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*Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,
Letters to the Editor, etc.*

Views and Opinions.

The Sunday Bill in Committee.

As was to be expected very little has appeared in the newspapers concerning the Committee Stage of the Sunday Performance Bill. There have been no "scenes," no member has been expelled, it is just a thing which concerns the well-being of a few millions of people and questions of freedom and enlightenment. Such things are to-day not "news," and cannot hope to compete with columns of what Miss Norma Shearer thinks of London, or personal sketches of some well-known criminal. But the Committee has been sitting, and apart from the intrinsic importance of the measure, the proceedings have really been commonplace in the extreme. Gleams of intelligence in the Committee have been few, and the Chairman, if he reflected at all, must have often had a feeling of compassion for the electorate.

Up to the time of writing (July 14) the Committee has held four sittings, and apparently nothing is to be said by the Committee on the greatest iniquity of the Bill—that of placing all meetings and entertainments held on Sunday under the control of a licensing body. I must again remind readers that under the existing law any meeting, or any entertainment may be given on a Sunday, provided that no charge be made for admission. With that restriction anything that is permissible without a licence on a weekday is permissible on a Sunday. When this Bill passes no public meeting "for publicly debating any matter" may be held on Sunday without the permission from a local Council, and whether the Council grants such a licence will be determined by whether it thinks there is a sufficient demand for it, and in granting the licence it may impose any conditions it thinks fit. For the first time in the history of modern England the British public is being deprived of the right of public meeting on Sunday. The House of Commons passed this, on the second reading with-

out comment, and it will pass the third reading. It may be that the House of Lords will say a word in defence of freedom of discussion, but the House of Commons will agree to almost anything. It may kick against a free-born Britisher being permitted to drink a glass of beer in a public park, but that is a question of restricting liberty, and so comes within a different category.

* * *

Sectarian Absurdity.

One of the members of the Committee, Mr. R. J. Russell (Chester) actually moved an amendment to leave out debates from the subjects that were permitted to be licenced on Sunday, on the avowed ground that of all the things that we should be permitted to do on Sunday debating was not among them. In the course of his argument against Sunday entertainments a sample of that gentleman's mentality was exhibited in the statement that it is calculated that there are no less than 50,000 visitors in London every Sunday, and there were fifty thousand visitors to cinemas on Sunday. From this he drew the conclusion that London cinemas were on Sunday kept open by visitors from the provinces. Absurd as this was he capped his own absurdity by arguing that the provinces do not want Sunday cinemas, when on his own showing 50,000 of them came to London to escape the deadly dulness of the Provincial Sunday. Mr. Russell also said that there are in London 2,000 churches and only 318 cinemas. He might have added that the Cinemas are packed out every Sunday. The Churches are not. What the people need, said Mr. Russell, is really more desire for work and more desire for worship, and he opposed the opening of Sunday cinemas because they will tend to weaken the desire for both work and worship. I remember a conundrum which asked why does a donkey eat thistles. The answer was "Because he's an Ass." I think the same answer would be given as to why anyone wants more work and more worship.

* * *

Chapels or Cinemas?

I do not wish to be too hard on Mr. Russell, because the whole proceedings were very much upon the level of his argument. Mr. Kedward (Ashford, Kent) for example, in supporting an amendment to restrict the operations of the Bill to London, desired to protect the provinces from the contamination of Sunday cinemas, and affirmed that Sunday was "the sheath that safeguards the very kernel of Christianity." The Rev. Mr. Lang, Socialist Member for Oldham, moved an amendment to leave out the clause which permitted cinemas to open on Sunday, and treated the Committee to a full blown Sabbatarian sermon. He said that to go to a cinema on Sunday was the very worst way to spend the day. Many of the films shown were not of a "helpful"

character, the atmosphere of the cinema, "even the costumes of the attendants" suggested things not good for young people. This sort of thing ought to be closed to young people once a week. He declared that if people wanted music they could get it in Church or Chapel. But why the young people should be protected only once a week, or why music should be good in a chapel, but not good in a concert hall, it is puzzling to see. For my own part I have never seen anything more discreditable in young women in cinemas going about in trousers, than in seeing a Roman Catholic priest or a High Church preacher going about dressed up in what is substantially a woman's costume of a very fantastic shape. It was all very strange and peculiar, and made one wonder whether men of the type of Mr. Lang and Mr. Kedward will ever grow up. To find such men elevated to the legislature is among the things that is bringing Parliamentary Government into contempt.

* * *

An Honest Bigot.

The best and the most straightforward speech up to date, was the one delivered by Lord Eustace Percy. Lord Eustace was Minister of Education under the Conservative Government. He is a man fundamentally primitive in his outlook, but who in many instances has all the fearless logic of a child or a savage, with a mentality that belongs to the tenth century, rather than to the twentieth. An amendment was moved by Lieut.-Colonel Heanage to add to the words permitting cinema performances, "Of a religious and instructive character." On this Lord Eustace delivered a speech that was really straightforward and went to the heart of the matter. It expressed the bigotry of the Sabbatarian with none of the Nonconformist cant about morality and social betterment with which it is usually disguised. He said:—

It is just the weakness of the opposition to the Bill that it is not opposed on purely Sabbatarian grounds. I am a Sabbatarian, and I approach the Bill, on these grounds, that is to say, I believe that the State can have no right to limit the right of the individual as to what he does on Sunday, except on the definite grounds of revealed religion. Revealed religion says, I presume, that Sunday is primarily a day of worship, and secondly a day of rest . . . Sunday is not a day of moral uplift, but a day of worship, and this attempt to censor the pleasures of the people, quite apart from the amount of labour involved, which is the real and only consideration, seems to me to be not Christian, but an example of that queer combination of Laodicean lukewarmness and spiritual pride.

Now that is quite straightforward, and quite to the point. It strips the whole ghastly business of its hypocrisy, its humbug, and cant, and shows it for what it is. There is no other basis for the restriction of Sunday entertainments save sheer superstition. Sunday is a taboo-day, the Mumbo-Jumbo to whom these Sabbatarians pay homage decreed—not that men should not play, but that they should not work on the Sabbath. There was no injunction against play, it was not thought about then. It was not thought about two generations ago. But when the people became more civilized and the primitive taboo lost its power, men of the Lang type suddenly became deeply concerned over the possibility of men having to work on Sunday. Lord Eustace Percy deserves our thanks for speaking so plainly. He was the one honest Sabbatarian in the dispute—and I expect the rest of the gang will be blackguarding him for his straightforwardness.

A Bad Bill.

Unless someone is prepared to carry an amendment that will make the Bill useless, it will certainly become law, and it will probably leave things worse than they are. It will make cinema performances legal in London, subject to the consent of, and the conditions imposed by, the L.C.C. But London will have its cinemas in any case. And under this Bill a licensing Council can impose any condition it pleases. It can decide the kind of films that may be shown, and the amount of profit, if any, that the cinema proprietors may make. It may, even when it is forced to give way to a demand for cinemas, lay down conditions that will make business impossible. It will make local politics more a question of local chapel influence than ever. The Bill, moreover, consecrates the principle that it does not matter what number of people wish to indulge in a perfectly harmless form of entertainment, they may not do so if a number of other people do not wish to see them doing it. What one man does not like to see, another man may not do, so long as the "not-liker" is a believer in a peculiarly repulsive form of primitive superstition. It is saying in so many words that the least enlightened, the least tolerant, the least advanced section of the community shall determine what the more enlightened section of the community may do with its leisure time. It is a great pity the papers have not reported these discussions in full, it might throw a light, not merely on how we are governed, but the type of men who govern us. I do not wonder that things are in the condition they are when our supreme legislature is made up of men such as figure on this Committee. It is said that every country has the laws it deserves. But have we really done anything bad enough to deserve these legislators?

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Lovable Charles Lamb.

"His graceful and lovely nature can hardly find expression in any form without giving pleasure to others."
O. W. Holmes.

"The most delightful, the most provoking, the most witty and sensible of men. He always made the best pun and the best remark in the course of the evening."
Hazlitt.

CHARLES LAMB is one of the most lovable of writers, and, despite his own jest that he wrote for antiquity, he becomes every year a more popular author with posterity. "A fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy," it could scarce be otherwise, for much that he writes awakens personal affection in the reader. Writing of youth, of familiar faces, of homely things, he keeps marvellously close to life. It was we feel, just so with us in childhood, at school, in this glad or sad experience. This power, together with the gift of getting at the heart of things, makes him keenly alive to life, and ensures the immortality of his writings.

As a man, Charles Lamb was well worth knowing. What would it not be worth to have had a few hours of his company? In his buoyant humour, or in his more serious vein, it was all one. Suppose we could have dined with him that day when the dish was the sucking-pig that Farmer Collier sent him, and heard the good wishes wafted to the giver:—

May your granaries be full, and your rats empty, and your chickens plump, and your envious neighbours lean, and your labourers busy, and you as idle and as happy as the days are long.

Or imagine we had been present when the statesman and eloquent Coleridge asked him: "Charles, did

you ever hear me preach?" and he replied in his amusing way, "I never heard you do anything else." Or what if we had taken a hand at whist when Martin Burney was his partner, and he called out, "Martin, if dirt were trumps, what a hand you'd have." Or, better still, had we been with him that Saturday night when he brought home the folio volume of Beaumont and Fletcher's Plays that he had wanted for weeks, while he had saved the price of it, and he could not think of going to bed till the loose leaves had been pasted in, and he had read his favourite passages. Or, best of all, had we been among those to whom his door was open on the famous Wednesday evenings in the Inner Temple Lane. Wordsworth was one of the number when he was in town, and Coleridge, Haydon, Hazlitt, Barry Cornwall, and Talfourd. Surrounded by such a galaxy of genius, it must have been a rich memory, and abiding delight, to have been with Lamb at times like these. It must have been a festal evening such as those memorable suppers at the "Mermaid," when rare Ben Jonson exchanged jests with the smiling Shakespeare, and the brilliant Elizabethan wits made the night merry with their repartee.

The austere Thomas Carlyle was one of the very few of note who misunderstood Lamb. Carlyle's seriousness, his want of humour, his dogmatism, shut the doors of sympathy. Where they met the atmosphere was electric. On one occasion, while they were waiting for their host, Carlyle looked out of the window and watched the flight of some pigeons. Lamb, hurt, perhaps, at his silence, went up to him and asked: "Mr. Carlyle, are you a poulterer?" Another time, as they were together in the hall, preparing to leave a party after the sage had monopolised the conversation, Lamb handed Carlyle his hat with the remark: "Is this your turban?" Accordingly we find the philosopher writing in his journal: "Charles Lamb I sincerely believe to be in some considerable degree insane. A more pitiful, rickety, gasping, staggering, stammering tomfool I do not know." Carlyle was as completely wrong with regard to Lamb as he was in error concerning Heine, Voltaire, and his own contemporary, Herbert Spencer. Lamb's jests often contained shrewd observation, as in his ironic expression of regret that the Royalists did not hang John Milton, for then posterity would have laughed at them.

Other men of genius who knew Charles Lamb realized his real worth. They saw the splendid nature under the homely exterior. Lamb was no dilettante. He earned his own living, paid his own way, was the helper, not the helped; a man who was beholden to no one, a shrewd man capable of advice, strong in counsel. He was ever ready both with sympathy and help, generous and unselfish. He had pensioners on his bounty, among whom were an old teacher of his own, and a cripple whose solitary claim was that he was recommended by his friend, Robert Southey. Barry Cornwall tells a characteristic story. He was in Lamb's company one day; in low spirits, which Lamb thought was due to want of money. Turning suddenly, Lamb said: "My dear boy, I have a quantity of useless things, including a hundred pounds in my desk, that I don't know what to do with. Take it."

Lamb himself was modest and unobtrusive, but he had a strain of heroism in his nature. There was a taint of insanity in the family, and Lamb never married. What this meant to him may be guessed from the pathetic pages of his essay on "Dream Children." His sister, Mary, killed her mother in a fit of madness. A few weeks' restraint restored her to her right mind, but the disease recurred at intervals ever afterwards, and a retreat was provided in

a private asylum. There was warning of this coming, and a friend has related how he met the brother and sister at such a time, walking hand-in-hand across the fields to the asylum, both in tears. Lamb was rewarded by the devotion of his sister and her warm sympathy in his literary work. He gives a charming picture of her in his essay on *Mackery End*, where he describes her as a "most incomparable old maid."

Lamb was a true Cockney, and he loved every stone of London, and would not willingly have exchanged the roar of Fleet Street for the most attractive country sight or sounds. "The streets of London are his fairy land," writes Hazlitt, and in his essays Lamb gives us a wonderful series of pictures of London life, its old buildings, its playhouses and actors, even its sweeps, beggars, and quaint characters.

If Charles Lamb waged an unequal war against fate, he was, at least, a happy soldier. When his turn came he yielded up his broken, but not dishonoured sword to fate, the conqueror, with a brave and a humble heart.

MIMNERMUS.

Obscurantism and Biology.

"OBSCURANTISM and Biology" is the title of the last chapter in a book entitled *The Serpent's Fang*, by Mr. Morley Roberts (Eveleigh Nash, 1930) the well-known novelist. We are indebted to Mr. Roberts for that very fine work *The Private Life of Henry Mailand*, which is really a biography of George Gissing, whose novels are not so popular as they ought to be, because they reflect the misfortune and unhappiness which dogged his footsteps all his life, mainly, through his own weakness of character and lack of self-control.

Mr. Morley Roberts combines a love of literature with the pursuit of science, his *Warfare in the Human Body* (1920) was very favourably received when it appeared, and scientists are very chary of extending a welcome to trespassers upon their domain. Mr. Roberts describes *The Serpent's Fang*, as an "Essay in Biological Criticism." It is really an attempt to explain how the Serpent came to evolve the formidable hollow fangs and poison sacs, with which it is now furnished. The discussion is complex and highly technical, and only suitable for experts, but the last chapter "Obscurantism and Biology" is written in a popular style, and is an attack upon those obscurantists who are always with us—and never more active than to-day—seeking every loophole for the return of the supernatural into the swept and ordered domain of Science. "They fall back on unfounded assumptions and begin to deny causality," says Mr. Roberts, and continues:—

they hint that what we seek to explain by patient work can be settled at once by the introduction of factors drawn from the rusty armoury of verbal metaphysics and theology. They allow their desires to overcome their very training, for it grows surer every day that what they aim at is the restoration of some kind of religious thought. They appeal to the public in popular essays. They even carry propaganda into the laboratory and hope to convert the patient and incredulous worker still untouched by such heresies. (*The Serpent's Fang*, p. 222.)

During private conversations regarding what our author describes as: "the present movement towards the production of infertile hybrids between religion and science," he has urged upon those who have a right to be heard in the realm of science, that it was their duty to say what they really thought about these new forms of obscurantism; but they suggested that it would be better if the task were under-

taken by one of more independence while they went on with their work undisturbed, hence the present chapter dealing with the subject.

When, says Mr. Roberts "physicists become metaphysicians they naturally assume the authority of their rank in their own science. Great men in what they know are held to be great men in what they do not and cannot know. We all want to make "the passage to physics," and most readily accept a helping hand when physicists offer it. But when instead of help we get obscurantism and a passage to some kind of theology we owe them no gratitude." (p. 226.)

Those ignorant people who declare that matter is incapable of doing all that mind, soul, and spirit is claimed to do: "These know nothing of the brain or its capacities. They cannot appreciate the meaning of a million, and the fact that some 9,200,000,000 neurons form the cortex of the brain is but a set of empty words. Yet what are the mathematical capacities of change and fresh linkage among these neurons and what do they become when we add the nerve dendrites with their multiplied and infinite potentialities?" (p. 230.)

Mind, says Mr. Roberts: "as I conceive it means the reactions of the brain to the external and internal environment and means no more. Mind, soul, spirit, and consciousness as well, are therefore loose allied words which are useful in talk and literature for slightly different aspects of cerebral work. The assumption that they are more is at once unscientific and unphilosophical, and here we may distinguish a sane logical philosophy from metaphysics, because that is always a personal multiplication of unnecessary hypotheses." Therefore: "We must wholly exhaust the possibilities of matter, body and brain before we call in despair on hypothetic verbal spectres, even to salve, with the help of Eddington and a probably unwilling Planck, the sacred ghost of free-will." (p. 232.)

The great war has been followed "by a strange renaissance of barbaric belief," the usual aftermath of great wars, and one of the penalties we have to pay for them, and those who rely upon the Church for their knowledge are under the impression that these beliefs have spread very widely among scientific men.

Scarcely a week passes without some decanal or episcopal pronouncement that no one is now a "materialist," and that the notion of a mechanico-physical explanation of life and the universe has been given up. As it seldom happens that scientific workers have any time or taste for contradicting every foolish thing in the newspapers they naturally say nothing and get on with the task in front of them. And their task is usually to add just a little more to that very mechanico-physical explanation which they are said to have discarded. Perhaps it is a pity that these men should be so silent, for if the celebrated Bellman was right in stating that what he said three times was true, those uninstructed in the general scientific intellect may end in believing what they are told thousands of times by very foolish people. (p. 234.)

The following is evidently a shot intended for Eddington, Jeans and Lodge: "Let people say what they will the chief enemy of science has always been religion, and it always will be so long as it palters with its practical and social work and makes for transcendentalism of the theological kind. Nowadays when the Churches are fighting for their authority and their lives, all the time in deadly fear of science, to which they hold out appealing hands for help, it seems a most disastrous thing that they should get it from those who know quite well that a dominant church would be just as obscurantist as all churches have always been when in power." (p. 235.)

What they are capable of "may be seen when any man with authority in science says something which may or might mean, or can be tortured into meaning, what they want to hear."

Mr. Roberts observes that no doubt it will be said that he has no authority to speak for the general body of scientific workers, to which he replies:—

But that does not deter me from saying that there are enormous numbers of such workers who feel exactly as I do myself. They may be poor naïve realists, but they know that these philosophers, whose metaphysical tendencies they detest, are also naïve realists at the bench, in their bath, their bed and at breakfast. They do good work as such and then break out into a rash of metaphysics and undo half the work they might have done. Because during difficult and arduous enterprise upon the very verge of the unknown they find the air almost too rarefied to breathe, they have no right to erect very natural and unblameworthy ignorance into a "proof" that they have somehow reached a region in which law fails. To do this was once the mark of ignorance and presumption, which in other times put Galileo in prison and burnt Bruno. There is no need for physicists to propagate waves of obscurantism. We have enough of it without them. (p. 236.)

Every advance towards reason: "has been marked by a progressive relegation of the imaginary creator or creators of the world to loftier and more inaccessible regions and the imputation of those offices, of which he has been summarily deprived, to natural forces." (p. 241-2). We hope that Mr. Roberts will publish this chapter separately, so that it may reach a larger audience than it will do in this expensive technical work.

W. MANN.

Ancient Mysteries.

I.—EGYPTIAN.¹

"O Egypt, Egypt, of thy religion there will be left remaining nothing but uncertain tales, which will be believed no more by posterity; words graven on stone and telling of thy piety."—Hermes Trismegistus.

EGYPT, the cradle-land of arts and civilization, was also the great fountain-head of streams of religious mystery. An air of impressive massiveness and mystery remain stamped upon its monuments. Its hieroglyphs, despite the glimmering light of Hermapollo, were impenetrable mysteries until the genius of Champollion unearthed the secrets of forty centuries and showed the cross as the sign of life² on

Those mystic-story volumes on the walls long writ,
Whose sense is late revealed to searching modern wit.
The lonely, watching Sphynx, profound and unfathomable, rearing its monstrous form and calm, impassive head above the drifting sands of time, is a type of Egyptian religion. The basis of that religion was nature and fetish-worship, as now found in the heart of the Dark Continent. Down to the latest times may be discerned traces of savagery, in animal worship, totemism, magical prayers, amulets, and methods of divination. As with other faiths where the priests were a dominant caste, religion overrode every part of life and ramified in all directions. As

¹ See Plutarch's *Isis and Osiris*, the *Hieroglyphics of Hermapollo*; Apuleius, *Golden Ass*, bk. xi; Hermes Trismegistus (tr. by J. D. Chambers, and in French by L. Menard), *Cleopha Repoa* (Berlin, 1778), and the works of Birch, W. R. Cooper, Gerald Massey, Bonwick, Sharpe, Brugsch, Maspero, Tiele, Renouf, Lefebvre and Erman.

² The ankh, or crux ansata, is found as the sign of life on the tomb of Khufu Ankh, officer of Cheops, B.C. 3733; on the coffin of Men-Kau-Ra (Mykerinus) B.C. 3133, and on the papyrus of Ptah-Hotep, the oldest book in the world.

in India, the Brahmins sum up the three million deities into a sublime pantheism, with the motto *Ekam eva advitiam*—"There is but one being, no second," so the Egyptian priest recited hymns to Amen Ra as the one hidden creator, while the populace worshipped cats and crocodiles. I do not propose, in my limits, to wander in the maze of Egyptian mythology, but proceed at once to the central myth—that of Osiris, the deity who presided over the greater, as Isis over the lesser, mysteries.

Says Mr. Andrew Laing, in his *Myth, Ritual, and Religion* (Vol. II, p. 84): "As one great river of mysterious source flows throughout all Egypt, so through the brakes and jungles of her religion flows one great myth from a distant fountain-head, the myth of Osiris."³ This myth, says M. le Page Renouf, is "as old as Egyptian civilization." In brief, it tells how Osiris the beneficent, who taught agriculture and other useful arts, and instituted laws, was overcome and slain by Set (Typhon). His body was mutilated and strewn over the land of Egypt in fourteen pieces (perhaps representing the fourteen days of the waning moon). His dirge was sung by Isis, his sister and consort, and Nepthys, her sister and wife of Typhon, the mourning lasting five days. Isis seeks the mangled remains, finding and burying all but the genitals. By aid of his son Horus, the deliverer and avenger, whose legend is largely a replica of that of Osiris, Typhon is overcome, Osiris raised from the dead and becomes the judge of the quick and the dead. In the story, as given in Plutarch, we may trace the rudiments of organs more fully developed in an earlier form. The legend, in part, was probably invented to account for the customs; thus the story of the parts unfound was to explain the bearing of imitation phalli in the festival and the particular honour paid them, these phalli being originally symbols of fertility and of victory over enemies. The burial of various members was told to explain how numerous places claimed to show the tomb of Osiris. The story of the dying and suffering god was a mystery. Herodotus (bk. ii. 171), speaking of the lake near Sais, says: "On this lake it is that the Egyptians represent by night his sufferings whose name I refrain from mentioning, and this representation they call their Mysteries. I know well the whole course of the proceedings in these ceremonies, but they shall not pass my lips. So too, with regard to the mysteries of Ceres, which the Greeks term "the Thesmophoria." I know them, but I shall not mention them, except so far as may be done without impiety."⁴ To the comparative mythologist, it is evident the mysterious sufferer alluded to was a dying god, or a man who represented him. This feature of Egyptian religion was alluded to by the Freethinker Xenophanes, who said to them: "If ye believe them to be gods, why do ye weep for them; if they deserve your lamentations, why repute them

to be gods." (Plutarch on Isis and Osiris). Rawlinson says, in his note on the passage cited from Herodotus: "The sufferings and death of Osiris were the great mystery of the Egyptian religion, and some traces of it are perceptible among other people of antiquity." Osiris was the good deity who died, rose again, and judged the dead in the underworld, who attained bliss by becoming Osirified like unto him."⁵ This was the Egyptian scheme of salvation. To no mythological hero has the solar theory been more persistently or plausibly applied. It held sway from Machobius to Renouf. Yet it is only partially true. Osiris absorbs the attributes and myths of Ra the sun, and Horus the light. He becomes the sun of the underworld. But while Ra is primarily solar, Osiris is only secondarily so. Originally he represents fertility, appearing, as Mr. Frazer suggests, as the tree spirit and corn spirit, with a sacrificed pig as part of his ritual. As the fertility of Egypt depends on the inundation of the Nile, he comes to represent humanity. In Egypt the sun does not die in winter, it is therefore as vegetative life his annual death and resurrection was celebrated.⁶

The myth of Osiris became not only typical of the daily triumph of the sun over darkness, the annual victory of vivific nature over winter, but of the life long conflict of humanity with evil. Osiris the Good (Ounefr) became the type of ideal humanity, with its sufferings, struggles, temporary defeat and final triumph. The living and the dead were typified in him. The very core of Egyptian religion lay here. As the god of life, conquered by the powers of darkness and death, passed into the underworld, and waged there a triumphant contest with his enemies and rose again with new life and vigour, so with the human spirit. The renewal of life in nature was the pledge of man's immortality. Life and immortality were thus brought to light ages before Christianity. The resurrection of the body and the life everlasting was the *credo* of the Egyptians ages before Moses, and the curious thing, if he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, is why in spoiling the Egyptians of certain of their mysteries, he did not also borrow their central doctrine.

(Late) J. M. WHEELER.

(To be continued.)

Man supposes that he directs his life and governs his actions, when his existence is irretrievably under the control of destiny.—Goethe.

Whatsoever contradicts my sense I hate to see and never can believe.—Roscommon.

Discontent is the want of self-reliance. It is infirmity of will.—Emerson.

Let your own discretion be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action.—Shakespeare.

³ The identification of the dead person with Osiris, is seen on the earliest tombs and in the Ritual of the Dead.

⁶ Mr. Andrew Lang brings Osiris into line with savage benefactors as "a culture-hero." But even Mr. Lang, though of the school of "rational Christians," who invent a "real Jesus" out of the ideal Christ, does not pretend that he can reconstruct a real history of Osiris, as modern Christians, knowing nothing of their own myths or their own mysteries, fancy they can reconstruct a real history of Jesus. Such rationalizers are usually the reverse of rational, for they attempt to interpret old legends on nineteenth century principles, instead of explaining them from the atmosphere of myth and miracle in which they arose.

⁴ The profoundest mysteries are the simplest. Two of the largest works dealing with the mysteries are the *Anacalypsis*, of Godfrey Higgins, and the *Isis Unveiled*, ascribed to Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, and founded on the MSS. of the Baron de Palm. The late lamented excellent Freethinker, Winwood Reade, also has a learned work, chiefly on Druidical mysteries, entitled *The Veil of Isis*. All these titles refer to the inscription to Neith, or the Saitic Isis, "I am all that is and has been and shall be, and no man hath lifted my veil." Now Isis represented the female principle, the universal mother, "with beauteous bosomed body full of fruit"; the blood of life. Hence she must always wear her veil, and is the Kosmic Koré, Nature, the ever-virgin mother, the earth-mother, "with beauteous blossomed body full of fruit"; the heaven-mother, "clad in the beauty of a thousand stars."

⁵ We shall see when we deal with the Eleusinia and Thesmophoria, that these mysteries preserved the same meanings as those of Osiris.

The Burden of Proof.

A CONFERENCE on "Church Stewardship and Finance" was held in Edinburgh (from June 22 to 26) and the views expressed by the speakers at the commencement must be sufficiently depressing to the general body of lay Christians who have been looking for a lead in finding solutions of the main human problems of the time. Of course Conferences like these do not get to grips with the essential differences between Christians and non-Christians, for the simple reason that the latter do not participate in the discussions. This Conference like similar conferences is necessarily a one-sided affair. But just because it is so, it can say what it likes about the opinions of those who are not Christians; who, of course, not being present, have no opportunity of replying or defending themselves.

One of the speakers sated that the spokesmen of science had declared that a God who controlled the universe was incredible—and unnecessary. But curiously enough in a later part of his speech he said it was "a hopeful sign that scientists were no longer dogmatic. They were coming to recognize that science had not the power to solve all human problems or measure value of quality or control the world or redeem it. Science to-day confessed that there were mysteries which it could not solve and however much it might explain things, the sum of the unexplained seemed in no wise diminished."

The speaker did not go on to show by what means religion was going to supply the deficiencies of science. Another speaker maintained that many people had lost their faith because they had lost heart. Still another, after predicating the unsuitability of the Church for giving detailed political, economical and sociological guidance, said *there were many outside the Church who knew more of these subjects than preachers!* He said this was the day when Materialism was rife. Then an American clergyman tied himself in knots in an attempt to distinguish between Russian Communism and Christian Communism. The latter he said differed from the former in that the latter was voluntary; no man being compelled to surrender more than his heart bade him give. It was, he said, a voluntary experiment of Christian democracy based on the laws of Jesus Christ, and if it had been applied to commerce and industry they would have a different world to-day.

A person might as well talk about Brown Communism and Green Communism as about Russian Communism and Christian Communism. Communism is Communism; and the employment of adjectives cannot change its essential character. The scriptural record is quite clear and definite on the point that the first Christians "had all things in common." How could there be anything left to surrender, when everything had already been surrendered? Communism meant, and means, the pooling of all individual resources for the interest of the general community. No amount of philosophical or metaphysical discussion can alter an essential fact. The further fact that the "old Adam" reasserted himself, and that the Christians reverted to a system of private property (or capitalism) is equally unalterable.

It seems to be realized by Christians that secular questions need so much attention from thinkers, speakers and writers and from national and local bodies, that there is really nowadays very little time for participation in religious services. Even on Sundays the King's Ministers are occupied with matters of public secular interest, or engaged in conferring with representatives of other powers who visit them on such matters. It is simply the force

of circumstances, and the economic pressure of the time that are elbowing God and the Goddites aside. The great achievements of science may have done their part; but taking the whole administrative system into account, and the complexity of modern civilized life, there is really no time, room or place for God. What does it matter anyway? Unless we are confirmed pessimists, we ought to be gratified by the advance of man; by the proofs he has given of what he can do. If God can beat man, let him do it. There is an open and fair field and no favour. Of course the clerics always maintain that without religion man cannot retain moral integrity—the falsity of which statement has been demonstrated again and again. The burden is on them to prove the existence of God and the justification for the existence of a "clerical profession." Materialism does not prohibit anyone from thinking or believing what he chooses to think or believe, and it proclaims the right of every individual to control and direct his own personal destiny. But that is subject to the needs of Humanity as a whole; and the unit may not possess, control or act to the detriment of the general brotherhood.

The burden of proof lies upon the spokesmen of Christianity to show that human improvement is due to supernatural and not to natural and human agencies. Let us have it. Its production is long overdue.

IGNOTUS.

Perchance to Dream . . . !

SOME men aver in dreams they range where'er they wish to be: no laws of arbitrary Change to mar their liberty—no limits laid upon their rational choice of all that makes the human heart rejoice!

Both actor and spectator, I pass on unguided feet through myriad scenes of earth and sky, or bitter-harsh or sweet; but far away, no matter what I do, the power to Will, the right to See 'It Through!

I lay me down in weariness, breathing a thankful sigh: and without effort or distress a wandering sprite am I—who, waking, may not tell th' approaching theme; or, sleeping, plan the period of his dream!

For I, proud warden of the brain, find myself all astray: a helpless mime, whose joy or pain his conscious hours gainsay—a casual looker-on, whose onerous toll is abdication of a sane control!

Yet some such dreams are keener far than many a waking hour: Remorse and Terror 'yond the Bar clamour and shriek and cower; while other visions, in their ravishment, leave on th' expectant mind a deep content!

As savage broods of Ancestry lurk in the souls of all, so starry powers in you and me pledge Hope's ecstatic thrall; though none may prove Man's fragile dreams of heaven, nor quite disprove his nethermost Hades even; since there we find some cleaving Dawn; or Night, engulfing, black; else Dread that leaves the breath indrawn, or nerves upon the rack; or else recurrent deeds of shifting Shame that even in thought might blush to give there name!

Of these night-craws we bear the scars, where phantoms, rapt and pale, have drawn us through the cloud-land-bars of Death's tenebrous veil; yet . . . can we prove these visions anything more real than Fancy—gone wool-gathering? For oh! what boots it that each morn we tales tell of our Dead, if we—with heart and brain forlorn—confess that naught was said to change the fact that Thought holds all in fee; and men are what they think themselves to be!

Ere broken be the golden bowl and loosed the silver cord, how wonderful to tell the whole Great Secret in one word: one reconciling and tremendous Truth to soothe Old Age and satisfy proud Youth! How gladly would we break the bond that keeps our soul in place; how eagerly would pass beyond the barriers of Space, could we (on waking) in frank friendship give the clarion message: "Die!—but die . . . to live!"

But all are forced to recognize that Thought alone is king; and Thought is neither deep nor wise without cell-functioning—hence Death is Death, unless indeed there be some other brain awaiting you and me! And so each night with tranquil heart absolute content oh! let us use a Prayer apart from futile argument:—

"Sleep after toil; port after stormy seas;
Death after life—all these do greatly please!"

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

Onitsha, Nigeria.

THE INTELLIGENT AND THE STUPID.

The inventions and organizations that have produced the peculiar opportunities and dangers of the modern world have been the work so far of a few hundred thousand exceptionally clever and enterprising people. The rest of mankind has just been carried along by them, and has remained practically what it was a thousand years ago. Upon an understanding and competent minority, which may not exceed a million or so in all the world, depends the whole progress and stability of the collective human enterprise at the present time. They are in perpetual conflict with the hampering traditions and the obduracy of nature. They are themselves enumbered by the imperfection of their own trainings and the lack of organized solidarity. By wresting education more or less completely from its present function of transmitting, they may be able to bring a few score or a few hundred millions into active co-operation with their efforts. Their task will still be a gigantic one.

We are only able to guess at the amount of undeveloped capacity that goes to waste in each generation. There will certainly remain a considerable proportion of mankind, incapable of being very much educated, incapable of broad understandings and co-operative enterprise, incapable of conscious, helpful participation in the adventure of the race, and yet as reproductive as any other element in the world community. For a number of generations, at any rate, a dead weight of the dull, silly, undeveloped, weak, and aimless will have to be carried by the guiding wills and intelligences of mankind. There seems to be no way of getting rid of them. The panics and preferences of these relatively uneducatable minds, their flat and foolish tastes, their perversities and compensatory loyalties, their dull, greivous resistances to comprehensive efforts, their outbreaks of resentment at any too lucid revelation of their inferiority, will be a drag, and perhaps a very heavy drag, on the adaptation of institutions to modern needs and to the development of a common knowledge, and a common conception of purpose throughout mankind. Obsolete religious forms and plausible political catchwords will be used to rally and canalize their mental weaknesses. The brighter, more energetic types of stupidity and egotism will be constantly organizing and exploiting the impulses and weaknesses of the universally diffused multitudes. For here we are not writing of any social class or status in particular. The inferior sort is found in greater or less abundance at every level . . .

The struggle of intelligent and energetic minds throughout the world to clear out their own lumber and get together for the conscious control of the affairs of the strangely mingled multitude of our kind, to develop the still largely unrealized possibilities of science and to organize a directive collective will, is the essential drama of human life. All other great human events, wars, epidemics, revolutions, strange fashions of living and the like, are by comparison either phantasmal or catastrophic or both.—"The Science of Life," by H. G. Wells, J. Huxley, and G. P. Wells.

'Tis not the many oaths that make the truth,
But the plain single vow that's vow'd true.

Shakespeare.

Power affects the intelligence of men.—Napolcon.

Acid Drops.

It seems to be almost a case of "Gloves Off" with Mussolini and the Pope. Doubtless Mussolini made the same mistake that many others have been foolish enough to make—that of thinking they could use the Church to advance their own ends. If they had read history more intelligently they would have realized that the only way in which one can be sure of using the Churches is when it suits the Churches to use them. More than once in the history of this country reforming parties have made the same blunder—some are still making it—only to find their cause being weakened and their principles flouted. But politicians of all classes are so eager to grasp at some temporary advantage that they seldom count the more remote consequences. Politics both attracts and develops that type of mind.

In the case of Italy the struggle has arisen over the control of the rising generation. As in the case of Russia everything depends in Italy on leading the rising generation along a narrowly enclosed path, and as that path does not lead to the Church, the Church is bound to do what it can to upset the plan. Mussolini wishes to make the State supreme, the Pope wishes for supremacy for the Church. Mussolini cannot allow that the Church may be anything more than, at most, a department of the State, the Pope aims at making the State a department of the Church. Hence the clash. A State Church in Europe came in with Protestantism, it is something with which the older Church will never agree.

The present generation, affirms a reader of a weekly journal, has more tolerance and more understanding of the views of other people than its forerunners had. In this connexion the reminder is not out of place that the present generation has largely escaped from the influence of the Christian religion, with its glorification of intolerance into a virtue.

Methodist Times has the melancholy satisfaction, for two weeks in succession, of announcing that there is not a single film among the West End shows, and the general releases which can be recommended as "really good entertainment." The word "good" means here that which satisfies the pure mind of Methodist puritanism. Of course, to say that there are no "good" films implies that all are what the Methodist regards as "unclean." This advertisement should send Methodists in shoals to the cinema!

John Wesley, says a religious weekly, went to Cornwall on more than thirty occasions; and ever since the people of the county have been, perhaps beyond any other people of the country, a deeply religious and God-fearing people. We may add that certain sections of Cornwall people have also a reputation for narrow-mindedness, intolerance, and bigotry. So of John Wesley we may say with Shakespeare, "the evil that men do lives after them . . ."

The Bishop of Barking has been pointing out the important advance made in child welfare in this country during recent years. Infant mortality has been reduced, child labour has been abolished, and cruelty and neglect are under constant vigilance and restraint. We dare say his Christian audience was too dull to wonder why this and other advances should occur only in recent years when religion is at a low ebb, and why they did not manifest themselves when the people were saturated with religion.

"Historicus" of the Methodist Times gives the following anecdote in his reminiscences of student days at Dublin University:—

One divinity student—a very callow youth—who had been entered under Mr. — as his tutor, timidly approached the great man and asked him: "What is the first thing a divinity student has to learn?" "That the public ith an ass," was the promptly lisped reply. We feel sure the divinity students were greatly inspired thereby to zealously pursue their studies. It is one of

the great axioms which most priests and parsons fruitfully appreciate.

The new President of the United Methodist Conference presented the brethren with the usual jeremiad:—

The idea of God is not so commanding as it was. The fashions and goings of men have changed. Restraint has weakened. Unfettered self-expression is sought, and it is moral chaos.

This is, of course, merely a variant of the stale old theme that when a man ceases to have anything to do with religion, the Church, and the parson he inevitably becomes a blackguard. It is in an oblique way an attempt to justify the existence of parsons and churches. The reverend gent. also says that: "Discussion has ranged around the circumference of things: no fire has been kindled. It is fatal to religion if it loses its warmth." Quite so. But religion cannot help losing its warmth or fervour, now that the spiritual uplift of hell-fire is missing and the brethren are wondering what exactly it is they have been "saved" from. For it is written that the source of Christian fervour is in the womb of vivid fear.

Captain Frank Shaw, the novelist, has related to an interviewer the sad story of an early misfortune:—

I was cradled, and nearly suffocated, too, in strict evangelical Nonconformity . . . The Sunday of my childhood was a day of incredible hardship—chapel twice, Sunday school, and an after-service prayer meeting on Sunday night at old High Street Chapel [Huddersfield]. Honestly, it was purgatory to be religious then, and my revolt for many years against orthodox religion—and, I suppose, my curious return to it in a measure in these later after-war years—is due to what I went through as a boy.

Captain Shaw's return to religion irresistibly reminds one of Proverbs xxvi. 11. (Authorized Version.)

When a writer in a pious weekly affirms that "A special kind of religious goodness seems to have an innate capacity for pharisaism," one hopes that some illuminating suggestion will be given as to the probable cause of the observed fact. This not being forthcoming, one must endeavour to make good the deficiency. If pharisaism be defined as self-righteousness or the expression of the attitude, "I thank God I'm not as other men," it may rightly be assumed as the natural outcome of an intense conviction of having been "saved," and of being a special protege of God Almighty. Hence one concludes that the association of pharisaism with religion is, in the nature of things, inevitable.

A Nonconformist scribe is greatly impressed by the unity existing between the various Churches in Birmingham. He thinks the fruit of it is seen in the establishment of a Christian Social Council, on which there are parsons representing most of the various soul-snatching businesses in the City. The parsons, of course, all violently disagree as to the exact meaning and interpretation of the religion of Christ, but they are wonderfully unanimous or united when anything threatens adversely to affect their professional interests. This state of affairs is, of course, as it should be. To achieve this was one of the chief reasons why Christ died on the cross.

After knocking an eye out of the heads of each other, England and Germany have decided to meet at Kiel. Following a description of what festivities the naval officers will enjoy, the writer in the *Evening Standard* makes the following disclosure:—

But perhaps the most interesting meetings of all will take place in the small public houses of the quayside where German sailors will forgather with their British ex-enemies, and over a glass of beer exchange reminiscences of that night of fog in May, 1916, when the British and German navies clashed together in the greatest naval battle in the history of the world.

Some matters will be settled in a public house, and until we have evidence to the contrary we are at liberty to believe that world affairs could not be settled in any worse manner than that now obtaining in institutions of a more imposing nature.

Mr. Robert Iynd, in a review of *Modern Civilization on*

Trial, by C. Delisle Burns, states that the great problem of the hour is, not to produce more, but how to give the human race an opportunity to consume what it produces. This is touching the spot with a vengeance, but one is left wondering what it is that the whole army of religions produces—except wars, discord and family feuds.

The *Church Times* calls attention to the "serious fact" of the reduction in the number of births during the past ten years. We do not see anything very serious about it, the important thing being not the size, but the quality of the population. But as political leaders appear to think that population is mainly to be considered with regard to the fact of whether we are outnumbering some other community or not, and militarists as to whether we can provide more "cannon fodder" than other nations, so the *Church Times* considers the subject with regard to Roman Catholicism. It says "If the Roman Catholic laity are obedient to the direct and clear direction of their church, and continue normally to increase and multiply, there may be amazing changes in European society before the end of another century." Possibly, but it is a pretty picture of human society if our only hope of keeping in control such an organization as the Roman Church is to treat women as mere breeding machines so that we may outweigh a Church which teaches its followers to go on breeding, without regard to what is bred.

But this is surely not the last word of civilization. To begin with, civilization itself, the prevalence of better social and industrial conditions, tend of themselves, apart from any deliberate propaganda to limit population. And there is plenty of evidence that in spite of all the Roman Church can do it is not keeping pace with the growth of population. There is no part of the world where the Roman Church is holding its own in this respect. It may increase its political strength, and even its sectarian numbers, but in relation to the whole it grows weaker. Secondly, the real lesson to be drawn from the situation is to weaken the influence of the Roman Catholic Church by weakening the influence of all Churches. It is absurd to think that you can weaken one branch of Christianity without weakening the whole. This has never been done and never will be done. But, of course, one cannot expect the *Church Times* to recognize this obvious way of imparting to social life a more humanistic tone.

The headmaster of Rugby School says that the intelligence of England is unmistakably low, and it is essential that something should be done to raise it. Presumably, Mr. Vaughan is speaking from his own experience, and as Rugby, in common with the rest of our public schools, lays great emphasis on such things as religion and national aggrandisement, and will not tolerate anything like heresy in either sociology or religion, what can one expect? If you bring people up like sheep, each one repeating the stereotyped things at given moments, you ought really not to complain if when the flock is faced with a particular situation each member bleats in the same way. We would like to ask Mr. Vaughan what would happen at Rugby if a pupil was caught incultating, say Atheism or Communism, or Republicanism, or a teacher was found who advised his pupils that all these things should be studied in order to form rational opinions? They would promptly be ordered to stop. You can't educate people in an unintelligent way and then find them acting intelligently when they leave your care. Heresy should always be encouraged. It may be wrong, but it is always healthy. Heresy is the high road to independence.

There are no Sunday excursions to the Isle of Skye and now the inhabitants have made a still further move. Intending visitors are presented now with an ultimatum—accommodation only on the undertaking to attend Church on Sunday. And there will be, of course, no Sunday games or excursions of any kind, and no provision of refreshments of any kind. We suggest that the Sabbatarians in the House of Commons should be transported there at once. Next to that it is to be hoped that the natives of Skye will soon be transported to heaven—which is just beyond.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—B. B. Beaumont, 5s.
B. B. BEAUMONT.—Pleased to have had the comments of your German friend on this paper, and to note its aftermath.
C. TUSON.—Very glad to have so good an account of Mr. Ebury's meetings. If he can teach some Christians better manners he will almost make us believe in miracles.
C. L. NORLEY.—Thanks for cutting. Regret that we have not the space to deal with it as fully as would be required to expose the writer's fallacies and mis-statements.
A. H. SIMPSON.—We had not seen the article, but will look it up.
C. N. MOORE.—One day we hope to issue a reprint of some of the old Freethinking pamphlets, and to open the eyes of present unbelievers as to the work these pioneers did.
A.C.W.—Hope you will have a pleasant holiday. Shall be pleased to hear from you at any time.
R.H.S.—Crowded out of this week's issue. We have had to hold out others for reasons of space.

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

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

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

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

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—

One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.
 Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Sugar Plums.

The arrangements for Mr. Cohen's visit to Durham are now almost complete. He will speak in the Town Hall on Wednesday, July 29, and in the Market Place on the following evening. Both meetings will commence at 7.30. In view of recent occurrences it is hoped to have a good muster of Freethinkers from the district. As it appears to have entered the heads of some people that Durham is a place in which Christianity may not be criticized, it must be shown them that this is quite a mistaken idea.

A newsagent writes to the *National Newsagent* saying that he displays a copy of the *Freethinker* outside his shop, and "a gentleman walked in and said he was a brave man." Now that is a really fine commentary on English culture and English freedom in things that matter. It shows bravery to exhibit a copy of this paper! Why? Only because the narrow intolerance of British Christians are willing to ruin a man's business if they can, if he dares to show a paper that makes a straightforward attack on one of the greatest superstitions in the world. There is quite a volume in this incident. But we are glad to say that, thanks to the policy we have adopted for the past two years, the *Freethinker* is now exhibited week by week by about two hundred newsagents who formerly only took it to order, or, in fear of Christian bigots, kept it hidden under the counter. If we had only had the means to what we would like to do we would give the Churches of this country a shaking such as they have never before had in their history. One day, perhaps, that opportunity may arise.

We see from a note in the *Stockport Express*, that there has been some discussion over placing the *Freethinker* in the public library. "Atticus," one of the *Express* Staff, has the following notes on the matter:—

The refusal of the Parks, Museums and Libraries Committee to allow the *Freethinker* a place in the reading-

room of the Public Library reminds me of the time when the *Clarion* was similarly banned from the same room.

A good deal of acrimonious discussion ensued at the time, and in the long run the paper was admitted after receiving an excellent and gratuitous advertisement.

The *Freethinker* is not a new paper. It has passed its fiftieth birthday, and enjoys a larger circulation than ever before.

Contributors to the columns of the paper are drawn from all classes and arrest the attention of people of all shades of opinion. The late Charles Bradlaugh was at one time closely connected with it, and Dr. Annie Besant was a regular contributor to its pages.

I hold no brief, either for the *Freethinker*, or the views it expounds against the conventional belief in God, but I feel that is no reason why I should deny others whose views are different from perusing it.

The fact that the minute was taken back by Alderman Coupe lends colour to the belief that no serious opposition to the placing of the paper had been put forward at the committee meeting. Perhaps the members had never taken the trouble to scan the journal. One never knows.

That is quite good, but Mrs. Besant was never a regular contributor to the columns of the *Freethinker*, and Bradlaugh was only connected with it in the earlier days of its existence inasmuch as it was issued from the Freethought Publishing Company's office. For the rest we can only say that the incident is an example of the way in which things are done in this country. And it is to this class of persons that the Government proposes handing over the question of whether people shall be permitted to go to a Sunday entertainment or not.

We venture to suggest a way in which we may teach these bigots a lesson. If a few friends in Stockport will overlook their distribution we will send any quantity of specimen copies of the paper to Stockport for distribution. We will even undertake the payment of men to undertake the distribution so long as some responsible person will supervise the distribution. We know that by the bigots the *Freethinker* is the best hated and the most feared paper in the country, and, widely known as it is, we hope to make it one of the best known of British journals. If anything awaits us after death we hope to feel that we have earned it.

We are pleased to see from an account of the annual meeting that the Birmingham Branch has had a greatly improved year's work. In spite of the bad times the subscriptions and donations have been greatly in excess of recent years. We hope that this will inspire the members of the Branch to renewed efforts during the present year. The next meeting of the Branch will be held in the Bristol Street Schools, on July 23, at 7.30, when Mr. Bradsworth will open a discussion on "The Sunday Cinema Question." Local friends will please note.

We are obliged to hold over several letters until our next issue, and some we regret we are unable to publish—mainly owing to their length. As we have so often pointed out, but of which so many decline to take any notice, a letter should be a letter, not an essay. Letters of a couple of columns length may only be written by a genius in letter writing, and "they be precious few."

Mr. G. Whitehead reports a very encouraging fortnight in the Bradford district. Attentive audiences, healthy opposition, and a demand for literature is not only a compliment to the speaker, but also a testimony to the good and persistent work of the local Branch. In that direction it is pleasing to note the Branch Secretary was present at every meeting during the fortnight, and another item of enthusiasm worthy of recording is the gift of an attractive platform for open-air work, made by one of the Branch members and presented to the Branch.

This week, starting from to-day (Sunday) Mr. G. Whitehead will break new ground around Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, Northumberland. It is hoped that every saint within range of the district will turn out to assist the few enthusiasts responsible for getting Mr. Whitehead's services.

"The Flight from Reason."

LET me confess that there is nothing I like better than controversy—particularly when my own special unbeliefs are attacked. I have made it my business for many years to read the opponents' side. I have waded through Christian apologetics of all ages. I wanted to see exactly what sort of a case the believer could put up whether as an orthodox Christian or Theist, an anti-Materialist or Spiritualist or even as an "Agnostic" on everything, which, as a rule, meant merely scepticism. I have had some glorious moments of sheer pleasure in reading the way in which the believer can twist himself into a knot that cannot be untied.

I have been bored stiff with dreary drivel, and I have been often left wondering at the tremendous credulity human beings can show in the effort to appear reasonable. Some friends of mine have asked me to reply to Mr. Arnold Lunn's latest work *The Flight from Reason*, which they told me was a serious attempt not merely to discredit Darwinism and Materialism, but was out to prove it was the Freethinker who was utterly without "reason," while the Roman Catholic exercised nothing else. Moreover, unlike so many apologetic believers, Mr. Lunn had at least the courage to mention both the *Freethinker* and its editor, and this showed he was not afraid of our criticism.

Well, I have carefully gone through his book and I can only marvel that such a work could have found a publisher. It only seems learned and full of sound reasoning because the vast majority of people are totally unfamiliar with the subjects he deals with. To know all about Darwinism, Evolution, Materialism, Spiritualism, Bible Criticism, from both sides requires years of intensive reading. It is not enough to take somebody's opinion about a book, nor is it enough to quote other writers. One has to steep oneself in the literature, both for and against, and a mere glance at a library catalogue or even the books themselves is simply ludicrous. Thus anyone who has really read up the subjects he deals with from many angles will recognize at once that Mr. Arnold Lunn has the merest superficial knowledge of the many questions he writes about in his "entertaining" work—for it undoubtedly is quite entertaining but not exactly from the point of view he was perhaps hoping for.

To begin with—and I find I have to repeat this constantly—once you admit God, you can admit anything. If the Roman Catholic Church logically and reasonably follows the existence of God, so does Aladdin's Wonderful Lamp. I defy Mr. Lunn to show me one argument based on reason which can't stand equally for both if once God is admitted. By God, I mean what the Pope means—whatever that is, and I am not going to stop at the moment to show how utterly illogical any definition of God must be, whether defined by the Pope or Mr. Lunn. Once you admit it, then Aquinas is the greatest logician the world has seen if you like; and so would be the writer of the *Arabian Nights*. For every miraculous happening that Aquinas and Mr. Lunn so ardently believe in has then exactly the same authority as the events so thrillingly narrated in that storehouse of Oriental tales. Now whether the Victorian scientist was or was not a credulous fool or the ardent believer in everything the Roman Catholic Church teaches is a sound and logical reasoner, the fact remains that among those people who can think at all, such happenings as Joshua stopping the sun or Jesus carried about by a Devil are simply stupid fairy tales and not all the apologetics of Mr. Lunn or Mr. Chesterton can make them otherwise. It was these things and

hundreds of others like them that the Victorian scientist revolted against. He knew they were fairy tales, and he found them taught as sober history. And he found educated men teaching balderdash of the same kind to children, threatening the poor kiddies with foul lies about Hell if they didn't believe. Mr. Lunn knows this as well as I do and yet he coolly writes pages of piffle about the Victorian scientist being credulous, while the Roman Catholic, backed up by Aquinas, actually teaching superstitious bunkum about devils, hell, angels, purgatory, relics, miracles, is held up as a model of reason. My hat!

Mr. Lunn ventures into Biblical criticism, about which he knows just as much as the average railway porter. He tells us that the "Great Protestant theologians, Bishop Butler, Paley, Salmon and Lightfoot" were "heirs of two great traditions, the Protestant appeal to experience and the Catholic appeal to reason." And he adds, "Bishop Lightfoot's masterly reply to the anonymous author of *Supernatural Religion* would have given equal pleasure to Aquinas and to Luther."

The idea of Lightfoot's being a "masterly" reply is about as ludicrous as to call the author of *Supernatural Religion* "anonymous"; and it may just as well be pointed out that had Mr. Lunn read either of the two authors he could not possibly have written such a hopeless criticism. The fact is, the "masterly reply" he got from Dr. Salmon as well as the word "anonymous," and Mr. Lunn did not take the least trouble to verify the silly statement.

W. R. Cassels has been known as the "anonymous" author for nearly thirty years—though not when Dr. Salmon was giving his New Testament lectures. And as for Lightfoot's reply being "masterly," the fact remains that the main positions taken up by Cassels are just as strongly entrenched as ever. Lightfoot avoided them like poison. Let me challenge Mr. Lunn on this point. Cassels claimed that the four gospels as we know them now were unknown before the year 150 A.D.

If Lightfoot's reply was "masterly" then he must have proved they were in existence before then. Will Mr. Lunn give me chapter and verse from Lightfoot's *Reply*, where the learned Bishop clearly proves this? Cassels devotes the first part of his book to a magnificent attack on miracles. Will Mr. Lunn show me where Lightfoot proves that the Biblical miracles really happened? Cassels analyses the gospel accounts of the Resurrection. Will Mr. Lunn tell us how Lightfoot proved that the Resurrection actually took place as narrated, without the shadow of a doubt? When he has done these things, he will be able to talk about Lightfoot's reply being "masterly." The truth is statements like this get a good start when published in book form, and lots of people will believe them without making the least effort to verify them. And, as is well known, one never can catch up with a good Christian lie.

Mr. Lunn's knowledge of Spiritualism is about as great as his knowledge of Biblical criticism. He starts out with mentioning the "greatest physical medium that ever lived"—"David" Home, then he forgets the "David" and calls him Daniel "Douglas" Home. Then he reverts back to the "David," both in the text and the Index. Now, this is not due to carelessness, but simply to obvious unfamiliarity with his subject. Mr. Lunn thinks it is enough to repeat statements—often in the same words—from spiritualistic works, in favour of Spiritualism, of course. And he knows so little about it that to get a name wrong here or a fact there does not worry him in the least. The public will marvel at his immense reading and there you are. He cannot even spell the title of *this* journal correctly in one place

and yet he has the impertinence to tell Mr. Cohen to change its name! He writes the most appalling nonsense about Determinism, calls Mr. Cohen "that plucky survivor of Victorian Materialism" (rank rubbish, if ever there is any) and tells us that in the "Free-Thinker" (sic) Mr. Cohen "proclaims week by week that free-will is an illusion, that there is no such thing as freethought, and consequently no such person as a Freethinker." And I am asked to reply to this kind of stupidity!

To come back to Psychical Research, after telling us how we materialists find it utterly impossible to reply to Crookes, Richet, Lodge and all the other well known names that are constantly being hurled at us, and therefore, by implication, that the phenomena must be due to spirits, Mr. Lunn tells us he himself is quite agnostic on the matter. He actually expresses surprise that we are not converted to Spiritualism by the marvellous happenings, but wants us to believe that he is quite undecided about their cause. They may be due to spirits or they may not, but it is obvious that for him the only genuine people are the believers. In the case of "Margery," it is with the greatest delight he tells us how Houdini was "thoroughly exposed." He gets this from Mr. Malcolm Bird's book on the Boston medium, and naturally he never questions in the least any statement made by Bird. Everything that gentleman says must be true, while everything that Houdini said is due to biased ignorance. It is most pathetic, but I, who have read both Bird and Houdini, prefer the clear, concise, direct narrative of Houdini to the windy account of Bird. If there is a liar between them, I should have no hesitation in saying which is—and it would not be Houdini. The famous "ruler" episode in which the gallant control "Walter" said, in emphatic language, that Houdini's mother was not married to his father, simply proved that under proper control, no phenomena could take place, from Margery or anybody else. And the cream of the whole thing is, Bird himself was no more convinced of the spirit hypothesis in Margery's case than is Mr. Lunn.

Mr. Lunn can't mention Huxley without contempt, and quotes the letter to the Dialectical Society, in which Huxley declines the invitation to join a committee for investigating spiritualism in terms which a good many of us who have studied the question far more than Mr. Lunn, will thoroughly agree with. But why did not Mr. Lunn quote Charles Bradlaugh, who was after all, the representative Freethinker of his day, who never shirked any question which was contrary to his Freethought, and who met and sat with some six times? Nothing happened at any of the sittings remotely approaching such simple things as picking up live coals from a fire, flying out of windows in strong moonlight, levitating all round a room, or any of the other marvellous happenings which Mr. Lunn quotes with gusto as if for the first time! Crookes, Wallace and Lodge were all converted to Spiritualism by fraudulent mediums, and as for the famous "Eva C.," one would have thought she was by this time quite laughed out of court as an impudent trickster who had been exposed long before she imposed upon poor Schrenck-Notzing.

Mr. Lunn devotes, I don't know how many pages, to Darwin and Darwinism, and to his credit, he does not attempt to confuse Darwinism with Evolution. This is one of the little tricks of people like Mr. Belloe, Mr. Chesterton and "Gerrard." "Gerrard" is quoted by Mr. Lunn against Huxley as an "authority"—which is surely a scream. Huxley may or may not be forgotten one of these days, but who, outside Mr. Lunn's favourite Church, knows "Gerrard"?

That this Jesuit priest—a thorough be-

liever in miracles, the virgin birth, the resurrection, relics, purgatory and other senile absurdities—should be brought up against a giant like Huxley shows the enormous strength of Mr. Lunn's arguments. *Whose is the flight from reason?*

Whether Darwinism be right or wrong does not matter in the ultimate. Darwin proposed "natural selection" as the *method* of evolution, and he may have hit upon the true solution or it may be but one of many solutions or may not be a solution at all. What does matter is evolution. Is evolution true? If it is, then Christianity is not true. *Theism* may be but not Christianity and nothing whatever that Mr. Lunn urges against either Darwin or Darwinism is of the least moment in the controversy.

Finally there is Materialism. For the 10,897th time, Materialism is attacked and annihilated. Mr. Lunn knows all the arguments, including the favourite ones culled from that super-intellectual body, the Christian Evidence Society. "The Materialist, like the madman, is not hampered 'by the sense of humour or by the dumb certainties of experience.'" Nor is a Materialist really sane; nor can a Materialist enjoy music or art or poetry or great literature. It is all very depressing, and when I have finished this article, I hope to see Mr. Charles Chaplin or enjoy my Rembrandt etchings or—alas—even get down my favourite volume of Burns. But if I really want to enjoy a joke, I manage to get hold of one of Mr. Chesterton's earnest exhortations in the *Universe*. Then I have—though I am a Materialist—a good laugh. Mr. Chesterton, it will be remembered, never got over the thorough defeat he received at the hands of Mr. Blatchford about thirty years ago and found it necessary to join the Roman Catholic Church so that he could have some "certainty" behind him. And his pious piffle has been a huge joke to everybody since.

To answer adequately all Mr. Lunn's "entertaining" criticism would require a volume as big as his own at least. I must reluctantly part with him now, but hope we shall have the pleasure of a "big, clean" reply from such a formidable controversialist.

H. CUTNER.

The Book Shop.

THAT old ruffian Schopenhauer (this is a term of affection) cannot be visited without the visitor coming away with a present. Nibbling among his works, the underlining of a sentence in *The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, caused me to stop and reflect on how much sense could be packed into a few words. In his writings he appears to be in an incessant state of warfare with those whom he calls "our professors of philosophy," and this tension perhaps accounts for the many good things of mental nourishment that he gave to the world. Almost with a pin, he seems to prick fallacious bubbles. Chapter V. has a phrase—"the arbitrary constructions of the Absolute" which, in itself is a hint and a warning, and most useful to Freethought speakers. In his preface to the second edition *On the Will in Nature*, he will not, with Kant, gnaw the bones of Space and Time. He writes, "Fetch me a peasant from the plough; make the question intelligible to him; and he will tell you, that even if all things in Heaven and on Earth were to vanish, Space would nevertheless remain, and that if all changes in Heaven and on Earth were to cease, Time would nevertheless flow on." Quite by accident I found that my copy of the above work bears the signature of H. Spencer. It was acquired in one of those solitary hunting expeditions when a youthful mind was hungry, and a casual glance through it at the book shop decided its right to space on the book-shelf of its present owner for the following words:

"Truth depends upon no one's favour or disfavour, nor does it ask anyone's leave: it stands upon its own feet and has Time for its ally; its power is irresistible, its life indestructible." But there were other books that slipped through the mind's customs' office without such passports of integrity.

The above paragraph is the fulfilment of a promise to return to *The Conquest of Illusion*, by J. J. Van der Leeuw. The author, after making a clear analysis of philosophical problems retreats to the Absolute, and though the writer may be perfectly sincere (and he has written admirable criticism of many scare-crows in the world of words) his conclusions are unsatisfying. I am content to accept the term unknowable as a definition of what cannot be known; it is only when a description of it is attempted that the trouble begins. The Absolute is only another variation of Spinoza's "sanctuary of ignorance," and as George Meredith wrote in the *Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, "When people do not themselves know what they mean, they succeed in deceiving and imposing upon others." Meredith mixed brains with his work and that is why, compared with most modern novelists, he is out of date. His worldly wisdom did not lead to a cloud of abstractions, and I have bought some of his novels at sixpence apiece. I feel sure that if the Editor of the *Freethinker* would only charge a guinea or two for his books, pad them out, and insert a few chapters of obscurity, he would be thought much more highly of by our own professors of philosophy.

The knack of disassociating ideas from individuals holding them is very difficult to acquire. There are not many people capable of this effort, and, if I were asked to name anyone who had mastered the art, I would give without hesitation Spinoza. His correspondence is a liberal education in the many shades of sweet reasonableness, without yielding to propositions with which he cannot agree, whilst adding copious proof of their unsoundness. In these notes on books I carefully bear in mind the fact that they are written for the world—of Freethought. The unbending resistance to Freethought may be found in the fact, that, when the mind is not under the burden of authority it is left in a condition to view impartially all the ferment of for and against in the various forms of religion, politics, and the wide world of ideas. I have just finished reading *The Coming War*, by General Ludendorff, published by Faber & Faber, 6s. net. The author is an old man, war has been his trade, and the book was written or published on October 26, 1930, the anniversary of his dismissal from office—at least that is the information given at the end of the volume. A delightful way, worthy of the best in journalism, is the author's method of describing as "mayflies," all those who do not agree with him. It is difficult to gather a clear idea of the writer's aim. There is war, war, on every page. Lumped in indiscriminately are Jews, Freemasons, Jesuits, Communists, Bolsheviks, Atheists, and others that I may have left out: all these are in some way working for alliances of parties, the downfall of nations, and the General gives a map showing Europe as the area of conflict. With the characteristic ease of military men he handles, on paper, millions of men, all intent on slaying or being slain. I wonder if this can be true, seeing that all the unfortunate men who lost legs in the last war have not yet been fitted up with artificial ones, and in addition, it now being impossible to put a finger on the cause of war in five minutes. Is it not a simple fact that an individual cannot live on hatred for ever? And the hollowness of the great victory of the last war can be seen by the blind in spite of the childish talk of distinguished men who are still squabbling about who won it. The book is a melancholy sign-post of the military mind, hopeless and utterly incapable of a single constructive idea; it is a nightmare after a debauch of 1914-1918, and should be read by all who are now able to precisely assess the contribution of those who are only able to think of things in terms of physical destruction. The forehead of Mars is low, and assuming all the premisses of General Ludendorff to be correct, the survivors of the *Coming War*

would be driven mad with the problem of not knowing what to do with their victory. And if the reader is any good at picking out fallacies let him try his skill on these two sentences from the book—"It is the duty of the German people to survive. God has ordained that it must fight for its life." That is the language of Mars and the cave man; it is the military man's contribution to the human race, and those who use it have been trusted with the destiny of millions of lives. This destiny would be safer in the hands of Charlie Chaplin.

The *Bookmark*, a quarterly magazine published by J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., is issued by that house for the purpose of bringing their own publications to the notice of the public. It has all the marks of good taste in an age when one has almost to apologise for a preference for the best, even if it is only to advertise books that may be read for once only. The editorial contains a notice of Sir Charles Higham's advice to publishers, which is referred to as a "torrential sermon" from that distinguished public man. The *Bookmark* is not in love with any of his suggestions, and one passage in the editorial will, I think, be of general interest to readers of the *Freethinker*: "The publisher knows that the reading of literature destroys in the reader that child-like credulity on which the success of general advertising depends; therefore he knows that to publish good books must be his first consideration, and that the advertising and selling of them must, to be successful in the long run, be in keeping, in selectivity and care, with that first consideration." Messrs. Dent have a reputation to maintain, and they do it. There is nothing like the rage of a reader who has been taken in with a specious fogle and fanfare of a book, not worth the price paid, the shelf room, or the precious time taken in finding out that it may have been better spent in looking up at the sky. Books are not food for the stomach, nor is the fact that the author has been prosecuted any criterion alone of their value. The truly vulgar and sensational can safely be left to the efficient care of the newspapers; whilst for those who are unmoved or not interested, a good book, "is the precious life-blood of a master spirit embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life." That is immortality to which the intellect gives its consent. Sir Charles Higham has been warned off the precincts of discrimination by the *Bookmark*: its kingdom is not taken by violence.

A friend has lent me *In Defence of Sensuality*, by John Cowper Powys. The book is good in parts, although there seems to be an unnecessary straining for effect, and an absence of economy in space. Several of his passages are tortuous and their meanings not clear. His thesis may be summed up in a sentence by Von Hugo von Hofmannsthal: "The despair of an epoch would be expressed by the fact that it came to think it not worth while to occupy itself with the past." A sturdy tree cannot grow without its roots in the ground, and to much of the modern trash that is thrust on the people through a defective money system, those who remember man's history will turn a blind eye to it, and perhaps have a gentle laugh at the folly of a country full up with all human wants in the shape of goods, but the horse-sense to distribute them lacking. And those who laugh may be those who have had their child-like credulity destroyed by the reading of good books, so that the illustrious dead have not lived in vain.

In this column that I am privileged to write, I mentioned that the Press was on the defensive; this year was a notable one for nothing else but the fact of these big blustering bullies being forced to do something other than make long and abusive assertions that any fools were expected to disprove. The *Daily Express* is now stating that the Co-operative movement must be crushed by the will of the community. The crime of the Co-operative is that it has challenged the superstition connected with money. One of its publications has asked "Where Does Money Come From?" and this innocent question has stung the above daily into a fury like that of Ajax. The *Daily Express* has opened war on 6,000,000 members of the kingdom. It is a truly grand sight. Hardly any newspapers have helped to create the

operative movement, and although I hold no brief for it, there is much pleasure in watching the call of newspaper bluff. Let the *Daily Express* be correct in its figures and add one more to the number. I for one, have been asking the same question for years. The answer was, of course, known all the time, and the universal knowledge of its source will be as epoch-making as Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood. It will be as illuminating as the discovery that priests cannot cause one spot of rain to fall by prayers, or that there is anything but ordinary assimilation in the eating of a holy wafer. I am prepared to subscribe the sum of two pence for another similar leading article by the *Daily Express* for the publicity it can give, by accident, to anything approaching common-sense. When Mr. Stanley Baldwin and Lord Beaverbrook fell out, it was the same as a good set-by by the Archbishop of Canterbury and Cardinal Bourne, and for the same reason it would speedily finish. The world would begin to know too much of the great secrets of a very ordinary concern as far as it was a contribution to human knowledge. Harassed tradesmen, poor students, and worried housewives, would be enabled to lead normal lives when the real answer to the provoking question is known and something radical done about it. Good books would be able to be bought without stoical denial of the common necessities of life, and to quote Shakespeare we say to the muddleheaded *Daily Express*, "Lay on, Macduff; And damn'd be him that first cries, 'Hold, enough.'"

C-DE-B.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

GOD AND THE STATE.

SIR,—I dare say you will be surprised at receiving a letter from a Catholic, but it so chanced that I came across your paper by accident a few days ago, and was interested in its perusal.

I hesitated about writing you, for I fear that nothing I can say is likely to change your opinion. Still, I wish you to believe, that Catholics are as sincere in their belief as you are in yours, and no harm can come of exchanging views even if we differ. And I want to correct some of yours with regard to us.

You say the Roman Catholic does not function as a free man in a free State, but is a soldier acting under orders which he is forbidden to question. In this you are quite wrong. I am as "free" as you are.

Cardinal Bourne is a Conservative. I am a Labour Man and vote Labour. It is plain from this that the Cardinal believes in tariffs, while I do not. Now the Cardinal has no power to order me, or any other Catholic to vote for Tariffs, or indeed for any other secular programme, and if he did, I should simply refuse to obey him. In all secular matters I am as free to vote for any side I please. All that the Cardinal has done is to repeat what the Pope has said, when he notifies the faithful that certain theories in vogue at the present day are not in accordance with the Moral Teaching of the Church. Naturally, then, if a Labour Candidate is put up by the party, and this candidate endeavours to force us to swallow tenets that are subversive of faith and morals, then certainly I would vote against him. I do not need the Cardinal to tell me that; for I would do it instinctively. This has nothing to do with Labour as such. The Candidate might be a Tory, or a Liberal, the result would be the same; but what harm is there in that?

I claim the same liberty for myself, as the I.L.P. claims as against the present Government. The Labour Party has been beseeching the I.L.P.'ers to vote for them in every case and in every circumstance. The I.L.P. have declined to give such a promise. They claim the right to criticize the Labour Party, protest against it if needs be; and if they think fit, to vote against its proposals. They are quite right in this, for what is this but the claim to exercise their vote in accordance with their Conscience? No man can claim the vote on the prin-

ciple of "my party right or wrong." This would be to sell his soul. The utmost that a party can claim of a supporter is that *in general* he will vote for the views of the men he attaches himself to, but he must always reserve the right of begging to differ on occasions, else he loses his liberty. The Catholic wishes to do the same.

You talk of a "Free State." What do you mean by that? Free of what? Not free of Law, for no State can rule without Law. Then if you intend to change the present Law, and put another in its place, the question is what Law are you going to put in the place of the Christian Law? Who are the men who are going to make the new Laws, and what right have they to say I must obey them, if I don't like them? What Authority do they possess to impose Laws on other people over and above the Authority that imposes the present ones? It is as plain as a pikestaff that they must make some laws. Am I to have the right to protest or thwart them if I do not like them; and will they allow me to vote them down if I think fit? If not, what becomes of my liberty? In what am I free? There is no such thing as a Free State. It must be bound by something. If not Catholic Principles, then the principles of Carl Marx, let us say. Then they are *not* free any more than I am; and no man can be, unless he says he is going to be bound by no principles at all; but I should suggest such a man would be half way on the road to the mad-house.

I am as free as you are. I am at liberty to leave the Church and join the I.L.P., or anything I like, and nothing holds me but my faith. The same thing holds you, to whatever principles you profess to adhere to. Then how are you more free than I am? Oh, you say, I dare not leave the Church, for if I did, She would enforce her orders with spiritual pains and penalties. It is plain, Dear Sir, that "free-thinking" is not the same as logical thinking. It is as clear as crystal that if I lost my faith in the Church, and set out to act against her, that I would automatically lose faith in the aforementioned spiritual pains and penalties. So I AM FREE.

I am open to be persuaded by any man who can prove to me that the moral principles of some other creed are better than the ones I hold. But I see no signs of any such. The only Atheist State we know of at present is the Soviet State, and a man must have a brain of brass as well as a face of brass if he is bold enough to say that liberty of ANY KIND exists in Russia. There is not a particle of liberty there in any shape or form, as you, Mr. Editor know full well. Then I say, if the Russians have lost their liberty, they have lost everything, even if the Soviet State gave them Utopia.

W. F. H. REES.

FREETHOUGHT AND LIFE.

SIR,—“Let us eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die,” was the Christian saint's idea of the only philosophy of life open to the unbeliever in personal immortality. “Let us be aimless, pessimistic and cynical, for in some millions of trillions of years the race will die,” is what your correspondent, Mr. Sezel, calling himself a Freethinker, lays down as the logical point of view for Freethought adherents.

There is little to choose between the saint and the cynic. If the latter's view is defensible, so was the former's. Perhaps this is sufficient answer for Mr. Sezel.

Since, however, he is sufficiently doubtful of his position to ask for help from Freethinkers who do not share it, I would suggest that his trouble is due to a dislike of facts. Now Freethinkers do not dislike facts; they make the best of them. Mr. Sezel, therefore, Atheist though he may be, is *not* yet a Freethinker.

The facts he so irrationally dislikes are those concerned with the ultimate extinction of human life and works. “No effort is worth while, if the result is finally destroyed,” sums up his argument, but all experience proves him wrong. The artist he instances creates for the present satisfaction of doing so; the scientist investigates to remove present ignorance; the reformer strives with present evils; the Freethinker seeks to make more Freethinkers now; and always the reward lies in the efforts themselves or in results more or less immediately following them. It is simply not true that satis-

faction is only possible when its cause is regarded as something that must survive for ever.

The line for Mr. Sezel to take, therefore, is to make the best of things as they are, give up crying for the moon, and continue to read this Journal. The latter, I can tell him from my own experience, will prove an antidote to the mushy sentimentalities that are mixed with the more stimulating sections of the writings of the three authors who appear to have been influences largely responsible for his unsatisfactory position to-day.

P. VICTOR MORRIS.

IS LIFE WORTH HAVING?

SIR,—I suppose Mr. Sezel's "sceptre of old age" is a misprint for spectre. But in a Christian world it is not such a bad spectre. Christianity made my youth so wretched that I am rather glad to be sixty-five, and would not go back to twenty-five in a Christian world if the chance was offered me. As for Mr. Sezel's lack of aim, I think he really has one, else he would not say "such feeling are dangerous." If nothing matters, what does danger matter? My own aims in this life might be summarized as feeding, breeding, reading; or, more accurately if less rhymingly, food, a mate, and knowledge. The first two are essential, but limited and satiable; the third is insatiable. At present I am not certain of anything, and I want to be certain of everything. And as facts are infinite, generalization infinite, and viewpoints infinite, I see no likelihood of becoming blasé, whether I end as a person when this shabby old body no longer obeys me, or whether I take modified form, or even if I am for ever in a Christian hell.

C. HARPUR.

Obituary.

HENRY HERBERT HURRELL.

ON Monday, July 13, the remains of Henry Herbert Hurrell were cremated at the City of London Crematorium, Manor Park, London, E. Sixty-seven years of age, he had the misfortune to fall down some stairs, and was taken to the Metropolitan Hospital, on June 17. Unable to respond to the treatment, he gradually grew weaker, and eventually he slept from life to death. He was an admirer of Charles Bradlaugh, and the succeeding Freethought Chiefs; and the Hall of Science, *National Reformer*, and the *Freethinker* were landmarks in his Freethought. A number of friends were present at the Crematorium, and in accordance with his expressed wish a Secular Service was read by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

Miscellaneous Advertisements.

TO GLASGOW FREETHINKERS.—Freethinkers in Glasgow and District are invited to call at the Freethought bookstall at the juncture of West Regent Street and Renfield Street. A varied assortment of Freethought books always in stock. Current issue of the *Freethinker* on sale. Any book got to order.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

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

FINSBURY PARK N.S.S.—11.15, Mr. B. A. Le Maine—A Lecture.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrols Road, North End Road): Wednesday, at 7.30, Messrs. Haskell and Aley; Saturday, at 7.30, Messrs. Barnes and Day. *Freethinker* on sale at both meetings.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine—A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.—Every Tuesday evening at 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury will lecture outside Hampstead Heath Station, L.M.S., South End Road. Every Thursday evening at 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury will lecture at Arlington Road.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine; 3.30, Messrs. C. E. Wood and C. Tuson; 6.30, Messrs. A. H. Hyatt, A. D. McLaren, B. A. Le Maine and E. C. Saphin. Every Wednesday, at 7.30, Messrs. C. E. Wood and C. Tuson; every Thursday, at 7.0, Messrs. E. C. Saphin and J. Darby; 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.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith): 3.30, Messrs. Bryant and C. Tuson.

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

INDOOR.

HIGHGATE DEBATING SOCIETY (Winchester Hotel, Archway Road, Highgate, N.): Wednesday, July 22, at 7.45, Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W. C.1): 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"Is England Declining?"

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S.—Every Saturday evening at 8 p.m., opposite the Open Market, inside the level.

DARLINGTON (Market Steps), Sunday, July 19, at 7.30, Mr. J. T. Brighton—A Lecture.

HARLE SYKE.—Monday, July 20, at 7.45—Mr. J. Clayton.

HAPTON.—Tuesday, July 21, at 7.30.—Mr. J. Clayton.

HORDEN (near Miners' Institute), Saturday, July 18, at 8.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton—A Lecture.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S.—Sunday, at Queen's Drive (opposite Baths), Messrs. Jackson, Shortt and Tissyman; Monday, at Beaumont Street, Messrs. Jackson and Wollen; Tuesday, at Edge Hill Lamp, Messrs. Little and Sherwin; Wednesday, at Waste Ground adjoining Old Swan Library, Messrs. Little and Shortt; Thursday, at corner of High Park Street and Park Road, Messrs. Jackson and Tissyman. All at 7.30. Current *Freethinkers* on sale at all meetings.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Bigg Market), Wednesday, July 22, at 8.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton—A Lecture.

PADIHAM (Recreation Ground).—Sunday, July 19, at 7.30—Mr. J. Clayton.

SUNDERLAND (Boilermakers Hall), Sunday, July 19, at 10.30, Mr. J. T. Brighton—A Lecture.

TRAWDEN (near Post Office).—Friday, July 17, at 7.45—Mr. J. Clayton.

INDOOR.

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