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Views and Opinions.

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Causation and God.

Nothing shows the haphazard character of the evidence advanced on behalf of the belief in God, so much as the way in which the ground is shifted from time to time. Of this the general question of causation offers a good example. The belief in miracles—the assertion of the direct interference of deity in affairs—was a denial of the fixed and determinable character of events. Anything might happen, and what had been was no guarantee of what would be, even in identical circumstances. But as the determinable character of events was established, the belief in miracles faded away. So Theists began to argue that the existence of God was shown by the fact that nothing happened in a haphazard way. To use an unscientific expression, a universe "governed by law" proved the existence of a controlling intelligence.

But this reduced God to a nonentity. He took no part in the actual conduct of affairs. He had set things going, and ever afterwards they went their way without interference or guidance. The identification of God with the universe, or nature, gave little help. A vague pantheism of this kind is removed only in name from Atheism. God becomes a mere figure of speech. Of course, what has been said holds good only of those endowed with some sense of logic. Fortunately for the Churches the majority of her followers find no great difficulty in holding two or more contrary opinions at the same time. A religious sense that cannot swallow a contradiction is a very poor one, and functions but badly.

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The Principle of Causality.

I do not intend discussing the basis on which Professor Eddington challenges the principle of causation. It would involve a lengthy explanation of the latest theories in mathematical physics, of the value which, indeed,

my opinion would be that of a sheer amateur. What concerns us are the conclusions reached by Professor Eddington, and the use he makes of them to support some sort of a nebulous religion, as well as the way in which they have been welcomed by religious leaders. They have forgotten all that have been saying, that the existence of a universe "governed by law" is proof of the existence of God (which implies that if it were not, the existence of God would be dubious) and have welcomed Eddington's statement that one portion of the universe at least cannot be brought under scientific law, and that the principle of causation has broken down altogether. This last illustrates what I have before said of Professor Eddington's great readiness to take the present standing of certain theories of physics as being final. And that is on a par with the popular statements that Einstein has wiped Newton off the map, that the atom has been destroyed and matter annihilated. None of these statements is true. The atom is there, as useful as ever—with only a changed conception of its constitution; matter is as "real" as it ever was. Newton, as Eddington and Einstein have both said, stands about where he did, and as Bertrand Russell has pointed out, the whole Relativity theory leaves the questions of Materialism and Idealism where they were.

It is, says Professor Eddington, "a consequence of the advent of the Quantum theory that physics is no longer pledged to a scheme of deterministic law." I speak with all deference, but so far as I understand the position, all that is actually the case is that, first, physicists are at present using theories which apparently contradict one another, but which they hope soon (this on the assertion of Einstein) to bring into line with "the strictest causality." Next, we are told that as the future is a combination of causal influences belonging to the past, with unpredictable elements contributed by the future, we have therefore no ground on which to say what the future will be like. I am not quite sure what Professor Eddington has in mind when he writes in this way, but I would like to know whether he really believes that the future is not brought about by determinable influences, even though we may be quite ignorant of what these are? I do not think he would answer this question in the affirmative, because he says (in support of the statement that strict causality has dropped out of the material world):—

Our ideas of the controlling laws are in process of reconstruction, and it is not possible to predict what kind of form they will ultimately take; but all the indications are that strict causality has dropped out permanently. This relieves us of the necessity of supposing that mind is subject to deterministic law, or alternatively that it can suspend deterministic law in the material world.

But in the very act of casting doubt upon the continuance in science of the principle of determinism,

Professor Eddington is bound to assume it when he speaks about the future. His argument depends upon this; for if we are to pre-judge the future on the basis of present tendencies, we must assume that the present stands to the future in the nature of a causal fact. If the present is not viewed causally, how can Professor Eddington judge what the future will be like. One day he will, perhaps, realize, what I have so often pointed out, that determinism is not merely a truth of physics, it is a condition of sane thinking. I am confirmed in this hope, because I find him admitting, "I have not been able to form a satisfactory conception of any kind of law or causal sequence which shall be other than deterministic." And when we are told that he "can imagine a science which has no contact with the usual phenomena and laws of physics, which yet admits of the same kind of exact treatment," he seems to be admitting by the back door, something that he has just ostentatiously thrown out of the window.

As a matter of fact, unpredictability is theoretically true of the product of every combination of factors. It is the repetition of experience that blinds us to this truth. But the only reason why we are able to predict that the combination of two gasses will produce water, is that experience has shown this to be the case. But there is nothing in the known qualities of the two to lead us to say, prior to experience, that this will be so. The use made in the interests of religion, of the theory of emergence is due to an ignoring of this truth. Emergence merely stresses this fact for a special purpose. Otherwise "emergence" is one of those things that should have been long ago recognized by anyone capable of sound scientific thinking. Readers of this journal know that I have been stressing this aspect of causation for now nearly forty years.

* * *

Mind and Matter.

Next week, in a concluding article, I will deal with Professor Eddington's theory of two different worlds, in which the same principle of law does not obtain. It is enough to say at present, that he marks the world of "matter" off sharply from the world of "mind." Of the first we have, he says, a merely "symbolic knowledge," but we have a real and not a symbolic knowledge of our own nature. This is not an uncommon mode of expression, but it is, I think, wholly wrong. I agree that when we use such terms as matter, force, atom, etc., we are using so many symbols which stand as signs for certain classified experiences. But the raw material of our conscious life is experience, and experience, as Professor Eddington himself puts it, stands for the interaction of organism and environment. And the same interaction which leads me to call one part of experience matter, or material, leads me to call another mental, or physical. But we have no more, and no greater knowledge of "mind" than we have of "matter." They are both names given to a particular type of experience. We do not know "mind" as a substantive fact at all, but only as a general term which covers a certain number of particular instances. I deny flatly the correctness of Professor Eddington's statement, that while we have only an inferential knowledge of nature, we have a direct knowledge of our own "mind." Looked at from the proper point of view, mind and matter are equally "symbolic." The conception of either is due to the interaction of organism and environment, and why one should be counted as being more "real" than the other is more than I can tell.

Professor Eddington says that "starting from ether, electrons and other physical machinery, we cannot reach conscious man and render count of what is apprehended in his consciousness." If what is

meant here is that you cannot express mental changes in terms of physics, he is saying what no adequately equipped materialist will dispute. But if he means exactly what he says, all that one can reply is that, starting from ether, electrons, and other physical machinery, we do reach conscious man, and can reach him in no other way. Only by an understanding of these things do we lay the foundations for an adequate knowledge of man in his very highest expression.

* * *

A Conclusion or An Assumption?

The truth is, I fancy, that Professor Eddington's opinion as to the present bearing of science on religion is dictated largely by pre-existing beliefs. I am confirmed to this because right through the substantial truth of religion is taken for granted. On the one hand he says, "I do not attempt to prove the truth of religious experience," when the question at issue is as to the nature and truth of religious experience. And on the other hand he says:—

I have sometimes been asked whether science can not now furnish an argument which would convince any reasonable Atheist. I could no more turn a religious conviction into an Atheist than I could turn a joke into a Scotchman. The only hope of "convincing" the former is that through contact with merry-minded companions he may begin to realize that he is missing something in life which is worth attaining.

And that is exactly the argument of the drunken Scot, who when reproved by the Sheriff, and told that he (the Sheriff) had never been drunk in his life, replied: "Well, ye dinna ken what ye hae missed." To sound science—which is not restricted to the physical world—religious conviction is as much a subject for examination as anything else. No one disputes that there are certain experiences which are called religious. The whole question is as to their real nature. Is the statement of the "mystic" that his meditations bring him into touch with a "spiritual world," of any greater evidential value than the statement of the savage or the medieval monk that he reached the same result by fasting? In the confession that Professor Eddington cannot hope to convince an Atheist is the implication that belief in religion has nothing of the nature of that reasoned conviction about it. But the hope that merry-minded companions may deserve to convince the Atheist that he is missing something worth having is exactly on all-fours with the opinion of the "merry-minded" drunkard as to his teetotal friends.

Again, we have to say that nature has not acted kindly to Professor Eddington, in giving him an intelligence above the ordinary—that is, if he was intended to be religious. He too obviously gives himself away—and sometimes one fancies he knows it.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be concluded.)

The Children of Credulity.

"Civilization must advance, not only in the paths of electricity and motors, but in those of humanity and wisdom."—G. W. Foote.

"A world in the hand is worth two in the bush."—Emerson.

Civilization covers a multitude of barbarisms and savage-survivals. The belief in witches, for instance, still exists. A Reuter telegram from Lisbon states that a poor, old woman has just been brutally murdered in Portimao, because her neighbours attributed to her such things as illness, bad crops, and even that the bread did not bake properly. From other parts of Europe, from time to time, come similar reports. Incredible though it may sound in this twentieth century, in this matter-of-fact age witchcraft

is still widely believed and practised. This fact was announced at a meeting of the Folk Lore Society. It occasioned no surprise in the audience, for this consisted entirely of men and women who had spent years in acquiring knowledge of the out-of-the-way superstitions of the world's inhabitants.

According to Professor Gwynne Jones, belief in witchcraft is still strong in Cardiganshire, Montgomeryshire, and along the English-speaking border. A case which had come to his knowledge was that of a young woman who called on the family doctor and asked him for a prescription for a bewitched cow. Another case was that of a young man who journeyed forty miles to consult a witch-doctor, though at the time he was actually being attended by a properly qualified medical man. There are many witch-doctors to be found in Wales, it seems, and they still do a certain amount of business, mostly for spot-cash. One man consulted a witch-doctor for asthma, and was given a piece of moleskin to wear on his chest. Indeed, to superstitious beliefs there is apparently no end in Wales. Small wonder that in such a soil corybantic Christianity should flourish, and that a stronghold of the itinerant evangelist, and end-of-the-world crank, should be in that remote part of our native country.

Witchcraft in the year 1929 seems incredible to sophisticated folks. In these days of airships, radios, and motor-cars, we are too apt to regard ourselves as "the heirs of all the ages," and as being radically different from and superior to the men and women who lived before us. Our ancestors were not all ignorant nor barbarian. If Plato revisited the earth he would be an honoured guest with our wisest men. Socrates would have the same difficulty in finding an honest man in London as in Athens. And Shakespeare would notice, smilingly, that demagogues still tickled the ears of the groundlings. If Marcus Aurelius found himself at Buckingham Palace, there would be nothing to disturb his wonted equanimity. Thele Arthur Henderson may wear a frock-coat instead of a toga, but the human species has not undergone any perceptible change.

A few generations back the Lancashire "witches" were being done to death for crimes which neither they nor anyone else could commit. The same sad story was repeated at St. Osyth and many other places. We regard witchcraft as nonsense, not because we are congenitally different from our forefathers, but simply because we have been brought up differently from them and live in different surroundings. The conditions in remote parts of Wales resemble the general conditions of long ago, and partially explain the prevalence of the grosser forms of superstition.

Witch-hunting was once a terrible business. Thousands of old women, the most helpless of their sex, were hunted out like wild animals, and executed after the mockery of a trial. Learned lawyers and sober judges wrangled over the interpretation of biblical texts, for the Christian Bible countenanced witchcraft, and men, who otherwise would have dismissed the thing as an old wife's tale, passed the death sentence because of the text: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

We know how the world wagged in those far-off days of faith. The wildest legends found ready believers. In the days of Joan of Arc, for instance, one French Knight was said to have sold his hand to the Devil. A great baron, a Marshal of France, and one of Joan's companions in arms, was said to have decoyed young children to his castles, and offered their bodies as sacrifices to the Evil One. Joan herself, despite her great services to her country, was

burnt as a sorceress. Undoubtedly, Joan was heretical, however pious and saintly. She put her own inspiration above that of the priests of the Roman Catholic Church, and she aggravated her offence in the eyes of her pious murderers by the complete independence of her replies. Her execution by burning at the stake produced an enormous impression everywhere, an impression which Roman Catholics will never efface by a trumpety and belated rehabilitation many centuries later.

Credulity is one of the weaknesses of human nature. For all our science and common sense, we are very lackadaisical in matters of such consequence. By surrendering the control of national education to priests, the ordinary citizen has sold the intellectual birthright of his children. For the priests carefully cultivate the will to believe in their superstition, knowing full well that the unfortunate scholar will defend with passion what logic has long since abandoned so long as it brings peace of mind. In plain English, the priests batten on ignorance just as witch-doctors do, and for precisely the same sordid reasons.

MIMNERMUS.

The Conflict in The Church.

It is now several years ago since Dr. Barnes discovered that he could no longer believe in the literal story of the alleged Fall of Man, as narrated in the third chapter of Genesis. He had been a clergyman of the Church of England for some years, but soon after he was appointed Bishop of Birmingham, he made the declaration that, viewed in the light of modern science the Bible story was purely allegorical, and there was demonstrable proof that man had come up from the lower animals—in short, that man was not a fallen being, as Christians had always contended, but a decidedly rising one. Of course, Dr. Barnes was well qualified to make this pronouncement, for he was not only a distinguished scholar, but also a Doctor of Science. However, this statement, simple as it appears on the face of it, was like a bombshell, thrown among a crowd of believing Christians, bishops, priests, and ordinary laymen. For a time they did not seem to know where they were. But some of the more subtle and logical-minded among them soon began to realize that if Adam never fell in the Garden of Eden, there was no need for Jesus to come four thousand years later, and die in order to blot out the sins of unregenerated mankind.

In other words it gradually began to dawn upon their minds that if what Dr. Barnes said was true, the foundation of the Christian scheme of salvation was undermined, and the whole fabric of the Christian Faith would soon fall to pieces. Consequently there are many bishops and priests in the Established Church to-day, who will never forgive Dr. Barnes for his bold, but presumably very undiplomatic statement. They would not have objected to Dr. Barnes himself believing in the doctrine of Evolution, but they were certainly very much opposed to him making any such declaration from the pulpit. So the fat is now in the fire, and cannot be got out, and no one can see, with any degree of certainty, what will be the ultimate result of the conflagration.

Some time after this, Dr. Gore, another Bishop, issued his critical examination of the Pentateuch, in which he found that the Bible was unscientific, un-historical, and in many of its passages, decidedly immoral. There was nothing new in this publication, for Dr. Colenso had made the same discovery over sixty years ago, but still Dr. Gore's work, in

which he was assisted by other learned prelates, thrown with Dr. Barnes's doctrine of Evolution into the seething mass of controversial matter already in the religious cauldron was likely to cause a lot of uneasiness in the minds of ordinary simple-minded Christians. And Dr. Barnes was not satisfied with merely saying that he was a believer in the doctrine of Evolution; he took every opportunity of rubbing this fact into the minds of his hearers, in sermons in Westminster Abbey and elsewhere; so much so that ministers and laymen wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury about it, and protested that such statements were very disturbing to their beliefs.

Indeed, the Rev. H. E. Sexton, vicar of All Saint's, Upper Norwood, preaching at St. Margaret's, Westminster, and referring to Dr. Barnes, said that "according to the Bishop of Birmingham there was a definite clash between Modernism and Anglo-Catholicism. As a result, the consciences of many of the faithful had been wounded, the religious perplexities of the man in the street intensified, and the work of the parish priest rendered still more difficult. The greater part of the Church was shocked and scandalized, that those who accepted prominent positions in the Church were permitted to play fast and loose with the Christian faith and yet retain their positions unrebuked."

And so the controversy raged fast and furious, until the Archbishop was appealed to, and his Lordship tried to pacify the poor wounded spirits of the faithful. But the irrepressible Dr. Barnes came up again smiling, and affirmed that he was convinced, whatever others might think to the contrary, that Modernism would ultimately triumph. It is true he had made some very cutting remarks about the beliefs of Anglo-Catholics; he had spoken offensively of a statue of Mary and Jesus as a "female and a child," and also had sneered at the idea of converting bread and wine "into the body and blood of Christ," as a kind of "religious barbarism"; nor was this all, he had gone so far as declaring that the alleged miracles of Jesus were unnecessary as supports to the Christian faith, and had left it possible for Modernists to proclaim Jesus as a "Divine Man," and a true Spiritual Saviour of Mankind. And now to add to the trouble in the Church, several of the Bishops have decided to use the revised version of the Prayer Book, thus putting themselves in direct antagonism with the law, in view of the fact that the House of Commons had twice decided against it. This is indeed a very bad example to set to the mass of law-abiding Christians; for if learned Bishops are allowed to disobey the law with impunity when it suits them, why should simple-minded Christians be expected on all occasions to obey ecclesiastical laws, many of which are just as distasteful to them, as the Old Prayer Book is to some of the Bishops? Nor must we suppose that the conflict in the Church affects only Anglo-Catholics and Modernists; it applies with equal force to the Evangelical Party, which, perhaps, is the largest section in the English Church. This Party has great reverence for the Bible as a book, and although some of its members are prepared to admit that it is not divinely inspired in all its parts, consider it the most interesting and marvellous record of religious experience gathered together in one book, in the world. The Evangelical Party also have great love for the Old Prayer Book, and object to its revision; they are wedded to the Old Service; and are in every sense old-fashioned and conservative. But they are not so narrow in their views as the Fundamentalists of the Dissenting bodies; and while these important controversies are going on in the Church they remain quiet or express their grievances in intimate letters to the clergy. They cannot, however,

shut their eyes to the fact that ritualistic practices are becoming more general in the Church; and that the confessional plays an important part in some High Churches in the Christian Community. In point of fact, the Anglo-Catholic Party in England is making a steady but decided movement towards Roman Catholicism.

On the other hand the Modernists are just as surely making in the direction of Unitarianism. By the elimination of the miracles of the New Testament, and the humanizing of the character of Jesus—in the rendering of Jesus as the "Son of God," in the sense that all men are the sons of God, in their view, they hope to save the Christian faith from ultimate destruction. When Dr. Barnes, however, declares that "Modernism is bound to triumph," he appears to us to be a little bit too sanguine.

Religious beliefs do not change so rapidly as he imagines. They undergo a very slow process of change; before Modernism is accepted by the majority in the Church, a large number of Evangelicals have to be converted to the New Faith, and a still larger number of merely nominal Christians who care very little for either party. Freethinkers take no sides in this controversy; they leave each party to fight the matter out for themselves.

But in the meantime, they attack the doctrines of each party and try to win the most reasonable among them over to our views; recognizing that the ultimate fight will be with Freethought and Roman Catholicism—between Rome and Reason in the confident belief that Reason will ultimately prevail. With Milton they exclaim: "Let truth and falsehood grapple. Whoever knew truth put to the worst in a Free and Open encounter."

ARTHUR B. MOSS

"Birds of Pray."

A BOOKLET entitled, *A Tourist's Guide to Ireland*, published by the Mandrake Press, supplements a good deal of what Mr. P. Murphy says in his article on "The Pope's Green Island." If the author, Liam O'Flaherty, comes anyway near the truth it is truly God's Green Island, for now more than ever his priests are in command, and Christianity functions to the deeper degradation of a people always remarkable for their liking for gross superstition. It used to be said that the Irish priests fostered the agitation for Home Rule in order to keep the people from devoting too much attention to themselves in a critical way. On one or two occasions the Irish people went contrary to the way laid down by the Church, and that was cited as a proof that once Home Rule was settled and out of the way, Ireland would free itself from the clutch of Rome and set an example to the nations worth the following. It has, however, worked out the other way. Some people are made to be exploited, and the Irish peasant has developed an ideal which ends in a vision of his son being a priest, and himself a gombeen man or a successful politician; three ultimate factors which spell disaster to any nation embracing them.

One gets an idea, from the *Tourist's Guide*, of how this trinity of evil keep Ireland in the Middle Ages. Most of the Irish priests are peasant born. The Irish peasant aims at moving up from tilling the land to dispensing poteen to his mentally starved neighbours, and from that height his ambition runs in the direction of politics for himself and the priesthood for at least one of his sons. The father-in-God then sees to the spiritual submission of the common dupes, and the father in the flesh sees to the disposal of their earthly goods. The combination is evil.

cient; parasites are always so; their efficiency goes to the length of seeing that there is always a goodly supply of hosts, for the limitation of families is the sin against the Holy Spirit in Catholic Ireland. At least two of my Irish acquaintances have had their partners selected for them by a celibate priest, and on the one or two occasions when I was invited to a Catholic Guild function, we had a priest with an Irish brogue hounding the young fellows out of the card room with, "Out of here wid ye. Git yerself among the girls." Breeding them is a surer way of filling the ranks than appealing to the critical human reason.

The priests' part in the tragedy is not merely seeing to the spiritual submission of the peasant; he has too much of his sire in him not to covet some of the temporal reward of the partnership, so we find him having a finger in every pie that promises good eating. The tourist is therefore advised to go warily when he enters the Isle of Saints. He must find out by judicious questioning which of the boarding houses and hotels are under the priests' patronage and take up his abode in it. A dollar or two subscribed to buy some soul or other out of Purgatory—the priest always has a few such finds on hand—and the word goes abroad that the Englishman is under the protection of his reverence, and the lesser parasites are warned off. This is a sorry picture of a country which gave Christianity to us; perhaps it is the reward most appropriate for that service, but is it not overdone? The priests of the Roman Catholic Church have been a soiled fraternity during the whole of their existence, and what the author of the *Tourist's Guide* says of them in that distressful country can be truly said of them, with additions, wherever they have taken up their abode.

The peasant priests of Ireland are the small fry of the Church. They have an easy task in fastening the shackles of the creed on ignorant country people; poison is injected just as soon as they can sit up and take notice, and as long as they remain at home there is not one chance in a million of knowing enough to question even the crudest of dogmas. But when it is different, and there another class of priests in charge of the Church's defence. Cardinal Newman, writing in 1845, said, "It is melancholy to say that the chief, perhaps the only English writer, who has any claim to be considered an ecclesiastical historian, is the infidel Gibbon." Bluntly, that man, alone among the Church's historians the Freethinking Gibbon was capable of speaking the truth. And again, speaking of the establishment of a Catholic journal, he wrote, "Nothing could be better than a historical review. But who would bear it? Unless decorated all one's facts, one would be thought a Catholic," which is a plain enough confession that robust lying is a necessary qualification for the writing of Roman Catholic history.

One can expect anything from an ethic of that sort. From it sprang all the famous frauds of the Fathers of the Church: the letters of Jesus Christ and Pilate; the Decretals and the Donation of Constantine; the Thundering Legion, a sort of heavenly host of Mons Angel type who assisted Marcus Aurelius rout the barbarians. Eusebius, described as the most robust liar in all history, had something to do with that. There was also the Sibylline verses where pagan prophecies of the career of Jesus Christ were supposed to have been discovered; and all the rest of legend and miracle in the Church's story down to the misreading of history in Father Benson's novels. The Catholic Truth Society, for as Fr. Barry, the great historian admits: "To manipulate ancient writings, to edit history in one's own favour, did not seem a criminal if the end in view were otherwise just

and good," the justice and goodness in the matter being of the Catholic brand.

The Romish priests are exploiting with Barnum-like acuteness the anniversary of their emancipation by spreading it over many days. Emancipated, in any decent sense of the term, no Catholic can be, for he is tethered hand and foot to authority, authority which is not the authority of truth, and his bondage is just as restrictive as of old. His aspirations also are as of old; sinister and a threat to the liberty of every human being with a mind of his own. Mr. G. G. Coulton, in his pamphlet on *The Death Penalty for Heresy*, has shown that so far from being satisfied with worshipping their god without interference, they assert the right to inflict death on any heretic. The claim is not shouted abroad to the heavens, naturally, it is kept for the private confabs and the little-circulated books of the papal protagonists. But the most reverend Father Alexis Lépicier, a prominent professor of theology in Pope Urban's College, has no scruple in punishing the heretic. He published a book in 1910, asserting that it had been the Church's policy throughout its history and still was: "for seeing that he is found dangerous to the community, and a corrupter of its good, it is laudable and wholesome that he should be killed for the preservation of the common good, for, as St. Paul saith also (1 Cor. v. 6) a little leaven corrupteth the whole paste." It is the doctrine of salvation by faith in practice. And for those who think that the Church merely handed over the unfortunate infidel to the secular power, Lépicier says that is incorrect; "for, though this was often done, yet sometimes the Church has even compelled the secular judge by excommunication, to perform this duty." And this priest had the approval of the Pope.

But, nevertheless, they are stricken. The steady, and in the last fifty years, rapid growth of knowledge in all its branches, hastens the decay of superstition. The scientific atmosphere smothers the idea of the supernatural and annihilates the gods by showing how they were born. As the science of history develops and sets down more accurate records of religions, so mankind shifts nearer to the truth of things and the adoration due to the deity gets devoted to human beings. A parson in the *Daily News* was lamenting the growth of Malthusian ideas as tending to give the Roman Catholic an advantage by the sheer force of child production. It is a parson's outlook! Whether Roman Catholic or any other variety, they prefer quantity to quality; they would rather have a bunch of ignorant peasants in their church than a few intelligent men. But intellectual men can wield a force greater than that contained within the ignorant many; the factors making for freedom, wherever you look in the world's history, were, and are, based on ideas in the minds of intelligent men and against that force a few more millions of illiterate Spaniards or Irishmen counts for nothing.

H. B. DODDS.

Systematic thinking is apparently a comparatively late development in human experience; it has not played any great part in human life until within the last 3,000 years. And even to-day those who really control and order their thoughts are but a small minority of mankind. Most of the world still lives by imagination and passion.—H. G. Wells.

We have too long
Obeyed their orders, bow'd to their caprices—
Sweated for them the wearying summer's day,
Wasted for them the wages of our toil;
Fought for them, conquered for them, bled for them,
Still to be trampled on, and still despised!
Shall we sit tamely down beneath these evils?
The mighty multitude shall trample down
The handful that oppress them.

The Wisdom of Maxim Gorki.

"TWENTY-SIX MEN AND A GIRL," AND
"THE MAN WHO WAS AFRAID."

IN an introduction to the first of the two novels mentioned, Edward Garnett compresses a masterly criticism of Gorki in a few words. The copy we have before us is from Duckworth's Greenback Library, and dated 1902, and about that time our author was the fashion in Russia. Garnett writes: "The admirable story here printed, is a good illustration of the fact that the art that analyses human nature is immeasurably superior to the art which falsifies human nature to suit a moral purpose . . ." An author may have many aims—in many cases the chief one is bread and cheese or its equivalent. It may be fame, or, in a few isolated cases, an intense love of one's fellow-men. Looking at the whole of Gorki's works, the present writer's opinion is that Gorki knew and felt the fearful truth in the aphorism of Nietzsche that "life and injustice are one." In the palmy days of Czardom, Russia was an empire reared on slave morality; it had not the redeeming features of ancient Greece or Rome, and, moreover, Gorki had not come into the world to comply with it. There is the initial handicap on entering life, that those born have no choice in the matter. If it were otherwise, it would be a different world entirely, but Gorki saw the squalor and wretchedness of the very foundations of society, and, in spite of the fact that it is more difficult to do good than evil, his writings, in our opinion, are a titanic effort to make an adjustment. In the words of Goethe, "If God is what he is said to be, then the world is what he would have it be." All reformers, therefore, to speak cynically, are attempting to improve perfection. But one has only to have horse-sense to turn down such an attitude with disgust. Later on, we shall indicate where Gorki attains the mastery of life, and, last triumph of all, refuses to allow the world to make an impression on him.

Returning again to Garnett, this writer states that "In Gorki we find no circulating library 'aristocratic' emotions to admire, and no up-to-date Puritanic eroticism to smile at." He does not deal in the shadows of romance, and therefore does not lead to false paths in creating a false world as a temporary relief from the one in which he was living. He is as antithetic towards sugary romance, as our own Fielding was towards Richardson.

The story of "Twenty-Six Men and a Girl" is short, but powerful. Into the drab and monotonous life of twenty-six men working in an underground bake-house comes a young girl, beautiful and affectionate. Her name is Tanya, and the grotesque Ferdinands of the cellar chops wood for her, but without the happy ending in the "Tempest." Her coming is described by Gorki: "She flashed on our eyes like a star falling from the sky, and vanished; and maybe because she was little and very beautiful, and everything beautiful calls forth respect, even in coarse people." The dénouement of the story is sad and painful—just one of those smudgy finishes to an idyll that is true to life, and recognized by Burns in two lines:—

"The best laid schemes o' mice and men
Gang aft a-gley."

In the same volume is included a story entitled "Tchelkash." This was written about 1895, and the pictures in grey and silver of a smuggler and a Russian peasant are memorable. The smuggler "Tchelkash" is a hard, sinevy type of man, devoid of fear, and knowing little of the softer side of life, but in spite of this, Gorki succeeds in locating a spark of good in the ruffian. He has exploited Gavriilo the peasant on a night's smuggling and, after a fight, hands over to him the whole of the proceeds—the peasant has "land hunger," and again the Cyrano de Bergerac element enters into the recklessness of the smugglers, who despise the covetousness and rapacity of the peasant.

"My Fellow-Traveller," together with "On a Raft," complete the book. The former is a peculiar story of a wandering by Gorki with a Georgian prince. There is

shrewd sense in the narrative, and it continually reminds the reader of one of Blake's Proverbs of Hell: "He who has suffered you to impose on him know you." For Gorki, the journey was an experience, and as one reads, it is like watching an objectionable character on the stage; the prince is a mean creature, finally disappears at the journey's end, and the story concludes:

"He taught me much than one does not find in the thick volumes of wise philosopher, for the wisdom of life is always deeper and wider than the wisdom of men." If this story is true, Gorki's forbearance and control was wonderful and praiseworthy; it may have been the biggest lesson in his life whereby he was the gainer.

"On a Raft" is slight, and deals with ancient Russian folk-customs, where the father of the bridegroom considered he had rights over his daughter-in-law. Broad strokes fill in the landscape, and it is tragedy and comedy playing battledore and shuttlecock.

Foma Gordyéeff would be written in about the year 1901. The story has the same intensity of clearness in portraying the characters in action and reaction as in the former books, but in this particular one there are a multitude of persons, some described with a minuteness of detail, and others sketched in sufficiently to make them all alive. Foma Gordyéeff was the son of a wealthy merchant, and his second wife, the daughter of an Ural Cossack. She is mentioned as Natalya Fominichna. Morose and silent, she dies after bearing a son—Foma—and the story from that point is an account of the life of him—or, as the title has it—*The Man Who Was Afraid*.

Foma undoubtedly inherits characteristics from his mother that are destined to go with him all through his life. He has, like every mother's son and daughter, the handicap of determinism. And it is this inheritance that Gorki makes the pivot of his story. Sympathy is evoked for Foma as the story is unfolded, and it is loaded with the profound wisdom from the author, whom, it will be remembered, did not come into the world to comply with it. There is a continual conflict proceeding, and he seems to belong to that almost impossible world where no one commands, and no one obeys. There is a hard saying in the Bhagavad Gita that "the wise grieve neither for the living nor for the dead"; this may be taken with a grain of salt—it is on the same level as loving ones enemies; and apart from the words and the practice of those who profess it, it would be interesting to see in society the results. Foma has seen from his father's steamer, the body of a dead man floating in the river; the body is known to those on the steamer as a "guest, and it is shoved away to avoid trouble, inquest, and examination. This makes an impression on Foma, who questions his father Ignat, in the course of the dialogue her father says to Foma, "My dear, is so arranged that death is sometimes a holiday for one, sometimes it is a blessing for all."

At a later time, when his father is dead, Foma meets an old school-friend, Yozhov, who earns his living by writing for newspapers. Foma has almost rioted away his wealth, and has lost his way in the mental world, and he appeals frantically to his friend in youth—"Now tell me what one should do in order to live calmly; that is, in order to be satisfied with one's self?" Yozhov replies: "You must always be in love with something unattainable to you. A man grows in height by stretching himself upwards." Browning in "Cleon" has a line.

"Why stay we on the earth unless to grow?"
But growing is hard work; it is the individual taking stock of himself—and making improvements; an easier line of action is to advise others—and Foma derives little comfort and solace from his friend who has almost reached the state of madness.

Into the intimate thoughts of Gorki we come at a period when Foma is aboard a steamer lost in fog. The thoughts are as true to-day as they were when written:

"Through fog and uncertainty, surrounded on all sides by gloom impenetrable to the age, life is moving somewhere slowly and heavily. And men are grieved over the sins, they sigh heartily, and then fight for a warm place, and asking each other for the sake of possessing the place, they also receive blows from those who strive for order in life. They timidly search for a free road toward the goal."

Foma is finally vanquished by his many merchant enemies—he is put under restraint, and finishes his life with his half-sister. The story concludes with a recounting of the jeers at him as he roams about the streets half-witted and a wreck. It is sad, it is tragic, yet the noblest stuff of life comes from the source. And Gorki, as he gained the mastery over his art, in this book, touches the fundamental side of existence that has been the subject of the greatest dramatists and writers of all ages. How he succeeds may be seen by the reader who dares not primarily want to be entertained, and can command enough energy to go with Gorki for an examination of character and destiny in the figure of Foma Gordyeff, for Gorki has not falsified human nature to suit a moral purpose.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Acid Drops.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle thinks that in the future every well-equipped police station will have a clairvoyant who will provide clues for the police to work on. We do not know that there is anything to prevent clairvoyants and others to detect criminals now. All they have to do is to tell the police what they know—the unfortunate thing is they never appear to have anything worth the telling.

In a prologue to a miracle play, performed in Canterbury Cathedral, one of the characters represented God. The *Daily Express* correspondent felt "profound awe," as was to be expected. If it had happened in a theatre he would have raised a cry about sacrilege. It makes a deal of difference what paper you are writing for, and where the performance takes place. The correspondent also says that never before has such a thing occurred in a cathedral. Not perhaps in a cathedral, but if this gentleman will look up the subject, he will discover that the deity often appeared on the stage in the early miracle plays. But that was in the days when God was thought of as a man, which is the only intelligible and intelligent way to think of. Now he is thought of as a man minus all that makes a man. Which same is a mystery.

The "Wailing Wall" of Jerusalem—the western wall of the Temple of Jerusalem—has again been the scene of pious disorderly conduct. Arab fanatics in large numbers invaded the wall, burning a cupboard used for storing Jewish prayer-books, and damaging a number of books. This serves to remind one that intolerance is not a virtue of which Christians have a monopoly; and that the good old pious practice of persuading the other fellow of the error of his religious ways by making yourself as objectionable to him as possible, is in no danger of dying out. The latest news is that a number of Jews and Arabs have been killed, one Englishman, and one American also killed. Yet there are still people who profess to be scared by the thought of what the world would be like without any religion! Without religion both Arabs and Jews might get on together quite comfortably.

"The Padre," of the *Methodist Times*, assures his readers that hostile criticism of the Churches is the world's tribute to Christ's own standards. He adds that: "non-church-goers usually possess a strong scent for the delinquencies of Church-folk, and this, after all, arises from their sense of what befits the followers of Jesus." "The Padre" is a trifle out in his reckoning. Pious people claim that they are vastly better men and women than non-church-goers, and that it is their religious training and exercises which make them superior. Non-church-goers, however, discover from experience that their pious friends are not better and in some respects—e.g., intolerance and narrow-mindedness—are worse. Hostile criticism arises from the fact that the claims of the pious are seen to be unjustified. Our friend's explanation may suit his readers, but we doubt whether the intelligent non-church-goer will find it con-

vincing. In any case, to admit that the Churches as institutions, and also their adherents, fail and have failed to act according to Christ's teaching is hardly a testimony to the all-conquering power of Jesus.

A contributor in a weekly journal thinks people should keep a watch on their moods, and not go about spreading depression. Men and women who do this, we learn, deserve to be locked up; they are a positive danger to their fellows. We sympathise with this contributor. The doleful lamentations and prophecies concerning Sunday school decline, lack of church patronage, indifference to spiritual matters, and desecration of the Sabbath, which continuously flow from parsons and parsonic scribes, can hardly be deemed anything but depressing. There's one thing we can say. The *Freethinker* does not spread depression. It optimistically affirms that the world is getting better; that mankind is forsaking—gradually maybe—its ancient stupidity of being guided by magic superstition, "sacred" books, heavenly inspiration, and priests; and that the number of people willing to accept Reason as a guide is increasing. No one could rightly say that we deserve to be locked up for disseminating pessimism!

Mr. F. J. Chamberlain, the new Y.M.C.A. Secretary, is rather depressed that the new generation is so taken up with secular interests as to neglect "spiritual ideals." Nevertheless, he spots a silver lining among the dark clouds. This is that the Y.M.C.A. methods are finding a response from the on-coming generation, and that this "proves beyond dispute that the Christian view of life is capable of drawing the attention of and fascinating youth." This pious gent is unduly optimistic. The majority of young people patronize the Association's rooms for its secular amusements. Only a small percentage of its patrons are attracted by its religious side. Moreover, if some philanthropists would organize and equip, on a national scale, club-rooms catering for youth's needs, and open seven days a week, the Y.M.C.A. would soon record a serious shrinkage in number of patrons. Still, we presume the yarn about Y.M.C.A. religions attracting and fascinating youth, serves the useful purpose of conjuring cash from the pockets of pious old ladies of both sexes.

The following is culled from the editorial columns of the *New Chronicle*, a Sunday school weekly:—

Holidays are in truth the opportunity of taking "long views." They were never more needed by Christian people than now. Youth, as always, is in healthy ferment. Church and Sunday school are confronted with challenges which spring from the increasing speed at which the secular progress of the world advances. Education, the supreme ally of religion, is on the point of an immense and eagerly anticipated transformation. Science is becoming, in an unprecedented way, a witness to the spiritual nature of reality.

This sounds as if the pious editor is trying to cheer himself up a bit of auto-suggestion. Youth is revolting against traditional Christian teaching and practice. Churches and Sunday schools are getting emptier. Sunday is everywhere used as a holiday. Education has forced the Churches and Sunday schools to revise their teaching and methods of instruction. But, brethren, if we only take "long-views," the situation is not really so bad it seems, and everything will come right in the end!

The Vicar of Christ Church, Chadderton, Lanes., says there is a peculiar disease that is afflicting Christians. He calls it "Morbid Sabbaticus," and describes its symptom as follows:—

The attack comes on suddenly every Sunday. No symptoms are felt on Saturday night, the patient sleeps well, eats a hearty breakfast, but about church time the attack comes on, and continues till services are over for the morning.

Then the patient feels easy, and eats a hearty dinner. In the afternoon he feels much better, and is able to take a walk, and talk about cricket or politics, but about

church time he gets another attack, and stays at home. He retires early (sometimes), sleeps well, and wakes up on Monday morning refreshed and able to go to work, and does not have any symptoms of the disease until the next Sunday.

The peculiar features of the disease are:—

It always attacks professing church people.

It never makes its appearance except on Sundays.

The symptoms vary, but it never interferes with the sleep and appetite.

It never lasts more than twenty-four hours.

No physician is ever called in.

It is becoming painfully prevalent, and is alarmingly infectious: make no friends of the infected.

No remedy is known for it, except prayer.

Unless checked it always proves fatal in the end—to the soul.

All that need be added is that the disease is on the increase, and it is quite incurable.

The Air Minister told the Lord's Day Observance Society, in reply to a protest against the Schneider Cup Race being held on a Sunday, that the Air Ministry was not responsible for the contest nor for the rules governing it. Nothing daunted, the gallant Secretary of the Lord's Dayers has again appealed to the Minister to exert his powerful influence against these Sunday races, "especially in view of the fact that British machines are taking part at the expense of the National Exchequer." The Lord, and the Lord's Dayers, alone know why this latter fact should be sufficient reason for the Air Minister to endeavour to suppress Sunday air races. What may safely be presumed is that the pious Society would never have thought of protesting against the aforesaid expense if the race was to be held on a week-day. But perhaps, after all, what the Sabbatarian fanatics intended to convey to the Air Minister was that, if he refused to obey their orders and did nothing to suppress Sunday air racing, an adverse church and chapel-vote would be organized at the next election. We hope dear Jesus approves of the methods and tactics by which his beloved followers achieve their godly ends.

Mr. J. B. K. Bradford informs the readers of a daily paper, that by sound scientific reasoning Sir Oliver Lodge has convinced thousands of the reality of a future life. We may suggest that sound scientific reasoning would leave very few people unconvinced. We should much like to know how many people have been converted by Sir Oliver Lodge who had not a previous belief, or who were not actually *looking* for it?

A notorious run-runner, the "Gulf Stream rum-pirate," has just been hanged at Florida. He was found guilty of several murders. It may cheer up those who place so much value upon the comforting power of religion to know that he turned very religious in prison, and played the part of evangelist to the other prisoners. He died calmly proclaiming his lack of malice to all. We expect that he has pardoned the men he killed, and hopes to meet them in heaven—that is, if they repented in time. If they did not, he may think of them in hell, and how much more astute he was.

The Carlton Urban Council has decided to arrange for Children's games on Sunday. The local Free Churches have protested against this on the grounds that it will disturb Sunday quietness. Church bells and Salvation Army bands will not disturb Sunday games, but children's games will. We wonder how long the country will be troubled with those people who would sooner see children grow up dirty and criminal than healthy and happy?

The following piece, from a daily newspaper, is a gallant soldier's best effort in defence of the brutal sport of stag-hunting:—

We know the people like it; we believe the horses like

it; and the hounds like it; and we do not know that the quarry objects to it. Hunting may be productive of all the noble virtues, but apparently it doesn't encourage intelligence. There are still many persons in this nineteenth century England who have yet to be civilized.

As an explanation to account for the decline in Sunday school attendance, a parson says that many former scholars, now parents, are not interested. In the average home of former days, he adds, it used to be "Go." Now it is "please yourself." That is very sad. That much advertised revival of religion is just on the verge of eruption, but seemingly it will have to manage without any aid from former Sunday school scholars or their children. Still, Mr. James Douglas is a host in himself.

Apropos of the announcement of the names of persons appointed to the Royal Commission on Licensing, a Sunday school weekly, which favours total abstinence, thinks the Committee "should prove a well-balanced one." Knowing our contemporary's leaning, we may presume that "well-balanced" means that the balance is on the side of as many pin-pricking restrictions as possible. And this is, of course, as it should be, in the eyes of people to whom the real meaning of "temperance" is unintelligible.

A writer in a pious weekly explains that young people nowadays attend a church or join it because they were brought up there, or because they like the service or the preacher, or because the social life of the church attracts them. As an explanation these regrettable facts, we humbly suggest that the young people's natural religious instinct has not been nourished with the proper religious manure. There seems no other way to account for the fact that it has failed to blossom with "love of Jesus."

Christian Missionary Societies are hard put to it, to justify the enormous expenditure, and the ridiculously inadequate results of their propaganda in China and Japan. It is calculated that there are 15,000 Christians in Japan after a century or more of Christian effort. The 15,000 includes immigrants, and it is said to represent "a continuous increase." If so the increase must be remarkable for its leisured stride. The *Japan Advertiser* (Tokyo) says, that at this rate of speed it will take Christianity another 10,000 years to make any impression on Japan. The Americans are subscribing considerable funds still for this wild-goose purpose. The only consolation for Christians seems to be the *Literary Digest's* claim, that there are few Christians, but a lot of Christianity in Japan. Less than half of one per cent of the Japanese has accepted the Christian profession, but then look at the immense growth in Japanese battleships, guns, and fighting forces! Evidences of Christianity presumably!

There is another explanation of the persistency of these missions. There may be no converts, but there will always be missionaries. The *Student Volunteer Bulletin*, an American Missionary Journal, says there is a continual increase year after year in American missionary enterprise. More money than ever is being subscribed, and, continues the *Bulletin*:—

Outgoing missionaries last year numbered 667. Yet it must be remembered that even these 667 new missionaries who did sail in 1928 are not enough to maintain missionary personnel abroad at the present totals. Conservative estimates state that at least 1,500 new missionaries are needed annually to make good the inevitable losses, due to retirement, ill-health, and other causes, of the total Protestant mission forces of about 30,000 missionaries. In the past, North America has furnished over four-sevenths of that total. This means that at least 850 new missionaries will be needed each year from North America if our boards are to maintain their present missionary forces. However, the average for the past three years has been 28 per cent below the required replacement number.

National Secular Society

The Funds of the National Secular Society are now legally controlled by Trust Deed, and those who wish to benefit the Society by gift or bequest may do so with complete confidence that any money so received will be properly administered and expended.

The following form of bequest is sufficient for anyone who desires to benefit the Society by will:—

I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society, and I direct that a receipt signed by two of the trustees of the said Society shall be a good discharge to my executors for the said legacy.

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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.

D. MATHEWS (Transvaal).—Sorry that the subject of controversy is now far away that readers would not be able to follow your reply. That is one of the disadvantages of living at a distance. Regret very much to hear of the ill-health experienced by your wife and yourself. Hope to hear better news when next you write. Given good health, and nothing else matters very much.

P. N. PATINSON (U.S.A.).—Pleased to know that you consider the *Freethinker* the best expression of Freethought in the language. All we can say, we try our best to make it so. It is written by those who do their own thinking for those who think for themselves.

A. J. MATHIE.—The damnation of unbaptized infants was asserted by Augustine. We are not aware that this doctrine was ever adopted in so many words by Spurgeon, although it may have been so. Spurgeon believed that escape from hell had nothing to do with personal merit, but that however bad one might be, repentance the moment before death would land one in heaven.

M. COLVIN AND A.H.M.—Received. Thanks.

J. C. MACKAY.—Mr. Chapman Cohen has booked December 8 and February 16 for Glasgow. Subjects later.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—Hugh Close, 10s.

W. JOB.—Sorry we cannot supply the information requested.

F. THORNTON BERRY.—We have not received a copy of the work. If it comes to hand, and is likely to be interesting to our readers, it will receive notice.

S. THOMPSON.—We do not agree with you. St. Augustine was really an able man, but with cranky views. Hence his Christianity.

A.M.—There is edition of Leopardi's Essays published by Routledge & Co., at 2s.

Will subscribers please not that we have discontinued notifying that subscriptions to this paper by means of a green wrapper. A printed notice will be inserted in its place.

A. STELLING.—Newsagents are supplied with this paper mainly through the wholesalers. We have no means of telling how many copies go to particular towns. All we are certain of is that we should like more to go—and still more.

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

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

The "*Freethinker*" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—
One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

Sugar Plums.

We have several times called attention to the powers assumed by both the police and magistrates in connexion with public meetings, but we are now so Germanized by officials, that no one seems to question an order so long as it is given by some one in uniform. At some of the places visited by Freethought speakers for delivering open-air addresses, it is customary for a policeman to approach them and ask if they have a permit from the chief of police to hold the meeting, and if they have not, to order the meeting to disperse. Now the police have no power whatever to issue such permits. We are going that way, but the right of public meeting in England has not yet reached the point of being at the goodwill of a policeman. The police have the power to summons anyone for causing an obstruction for inciting to a breach of the peace, or causing annoyance. But they have no other power. The public streets are open to public meetings, provided the conditions named do not arise. As an act of courtesy, one may ask the police whether a meeting may be held at a particular spot, and as an act of courtesy, the information may be given. But that is no more than the courtesy of a citizen willing to help an official in the discharge of his duty. Enclosed spaces under charge of a public body come under different considerations.

The other morning we took the trouble to listen to one of the early religious services, and anything more intellectually contemptible it would be impossible to conceive. From beginning to end the prayers were composed of grovel and eadge. "O Lord, we are poor and ineffective," "Oh Lord, give us this or that, but give us plenty of what we want." It is difficult to realize self-respecting men and women grovelling in this manner, any God who had the instincts of a man would feel inclined to blast such followers off the earth. One has to be bred to this religion of grovel and gabble to get attached to it. Even the intonation of the ordinary religious service is enough to make one squirm.

The *Literary Guide* notes our comments on the question of the Secular Society, Limited and the trial of G. W. Foote for Blasphemy, as though it is anxious that, in view of what we said, the credit due to Mr. Foote should not be minimized. That caused us to smile. We expressly objected that the account given in the *History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century*, of the Secular Society, Limited as inadequate, and that justice was not done to the importance of the work done by Mr. Foote, and to the historic nature of his trial before Lord Chief Justice Coleridge. In our judgment that trial was—not because it was a trial for blasphemy, but because of the careful statement of the then position of the Common Law of Blasphemy it called forth—one of the most important trials for blasphemy ever held; and Foote's speech in defence was, in our opinion one of the finest speeches ever made in a blasphemy trial. Taking the trial and the tremendous value to the whole of the Freethought Movement of the Secular Society, Limited, we gave our opinion, and still hold to it, that much greater justice should have been done to G. W. Foote, even though less space had been given to men of much greater social standing, and whose work, therefore, was not so carefully hidden from the general public.

Leo Tolstoy.

(Continued from page 532.)

It has been said of Heine that no wonder acquaintances fought shy of him, when he gave greeting with his right hand, and pinched agonizingly with his left. The same remark would apply still more truthfully to Tolstoy. His conduct towards Tourgénéf was disgraceful. Tourgénéf was ten years older than Tolstoy, and was acclaimed as the greatest Russian writer of his time, until *War and Peace* appeared. Many of us have thought he was the greater all along—and modern opinion, escaped from the Victorian bonds and shackles, is coming to the same opinion—yet, as Alymer Maude observes, "Tolstoy showed him no deference, but on the contrary often attacked his views with mordant irony."¹⁶ As he further remarks: "Tourgénéf was neither ill-natured nor quarrelsome . . . the younger man sought the elder's company, and then made himself disagreeable." Not out of malice, says Maude, "but because it was his nature to demand perfection from great men." Yet Tolstoy was very far from being perfect himself, for as the same writer admits: "This conduct was no doubt all the more trying for Tourgénéf, because Tolstoy neither co-operated with the Liberal Movement then current, nor lived more abstemiously with regard to food, wine, women, and cards than others of his set whom he scolded."

It seems to us more likely that Tolstoy's conduct was the result of jealousy. He could not endure a rival in the literary field, and this was probably at the bottom of his attack on Shakespeare: "Did he honestly believe," asks Stefan Zweig, "that Beethoven was a 'seducer to sensuality,' that Shakespeare's plays were 'meaningless twaddle,' that Nietzsche's writings were coarse, foolishly emphatic babble,' that Pushkin's works were 'only fit to use as cigarette paper for the people'?"¹⁷ One day, on parting from Tchéhof, whose plays have been so successful here lately, Tolstoy said: "You are a very good fellow, and I am very fond of you; and as you know, I can't bear Shakespeare, but still, his plays are better than yours!" So he could not have thought them so bad after all.

Tolstoy was in the habit of saying the most cutting things to his friends, but woe betide them if they criticized him. He could bandy insults with impunity, for he was possessed of immense physical strength. He was remembered in his battery as: "an athlete, who lying on the floor could let a man weighing thirteen stone, be placed on him, and could lift him by straightening his arms."¹⁸ And his ambition had been "to become the strongest man in the world." Yet, the poet, describes his first sight of Tolstoy; he was sleeping off a debauch, in the drawing-room of Tourgénéf's house. Tourgénéf told Fet that Tolstoy came straight to him from his battery at Sevastopol, and had been going the pace ever since. "Sprees, gipsy-girls, [prostitutes] and cards all night long—and then he sleeps like a corpse till two in the afternoon. At first I tried to put the break on, but now I've given it up, and let him do as he likes."¹⁹ Fet also tells us that the first time he met Tolstoy: "he noticed his instinctive defiance of all accepted opinions; and at Nekrasof's lodgings, the first time he saw Tolstoy and Tourgénéf together, he witnessed the desperation to which the former reduced the latter." He describes the scene; which ended by

Tourgénéf, who was worked up to a frenzy and panting with excitement, telling Tolstoy, in a voice rising to falsetto, to go to the salon of his Princess B——! And Tolstoy coolly replying: "Why should I ask you, where I am to go? Besides, empty talk won't become conviction merely because I am, or am not here."²⁰

Grigorovitch, the Russian novelist, describes a similar scene:—

You can't imagine what it was like! Great Heavens! said Grigorovitch. Tourgénéf squeaked and squeaked, holding his hand to his throat, and with the eyes of a dying gazelle whispered: "I can stand no more! I have bronchitis!" and began walking to and fro through the three rooms—"Bronchitis is an imaginary illness," growls Tolstoy after him: "Bronchitis is a metal!" . . . Tolstoy, in the middle room, lay sulking on the morocco sofa; while Tourgénéf spreading the tails of his short coat, and with his hands in his pockets, strode to and fro through the three rooms. To avert a catastrophe, I went to the sofa and said, "Tolstoy, old chap, don't get excited! You don't know how he esteems you and loves you!"

"I won't allow him to do anything to spite me!" exclaimed Tolstoy with dilated nostrils. "There! Now he keeps marching past me on purpose, wagging his democratic haunches!"²¹

The rest of the evidence, as to Tolstoy's irritating and pugnacious nature, which never altered, is of a similar nature. "Of desire to agree," says Alymer Maude, "there was hardly a trace in Tolstoy, who never doubted his own sincerity, and seldom credited that quality to others." It is owing to this side of his character, he adds, that Tolstoy "has had very few intimate friends, and has constantly been misunderstood."²² Yet, his friendship and admiration for Tolstoy, leads him to try and fix the blame on the mild and inoffensive Tourgénéf! Few will believe it. Gorky, who knew Tolstoy well, declared: "it is trying to meet him often. Personally I should find it impossible to live in the same house with him, not to mention in the same room."²³

The same spirit pervades all Tolstoy's work. His novels fill one with a vague disquiet. He communicates his own dissatisfaction with life, and the world in general, to his readers. Like Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, he holds you with his piercing eyes, and you read on to the final catastrophe, or dénouement. There is a complete absence of humour, of wit, and the joy of life. As Stefan Zweig observes, the skies are uniformly grey over a sombre landscape:—

When we read Tolstoy, we feel that winter will soon be here; that nature is dying; that all men are grass; and that our own particular embodiment of the universal human life must ere long perish . . . These books make readers serious and reflective . . . never a smile to throw a fugitive charm across these unmeaning activities; always a ruthless, a cruelly sober portrayal of gloom, an uninterrupted analysis of a madhouse drama, the impressions of an embittered observer who will not allow himself to be deluded by any false consolers.²⁴

Tolstoy's works, like the Bible, have been extravagantly over praised. He lacks imagination and humour. Take his greatest work *War and Peace*. What is it but a panorama of the aristocratic Russian Society which Tolstoy knew from the inside, plus a description of Napoleon's invasion of Russia as seen through the eyes of Prince Andrew and Peter, who are merely projections of Tolstoy himself? Tolstoy's eyes were very keen and missed nothing. He watched everything going on, and had a wonderful memory

¹⁶ Maude: *Life of Tolstoy: First Fifty Years*. p. 221.

¹⁷ Zweig: *Adepts in Self-Portraiture*. p. 306.

¹⁸ *The Private Diary of Leo Tolstoy (1853-1857)*. p. xv.

¹⁹ Maude: *Life of Tolstoy, First Fifty Years*. p. 140.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 140.

²¹ *Ibid.* pp. 140-141.

²² *Ibid.* pp. 141-223.

²³ Maxim Gorky: *Fragments from My Diary*. p. 200.

²⁴ Stefan Zweig: *Adepts in Self-Portraiture*. pp. 254-255.

for recording it later on. He gives us a vivid picture of the corruption and rottenness that surrounded the Court. The struggle for titles, honours, decorations, and Government jobs, by the worthless parasites who had done nothing to deserve them. As Stefan Zweig remarks: "this man has no powers of invention, who is competent only to recount the experienced and the perceived, can never exclude himself, the experiencer, the perceiver, from the field of vision." And when, after his conversion, he becomes doctrinaire: "his characters pale, and are no longer convincing. They wither in the cold light of reason. The reader stumbles over logical prolixities, and wearily gropes his way to the exit . . . The more Tolstoy surrenders to the 'despotisms of morality,' the more he departs from the sensuous veracity which is the primal element of his genius to lose himself in a dialectical Cuckoo—Cloudland."²³

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

The Lay of a B.A.

An Open Letter, with an Introduction to the
(Rev.) J. R. Higgs, B.A.

If the (Rev.) J. R. Higgs, [B.A.]'s letter is an elaborate leg-pull, it is exceedingly well done; and we congratulate the writer, who displays his university degree to some purpose, B.A. signifying Brightly Argumentative.

If the letter, however, be intended seriously, which we can hardly believe (August 15, 1929), we hesitate, out of some relics of chivalry that we still possess, to beard one who ventures so naively into the Lion's Den. "A spaniel come to judgment?" However, duty is duty; and some duties are pleasant. So we obey the voice of Conscience, O Mr. Higgs, though we will try not to hit too hard. More than that we can promise no parson, B.A., or no B.A., living.

* * *

Now, Mr. Higgs, come, come. We really *must* dissent. You have *not* "spent many hours in the London parks proving to them [Atheists] the futility of their position." You have only (more modestly) *attempted* to prove it. If you had *proved* it (a thing impossible in nature) you would have convinced or converted them. How many—honestly, now—have you convinced or converted to date?

Mind you, we are not blaming you; no doubt you did your best (we would not say "damnedest"); but, my dear Sir, Big game hunting with a peashooter . . .

"If," you say, meaning the *Freethinker*, "claims to be up to date, ahead of the time, etc., etc." Would you be so courteous as to expand that "etc., etc."? Surely "up to date, ahead of the time" fills the bill, as it were? We suggest, modestly, that the pulpit habit of exaggeration, hyperbole, etc., etc., is responsible for this regrettable redundancy, dear Sir. Do not, we beg you, ask us to expand out "etc., etc." We would not willingly shock you.

And oh! that poor, long-suffering "General Public"! Spoon-fed with decaying tripe, it is supposed, by the innocent English Parsonry, to be hotly eager after anything in the slush-mush-gush line that those dear educative newspapers please to ladle-out to it; free crosswords, cinema stars' legs, monks' ghosts, the ethics of modern statuary, the virtues of jumble sales, the ethics of Hollywood, and anything else that comes handily to the enterprising, impartial, highly-paid, public (house)-spirited journalists, who naturally

love that dear Saviour of theirs who has inspired so many original panegyrics, at "three guineas a thousand." So our impartial, disinterested newspapers—throbbing with a philanthropy and patent-medicine advertisements—are "satisfying the demand by publishing articles on religious subjects," are they, my dear Sir? Really! It is astounding, when you come to think of it, isn't it?

"Twenty or thirty years ago," or two or three hundred years ago, or two or three thousand years ago, was the Golden Age of Atheism; to-day, on the other hand, is the day of Jesus. We seem to have heard or read something like that before, once or twice, or one of two hundred times, or one or two thousand times . . . but no! we will be kind to you. But Atheism, you will admit, must have a fine, strong, healthy constitution to survive so many declines and falls.

Dear and reverend Sir, B.A., why do you think that the six points of your Charter in favour of "God" annoy us?

Those six points are not so pointed as they may appear to you.

1. "Millions listen in to a religious service." How do you know that they do? As the friends of "God" here nobbled the B.B.C., and no alternative to holy howlery and Druidic drawlings is provided, the poor "General Public" do not seem to have much option, do they?

2. Who are "best" philosophers and scientists? You speak of men as though they were labelled and priced, like tea or tobacco. The "best"! Names, Sir, please. Wake up!

3. "Most schools insist on religious instruction." Of course they *insist*; because they know, as well as we do, what would happen if they didn't.

4. "The Press is increasingly willing to educate the public mind (the public mind!) religiously." It is also willing to do anything else that pays.

5. The Bible has a greater circulation than any other book in the world. As it is printed for free distribution and sale below cost price, by numerous societies, run by interested pietists, is this surprising? Religion is a vested interest in this country, and heavily-subsidized at that. Edgar Wallace or John Oxenham would have just as large a circulation in similar circumstances.

6. Certainly the fact that that excellent man the King, scholar and theologian, goes regularly to church proves Christianity to be true. Who doubts that? It would be disloyal, and even "Red."

Now, dear Mr. Higgs, B.A., *next* time you go on the Atheist-converting lay in the London parks', look out; or your audience may quote this article at you. Wouldn't we love to be there!

Yours, in or out of Christ, as you please,
VICTOR B. NEUBURG.

YE Princes of the Earth, ye sit aghast
Amid the ruin which yourselves have made,
Yes, desolation heard your trumpet's blast,
And sprang from sleep!—dark Terror has obeyed
Your bidding—O, that I whom you have made
Your foe, could set my dearest enemy free
From pain and fear! but evil casts a shade,
Which cannot pass so soon, and Hate must be
The nurse and parent still of an ill progeny.

Ye turn to Heaven for aid in your distress;
Alas, that ye though mighty and the wise,
Who, if he dared, might not aspire to less
Than ye conceive of power, should fear the lies
Which thou, and thou, didst frame for mysteries
To bind your slaves?—consider your own thought,
An empty and a cruel sacrifice
Ye now prepare, for a vain idol wrought
Out of the fears and hate which vain desires have
brought

²³ *Ibid.* p. 258.

A New Legend.

I.

"Sumer is y-comen in,
Loud sing cuckoo;
Sing cuckoo!
Merrie sing cuckoo!
Cuckoo, cuckoo;
Well thou singest cuckoo!"

writes an unknown medieval poet.

To him responds the popular singer:—

"The cuckoo is a pretty bird,
He singeth as he flies,
He beareth us good tidings,
He telleth us no lies."

Edmund Spenser takes up the strain:—

"The merry Cuckoo, messenger of Spring."

John Lyly carried it on with:—

"Hark how the jolly cuckoos sing
Cuckoo, to welcome in the spring."

Shakespeare mentions:—

"The plain-song cuckoo grey,
Whose note full many a man doth mark
And dare not answer Nay."

Logan cries:—

"Hail! beauteous stranger of the grove!"

Wordsworth welcomes him with ecstasy:—

"Oh blithe newcomer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice."

So the laudatory chorus goes on to the modern lay:—

"The cuckoo sat in the old pear tree.

Cuckoo!
Singing as loud as loud could be
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"

Not a poet names the cuckoo but to praise.

For an exception the unknown priests and scribes who compiled the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy classify with severe practicality the cuckoo as an unclean bird not to be eaten by Jews, quaintly including the bat in the same list of uneatable fowl.

The common man, walking along the highroad or working in the fields cocks his head, and in heightened tone says "Hark! The cuckoo!"

The bird's monotonous iteration of two notes seems to have a hypnotic effect, so that grave and elderly gentlemen write letters to the newspapers stating the first date on which they heard the cuckoo, and are jealous of anyone who antedates them.

This is all most curious in these days of wide knowledge and exact research.

Time was when everything known about the cuckoo was contained in the rural doggerel:—

"The cuckoo comes in April;
Sings a song in May.
In June changes tune,
And in July flies away."

We of the present age know a great deal more, and can examine the case of the cuckoo dispassionately, not misled by the bird's reputation of being harbinger of spring.

Else there were danger of thinking that spring could not come without the cuckoo; that his "two-fold shout" woke the vernal season into activity, as Rostand's "Chantecler" thought he called up the sun at morn, which would be carrying cuckoo-olatry to absurd lengths.

II.

Wordsworth approached the nearest solution of the problem of the cuckoo.

Wordsworth approached many problems in a startlingly modern spirit, but failed to explicate them because of too strong a sense of reverence. He lacked the necessary scepticism, the iconoclasm essential to exposing what appears recondite but is really simple. A dash of vinegar when he mixed his salad, a spot of acid in his composition; but plainly a critical as well as appreciative sense, and a tiny amount of cynicism would have made Wordsworth the prophet of modernity, as well as saving him from being sometimes ridiculous.

For the truth about the cuckoo we have to turn to those people who teach us the principles of reincarnation and transmigration of souls.

In some former existence the cuckoo was a politician. Here elements of doubt and disputation creep in.

There are those who see in the character of the cuckoo resemblances to the priest and even to the Pope himself. As Milton informs us "New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ large," an irresistible inference is drawn from the young cuckoo's practice of throwing its birth-mates out of the parental nest, though they have the hereditary right there.

This overthrowing of ancient rights points again to the politician. Andrew Marvell clinches the point with:—

"Though Justice against Fate complain,
And plead the ancient Rights in vain—
But those do hold or break
As men are strong or weak."

Suggested also is the military or revolutionary leader. The priestly and Papal comparisons may be dismissed now, as the cry "To hell with the Pope!" is discredited even in those places where it was once cried loudest, and perhaps believed and hoped.

Some there are who, fastening on the cuckoo's inveterate song would make him the prototype of the school-teacher or the lecturer or the moralist with this repetitious zeal.

More believable are those who say the cuckoo is the apotheosis of the advertising agent. Birds with a wide range of song, pleasing to hear, attract less notice than this impudent persister, who cries aloud two notes only till everyone listens, and some admire and praise.

III.

Wrote Burns:—

"He looks as sign-board Lions do,
As fierce, and just as harmless too."

Who or what but a creaking painted inn-sign, a politician and a cuckoo could assume such cockatoo-crested ferocity? The scarecrow in the cornfield knows not the elements of its business in comparison.

As Rosalind wittily observes to Celia:—

"A gallant curtle-axe upon my thigh,
A boar-spear in my hand! and (in my heart
Lie there what hidden woman's fears there will),
We'll have a swashing and a martial outside;
As many other mannish cowards have,
That do outface it with their semblances."

So in the last European War it was a lawyer-politician who shouted, "We will not sheath the sword!"

He would hardly have known which end of a drawn sword to grasp, and certainly could not have swung one. Like the propaganda campaigns carried on during that war, it was the cry of "Cuckoo!"

On examination all politicians' cries are found to resemble the twofold note of that bird.

Twofold! Wordsworth's "twofold shout" is significant. It is synonymous with the vulgar "two-faced" for hypocrisy?

"Thy twofold shout I hear;
From hill to hill it seems to pass,
At once far off and near."

"Babbling only
a tale

Of visionary hours."

"No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery;"

No! No mystery, but a demagog, a self-advertiser, a politician.

A bird which makes its young parasitic upon and destructive of others; which apes the ferocious hawk till seen closely, when the small birds mob it and compel it to flee ignominiously; which attracts more notice than any other bird, yet gives in return merely two unvarying notes: one marvels that our ancestors, with such a capacity they had for the legendary, did not recognize the cuckoo to be an obvious prototype.

Or in the antique ballad of the cuckoo is the line—"He telleth us no lies"—delicately subtle satire?

Hamlet, accounted mad, that is really saner than his fellows, has an inkling of the truth. He says to Horatio:—

"This might be the pate of a politician, which this
ass now o'er-reaches; one that would circumvent God,
might it not?"

Horatio should have replied that his spirit would live for ever, flying as a double-noted bird, catching the ears of the groundlings.

A Sad Case.

In the office letter-box I recently found a Tract, entitled, "Our Family of Ten Atheists—and God." My first impression was "An enemy hath done this," but on reading, I found it a very pathetic case.

A family of ten cast-iron Atheists, father, mother, seven boys and one girl. I must, however, direct attention of the "Free Tract Society" to a fatal mistake. That family of Atheists is reported as having a good home, being very happy, and the parents high-principled people. Really, that sort of thing is not done in Christian tracts you know. The Atheist daughter was even beautiful, and guarded against all evil. Just ridiculous in a Christian tract.

Well, they were all very happy until two days before the daughter's wedding, when she saw an announcement of a Salvationist meeting. Events then moved rapidly. She went to the meeting, and soon afterwards a strange light shone in her eyes. She surrendered to God, got married, danced a little after the ceremony, then went upstairs, had a hemorrhage of the lungs, and died on Good Friday. She found God and God evidently found her.

The mother was so overcome with grief that her mind gave way; God seized the opportunity, and during her mental affliction the mother threw in her lot with God.

One of the boys began to show signs of mental trouble, and eventually threw himself into the sea. He was rescued, and provided another great capture for the Lord. He tried to convert his father, but the old man being strong in mind was impregnable. God, however, was not to be thwarted, and when the poor old father was sixty-eight, the tract tells us, "He received Jesus as his Saviour like a little child."

He is now in heaven, and prayers are asked for the mother who is, or was dying of cancer in the stomach. The other brothers have been saved, but their misfortunes are not recorded.

My tract reading is not extensive, but surely it is strange to find a religious tract tracing the conversion of a happy family of Atheists, into a broken family of suffering Christians.

That the story is true cannot be doubted on the evidence. The tract is without date, but we are told the Rev. Mr. Leynse unfolded the story before a meeting in Peking last year. Miss Jean Graham wrote it down, and Mrs. Jonathan Goforth, of China, gave it to the world.

R. H. ROSETTI.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

IS SCIENCE RELIABLE?

SIR,—Mr. Kerr obviously identifies science with scientists. I do not. Nor do I know of a shadow of a reason why I should. Had he asked, "Are Scientists Reliable?" I defy anyone's no to be louder than mine. To me the term Science stands *not* for an authoritative pronouncement by an individual scientist, however highly placed he may be in his profession, or however august his credentials, but by the consensus of beliefs which have acquired the status of admitted truths after ages of sifting. The filtering is very analogous to that performed in the purification of water in filter beds by passing it through layer after layer of gravel and sand of successive fineness. Similarly, the beliefs, the hypotheses, and the theories advocated by the scientists of one age, are subjected to the scientific filtering of successive generations, and as the porosity of the filtering bed gets more and more fine and efficient, even minor mistakes and imperfections are removed and the filtrate is a resultant free from error.

A notable instance of the process in action is furnished by the history of the Theory of Descent. If ever one could be excused for identifying science with a scientist, it would be in the case of the immortal Darwin (though through some unaccountable stupidity, I omitted his great name in my last letter). But it is not the fact

that the Origin of Species was propounded by Darwin that has established the theory as *Science* to-day; but that other fact—*viz.*, that it has passed the filter beds virtually unaltered.

It is *not* "the general public" that constitutes the filter, but the scientists of later generations. To identify science with scientists is to confound the filtrate with the filter.

KERIDON.

SIR,—In persisting in damning scientists, lock, stock and barrel, because here and there some particular scientist has erred, Mr. Kerr but sinks himself deeper in the mire. His false conclusions, based as they are on inductive reasoning, that is, on arguing from the particular to the general, from the individual to the universal, stand out naked and, alas, unashamed. Of course scientists, even front-rank ones, make mistakes, as do people in other walks of life, but it is surely a question of relativity. Were all the printed statements made by scientists in a given year to be put into one bag, and all those made by theologians in the same period to be put into another bag, and a hundred draws made from each, I think most of your readers would agree that the result would be to show a minimum of error on the part of the scientists, and a minimum of truth on the part of the theologians. No one, probably, has made fewer mistakes than the late Professor Huxley who, pre-eminent in the sphere of biology, had a long, versatile, and at times gladiatorial career in the whole arena of science yet, than he, few have been more tolerant and sympathetic towards the mistakes of others. Only when he came up against individuals who, aliens to the realms of science, recklessly plunged into, and dogmatized upon it, or when his keen eye detected an opponent wilfully indulging in false statements to serve some desired end, was he utterly merciless, as, for example, when, at the Oxford meeting of the British Association in 1860, he subjected the unfortunate "Soapy Sam"¹ to a well-deserved trouncing. Yet what has Huxley to say concerning people who make mistakes? :—

"Next to being right in this world, the best of all things is to be clearly and definitely wrong, because you will come out somewhere. If you go buzzing about between right and wrong, vibrating and fluctuating, you come out nowhere, but if you are absolutely and thoroughly and persistently wrong, you must, some of these days, have the extreme good fortune of knocking your head against a fact, and that sets you all straight again." And elsewhere he says, more tersely :—

"The only people, scientific or other, who never make mistakes, are those who do nothing."

CHARLES M. BEADNELL.

[We have received also a letter from C. S. Fraser, dealing with this subject, for which we regret we are unable to find space.—EDITOR.]

THE POTENCY OF THE HELL-DOGMA.

SIR,—I wish to draw the special attention of your readers to one sentence in your last article, "Science and Religion." The sentence is: "... much as the Christian Church first developed the idea of hell to frighten people into believing, and then offered the 'way of Salvation' as the only method of escaping it." For many years I have been fully convinced that it was the dogma of hell that established Christianity as a world religion. The fiendishness of the dogma, coupled with the fact that refusal to believe was ferociously denounced as the most heinous crime, terrorized people into professing it.

And the Roman Church to-day knows full well that the hell dogma is its most effective weapon to perpetuate its religion, and that is why it sticks to it like grim death.

Many a time I was on the point of writing an article merely to draw attention to this basic fact. And now I gain my object by simply emphasizing the deep significance of your remark.

KERIDON.

¹ Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford.

Society News.

THE last week at Swansea provided the most exciting meetings of the year. There were none of the bad-mannered interruptions usually found when opening out in a fresh town, and but for rain which the meeting bore for some time, we should have registered some new members.

The Sunday evening meeting was the largest ever addressed by Mr. Whitehead at Swansea, which is famous for its good Freethought meetings on the sands. A local curate, who made himself offensive on a previous visit, took the platform in opposition. He began by offering to fight the speaker, and when a listener remonstrated, he threatened to "thump" the man "under the jaw." He later described Mr. Whitehead as "a gaol bird" and "a liar," for which latter epithet he was obliged to apologise.

The curate promised to attend later meetings and provide proof for some of his statements, but failed to do so. There was, however, a correspondence in the local press—reprinted in part, in the *Western Mail*, in which Mr. Whitehead and the Secretary of the local Branch took part.

The curate's failure to be present at any meeting after his solemn promise to do so, together with his general tactics, have disgusted thousands in Swansea, where the whole affair made a tremendous sensation.

For the rest, good meetings, immense sympathy, scores of congratulations, written and oral, and large sales of *Freethinkers* attended our efforts, and the whole three weeks may be counted as highly successful.

The local members helped very willingly, and Mr. Moore, the Secretary, worked efficiently and with enthusiasm for the whole period.

From August 31 until September 6 inclusive, Mr. Whitehead will be at Langworthy Road, Salford.

MR. J. CLAYTON continues to hold successful meetings in N. E. Lancashire. In each place visited—at nearly all a Freethought Mission is a new thing, and the speaker has to usually depend upon himself to act as chairman and speaker—it becomes clearer with each visit, that a good impression is being made. At Great Harwood the meeting was prolonged until the speaker had to make a run to catch the last motor-bus home. At Blackburn good meetings were also held, and in between special lectures local Freethinkers do what they can by holding free and easy discussions to keep the ball rolling. Other places were also visited with good results. This part of Lancashire is just a cluster of towns, and there is plenty of work for speakers. It would be a good thing if some local speakers developed who could keep the ball rolling between visits from outsiders. A quantity of literature was distributed at each meeting. A note of the success of the meetings at Higham appears in the local paper.—J.C.

Think not thy wisdom can illumine away
The ancient tanglement of night and day.
Enough to acknowledge both, and both reverse,
They see not clearliest who see all things clear.

Lives there whom pain hath ever more passed by
And sorrow shunned with an arrested eye!
Him do now pity—him above the rest,
Him of all hapless mortals most unblest.

Sir William Watson.

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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, Moogate, E.C.2): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"The Road Before Us."

OUTDOOR.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrols Road, North End Road): Saturday, 8.0; Effie Road, Walham Green Station, Sunday, 8.0—Various Speakers.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan; Brockwell Park, 6.30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan; Wednesday, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Mr. F. Mann; 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—A Lecture.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. F. Mann—A Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Outside Technical College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine—"The Bible and the Truth."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith): 3.30, Mr. James Hart and Mr. C. Tuson.

STREATHAM COMMON BRANCH N.S.S., 6.30, Mr. Preece—A Lecture.

PINSBURY PARK N.S.S., 11.15, Mr. Preece—A Lecture.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.30, Mr. James Hart; 3.30, Messrs E. Betts and B. A. Le Maine; 6.30, Messrs C. Tuson and A. H. Hyatt. Freethought meetings every Wednesday at 7.30, Messrs C. Tuson and J. Hart. Every Friday, at 7.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. The *Freethinker* may be obtained during our meetings outside the Park Gate, Bayswater Road.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

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

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S.—Ramble to Balloch. Meet at Queen Street Station at 11.15, train leaves at 12.2.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beaumont Street): Monday, September 2, 7.30 Mr. J. V. Short—A Lecture.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. George Whitehead will lecture as follows: Saturday, August 31, Corner of Langworthy Road, and Liverpool Street, Salford, at 7.30 p.m.; Sunday, September 1, Stevenson Square, Manchester, at 3.0 and 6.30 p.m.; Monday to Friday, September 2 to 6, Corner of Langworthy Road and Liverpool Street, Salford, at 7.30 p.m.

MR. J. CLAYTON will lecture at the following places during the week: Sunday, September 1, Hapton, 3.15, Todmorden, 7.45; Monday 2, Colne (Outside Station), 8.0; Friday, 6, Earfield (Barnes Square), 8.0.

Miscellaneous Advertisements.

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