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Views and Opinions.

Religion and Life.

Some time ago I called attention to a phase of Christian superstition that flourishes wherever the Roman Catholic Church exists, but which in this country is not given the publicity it receives in places where the Roman Church is differently situated. The case to which I refer is the sale of "Votive Lamps" carried on under the direct patronage of the Archbishop of Brisbane. By paying 5s. for one of these lamps a man may get almost anything he requires. These things include rain—no small thing in such a country as Australia—successful deals in land, finding situations, getting a rise in salary, passing examinations, letting houses, etc. The details are published in a paper, just as are lists of testimonials in a quack medicine advertisement. The whole thing helps one to realize the depths of mental degradation to which the most authentic form of the Christian religion can reduce its followers.

Another sample of the same kind of idiocy has just reached me. In this case it hails from New York. There is an agency there run by the Very Reverend Monsignor Mallick J. Fitzpatrick, which will supply subscribers to the St. Joseph Union with a cord—just a piece of thin white cord. But it is not an ordinary cord. It seems that in 1657 there was a nun who was ill of some deadly disease. She had no hope of human salvation, so in her distress she made "doubtless by divine inspiration" a cord, had it blessed in honour of St. Joseph, and while wearing the cord she prayed to the saint. While she was she found herself getting better, in fact, she was "instantaneously and completely cured." Nothing more was heard of this cord until 1842. Then other things happened which were brought under notice of

certain Popes. Finally, Pope Pius IX established the order of St. Joseph's Union, endowed it with indulgences, and gave the Union the power to bless the cord and retail it among the faithful. In 1876 Father Drumgoole, of New York petitioned for power to bless the cord, and permission was granted in 1883. The result is the issue of this sacred cord, with seven sacred knots, which by wearing—and paying for—you may be granted all sorts of favours from St. Joseph. The forms of prayer to be said, with other particulars are in the circular before me. The cord is also before me, although to paraphrase the celebrated Jumping Frog, "there don't seem anything about that yere cord different from other cords." Perhaps Mr. Hilaire Belloc would be able to explain.

* * *

A Magic Cord.

I do not intend dwelling upon the huge trade in credulity that is carried on by the Roman Catholic Church. It is quite certain that if any individual were to set up selling either magic lamps, or sacred cords, with elaborate accounts of the wonders worked by them, he would soon find himself in a police court. And being quite Catholic—although not in the Roman sense—I am not inclined to be unduly severe on the Roman Church compared with other churches. After all there is not a very substantial difference between getting benefits from St. Joseph, or for some other saint, and securing an alteration in the weather, or a change of health, or success in war, by praying to Jesus, or Jehovah, or the Holy Ghost. One is a cruder and more primitive form of the other.

I mention the particular superstition of the sacred cord, or the magic lamp, because it is the Roman Church that has in this country been largely instrumental in holding up the Government in the pursuit of its educational policy, and which openly boasts that Catholics will always put the interests of their faith before everything else. That is they will obey the orders of their priests, and to a Roman Catholic—as Mr. Hilaire Belloc says with regard to himself—when the Church has said that a certain thing is right, it is a matter of no consequence whatever to him whether the thing which is declared to be right commends itself to his intelligence or not. The Roman Church in this country declares that unless the Government of the day is prepared to further subsidize the teachings of its doctrines to Roman Catholic children it will by every means in its power strive to make democratic government impossible, and on the other hand, it will support any political party that will give it what it wants. It is in the market, there is no mystery about its price, and with the most united and the most ignorant vote in the country at its command, it represents danger to the security of the State.

Sabbatarianism.

But the evil influence of the intrusion of religion into public life does not begin, nor does it end with the Roman Catholic Church. It is merely its most thorough and most evil example. At the other end of the Christian scale we have the most ignorant and the narrowest form of Protestantism uniting in the perpetuation of a Sabbatarianism that is a disgrace to any people calling themselves civilized. The object here, as in the case just dealt with is entirely religious. There is no other object involved in the demand for the "sacredness of Sunday," and there never was any other purpose involved. Both the seventeenth and the eighteenth century Acts were avowedly created to prevent the desecration of the Sabbath. There was no concern for the promotion of the health, or the betterment of the people, and none for the interests of labour. It should indeed, never be forgotten that it was while Sabbatarianism in this country was at its highest and its strongest—if we omit the short Puritan dominancy in the seventeenth century—that the English factory system came into being. Sabbatarianism saw nothing wrong in women working nearly naked in the mines, or in children of six and seven working at looms till they dropped, it saw nothing wrong in the transportation or imprisonment of men for seeking higher wages, or fewer hours of employment—so long as the Sabbath was not desecrated.

Even to-day it does not question the authoritative statement of responsible officials all over the country that the growth of Sunday entertainments and Sunday excursions have led to a diminution of drunkenness, and to a general improvement in the behaviour of the younger generation. The thing that matters in the opinion of these bigots is that the Sabbath is being desecrated, and in the opinion of the parsonry places of healthy entertainment are certain to draw people away from Church or Chapel. The notion of testing the serviceability of existing customs or laws by reference to the well-being of the people is entirely foreign to the Christian mind. It is just a question of carrying a religious belief into practice, and pandering to a religious vested interest. Just as the Roman Catholic says he will have no education that is not saturated with Catholicism, so the Sabbatarian says that it does not matter a jot to him what are the secular advantages of a rationalized Sunday; it is the religious aspect that alone matters. Better have the country drunken and disreputable and religious, than sober and well behaved and neglecting the religious observance of Sunday.

* * *

What the Bigots Want.

Just before the last General Election that unspeakably stupid body, the Lord's Day Observance Society put forward a programme of legislation it intended working for in the new parliament. It hoped to get legislation passed that would:—

Stop all Sunday games and Sunday pleasure rides by motor omnibus and motor coaches.

Stop all Sunday newspapers.

Stop all Sunday concerts, dances, cinemas, theatres, and the Sunday opening of the Zoo.

Close all shops of every description on Sunday.

Close all public houses all day on Sunday.

That at all events gives us the ideals of these Sabbatarians, and indicates what may happen if the Home Secretary gives way, as he is quite likely to do unless the more civilized around him are very active, to the demand being made for local option. That would make the position worse than it is at present, for it would mean that the bigots would have an Act

passed in 1931 to back them up instead of appealing to one that is admittedly out of date. There would be a world of difference in practice in breaking a law that the majority of educated people believe ought to be broken, and breaking a law which is avowedly an Act which owes its origin to sheer religious bigotry.

* * *

Keep Religion Out.

To that aspect of the matter I may recur in another article. What I am desirous of is to emphasize the evil at any time, and at any place of the domination of secular life by religious considerations. Put it that in the controversy over the Education Act the Nonconformists demands could have been made to harmonize with those of the Roman Catholics and the more extreme Churchman. We should then have had a very definite form of religious instruction being taught in the schools at the expense of the entire community, and the spectacle of the children being taught religious doctrines as absolutely true, which the majority of educated adults would admit to be probably false. The nation was saved from this only because the sects could not come to an agreement as to the common and agreed method of exploiting the State and the child. As it is it was degrading enough to see a minister of education, on behalf of a Government, the majority of the members of which do not believe in the State teaching of religion, going cap in hand to religious leaders to see if some bargain could not be struck so that they might graciously permit the educational work of the Government to go forward.

Again, there is no question that the interference of religion in the case of the Lord's Day Observance Act has been evil, and has produced nothing but evil. The right of the people to access to museums, or art galleries, or playing grounds, or to entertainments on Sunday was as valid in 1781 as it is in 1931. The only difference is the increased power of a more enlightened public feeling. It is the same in whatever direction we turn. The influence of Canon Law on the secular law is admitted by all authorities to have been bad. It makes laws harsher and more brutal and more intolerant. And as a mere matter of fact, wherever the religious organizations of a country have been allowed to exert a dominant influence in the secular life of a State, the secular power has been compelled to step in, and in the interests of the community curb their activities. In this sense, we are to-day witnessing a phase of the old war between the secular and the religious forces of society. The choice here is, as in so many other directions, a choice between the naturalistic and the supernaturalistic conception of life, its duties, and its possibilities.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The evidential value of profane writers and the Pauline Epistles in regard to the existence of an historical Jesus has proved illusory. The genuineness of the Pauline Epistles is not at all established. Even if, however, they were really written by the apostles in the fifties and sixties of the first century, they would give no testimony to the historical human being called Jesus. That the apostle had such a person in mind and not a heavenly being, a Saviour-God Jesus, who has become man, cannot be deduced from the Epistles, but is read into them, so that the existence of an historical Jesus is merely assumed. Now this assumption is based on the Gospels and therefore cannot in their turn serve to prove the existence of the Jesus of the Gospels. There is no other source of the belief in an historical Jesus but the Gospels. The credibility of the historical documents of Christianity finds no support outside themselves.

Professor Arthur Drews.

Pioneers in Prison.

"Stone walls do not a prison make
Nor iron bars a cage."—*Lovelace.*

"Rough work, Iconoclasm, but the only way to get at
truth."—*O. W. Holmes.*

"Liberty's chief foe is theology."—*Bradlaugh.*

"You see how this world goes!" is one of Lear's pregnant exclamations in the greatest tragedy penned by the master-hand of Shakespeare, *Gloster*, who is blind, says he sees it feelingly, and Lear replies:—

Look with thine ears: see how yon justice rails
upon yon simple thief. Hark in thine ear: change
places, and handy-dandy which is the justice, which
is the thief?

Lear, even in his ramblings, gives terse, pungent expression to thoughts extraordinary for acuteness and depth, but he seldom surpasses this transformation scene in respect to suggestive import and vivid presentment.

This apparent paradox is explained by the history of religious persecution. Read the stories of the judicial murder of Freethinkers, heretics, Jews, and alleged witches. Read Fox's *Book of Martyrs*, and McCabe's *Biographical Dictionary of Rationalists*. See how, through so many ages, independence of mind was killed off and hypocrisy and servility fostered. For many centuries Europe was a hotbed of religious persecution. With rack and thumbscrew, stake and gibbet, the Christian Churches silenced opposition. Thus it happens that some prison records are bright spots on the scroll of history.

There is an unfortunate affinity between pioneers and prisons. Many of the noblest men and women in history suffered long and cruel incarceration within the grim walls of prisons for their devotion to truth. Prisons have thus not infrequently been glorified by the halo of the martyr. How many brave soldiers in the Army of Human Liberation have rotted in gaols? How many men of genius have solaced their imprisoned hours with their pens, learning in suffering what they expressed as literature?

The ancient priesthood commenced the work of persecution. In old-world Athens Socrates solaced his prison hours with philosophy before he drank the deadly hemlock among his sorrowing disciples. The Christian priesthood, even more fanatical than their Pagan predecessors, sometimes dispensed with the mockery of a trial, and, as in the case of the unfortunate Hypatia, resorted to plain murder. The great Galileo, when he was old and poor, suffered in a Roman dungeon, and Roger Bacon was on two occasions imprisoned—once for a period of ten years—on the common charge of heresy and magic. Yet he, too, like Galileo, but disturbed the pious ignorance of his contemporaries with ideas of discoveries that were to be realized after his death.

Nor can we forget that the hapless Giordano Bruno, perhaps the greatest martyr of all, suffered the horrors of a cruel imprisonment before his tragic end by burning at the hand of the hired assassins of the Romish Church. Thomas Paine was another fine illustration. To relieve the tedium of the loneliness during his captivity in prison he composed part of the world-famous *Age of Reason*, a work for which scores of persons afterwards suffered imprisonment. It was while in the Bastille that Voltaire wrote the greater part of the *Henriade*. The priests would have liked to put Voltaire to death, but thanks to his influence and position he always evaded their eager clutches. Richard Carlile, his family and associates, had more than their share of pains and penalties for daring to defend free speech in Georgian England. Carlile

himself suffered over nine years' imprisonment, and his family and shopmen endured among them about fifty years' confinement. That warmhearted Leigh Hunt had two years' captivity for satirizing the Prince Regent, afterwards George the Fourth, of indifferent memory. Thomas Cooper, the Chartist, was no stranger to the interior of a gaol. His famous *Purgatory of Suicides* was another instance of a mind triumphing over captivity. Ernest Jones, another Chartist leader, also belongs to the roll of men who have, by the resources of genius, converted a prison into a palace of thought.

Another noteworthy prisoner was honest John Bunyan. He was not a Freethinker, but he spent twelve years in Bedford Gaol for militant Nonconformity, and wrote part of the *Pilgrim's Progress* while in durance vile. Bunyan had an excellent humour. A snuffing busybody came to visit him and declared that God had ordered him to search for him in half the prisons of England. Bunyan retorted: "If God had sent you, you need not have taken so much trouble. God knows I have been in Bedford Gaol for years." It is a singular coincidence that the authors of two of the most popular books ever written should have been not only contemporaries, and of the same nationality, but both imprisoned in the same county. Daniel Defoe, however, did not write his immortal *Robinson Crusoe* while he was imprisoned, although other works of his prolific pen were born of his captivity. Cervantes, a much greater writer than Bunyan and Defoe, and one of the world's foremost authors, was held captive by the Moors for five years, a truly terrible experience.

Among the host of noble names of those who have suffered imprisonment we have referred only to a few, and most of these were apostles of Freethought. Indeed, Freethinkers have ever been the most potent forces of progress. No other men are discussed so widely, but magnificent as is their life-work, the men themselves are greater. Hissed at by superior people, stoned by the crowd, they found that intellectual honesty is not a paying career, yet good men and true have had to submit to this treatment. Charles Bradlaugh, prematurely aged by his strenuous fight for liberty, saw honours showered on men not fit to black his boots. Francesco Ferrer, fronting the rifles of the firing-squad, had to find his reward in his own conscience. George Foote had to listen to the mocking voice of the Papist judge, telling him that he had devoted his great talents to the service of the devil. Yet, in their hours of apparent failure these men had actually triumphed. They were martyrs who missed the palm but not the pains of martyrdom; heroes without the laurels, and conquerors without the jubilation of victory. They laboured not for themselves, but for the world and coming generations.

MIMNERMUS.

At Eighty-Four.

GREETING TO W. A., AYR.

FOUR SCORE AND FOUR, and thou art living still,
Refined, matured, in reason, wisdom, will;
Live on, old man! nor vex at passing years;
Still see afar the end that evernears;
Long hast thou laboured here, an honour'd guest;
Forget the worse and treasure still the best;
Still in thy garden, mid your roses red,
Thy birds and books, erect thy noble head
Now grey without but vital still within,
To all that's truest in this world akin:
When seeks its Golden West thy Caravan
In Echo still we'll hear,—*This was a man!*

A.M.

The Approach to Truth.

"For this cause came I into the World, that I might bear witness unto the truth."
"Pilate saith, What is truth?"

No answer is recorded, and it is doubtful whether there has ever been much common agreement on the matter. John Locke relates that he was brought to the study of philosophy by the conviction, following a discussion with three friends, that there had been no mutual understanding as to the nature of knowledge. We venture to say that many of the problems which have confronted mankind would have been simplified and shortened had there been some common ground in the beginning, some common standard as to what it was the disputants were in search of. A great many more problems would never have been raised at all; many "philosophical" questions are invalid. At the Seventh International Philosophical Congress recently held at Oxford, the Austrian Schlick said, "Most of the so-called metaphysical propositions are no propositions at all, but meaningless combinations of words."

By way of arriving at a working conception of truth, *viz.*, that truth is the workability of hypothesis or "verification by experience," let us enumerate the various contemporary methods of approach to truth.

I.—AUTHORITY—THE ROMAN CATHOLIC WAY.

The consistent Roman Catholic does not search for truth. He already has The Truth, which is established for all time. All subsequent discoveries will be valid only so long as they conform to the standard of Truth set up with authority and infallibility by the Church. The pivotal position is thus already determined; further knowledge must refer to it, and become established only by that reference. A great, primary Truth, divinely granted by revelation, stands supreme, and all minor truths must revolve round it.

Probably no amount of reasoning will shake this tenet, since it does not acknowledge the supremacy of reason in the first place. Reasoning does not come into play until the Truth is accepted. It is, as it were, put into the corner until needed. Then it is used only in service of the Truth. Unless that is accepted reason is blind, aimless, without a basis.

One might, of course, ask why the Christian Revelation should be given preference to the Mohammedan, for instance; each revelation rules out the others. But the only hope for the Roman Catholic is the absorption of a grain of Rationalism. Hitherto he has been more or less sheltered from rationalistic attack, but the moment reason makes its entrance, no matter how small its allotment, as it did at the Reformation, from that moment there is opened up the possibility of an intellectual journey to the other logical extreme—Atheism.

We choose to reject truth by authority, of which the Roman Catholic Church is the great example. It is ultimately a matter of preference, or taste, and one aim of education is to refine this taste. Roman Catholicism can be quite consistent, quite comprehensible and neat, and quite despicable. Its adherents will include, on the one hand, a vast, ignorant mass, and on the other, men of eccentric mentality or rampant imagination. It has been well said by an eminent Catholic, Hilaire Belloc, that all that is not Catholic is returning to infidelity.

II.—THE MYSTIC WAY.

This is exemplified in our day by Dean Inge and James Douglas (no offence to the Dean is intended.) The latter speaks of his "sixth sense," and the former is a champion of Plotinus. We do not doubt

for a moment that the Dean has had what he is pleased to call "mystic experiences"; we only ask, what are they? That is, we accept the mystics' *description* of them, but reserve the right to be sceptical regarding his *interpretation* of them. We are not bound to conclude, with him, that his experience was "communication with God," or anything of that sort. Provided he is an interesting subject we might hand him over to a psychoanalyst. And in any case the mystic approach to truth is met at the outset by the objection that a study of the history of mysticism reveals a certain lack of consistence among the mystic subjects; there is more caprice and contradiction than agreement; except for a certain general tendency to Pantheism.

As for a "sixth sense," it is really remarkable that those whose faith is too evanescent for words seem to profess a sovereign pity for sober thought as it toils in the plane below and counsel it to drown itself in sheer despair; an attitude which indicates a certain poverty of imagination.

III.—BERGSON'S WAY—INTUITION.

We have here a depreciation of the intellect, which, because (according to the French philosopher) it can only deal with what is fixed and static, solidifies all it touches, makes symbols of moving objects, and congeals into concepts what is really a flowing reality. The intellect, therefore, remains adequate only for the discontinuous, which is merely an abstraction from continuous reality. We require that which will place us inside the movement. Intuition is our instrument. We become aware of the change which is reality through intuition, which appreciates the flux or duration, whereas intellect merely cuts it up into static moments, such as cannot exist.

Of what use, then, is intellect? Bergson replied that it was only developed in the struggle for existence, and was therefore not to be taken as a source of true beliefs. Russell objects to this in his *Mysticism and Logic*, and points out that we only know of the struggle through intellect.

It would be quite easy, moreover, to invert Bergson, and claim that reality is a series of disconnected events; "mobility" being an addition by the mind. But there is no need to resort to propositions that have no utility. It seems to us that the intellect does exactly that which Bergson denied to it. It appreciates movement. Many of our "thoughts" are prolonged "thinkings." For proof of the assertion that the intellect can appreciate duration we have only to go to grammar and study the function of verbs.

Both intuition and intellect, if we understand them aright, have their own use. They combine in the mind of the scientist; and their opposition is, we believe, totally illusory. A hypothesis is a piece of scientific imagination, in agreement with at least two definite percepts having correspondence to some fact of experience. The only trouble is, that these hypotheses sometimes get too far ahead, with the intellectual support lagging far behind, so that they have to be withdrawn.

IV.—SELF-CONSISTENCY—THE MATHEMATICAL WAY.

Descartes, with his "innate ideas," might serve as chief example.

The only objection is, that any fairy tale can be self-consistent—given that fairies *can* do such things, and *are* such people. A dream, too, can contain a considerable amount of self-consistency.

The mathematician Jeans (or, at least, Jeans in a mathematical frame of mind) gives us a Great Architect on the following lines of argument:—

(a) Nature is mathematical.

- (b) Mathematics can only be appreciated by an intelligence versed in Mathematics.
 (c) Therefore Nature is the work of a mathematical intelligence,

and though there is nothing inherently inconsistent about the idea, we cannot see that the conclusion follows. The scheme imagined by Jeans meets with no *a priori* objections. The opposition is a *posteriori*. It should be added that although self-consistency alone is not enough to establish truth, that which is true must be at least self-consistent.

V.—PRAGMATISM—THE WAY OF WM. JAMES.

The mass of literature which has gathered round this subject bears some testimony to its importance, and naturally it would be quite impossible here to do anything like justice to it. James found himself having to refute, time after time, in one publication after another, objections which, so he lamented, should never have been raised. The fault was, we believe, entirely his own. That a man with his gift of expression could not make himself clear in about half a dozen volumes is a fault which cannot be ascribed to numbers of his intelligent contemporaries. We fancy the distinguished American was rather too ambitious for his theory (it cannot, we think, be doubted that he catered for popular applause), with the result that he attempted to carry it further than was strictly permissible. "All that is implied by the pragmatic method," he once wrote, "is that truth should have practical consequences." Our ideas should bear a correspondence with independent reality ("pure experience") *i.e.*, they should "work" when applied to the test.

So much is promising, but James proceeded—in spite of his protestations—to give to the human will a great power of arbitration in deciding what is to be called true. Materialism, for instance, "with its notion of lower forces eternal," "is not a permanent warrant for our ideal interests, not a fulfiller of our remotest hopes," and so must lose preference say to the notion of God, which "guarantees an ideal order which shall be permanently preserved," for "the need of an eternal moral order is one of the deepest needs of our breast." Obvious objections immediately confront such a proposition, which rests upon the implicit assumption that all wills give similar expressions.

Prof. Dewey, who prefers the term "operational thinking," avoids the error of James.

VI.—THE MODERN SCIENTIFIC WAY—WORKING HYPOTHESES.

A hypothesis is advanced, and if it meets with systematic response we say it works, and frame an expression of its workability in language, which we call a truism. We then investigate the extent of the facts or events which it will cover. If the response becomes capricious we suspect intervening factors, and limit the application of our hypothesis. Things themselves are neither true nor false; they simply *are*. Truth is a mental affair; it is the appreciation of some consistent relationship in nature. To ascribe truth to an idea is to assert that it shall have practical consequences; certain expectations of ours are to be rewarded. The statement "Napoleon lived" carries with it, or is, the affirmation that there are a host of things with which his non-existence is incompatible. There are, it may be added, no "degrees" of truth, but only of probability.

Without giving unqualified support to those immortal words of the poet Keats, which identify truth and beauty, it may nevertheless be held that truth—as truth—is beautiful. It is, of course, nothing concrete, and is generally considered one of the "values."

G. H. TAYLOR.

Freethought and the Children.

IN the weekly journal *Tit-Bits*, a page is conducted by "Mrs. Sunshine," under the title of "Your Happy Home Page"; and in the issue dated January 31, she announces that she is to begin an "Important New Series" of weekly articles containing advice to parents about the answers to be given to the questions put to them by their children. One would suppose that a parent of average intelligence (who has the most knowledge of the idiosyncracies of his offspring) is better able to judge how their questions ought to be answered than an outsider. But it is a characteristic of the age that many popular weeklies have developed into Information and Advice Bureaus on all sorts of topics—law, love, medicine, domestic economy, dress, etiquette, games, potatoes, prunes and prisms. It is somewhat depressing to reflect that this is just another proof of the lack of individual independent thought. Minds that are neither original nor free must lean on others for guidance in intimate matters which the individual himself ought to be able to solve without outside help.

And now "Mrs. Sunshine" is in particular going to prove herself an authority upon the answers to be given to children on the subject of religion. Next week the special article is to be headed: "What shall I tell my child about God?" This subject has apparently been provoked by a letter from a "mother of four," who has written thus-wisely to "Mrs. Sunshine": "The Snags I get tied up in when the children question me about God are too humiliating. I've given up talking to them about religion." "Mrs. Sunshine" comments upon that letter in this way: "An easy way out. But is it just? Is it right? Is it sane?" (Sounds like a modern Chadband). Is it fair to launch a little human ship on the restless sea of life and refuse even to try to chart it a safe course?"

I know these comments will bring a smile to the faces of Freethinkers who were brought up in the faith during the last three decades of the nineteenth century; but who have snapped the fillets of intellectual bondage, and have refused to allow their little ones to be bound by them. But let us see what "Mrs. Sunshine's" attitude implies. Evidently in the first place that without religion young people are on an unsafe course when they go out into life; and in the second place that the numerous Freethinking parents who have no use for any God, but who have instructed their children in the care of their bodies and the nurture of their minds *without supernatural supports* are either fools or rogues.

It is a testimony to the growth and increasing influence of Freethought that children are coming home from school to puzzle such parents as this mother of four with awkward questions about God and religion. Parents like her can only throw up their hands—and the sponge—in despair! They evidently have given very little consideration to God or religion either way—for or against; and they are as ignorant of advanced thought as a cow is of snipe-shooting. But certainly even such parents when you converse with them on such topics exhibit their indifference to religion by the declaration that they want their children to have a happier childhood than they had; and they allow their children to whistle and play and walk and read secular magazines on Sundays. They don't prevent them from going to church or chapel or Sunday school if they feel like it; but they don't force them to go. Even with unthinking parents who, in their early days, were driven to church and Sunday school

against their inclination, the tendency is to concern themselves with the present instead of a distant future—to make the most of the present world—to occasionally go to church if they like and stop away if they like. The Family Bible that by grandfather was read every evening of the week now reposes on a top shelf under an ever thickening coat of dust—or supports a home-made chest of drawers in the children's bedroom.

Instinctively and intuitively very many people of this description have sensed the eradication of religious terrorism. There is more common sense in the air than there was, and these folk have a subconscious disbelief in the justice of everlasting fire for even a life of eighty years of villainy. The churches no doubt retain the allegiance of many people by solemn warnings about future "retribution." But that expression is capable of a variety of constructions; and many argue that not only have they had their share of "retribution" in this life; *but a good deal more*, so that on a balancing of accounts at the judgment day it is they who ought to get judgment against God and not God against them! When ecclesiasticism surrendered the weapons of the Inquisition; physical and corporal torture; an everlasting Lake of Fire; and the Devil and his Angels, it restricted itself to expedients of a sneaking and defamatory kind. The modern devil in the Christian representation is the Freethinker. And if he isn't a devil he is a reptile—unfit by his noxious views and nauseous practices for association with decent Christians, who are "charted on a safe course," and whose home is a pure and beautiful heaven. Still, on the whole, the modern expedients have not turned out the success that was hoped. The old-fashioned Inquisition and everlasting hell were much more effective with the people of earlier times. But—ah, and there's the rub—the people of these later times have acquired the knowledge of wrinkles that their ancestors knew nothing about. With increased knowledge there is a decreasing credulity. With increased knowledge, liberty and equality are beginning gradually to get a show.

Need one be surprised that the new atmosphere should have its effect even on the minds of the very young? The keenness to know the truth in all things—so far as we can know it—is a desirable and a commendable feature of the time. And it is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—not a collection of distorted information from prejudiced sources—which is the supremely beneficent objective.

Courage, ye Freethinkers of Britain! Ye may be but a (comparatively) little band and lowly; yet you have chosen the good part of setting out to open the eyes of the minds of your blind fellow-beings, and to purify, enlarge and exalt their conceptions of themselves and their individual capacities. Courage! Because you have behind you such a record of achievement of noble men and women which is an inspiration like nothing else in history! One is filled with hope when he thinks of the future. And meanwhile what may not the children of Freethinking parents be able to do to help to bring in the happy era of Humanism, Truth and Liberty? I sometimes think these parents would do a great service to the greatest of causes by naming their little ones after eminent figures who gave and are giving their talents and their lives to it! We want to find in our primary schools many more Charles Bradlaugh Smiths; Robert Ingersoll Robinsons; George William Foote Joneses; ay, and Chapman Cohen Browns!

IGNOTUS.

The Road Back.

SIR HERBERT BARKER'S own special branch of work is concerned with bones, joints and muscles; and only the more unyielding and conservative of the medical profession would deny to him the just praise that is merited by his achievements. But he has been reading outside his speciality, and three books have lately given him food for thought—*The Myterious Universe*, by Jeans, a work of Freud's and the Holy Bible. The astronomical distances to which Sir Herbert's attention has now been directed have appalled him and threatened him with a recrudescence of the agnosticism which, like a wave of Influenza, passed over the community within his recollection. The work of Freud's has provided him with an unwelcome theory of the belief in God that evidently appeals to him as the "modern explanation." And finally, the Holy Bible points the way home again, out of this new-cast gloom of doubt and difficulty, to the simple truths that were taught to him "long ago by his mother." It is a very human story, in many ways a touching story, but I am a little surprised that he wrote to the *Sunday Dispatch* about it.

Sir Herbert tells us that he felt very depressed, after the dose of Jeans, at the "contemplation of his own insignificance in time and space." It is curious how many people, not very clear-headed about things in general, seem to want a "significance in time and space." It is not sufficient for them to have a significance in life, or in the world, or in affairs, or in any of those groups of relationships in which they live, move and have their being. It must be a significance in time and space, or in eternity, or in ultimate purpose, or in transcendent reality, or in something or other that has nothing to do with them. If Sir Herbert had read his Freud with reasonable care and comprehension he would have found there the key to the riddle of his article in the *Dispatch*. He commences, so very obviously, with a shock the impact of which temporarily throws him off the rails, and the remainder of the article is the story of the effort to get back.

The Road Back Sir Herbert first attempts on foot-steps of reason, but his progress is halting. His objection to Freud's theory that God is the outcome of a grown-up child's quest for a father is that the "father-hungry all over the earth have hit upon an identical solution of their difficulty." Sir Herbert evidently thinks it too peculiar that the father-hungry should all have hit upon a father to appease their father-hunger. In the sober truth of anthropological science, of course, God is not a father all over the earth, nor is he universally the result of a father-hunger, nor does the conception of deity represent "an identical solution" to the cosmological problems of all peoples. But religious anthropology evidently does not trouble Sir Herbert much. Feeling perhaps that this is not a complete demolition of his difficulties he passes on to a criticism of science. Science is "shifting sand"; it "moves swiftly in quest of new knowledge." But within our reach there is an abiding truth; it has stood the test of two thousand years, and will withstand another two thousand. It is the Sermon on the Mount.

Sir Herbert may be a man of great manipulative skill where the human frame is concerned, but he evidently does not understand the framework of science. How old is the substantial truth of scientific principle and method we cannot say, but we know that it is at least as old as Greek philosophy, and that is considerably more than two thousand years of age. The substantial principles of science are inextricably bound up in the conditions of human reasoning, and the application of rational thought to cosmic problems. Causation, as Hume ably pointed out, may be a theory, but it is also a condition of thought; a fact, by the way, which Sir James Jeans has entirely overlooked. After this broadside hurled at the fortress of rational scepticism, Sir Herbert evidently thinks he has said enough. He leaves reason for dead. There is "something higher than reason." It is the something, apparently, that he learnt long ago from his mother. It is the "essence of truth"; it is the "ultimate reality of spiritual truth"; it is something that is

not reason, but Sir Herbert can nevertheless understand it, for he "can comprehend it within him." It has to do with the Sermon on the Mount; it has to do with prayer, not with asking for what you want, but with real prayer, which is to say work. It has to do not with the brain but with the heart. And so Sir Herbert heels over and plunges right into the syrupy waters of religious cliché.

I have no doubt that this manipulative surgeon feels something inside him, and only to the fact that it is higher than reason can we ascribe his lamentable inability to get it outside him in a manner that will enable us to understand him. But in this he is not alone; he is in the quite notable company of the famous mystics of every age. As for his outlook being the "religion of the plain man," I have my doubts. Plain men should have plain beliefs, but this is anything but plain. He is certainly right, however, when he says that it "transcends all reason." Whether, as he tells us, it "defeats all doubts" depends entirely upon the character of the doubts. If they are the unrestful feelings that assail one who wanders momentarily from the truths he learned long ago from his mother, then perhaps these will be defeated; but if they represent the intellectual scepticism of a vigorous and rational brain, then they must be assuaged by something better than that which "transcends all reason."

MEDICUS.

Acid Drops.

Some of us remember the indignation in the Roman Catholic world when the statue to Bruno was erected in Rome. It was denounced as an insult to the Holy Father, the Pope, and if the Roman Church had had its way the monument would have soon been destroyed and those who erected it imprisoned. Now the Pope himself has entered a strong protest against the toleration of Protestant activities in Italy. He considers the toleration of Protestant activities as an insult to the Holy See. The protest reminds us that Roman Catholicism is just what it has always been. The same mass of ignorance, superstition, and intolerance, run by some of the "cleverest" and the most unscrupulous men on the face of the earth. And it is this Church which asks for a further measure of cash support for its religion in the schools.

In Belgium Cardinal van Roey, Archbishop of Malines has raised a public protest against another insult to the Roman Catholic conscience. Lieutenant General Bernheim, who died recently, led the Belgian Army during the war. He was cremated and given a public funeral. So the Cardinal issues a public protest against the Belgian Government insulting the Roman Church, because it does not approve of cremation. The impertinence of these clerics almost pass belief. We wonder what the private opinion is concerning the existence of the *Freethinker*. And yet there are some who write to us, and who think we do not treat these Ju-Ju men with sufficient gravity and respect, and who imagine we might do more with that type of mind if we treated them with greater kindness. That method is about as effective as would be stroking the back of a starved tiger.

To the assertion that the opening of theatres on Sundays would lower the moral standard of the community, a reader of a daily paper replies that if theatres do not adversely affect moral standards on week-days, they cannot have a worse effect on Sundays. Of course; things that are unobjectionable on week-days do not suddenly get bad on Sundays. If they do, then there must be something malignant in the atmosphere of the English Sabbath.

Dr. John Mott, president of some pious world alliance or other, has been eloquent regarding "youth's opportunity." He thinks that youth will be drawn to the Church, not by a false message that all is right with the Church, but "by a realization of the tragic need of the Church for youth." Alas that tragic need and that

realization! Youth would appreciate them well enough, if only it hadn't learnt that it can get along splendidly without religion, churches and parsons.

In the *Daily Mirror*, someone points out that Lent is not a season for self-denial for any but religious reasons. For the religious it is a time for penitence; but they need not boast of their penances, or seek to impose them on others. Quite so. Lent is a time when Christians advertise the inglorious fact that they have been making hogs of themselves, been indulging themselves too much, and that they realize the need for calling a halt to hoggishness. On the other hand, temperate non-Christians have no need for mortification and penances.

A reader of a daily paper thinks that, if the Church cannot succeed in drawing the crowd unless she has first suppressed her brighter competitors the cinemas, then the fault lies with the Church—and not with the message she has to give. Well, after this, there is only one thing for the Church to do. She must call in a few American film directors to show her how to make the soulful message of Jesus nice and bright and snappy.

The Secretary of the Lord's Day Observance Society tells *Methodist Times* that the Lord's Day Act of 1751 was one of the results of the Methodist Revival, and was put on the Statute Book in Wesley's time because the observance of the Sabbath was being increasingly neglected. For this information, much thanks! The friends of freedom will now know to whom is to be credited another bad debt. As Shakespeare put it: "The evil that men do lives after them." And people in this twentieth century are compelled to forego entertainment on Sunday because a gang of bigots who lived 150 years ago objected to it. It is quite time the "dead hand" of eighteenth century bigots was lifted off the twentieth century.

The Lord's Dayers' Secretary also asserts that the great prosperity of England during the time the Act has been in force is due to the nations recognition of "the sacred character of the Lord's Day." This is a pretty theory. As the majority of English citizens have been compelled to observe Sunday as a day of gloom, are we to understand that the Lord has rewarded a nation which has against its desire been forced to observe Sunday as a day of gloom? Then, again, there are nations with a "Continental Sunday," which have also been prosperous. How can that be accounted for?

Mr. Jack Jones, M.P., writing about Sunday recreation, says:—

The people of this country have the right to rational recreation on Sunday as on every other day, always providing that provision is made for one day's rest in seven, and proper payment is made to those who work on Sunday.

With these safeguards, I see no reason why cinemas or any other form of rational entertainment should be forbidden on Sunday.

Well, there ought not to be any difficulty about securing those safeguards in any Act of Parliament designed to allow the nation to enjoy rational entertainment or recreation on Sundays.

"The Eclipse of Superstition" is the heading to an article in the *Methodist Times*, from which the following is taken:—

How excellent and beneficial to all concerned is the advancement of knowledge. Our gratitude is due to all workers in the field of natural science, who have brought to light clearly demonstrable facts that put antique fallacies to ignominious rout. . . . In the domain of religion as well as in that of natural history, the emancipation of the human mind from error has proceeded to an extent for which we may be devoutly thankful. We have escaped from the bondage and the tyranny of dreadful perversion of belief that sanctioned "holy" and "righteous" wars, and that insisted, at no very remote period of the world's history, upon the savage torture of people whose convictions differed from the absurd dog-

mas held by self-styled "Authority." Gone, one by one, or rapidly going, are all conceptions of God that are an insult to human intelligence, and that portray Deity as other than Universal Benevolence.

That these fallacies, errors, perversions, and absurdities have been allowed to persist—with all their dreadful consequences to the human race—for 1900 years, is a fact which is not exactly in harmony with Universal Benevolence. But we daresay the spiritual training of the believer will enable him to bring both into sweet accord. Meanwhile, it is worth noting that "emancipation" came from knowledge provided by Science and not by Religion or God's special representatives.

In a review of Dr. Selbie's *Religion and Life*, we are told that the doctor says:—

There can be little doubt that of the indifference to and the alienation from religion which is so common today, a large part is due to mistakes and extravagances in religious teaching both in the home and in the school. To the same cause must be put down a large part of religious aberrations in adolescence and later.

Dr. Selbie also avers that both secularism and religious fanaticism which forms the opposite extreme are traceable to this one source. Whereupon, one seems justified in inferring that divine guidance or inspiration is rather over-rated, since it appears not to have enabled teachers of religion to avoid making very dangerous mistakes. The learned Doctor, however, may be merely trying to shift the blame for the religious slump on to those who have taught and still teach certain religious notions and doctrines which, through the inspiration of Freethought criticism, he has come to regard as repulsive. It seems to be quite the fashion with one school of theologians to try to put the blame on one of the other schools. The Protestant and the Catholic fundamentalist blames the Modernist, and vice versa. As they cannot agree as to the cause, how can they hope to find the remedy?

One of our religious cave-men has been volunteering the opinion that an earthquake indicates God's anger and vengeance for wickedness. Taking the good man's education in hand, someone points out that earthquakes average 9,000 every year; and so God must be in a perpetual state of anger, and must always have been, since earthquakes and volcanic eruptions were in evidence during the ages before man was on the earth. Our cave-man friend is also advised to read history and physical science, and to cease to worry about the crude imaginings of ancient, unlearned writers as to the purposes of the Deity. We feel sure the advice will be neglected. Some men and women are born with the type of intelligence that is in tune with crude imaginings of Holy Writ. There's no cure for it.

A most serious attack on the value of education was made the other day in the House of Lords by the Bishop of London. He said that his father had almost ruined himself in providing for his education. We hope that those who listened bore in mind the consideration that every adventure in educational expenditure does not turn out so badly as in the particular instance cited. And the Bishop's father might have been careless with his money in any case.

The Bishop of London was never remarkable for either truthfulness or ability, but as he gets older he gets worse. We have from time to time called attention to these "inaccuracies," and reverently published some of his tall and quite contradictory stories about his appointment to his present position. His latest excursion into the realms of the fabulous was given to the world in a sermon delivered at the Chapel Royal, St. James's Palace, on Sunday last. Number one was that during the war it was the communicants who kept themselves "clean" in the cities. Number two was concerned with the number of married women who, he asserts, go off with men not their husbands for a week-end. He said that he tried to persuade a young married woman not to spend a week-end with a strange man. He told her that was adultery. She replied, "What a funny name to call it." Now the man that can accept these

stories as true could swallow anything. The idea that the Bishop knows the proportion of men who were not "clean" during the war that were communicants, and those who were not is absurd. Nurses could tell a different tale. And the notion a young married woman would tell him that she was going off for a week-end, and was surprised when she heard that it was called adultery, could never enter the mind of a man less foolish than the Bishop. This gentleman's salary is £10,000 a year, with a free lodging thrown in.

It is well known that nearly all the leading gangsters in America are very religious. They believe while they are alive, and they have religious funerals, of a very gorgeous description after they are dead. They live in the odour of whisky and die in the odour of sanctity. Naturally, then, so religious a person as the great Al Capone objects to being labelled as a criminal. He says that he is just in business, giving the public what it requires, and in reply to an attack upon his character made by General Smedley Butler, he says in justification of his character, "I have been feeding between 2,500 and 3,000 people daily in Chicago during the past six months."

That appears to us a quite complete, and certainly a very Christian reply. For it must be noted that it is not *how* a man makes his money, but how he disposes of it that is important. Very much of the wealth and possessions of the Church have been derived from the Al Capones of Christendom—robber barons, mining magnates and factory owners during the worst days of British industrial history, and so forth. A complete and frank biography of the pious founders of Church wealth would make very interesting reading, and would certainly prove that Al Capone has very great justification for the attitude he has taken up.

Al Capone is also in the true line of classic Christian evidence. For here, too, it is to be noted that the line of justification is what is given not what is done. The fact that the Christian religion is built upon all kinds of imposture and fraud and falsehood is excused on the ground that it has founded many charitable institutions. The fact that the Churches have gained their wealth by trading upon the ignorance and credulity of the people, that the Roman Catholic Church partly maintains itself by means which if practised outside the Church would bring a man within the grasp of the police, is atoned for by pointing what Sisters and Church visitors give to the people, and the fact that it does dispense some of its plunder to those who have been held up by clerical gangsters and made to "partup" by having a theological pistol held at their heads. This letter of Al Capone puts him in quite a new light. I should imagine that he is a student of Christian evidences, and has seized its essential features. And I am quite sure that if one day having made his pile, and fixed it up with the rest of the "boys," he retires from active business and gives liberally to the Church he may yet add another saint to the Christian calendar. One ought to remember, probably Al does, that in the story of the thieves on the cross it was the thieves who benefited from belief in Christ, not those from whom they had stolen.

The Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. declares that "the deepest needs of the boys and young men of to-day are bound up with the purposes and aims for which the Y.M.C.A. stands." Now, it may be admitted that among lads and young men in large towns there is a common need for indoor and outdoor recreational facilities. The aim and purpose of the Y.M.C.A. is merely to exploit this common need in order to introduce religion to its patrons for the benefit of the churches—in other words, to supply an attractive secular bait to a religious trap. This is so obvious that the Y.M.C.A.'s pretentious assumption of having noble aims and purposes is clearly just an ordinary piece of Christian cant and hypocrisy.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

F. ROBERTS.—We hope that all Freethinkers will make all the use they can of this agitation over the Sunday question. It is largely due to the growth of Freethought that Sunday has become what it is, and we ought to reap what advantage we can for the Cause now that there is a general interest excited on the subject.

C. S. FRASER.—Received and shall appear. Sorry to hear you have been unwell. We have been none too well ourselves during the past two or three weeks.

L'ACQUILLON.—Thanks. Shall appear as soon as possible.

E.J.P.—We hope for very little from the ordinary press. But as G. W. Poote said, as we do not owe anything to the press, the press is quite powerless to injure us.

A. P. HYSLOP.—Sorry we cannot agree with you in your general position. There is as much justification in holding up religion to ridicule, or in presenting it in the form of a Cowboy talkie, as there is for treating other subjects in a similar manner. We should not think of using that method with everyone, but, on the other hand, very little is gained by leading religious folk to imagine that Freethinkers believe opinions on religion deserve a tremendous degree of "respect."

R. K. NOYES.—Your selection of the entertainments open to Bostonians on Sunday makes one curious as to the statistics of religious mania in that city.

B. A. MILLICHAMP.—Thanks for prescription. Have passed it along.

S. BURGESS.—We agree with you that all Freethinking holders of wireless licences ought to protest against the present policy of the B.B.C.

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

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Sugar Plums.

To-day (March 1) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the City Hall, Glasgow, at 11.30 and 6.30. His subjects are "Ghosts," and in the evening, "God and the Universe." The usual good audiences are anticipated.

The last of Mr. Cohen's course of lectures at Leicester came to a very successful conclusion on Sunday last. The keenest of interest was shown throughout, and the hall was again well filled. Mr. Hassell occupied the chair, and in view of the approaching jubilee of the opening of the hall made a very earnest appeal for members and further support for the Society. We hope that it met with the success it deserved.

Next Sunday, March 8, Mr. Cohen will speak in the

Chorlton Town Hall, Manchester. On Saturday evening the Branch is holding a "Social," and Mr. Cohen has promised to leave London by an earlier train than usual in order to be present. The meetings on Sunday will be at 3.0 and 6.30. There will be a number of reserved seats at 1s. each.

In *The Suffragette Movement* (Longmans, 21s.) Miss Sylvia Pankhurst has written an interesting story of the Suffragette Movement during the lifetime of the Pankhursts, and it is one that contains a record that those interested in the movement cannot well afford to miss. It was a very strenuous fight, and future generations may well marvel at the opposition, the bigoted, and sometimes brutal opposition, offered by the opponents of the franchise for women. For that reason, and in spite of the unquestionable value of the work, we regret that the story was not given more of what we may call a historical setting, and at least prefaced, by an historical chapter, giving the history of the growth of the woman's movement from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Those who fought and suffered to create the more liberal atmosphere in which the Pankhursts worked, deserve due credit, and they are hardly likely to get it from orthodox historians.

Miss Pankhurst writes with loving appreciation of her father, and from what we know of Dr. Pankhurst from other sources, he must have been an admirable character. Miss Pankhurst mentions her father's connexion with all sorts of movements, but, curiously forgets his association with the Manchester Branch of the National Secular Society. She is also rather diffident too in proclaiming to the world the extent of her father's departure from orthodox religion. She does say that he had shaken himself free from a belief in God, the soul, and immortality, and says that "it was known he was an Agnostic." But that very confused word had not then been invented by Huxley to cover his Atheism, and we very much question whether Dr. Pankhurst ever used the term. One is not really complimenting the dead in asserting their attachment to these ambiguous and therefore misleading phrases.

Still, Miss Pankhurst has written a very important work, since it will preserve the names of many workers in the Cause of the emancipation of women who would otherwise gradually be forgotten. The tendency, the very marked tendency, is for historians of movements—who usually write when the victory of the movement is assured—singling out the names of prominent and "respectable" people for notice, and give them the credit for what has been achieved, and forgetting the humbler persons who first beat the trail that led to ultimate victory. We have protested against this in connexion with histories of Freethought, and we are glad to see this fault to some extent corrected in the work before us. All the same the preliminary chapter we should have liked to have seen would have contained the names of a galaxy of Freethinking men and women, without whom women would be still battling for their "Rights."

Mr. Cohen's new work dealing with the views of Sir James Jeans, and Professors Eddington, Huxley and Einstein is now ready. So much has appeared concerning these men in relation to religion, and so much as to the re-establishment of religion by the "new physics," that most of our readers will welcome a work that estimates the nature and importance of the views of these well-known scientists. Mr. Cohen's criticisms are, as usual, plain and informative, and should prove useful to Christian and Freethinker alike. A review of the book from the pen of "Medicus" will appear in an early issue. The work is issued by the Secular Society, Ltd., at 2s. in paper, and 3s. cloth.

The Perth Branch of the N.S.S. is collecting a library in connexion with its local work, and would be grateful for the gift of any book or books on Freethought and kindred subjects. The idea of such a library is a good one, always providing full use is made of it, and any reader prepared to help can send his, or, her gift to the

local secretary, Mr. J. A. Reid, 70 South Methuen Road, Perth, Scotland.

Mr. Millington, the Secretary of the Birmingham Branch N.S.S. is a young and keen Freethinker, and having settled into the duties of his office, the Branch is beginning to pick up again. There was quite an improved audience last Sunday, Mr. R. H. Rosetti's lecture was closely followed, and drew a number of interesting questions. Mr. Terry was also more busy than usual at the literature stall. If the local saints will help, the Birmingham Branch will soon be an active centre of good work.

Mr. A. D. McLaren visits Liverpool to-day (March 1) and will lecture in the Transport Hall, 41 Islington, Liverpool, at 7 o'clock. His subject will be "A Freethinker Looks at the World." Mr. McLaren is a much travelled man, and his lecture is certain to be full of interest. Admission will be free, but there are some reserved seats at 1s.

The Purpose of Prayer.

At last we have a really authoritative declaration on this highly debatable subject. On this occasion Dr. Temple, Archbishop of York, is the oracle; so who can doubt the validity or orthodoxy of the opinions expressed. The pronouncement was made on Saturday, February 14, in a sanctified building—St. Mary's Church, Oxford—so who can doubt that divine inspiration hallowed the very syllables of his sentences. And the audience before which these gems of wisdom were dropped was no less than a congregation of Oxford undergraduates; so who can question that the language used was as simple and as plain as our venerable prelate could make it.

"The aim of prayer," said His Worshipfulness, "is to bring our wills into harmony with God, so that through us He may use His will . . . Unless we are conscious of that, *He cannot do anything.*" Though the italics were not indicated by His Reverence, we may clearly infer from this remark that he is utterly up-to-date in his agreement with the latest findings of theological philosophy (or should it be "philosophical theology"?) For, according to the pundits, it appears now that it is far more reasonable to deny the *omnipotence* of God than to deny his *goodness*. And as an unequivocal denial of God's almightiness it would be hard to improve upon the words of Dr. Temple. Doubtless it will not be so very long before he arrives at the equally logical stage of denying God's *goodness*, as well as his *omnipotence*, in preference to denying his *existence*. And after that it will be a mere step to the most logical position of all, and we shall find harmony reigning between Anglicanism and Freethought in a mutual agreement to deny that God has any attributes at all.

Later, in the course of the address, the Archbishop declared that, "we do not pray in order to tell Him what we want, for He knows already." This almost sounds as though His Very Reverence had set himself up as critic of the deity he professes to worship. But the more probable explanation is that this is merely another expression of his modernistic leanings. That it is a clear denial of the divinity of Jesus no one can doubt. For was it not Jesus (reputed to be God in human form) who said, in that model of all Christian prayers, "Give us this day our daily bread"? Whether this particular prayer will henceforth cease to be used in the Anglican churches remains to be seen.

Still more light on the purpose of prayer was shed when Dr. Temple stated that "we do not pray to

change God's mind." Unfortunately it does not appear that any explanation was given of the numerous prayers in the Book of Common Prayer, whose whole purpose seems to be to persuade God to do something other than what He has chosen to do at the moment. Prayers for rain, for fair weather; prayers to be used in time of dearth or in storms at sea—all these are presumably thrown overboard by His Reverence. Well—all we can say on the matter is: "Good riddance!"

It might appear to the carping critic that the Archbishop's information on the purpose of prayer is entirely negative. We are told that we do not pray for this reason, nor for that, nor for the other. For what reasons then *do* we pray? To this annoyingly persistent question (which no one in the congregation thought to ask) we are given a most pellucid answer. So pellucid, indeed, that no one can fail to see through it. "The outline of a purely Christian prayer," says Dr. Temple, "is not 'Do for me what I want,' but 'Do with me what You want.'"

As an outline this is pretty good. As a full-blown prayer it may seem a trifle sketchy. So if we are to avoid a tedious repetition of this somewhat monotonous alliteration, what are we to do? Again the answer is super-pellucid in its simplicity. "The most essential part of prayer is to realize the character of God." Could one want anything simpler?

On the strength of the above information we have little difficulty in putting together a couple of ideal prayers (Ancient and Modern) to be used in all the Anglican Churches throughout the world. We dedicate them to the Archbishop of York with the assurance that we shall never claim the copyright, nor charge him one farthing in royalties for making whatever use of them he likes. Here they are:—

O Not-quite-so-Almighty God,

We thy not-quite-so-impotent petitioners, realising for the first time in our not-quite-so-miserable lives that Thou canst do absolutely nothing without our not-quite-so-valueless aid, do not-quite-so-humbly pray Thee to communicate to us in not-quite-so-vague a manner as heretofore what Thy not-quite-so-obvious Will is to us-ward. If Thou canst not do this in not-quite-so-ambiguous terms as Thou hast done in the past (thereby causing numberless not-quite-so-amicable dissensions amongst Thy not-quite-so-faithful servants), we intend in the not-quite-so-distant future to cease bothering our not-quite-so-servile minds about Thy wishes altogether. And then where wilt Thou be? Amen.

or, for alternative use, the following:—

Dear Old God, Your pal and earthly representative, Temple, D.D., Anglican high-priest at York, has just told us that it's no use asking you to change your mind. He also said that it was a waste of time to ask for anything we want, because you already know what we want before we want it. If this is so, why in Canaan don't you give it us? Or, if you do give it us, why in Galilee do you make us wait for something else? As it seems, however, that you really can't do anything unless we first of all find out what you want and help you to get it, don't you think it about time you stopped this shilly-shallying and messing all your followers up with contradictory instructions? Now, see here and get this! We know that you're not all you used to pretend to be. Your pal Temple has quite clearly told us that you're not almighty, and he hints very strongly that all that talk about Jesus being you and you being Jesus is all tommy-rot. On top of this we're beginning to doubt whether you're as good as you pretended to be, and some of us are even wondering whether you are, in fact, all there. So if you don't pull your socks up and give us straight, honest, man-to-man orders in future, we're going on strike. That's flat.

Amen.

C. S. FRASER.

"Why I Am An Atheist."

(Concluded from page 118.)

One may believe what he will as long as he is well fed and protected from the elements, but the moment he falls below that condition he is actually deprived of food necessary to life by the church that does not pay taxes. In reality it is actually stealing food from one who is starving. It is like a miser counting his gold while poverty is knocking at his bolted door. To delude a man into believing that the more he gives of the possessions of this life for the imaginary benefits to be enjoyed in a mythical one is to perpetuate upon him a monstrous and unforgivable fraud.

Every steeple that rises above a church is a dagger thrust into the heart of Humanity. It has proved so in the past. And by the past, we judge the future. Throughout the ages it has perpetrated every fraud, defended every injustice and has been the ally of every form of tyranny. If Atheism is sometime called a "negative philosophy," it is because the conditions of life make a negative philosophy best suited to meet the exigencies of existence, and only in that sense can it be called negative.

Some ministers of religion ignorantly call Atheism a negative philosophy because Atheism must first destroy the monumental ignorance and degrading superstition with which religion, throughout the ages, has so shamelessly stultified the brain of man. A negative attitude in life is sometimes almost essential to proper conduct. Life itself very often depends upon negation. It is a negative attitude when we are cautious about overeating. It is a negative attitude when we curb our impulses and appetites. And on many occasions I have seen illustrated editorials sermonizing upon the fact that the hardest word in our language to pronounce is the word "No." It is only when we have the courage to say "No" to certain temptations that we can avoid the consequences that are the result of following those temptations. Progress also very often consists in negation.

Man finds himself utterly unprepared and poorly equipped to face the facts and the conditions of life. He must overcome the illusions and the deceptive forces that are for ever present in nature. When the light of intelligence first came into the mentality of man, he found himself in a world that was a wilderness; a world reeking with pestilence and populated with shrieking beasts and brutal and savage people. No wonder that man's distorted intellect gave rise to a series of ideas concerning God that makes one shudder at their hideousness. His primitive imagination conceived of Gods with a multitude of heads, of grotesque parts, of several bodies, of numberless eyes and legs and arms.

In order that man may think clearly and rationally upon the facts of life, all these concepts must be destroyed. That is only one of the tasks of Atheism. "To free a man from error is to give, not take away," said the philosopher Schopenhauer. Some of our present-day humanists, emancipated to the degree that they no longer accept deities like "Jehovah," cry for a new concept of God. They want something to put in the place of what has been taken away.

Do they also want a substitute for hell? And what would be their answer to this question: "If the devil would die would God make another? They are like children crying for the moon. Will anyone be so good as to tell me what we need a new concept of God for? Haven't we had gods enough? Hasn't it been task enough to get rid of the conglomeration that has already plagued the human race? I plead

that we no longer contaminate the heavens with these hideous monsters and frightful creatures of religious hallucinations.

Some ministers also take delight in saying that Atheism is dogmatic and destructive. If Atheism is called dogmatic it is because dogmatism is the law of nature. A fact is the most stubborn thing in the world. Matter insists upon occupying space all by itself, and motion will continue in motion regardless of the opinions concerning it.

Atheism is destructive in the same sense that Columbus was a destroyer when he corrected the erroneous conception, induced by false theological ideas, of the flatness of the earth, when he sailed across the ocean and proved the rotundity of the planet upon which we live. Atheism is destructive in the same sense that Galelio was a destroyer, when he corrected the erroneous conception induced by false theological ideas, concerning the existence of only one moon, by discovering the satellites of Jupiter.

So throughout the history of intellectual progress is this attitude true. Call it negative, call it dogmatic, call it destructive, call it what you will. It is the mainspring of progress. Is a physician destructive when he cures a patient of disease? And what hypocrisy it is on the part of those ministers of religion to call Atheism a negative philosophy, when their own Ten Commandments are a series of "Thou Shalt Nots."

But Atheism is also an aggressive, and a militant and a constructive philosophy. It is interested in the Here and Now. It finds problems enough here that require immediate attention and does not fly to others that it knows not of. Atheism cannot sit idly by and watch injustice perpetrated, nor permit the exploitation of the weak by the strong. Its ideal is the establishment of justice—man-made justice even though it be. If man waited for God to feed him he would starve to death.

Atheism believes in education. It believes in telling the facts of life and revealing the truths as they are discovered regardless of whose opinions it shocks. It is ever ready and willing to accept the new if it is better, and reject the old when it is no longer useful.

When the astronomer pointed his telescope to the sky and explored the regions of unlimited space, he was called an Atheist because he found no God within the reach of his telescope, and no heaven within the region of his explorations. When the geologist determined the age of the earth through its rocks and soil and formations, he was called an Atheist because he too destroyed a belief in the special six-day creation and repudiated the biblical cosmogony. When the Historian went back to ancient and prehistoric times and discovered civilizations of high ethical and moral culture, of intellectual achievements that are still an amazement to us, he was called an Atheist because he exposed the myth of Adam, uncovered the mistakes of Moses, and branded with the epithet of fraud the commands of Jehovah. When the Physician sought to alleviate the pain and suffering of Man, he was called an Atheist because he refused to accept the existence of disease as a special visitation of a vengeful God. Even the discovery of anaesthesia, the most humane of all man's accomplishments, was branded as an impious intrusion, and an effort to circumvent and defeat the so-called will of this "loving" God. And Timothy Dwight, a gentleman, once president of Yale College, preached a sermon against vaccination, on the ground that smallpox was a decree of God, and it was a frightful sin to avoid it.

Every scientist who refuses to be held back by narrow theological limitations and searches Nature for her secrets, becomes an Atheist, the Millikans, the

Osborns, and the Pupins to the contrary notwithstanding. That electrical wizard, Prometheus himself, the late Charles P. Steinmetz, said that Atheism was the ultimate philosophy of the scientists. "Where there are three students of nature there are two 'Atheists,'" is an old saying. Atheism is a philosophy of life, founded upon nature and without a God. Atheism does not believe that man's mission on earth is to love and glorify God, but it does believe in living this life so that when you pass on, the world will be better for your having lived. That is the ideal that now inspires more hearts to help humanity in its upward march than ever before in the history of the human race. That is the ideal that inspired Shelley, that inspired Voltaire and Humboldt and Garibaldi; that inspired Abraham Lincoln; that inspired Mark Twain, John Burroughs and Luther Burbank. That is the ideal that inspires Sir Arthur Keith, Thomas A. Edison and Albert Einstein.

In this age and generation no one need cloak his Atheism with some garment of so-called "religious respectability." Charles Bradlaugh's and Robert G. Ingersoll's fight to make Atheism respectable has fortunately come to pass. When religion expresses a nobler sentiment than that contained in these words of Ingersoll's, then, and only then, might it assume a superior attitude. He said: "Call me infidel, call me Atheist, call me what you will. I intend to so treat my children that they can come to my grave and truthfully say, 'He who sleeps here never gave us one moment of pain. From his lips, now dust, never came to us an unkind word.'" Compare that statement with the words of Jesus when he said: that if a man hate not his mother and his father, his brother and his sister, his wife and his children, he cannot become his disciple, and then decide whose mantle you prefer to wear.

I am an Atheist because the philosophy of Atheism is scientific, and science has given to the human race the intellectual monarchs of the world.

When the great Darwin discovered the law of the origin of the species, he was called an Atheist because he disproved the special creation of Man.

When the Chemist went into his laboratory and discovered the indestructibility of matter, he was called an Atheist because he proved the impossibility of a Creator.

I am an Atheist because I want to see hatred and prejudice and bigotry vanish from the earth. I want to eradicate fear from the minds of men. I am an Atheist because I want to see war abolished. I want to see human beings live in harmony and peace. That is the very least that we can ask of life. I am an Atheist because if there is an omnipotent God he has treated the prayers and appeals for help of the human race with an insolent silence that deserves our rebuke and repudiation. I am an Atheist because I want science to continue its glorious achievements to free human beings from the drudgery of existence that Nature has imposed upon us. I am an Atheist because I want science to continue its glorious achievements to free human beings from the drudgery of existence that Nature has imposed upon us. I am an Atheist because I want to see a race of human beings with smiles upon their faces, laughter in their hearts; human beings who will love gloriously and live vigorous and happy lives. I am an Atheist because I want to see a race of intellectually free and morally courageous men and women.

JOSEPH LEWIS.

Strange Gods.

GUY DE MAUPASSANT, in one of his short stories develops rather a quaint conception of a God. One of his characters—a Countess—has decided that she will no longer be a mere instrument in the bearing of children. She has already borne seven, and in order to protect herself from her lord and master, she invents a story to the effect that one of her children, she won't say which, has another man for a father. This has the desired effect.

Two men, standing in the pit of a theatre visited by the Countess discuss the situation. One of them details his idea of the Godhead. He thinks that animals and plants, and all lower creatures were made by God, but that man, in developing his intelligence has outwitted God, so to speak. God intended—and it is notorious how many writers are perfectly well-acquainted with the intentions of the Almighty—that man should be on the level of the animals, fight with them for shelter and food, should, I suppose, be still red in tooth and claw, but in the process of evolution, he has discovered more ethical means, and left his God rather a helpless tyrant, somewhat like a keeper of a menagerie.

De Maupassant, works all this out very interestingly, and, doubtless, his God has as much right to be considered as any other.

Ruskin, in *Modern Painters*, has a reference to Sir Walter Scott's poetry, where he claims for that author a special quality in his attitude to Nature. We must go carefully here, for Ruskin's genius had a way of exaggerating virtues and vices. But, if I remember rightly, he claimed for Sir Walter the idea of personality in Nature. The hills and the streams, the mountains and the woods, were like personal friends to him. In short, they were instinct with intelligence.

Some of us have felt like that sometimes. We felt like stroking a bush or a tree, as if it were a conscious thing and could enter into our feelings. To the poet that may be an advantage, and we can imagine Scott in his rugged glens behaving as though he were encompassed with a great cloud of witnesses.

People in the transitional stage from superstition to Naturalism, may almost be excused for taking shelter in a kind of Pantheism, when every gorse-bush is affiance with God, and every mountain-peak proclaim his presence.

The fact would seem to be that each one of us makes a God after his likeness. Recently I talked with a coal-man, and I expect his God was a magnified coal distributor. He said we had no idea as to what God was like—and I agreed—He might be a hundred yards high, but surely there must be some governor of this mighty universe, some supreme intelligence to guide the planets in their courses.

The coal-man had rather a poor idea of our men of science. They were so clever in their own conceits, measuring interstellar spaces, and dissecting the atom that they were unable to hear the still small voice. He thought God was just giving them up as a hopeless proposition by reason of their pride of intellect. He even went on to say that God was playing with them, prior to a terrible reckoning day, when they should be compelled to see the King in his beauty, and then they would be compelled to surrender.

I tentatively remarked that if God was playing with these men, he should at least play fair, and that he should never, purposely, obscure facts and darken counsel. But my friend had the usual ready way out of this difficulty by the open sesame free-will. These men had free-will, even if the coal-man had it not, and, if they failed to find God in their measurements, that was their own look out.

It ought not to be very difficult to find a King in his Beauty if he is a hundred yards in height. I am in search of the coal-man's God!

ALAN TYNDAL.

What Is Secularism?

SECULARISM is usually defined as "This-world-ism." The description is inadequate. One may assert that Politics, Prostitution, Beer and Skittles are this-world-ish, but these and a host of "Worldly" things are extraneous to Secularism truly defined.

So what is Secularism?

In the first place we have to agree that Science is Secular; it contains nothing about Gods, Goblins, Sprites, or Spirits; in terms of Materialism it explains all we know of ourselves—physical and mental.

We also are compelled to admit that Humanitarianism is Secular, and although it contains all the humane ethics incidental to Religion, it concerns this life only. Science is based upon inherent desire to know the true.

Humanitarianism springs from innate longing to attain to the best for mankind.

Upon these—Science and Humanitarianism—all true progress rests, including self-development of the individual and the evolution of the race.

By furthering the interests of Science, and by utilizing Science for the realization of Humanitarian ideals, we have advanced; by these means alone can we hope to further go.

From the dust, through slime, swamp, jungle and savagery, we have been impelled by irresistible urge to Civilization. We have probably a much longer journey to go than we have come. While travelling, what forces have contributed more to our advancement than Science and Humanitarianism? What more, in the way of stimulus, does Humanity need? What factors can promise greater achievements?

These are pregnant and pertinent enquiries for philosophers—especially those with Religious proclivities. In putting them forward we answer the question, "What is Secularism?" by saying that it is a combination of Science and Humanitarianism.

The Religionist will claim chief partnership in the Humanitarian section; but History and current events indicate his disinclination to embrace Science in like manner; the Fundamentalist and Modernist positions show varying reluctance and enthusiasm in the nature of their welcome to Scientific pronouncements.

We cannot overlook the fact that the Humanitarianism of Religion is, and always has been, permeated with Theism, in the form of God's commandments, and also by other-world-ism consisting of rewards and punishments, consequent upon our obedience or disobedience with regard to such commands.

The Humanitarianism of Secularism is in quite a different category, inasmuch as it possesses no Theological sanction nor Supernatural authority for its Morality, attributing such to experience obtained in the struggle for existence wherein we have gained knowledge through suffering, and profited by mistakes.

Secularism also informs us that the necessities of life have prompted experiments in Social conduct, thus have we learnt and can say that "necessity is the mother of invention." The Secular view of Humanitarianism points out the worth-while-ness of sound Ethics for this Life, and without dragging in any Theological or other-life inducements, Secularism discloses the intrinsic value and utility contained in Humanitarianism.

It is interesting to notice how Secular Humanitarianism has been hand and glove with Science, whereas on the other side, the Humanitarianism of Religion has been honeycombed by ignorant and bigoted superstitions, which Science has exposed.

Analysis thus discloses the difference between Secularism and Religion, and by comparison shows the strength of one, and incidentally, the weakness of the other.

Secularists can afford to be sympathetic and, at the same time, optimistic.

Religion cannot escape the stream of tendency, it is evolving.

To Theism and other-life-ism there is only one alternative course; Secularism is the only way it can take.

The Religious outlook is undergoing great and frequent modifications; in all these it appears to be evident that to the Scientific-Humanist, or the Humanistic-Scientist, the future of the race belongs.

C. RATCLIFFE.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

A BEGGAR'S GOSPEL.

SIR,—I regret that our friend Mr. Harding should consider me somewhat irrational. Every rule has its exception. When laying down general principles one has not the time to discuss exceptions. However, as Mr. Harding agrees with me in the main, that is quite sufficient.

E.J.P.

CEMENTED RELIGION.

SIR,—Your amusing reply in your issue of December 21, last year, to Mr. J. F. Sands, who calls the *Freethinker* "Junk," and proudly announces himself on his letter paper as a journalist, stating that the trenches "cemented" his religion, seems to open the way to a few remarks on this interesting subject that have occurred to me. Perhaps Mr. Sands means that the dangers he incurred in the trenches turned his mind to religion, and "put the fear of God into him," which I can believe. This expression used to mean giving anybody a great fright. It is a very ancient saying, which I heard sixty-three years ago, when I went to sea at the age of fifteen. It owes its origin to the fact that religion is founded on fear, and that no fear is greater than the fear of God. "Putting the wind up" is its equivalent in modern slang. No one can be blamed for having "the wind put up him" in the trenches with Jack Johnsons flying around, dashing to pieces dozens of men at a time, still this very natural fear is nothing to boast about. But for a qualified journalist to say "the trenches cemented my religion," does him no credit, for the phrase is ambiguous and conveys no clear and definite meaning. Cemented religion is unknown. Mr. Sands might be "cemented" in religion without his religion being "cemented." The terrifying experiences that men underwent during the war were well adapted to imbue the most timorous and least rational of them with the fear of God and to "cement" them in religion without cementing their religion, of which the fear of God is the essence. Are not the terms god-fearing and religious synonymous? But to other men of a nobler disposition such hellish doings only served to show them the non-existence of any beneficent supernatural power, "all love and perfect wisdom," such as priests prattle about. A young man passed my trading station some time ago, who had served on the Western Front and been promoted to the rank of Captain, and he told me that the war had made his parents Atheists, as well as himself.

Nature is all we know, or can know, anything else is merely imagination, nought but "leather and prunella," to use Pope's words for describing what is of no consequence. Against this simple, self-evident, truth that Nature is our all in all, in which "we live and move, and have our being" words are powerless to prevail, and before the impregnable citadel of Atheism, the finest phrases, inspired by fervent theology, fall as flat as the walls of Jericho are supposed to have done.

J. E. ROOSE.

HUMAN NATURE AND RELIGION.

SIR,—In your issue of February 15, "Mimmermus" says that, according to Lucretius, "the greatest curse of human nature is religion, which priests use to fool and to degrade mankind." Now it cannot be denied that in many cases in history religion has been exploited to this end by priests and politicians. Napoleon, for instance in his autocratic days, said that religion was excellent stuff for keeping the people quiet; and Lenin's famous definition of religion as "the opium of the people," is certainly borne out by many historical instances. There is much hypocrisy, double-dealing, and tongue-in-cheek roguery in the formal religion of modern England, and in my own few contributions to this paper I have attempted to denounce this element of insincerity in present-day religious tactics. But I protest against the implication which such assertions con-

vey that *all* Freethinkers regard *all* religion as, at bottom, a mere astute move of roguish priests in the interests of political bosses. For that is not true; historically and psychologically, it is patently false. I dislike the implied assertion that *all* the enemies of Freethought are hypocrites and rogues, it savours too much of that narrow-minded bigotry and intolerance for which we rightly condemn so many of our priestly opponents. The Bishops at Lambeth ran true to form when they asserted that modern unbelief was due less to "imperfect thinking" than to "evil wills"—that is, that unbelievers were more knaves than fools. I should be sorry to see Freethinkers take a leaf out of their book. If Freethought is to be anything more than a mere perverse desire to get rid of religious restraints, it must base itself upon the sincere belief that the religious interpretation of existence is intellectually unsound and morally distorted. Without such an intellectual and moral conviction of its own truth and the necessity of reform, Freethought can be of no use to mankind. Modern Freethought, if I understand it rightly, is based on this conviction. It opposes religion and preaches Secularism, because it believes in all sincerity that religion is a hindrance to progress, and that the gospel of rationalism is necessary for the advancement of civilization. The uncompromising assertion that all our opponents are rogues and hypocrites, besides being untrue, can do little to aid our cause, and may do much to stultify its advocacy of complete intellectual liberty.

Let us be fair even to our enemies. Let us admit that, however mistaken, the majority of religious people are at least sincere. To deny *in toto* their sincerity is to adopt the shady tactics of the hierarchy. Religion is based, not upon the knavery of priests, but upon the mistaken science of plain men. It is not a crime; it is a mistake. Many Freethinkers appear to hold the theory that religion is based on mere fraud; and it is, I think, a mistaken and ungenerous interpretation of the history of religious thought. We need not respect our opponents' opinions, and we may have the lowest regard for their logic; but we can at least avoid personalities, and give even to parsons, a little credit for the sincerity which we claim for ourselves.

C. V. LEWIS.

Society News.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S.

MR. E. BRYANT met Mr. R. Dowley last Sunday in debate before an interested audience of fifty. The subject was "Is Death the End?" and the case for survival as stated by Mr. R. Dowley was not at all convincing. Perhaps on a future occasion he might be able to provide more evidence. This Sunday we shall be entertained by our friend Mr. J. H. Van Biene. Subject: "Not Wanted: Education."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.

THERE was a very good attendance at Conway Hall on Sunday last, to hear Mr. F. W. Read lecture on "Egypt and Some of Its Religions." Mr. J. P. Gilmour occupied the chair. The meeting terminated after a vote of thanks had been moved to the lecturer, which the audience enthusiastically endorsed.

Miscellaneous Advertisements.

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

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OUTDOOR.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Messrs. A. D. McLaren and B. A. Le Maine; 3.30, Messrs. C. E. Wood and C. Tuson; Every Wednesday, at 7.30, Messrs. C. E. Wood and C. Tuson; every Friday at 7.30, Messrs. A. D. McLaren and B. A. Le Maine. Current *Freethinkers* can be obtained opposite the Park Gates, on the corner of Edgware Road, during and after the meetings.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrols Road, North End Road, Walham Green): Saturday, 7.30, Messrs. G. Haskett, F. Day and E. Bryant.

INDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Workers Circle, Great Alie Street, Aldgate): 8.0, Mr. G. Bradley—"Hereditary and Environment."

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (London Co-operative Society's Hall, 249 Dawes Road, Fulham): 7.30, Mr. J. H. Van Biene—"Not Wanted—Education."

HIGHGATE DEBATING SOCIETY (Winchester Hotel, Archway Road, Highgate, N): Wednesday, March 4, at 7.45, Mr. L. Ebury—"Christianity, Religion and Morality."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Town, N.W.7, facing The Brecknock): 7.30, Debate—"Does Materialism Fail to Account for Human Consciousness?" *Affir.*: Mr. Newton; *Neg.*: Mr. T. F. Palmer.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Winter Garden, 37 High Street, Clapham, near Clapham North Underground Station): 7.15, Mr. F. P. Corrigan—"Tell us a Story."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Mr. Katz—"Progress and the Claims of the Roman Catholics."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, C. E. M. Joad, B.A.—"Jews, Eddington, and Religion."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 7.30, Mrs. Isabel Kingsley—"Spiritualism—A Reply to Some Rationalist Critics."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONAL ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, "Illustrations of Scientific Thinking." Speaker Mr. Fred Casey, of Bury, Author of *Thinking: Its History and Its Science*. Questions and discussion.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.—City Hall (North Saloon): Mr. Chapman Cohen will lecture at 11.30, subject "Ghosts," at 6.30, on "God and the Universe."

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, 41 Islington, Liverpool—entrance Christian Street): 7.0, Mr. A. D. McLaren (London)—"A Freethinker Looks at the World." Doors open 6.30. Reserved seats 1s. Current *Freethinkers* on sale.

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