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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>Religion and the B.B.C.—The Editor</i> . . . . .	721
<i>A Roland for Sir Oliver.—Mimnermus</i> . . . . .	722
<i>Tolstoy and Jesus Christ.—W. Mann</i> . . . . .	723
<i>Luther was Not a Puritan.—(Reverend) Ray H. Abrams</i> . . . . .	724
<i>A Study in Atheism.—J. E. Roose</i> . . . . .	726
<i>Dolet.—G. W. Foote</i> . . . . .	730
<i>Does Man Survive Death.—A. D. McLaren</i> . . . . .	731
<i>Black (coated) Justice in U.S.A.—George Bedborough</i> . . . . .	733
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions.

Religion and The B.B.C.

So far as the vast mass of the public are concerned, its education to-day lies chiefly in the hands of the press, the cinema, and the B.B.C. With rare exceptions the aim of the press is frankly commercial. Its news service is magnificent and costly; but what it gives and what it does are governed by its devotion to the great God Circulation. In its service it will exploit any passion or play to any prejudice; and where each has served its purpose, denunciation will take the place of advocacy. The evil is that the British public is not a reading public of good books, and so lies helpless before the stunt monger and the writer of sensational headings.

The aim of the cinema appears to be that of carefully refraining from disturbing any established opinion. The Board of Censors sees to it that nothing shall run counter to the most stupid of religious prejudices, and when it shows religious pictures, signed O.K. by the great "Tay Pay," their theology may be counted recent if it dates no further back than a century. If it is important to stereotype stupidity when most pictures may be said to be doing a valuable educational work. I speak as one who goes often to the "pictures" although I find my chief entertainment in the comments of the audience. They really are educative. Those who want to understand the mentality of a general election, or the reason why we still have wars, and other social monstrosities should never neglect the silent pictures. The "talkies" are just a hindrance to folk-study.

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How it was Done.

The B.B.C. also originally aimed—so far as politics, sociology and religion are concerned—at keeping established opinions as they were. This could not be quite effectually done in regard to politics, although even here for a long time it sheltered behind the plea that it could not have controversial matter broadcast.

Strictly interpreted this meant that speakers would have had strictly to confine themselves to a recitation of the multiplication table, and if that had been intoned to a Church organ, there is no doubt that the B.B.C. would have received many letters as to the great comfort derived from its religious service. With religion the B.B.C. commenced very quietly. Sir John Reith has just explained to a meeting of the clergy at Leamington that he did this on his own. "No initiative came from the Church, and not much encouragement, because there were clergymen who were more concerned about the possible diminution in their own congregations than about the spread of a message to fifteen millions of people." Naturally. What is the use to a parson of a religious service which leaves him out? He wants you to have religion, but he also wants you to have him with it. A religion that leaves out the parson does not interest him very much.

So the B.B.C. went on giving us increasing doses of religion, and the clergy became more reconciled to it because if they got no collection they got an advertisement. Then somewhere about four or five years ago I took a hand in the game and very quietly encouraged licence holders to protest against the way things were being managed. Nothing had been said because in this country we are so used to the arrogant impertinence of Christians that most people take it for granted. But letters began to flow into the B.B.C., asking for either religion to be kept out or the other side to be let in. Some genius then hit on the defence that criticisms of religion could not be allowed because controversial topics were excluded. I raise my hat to that man, whoever he was. To take the most controversial subject in the world and deny criticism of it because controversial topics are not admitted, makes us poor amateur liars give up all hopes of ever gaining the status of a professional. The position became steadily more and more ridiculous. Some politicians were permitted to put opposite views in politics, and eventually a series of five talks on "Points of View" were given. To those who were acquainted with the course of thought during the past forty years, there was nothing very startling in what was said, but one of the speakers, Professor Haldane, remarked that he had been brought up in a home in which there was no religion, where science and philosophy took the place of faith; and Mr. H. G. Wells said that he had no belief in personal immortality.

This seems to have outraged a certain number of parsons, who appear to feel that Sir John Reith had gone back on them. If Professor Haldane had turned out a thorough paced blackguard, and if Mr. Wells had said that the loss of belief in immortality had robbed him of all happiness, the confessions of both of them would have been hailed with rapture. The Christian is always ready to take to his heart the bad Freethinker, it is the good one for whom he has no

room. So Sir John Reith informed the Diocesan Conference some clergymen had written rating him for permitting such things. Sir John feels that he is being treated badly and hits back as follows:—

In my view thousands of people who are being stirred to an interest in religion again, from what they hear on the wireless, and go along to the average church are literally sickened by what they find . . . I literally marvel at the exhibitions which some clergymen are content to make of themselves in the pulpit Sunday after Sunday. Whose fault is it?

I am really afraid that some of us Freethinkers are responsible for this state of affairs. For Freethought propaganda, without the advantage of wireless, has so discredited Christianity, that if any man of intelligence wanders into a church in a spirit of curiosity, he, like Sir John Reith, is very likely to be astonished at what he hears there. But in all probability if one could get the parson in a confidential mood, he would reply, How on earth can a man deal with a ridiculous creed save in a ridiculous manner?

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#### More Spoof.

Sir John Reith says he does not think much of religious people. Neither do I, although it might be a good thing if he set himself to inquire why the type is so poor. But he must also think poorly of other people if he thinks they will agree with his statement that the "Sunday night epilogue and religious services generally are among the most highly appreciated activities of the wireless during the whole week." Of course, one must bear in mind that Sir John was addressing a gathering of parsons, and there are reasons why the B.B.C. should not do anything to arouse clerical hostility. But can any reasonable person believe that the statement represents the facts? How does Sir John arrive at his conclusion concerning the wireless? Is it by the number of letters received? in that case I may remind him that soon after the daily religious services were started the *Radio Times* stated that so few letters were forthcoming, approving the services, that unless there were more the service would be discontinued. Then more letters were received: the clergy saw to that. Presumably the clergy had got to work and induced their followers to send more letters, whether they were holders of a wireless licence or not.

Look at Sir John's statement from another point of view. It is known that about ninety per cent of the population will not attend church. They cannot be got there by bribery, coercion, or social pressure. We can safely assume that the same proportion of churchgoers holds good of wireless licence holders. Does Sir John expect us to believe that this ninety per cent of the population, which cannot be got to church by any means are all filled with gratitude to Sir John for providing them with the religious service, they will not have of their own accord? Human credulity will hardly stretch so much. Some time ago when a deputation waited on the B.B.C. to see if an alternative service could not be given on Sunday, it was suggested by the deputation, as a means of testing the question that a district should be selected, and all licence holders asked whether they would care for an alternative broadcast. The suggestion was turned down at once. It was felt that it was not a matter to be put to the vote. It may also be remembered that the late Rev. R. L. Shepherd, of St. Martin's-in-the-Field, wrote in the *B.B.C. Year Book*, that only about twenty letters had been received protesting against the religious service. After some pressure he confessed that he had made a mistake in the figures they should have been two hundred—and I had copies of more than that number in my office!

The plain truth of the matter is that the B.B.C. and religion form one more instance of the way in which all considerations of fair play go by the board where religious interests are concerned. And I have good reason for believing that—with the exception of Sir John Reith, who has the virus of religions in his blood, the association of the B.B.C. with religion was a purely business move to begin with. The B.B.C. was trying to consolidate itself. Hence the introduction of a brief religious discourse on Sunday, then by easy stages to the full service. Had Freethinkers been on the alert from the outset, and had protested at once against the utilization of what was virtually a State institution for the dissemination of religion, things might have been very different. It should be a lesson to Freethinkers to be more alert in the future.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### A Roland for Sir Oliver.

"There is no darkness but ignorance."  
Shakespeare.

"I sent my soul through the invisible,  
Some letter of that after-life to spell,  
And bye and bye my soul returned to me,  
And answered, I myself am heaven and hell."  
Fitzgerald.

SIR OLIVER LODGE is, unwittingly, a philanthropist. For he has tapped a new source of humour. Just when theologians had repeated the old, old arguments of their sorry profession regarding survival after death *ad nauseum*, Sir Oliver steps in with a fresh presentation which will add to the gaiety of the "intellectuals" of the world. In his latest book, *Phantom Walls* (Hodder and Stoughton) he discusses the possibility of animals possessing another life after death.

This is a discussion which is a sheer delight to a Freethinker who has emptied many an inkpot in the service of what George Meredith calls "the best of causes." The dear clergy always narrowed the discussion to the survival of Mr. Smith, or Mr. Jones, with an occasional reference to Messrs. Robinson and Brown. The question used to be whether the lamented Mr. Jones, who used to travel with us on the nine o'clock up train, was now undergoing thirty million years' penal servitude in a temperature of 150 Fahrenheit. That used to touch us on the raw. But animals are an entirely different proposition? If we allow the immortality to the chimpanzee, the camel, and the elephant, are we to be so hard-hearted as to deny a sweet hereafter to the shark, or the fly, or even the tubercle bacillus? And what of the hard-working flea, who turns night into day in his zest for employment? Let Sir Oliver Lodge enlighten us on this extremely delicate point:—

Suppose we let it be granted that accumulated evidence shows that human beings survive, a number of problems clamour for attention. What does survival mean in general? Why should it be limited to human beings? When we talk of human survival we mean individual survival, the survival of personality and character. Whether some of the higher animals have acquired a kind of individuality in character and wealth of affection which seem worthy of continued existence, may be argued.

Considering that Sir Oliver is "Sir Oracle" among the Spiritualists it may almost be said that the oracle is dumb on this occasion. For his latest pronouncement is as elusive as the prospectus of a questionable oil well in far-off Oklahoma, U.S.A. Let it be granted that the oil well is actually there, fat dividends may be expected. Morality is a fact; immorality is pure speculation, and there are so many theories on the subject. Even the clergy are all at sixes and sevens concerning post-mortem possibilities. Educated

priests prattle prettily of the immortality of the soul. The less educated shout of the resurrection of the body. And Mr. Everyman is beginning to wonder if the matter is worth worrying about at all.

Sir Oliver Lodge writes of the "accumulated evidence" for personal immortality. But accumulation of evidence is nothing, unless the evidence itself is beyond dispute. When we examine the materials for belief in another alleged existence one wonders. From the enormous mass of communications pretending to come from discarnate spirits nothing really tangible emerges. All is nauseating, frivolous, spurious, contradictory drivel.

According to the oracle of Birmingham University, a "wealth of affection" may entitle a creature to immortality. He instances the "higher animals" as being worthy of the honour. But a shark is no worse in this respect than a company-promoter. Both look after their own families regardless of others. Yet the financier is said to have a "soul," and the shark not even a little one. This "wealth of affection" argument works out curiously. The dogs for instance. Is there no difference between a pet Pomeranian, stuffed with chocolates and selfishness, and a St. Bernard dog who saves life?

The argument for the survival of animals really adds an additional terror to death for the believer. He has eaten meat for many years. Bulls, sheep, calves, pigs, rabbits have been murdered for his personal benefit. He will have to meet his victims in the next world. It is enough to make him cut his life short in this world in order to prolong it in the next. But there is not much "wealth of affection" in the association, although butchers have made wholesale murder one of the fine arts.

Are we to suppose, after all, that all life is indestructible? In that case, we have still to ask where life begins; and wherever the line may be drawn, it is manifest that the jellyfish, the oyster, and the bug are on the hither side of it, and should have "souls." Should bugs, however, have a post-mortem existence, we hope, with Voltaire, that they will be self-supporting.

Lodge has already given the world a picture, or, rather, a talkie-picture; of the alleged next world. In "Raymond: or Life and Death" he gave us "conversations" from the other side. We were told that there were men and women there, and laboratories, factories, and even cigars. There's revelation for you! What is there in Lodge's own evidence to convince the world, or even to carry conviction to the minds of Mr. and Mrs. Everyman? Why is he now publishing a book thirteen years later than these alleged "conversations," and actually questioning to-day whether animals have a post-mortem existence or not? Whether ghosts smoke "Coronas" or "Wild Woodbines"; whether "hell" is a place "very like London" as Shelley said sarcastically, the whole story is diametrically opposite to the orthodox conception of heaven, with its angels, harps, haloes, and a red-hot-poker department for the folks who never paid their pew-rents whilst alive.

Lodge's latest utterance may cause a flutter, and even jubilation, at the Dogs' Home, Battersea, or at the Zoological Gardens. It will, however, cause depression in Christian circles. Charlie Brown has been taught from childhood that he will, if he is very good, be a beautiful angel in the after-life. He has paid money for years to the kind gentleman who told him this. Now, the rector of Birmingham University, tells him calmly that he will never have those white wings, nor play that lovely harp, nor wear that fashionable halo. It is the cruellest form of iconoclasm. Can not you imagine the poor Christian sobbing: "What are you going to put in their place? I cannot afford

to part with ten-feet wings, and a lovely harp for nothing. Give me my money back."

If I were Sir Oliver Lodge I should keep indoors for a space. It is odd, however, that necromancy and spiritualism should be the pastimes of a University dignitary who has signed the "Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England." For mediums tell very different stories to priests of the State Church. In the Ages of Faith necromancers were cursed as handsomely as any scientist or Freethinker. The civil authority, acting for Holy Mother Church, saw that these curses were carried into effect, and the undertakers did the rest. Now we have come to this, that necromancy is reputable under the high-sounding name of Psychological Research, and can count its advocates among University dignitaries, instead of looking to Sludge the medium, with a tambourine between his toes, and lies at his lips.

In Barnum's world-famous circus, it is said, there used to be a door marked in bold letters, "To the Egress" with a pointing hand. Hundreds of people passed through daily, only to find themselves outside the circus, and willing to pay again for re-admission. Lodge's book is like that. After wading through many pages the reader finds himself where he started, and none the wiser.

MIMNERMUS.

## Tolstoy and Jesus Christ.

At the risk of boring our readers with Tolstoy and all his works, we return to the subject, and promise that this will be the last.

When Tolstoy became disillusioned, at middle age, he took up the study of Schopenhauer's works, and found a kindred spirit in the author of the pessimistic philosophy, declaring, to his friend Fet, that Schopenhauer was the greatest of all geniuses. It was Schopenhauer who directed Tolstoy's attention to pessimistic teachings of the gospel Jesus.

The truth is that Tolstoy was disgusted with life, as many people do become disgusted with life when they reach middle age. He had reached the utmost pinnacle of his ambition. He had nothing further to wish for, and he was not satisfied. He was like the child who does not know what he wants, and wouldn't be happy if he got it, and, like many another man, Rousseau, for instance, he threw the blame on civilization and raised the cry of back to the simple life, back to nature.

He straightway proposed to give up all he possessed, turn peasant and work on the land, in accordance with the Gospel teaching. But the Countess, who had never been taught to earn her own living, and was, at her age, incapable of doing so, or of doing the washing, scrubbing, baking, and other housework, for him and their family, to say nothing of living on the coarse food that a peasant's earnings could provide, very properly refused, on behalf of herself and her children, to fall in with such an insane proposal.

So Tolstoy made over all his property to his wife, donned a peasant's blouse and boots, with a leather belt round his waist, and became a peasant. But only in outward appearance. The old Tolstoy was lurking in the background all the time. The leopard does not change his spots so easy as that. As Stefan Zweig observes:—

There is nothing to show that Tolstoy, after his conversion to the folk-God, had thereby attained peace of mind, the power to rest in the bosom of his newly found deity. On the contrary, whenever he speaks of his new doctrine, we cannot but feel that he is trying to hide the unsteadiness of his faith by vociferating that naught can shake his conviction. During the days that followed the conversion, all

Tolstoy's sayings and doings had a disagreeable stridency. There was something ostentatious, forced, cantankerous, bigoted about them. His Christianity brayed like a trumpet, his humility strutted like a peacock. Anyone with a fine ear could detect in the exaggerations of his abasement the old note of Tolstoyan arrogance, could discern the pride which had assumed the mask of humility.<sup>1</sup>

To show the world that there was no deception, he has his portrait painted, as a peasant, by Repin, the greatest Russian artist of his time. There he is, in his study, the room is uncarpeted, furnished with a roughly made deal table and chair. A scythe, a rake, and an axe, hang on the bare wall; ocular evidence of his labours in the field.

Tolstoy would indeed mix with the peasants, but let them attempt to become too familiar, says Maxim Gorky, then:—

Suddenly, under his peasants beard, under his democratic blouse, there would rise the old Russian *barin*, the grand aristocrat: then the noses of the simple-hearted visitors, educated and all the rest, instantly became blue with intolerable cold. It was pleasant to see this creature of the purest blood, to watch the noble grace of his gestures, the proud reserve of his speech, to hear the exquisite pointedness of his murderous words. He showed just as much of the *barin* as was needed for those serfs, and when they called out the *barin* in Tolstoy it appeared naturally and easily, and crushed them so that they shrivelled up and whined.<sup>2</sup>

Gorky tells us how he was returning from Tolstoy's house with one of those "simple-hearted" Russians, and for a long time he could not recover his breath, but kept on smiling woefully and repeating in astonishment: "Well, well, that was a cold bath. He's severe . . . pooh!" The Countess also, was not deceived. In her later Diary, she records, under the date January 26, 1895: "I cannot share my husband's *ideas*—which are false and insincere. It is all so strained and artificial, and the basis is all wrong; it is all vanity, this endless thirst for fame; this everlasting desire to become more and more popular." And goes on to relate that it is 1 a.m., and she and the butler are waiting up for Tolstoy's return from some committee meeting or other, where "they just talk." She pathetically complains:—

And at eight to-morrow I will have to get up and give Vanya his quinine and take his temperature—while he will go on sleeping. And then he'll go out and carry water without even asking how the child is and whether the mother is not too tired with all these cares. How very little kindness his family gets from him! He is austere and indifferent. And his biographies will tell of how he helped the labourers to carry buckets of water, but no one will ever know that he never gave his wife a rest and never—in all these thirty-two years—gave his child a drink of water or spent five minutes by his bedside to give me a chance to rest a little, to sleep, or go out for a walk, or even just recover from all my labours.

And this was the man that was held up for our admiration as the ideal Christian! After all these years a voice rises from the grave, the voice of his neglected wife, and Tolstoy the Christian appears in his true colours, a vain, heartless, and cruel fanatic.

But, did Tolstoy sin against the commands of Christ by such conduct? Not at all; as he would, no doubt, have pointed out to any one who would tax him with it. For, although we are exhorted to love our enemies, we are not told to love our families. In fact, we are enjoined to bestow the hatred that we should normally give to our enemies, on our family! For Christ declared: "If any man come to me and *hate* not his father, and mother, and wife, and

children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke xiv. 26.) So Tolstoy could claim that he was acting in a thoroughly Christian manner, and those who condemned him were wrong.

The fact is that Tolstoy loved nobody. When it was pointed out to him that the effect of abstinence from marriage, or sexual connexions, would soon bring the human race to an end, he replied, in effect, "Well, what of it?" Indeed, Lavrin quotes him as saying: "What is it that so revolts men, in the idea of the possibility that a moral righteous life will also bring the race to an end? Perhaps the one and the other will coincide."<sup>3</sup> Lavrin thinks that: "Tolstoy's very recipe for a universal suicide may have its root in the hidden disgust with mankind." And concludes by describing him as "a weary Eastern nihilist in pseudo-Christian garb." (p. 217.) And this is the man the Victorians placed on a pedestal and adored.

The moral to be learned from Tolstoy's life is, that the teachings of Christ are not a fit guide for us in this life. Tolstoy and his family were happy enough before his conversion, but afterwards all love and peace were destroyed—as, indeed, the Gospel Christ prophesied would be the case. Misery, culminating in hatred, desertion and flight from his family—just like the hero of Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress*—ending in a miserable death at a little out-of-the-way railway station, was the outcome of Tolstoy's attempt to live up to the teachings of Christ.

W. MANN.

## Luther Was Not a Puritan.

From "Plain Talk" (New York) August, 1920.

THE halo that encircles the heads of the founders of religious sects and denominations is comparable to the phenomenon that attends the worship of the founders of these United States of America. Anyone who has chosen to inquire into the facts knows full well that Washington, Hamilton, Franklin, and Jefferson were anything but orthodox, politically, economically, or religiously. Were they present to-day, they would be decidedly *persona non grata*, while those in authority would feel much more comfortable after a lengthy sojourn had been provided for these national "fathers" in some reliable institution of incarceration.

The same is true in the world of religion, where the founders and early heroes of religious movements were utterly different from that which their followers ordinarily believe them to have been. Consider how far the Baptists have departed from John Bunyan and Roger Williams, the Methodists from John and Charles Wesley, the Mormons from Joseph Smith, the Christian Scientists from Mary Baker Eddy, the Presbyterians from Calvin and Knox, the Congregationalists from John Robinson, the Quakers from George Fox and William Penn, and the Lutherans from Martin Luther. Although followers of these leaders are continually harking back to them and quoting them as orthodox authorities, it is certain that in most instances these saints would be rejected by the vast majority of their worshippers and excommunicated as vile heretics.

Let us take the case of Martin Luther. The Lutheran church in the United States in total membership is exceeded by only two other branches of Protestantism. Luther is naturally held in the highest esteem by these followers and by the rest of Protestantism that makes so much ado about the Reformation. But, were the gentleman here to-day, he would scarcely be tolerated in any Protestant sect,

<sup>1</sup> Zweig: *Adepts in Self-Portraiture*. p. 290.

<sup>2</sup> Gorky: *Reminiscences of Tolstoy*. p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> J. Lavrin: *Tolstoy: A Psycho-Critical Study*. p. 201.

and would be accused of the vilest heresy. He, too, would be playing checkers in jail with fellow prisoners.

A genuine heresy trial conducted in the proper manner is first of all mightily concerned with one's attitude toward the Holy Writ. True believers bow before Luther as the great protagonist and defender of the Scriptures. But was he? What could any devotee say in the face of the following contentions of Saint Martin? Speaking of the canon of Scripture admonished:—

The book that does not teach Christ is not apostolic, were St. Peter or St. Paul its writer. On the other hand, the book that preaches Christ is apostolic, were its author Judas, Ananias, Pilate or Herod . . . the Epistle of James is a veritable epistle of straw, for there is nothing evangelical in it.

He rejected the Book of Revelation, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and Jude and several of the Old Testament books, particularly the prophets:—

Without any doubt, the prophets had studied the books of Moses, and the late ones those of their predecessors, and, filled with the Spirit of God, they committed their good thoughts to writing. But this is not to say that these doctors, scrutinizing the Scriptures, did not sometimes find wood, hay, and stubble, and not always gold, silver, or diamonds.

This free-lance method of rejecting parts of the "Beloved Book," inspired from cover to cover, would never be acceptable to any Christian sect of our day, and no group would be quicker to turn Luther out than his own spiritual descendants the Lutherans. To let every man form his own canon of Scripture would throw the whole ecclesiastical system into chaos. Yet this is exactly the logical outcome of the principle that the great reformer advocated. It is blasphemy, indeed.

A more practical consideration leads to an estimate of Luther's attitude toward the everyday affairs of life. What, for instance, was his approach to the "confession of sin," which is a fundamental plank in modern systems of conversion and spiritual growth? In the *Sermo de Penitentia* is this counsel: "Do not take upon yourself to confess all daily sins, for no one can know all mortal sins, and formerly men only confessed public and known mortal sins." This sounds very much like resorting to casuistry, though Luther denied all such intention. Amid much stir, Erasmus, in 1529, rose to Brother Martin's defence by a skilful interpretation. The scholar from Rotterdam maintained that what was meant was that "we are not bound to confess mortal sins, except those that are known, meaning those that are known to us when we confess." Nevertheless, the *Bull Exsurge Domine* of 1520 saw fit to condemn such remarkable wisdom as Luther had propounded in the field of ethics.

Defend Martin Luther, if you choose; but that he could and did resort to juggling ethical principles and to defending known sins by desperate secrecy is well illustrated by an event that rocked Europe and marked the decline in power of the Protestant Reformation.

A lecherous and profligate prince, Phillip the Magnanimous, Landgrave of Hesse, who was married to one woman but cavorted with many in brazen immorality, fell passionately in love with a seventeen-year-old girl, Margaret von der Saal. He decided to add her to his household as a second wife. He appealed to Luther and Melancthon for a written defence of the proposed act of bigamy. Accordingly, shortly thereafter, on December 30, 1539, Melancthon had drawn up a document to fit the case of special pleading. It was signed also by Luther, and later by several other divines. The import of this

indorsement was that although God in his infinite wisdom had ordained monogamy, there were by the very nature of things some exceptions to the rule. Philip's case could be considered as one of these exceptions to the rule. Since the Landgrave was one of the pillars of Protestantism, the reformers could not with good grace refuse him a little favour like twisting the Scripture around for his convenience.

Now, Luther had always been opposed to divorce, and had advised Henry VIII to commit bigamy rather than divorce Catherine of Aragon. The reformer had noted the many instances of polygamy among respectable people in the Old Testament; and finding no actual condemnation of the practice in the New Testament, he concluded that it could not be considered as a sin in the Christian dispensation. However, be it said to his credit, he never publicly proclaimed this doctrine. Not wishing to get into difficulties over such a matter, he believed that discretion was the better part of valour.

Since Philip's case was clear enough, the reformers advised him that there was no scriptural teaching against polygamy, to let his conscience be his guide and, whatever he did, to keep it a dead secret. Following this advice, the Landgrave soon married his new love. Luther, trembling at the thought of possible publicity, again warned the bridegroom: "We want to keep the affair a secret for the sake of the example, which every one would follow, even at last the coarse peasants."

Thus a poor peasant lad who had grown up to shake hands with royalty turned his back on his own class. For the princes to enjoy polygamy was perfectly proper, but the peasants were denied such worldly pleasure. A historian has commented that Luther "had the upstart's contempt for the class from which he sprang."

But, none the less, his conscience was not totally clear in the matter; he constantly sought for new arguments to justify the position he had taken. After a long defence of his action to the elector of Saxony John Frederick, he concluded with, "I am not ashamed of my counsel, even if it should be published in all the world; but for the sake of the unpleasantness that would then follow, I should prefer, if possible, to have it kept secret."

In his desire further to strengthen the bulwarks of infallibility against all possible contenders, and further seeking to satisfy his own conscience, Luther projected what to him was perhaps the strongest argument of all: "Is it not a good plan to say that the bigamy had been discussed, and should not Philip say that he had indeed debated the matter but had not yet come to a decision? All else must be kept quiet. What is it, if for the good and the sake of the Christian Church, one should tell a good strong lie?"

In his anxiety to prove his case, he even maintained that the omniscient Christ had told a lie when he said, "The Son knoweth not the day," for surely Christ, knowing all things, must have known the day.

On this point it appears that although Philip was not averse to committing bigamy or adultery, he drew the line at telling a lie. This was going much too far for his enlightened conscience. To Luther he wrote: "I will not lie, because lying is wrong and no apostle nor Christian ever taught it; yea, Christ forbade it strictly and commanded people to stand by their yea and nay."

Amid all the furor on the inside, inquiries kept coming in—for knowledge of the affair was slowly leaking out. Luther had an idea that if he were skilful and insistent enough he could stave off the inevitable. So Philip, already weary with injunctions

to be cautious, received more epistles from the pen of Luther, "What one knows only in a private capacity one cannot know publicly." One would conclude that for pure indulgence in the most dexterous mental gymnastics Luther would be difficult to beat. The attorneys for the defence in the oil cases could have taken lessons with profit from the clergyman of Wittenberg.

(Reverend) RAY H. ABRAMS.  
(To be continued.)

### A Study in Atheism.

THERE is nothing like travel and living in foreign countries to enlarge the mental outlook. Those staying at home usually stick to the ideas they were brought up with. Shakespeare says that home-keeping youths have ever homily wits, and Leigh Hunt, in his Autobiography, relates how his postilion in Italy, whom he found to be remarkably free of superstition explained the fact, when asked, by saying, "Ho viaggianto, signore." (I have travelled, Sir). Darwin, who has made of religion a crumbling ruin, owed his discovery to his five years' cruise in the *Beagle*. As a rule, one must remain with the herd to keep like the herd. Dr. Johnson's perfect orthodoxy was due in great part to his having travelled no farther than Paris and the Hebrides, and then only when advanced in years. It is remarkable that this man of powerful intellect, described as the great Cham of literature, lived in constant fear of being damned. Once, when asked what he meant by damned, he replied, "passionately and loudly, 'Sent to Hell, Sir, and punished everlastingly.'" Ridiculous as this now seems, yet, according to the Bible, which, beyond the puling and prattling of priests, is all that Christians have to go by. Dr. Johnson, as a devout Christian, did right to believe in hell, which is solemnly vouched for by Jesus Christ. I have seen it stated that formerly nine out of ten deaths were made frightful by this Christian delusion; but now, thanks to beneficent Freethought, it troubles nobody except some ignorant Roman Catholics and demented Fundamentalists. Without Hell men of God have become powerless, and can now only scare children with what are left of their bugaboos.

In civilization Nature is seen adapted by men to their needs, but in the wild parts of the world, where treachery and cruelty, and the triumph of the strong and cunning prevail, and where insects with marvellous ingenuity destroy animals useful to man, Nature shrieks Atheism, and the cry echoes in the hearts of all sensible men. The few travellers who pass here from time to time are men like myself, to whom a personal God seems like the conception of an idiot. If the author of that eloquent production *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* had left his cosy harbourage in England, and experienced Nature's ways in Africa, he would, I opine, have had a different tale to tell, and something more interesting to write about. It is ignorance of Nature's ways that keeps Christians to their faith. Dr. Gore proved himself more honest than others of his cloth, when he said "God does everything or nothing." Yet, strange as it may seem, he had not the gumption to perceive the implications of this frank avowal. According to this theologian, when a crocodile ate a dog of mine recently, it was God who did the deed. When a lion carried off another dog it was also God's doing. When three other dogs were tortured to death by ticks, Dr. Gore's God was likewise the culprit. When a stallion donkey, which I had to shoot, bit out lumps of flesh from under the tails of two good useful mare donkeys, causing their painful deaths, it was Dr. Gore's Devil-God who possessed the animal with this sex frenzy. All the agony of the Great War was his doing; the tortures of the Inquisition, and every abomination that has ever happened, Dr. Gore's Devil-God, that he worships, and seeks to make others worship, is responsible for. Verily, a theologian is a crazy man with the instincts of a knave, to whom honest toil is hateful, as it is to clerics in general. Oh, for a mighty philanthropist to make such people labour for their living as others have to do.

When a small boy I was fond of looking over Haydn's *Dictionary of Dates*, and was indelibly impressed by its mention of the punishment of boiling alive that prevailed in England in the reign of that monster Henry VIII. I had been told that God was good and all-powerful, and the horror of boiling alive created a contradiction in my mind that prepared me for the ready acceptance of Atheism which involves no contradictions, but accepts the Universe for what it is, namely, a vast Natural machine, whose ways of working it is the function of Science to discover. If these ways hinged on the will of an irresponsible Being they might change at any time, and research would be useless as nothing could be ascertained for certain. Science takes for granted the non-interference of any Supernatural potentate and ignores theological assertions. As matters unconnected with their work, men of Science speak with no more authority than other men like whom they often make mistakes, and, for such mistakes ignorance and conceit blame Science. These two unpleasant attributes may be compared to two loving brothers who usually go hand in hand.

The conclusions of Science, in which facts must agree with statements, remind me of a banking account where figures must balance. In both cases discrepancies are noted and their causes keenly looked for.

J. E. ROOSE.

Kafue, N. Rhodesia.

### Acid Drops.

Hat off to the Bishop of London! Ever since we first knew him, now nearly forty years ago, we have never known him to fail to live up to expectations and refrain from saying something silly at the slightest opportunity. Preaching at St. John's Church, Regents Park, he asked, "Why do we believe in the resurrection of the dead and the life to come?" Here is the answer given with all the combined certainty of a company of idiots trying to cut a hole out of a pair of trousers—"Because we are sure that this life is not closed with death." Magnificent! Turn it upside down and it is just the same. Thus—"Why are we sure that this life is not closed with death? Because we believe in the resurrection of the dead and the life after death." Whether we use the question as an answer, or the answer as a question it reads just the same. Long life to the Bishop of London! Even in these days we are not likely to get another bishop with the same dead level of unconquerable stupidity.

Those who question the historicity of Jesus Christ might bethink themselves when they read a paragraph which appeared in a recent number of the *Daily Express*. It appears that the King of Italy has in his possession the actual winding sheet in which the body of Jesus was wrapped after the removal from the cross, and there are actual marks of his blood thereon. That does not appear to leave much room for doubt. We daresay, if it were necessary, the bill from the linen draper who supplied the sheet would be forthcoming. The man who doubts this relic shows himself impervious to any sound religious argument.

The Bishop of Bradford says there is still prejudice in the church against women holding certain positions. He adds that this is due to a misunderstanding of the teachings of Scripture and of the traditions of the Church. All the same it is curious that this misunderstanding was never corrected till Freethinkers forced the question of the equality of the sexes on the Christian world. And what a pity it is that Jesus did not set an example by appointing one woman among the selected twelve!

In the *Schoolmistress*, a writer under the name of "Minerva" says:—

Far be it from me to criticize the devotion of the

parish priest or the managers of non-provided schools to the idea of the schools as belonging to, or being a part of, the ecclesiastical parish. In these days . . . it is good to hear of loyalties and staunchness. There is no doubt, however, that the parochial system (whether rightly or wrongly I will not say) stands in the way of re-organization.

She adds that recently some head-teachers of Church schools have mentioned to her their anxieties. They see groups of Council schools coming into line with the policy of the Board of Education, but Church schools standing apart from the stream. And the head-teachers are saying: "If our managers will not move themselves, will they be swept away?" We hope so! It is not right that children should receive indifferent education merely because pious school-managers want the schools kept chiefly as client-producing incubators for the churches and chapels.

Inspired by Dr. Cyril Norwood's book *The English Tradition in Education*, the *New Chronicle* tells the world:—

The notion that any kind of education can be neutral in its relation to religion is a Victorian delusion and is dead. It is being said on all hands that what is intended from 1931 onwards is a new kind, and not merely a greater amount of education for the sons and daughters of Everyman. The majority of people desire that this should be religious education.

Seeing that the majority of people in Britain have nothing to do with the Churches, and ignore the Christian religion, one cannot help wondering on what grounds our pious friend bases its assertion that the majority desire education to be a religious one. If, instead of Christianity, an intelligent and intelligible system of ethics was taught in the schools, the majority of the parents would be perfectly satisfied. If the *New Chronicle* has any support for its views among persons outside the Churches, it is only because such persons have a hazy notion that there is no such thing as ethics apart from the Christian religion.

Signing himself as "Bible Trainer," a reader of a daily paper writes as follows:—

Nearly all the "religiously educated" children of the past generation seem to have grown up with an inveterate prejudice against religion of a dogmatic kind. Let this be a warning to the religious dogmatist!

Seemingly, this person imagines that there is, or can be, such a thing as Christian religion without dogmas! Now, a dogma or doctrine is a statement of belief as regards some one point; a settled opinion positively expressed; a principle or tenet laid down as true. Therefore, a "religion" that had no statement of beliefs, no settled opinions, and no principles to affirm as true, would be nothing at all! When "Bible Trainer" says that people to-day are against "religion of a dogmatic kind," he is really declaring that they reject the statements of belief, the settled opinions, or the principles affirmed as true by the Christian Churches. Well, that is what people are doing. And hence the more alert clerics have got busy with the reinterpretation wheeze.

At the Conference on Mental Hygiene, Mr. W. Clarke Hall (a Metropolitan magistrate), dealt with the subject of "Delinquency—a problem of mental hygiene." He traced the development of the attitude of society towards criminality. He is reported as saying that:—

Until quite recently the general idea on the part of the Church was that all crime was inspired by the devil, and that criminals were children of the devil. The attitude of the State was formerly that all criminals were enemies of society, on whom society was entitled to wreak vengeance. From either point of view, it was felt necessary and most desirable to get rid of the criminal so that he should not bother anybody again. Obviously, the simplest means of doing this was to hang him! In days gone by death was the penalty for all felonies.

Later, came the adoption of the transportation system,

which, says Mr. Hall, inflicted unspeakable cruelties. After this came the system of penal servitude. Mr. Hall finished up by declaring that "the old conception of the punishment of the wrong-doers as a justifiable revenge upon him for his wrong doing must be eliminated." We may add that, it is not difficult to realize the part played by the Christian religion of Love and Mercy in inspiring erroneous notions as regards social delinquents. The unspeakably brutal treatment of wrong-doers naturally followed, and it had the Church's approval.

At Chatham, a Referendum taken on the question of opening cinemas on Sunday resulted as follows: Votes in favour of Sunday opening, 8,050; against, 7,491. After discussing the question at a special meeting, the Chatham Town Council resolved to refer the matter back to a committee. The Council need not worry itself over the problem. The solution is simple enough. Some eight thousand citizens—about a third of the electorate—desire Sunday cinemas, and as such citizens will not prevent the seven thousand pious people from enjoying Sunday as they wish, there's no sound reason for closing the cinemas on Sunday. If the Council is concerned about Sunday labour, it need only stipulate that no cinema employee shall work more than six days a week.

Apropos of the wireless "Point of View" discourses by well-known men, the "Padre" of *Methodist Times* says:—

There are probably a good many persons who have reached the thirty's without awaking to a consciousness that there are views seriously entertained other than Christian. They have certainly come in contact with several non-Christians, but it may well be the case that they have never actually encountered anyone holding a definite philosophy of life which excludes Christianity. In other words, they have taken it for granted that non-compliance with Christian standards is invariably a question of depravity, never one of conviction. I think that after listening to this series [of discourses] we shall have to give the speakers credit for really holding the views they advocate. Prof. Haldane, Mr. Wells, and Mr. Shaw are as sincere and honest as the most sturdy pillar of orthodoxy—that is axiomatic.

That such ignorant, narrow, and bigoted notions about unbelievers should be common among Christians is good testimony to the efficiency of Christian education. But it is hardly a compliment to Christian intelligence. Still, we think it well to warn the "Padre" that to disturb so venerable a Christian tradition was piously unwise. Some readers may begin to doubt whether unbelievers do really go to hell—God would surely not punish, much less torture, sincere and honest persons. And hence may arise doubt as to the advantages of Christian "salvation."

For the children of Ifield, Sussex, a meadow has been given as a playing-field. The kindly donor should, we suggest, stipulate that the children may use the field for games on Sunday. This would give the children fifty-two extra opportunities for happiness a year, and would prevent that Sunday boredom which leads to mischief and delinquency.

The Privy Council of Canada has decided that women may sit in the Senate. Perhaps some enterprising Spiritualistic journalist might interview the "shades" of St. Paul and the Christian Fathers to get their views on the innovation. It would be interesting to know whether they still regard women as "chattels" lumped in with beasts of burden.

Though there are many writers, says Mr. W. B. Maxwell, readers are all too few. Having a fondness for exactitude, we would prefer to say that followers of print are multitudinous; real readers are rare. To our educational pundits, busily engaged in organizing the new education for 1931, we suggest that they might note the phenomena, look for the cause, and prescribe a remedy.

Clergy and laity, numbering over a thousand, recently walked in procession bearing banners with the words: "A Call to the Church to End War." We presume this was for the purpose of advertising the fact that the Church, professing to believe in the teaching of a pacifist master, has failed to prevent war during the nineteen hundred years of the Church's existence. After its nineteen hundred years of failure in this direction, the wonder is that there should be fools stupid enough to think that it is of any use now to call on the Church to end war.

The Bishop of Southwark says that "every slum is a hideous defiance of the Fatherhood of God." Well, if God had the instincts of an ordinary human father, he would never have let slums come into existence.

In Barbusse's *Under Fire*, a soldier says, "there'll be no more war when the spirit of war is defeated." The truth of this appears to have impressed some of our parsons who are crusading against war. Christ, they declare, is against all war. But we shall need a lot of convincing that the spirit of war can be defeated by broadcasting the silly advice of Christ—that the smitten should turn the other cheek to the aggressor. That sloppy piece of divine wisdom has been floating around among the Christian peoples for nearly 2,000 years. But it hasn't even prevented strife among Christian Churches, much less among the Christian nations.

If one wants to hear truth from religious preachers, one is most certain to get it when they are criticizing forms of religion in which they do not believe. This, of course, is due to the fact that they are then able to apply Freethinking criticism to what is before them. Here, for instance, is Dean Inge preaching the annual hospital sermon at Nottingham:—

"Spiritual healing" has lately become a fashionable craze. We hear constantly of alleged marvellous cures by prayer, unction, or suggestion, and of extremely flourishing businesses carried on by the priests and hotel-keepers of Lourdes.

And here is the same gentleman when he comes to deal with a part of his own religion which he dare not altogether disown:—

The gifts of healing of which St. Paul speaks are perpetuated in the labour of those who bring the resources of science to the relief of suffering in accordance with the laws of Nature.

It is really very difficult to believe that Dean Inge cannot see that he has thus disposed of miraculous healing as laid down in the New Testament. Not being a minister of religion we are able to treat all believers—from Jesus to the Lourdes' priest alike. Jesus and Paul unquestionably believed in miraculous healing without any qualification whatever. They both believed that disease was the product of demonic agency, and both believed that these demons could be expelled by exorcism. There is no room whatever for doubt on this head. It is the belief of savages all over the world, and it persists wherever the uncivilized mind persists. To say that when Paul speaks of gifts of healing he has in mind "the labours of those who bring the resources of science to the relief of science" is simply not true, and it would be an aspersion on the intelligence of Dean Inge to assume that he does not know it is not true. We wonder what Dean Inge would say to anyone who argued that when an African Witch Doctor performs his incantations over a man suffering from disease he is teaching the same thing as the modern therapist? It is a standing truth that the moment an educated man to-day begins to defend religion he begins to falter with the truth. We should like to see Dean Inge defend the thesis of his sermon in the pages of the *Freethinker*. It is cowardly to say such things in sermons, where criticism is impossible, or in papers where the editor stands between the writer and adequate exposure.

Cardiganshire Education Committee has unanimously adopted a scheme of Bible instruction in elementary schools. The county branch of the N.U.T. has decided to ask the Education Committee to defer the scheme and to call a Conference of teachers and the Education Committee to discuss it. We do not see what the N.U.T. has to complain about. It is too afraid of its clerical masters to adopt a straightforward policy of Secular education, and it ought not to complain if the clergy want the religious teaching in the schools to be effective. It is stupid to expect to have the benefits of intellectual freedom with all the somnolent comforts of a lazy conformity.

Canon G. G. Nicholas' lament is that people will pay half-a-crown for a dance, but would consider themselves absolutely daft if they gave a similar amount for diocesan or church purposes. What the Canon has failed to grasp is that, in recent years, the standard of intelligence has slightly risen, even among church-goers.

Religion is a venture, declares Dr. F. W. Norwood. How true that is! The religionist adventures into a realm of irrationality, stupidity, and incongruity. With the aid of fancy he makes many discoveries, but none of them have proved of value to rational mankind.

The Religious Tract Society publishes and distributes, we are told, millions of tracts every year. Seeing that for the last two or three decades the belief in Christianity has steadily dwindled, a permissible inference is that millions of tracts are used for a purpose other than illumination of the human soul.

Mr. H. H. Martin, Secretary of the Lord's Day Observance Society, says that whenever there is a proposal to open cinemas, etc., on Sunday, it arouses "storms of opposition in the towns and cities of the provinces." Really, if that is the case there seems little need to forbid their being opened. The storm of opposition ought to be enough to prevent the public providing a paying audience. But perhaps Mr. Martin is only anxious to prevent the cinema proprietors playing to empty houses. Or it may be that the "storm of opposition" occurs only in Mr. Martin's office.

"By religion," says Sir Oliver Lodge, "I understand the reaction of man to the whole of the universe; by science I understand the groping after truth." These definitions are absurd that definitions drawn to make room for religion usually are. Probably had Sir Oliver been less intelligent than he is, the definitions would have been more exact, but more dangerous. But it is interesting to know that in his opinion religion is not concerned with getting at the truth.

The Bishop of Southwark says that the clergy "must boldly pray for money," and must reform and spiritualize their central organization for the raising of money." Well, that will be straightforward anyway. It is better than preaching about the worthlessness of money, and then pleading earnestly for as much of it as can be got. The clergy, by the way, have a very fine phrase, "The spiritualization of wealth," which means give it to the Church, and it will bear the burden. Not many parsons are quite so open as the Salvation Army's first great showman, who said quite plainly that he never cared where the money came from so long as he got it. But then he was the Barnum of the religious world—and the world is always kind to a good showman.

The practice of self-restraint and renunciation is not happiness, though it may be something much better.

T. H. Huxley.



## Testimonial to Mr. Chapman Cohen.

### FIFTH LIST OF ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

Previously acknowledged £808 os. 6d.; J. Brodie, 5s.; Anonymous, 5s.; R. B. Harrison, 10s. 6d.; Edward Oliver, £10 10s.; Mr. & Mrs. W. R. Francis, 10s.; F. A. Hornibrook, £10 10s.; J.P.C., 5s.; Thomas Dixon, £5; Mrs. M. J. Wadman (South Africa), £1; Appreciator (South Africa), 10s.; A. Raymant (South Africa), £1; James Logne (South Africa), £1; J. H. Thomas (South Africa), £1; John Latham (South Africa), £1; Julius Zacheyge (South Africa), 10s. 6d.; Ting, £1; W.B., J.C., and H.F., 10s.; Frank Gubbins, £1; W. C. Bishop, 5s.; H. Miles, 10s.; Miss E. Williams, £1; C. M. Hollingham, 10s.; A.B., 10s. 6d.; Miss H. M. Cope, 10s.; J. F. Williams, £1 1s.; Mr. & Mrs. S. Bliss, 10s.; J. Davies, 7s. 6d.; Henry H. Hurrell, £2; Mrs. N. Bogg, £1; John O'Connor, £2 2s.; B. & A. Ballard, 10s.; R.O.K., £5; E. W. Youell, £1 1s.; R. F. Turney, 5s.; E. B. Gough, 5s.; B. Lee, 7s. 6d.; Mrs. A. E. Robertson, £5; P. Green, 10s. 6d.; J. Lazarnick, £1 1s.; W. Robson, £1; D. W. Allan, 2s. 6d.; G.E.T., 5s.; The Taylor Family, 10s.; E. Lynden, Junr., £1; George Whitehead, 10s.; Geo. Smith, £10 10s.; Franklin Steiner (Chicago), 5s. 1d.; Total to November 11, 1929, £882 15s. 1d.

Here are a few extracts from the many letters received:—

Edward Oliver writes: "I send with pleasure and a feeling of duty, as no one has kept the lamp of liberty and Freethought burning more brightly or held it higher." He also thanks the Committee and Hon. Secretary, as do many others.

Mrs. Wright, aged eighty-two, sends her "mite."

Henry Spence says: "He is our courageous leader with a wonderfully keen intellect, always entirely at the service of our Cause."

R. B. Harrison sends "a little money well spent."

John Ross "hopes that the amount will be handsome for such a Champion of Freethought."

Mr. and Mrs. Venton say "Those of us who have attained mental freedom through the devotion to truth that such a man displays, wish we were wealthy so that our contribution might be a more fitting one."

W. Kerslake, expressing his pleasure that this Movement was started, "that we were enabled to give our mite, as he has been responsible for our freedom from inherited tyranny."

W. R. Francis says: "I am sure that he is held in the highest respect and greatly admired by all who know him—apart from his friends in our Movement."

As will be seen from the Acknowledgments, some of our good hearted friends in S. Africa have sent remittances. All their letters ought to be printed. We have not yet however received the bunch of thousand pound cheques from the millionaires of that region who share our views. Perhaps our S. Africa friends will bring this to their notice!

The Committee will soon have to consider a closing date for the Fund—formally at any rate—and we shall be glad if those who desire to be included "in the roll of honour," will bear this in mind.

Again thanking all our friends for their many and varied tributes.

W.J.W.E.

### ANATOLE FRANCE.

Anatole France was human, and, being human, he was not always consistent in his ideas, or at least in his expression of them. But underlying all these apparent contradictions, was the compassion he felt for the sufferings of the down-trodden and the helpless; the scorn, passionate yet restrained which meanness, cruelty, and injustice never failed to awaken in his heart.—J. Lewis May.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

D. Y. WARREN.—It is very easy to over-value mere scholastic education. Far more depends upon the native ability which one brings to the task. We suggest you read Draper's *Conflict Between Religion and Science*, and some of the volumes of Mr. Cohen's *Essays in Freethinking*.

G. PARSONS.—If you direct a letter to Mr. Victor Neuburg, c/o this office, it will be sent on to him at once.

S. J. WILKINSON.—Thanks for references to articles. We had not seen either. People are apt to forget that the bulk of parsons are as mentally backward as ever; and in some directions they have it more their own way now owing to the withdrawal of genuine intelligence from the churches.

W. LEE.—Mr. Cohen has dealt fully with the meaning of "matter" in the fourth chapter of *Materialism Re-stated*, and your question would take too long to be answered fully here. There is no question at all of denying the distinction between "subjective" and "objective," only that of giving to the terms a scientific meaning and of making them intelligible.

E. BOTT.—Thanks. Apparently the Rev. Mr. Hardwick sees clearly enough the use of dancing in religious ceremonies. What he has yet to learn is that the hymn-singing in church and chapel, the use of stereotyped phrases in prayer, with the artificial attitude assumed in religious exercises are only so many forms of auto-suggestion used to induce what is known as a religious frame of mind.

C. JACKSON.—There is no branch of the N.S.S. at Nottingham, but there are plenty of Freethinkers there, and one ought to be formed. The Secretary is writing you. The *Freethinkers* can be ordered through any newsagent or from one of W. H. Smith's bookstalls.

A. B. MOSS AND S. G. BATH.—We had several copies of the paper sent us containing Mr. Shaw Desmond's reference to the recent debate. We take it that Mr. Desmond is rather uneasy about the matter. "The lady doth protest too much."

J. G. BARTRAM.—We are obliged for copy of pamphlet. It will be useful for future reference. Hope all are well.

S. A. T. ROSETTI.—There are no exact figures of the number of the increase of Roman Catholics in England, but we think there is no question of an advance. You must expect an increase in the strength of the superstitions manifested in all the Churches as the better intellectual, and more restraining influences are withdrawn.

J. GLOSSOP.—A letter on the subject appears in another part of this paper. The rebuke is justified.

W. S. RAMSDEN.—We daresay most debaters think they have quite floored the other fellow; but not many are foolish enough to say so.

W. MAY.—It is impossible to answer a question satisfactorily if it is not put properly; and to ask whether the "mind" controls the "body," or the body controls the mind, is to put a hopeless proposition. It is like asking whether a tail exists so that the dog may wag it, or does a dog wag its tail because it is there? Metaphysical Materialists and metaphysical Spiritualists might go on debating that question for ever.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums.

The Secular Hall, Leicester was well filled on Sunday evening last to listen to the second of Mr. Chapman Cohen's lectures on "The New Materialism." It was not an easy task to keep a general audience interested for an hour to an address on the philosophy of science, but judging from the interest shown and the applause at the close of the meeting, the effort was quite successful. Mr. Cohen delivers the third of this course to-day (November 17) on "Materialism and Life." He will then go on to Liverpool for his debate in the Picton Hall on the Monday evening, returning to London early on Tuesday morning to see the *Freethinker* through the press. It will be rather a busy week end.

The West Ham Branch has made arrangements for a visit to the Tate Gallery on Saturday, November 23. Members and friends will meet outside the Gallery at 2.45. The nearest station is Westminster. An official guide will conduct the party.

A deputation, organized by the Society for the Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, waited on the Home Secretary, Mr. Clynes, to see whether the Government could provide facilities for the introduction of a Bill for the abolition of the statute and common law of blasphemy. The deputation comprised Professor Graham Wallis, Professor Laski, Canon Donaldson, Mr. Chapman Cohen, Dr. Walter Walsh, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, Mr. F. Verinder, Rev. R. Sorrenson, M.P., Mrs. Seton Tiedeman, and many others. Mr. Sorrenson briefly introduced the deputation, and Professor Graham Wallis outlined the case for the Deputation. He was followed by Canon Donaldson and Mr. Cohen. The Home Secretary, although of opinion that there might be a considerable body of opinion in the House in favour of the repeal of the blasphemy laws, could not promise, in view of the congestion of business, that the Government could set aside any time for the discussion of such a measure. All he could do was to report the substance of the speeches that had been delivered to his colleagues in the Cabinet. Mr. Sorrenson pressed for some definite concession, but without result.

The indefatigable writer of letters to the papers, Mr. Algernon Ashton, has a recent letter in which he comments on Sir Oliver Lodge's latest announcement of his belief in the immortality of animals. He concludes by saying "Every common sense man knows that there can be no life after death. I should be very sorry if there were." We have always held that it is only the absence of a scientific imagination that could make the idea of immortality reasonable or tolerable. Intrinsicly it is more ridiculous than the idea of a God.

We are indebted to the *Daily Express* that Mr. J. Booth, Councillor, magistrate, and deputy-chairman of the Baldock Bench, at sixty-three is still carrying on his business of a street hawker. Mr. Booth is a hawker by compulsion, and but for the bigotry of Christians would have been following a less arduous, and probably more lucrative profession. Mr. Booth is, however, a Freethinker, and one who did not keep his opinions to himself. When he first settled in Baldock, thirty years ago, he set up in business as a grocer, but the good Christians of the place, unable to imprison him or burn him, did what they could by boycotting him, and so compelled him to close his shop. We congratulate Mr. Booth on his courage and his success. Christians will doubtless consider him very foolish for risking so much for the sake of an opinion, and those poor timid souls who are not Christians will find encouragement in religious bigotry. Baldock will be the better for having had Mr. Booth as a resident. We wonder of how many good Christians could this be truthfully said?

In connexion with the proposed Bradford Branch of the N.S.S., we are asked to announce that a meeting will be held in the Bradford Moor Council Schools, Killinghall Road, Bradford, on Sunday, November 17, at 7 p.m. Official sanction is all that is now required, and will local Freethinkers please attend.

## Dolet.

(Concluded from page 709.)

WE should judge Dolet, says Mr. Christie, as a scholar and a man of letters. And he continues:—

"If we cannot place him among the two or three foremost names of his contemporaries, he is certainly entitled to a high position. . . His Commentaries were one of the most important contributions to Latin scholarship which France had as yet given. His "Formulæ" his criticisms on Terence, and his translations, are all among the most meritorious works of their kind. . . Nor must his services to the French Language be forgotten. He was one of the few scholars of the day who had formed a true conception of its importance, and of the method of treating it scientifically. His grammatical tracts and his translations afford us proofs of this, and add to the many other indications of what he might, and probably would, have done had a longer life been allowed to him. For in judging of his talents and abilities, we must not forget that he had only attained the age of thirty-seven years at his death, and that the last four years of his life were almost wholly passed in prison."

Mr. Christie points out something beyond and above all this. He notices that both in his Latin and in his French verse Dolet, "rises to a height of pathos, vigor, and imaginative power, rarely, if ever, to be found among the poets of the day, and which certainly induces us to believe that, had he devoted to French verse the labour and pains which he gave to elaborating and polishing his Latin prose, he might have equalled any of his contemporaries, and surpassed all except Marot."

Was Dolet an Atheist? Mr. Christie affirms that nothing in his published works warrant the belief that he was. He wrote as a true Catholic, and submitted to the authority of Mother Church. But so did Rabelais, Desperiers, and nearly everyone else. Mr. Christie tells us that Dolet was held to have been executed as a relapsed Atheist and although it is not so stated in the sentence, he "inclines to think that this was its effect and intention, and that the almost universal belief that he was a Materialist, or (for the words were then and afterwards used as synonymous) an Atheist, was shared by his judges." If not really an Atheist, it seems pretty certain that he was put to death as one.

But let us hear some of his contemporaries. Scaliger, in a brutal ode written after Dolet's death, calls him "Atheist," and says that he was "filled with an arrogant madness which, being armed with the most consummate impudence, would not even confess the being of a God." Franciscus Floridus, after charging him with plagiarism, adds: "This fellow asserts the soul to be mortal, and the highest good to consist in bodily pleasure." Bernard Bochetel, Bishop of Rennes, said that Dolet "fell in a short time into the most execrable blasphemies I ever heard." And lastly the sweet-mouthed Calvin wrote, soon after Dolet's execution: "It is a matter of common notoriety that Agrippa, Villanovonus (that is Servetus) Dolet, and such like Cyclopes, have always ostentatiously despised the Gospel, and at length they have fallen into such a depth of insanity and fury, that not only have they vomited forth execrable blasphemies against the Son of God, but, as regards the life of the soul, have declared that it differs in no respect from that of dogs and pigs." It is possible that Dolet gave freer vent to his scepticism in his conversation than in his writings. And this view is borne out by the words of Floridus in his reply to Dolet's defence. "The opinion," he writes, "of your impiety, which is everywhere held, cannot be got rid of by any extracts from your "Genethi-

liacum," for I hold this to be certain, that what you believe concerning God and the soul you would speak of cautiously and not openly at all, lest you should be immediately seized and put to the torture."

Such a general belief must have had some foundation. Dolet did not take much interest in theological controversy, nor was it likely that he would show his heresy in his works, except "between the lines." In that age men wrote, so to speak, with the halter round their necks and the faggots at their feet, and the slightest indiscretion was dangerous. When the bloodhounds of persecution were on their track, Freethinkers who had no desire for death were obliged to imitate the cunning of the fox. A Rabelais, with infinite strategy and wit, might contrive to avoid being burnt for the love of God; but fervent, impetuous natures like Dolet, were almost sure of an evil doom.

Mr. Christie concludes that Dolet was "a sincere Theist." We do not dispute it, but we say that the evidence is incomplete. Mr. Christie himself admits the Dolet's avowals of orthodoxy are "ostentatious," and that "they do not strike the reader as proceeding from the writer's heart, but as being inserted rather as a matter of form than of actual belief."

With respect to the immortality of the soul, he was at least dubious. His ode, already cited, on the death of his friend, Villanovus, proves this. And there is another short Latin poem in the same volume, which concludes: "Do not be terrified by the arrows of death, which will cause you either to be deprived of sensation, or else to be sheltered in happier regions, and to be in a joyful condition, unless the hope of heaven is vain."

In his "Commentaries," on the word Mors, he breaks into a noble strain of panegyric on immortality, but the immortality there meant is the immortality of fame. After quoting the names of great scholars, poets, warriors, and statesmen, he says that "the works of men of such excellence, consecrated as they are to immortality, are clearly beyond the power of death, and will, I am certain, never perish, but rather the sharpness of death and of time, which tramples all things under its feet, will be blunted by their virtue." In this immortality he was, as Mr. Christie allows, in his heart of hearts a believer; and he hoped, by passing his life "nobly and courageously," to participate in its glory.

"To say that he was a Christian," writes Mr. Christie, "as the term was then used or accepted equally by Protestant and Catholic, would be undoubtedly to say what is not the fact." As M. Henri Martin remarks, "Philosophy has alone the right to claim on its side the illustrious victim of the Place Maubert, whom the Reformation has denounced as impious by the voice of Calvin."

Dolet sided neither with the Church nor with the Reformers. His religion, to use Mr. Christie's apt language for the last time, was "a religion of duty in relation to this world only, and troubling itself not at all with the future, as being a matter of which nothing can be certainly known, and concerning which it was useless to reason or to speculate." What an admirable summary of Secularism! Dolet was with us, and we claim him as a martyr of Free-thought; another name on the noble list of our sacred dead.

G. W. FOOTE.

It is plain every great change is effected by the few, not by the many; by the resolute, undaunted, zealous few.—Newman.

Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties.

John Milton.

## Does Man Survive Death.

AN IMPRESSION.

ON Friday evening, October 25, I was one of the large audience that gathered in Caxton Hall to hear the debate between Mr. Shaw Desmond and Mr. Chapman Cohen. It is a considerable time since I have listened to a public discussion that has interested me so much. In my younger days in Sydney, days that seem a long way off now, I attended spiritualistic meetings and seances for a period of about two years, and I have read a good deal of literature purporting to explain what are called "occult" phenomena, but I make no claim to an expert knowledge of the subject. My own interest in it is that of a layman whose tastes are much more literary and historical than scientific. This candid admission, I hope, will not make the following condensed notes of the debate, and the reflections based upon it, less acceptable to readers of the *Freethinker*.

Evidently Mr. Desmond holds that only "empirical arguments" for survival are worth offering to the serious inquirer—arguments based on the interpretation of the phenomena yielded by psychical research. After reading passages from *The Other Side of Death*, to show that Mr. Cohen's personal attitude to survival was admittedly antagonistic, Mr. Desmond declared very positively that the Materialists were fighting in their last ditch. He then plunged in *medias res*, as he said, and recounted a long list of phenomena, which seemed to me to have hardly any mutual connexion. These could not be all explained by either secondary personality or telepathy. The direct voice from the air, levitation, cross correspondences in automatic writings, and identification by thumb-marks could not be so explained. He emphasized the strictness of the tests under which the phenomena were investigated, and mentioned the names of scientific men who accepted the survival hypothesis. Mr. Desmond said that he used the word "spiritualist" in the widest sense, and that he did not come forward as the representative of any society or any particular section of investigators. He admitted that some mediums had been frauds. This was to be explained in many cases by the fact that the work entailed so severe a strain that they lost their powers after a few years, and could not produce trustworthy manifestations. He entertained no high opinion of the acumen and insight of physicists in this field of research. (As quite eighty per cent of the scientists to whom my own spiritualist friends refer as supporters of their position are physicists, this last remark surprised me considerably).

At the outset of his remarks Mr. Cohen reminded his opponent that it was the fearless work of the despised Materialist, now "fighting in his last ditch," that had made it possible for Spiritualists to investigate the subject at all. He was not out to score mere debating points, and thought that those who dismissed all the phenomena offhand as due to fraud were the best friends the Spiritualists had. Where the choice was solely between fraud and ghosts, many people would choose the ghosts. As for Mr. Desmond's long list of manifestations of physical force—what magic there is for some people in this word "psychic"—one case irrefutably established would be just as good as a million. If levitation is proved to be a fact, if it is shown that a heavy object floats through the air without apparent physical contact—well, it is a fact. It would not prove that the force of gravity is overcome by discarnate spirits. With regard to cross correspondences, his opponent did not tell the audience that they had frequently been signal failures. Again, how did he know that the thumb-marks were those of the individual who had died? Given certain circumstances and a certain atmosphere, the inclination to fabricate was very strong. Mr. Cohen said that the investigations of students of abnormal psychology fully confirmed the fact of multiple personality, which he had already dealt with at some length in *The Other Side of Death*. The reason why mediums often fail to produce "genuine" manifestations is because they have been cured of their morbid condition. He asked his opponent to tell them, not how many scientists he counted in the ranks of the Spiritualists, but how many experts in abnormal psychology. If survival is a fact, and there

is so much evidence for it, why was it not accepted long ago? We must, said Mr. Cohen in conclusion, consider life and death as two phases in the history of all organisms, death being the natural end of the individual's birth and growth, and at the same time a great moral factor in human development.

Three brief comments on the debate itself suggest themselves to me. (1) In opening Mr. Desmond said, that where the disputants, owing to natural bent or habits of thought, have nothing in common, neither of them sees the question from the other's standpoint. This remark is no doubt confirmed by the history of the dispute between Materialists and Spiritualists. But in my opinion, the bias of the latter is much the stronger. As far as I can judge from my own reading, the "will to believe" is the outstanding characteristic of what both Theists and Spiritualists write on this subject. Throughout the controversies born of nineteenth century science, the view of death as the final extinction of personality was denounced by anti-Materialist as a "degradation of man's natural majesty." The first important book I read on psychical research was F. W. H. Myers' voluminous work, in which he admitted a strong desire to find evidence for survival. Not long ago I read an article in a theosophical publication which showed clearly the ineradicable bias of some anti-Materialists who consider themselves advanced thinkers. It was one long jubilation over results which the writer claimed to be established by physical research, and particularly over the disintegration of the atom of radio-active substances. All this exultation was due to the "proof" that the "old Materialism is completely discredited." The motto of the theosophical publication is, I believe, "There is no religion higher than the truth." (2) With regard to questions of fact, we are again and again asked to believe statements which we cannot possibly test, because they concern only a particular individual. Mr. Cohen referred to the voice heard by Mr. Baldwin, son of the ex-Premier, at the front during the war. I wonder how many Spiritualists accept the modern miracles of the Roman Catholic Church. (3) I am not inclined to accept, without qualification, the view that survival would have been accepted long ago if it were a fact. Personally, I think it is true. It is also true that the whole history of man's conception of the future life is a mass of confusion and contradiction. On the other hand, it has taken long periods of time to establish nearly all great scientific truths, and there has always been a strong theological prejudice against the attempts to get direct evidence of human survival. Nor in this field of phenomena can we look for the same consensus among scientists and investigators as there is for, say, Rutherford's experiments on radio-active substances.

Freethinkers with whom I have discussed the question of survival have often asked me: Suppose it convincingly established, would this knowledge produce any good in any shape or form? My honest opinion, for what it is worth, is that so far from enhancing the value of human personality, it would positively detract from it. Such a reply, of course, belongs to the category of values and would not affect the facts. Nevertheless, as we find anti-Materialists constantly supporting their arguments by an appeal to values, we are fully entitled to state our case from this point of view. We know only too well what belief in the "soul" has done for the individual and the race. It has contributed a tragic chapter to human history. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that man has progressed intellectually and morally in proportion as he has discarded the belief. Consider the barbarities and superstitions associated with it and still surviving in Christianity, that claims to represent the acme of man's spiritual development; the offerings to the dead who, if unappeased, will bring fatal consequences to the living; the resources and solicitude spent even to-day in preparing for the future life. Look at the men and women—I have known dozens of them—whose main concern is to save their souls! Either they have never grown up or their minds are diseased.

Is it not a significant fact that nearly all the old arguments for individual immortality have been abandoned as crude and unsatisfactory? Theists used to

assure us that the idea of life after death has been universal, and that the Creator would not have endowed men and women with hopes and aspirations that must for ever remain unrealized. But universality does not make a belief either true or of permanent value to the race. In the primitive conception of continued life, fear is the essential element, not aspiration. Besides, whose aspirations are to be fulfilled, the Christian's, the Mohammedan's, or mine? What the historical study of religion reveals, perhaps above all other things, is that belief in a future life, like the conception of the divine government of the world, weakens, as soon as men reach a certain degree of intellectual culture. Anti-Materialists often assure us that all the great teachers of religion and philosophy have accepted the idea of immortality, but the contention vanishes upon candid examination. The earlier writings of the Old Testament give no hint of the belief. The Jews borrowed the idea from the Persians, greatly to the detriment of their religious life, and some of the grotesque features of their Apocalyptic literature appear in the New Testament. Among the Greek philosophers and tragic dramatists, the conception of an after-life is vague and never becomes firm conviction. Socrates, it is true, is often put forward as a convinced believer in immortality, but if the concluding passages of Plato's *Apology* represent his real view he is far from finally asserting it, and nowhere does he base his moral teaching upon it. In the *Phaedo* Plato makes him argue for a previous state of conscious existence—the idea of "reminiscence" which Wordsworth in his great ode has clothed in verse that is probably "immortal" for the duration of our language. This idea, however, is entirely at variance with the belief of orthodox Christianity, while few nominal Christians now feel any inward assurance of "the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection," however dangerous they may regard the expression of open doubt on the subject. So far is the Buddhist from desiring immortality, that the negation of all sentient existence is the goal of his striving.

According to Kant the immortality of the soul is "a demand of the practical reason" because the highest good must remain unrealized here, inasmuch as no human being is capable of perfect adaptation to the moral law. This argument had considerable vogue once, but it is little more than a refined version of natural depravity. Evolution has put an entirely different complexion on our ideas of "moral law," and the "realization of the highest good." An extremely degraded form of the moral argument is that if immortality is a fiction men and women have a perfect right to consider only their selfish pleasures. This is never put forward now by any school of religious thought except Roman Catholics, lectures for the Christian Evidence Society, and the lowest type of evangelical Protestant.

Of all the older arguments, however, the most plainly opposed to elementary logic was that based on what was called "analogy." This argument can be expressed in very few words: the only mind we know is admittedly always associated with a material body, but the latter is not annihilated by death; therefore, reasoning from analogy, the mind is not annihilated. Here "mind" has taken the place of the "immortal soul" of the popular superstition. But the individuality of the body is completely destroyed, and analogy certainly assigns the same fate to the mind.

I am convinced that death will be the end of all things for me. The conviction may be wrong, but that fact does not cause me a moment's loss of sleep. I shall have then to submit to my destiny elsewhere, as I have had to submit to it here—even if the next stage is as some Spiritualists represent it.

A. D. McLAREN.

#### Epigram of Marriage.

Of regret and remorse after marital bliss,  
I venture a theory: concisely 'tis this—  
A man falls in love with a dimple or curl,  
Then recklessly marries the whole of the girl!  
J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

## Black(coated) Justice in U.S.A.

The method of government in any country is, of course, primarily the concern of that country's citizenry. It is impossible for any non-American to understand the distinctions between "Federal" and "State" law, but Americans have become accustomed to them. In a Chicago hotel there is a public announcement stating that the proprietor will endeavour to the best of his ability to enforce in this hotel all the different laws and regulations in regard to alcohol prescribed by the Federal, State, County and City authorities respectively."

It may be news to some people that the marriage laws of the various States vary from one another, so that it is possible for a couple to be married in one State, but bigamous or incestuous in similar circumstances in another State of the Union.

Certain actions constituting contraventions of the "Mann Act" of Congress are purely "federal" crimes, bearing no relationship to any known system of ethics. Under that law an unmarried couple living in adultery can be convicted (and severely punished) only if their motor-car, train or bus crosses from one State to another (a journey of 100 yards or less would be sufficient grounds for conviction). To illustrate, it is the same as if Mr. Jones and Miss Smith travelled all over England with impunity together, but a journey across the Welsh or Scotch border would cost them their liberty.

All questions of morals, one would think, might be dealt with similarly throughout the same country. The question of what people may drink is a federal question (no local laws can be made inconsistent with prohibition).

When it comes to questions of judicial procedure it seems incredible that laws of evidence, oaths, and general administration can basically contradict each other in the "United" States. The highest Court in the land is the Supreme Court at Washington, presided over by ex-President W. H. Taft. Mr. Taft is, in most respects, ultra-conservative, but he has a reputation for honesty, and he is a Modernistic Unitarian. According to recent decisions in some of the fundamentalist Southern States, Chief Justice Taft is ineligible to give evidence in any court of law because he does not believe in eternal damnation.

The condemnation of seven trade unionists for murder of a policeman is exciting great protest meetings, in which no doubt political and labour questions play an important part. The Gastonia men have been convicted on evidence, which seems to most people wholly inadequate and inconclusive. The question of paramount urgency, however, resolves itself into a consideration of how much longer will a self-respecting intelligent highly-educated modern Republic permit itself to be dragged at the heels of an illiterate incubus like the all-too-Christian Southern States.

South Carolina boasts that "it has kept Christ and Paul in its Courts." It can also boast that it is second only to Louisiana for illiteracy—and Louisiana has more excuses than S. Carolina for its benightedness.

According to Judge Barnhill, who sentenced the Gastonia "murderers," the State laws of South Carolina are "founded on God's Holy Word." Most, if not all, of the prisoners are Atheists. They have even been charged with blasphemy in addition to murder. Judge Barnhill refused to accept as witnesses anybody who did not satisfy him in regard to the fundamentalist conception of religion.

"Our State law, passed in 1777," said the judge, with unconscious irony, "impeaches the Testimony of any witness who does not believe in a personal and punishing God."

Mrs. Clarence Miller, the young wife of one of the young defendants, had important evidence to give, which nobody else could exactly duplicate except Atheists like herself.

"Do you believe in God?"

Mrs. Miller tried to turn the subject to more relevant points, but the judge permitted no evasion, and quickly forced this transparently honest and straightforward witness into a frank reply to the judge's impertinent questions. Judge Barnhill's *obiter dictum*

deserves quotation: "If I believed that life ends with death, and that there is no punishment after death, I would be less apt to tell the truth."

It is amusing to hear (as we all hear so often) this ridiculous confession in pulpit and press. Obviously Freethinkers can believe it in all sincerity: it is often indisputable. But fact, experience and history should convince these believers in their own unreliability, that Atheists are not so influenced. We might even go farther and say that truthful people would be truthful still, even if we discovered that some incredible myths were true.

Judge Barnhill's decision, of course, struck out all possibility of evidence being given by the prisoners themselves, and left the verdict a foregone conclusion. Of the jury it is only necessary to say that one man had to be removed and a new jury sworn after the trial had opened. The jurymen referred to is at present in the lunatic asylum suffering from *violent* religious mania. The other jurymen apparently were not violent.

What can be said for the prosecuting counsel John Carpenter? He boasted of his own Sunday School teachership; he called the mill-owners, his employers, "a holy gang; a God-serving gang"; he accused the prisoners and their associates of "irreligion, immorality and communism"; he appealed to the jury "in the sacred name of our God."

An appeal is pending, but meanwhile the prisoners are in jail under sentences of from seventeen to twenty years each.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

## Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

A PROTEST.

SIR,—May I be permitted as a regular reader of the *Freethinker*, to register an emphatic protest against a statement made in the issue dated November 3.

I refer to the article by "Mimnermus," headed "Religion and Realities." With ninety per cent of the article I am in entire accord, but on page 691 your contributor (following a reference to the need for more and more houses) writes as follows: "The average workman sings a lullaby to each brick as he places it in position, forgetting that he is monkeying with the happiness of Men, Women and Children, and limiting his own means of livelihood."

This silly slanderous statement is simply not true, but like the stories of the "Miracles," it has been repeated so often, until we find a Freethinker falling into line with the "Believer," accepting and quoting a statement without first inquiring for the facts concerning it.

The last sentence is true "Dean Ingeian," in that they both insult the intelligence of the worker. This oft repeated libel on the workers has been the subject of an inquiry (ask Mr. G. Hicks) when it was definitely proved to be equally as stupid as is the "Loaves" and the "Fishes" or the "Samson" fables.

In the same article (page 692) referring to the Clergy, Mimnermus says of them: "So long as they pander to the Upper Circles of Society, they will have few qualifications to enter serious economic controversy."

Agreed!—Yet "Mimnermus," by his sneers at the "Lullaby Singing Worker," is himself doing nothing else but pandering to the Christian Church-going Profit Seeking Dividend hunting crowd who comprise the "Upper Circles," and who would quite willingly tolerate his "Freethinking," provided he will placate them by castigating the Working Class now and then. Mimnermus has placed himself in the same category as the Clergy when it comes to debating any serious Economic Issue.

G. P. O'LEARY.

## FREETHOUGHT AND PROGRESS.

SIR,—In the debate on "Does Man Survive Death?" between Mr. Chapman Cohen and Mr. Shaw Desmond, a remark was made by the latter which seems to have passed unnoticed, and the importance of whose implications appears to have been missed.

Unfortunately I do not possess a verbatim report of this debate, but if memory serves me right, Mr. Shaw

Desmond said something to this effect: that Freethinkers were making no advance whatever, and that one proof of this was that they were saying exactly the same things to-day as they had said forty (or it may have been fifty or sixty) years ago.

Judged by the "advance" made by religion, this is, of course, a most convincing argument against Freethought. For, if there is one thing which can be honestly said about the statements of Religionists, it is that they vary from one minute to the next. Whether this variation constitutes "advance" is a matter of opinion. Many of their co-religionists describe it as "backsliding."

As from an opponent of the Freethought attitude, however, such a statement as Mr. Shaw Desmond's can be interpreted as nothing less than a thumping compliment. For it means just this, that despite the ever shifting basis of religious polemics, and the ever widening scope of scientific knowledge, no new fact or argument has been adduced which has even remotely threatened the sure foundations of Freethought and Rationalism, from the time when the public first began to take notice of them until the present day.

Indeed, every "backsliding advance" of religion, and every newly discovered fact of science has added proof to the truth and stability of Freethought principles. And since these principles were not dependent upon the professed revelations of the "Omniscient Almighty," but upon ordinary human reason and common-sense, we have every reason to be proud that what Mr. Shaw Desmond said is true.

C. S. FRASER.

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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.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (The Orange Tree, Euston Road, N.W.1): Thursday, November 21 at 101 Tottenham Court Road, Social and Dance, 7.30 to 11.30. Admission 1s.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): Free Sunday Lecture at 7.0, by John Katz, B.A.—"Civilization's Despair: The Catholic Revival."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury; Liverpool Street, Camberwell Gate, Friday, 8.0, Mr. F. Corrigan.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (The Orange Tree, Euston Road, N.W.1): Lecture—Mr. Bonar Thompson—"Mankind's Debt to Great Men."

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 39 Finchley Road, N.W.8, near Marlborough Road Station): 11.15, Mr. A. F. Dawn—Bernard Shaw's "The Apple Cart."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (361 Brixton Road, near Gresham Road, S.W.): 7.30, "What's Wrong with Freethinkers?"—Mr. Robert Arch.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0 John A. Hobson, M.A.—"Law and Order."

#### OUTDOOR.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.30, Messrs. Charles Tuson and James Hart; 3.30, Messrs. E. Betts and B. A. Le Maine; 5.30, Messrs. A. H. Hyatt and B. A. Le Maine. 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 meeting outside the Park Gates, Bayswater Road.

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): Mr. Chapman Cohen (Editor of the *Freethinker* and President of the National Secular Society) will lecture at 6.30 on "Materialism and Life."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, 120 Rusholme Road): 3.0, Miss Stella Browne (London, Contributor to the *New Generation*)—"The World League of Sexual Reform: Its Aims and Work. 6.30, "The Government and Humanism."

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Top Room, Royal Buildings, 18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street): 7.30, Rev. Sydney Spencer, B.A. (Liverpool)—"Free Religion: Its Basis and Meaning." Speaker will not commence until 8.0.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Picton Hall, Liverpool): Monday, November 18, Debate between Mr. Chapman Cohen and Rev. David Pughe (London, representing Pemthoke Baptist Chapel, Liverpool)—"Can We Do Without Christianity?" Doors open 7.15, commence at 8.0. Prices of admission: Reserved seats, Platform 5s. each; floor, 2s. 6d. each; Unreserved seats, Amphitheatre, 1s. and 6d.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, A Door, City Hall, Albion Street): 6.30, Lantern Lecture—Dr. Madeline Archibald will lecture upon "The East Looks In."

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S. (Club Room, Middle Chase): 7.0, Mr. Wm. Raine will lecture, subject—"Can it be Replaced?" Chair will be taken by Mr. G. B. Swinburne.

### Miscellaneous Advertisements.

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