civilized social vocabulary) is the reformation of the wrong-doer, and the prevention of wrong in the future. And what kind of reform can there be attaching to the idea of torture that never ends? It is a form of brutality which goes to prove to the wrong-doer that one can be as vindictive in the name of righteousness as in the pursuit of wrong.

* * *

A Satire on Morality.

What comes out very strongly in the Christian and semi-Christian deliverances published in the *Daily Telegraph* is the marked egoism of Christian influence. Each is concerned with the wrong that *I* do, and how it is going to affect *me*. This tremendous egotism attaches itself, as a matter of fact, to all belief in a future life. There must be another life because I feel that *I* want it. It must be, in order to give *me* a chance to develop, etc., etc. So in the region of ethics. But the wrong that hurts me alone,

if there be such a thing, the neglect of something that affects me alone, matters very little, and to demand eternal life in order that *I* may do something to purify myself is to make my egotism a law for the universe.

But the wrong that matters, the neglected duty that matters, chiefly affects others, and how can my punishment in some other world, or my improvement in some other world ever make these things good? Just over a century ago the Factory System was in full swing in this country. Men were driven off the land to herd worse than cattle in hovels in the towns. Children were sent into the factory and worked, half-starved, until they dropped at the looms. Men were degraded and women driven into prostitution. And the pious Christian mill-owner built church and chapel, founded this or that religious organization, sent missionaries to the heathen, and gave his money to convert the Jews. And when he dies, and the righteous God, about whom Abbot Butler writes, sent him to hell for ever, or to purgatory for improvement, or even gave him a crown because he established a mission, and say our preachers, the justice of God is vindicated. I do not know what the justice of God is, but it is a foul lie to say that justice is done as sane men and women understand justice. The wrong done by these men remained. It was there in the stunted and deformed bodies, in the starved and crippled minds of thousands. Nothing could remove these things. A teaching that can say otherwise misses the essence of sane morality and true justice. And a God who can permit a man to work such evils, and then pounce upon him after he is dead, and ignoring the plight of his victims send that man to hell, or to a term of purification in purgatory, a God who can do this is worthy of the worship of Christian priests. None others could tolerate him.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be continued.)

Priests and Public Neglect.

"There is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so.—*Shakespeare*.

"Even if forty millions of people say a foolish thing, although a sovereign folly, it is none the less folly."
G. Catlin.

"Cephalization is not civilization."—J. K. Syke.

ONE of the worst calamities that a theatrical manager has to face is a beggarly array of empty benches. Quoting a popular dramatist, he exclaims, "Come in any shape but that." Public neglect is like the last straw that breaks the camel's back. Those well-known performers, the clergy, are now experiencing a very lean time. They are playing to very small houses, and, were it not for trust-money and ancient endowments, would, in many cases, have to retire from business.

These are not idle statements. The Anglican Church, which is the State form of religion in this country, is feeling the pinch no less than its less fortunate Nonconformist rivals. Since 1914, the number of State clergy in the diocese of London has declined from 1,500 to less than a thousand. In the City of London, the heart of the Metropolis, no fewer than nineteen churches were listed as derelict by an Ecclesiastical Committee. At the end of the nineteenth century there were 25,000 Anglican priests in this country. To-day that number has dwindled to 16,000. Six hundred was the average number of Church of England priests ordained annually; now the number has shrunk until there is a real shortage of curates.

All religious denominations, save the Spiritualists,

are suffering decline in numbers and influence, and the Spiritualists are not definitely Christian at all, and belong to the fancy religions. So far as ordinary church and chapel attendance is concerned, the downgrade is simply amazing. In a respectable London area, with a population of over 80,000, the published figures show that the average attendance at each service has declined from 295 to 63 during a period of fifty years. In one East-End London district, no less than eleven churches have been closed in the last forty years. In other parts of the Metropolis the shrinkage is just as justifiable, and numerous places of worship have been transformed to other uses. Former chapels are now being used as post offices, cinemas, and furniture repositories. Others are in a state of decay, the grimy stucco exteriors being matched by the half-empty interiors.

Not only are the priests losing their grip on the adult population, but the rising generation is escaping their influence. The attendance of Sunday Schools of all denominations has gone steadily from bad to worse, and the process is actually continuing. A quarter of a century ago, it was claimed that 6,455,719 scholars attended. Last year that number had shrunk to 4,748,872, a loss of more than 1,500,000 in spite of an increased population. No wonder the clergy feel as bad as the bookmakers at the coming of "the tote."

The position revealed by these figures is of extreme importance. It is the beginning of the end of priestly domination in this country. The State Church of England is the wealthiest in the world. Entrenched behind millions of money, supported by the whole machinery of the State, it is powerless to perpetrate its dogmas. Its teaching is openly flouted, and no one seems to be a penny the worse. Take but two examples. This Church insists on the sacredness of marriage, and the Divorce Courts are crowded. This Church regards Sunday as a sacred day, and people motor, play golf, attend cinemas on that day, just as if there was not a priest in the world. For the first time in the history of civilization a generation is actually growing up, which, for all practical purposes, regards priests with indifference instead of respect. Ecclesiastics, at whose frown monarchs once trembled, now lag superfluous upon the stage of society, batten- ing upon dead men's money.

It is an astonishing transformation, and it is due almost entirely to Freethought and education. Compulsory education has been in existence in this country for sixty years; that is for three generations. It is not by any means so perfect an instrument of culture as it should be, but it is far preferable to the state of shocking ignorance which preceded it. Half a loaf is better than no bread, and very elementary education is better than the darkness of ignorance. The average citizen to-day has the means at his disposal of acquiring knowledge. To use a vulgar but sparkling Americanism, he has learned enough to distinguish the berries from the poloney.

Half-educated as he is, the average citizen knows little of science, but he realizes that the scientific account of the universe is founded on observation and verified by experiment. The dogmas of the Christian Religion are believed on the sole authority of priests, who are only educated in the patten of their profession. Hence arises that conflict between reason and religion, in which the latter, in spite of its enormous prestige and financial resources, is seen to be at a disadvantage.

This is by no means an exaggerated account of the situation. Even theologians have sensed this real danger, and sought by "Broad Church" and "Modernist" movements to stem the growing scepticism of the nation. Once upon a time the Christian

Church stifled opposition by murdering its opponents; now it seeks to mesmerize them. In some cases it may succeed, but it cannot avail in the long run. In the attenuated congregations of to-day too great a proportion of the worshippers are grey-headed. This melancholy fact speaks for itself, for no institution, ecclesiastical or otherwise, can live entirely upon its past. It must progress, or perish, like the provincial town which advertised on its trams: "Be Modern, Use Gas."

This widespread reaction of the present generation from priestly authority is a momentous matter. Priests still have control of education, public schools, national schools, and Universities alike. They have a very tight grip on the Army and Navy. - Forgetting their own precepts, they bless regimental colours and christen battleships in exchange for compulsory church parades and chaplain's salaries. It may not be an edifying spectacle, but it is smart business. In short, priests are entwined in the national life like poisonous ivy. Congregations or no congregations, 16,000 priests of the State Church batten upon the people of this country, from the Archbishop of Canterbury with his £15,000 yearly, to the curate of Little Slopington with his modest £5 weekly, and a residence thrown in.

In an age of faith the whole sorry business was understandable. In the present day the thing is a monstrous imposition. No wonder leading ecclesiastics ascribe the defection of their flocks to some temporary mishandling of the religious situation, sins of omission and commission. Such soft-soapy explanations deceive but few. Mr. Everyman is unlikely to be impressed by priests whose methods too closely resemble those of the Yankee politician, who, in addressing an audience, said: "These, gentlemen, are the serious convictions of a lifetime, but, if they don't suit, they can be altered."

MIMNERMUS.

The Passing of Religion.

(Concluded from page 436.)

As to the evidence presented by Spiritualism in favour of a future life, Mr. Masterman says his "mind is completely open. But so far as regards the bulk of its manifestations hitherto, our own verdict may be summed up as a case of "Not proven." We should be very glad, indeed delighted, to say "Not guilty!" but hesitate to do so owing to the long series of frauds not merely perpetrated by an apparent majority of professional mediums but—and what is much more to the point—successfully imposed upon the credulity of eminent men of science, Cæsare Lombroso, the erst arch-materialist, at the head of them."¹

For his own part, he says, he would "be only too glad to be able to reach a different conclusion." For he holds that a future life is the only justification of our existence on the earth at all, under present conditions. He does not ask for a "scientific demonstration," but would "welcome with inexpressible relief" even "a reasonable probability" of such a survival.

This is a rather naif piece of anthropomorphism. For what does Nature care about a justification for the life of mankind? No more than she seeks to justify her production of such devilish contrivances as the alligator, the shark, the octopus. Or the tiger, the cobra de capella, and the scorpion. Nature works blindly. Regardless, and unconscious, of good or evil, she produces indiscriminately all things, good and bad. Man and crocodile, lion and gazelle, and

¹ C. M. Masterman: *Essays*. p. 115.

leaves them to fight it out among themselves. Nature is absolutely indifferent to all questions of justification for her proceedings, and knows nothing of morality. Morality is an invention of man. It varies with degrees of latitude and longitude, and in different ages; and if there is a God, the author of Nature, then the same description applies to him. This is the so-called "mystery" or "problem of evil," which has beaten every theologian from St. Augustine, down to his holiness the Bishop of London, to compare great things with small.

Another essay, in the same book, entitled: "On Liberalism and the Liberal Party," which is as surprising as it is welcome, in a book of this description; is an indication of the way in which Freethought is penetrating all grades of society. In this essay, Mr. Masterman draws up a very black indictment of the part played by the now effete Liberal Party, in the fight for Freethought, and free speech. He recalls the case, well known to our readers, of how shortly before the Great War, a Freethought lecturer, Thomas Stewart, was sentenced at Stafford Assizes, under the Blasphemy Laws, to four months' imprisonment for blasphemy. "A good many men of letters got up a petition in his favour, and waited on Lord Oxford, then Mr. Asquith, the then Prime Minister, to present it." This petition included one for the abolition of the Blasphemy Law, under which, as Mr. Masterman points out: "any person can be sent to prison for 'denying or depraving any book of the Old or New Testament, or any part thereof.' For instance, Canon Cheyne, for denying that the Israelites were in Egypt at all!"² But, as Mr. Masterman observes:—

Of course no sane person would dream of arraigning under this act, a whole crowd of Modernist Anglican divines, who would, were it strictly enforced, undoubtedly be so arraignable! In point of fact, this absurd relic of another age is only now and then made use of to send to prison some obscure "infidel" who has no social prestige to support him! But, how utterly despicable! We might adduce the later case of a certain Mr. Gott, sentenced for "Blasphemy," and, since the Great War! At least, the Spanish Inquisition struck at the highest in the land—for instance, arrested for heresy, Carranza, the Archbishop of Seville, in the reign of Philip II.

But to resume. As we have said, that deputation of men of letters waited on Mr. Asquith. Of course, as genuine Liberals, which all or most of them were, they wanted him to grant facilities for the introduction of a bill abolishing the Act of William and Mary. Equally, of course, one would have supposed that the great Liberal leader would have given them a warm welcome, and promised to do his best for them. If Liberalism be a matter of principle at all, if complete religious toleration be one of its basic principles, how could he do otherwise? But, again, not at all! They only got politely—though very politely—snubbed for their pains. He said, he "did not consider the matter of sufficient importance, especially at the end of a session, to bring before Parliament." Nor could he hold out the faintest hope of his Government taking up the matter at any time, or even granting facilities. So much for the actual Liberalism of the great Liberal leader! From that strict Baptist, the parochial-minded Mr. Lloyd George, we feel sure they would have got even less sympathy, were that possible. (C. M. Masterman: *Essays*. pp. 68-69.)

No wonder that the younger men of to-day are deserting the Liberal ranks. Notwithstanding the lavish expenditure from their treasure chest, at the last election, the Liberals were left far behind. And if their opponents mock and deride them, in the

agony of their defeat, they richly deserve it as traitors and betrayers of liberty.

The Conservatives, on the other hand, have learned, by hard experience, that the game of prosecuting Freethinkers does not pay. But under the rule of Sir William Joynson-Hicks, the Home Secretary under the late Government, an attack was made on literature in the name of purity. The Home Secretary used his personal authority to condemn Miss Radcliffe Hall's novel *The Well of Loneliness*, and in a speech, publicly declared that no book should be published which would offend a little child—of course he would make an exception of the filthy stories in the Bible, which he would put in the hand of every child—so that if this rule were carried out there could be no discussion of sexual matters, of birth control, eugenics, and similar subjects. The Conservative Party made a very serious mistake in making this Evangelical Churchman the Home Secretary. No one could have done more damage to the Party, unless, possibly, the Bishop of London.

It has been said that the French Monarchy sealed their own doom, by making enemies of all the great French writers, by suppressing and confiscating their works; and there is no doubt that the action of the Home Secretary materially affected the election. The Conservative Party has never been noted for Puritanism as a whole, and it is certain that the Conservatives in Parliament, as a whole, did not approve of the action. All our finest writers, both men and women, denounced this uncalled for attack on liberty. Mr. James Douglas, who initiated the attack, was surprised at the indignation his action aroused, and declared that he had never been so bitterly attacked in all his life. And lamented that the London Press declined to back him up in his campaign. No doubt that the Home Secretary received a similar bombardment. If the Conservatives had returned to power, it is certain that Sir William Joynson-Hicks would not have been Home Secretary again. He has now been relegated to the House of Lords, where he will be out of mischief.

The truth of the matter is that both the Liberal and Conservative Party are governed by men brought up under the old Victorian ideas, and there has been a great advance in all departments of thought, especially since the war, and they have been left behind. This is recognised by Conservatives themselves. We read in the Conservative *Sunday Times* (July 7), that at "The Conservative Inquest" held at the Central Office, to inquire into the cause of the Conservative defeat: "The close of Mr. Baldwin's speech was an appeal to the local organizations to pick their candidates for the next election from 'the army of first-rate young men now tried in the House.' Politics to-day," he said, "are largely for the young. The new Government will do well to profit by the experience of the other two parties, lest they share a similar fate.

The discussion of such questions as the existence of God, and the possibility of a future life; with such freedom and entire absence of reverence, in a popular work of this description, shows how religion is losing its hold, and passing away from our civilization.

W. MANN.

WISDOM AND LOVE.

Wisdom is the lamp of love, and love is the oil of the lamp. Love, sinking deeper, grows wiser; and wisdom that springs up aloft comes ever nearer to love. If you love, you must needs become wise; be wise, and you surely shall love. Nor can anyone love with the veritable love, but his love must make him the better; and to grow better is but to grow wiser.—Maeterlinck.

² C. M. Masterman. *Essays*. pp. 67-68.

Triumph and Defeat in Life's Conflict.

EVOLUTION is constantly associated with the conception of slow but certain advance. Although the fossil pedigrees of faunal and floral structures indisputably prove progressive development in the leading organic groups, nevertheless the path of life is strewn with multitudinous modes of being that have perished in the struggle. Metaphysicians, men of letters, and even scientists themselves, when idealizing the onward sweep of evolution are apt to ignore the frigid fact that for one form of life that succeeds, ninety and nine succumb.

The eminent comparative anatomist, Prof. Edwin S. Goodrich, F.R.S., in his excellent volume *Living Organisms*, utters a timely warning against those writers who base an optimistic philosophy on an alleged perfecting plan in Nature's contrivances. Some authors, remarks Prof. Goodrich, "are fond of invoking some mysterious guiding principle, some internal perfecting agency—an *élan vital* or what not—to account for evolution; but there would appear to be little scope for such mysterious forces in a world where the majority of individuals are crushed out, where most lines of development fail hopelessly to establish themselves. What guiding principle there may be behind the whole of creation is a subject outside the scope of Natural Science, and on which it can express no opinion. It cannot even prophecy whether man or the bacillus will eventually triumph in the struggle for existence; indeed, both would seem to be doomed to destruction in the end by an unfavourable environment when the earth becomes too hot or to cold to support life."

The palæontological record has been materially extended since Darwin's day, and the story of life's evolution stands more clearly revealed. Also, recent embryological investigations confirm conclusively the judgments of palæontologists.

Haeckel's arboreal pedigrees of branching development still hold the field. Life has not advanced along straight paths, but has branched in all possible directions. Every plant and animal species has been compelled either to adapt itself to its surroundings or perish.

In Devonian or pre-Devonian times, the early Amphibia were evolved from fishlike ancestors. In the Carboniferous deposits these primitive four-footed creatures have left their remains. Like the living representatives of their order (frogs, toads, etc.) they began life in the water, breathing through gills, and subsequently developed lungs for air-breathing on land. They were then the lords of life. Some, such as the Labyrinthodonts were large and powerful quadrupeds. Others appear to have remained puny and inoffensive, while another group became the forerunners of extant forms such as frogs, salamanders and newts. But these are all degenerate descendants of a once flourishing order. The Anura (toads and frogs) are the only surviving amphibia which have successfully adapted themselves to modern requirements. Other contemporary representatives, such as salamanders and newts, are mere remnants of the once imposing Amphibia who linger as later adaptations to a more or less aquatic environment.

As the Carboniferous era neared its close the Reptilia steadily evolved from the more unspecialized species of Amphibia. The reptiles proved better adapted to terrestrial surroundings, and rapidly overshadowed their ancestors, at least on land. So complete became the victory that in the succeeding Permian and Triassic Periods the reptiles reigned as sovereign lords in every part of the planet.

The most primitive fossil reptiles so closely resemble their parent Amphibia that it is difficult to determine their differences. But the die was cast, and these semi-reptiles soon succumbed to more definitely specialized forms. Some monstrous land reptiles were herbivorous, while others were bloody beasts of prey. The Plesiosours and the Ichthyosaurs returned to the waters, and their limbs were modified into swimming paddles.

Probably, the most striking of these long extinct creatures were the Dinosauria. These first emerged in Triassic times. Their supremacy lasted through the Jurassic and Cretaceous Periods, but by the opening of the Eocene Epoch they had all passed away. Visitors to our splendid Natural History Museum, at South Kensington, are familiar with the Diplodocus, Iguanodon, and Triceratops, with other interesting representatives of past reptile life. These models display everything, save brain, that is essential in the struggle for existence. But despite all the innumerable adaptations in the shape of sanguinary weapons, apparently invulnerable bony-structures, horns and spines, these organisms were destined to destruction, and became extinct at the close of the Cretaceous Period.

That sanguinary beast, the crocodile, is probably the most important example of survival from these far distant ages.

Another survival from a remote past is the Sphenodon, but this reptile has become so rare that it is protected by law in its last retreats on islands near New Zealand. Tortoises and turtles still flourish in tropical conditions. Yet, of all the once stupendous array of reptilian life, the snakes and lizards appear to be the only orders that have really improved their position in modern times.

So closely related are the reptiles to the birds, that Huxley included them in one class. That all the warblers of the woods and wilds, and all the other innumerable feathered creatures have arisen from reptiles, there can be no question. Intermediate forms such as the Archæopteryx, a toothed bird, with a long reptilian tail, are known in the fossil state. As they evolved, the birds underwent multifarious modes of adaptive change, and the appearance of the mammals—even man himself—has not threatened their dominion throughout the world. Their high blood-temperature, acute senses, powers of flight, and care of offspring have all contributed to their success.

Several extinct Theromorph reptiles of the Trias so clearly foreshadow in their anatomy the mammalian skull, jaw, and other important organs, that they are obviously either the ancestors of the mammals themselves, or animals nearly related to them. While the birds travelled on independent routes of evolution the Mammalia have developed a four-chambered heart with an improved system of circulation and respiration which maintains the blood at a uniform temperature. The active and intelligent mammals proved highly adaptive, and soon forsook the egg-laying habits of their reptilian forbears. Yet, the original oviparous nature of the primitive mammals is still preserved in the Echidna and Ornithorhynchus which linger in that long-isolated continent, Australia.

Armed with the advantage derived from nourishing their young in the maternal womb, the placental mammals eclipsed their less-efficiently organized reptilian adversaries and were already the predominant animals in Eocene times. Now, among themselves a fierce struggle raged. Large and important mammalian groups completely disappeared, and many today survive at man's pleasure. The Marsupials have dwindled miserably from a once proud past. The Dugong and Manatee are the only remaining mem-

bers of an originally great order, while a dwindling remnant of sloths and armadillos linger as a reminder of the former importance of the Edentata.

The evolution of the hoofed mammals is an instructive story. From archaic Eocene forms as large as a fox with five-toed feet, the Ungulates spread out into several branches. Some evolved into gigantic forms such as the Dinoceras, but these soon expired. Another group of herbivorous animals, the Titanotheres survived to the Miocene, while the specialized Ancylopoda lived on to the Pliocene Period. A large group embracing mammoths, mastodons, and elephants long flourished, but two species only survive. Many contemporary mammals of the Carnivorous order are far less numerous than in earlier times. Antelopes, oxen, deer, and sheep are now most abundant. The rhinoceros and hippopotamus verge on extinction. Camels and llamas remain, but many of their related families have gone for ever. Of the floral and faunal realms as a whole it may be said that many are called but few are chosen. As Prof. Goodrich remarks: "Many are the forms developed, few are those that survive. Those who believe in a guiding force directing the course of evolution must admit that it has been singularly blind and inefficient, leading more often to destruction than to success."

Certain savage races remain substantially what they were at the dawn of history. The modern Greeks and Egyptians are hardly the equals of their ancient representatives. Yet from the crude-barbarians described by Tacitus and Cæsar in Roman times, the most cultured of living races have been evolved in less than 2,000 years.

So in the general world of life. Various molluscs have remained almost unchanged through vast lapses of time. Persistent types such as these were harmoniously adapted to their environment and protected from competition. Numerous forms of life preserved in Australia from a remote past soon succumbed to the changed conditions caused by the advent of the European invader.

In other instances, the rate of evolution has been relatively rapid. In terms of very gradual modification the modern horse has been developed from a five-toed diminutive ancestor since Eocene times. Beecher has traced a slow but constant transformation in Trilobites and Brachiopods. Other scientists have demonstrated progressive changes in Ammonites, Planorbis, and kindred organisms.

The fossil record proves that new forms of life arise from more or less undifferentiated ancestors possessing wide powers of variation. Organisms as they become highly specialized, tend to vary less and less. These have their day, and then disappear from the roll of life. Throughout the ages Nature has favoured those of her creatures who most readily adapted themselves to fluctuating circumstances. As a leading authority tells us: "Extreme specialization may secure temporary triumph, and in very uniform conditions even lasting success, but adaptability is the most precious possession, and it is the creatures most ready to meet new and changeable conditions which have the future before them."

T. F. PALMER.

MISSIONARIES.

"It never seemed to me that any African derives any real benefit from missionary establishments. In fact, I was wont, on recruiting man, to reject the converted Christians; I found pagans, for some reason I cannot explain, more reliable and less prone to lying, laziness, and theft."

From Michael H. Mason's "Desert Idle," p. 185.

In My Looking Glass.

I do not worry myself a great deal about the principles of any religion. I am not keenly interested in the apologetic or explanatory diatribes, or in the tales of "The Mystery of This," or "The Reality of That." Such things belong more properly to the student who has made them part of the curriculum of his life's work, and I am content to read and digest his views on them.

On the other hand, I do take a most real interest in the current operations of religions, and the bearing of such operations on the daily life of the world at large. For example, the influence of the missionary upon the moral (as apart from the religious) outlook of so-called uncivilized peoples, or the actions of religionists in relation to their fellow beings when the particular religions appear to be in danger. These things, in my mind, give us a clear view of the "uplift" and "corrective policy" which we are assured will always accrue from religion and its attendant habits.

After a period of three years peace has been proclaimed between State and Church in Mexico, and the black-coated fraternity now think that they can resume their "duties" without loss of dignity. But this peace is like the war which it ends, a matter of one side only. As far as the State was concerned, there never was a war, and so there can be no proclamation of peace. But it pleases the Church to state the matter otherwise.

In reporting this my newspaper says that "The statement makes it plain that it is not the purpose of the Constitution or the Government to destroy the identity of the Catholic or any other Church, or to interfere in any way with its spiritual functions." Incidentally, this was exactly what the State said three years ago, but at that time the statement was not broadcast in the same way, but was twisted about in order to show that the State was bent upon oppressing the Church in every way possible.

The statement goes on to say that the settlement has been effected without any actual modification of the laws. The clergy originally "came out on strike" in protest against the enforcement of the laws of the State, and now they have had to "climb down." The report, rather naively, adds that the agreement is not a complete settlement of all differences.

As an act of grace the Government has released all the women imprisoned for offences against the religious laws, except in one case only. The exception is the Mother Superior Concepcion, who instigated the murder of General Obregon, and received a sentence of twenty years. Doubtless she will eventually be canonized as a holy martyr.

When the churches did re-open, there was a great struggle on the part of the religious populace to enter these churches and, so once more, worship their God. So great was the struggle that their God permitted over fifty of them to be injured in attempting to do him homage. It was not their faults that they had not been to church for three years. The anointed of their Lord (the priests) had kept the churches shut for that period and public worship had not been performed. Yet, the God which these folk sought to adore was so annoyed by their non-attendance that he allowed fifty of them to suffer hurt. I think that this is the logical way to look at it, although not the religious one.

Here in England, where we have a State which is afraid to make any stand against religious institutions and their aggressive character, we have just had the most disgusting spectacle of a man persecuted and imprisoned for not repairing a church building in which, quite possibly, he was not interested. He, poor fellow, has had to give in, in order to save his life and to safeguard his dependents. Englishmen like to consider themselves in the forefront of civilization, but an act such as this would not be countenanced in the most retrograde state. No wonder that the religionists are so condemnatory of Mexico and Russia, where such actions could not have been so calmly and quietly performed. We live in England and so knuckle under to a form of slavery which would have driven the Ancients to red revolution.

A PLAIN MAN.

Acid Drops.

Bishop Barnes has been catching it among his clerical brethren. The other day, at a meeting of the Upper House of Convocation, he raised a protest against the reference to a statue of Mary and Jesus as "female and a child," and also his remark that some of the customs of the Church were those of religious barbarism. The Bishop of St. Albans said that his language was "fraught with sinister and far-reaching dangers to the Church of England." We agree with the Bishop of St. Albans that it is. The moment a man begins to speak anything like the truth about Christianity it is fraught with danger to every Christian Church in existence. According to Christianity, Mary was not an ordinary female, the child was not an ordinary child, and the father was certainly not an ordinary father, in fact, he was only the ghost of a father.

It is a pity that Bishop Barnes, when he talks of converting bread and wine into flesh and blood by the powers of incantation as a piece of religious barbarism does not recognize that the description covers far more than that. What is the practice of praying for good crops or fine weather, or good health, but a sample of religious barbarism? We should like Bishop Barnes to give a straight answer to the question whether he really believes that prayers have any actual effect on the weather, or the crops, or on health, or on anything else? And we beg him not to evade the question by pointing to the subjective effect that prayer has upon those who believe in it. For this effect can only be produced so long as those who pray believe it has an objective answer. Let anyone pray for better health without believing that there is someone who answers the prayers, and see how long he will continue the method. The policy of Bishop Barnes appears to be to emphasize the barbarisms of other people in order to hide the barbarisms he still cherishes.

Mr. Frank Milligan, M.A., Warden of Beechcroft Educational Settlement, Birkenhead, who recently spent some time in Russia by invitation of the World Association for Adult Education, has been describing his experiences at a Conference of the Educational Settlements Association. As regards the position of religion under the Soviet Government, he said that people were not hindered from attending public worship. On Easter-day particularly, large numbers went to services. Although the education system of Russia is Marxist, he thought the anti-religious propaganda carried on by the State had two aspects. First, it consisted simply of ordinary scientific teaching. A great portion of the people were illiterate. Multitudes had never heard of Darwin, and it was supposed that Science and Religion were incompatible. On the other hand, the Orthodox Church, under the old regime, had condoned illiteracy and superstition. The recent aspect of the current propaganda was antagonism to these things which again were supposed to favour religion.

A Catholic writer to a daily paper says that Blake's assertion—"all religions are one"—may do very well for a crank. But "the truly religious know that the Truth is single, and is not to be reached by a muddle or 'syncretism' of many creeds." Our Catholic friend rather innocently imagines that Truth is the same as Catholic Truth, with which the priests have fed him. Of the latter commodity we should say the correct epithet to apply is not single but "singularly"—unique.

The Rev. Murray Page, of Northampton, complains that many people treat the Christian Church as an Aunt Sally at which any fool can shy. The reverend gent should get a grain of comfort from the thought that the Christian Church is something which any fool can defend. And since fools are more easily caught by re-

ligion than are wise men, the Church should never lack defenders.

The London boy is the finest raw material in the world, thinks Sir Tudor Walters. Our parsons will declare their one shocking drawback to this boy—he is about the hardest to shape into a church-goer. Maybe the reason is that he has an acute sense of the ridiculous. Where that is, active, religious reverence always had a hard job to get a footing.

A schoolmistress said recently that children are often expected to think without having enough food for thought. We are glad to say this regrettable state of affairs is not noticeable during the Scripture lesson. While this is on, the children are not provided with the aforesaid "food" nor expected to think. Analogously to taking medicine, the unspoken command is—"Open your ears and close your brains."

Apropos of a discussion about the Sabbath and Sunday, a reader of a daily paper says that Sunday has always been a day of worship; but Christians won for it also rest, after three centuries. He adds:—

To rest only and not to worship is to own oneself a pagan, however upright, kind, and intellectual one may be.

This is a timely reproof. We feel sure all upright, kind, and intellectual people will now rush to church, in order not to deserve the horrible epithet "pagan."

The Board of Education instructed a Committee in 1924 to inquire into the conditions of the day-schools, and to formulate proposals for reform. The far-reaching alterations suggested in the "Hadow Report" are regarded by the Rev. Carey Bonner, General Secretary of the National Sunday School Union, as "a challenge to the Sunday-schools." The Day-schools, it appears, have in future to be so equipped that the children shall be "surrounded for a part of each day with beautiful thoughts expressed in Architecture, Art, Music, and Literature. And Mr. Bonner, knowing that present-day Sunday-schools can offer little or nothing of these things to the children, plaintively asks what the Churches are going to do in order to bring Sunday-schools into line with the State Day-schools. He suggests that changes will therefore be needed in the Sunday-schools—changes in lesson-material, in worship, in hymns, and in prayers, and also in buildings. Quite so. If the Day-schools improve the aesthetic ideas of the children, obviously the Churches will need to cast out what, up to the present, have seemed all right—the more repulsive features of their doctrines, hymns, prayers and buildings. That done, the Churches will no doubt claim to be pioneer purveyors of æsthetic notions to children. We shouldn't be surprised if they also asserted that it was Christian influence which brought such notions into the Day-schools!

Pulpit slander of paganism has become a fashion. Clerical ignoramuses who adopt it may learn something from "Latinist," a reader of the *Daily Mirror*:—

Church views about "paganism" do not influence the classical scholar. We know perfectly well that the minds of men such as Æschylus, Thucydides, and Plato, were as noble as any of those who came later and "called" themselves Christian.

We should say, too, that the average pagan compared favourably with the average Christian of any Christian period. The pagan certainly was not so mentally degraded as to imagine that bodily uncleanliness and mental timidity were virtues.

Mr. Ernest Betts, in a daily paper, thinks that the wearing of short skirts is unromantic and fails in mystery. The short fashion, he says, may have improved women's health, but it has not increased their charm.

We daresay that if these notions of Mr. Betts were traced back they would be found to derive from early Christian sources. The notion then was that the display of woman's physical members was dangerously seductive to men; and therefore, should be rigorously concealed. Human nature being as it is, "the more mysterious a woman made herself by wrappings, the more men desired to know what the wrappings concealed! The more the mystery, the greater the "charm" and "romance." People who argue in this wise to-day, are but advertising their possession of a First Century mentality. According to their way of thinking a Catholic nun ought to be mysterious and romantic and charming. She is wrapped up enough. But to more enlightened intelligences, she is hardly human, a mere bundle of clothing. We are glad to say the modern preference is for women to reveal herself as a human being.

Sir Robert Baden-Powell declares he has always lived without a collar-stud whenever possible. We wonder that his impatience with conventional notions hasn't done more than it has toward freeing the Scout Movement from antique conventions. Nowadays, the Scout wastes a lot of his time attending Church parades, or helping to form a body-guard to aristocracy or wealth officiating at some useless social function. Although adults have now ceased to touch their hats to parsons or to other people of alleged social importance, the wretched Scout is expected to do so. Some day, we prophecy, the Scout Movement may become a truly educative institution. But it will first have to purge itself of a few medieval and Early Victorian notions. This may happen when it acquires some leaders with freer minds and more intellectual interests.

In connexion with the imprisonment of Mr. J. H. Stevens, the *Daily News* has a very good word picture of the Peter Pans of history. Nothing can add to the beauty of the following description:—

But for the two score of twentieth century Pressmen, the whole setting of the Consistory Court probably represented very much what happened in pre-Reformation days—parchment and vellum, quill pens, austere ecclesiastical lawyers, frequent Latin phrases.

Mr. Stevens told a reporter, on his release, that on Sunday he would spend the day in reading his beloved Bible. So that, like the fairy tale, everybody lived happily ever afterwards.

The *Daily Express* publishes a letter from a Richmond correspondent, congratulating it on publishing articles on religion, and so "allowing different people to express their thoughts on all subjects." On the other hand Mr. Davis writes from Leigh-on-Sea, "that he takes a newspaper for its news, not for religious propaganda, that sort of rubbish is well catered for by the religious periodicals." We do not altogether sympathize with Mr. Davies, but with regard to the other writer we have only to observe that "different people," is not the equivalent of all sorts of views. The Freethinker's side is very carefully excluded. That has never been permitted in the *Express*. One must have some sort of a religion to enter its columns.

"Back to the Bible" is the cry of the International Bible Reading Association. In a large advertisement, the Association implores ministers, Sunday-school teachers, and parents, "to get the Bible read by everyone." This is an ironical comment on Sir Percy Jackson's recent statement that the Bible must be kept in the State schools, because it is the "will of the people." If the Bible were read and enjoyed by a majority of rate-payers, there would be no need to implore religious workers to try to get it read. As quite obviously it is not so read, where does Sir Percy Jackson's "will of the people" come in?

The same Bible Reading advertisement says:—

To prove the Bible true—read it . . .

To prove it the Word of God—believe it.

For sheer stupidity the logic and advice of this exhortation must be without equal. And the type of mentality to which it appeals as sound logic and good advice—what can one say about that? If only such mentality became common, our newspaper proprietors would fancy the millennium had arrived! This should encourage them to persist in their efforts to lead the masses towards religion.

In the judgment of General Sir Ian Hamilton, the author of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, should be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for the next ten years in succession. This opinion is from a man who was actually in the war, and did not, like Bishops, stay at home and urge others to the slaughter in the name of the Prince of Peace.

The United Methodist Conference at Halifax, on July 10, reported that in two years the denomination had lost 2,450 members, and 11,456 Sunday school scholars. Just one more proof of the great revival of religion that is going on.

The revival of religion in Australia appears to be taking the same course as the revival in this country. A cutting from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, of June 12, reaches us, in which the Rev. F. R. Swinney says:—

God was not apparent in the politics of the people or the politicians. If the nation publicly renounced the idea of God there would be little change in business or politics. Millions in Australia would be but little affected. Life would run on in the same channels, for they virtually, if not publicly already renounced God.

We note that the Australian papers still write cheerfully of the progress Australia is making, so Mr. Swinney's lament appears to a purely business one.

The drama of *The Wicked Vicar of Claygate* (Surrey) was given its first performance at Kingston, on July 15. A Commission was appointed to inquire into the charges made against the vicar of using bad language, of advertising a system of beauty culture and respiration, of advertising the church schools as a health resort, and fostering controversy with his parishioners in the parish magazine. These wild and wicked ways have led the parishioners, who do not want to be more beautiful, or to breathe more scientifically, or to have their school known as a health resort, to complain to the Bishops, and the Commission was appointed to inquire into the truth of the charges.

The most serious charge appears to be that of using bad language. Evidence was given that the vicar had used the words "damn," and "damned," and had actually told some one to go to hell. But these be quite religious words, and the vicar might have escaped all censure had he used them with the proper religious trimmings. We have ourselves been told by more than one parson, not to go to hell, which left it a matter of personal choice, but that we were going there, which it put all choice out of court. And while the vicar has got himself into trouble by saying: "You be damned!" he would have escaped all censure had he said, "You will be damned." So that the real offence appears to be that the swearing was not in the proper religious form, and the Bishop wants to see even the "cussing" done in a proper orthodox manner. But on the whole, to know that there was a vicar who could swear at his parishioners has sent the church up in our estimation, for, as Spurgeon said, there are times when a man must swear, or burst.

The Dentist's favourite hymn—

"Change and decay in all around I see."

The Barrister's favourite hymn—

"Brief life is here our portion."

Uncensored Recollections.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—Tom Jones, £1; Herbert Wilson, 10s.; Thomas Hardy, 5s.; G. Jessop, 5s.

F. C. ASHWORTH.—Pleased to see you are keeping it up. You are right in saying that the nebulous character of present-day religion make it more difficult to combat. It is like trying to shoot a man in a thick fog.

A.M.—Not surprised you think James Douglas deserves all he gets.

S. J. WILKINSON.—The articles are, as you will see, continued. We do not know when we shall be in Weston-super-Mare again. Certainly not in the immediate future.

L. RAMSAY.—Gerald Massey's *Natural Genesis* is out of print. You would probably have to pay about £2 for a copy.

SIXE CERE.—The omission was quite accidental.

LETTERS from E. J. Lamel, H. Whitham and others are held over till our next issue.

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

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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.

Sugar Plums.

There is only one science, but there are many religions, and they become more numerous as the world grows older. Any sort of a crank, and any sort of a fraud may start a new religion. One man, Job, said he had never seen the righteous man want, which would argue that his circle of acquaintances or his powers of observation were very limited. But it is certainly difficult to find a religious fakir that is without followers. From the Pope to Billy Sunday, from the Archbishop of Canterbury to Aimee Macpherson, none of these prophets are without honour, or without followers. The wise may smile and the shrewd may scoff, but the fool outnumber them both, and "In my Father's house are many mansions." We have always had a suspicion that "Mansions" should read "flats."

A bird's-eye view of a corner of the religious Zoo is provided by Mr. C. W. Fergusson, in *The Confusion of Tongues* (Heinemann, 12s. 6d.) Mr. Fergusson's book is quite American, but it is relieved from provincialism on account of the fact that the most of forms or religion he deals with are common in our own country, and those that are not are only extreme forms of what we have here. The reader had placed before him an outline of the history and teachings of twenty religious bodies, many of them recent, and for some reasons he includes Atheism, the reason being that it is "evangelical" in character. But Mr. Fergusson has apparently no acquaintance whatever with Atheism as a philosophy, and but little knowledge of it as a movement. He only knows the newly-formed American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, and knows so little of this that he speaks of the *Truthseeker*, established over fifty years ago, as a monthly journal and the official organ of "the Church." Like the *Freethinker*, the *Truthseeker* is a weekly publication, and like ourselves is quite independent of any organization, although always at the service of any body doing Freethought work.

But those who wish to know something about such movements as the Klu-Klux-Klan, Christian Science, the Four Square Gospel, and other curious bodies will find much information in Mr. Fergusson's volume. The chapters are developed, one would expect from journalistic articles, but there are some very shrewd hits, and some rather unexpected pieces of quite good analysis. Dealing with Buchmanism, a form of religious obsession that appears to flourish in one of our own universities, he says there are a number of young men,

reared to believe in the strictest identity between religion and asceticism (who) suddenly find themselves sorely tempted to partake of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Yet they are thwarted by the very positions they occupy, and the consequence is that they spend half of their time turning their minds into softly lighted brothels, and the other half seeking surcease from their torture. It is upon this group that Buchmanism feed.

Many of the sects described show quite a fine appreciation of the power of the dollar, particularly such as Christian Science, Theosophy, and those who talk loudest about their spirituality. But Mr. Fergusson does not on this account make the mistake of taking the acquisitive trait as the foundation of the movement he is dealing with. As he says, "The higher-ups can make no money out of a religion unless the lower-downs believe." That is a truth often overlooked. The great Churches, adventurers like Aimee Macpherson, Billy Sunday, and the tribe of travelling evangelists all make money, but they have to depend upon a mass of genuine belief to do so. Their strength lies in the fact that they have learned to capitalize credulity and ignorance. But then without credulity and ignorance—particularly the ignorance of the educated classes—where in the modern world would religion be? Mr. Fergusson's volume does not exactly raise the stature of the human race in one's mind.

The following resolution, passed at the Annual Conference of the N.U.T. has been sent round to all the Educational Committees of the country:—

"Conference records its continued adherence to the vital principle which, since 1870, has been part of the law of this country, that no religious catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination, shall be taught in schools provided by public money; and resolve to resist by all means in its power, any legislative or administrative attempt to introduce such teaching into Council Schools, either through the staff, or by according a right of entry to representatives of the religious denominations."

What we should like to see now would be the N.U.T. to adopt a clear principle of action, and pass a solid vote in favour of the State leaving religion completely alone. It is not at all complimentary to the teachers of the country to find them agreeing with religion being taught in the schools, but merely protesting that it shall not be a regulation that is clear to anyone, that no one who is an authorized teacher of religion shall be appointed to teach it, and that there shall be no open religious tests to see those who do actually teach it, are "sound or not." It is this kind of paltering with a principle that is responsible for all the trouble. Teachers, as such, should be above the pettifogging compromises of political life. Their duty is to impart clearly defined principles, compromises can be left to others.

An attempt is to be made to recommence Freethought lecture in Finsbury Park. Will a few friends in the locality who are ready to lend a hand, on Sundays, please send their names and addresses to the General Secretary. Finsbury Park was always a good place for meetings, and should be so still.

We note the following in the *Nelson Leader*, concerning Mr. Clayton's meetings:—

The Barnley Branch of the National Secular Society is evidently not disposed to be deterred by the opposition met with at Higham Park last summer. A series of meetings has been arranged. There were lively scenes last year, and we know a few persons who are hoping the excitement will be removed.

Miracles and other Supernaturalism.

It is evident that this subject presents considerable difficulty to a writer of the more scholarly type, who still clings to the Christian creed; and the difficulty is well illustrated in the articles on "Miracles," in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*.

The writer draws attention to the familiar fact that the miraculous element is all-pervading in the lower (savage or barbarous) stages of culture, and that it was scarcely less so among the earliest civilized peoples of the historic period. He does not, however, draw the rather obvious conclusion that any particular occult idea of such peoples was just as likely to be mistaken as their beliefs in totems, fetishes, animal gods or magic. Instead of this, he leaves the matter open to possible inference that the universality of such notions yields some presumptive, if not direct and conclusive, evidence of their truth.

Passing to later peoples, the writer shows the persistence of the features in question among the Hebrews, in Buddhism, Hinduism and in Islam; and though little or nothing by way of opinion on these cases is expressed, we are told that the recorded supernatural wonders of ancient Greece—the miracles of healing, the moving, speaking and bleeding of images, and the like—"do not possess an air of truth."

Arriving at the Middle Ages, the writer's difficulties clearly increase. Here he meets with innumerable alleged cases of wonder-working that no one but an ignorant and credulous Roman Catholic could possibly accept. These performances, as recorded by medieval and later writings, range from the supernatural infliction of plagues and various other "acts of God," to the countless activities of Flibbertigibbet and a host of other spirits, imps and demons, and the hanging up of a cloak on a sunbeam. Even the historical chronicles of the time include wonders such as the fighting of knights in the air.

If the writer had pursued the historical aspect of the matter further, he might have given innumerable instances of similar superstitious beliefs that have continued, though to a decreasing extent and degree, down to our own day. He might, for example, have related the case (gravely told, evidently by a pious Roman Catholic, in the columns of the *Irish Fireside* of January 7, 1884) in which a fairy child ("changeling") was got rid of and the real human child regained as a result of the thaumaturgy of a Roman Catholic priest: The changeling, by way of final treatment, was dipped thrice in a lake, when the real child arose from the water, accompanied by a "line of soldiers." The first attempt to get him to his home was a failure, owing to somebody speaking; but at the second attempt silence was maintained and the child was taken home, though the vehicle in which he was carried was upset at every stream that was passed, owing presumably to the malice of the foiled water-spirits.

It does not appear that the writer of the article under review believes in all medieval Christian miracles. But he suggests that some of them may be instances of phenomena of the "X region," and draws attention, as other theological writers have done, to the lately increased interest in psychical research as an indication of increasing belief in things occult. He also states that the tendency of modern theology is to regard the universe as "plastic to God" and miracles as "evidence of will."

This is a somewhat belated attitude in view of the fact that so many church leaders have, to a greater or less extent, thrown overboard the miraculous.

The writer of the article on "Creation" in the same encyclopedia clearly indicates that the account of the origin of mankind given in *Genesis* is not to be taken as a record of real events, and usefully refers the rise of such stories to a time when man was "mentally a child, with a child's vague fears of the unknown, a child's love of a thrilling tale, and a child's readiness to be satisfied with any explanation, however grotesque and absurd, of the things which aroused his interest." And now we find, in addition to the heterodox deliveries of Dean Inge and of Canon Barnes (who has lately repudiated miracles in Westminster Abbey), and the statement of the Rev. T. R. Williams of the Congregational Union, that "the framework of the old theology has gone to pieces," the *Church Times* warning its readers that they must not regard the probable evidence of a (local) flood in Mesopotamia as proving that the human race was ever destroyed. (It does not appear that the *Church Times* added—as it might well have done—that the flood story of *Genesis* is undoubtedly a reproduction of an old Sumerian legend.)

As regards the doctrine of "plasticity," and the "X region," Rationalists reply that there is no more evidence for the reality of medieval or other Christian miracles than for the wonder working of ancient Egypt or Greece, or for that of the barbarian witch-doctor; that the whole of our experience and verified knowledge convince us that such things do not and never did occur; and that where specific investigation is feasible, such alleged occurrences are found to be void of foundation in fact. We know, for instance, that the human race was not created, and that it was never destroyed. On more general but similar grounds, we conclude with certainty that the conversion of rods into snakes and of water into wine is, and has always been, just as impossible as the speaking and bleeding of Greek images. We are also equally certain that "men-gods" and "god-men" never had any more real existence than the animal-gods of ancient Egypt; and that all these belong to the same extensive category of legendary mixtures or transformations as the god-kings, the god-physicians and the redeemers of the ancient world, and the wer-wolves and swan-maidens of medieval and modern folklore.

J. REEVES.

Religion: Folkways and Experience.

(Concluded from page 443.)

OVER-BELIEF is not confined to religious cosmogony and æschatology. Personal ethical over-belief is as prevalent and as distorting. Any religion of ethical ideals, principles, or values, or any personal insistence on such ethical over-beliefs, is fallacious and pernicious. An ideal, principle or value is simply a mis-statement of mis-direction of the purpose, motivation, psychology of some course of activity or experience. The psychic process is organic, vital, authentic. The intrusion of folkways, Mores, or collective representations, of conscious, purposeful, applied ideals, principles, or values, or any other over-beliefs, as a purpose, directive, or regulator of any activity merely misguides, perverts and falsifies it. Most of these over-beliefs have been blunderingly composed and elaborated in the society, borrowed from it, and entered into individual experience. They there effect an imaginative confusion of the process of dealing with situations.⁵⁷ "An ideal is entirely unscientific.

⁵⁷ Sumner: *Folkways*. (pp. 32-33.)

It is a phantasm which has little or no connexion with fact. Ideals are very often formed in the effort to escape from the hard task of dealing with facts, which is the function of science and art. There is no process by which to reach an ideal. There are no tests by which to verify it. It is therefore impossible to frame a proposition about an ideal which can be proved or disproved. It follows that the use of ideals is to be strictly limited to proper cases, and that the attempt to use ideals in social discussion does not deserve serious consideration."⁵⁸ But any ideal is so hazardous and unjustifiable, so falsifying and deceptive, that proper cases "when ideals may be used," "scarcely exist. As soon as ideals, principles and values become over-determined, it is not life in its primal surge and flow that is experienced, but life as it is knotted upon these over-beliefs. There can then be no sure, authentic, original experience, but only experience hitched to these fastenings and impediments. For all such sentiments are throughout necessarily curtailed, in adequate and insufficient, and eventually transient, deceptive, and false. Authentically experiencing life in its natural evolution is all that is of any worth. The insinuation of psychological artefacts is inevitably a hurt to the actual process of experiencing. The utter supremacy of pure and outright experience in its directly evolving duration to all the machinations, substitutions, misplacements, deflections of over-determined over-beliefs is beyond question, however pitiously the professors of the vested over-beliefs may cry out for their continuance. One is to be to the last inured and held to the doggedly absorbing flux of living in all its own immediate, insistent, urgent identity. This means to be held by the imperious demands of authentically living, to keep to the natural and evolving self in its incessant application to whatever impinges upon it, to take life whole, straight, neat.

Immortality has been part of the religious scheme of things. In fact religion has practically contracted into its two chief notions of God and immortality with the rest largely sougled away.⁶⁰ The natural history of the belief in the conscious continuance of personal identity shows its origin.⁶¹ The results of statistical study of the belief with an account of its experimental standing in an American college are comparable with those of that of God.⁶² The present utility of the beliefs in a personal God and in personal immortality is to be questioned.⁶³ The attitude toward immortality ranges from active dislike, through actual indifference, to partial dependence.⁶⁴ The juridical function of immortality is now non-existent, but personal continuance, the completion of experience, and private and cosmic compensations are still looked for.⁶⁵ What centers about immortality and what it offers is the completion of what has been broken off, or held in check, the compensation for the experience that has been, and the avoidance of the well nigh inconceivable thought of ceasing and not being. But cessation is merely deceptive to think upon. For death is not experienced. It is a last chaotic fade out and loosing from experience. One may cease to experience, and at the same time die. But usually one first ceases to experience and some time later dies. By itself without the rest of the theological machinery the belief in immortality need not pervert living. From the experimental

standpoint it may be a continuance, an extension, a fulfilment. But it is still an untrue displacement from the authentic, immediate, and assured, and seizure on a belief for which there is no sufficient ground. It has the dangers of all other over-beliefs.

As opposed to or substituted for the free, humanistic, and experimental life, the belief in immortality is morally inferior.⁶⁶ The social origin of all moral ideas refutes transcendental belief and denies its utility. Morality is a social and personal matter. All over-beliefs are in relation to it adventitious and surreptitious surrogates shangled into misleading use and falsely impressed. Morality is in fact independent of belief. Beliefs are mere mockeries of humanly experienced fact. Man himself experiences. He lives socially. "The enormous practical importance ascribed to these beliefs no longer corresponds to reality. Since the study of origins and motives shows that the attributes which make gods and life after death precious to mankind are derived from social experience, it is evident that the loss of these beliefs would involve not the loss of anything essential, but only of a particular method (that of the present religions) of maintaining and increasing among men certain values created and discovered in social intercourse. What the real losses would be, and whether they might be compensated or even turned to gain"⁶⁷ is decided by these considerations. "The sources of religious life, its fundamental realities, lie deeper than the conceptual forms in which they find expression."⁶⁸ All must return to the sources from which the over-beliefs arose. They must there unswervingly abide. Breaking down this over-determination, effacing these over-beliefs, disintegrating these collective representations, discarding the religious folkways and more means to return to and regain life as it is actually to be lived for one and all. It is to return to life in its immediate, wholeness, fulness and vibrancy.

CURTIS BRUEN.

Bradlaugh's First Book.

A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

NOTHING concerning Charles Bradlaugh, the noblest hero of the nineteenth century, is without interest; this is my excuse for a note that, to many readers, will appear trivial.

Mr. J. M. Robertson, usually so accurate, and following him, Mr. H. Cutner, in the *Freethinker* for June 23, are rather badly "out" in their reference to the Master's first book, and, for the sake of the future historian, I shall put them wise. They will forgive me.

The Bible: What it Is was originally issued, following a common custom of the period, in penny numbers, whereof the first was dated March 8, 1857; it was advertised in the *London Investigator*; and reviewed in the issue of that journal for April, 1857. So interesting is the notice that it is here quoted in full:—

The Bible—What it is—being an examination thereof from Genesis to Revelations. Published fortnightly by Holyoake & Co. Price One Penny. The first number of this new work we have read with pleasure. It seems a revival of the days of Socialism. J. N. Bailey editing Haslam would give the best idea of "Iconoclast's" fortnightly work. It promises to be an able and outspoken refutation of Biblical errors, and we heartily recommend it to our readers. "Iconoclast" is a young lecturer and

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* (pp. 306-310, 319-329.)

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* (p. viii.)

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* (p. xi.)

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* (p. 201.)

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* (pp. 201-202.)

⁶⁰ Leuba: *The Belief in God and Immortality.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.* (pp. 1-171.)

⁶² *Ibid.* (pp. 213-218.)

⁶³ *Ibid.* (pp. 280-318.)

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* (pp. 294-306.)

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* (pp. 310-318.)

an author, rapidly rising into popularity. We hope that he will not, like so many of our once best and most promising advocates, allow himself to be tampered with by withdrawing from the standpoint he now occupies so ably.

The work was curiously prophetic of "Iconoclast's" career; it was hung-up for several years owing to the lack of funds; twice at least it changed printers; it incurred the obloquy of "respectable" Freethinkers.

The author came to loggerheads with his first two publishers over his comments upon the nineteenth chapter of Genesis. It is worth while to quote his own words, from page 36 (Number 5), of the book itself:—

My original publishers and my present printer, more moral than the Queen's printers, decline to print or publish any comment upon, or any quotations from, the obscene part of this chapter. In defence of the publishers, I may observe that, if this chapter was in any book but the Bible, and was published by any one not well protected by the aristocracy, he would be most assuredly prosecuted by the Society for Suppression of Vice; Regent Street, a few Lords, a Duke or Marquis, a Bishop, or the Bible, will, however, cover with mystery, and varnish over with fashion, that, which if stripped of its tawdry gewgaws or solemn black coat, is nothing but disgusting and degrading immorality.

The original printers were Holyoake & Co., who "struck" after the issue of Number 3; the next seventeen numbers were printed by J. Watts; then came E. Truelove; and the concluding numbers reverted to Holyoake & Co., whose name appears on the title-page.

From *The Investigator* of February 15, 1859, we learn that "The work is only standing still for want of funds." From the same source we know that it was intended to complete the Old Testament commentary in forty-eight numbers; but, as a matter of fact, the first edition is complete in thirty-three penny numbers; the last not published until 1861.

As I write, a copy of the excessively rare "First" is before me; there is no doubt as to its being a first issue, for the dedication, "To the Rev. John Graham Packer, M.A., Incumbent of St. Peter's, Hackney Road," begins: "Sir,—To you, twelve years since, . . ."; and Bradlaugh's first pamphlet appeared in 1849.

Strangely, Bradlaugh himself, writing, doubtlessly, from memory, makes a slight error in his Preface (1882) to the third and final edition of his book. He writes: "Originally commenced in 1856, . . . a second edition was published in 1865." As we have seen, the work was begun in 1857.

Mr. Robertson's statement is undoubtedly taken from this source; and, not having seen the book, he errs by five years; for, although begun in 1857, *The Bible: What it Is* was not published until 1861.

VICTOR B. NEUBURG.

Sacrifice.

NUMEROUS relics of our primitive ancestors lie scattered around over the country of D— as if flung there by some irresponsible Brobdignagian hand. In certain localities are remains of Temples of the ancient race: rude stone pillars arranged in circular form with a central altar stone, once stained in ancient days with largesse of the blood of sacrifice. The fragrant charm of antiquity rests like a nimbus over them all; the old stones, leaning all awry, seem whispering one to the other wondrous strange tales of the scenes passed in their midst, and the ephemeral figures who enacted them. Standing amidst their ruins one fancies the voice of Koheleth, sadly whispering, "All is vanity and a grasping after wind."

On the open moors, a mile or so from the village of E— the ruin of one of these ancient fanes still stands, much as it stood ten thousand years ago, and will, perchance, ten thousand hence. It is hidden away in the heart of a family of the graceful mountain ash, and is rarely visited now by human beings. On occasion, some wandering student in love with the vanished years finds his way here, to dream awhile on human mutability, and then depart: sometimes a prosaic farmer in search of a wandered sheep. It had one regular visitor alone—the village half-wit. He was an odd creature to look on in the light of day in his "loop'd and windowed raggedness"; a still odder sight to meet at twilight amongst the ruins. From his browless face pale blue eyes peeped out on the world in seeming wonderment; his ears were large, and projected acutely from his round little head, and all was topped with a triumphant thatch as ruddy as the dying sun.

The isolation of the old ruin had induced the half-wit to make it his permanent home. But, apart from its convenience as a place of shelter, the old stones and their environs exerted over him a strange and powerful influence. The tall upstanding monoliths appeared like long arms held out to him, in invitation to enter their embrace, and around a strange complex of emotions; he was attracted by powerful forces he could neither resist nor understand . . .

During the Summer months he was uniformly happy and contented with existence. On the long fine days he lay supine on some hillside or the open moor, rising like a wild animal to wander under the stars throughout the night. But, when Autumn had gone; when the fir trees in the coppice bowed their snow-laden branches down to kiss the earth, dropping icy tears upon her breast in lamentation for the absent sun; his heart was filled with sorrow at these signs of death, and he longed for the return of Spring. He loved the light of the sun passionately; to adoration. He left his whole well-being, his very existence, depended on the continued presence of its warmth and light, shining down. With its absence in the cold months he suffered agonies of doubt and despair; he feared the sun would never more return to visit the sad earth, to kiss all things back to life and laughter from the cold embraces of death.

He couched at night in his retreat amongst the old stones; resting against the palpitating breast of Nature, he listened to the pulsing of the life blood through her veins; the multitudinous whisperings of her breathing life. The cold winds blustering over the moors; howling away mournfully to silence down the valleys, brought to his mind the thought of some monstrous creature, writhing impotently in its bonds; wailing in the agonies of indescribable torments. Around him at such times he could feel the presence of malicious unseen Things. Shivering amongst the stones he endeavoured to form some idea of their nature; to understand who or what they were; their object in seeking him, as he felt they did, relentlessly, continuously, with blindly outstretched, groping hands. He associated in his mind some impression of each of the strange things he had ever seen and feared; the gargoyles grouped around the old church: a particularly ferocious farm dog: the village constable: strangely shaped trees and rocks and many other animate and inanimate things encountered in his wanderings. Some impression of each was blended into the final conception with which he identified the Unknown. These polyglot monsters of his frightened imaginings filled his dreams with terror: encompassing him: leering down wickedly upon him: mouthing terrible, incomprehensible things. He whimpered in his sleep like a dreaming dog whenever they visited him, and drew his rags closer around his shivering limbs . . .

The present Winter was of particular severity. As day followed day on leaden feet without sign of a change, his doubts and fears were intensified. The cold winds pierced through his rags with a myriad stinging needle pricks and made his teeth chatter in his mouth like castanets. He found it increasingly difficult to obtain food enough to keep the dim flame alight in his meagre body. He longed for the arrival of Spring, bringing the sun with its warmth and light: to feel the terrors of the Winter nights vanish away like the white mists of morning at the first soothing caress from his magic rays. He

dimly felt that the strange, the Unknown Things in operation around him, were in some way responsible for the absence of the sun; that they were in operation to accomplish his destruction. If he could only comprehend what they desired from him, he would in some way satisfy their demands: if he could procure some fine gift to offer them in humbleness, perhaps then . . . From this time a change took place in him; a strange new desire began to possess him, increasing in intensity from day to day to the exclusion of all other feelings. The ruins were pregnant with whispering voices; the whole of nature seemed crying out to him with a myriad tongues for assistance only he could give, to liberate her from her bonds. The stark branches of the trees appeared as the arms of supplicants stretched out to him; the furred and feathered folk he met from time to time, seemed to regard him with reproachful, and at the same time, pleading, eyes: all things were insistently urging him to some course of action, the thought of which filled him with a subtle blending of fear and joy . . .

The preternatural hush, which enwrapped the little village as in the foldings of a cloak of softest velvet, was rudely rent one morning by the sound of a hysterical cackling, borne down the wind. It seemed to be a signal the whole of sentient life was awaiting: rooster answered rooster, with garrulous outpourings: dog howled to dog in an echoing chain, link after link, down into the distant valley, the clamour increasing rapidly as each new creature added its voice to the general uproar: the patrolling constable commenced a tour of investigation . . .

The first flush of the coming dawn mantled up the sky, as the half-wit climbed the hill from the village. Walking firmly to the centre of the stone circle, as if attracted there by some irresistible influence, he laid the stolen gander, lamenting wildly and as wildly struggling, upon the altar stone. With difficulty he drew his knife and severed the head from the neck: the bird flogged the air with his wings in his death agony, and the hot blood spurted over his hands and clothes, and hung in scarlet berries from the cruel edges of the gorse. At length, the bird was still, his gander soul already winging in leisured flight the marshy border of some Anserine Styx. Stepping away a pace from the altar, he drew the back of his bloody hand across his mouth with a rapid, nervous gesture, and gazed intently towards the east. Standing thus, motionless, only the gentle rise and fall of his chest indicating he was alive, he awaited a sign, he knew not what, that cognisance had been taken of his offering. The day commenced to break: delicate tendrils of orange light zig-zagged from behind the hills and across the firmament. A band of figures became visible steadily climbing the hillside behind him, but he did not see them; he stood motionless, mouth agape, licking the smear on his face with the tip of his tongue, waiting, waiting. A lark commenced to sing in shrill tones, soaring upwards: a startled partridge lurched drunkenly from out of the heather and whirred away with a harsh, frightened, "Gek-Gek-Gek." Then a new, terrifying sound reached his ears; the sound of human voices raised in exultant acclamation, the tones of the village constable rising clear above them all. Stentorwise . . .

He started violently from his trance-like state and made a frantic plunge forward in the first instinctive effort to escape, anywhere; the stout roots of the gorse held his feet like treacherous hands and he fell forward, into darkness, striking his head on the ancient stone. He lay there, his limbs twitching, his blood mingling with that of the bird dripping softly down, a crimson libation on the earth . . .

The sun arose and shone down in full brilliance: the lark overhead continued to sing his praises in shrill tones, soaring higher and higher; the constable made copious and ungrammatical notes, expectorated on the ground at frequent intervals, and cursed the brightness of the sun shining in his eyes.

JOSEPH MARAH.

To pray is to flatter oneself that one will change the universe with words.—*Voltaire*.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

FREETHOUGHT AND DRESS.

SIR,—I was present to-day at the Men's Dress Reform Party, of which I am a member. Dean Inge is a member, and one of the speakers at the meeting was the Rev. Percy Dearmer, M.A., D.D. Now, the Dress-Reform movement is largely an aesthetic movement; this alone would leave one to suppose that no support will be given to it by "Christendom" in general. All aspirations towards making life more beautiful, in so far as they are successful, are conducive to health. But, unfortunately, our civilization is exclusively commercial, and noticeably indifferent to the arts and to beauty; so that Free-thought of any kind is anathema to the majority, whose object in life is not to seek truth or beauty, but to do and say "what profits"—themselves only, and to do just what everybody else does, no more and no less.

The cult of covering the body entirely with clothes, because the nude form was "indecent," found its fullest expression in the Christian religion.

The Greeks of old treated their bodies with respect and distinction; the young men appeared quite naked in the "Palaestra," and in Sparta, girls ran public races in the same condition. The assertion that our climate is not suited for even moderate dress reform is untrue. It is only a matter of gradual acclimatization (which is quite rapid) and plenty of physical exercise. A few people are now realizing that sun and air are necessary for attaining the best health, and an integral part of moral health; and that bodily health should be considered an integral part of moral health; but this view cannot be reconciled with the Christian and commercial conceptions of life. The present fashions are unhealthy and morally degrading even according to the "image of God" theory!

In Genesis, it appears that God was regarded as a personality with human passions.

Religious sophists of to-day whittle God down to an "incomprehensible spirit." Which process looks like a trick for glorifying the "God-idea" as something infinitely superior to "mere" humanitarian reforms. Activity in such a matter as dress reform, then, is, I conceive, likely to come from Freethinkers if from anybody. The Dress Reform Party has already over a thousand members, and is only three weeks old; all Freethinkers interested in the movement ought to join at once. There is no subscription. The Honorary Secretary is Dr. A. C. Jordan, c/o New Health Society, 39 Bedford Square, London, W.C.1. We need more freedom of body as well as of thought.

F. C. ASHWORTH.

FREETHOUGHT AND AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE.

SIR,—I was very pleased to read the article under this heading in the issue of July 7.

To the list of translations named by L. Corinna might be added the recently issued *Concerning Man's Origin*, by Prof. Sir Arthur Keith.

It is encouraging to think that these Freethought works are being read in countries into whose languages they may never be translated. In this connexion Esperanto is serving a very useful purpose.

F. GATESHILL.

SIR,—In your leading article of last week, you state that "Sir Oliver Lodge thinks that hell is the lower state into which one goes after death to await promotion to the higher forms." If a Salvation Army "Captain" had expressed such an opinion, or a clergyman, it would have been relegated to the limbo of useless opinions, but coming from a man of such learning as Sir Oliver possesses on other subjects, I respectfully suggest it is a prostitution of scientific knowledge. His opinion on a subject on which he knows nothing is worth as much and as little as that of a professional priest.

Sir Oliver, when he enters the region of unknown mysteries, does not seem to realize that he shakes the faith of those who trust his utterances on subjects in which he is supposed to possess scientific knowledge.

SINE CURA.

THIS FREEDOM.

SIR,—I was very pleased to see Mr. Victor B. Neuburg's article, under the above title, in your issue for July 14.

Mr. Neuburg has put, very clearly and cojently, what many people are thinking, but do not like publicly to avow. As things are at present, it requires no little moral courage to tell the truth about sexual matters, and no one could make a better defence for freedom of discussion in such matters than Mr. Neuburg has done, and never was such advocacy more needed than to-day.

For, whereas, in many other countries there has been a relaxation of literary censorship, notably in Germany, Austria, Russia, and America, where English books which have been prosecuted and confiscated, in the country of their origin, circulate freely. We, in England, "The land of the Free" (see Daily Press) seem to have lost what little freedom we ever had in the matter. The late Home Secretary, publicly declaring, and magistrates acting upon it; that no books may be published that are morally speaking unsuitable for a little child.

Our leading literary lights have publicly protested against this deadly blow at liberty of discussion. But protestation—like patriotism—is not enough; unless the protesting is done by the masses who have votes. If they want liberty they will have to fight for it as the Secular Party did for free speech. They will have to form a defence association, and fight every case, through all the courts, up to the highest. The government will soon draw its horns in, if every case is going to cost a lot of money for counsel and carried to the higher courts, where the Judges are more independent and less servile than the magistrates, and there is less chance of obtaining a conviction.

Every book that is published now, has to run the gauntlet of a lot of pious prudes and puritans, of the type of the editor of the *Sunday Express*. Some of these sex degenerates are pastmasters at pulling the strings behind the scenes, they hate publicity, and like to have these cases decided off hand by the magistrates. This simple method must be met and defeated, and it is not the slightest use appealing to either of the political parties.

W. MANN.

Society News.

MR. CLAYTON continues to hold successful meetings in N.E. Lancashire. Some rowdy opposition was encountered—as usual led by a cleric—and successfully defeated.

At Barnes Square, the local vicar, and a few warriors of the Church Army, helped, by a display of bad manners, to attract a very large audience, which, although at one time threatening, had ultimately the good sense to ignore the vicar and give the Freethought speaker a fair hearing.

At Rawtenstall, another large crowd gathered to listen to the message of Secularism.

A feature of the opposition here was the not unusual combination of vocal strength with mental weakness.

As return visits will be paid, it is to be hoped the interval will be used by the other side to get some intellectual opposition together.

MESSRS. BRIGHTON AND KEAST report large and interested audiences at Stanley and Spennymoor, where godd work was put in.

At Stanley the crowd grew until it had to move to a more commodious spot, where the meeting continued. The most ill-behaved person in the crowd was a local clergyman, who kept up a running fire of interruptions. His efforts, however, as well as those of a demonstration of Christian Crusaders, winning the world for Christ, failed to spoil the meeting, which as well as being complimentary to the speakers, also indicates sympathy with our movement, and may result in a local branch of the N.S.S. in the near future.

Mr. Whitehead's concluding week in Lancashire was interfered with by the rain, but one meeting was held at

Bolton, and seven at Blackburn. The Sunday evening meeting at Blackburn attracted a very large gathering, the meetings being very much depleted in favour of the Freethought one. There was great interest shown in the lectures, although the type of questions and opposition was of a rather poor type. But Blackburn, like Wigan, needs only a few energetic members to set a good branch going. Thanks are due to Mr. Glassbrook for the help given at the meetings.

From Sunday, July 21 till August 2, Mr. Whitehead will be lecturing at Plymouth.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.
Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.5, by the FIRST POST ON TUESDAY, or they will not be inserted.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, Mr. S. K. Ratcliffe—"The Springs of Social Action."

OUTDOOR.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Messrs. James Hart and R. G. Lennard; 3.30, Messrs. E. Betts and H. Tuson; 6.30, Messrs. B. A. Le Maine and Hyatt. Freethought meetings every Wednesday, at 7.30, Messrs. J. Hart and R. G. Lennard. Every Friday, at 7.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. The *Freethinker* can be obtained outside Hyde Park during our meetings.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith): 3.30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. B. A. Le Maine—Subject: "Belief in General."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. S. Hanson; Brockwell Park, 6.30, Mr. S. Hanson; Wednesday, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Mr. S. Hanson; Friday, Liverpool Street, Camberwell Gate, 8.0, Mr. F. Mann.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6.0, Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (outside Technical College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. H. C. White—A Lecture.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrolts Road, Walham Green): Saturday, 8.0, various speakers. Sunday, 8.30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan—A Lecture.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Moor, near North Road entrance): 7.0, Mr. J. C. Keast—A Lecture.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) Branch N.S.S. (Beaumont Street): Monday, 7.30, Mr. J. V. Short—A Lecture.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S.—Ramble to Corkindale Law. Meet at Barrhead Centre at 12 o'clock prompt.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. Whitehead will hold meetings from Sunday, July 21 until Friday, August 2.

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

MR. J. CLAYTON will lecture at the following places during the week:—July 21, Todmorden Market, 7.0 p.m.; July 22, Great Harwood, 8.0 p.m.; July 24, Sabden, 7.30 p.m.; July 26, Crawshawbrook, 8.0 p.m.

Miscellaneous Advertisements.

BIRTH CONTROL.—Every Adult should possess a copy of *Conception Control—Why and How*. Deals with the subject plainly and cleanly. Describes safest and best means to adopt, whereby prevention may be obtained at a very low cost. Above booklet sent POST FREE by THE LONDON MEDICAL AGENCY, Dept. 465, 91 St. Martin's Lane, London, W.C.2.

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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.
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