

STOCKPORT AND THE "FREETHINKER."

The

FREETHINKER

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Views and Opinions.

Stockport and The "Freethinker."

I do not know how many times during its history the *Freethinker* has been solemnly banned from some public library or the other. All I do know is that it has never seriously weakened its influence, or threatened its existence. Our late editor used to remark that as we did not owe our existence to the press, we cannot be destroyed by it. No paper in the country has ever been subjected to so strenuous and vigilant a boycott as the *Freethinker*. Newsagents have been threatened with loss of custom, wholesalers, in the early days, refused to handle it, and to-day, while very freely borrowed from by newspaper writers, it is seldom mentioned in newspaper columns. Apart from the big newspapers the *Freethinker* is probably as well known as any journal in the country, but the pretence of not knowing it exists must still be kept up, and where possible men and women, particularly young men and women must be prevented making its acquaintance. And yet the paper has weathered fifty years of existence; it withstood the "Great War," when so many papers went under, and it is now in a healthier condition than at any stage of its existence, and stronger than any Freethought journal in this country has ever been. One may be excused crowing a little over such a statement, but a journal which has been honoured with the unremitting and vigilant hatred which the *Freethinker* has met, ought to feel a little proud of having done so much to deserve it.

Bigotry in Action.

As our readers are aware, the latest attempt to suppress the *Freethinker* occurred at Stockport. The Libraries Committee, and subsequently the Council, declined to place the paper within reach of those who use the public libraries. There are many Free-

thinkers in Stockport, they pay rates as do other townsmen, and they are legally entitled to all the rights that others have. All sorts of Christian sects have their views represented in the public libraries, their journals are placed on the tables, and no one can pretend that on mere literary grounds they are admitted and we are excluded. Freethinkers have the same rights that others have to the use of the public libraries—no more and no less. But to a certain type of Christian a Freethinker has no rights, he has only priveleges. And if Christians permit him to live he should be content; if they further permit him to read what he likes and to stay away from Church or chapel he ought to be more than pleased, he should publicly thank them for being so high-minded, and so charitable. Civic and ethical considerations have no necessary place in any genuinely Christian scheme of things.

A writer in the local *Express* makes the following comments on the action of the Committee:—

At the last meeting of the Council the question cropped up again, and this time the paper was definitely banned. It is not even to be placed in the Reference Library. I can name a score of authors of books on the shelves of the Library definitely antagonistic to the Christian precepts, and could give titles of volumes I should blush to see in the hands of my children, and so could others. Yet these remain unmentioned and unmolested.

The fact of the matter is that books are bought, or seen to be bought, without regard to the contents.

The net result of the banning of the *Freethinker* is that the paper has already found a way into hundreds of homes in Stockport and the number of subscribers will undoubtedly grow, as a result of the stupid action of the Council.

I was under the impression that the days of suppression were past and that an enlightened electorate was quite capable of selecting what it needs in the way of literature. This is evidently not the case—not yet.

I do not, of course, know to what books the writer refers when he speaks of works he would blush to see in the hands of his children. There are a great number of books I would rather children did not read, but I do not know that I would forbid many, and in either case what are called "good" books for the young would be among them. As a matter of fact books seldom do anyone harm, although they are often made the excuse for the existence of evil propensities, much as stupid magistrates discover that cinemas lead young men to a life of crime. It is much easier to say that a book is well or ill-written than it is to say that it is ethically bad or good.

* * *

A Useless Weapon.

The *Express* writer seems poorly informed if he was under the impression that the days of suppression were past. They are not. Now as ever suppression

is as strong as circumstances will permit it to be. It does not often take the form of open suppression, still less frequently does it claim to suppress in the name of religion. Instead of that there is a hypocritical profession of regard for public morals or for the welfare of the young. When it is not that, the suppression is of the cowardly type that threatens a man with loss of office or of livelihood. Of course, in the case of a Council such as Stockport has, there can be very little dispute that the animating motive is sheer bigotry. The majority on the Council will not permit the *Freethinker* to be in the libraries because that ignorant majority does not agree with its teachings. It would be paying them too great a compliment to assume that they understand its teachings, it is enough for them that they know it is against the Christian religion. They do not understand it, they could not reply to it if they did, so they fall back upon the cowardly religious policy of suppression.

And in that they are bound to fail. The *Express* writer is right in saying that the result of the action of the libraries committee is to bring the *Freethinker* into a greater number of homes in Stockport than has, probably, ever been the case before. I hope that local Freethinkers will keep the game alive. They should let it be known that the *Freethinker* is the paper that the Council dare not permit in the Libraries under its control. I am sure that the number of subscribers will grow in that district in consequence of the action of the Council. We have sent down a large quantity for distribution, and we are willing to send any quantity almost that friends are willing to distribute. The best reply to all attacks made on the *Freethinker* is—the *Freethinker*. The Stockport Councillors probably thought they were posing as friends of public morals. All they have done is to make themselves ridiculous.

* * *

Christianity and Intolerance.

The moral to be drawn from the Stockport affair is two-fold. First, it should enforce the old lesson that if Freethinkers are to get fair play as citizens they must assert themselves. I know that if the number of Freethinkers in Stockport had made their opinions known the Libraries Committee would not have voted by nine to three for the exclusion of the paper. It is almost useless expecting Christians in power to act with justice to those who elect them. The Stockport Council is elected to carry out civic duties alone. They are bound, so far as they have any sense of responsibility and of honour to see that all under their administration are treated with absolute justice. Yet so soon as they are elected they convert themselves on the champions of religious doctrines, and are willing to use their powers in the interests of Church and Chapel. In other directions these Councillors may be, for all I know to the contrary, honourable men. Their action with regard to this paper proves that where religion is concerned honesty and justice has no place in their considerations.

Moral number two is the close association of Christianity with intolerance throughout the whole of its history. Creeds have changed, dogmas have been discarded, beliefs have been outgrown, but the intolerance of Christianity has remained. The one thing that powerfully impressed the Romans when they were brought into close contact with Christians was their intolerance. Christians refused to eat at the same table as non-Christians, or to take part in the amenities of social life. They showed the same intolerance to each other. Differences of belief, so minute as to be almost indiscernible to the modern eye, served as the occasion for bloody conflicts, and afterwards for the most fiendish of judicial tortures. Intolerance in religion practically unknown among

the ancient Romans became an established principle in the Christian Church. The best God for a man to have, said the Roman, is the God of his own country. The only God you may have, said the Christian, is my God, and every other was suppressed. This principle took so firm a hold on the Christian conscience that even to-day differences in religion is not tolerated as are differences on other subjects. In other matters there is at least a chance that a man may stand face to face with his worst passions, and their repulsiveness may effect a cure. In religion they are obscured, cloaked by a training that is older than any living individual, hidden under plausible excuses, ready with a traitor's stab delivered under the shelter of a flag of truce.

The facts are plain and they form a pretty problem for the religious man to discuss. Why should we not discuss religion as we discuss other subjects? The only reason is that religion as a whole appeals to feelings and associations that in other directions we have largely outgrown. Among primitive peoples religion is not discussed, it is accepted. The gods are facts of the primitive environment too dangerous to be made the subject of debate. The savage will discuss the wisdom of a chief's decision, but he fears to question the rulings of these mysterious beings who control nature, and against whom there is neither appeal nor protection. Later the danger of discussing religion is recognized because of the vested interests that have gathered around it. But by that time the feeling against heresy has become socially organized, and meets each newcomer into the social arena. But the basic reason is plain. In each of us there lies imbedded a great deal of the primitive savage, or, to be quite accurate, our social organization is such that we are ready to react to religious influences in a quite primitive manner. In attacking religion we are fighting an uncivilized thing, and the method of defence is an index to its character.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A Famous French Freethinker.

"What good is like to this
To do worthy the writing, and to write
Worthy the reading and the world's delight."
S. Daniel.

"Truth is only unpleasant in its novelty. He who first utters it, says to his hearer, 'You are less wise than I am.'—Landor.

FRENCH literature is one blaze of splendid scepticism from the days of Abelard to our own time, and the name of Anatole France is not by any means the least in this magnificent beadroll. Of all the modern Continental writers Anatole France was the most Voltairian. As he himself wittily expressed it, he was a symbol, as the citizen Momoro represented the Goddess of Reason at the festivals of the French Revolution. The word Voltairian means also something of tone and character, something of an alert and indignant regard, a delicacy of touch, a subtle irony which immediately suggests the very ideal of the Gallic intellect:—

"Ravishing as red wine in woman's form,
A splendid Mœnad, she of the delirious laugh,
Her body twisted flame with the smoke-cap crowned."

Anatole France resembled our own Bernard Shaw in one important particular. Not only was he known throughout the civilized world as a writer, but he was also a humanitarian. A convinced Freethinker, it was only natural that he should take up the brilliant sword of his wit by the side of the Atheist, Emilio Zola, when the latter championed truth and jus-

tice in the supreme hour of danger in the Dreyfus crisis. It was an abiding example of real courage. Honest to their own injury, brave against the enmity of tens of thousands, these Freethinkers, in defending a poor, persecuted Jew, raised the world's opinion of human nature.

Anatole France's literary forefathers were Rabelais, Swift, and Voltaire, three of the most virile and significant names in the world's literature. Yet he was no copyist, but strikingly original, modern, Parisian. The one thing that he had in common with his illustrious predecessors was his whole-hearted hatred of injustice and his mastery over language. Although a master of the lash, he used his whip caressingly. He did not cut his subject to ribbons like Swift; nor, like Voltaire, overflow with an adroit and subtle humour, which stung like a thousand wasps. Rather was he like Rabelais, who wrought satire into the stuff of imaginative comedy, and often pities while he smiles.

Rabelais was more tolerant than Swift, who, writing too much in the shadow of the Christian Superstition, found all the fair world a dunghill, and man the most loathsome object that squatted upon it. But Rabelais, out in the open air, with all the winds of the Renaissance blowing upon him, was more genial as a satirist. Under the motley of the jester beat a heart that sympathised with his fellow men. Anatole France possessed no small share of the tolerant humour of Rabelais, and at a distance of many generations carried on the same intellectual tradition.

Although Anatole France wrote a shelf-full of books, his works have a uniform excellence, and it is difficult to pick out any representative masterpiece. He wrote no *Candide*, no *Les Miserables*, those seminal masterpieces which represent the quintessence of their authors' genius. Like his illustrious countryman, Montaigne, he is not to be judged by a single essay. And, like Montaigne, he was a philosopher in disguise. He used the novel as a medium of expression, personal, and intellectual. In those charming pages of *La Vie Litteraire*, he told the world that he was not speaking pontifically, but only talking to himself, only sending his mind adventuring among masterpieces. Even in his novels, he is as personal and as intimate as Charles Lamb. In his *Isle of the Penguins*, he puts modern society under the microscope, and in *The Gods Althirst*, he unfolds himself on the subject of the French Revolution. With exquisite artistry and tender understanding, he gets to the heart of the Revolution. With what sympathy does he show the rebel Gamelin starving himself that a poor mother might be fed, or apologising to a child for his fanaticism:—

Child, you will grow up free and happy, and you will owe it to the infamous Gamelin. I am ferocious that you may be happy; I am cruel that you may be kind; I am pitiless that to-morrow the whole French people may embrace each other with tears of joy.

This genial satirist can, in another mood, portray delightful scenes of his own childhood. *My Friend's Book* is as fascinating as heart could desire, and in that perfect chapter, "The Hermitage of the Jardin des Plantes," he has described Pierre Noziere's childish passion towards saintship with inimitable grace and irony:—

My sole idea was to live the life of an ascetic. In order to lose no time in putting my ideas in operation, I refused to eat my breakfast. My mother, who knew nothing of my new vocation, thought I was ill, and looked at me with an anxiety that pained me to behold. Nevertheless, I persevered with my fasting, and there, remembering the example of Saint Simeon Stylites, who spent his life on a pillar, I climbed up on the kitchen cistern, but it was impossible to live there, for Julie, our cook, promptly

dislodged me. Though I had thus been ousted from the cistern, I pursued with undiminished ardour the way of perfection, and next decided to imitate Saint Nicholas of Patres, who gave all his riches to the poor. My father's study window looked out upon the quay, and from it I proceeded to fling down a dozen coppers or so which had been presented to me because they were new and bright. These I followed up with marbles, humming tops, whip-top, and eelskin whip.

"The child is crazy," exclaimed my father as he shut the window.

I felt angry and mortified at hearing this judgment passed on me, but I remembered that my father, not being a saint like myself, would not share with me in the glories of the blessed, a reflection from which I derived great consolation.

No one but a Frenchman could have written this passage, and of this delicate and delightful stuff is woven the golden fabric of his genius. So original, so modern, is this great writer, who, among other names, has been called the Pope of Freethought.

Born in a Bookseller's shop, Anatole France had "ink in his blood." During the most impassionable years of his life he was surrounded by old folios, illuminated manuscripts, and artistic books. At every pore of a sensitive nature he drew in the love of literature, and splendid use he made of his intimate and peculiar knowledge. A master of language, a scholar, a psychologist, humourist, humanitarian, and wit. When, by a natural fitness of things, he became librarian to the French Senate, the environment was suitable for changing the bookworm into a charming and attractive writer. Never a hustler, he was near forty years of age when his first notable story, *The Crime of Sylvester Bonnard*, was published and proved a triumph. Crowned by the French Academy, Anatole France wrote volume after volume until his name was familiar in all the capitals of Europe.

In the old, bad, far-off days Francois Rabelais caught glimpses of the dawn of Liberty, and, largely through the genius and courage of his successors, it has permeated all classes of society. Anatole France stood for the liberation of the intellect no less than Rabelais. Finding his contemporaries bound with chains of their own manufacture, it was his life purpose to break the fetters and set them free. In so doing, he wrote himself on history's page as one of the knight-errants of Humanity.

MIMNERMUS.

MATTHEW TINDAL. FREETHINKER (1657-1733).

In his notable work for that time, *Christianity as Old as Creation* (1730) Tindal, who was a fellow of All Souls College Oxford, and who believed and said that both revelation and Christianity were superfluous, says:—

If God will judge mankind as they are accountable, that is, as they are rational; the judgment must hold an exact proportion to the use they make of their Reason. And it would be vain to use it, if the due use of it would not justify them before God; and men would be in a miserable condition indeed, if, whether they used it, or not, they should be alike criminal. And if God designed all mankind should at all times know, what he wills them to know, believe, and profess, and has given them no other means for this but the use of Reason, Reason, human Reason, must be that means; for as God has made us rational creatures, and Reason tells us that 'tis his will that we act up to the dignity of our natures; so 'tis Reason must tell when we do so. What God requires us to know, believe and practise, must in itself be a reasonable service; but whether what is offered to us as such, be really so, 'tis Reason alone which must judge. As the eye is the sole judge of what is visible; the ear of what is audible; so Reason for what is reasonable. If then Reason was given to man to bring him to the knowledge of God's will, that must be sufficient to produce its intended effect, and can never bring man to take for His will which he designed they, by using their reason, should avoid as contrary to it."

Religion.

In any ordinary conversation or discussion people hardly ever trouble to consider whether the ideas they wish to convey are as clearly understood by their hearers as they imagine them to be. More seldom still do they pause to think whether they are clear in their minds as to the precise meanings of the words they use. They are, indeed, conscious of nothing but the fact that they are "expressing their own ideas"; whereas all that they are really doing is uttering sounds. They forget, if they ever knew, that meanings are not inherent in words.

Consequently we not infrequently find that a speaker shows resentment if he is brought up short by the question: "What do you mean by such and such a word?" For instead of realizing the necessity of adopting the somewhat tiresome process of explaining himself, he takes the easier way of attributing thick-headedness or perversity to his hearer. So disagreement begins and intelligent discussion becomes impossible.

Fortunately most conversations are of an utterly superficial nature. Any misunderstandings, therefore, which may arise from the normal ambiguity of words, are rapidly glossed over, and the flow of verbiage continues uninterrupted. Yet every now and then some word crops up which will not permit of inconsequential treatment; and if resort is not had to clearer definition of terms, ill-temper is almost certain to supervene. "Religion" is one such word; and in the interests of clarity we propose to analyse it.

Before commencing our analysis, it should be clearly understood that no escape from the evidence of fact can be allowed which claims that this or the other individual definition of religion is the only true one. However authoritative any given definition may appear to be, it cannot be true or correct if it fails to be generally applicable. And, besides, if each of us were permitted his own pet definition, then the word "religion" would be useless as a coin of speech. Admittedly it has almost reached that stage already. But since people continue to use and discuss it with the utmost freedom (when there is no likelihood of a precise definition being called for), we must assume that there is some sort of meaning which is correctly applicable to the word in all cases where it is not specifically qualified. And this is what we are setting out to discover.

We are not out to show what religion *ought* to mean according to the opinion of this or that person or community, but what the most correct interpretation of the word is when stripped of all idiosyncracies and reduced to its one invariable common denominator. And we propose to do this by examining as many definitions as we can. Those which are clearly sarcasms ("A collateral security for virtue") or metaphors ("Force of belief cleansing the inward parts") will not be included, since they cannot be taken as serious attempts to define what religion really is:—

- (1) Religion consists in the pious worship of the gods.—*Cicero*.
- (2) The many different forms of religion are all attempts to give expression to the idea of God.
S. B. Jevons.
- (3) Betting your life there is a God.
Donald Hankey.
- (4) Religion consists in our recognizing all our duties as divine commands.—*Kant*.
- (5) Religion is a belief in an everlasting God; a divine mind and will.—*Dr. Martineau*.
- (6) Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows, etc.—*St James*.

- (7) Religions, by which are meant the modes of divine worship proper to different tribes, nations or communities, and based on the belief held in common by members of them severally.
C. P. Tiele.
- (8) Religion: the outward act or form by which men indicate their recognition of the existence of a god or gods having power over their destiny.—*Webster*.
- (9) The belief in spiritual beings.
Prof E. B. Tyler.
- (10) A propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man, which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life.
Sir J. G. Fraser.
- (11) The appreciation of an unseen world, usually an unseen company . . . men's whole bearing towards what seems to him the Best and Greatest.
Stratton.
- (12) Our feeling about the highest forces that govern human destiny.—*John Morley*.
- (13) The perception of the infinite under such manifestations as influence the moral character of man.—*Max Muller*.
- (14) The engagement of the affections in favour of that particular conduct which we call good . . . together with awe and reverence . . . whenever one tries to pierce below the surface of things.
T. H. Huxley.
- (15) Morality tinged with emotion.
Matthew Arnold.
- (16) Religion is constituted by the Tender Emotion, together with Fear, and the Sentiment of the Sublime.—*Alex Bain*.
- (17) Religion expresses the outer form and embodiment which the inward spirit of a true or a false devotion assumes.—*Trench*.
- (18) A theory of man's relation to the Universe.
E. S. P. Haynes.
- (19) Belief in the ultimate meaning of the Universe.
Prof. Wallace.
- (20) An emotion resting on a conviction of harmony between ourselves and the Universe at large.
Prof. McTaggart.
- (21) Aspiration, unselfishness, the only real religion.
Zangwill.

Now it needs no great perspicacity to realize that as regards clearness of meaning "religion" is in a pretty bad way. The question "What do you mean by religion?" is, therefore, in no sense a cavil. It must also be obvious that the variations in definition are largely the outcome of personal predilections. No. 21 would be admirable if it were true; but since it applies with as much (if not more) force to Atheism, it can hardly be described as an adequate definition of religion.

Definitions 18 to 20 are clearly inadequate, since they do not fit a large number of religions in which no conception of the Universe exists. These definitions are more truly descriptive of philosophies than religion. Again, from the second half of No. 11 down to 16 we have descriptions of what religion might be or ought to be, but is not. For these definitions cannot be applied to religions such as Ju-Ju worship and many other religions of primitive races, which have no conception of "the infinite" or "highest forces" or "the Sublime," etc.

Of course, it may be argued that the religions of primitive races should not be so called, but should go by the name of "superstitions." But then we are faced with the question: "What is the difference, if any, between religion and superstition?"—an exceedingly pertinent question to which we shall return later. It is true that definition 17 allows for "false devotion," or in other words, superstition. But since no one holding a religion admits that his devotion is false, the definition is self-contradictory and must therefore, be ruled out.

Definition 10 is vitiated by the use of the word

"powers," which might apply to such things as gravity, electricity, and so forth. But if "powers superior to man" be taken as equivalent to "supernatural beings," then this definition has one element in common with the preceding nine and the first half of No. 11, namely, a belief in supernatural beings of some sort. And this element fits almost every religion, from those held by the most primitive to those held by the most cultured peoples. Unfortunately it does not fit one of the greatest, namely, Buddhism, and it is hardly applicable to another great religion, namely, Confucianism. For in neither of these religions in their pure forms is any belief in "supernatural" entities of any sort inherent; much less is there any belief in "supernatural beings." In their present degraded forms, however, the definition does hold good.

We should, therefore, substitute for the words "supernatural beings" some less specific term which will allow of the inclusion of both Buddhism and Confucianism. And we find this in that popular abstraction "the Unknown." So we finally arrive at the common denominator, the only meaning of the word "religion," which can be used in all cases without equivocation, and it is this: "A belief in the Unknown," and to this should be added the words: "leading to varieties of conduct based upon the supposed nature or demands of that which is believed in." For no religion is just pure belief divorced from behaviour.

Now to the Atheist, who does not believe in what he does not know or understand, the interest of this definition lies not so much in its accuracy or its universal applicability, as in the way it fits another less popular form of human credulity. For he is at once reminded of the pertinent question: "What is the difference, if any, between religion and superstition?"

To answer this question properly we must analyse the word "superstition" in the same way as we analysed the word "religion." Unfortunately the number of definitions at our disposal is very meagre. For it seems that there is much less confusion in the public mind as to what this word means, and the necessity for definition has not been felt to be so urgent. However, the few we have secured are sufficiently enlightening:—

- (1) Superstition is a senseless fear of the gods.
Cicero.
- (2) Superstition is godless religion.
Rev. Joseph Hall.
- (3) Superstition is an excessive reverence for, or fear of, that which is unknown or mysterious; hence, the attitude of mind of a person or persons whose beliefs are regarded as false; especially, a religious belief regarded as irrational or misleading; false religion—*Webster.*

The second of these definitions is clearly epigrammatic rather than descriptive; and the implication contained in it is also plainly due to the fact that its author is a protagonist of a godful religion. Apart from this, if "belief in a god" be admitted as a true definition of the word "religion," then "godless religion" must mean "godless belief in a god"—which is absurd. Similarly, if any belief which does not admit of a god is acknowledged to be a religion (such as Buddhism), then the definition is untrue. Or else—and this is really the logical upshot—the converse phrase "Religion is a godful superstition" must be true; and "religion" and "superstition" are synonymous.

With regard to the other two definitions little need be said. Both admit the belief in the unknown; while the latter definitely links religion and superstition together. Whether the fear or reverence is senseless or excessive is purely a matter of degree and varies with the individual. It is the belief which constitutes the invariable common factor.

In the true meanings of the words "religion" and "superstition," therefore, there is no fundamental difference whatsoever. But perhaps for the benefit of our religious friends it would be kinder to leave them with this one conclusive contrast—"If your religion is not my religion, then it is superstition." From the uncomfortable consequences of this distinction without a difference, however, the Atheist is fortunately delivered.

C. S. FRASER.

Note.—If it be maintained—as with some justice it might be—that Buddhism and Confucianism in their pure forms are really philosophies, or more simply codes of morality, because they do not admit of belief in supernatural beings, then the first definition of the word "religion" holds good. But this is not essentially different from the one adopted finally. For although the phrase "supernatural beings" is more specific than "the Unknown," the word "supernatural" necessarily implies that these "beings" are beyond natural knowledge, and are therefore part of "the Unknown."

A Brilliant Pioneer of Freethought

JOHN LOCKE's leading principle that probability forms man's main guide in life swayed all his philosophical speculations. He ever evinced reluctance to accept assertion on mere authority. The validity of every claim reposes upon evidence. When the evidence tendered in support of a statement proves inadequate the latter must be rejected or at best submitted to a reserved judgment. Utility is our real test in the practical concerns of life, and Locke's estimation of men was based on his appreciation of the services they rendered to their race.

Locke's friend and disciple, Anthony Collins, carried his preceptor's principles to more advanced conclusions. Collins was favoured with social and monetary advantages denied to his able contemporary John Toland. Born in 1676, Collins lived until 1729. He studied both at Eton and at Cambridge. A well-to-do country squire he held the position of justice of the peace and deputy Lieutenant in Middlesex and Essex. A man of sterling character, he was widely respected, and although his heretical opinions aroused a host of enemies his name was never sullied by innuendo or vilification. Indeed, his spotless reputation did much to make Deistic teachings fashionable in refined and cultured circles. As Locke testifies in one of his epistles: "Collins has an estate in the country, a library in town, and friends everywhere."

At this period Holland was probably the most tolerant European State, and several of Collins' works were published in that country. Collins paid his second visit to that enlightened land largely to escape the clamour occasioned in England by the publication of his *Discourse on Freethinking* in 1713. And it was in Holland that Collins published his inquiry into the prophecies, the English edition appearing later.

The liberating labours of Collins and the other leading Deists have been shamefully misrepresented. Leslie Stephen is regarded as an authority on the intellectual achievements of the eighteenth century, and as he was himself an avowed Agnostic, his pronouncements are commonly accepted. Collins is unduly depreciated by Stephen, although even he is constrained to acknowledge Anthony's services to the Freethought cause. Moreover, as Dr. Norman Torrey points out in his *Voltaire and the English Deists*: "Collins' attack on literal prophecy was admitted by Warburton to be the most plausible work ever published against Christianity." And even the relatively tolerant and enlightened Clarke "when driven to the wall by the ingenuity of Collins' argumentation, could resort to the strongest argument of the orthodox and

warn Collins against writing anything detrimental to the Holy Religion."

Collins was constitutionally a Rationalist. He was completely persuaded that by discrediting falsehood, truth grows in request. Consequently he was little impressed by the plea that when a superstition is overthrown something is essential to occupy its place. He seems to have anticipated Herbert Spencer in contending that the highest infidelity is the fear lest the truth be bad.

Ever earnestly striving to establish truth for her own sake Collins' pen was employed neither for honour nor for gold. In his *Essay concerning the Use of Reason in Propositions*, he demonstrates that man's judgment, resting on the recurrent perceptions of life, is the final authority in all matters secular and sacred. Orthodox and heterodox alike admit this. When men debate the question of Scriptural contradictions they by implication concede the power of reason in determining the truth. This proves, he claims, "the necessity of Reason to distinguish Falsehood from Truth in matters of Revelation in order to give all possible authority to that which can by any reason be supposed to be a Revelation."

Collins treated the doctrine of the Trinity with the same scorn that great Protestant divines have levelled at transubstantiation. When the solemn Samuel Clarke declared that humanity's religious nature placed man immeasurably above the beasts, Collins retorted that the lower creatures must therefore possess the advantage of relying on their natural faculties. He wonders in what useful sense theology is natural to mankind "when it is supposed to be contradictory to the perceptions of our faculties."

Like the later Thomas Huxley, Collins was a consummate debater. So successfully did he answer Clarke's angry criticisms of Dodwell, that Clarke dissimulated his choler under a cloak of supercilious disdain, and hinted at his assailant's incapacity and stupidity. Collins ironically remarked that since Clarke in his Boyle lectures had discoursed on the deity's existence, the public that had formerly taken his existence for granted now awaited a demonstration of this assumed truth.

In his justly celebrated *Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity*, Collins employs language well worth pondering even now when so much metaphysical trash masquerades as philosophy. Thus Collins: "That the Soul is acted upon by Matter is past doubt, tho' we know not the precise manner of the operation; which is not at all to be wondered at, since we are strangers to many Qualities of Matter and wholly in the dark as to the Substance of the Soul; Our most abstracted Conceptions can't furnish us with an affirmative Idea of Substance Immaterial, but our Inability to account for Multitudes of Effects from the known Qualities of Matter, is, I think, the sole Reason we impute them to anything else."

Collins' outstanding work, his *Discourse on Freethinking*, appeared in 1713. The term Freethinker originally coined by Sir Thomas More, and utilized in his *Utopia*, now became a recognized part of the language. The term "freethinking" was now regarded as synonymous with Deism. Collins' work, however, was deemed Atheistic and innumerable answers to its teachings were published. Among several celebrated writers who endeavoured to meet its arguments were Bentley and Swift. In the early stages of the excitement, so stormy was the discussion, and so bitter were the pious, that Collins prudently retired to Holland to avoid arrest and imprisonment. Yet Collins merely claimed the now universally conceded right of every man to think consistently and fearlessly on all subjects under the sun. Unless men think freely, he urged, no advance in science

is possible. The decline of the baleful belief in demonology and witchcraft is one only of the beneficent results of Freethinking. No theme is sufficiently sacred to secure exemption from the winnowing activities of thought. Indeed, free discussion and research form the main antidote to superstition.

In addition to his published writings Collins possessed several octavo manuscripts. Among these was his unpublished *Discourse upon the Miracles recorded in the Old and New Testaments*. Collins bequeathed his manuscripts to a trusted friend, who unfortunately parted with them to Mrs. Collins, the philosopher's widow, for the sum of fifty guineas.

Desmaizeaux, the friend in question, subsequently returned the money paid for the manuscripts, but failed in his attempt to get them back. It was reported a little later, that Collins' widow allowed these writings to pass into the possession of the Bishop of London, who saw to their safe custody. But whether they were destroyed or not is unknown. The loss is regrettable, but Thomas Woolston and other Freethought propagandists had now entered the field and were continuing the emancipating labours of their departed predecessors.

T. F. PALMER.

Why ?

ALTHOUGH Christianity is fast crumbling to decay, and church membership continues to slump, the clergy still manage to impress the average layman with awe, and a self-conscious feeling of inferiority. It is strange that people who have little or no use for religion continue to treat the clergy as a superior species of human creature. The secret is just this, while the average man makes his own valuation of those with whom he generally associates, in the case of the clergy, the clergyman's self-valuation is readily accepted. The result is, the clergy have succeeded in getting standards applied to themselves which are quite distinct from those generally used. In business, as neighbours, in the various forms of social intercourse, men have to earn and maintain a reputation of being a gentleman. The clergy are considered gentlemen by virtue of their calling. That real gentlemen are to be found among the clergy I do not deny. It is also true, that many who are far from being gentlemen have no difficulty in maintaining the position of a minister of the gospel, as well as obtaining promotion.

When the student in the professions has finished his training, he looks out for a berth, the Divinity student listens-in for a call from the Lord. The professional man receives a salary, the clergyman receives a stipend. An advance in the ordinary professions is a promotion. In the church, it is a call to a higher sphere of usefulness. In the formation of local committees, men with knowledge of, and interest in the object aimed at are invited to serve. If they accept, we are told they have kindly consented to act. But to give tone and prestige, a local cleric is humbly approached, and if he accepts, we are told the Rev. So and So has very graciously consented to serve on the committee. Why the difference in treatment? Why the common idea that a clergyman's support gives tone, and guarantees integrity? Why is it that when a clergyman visits a court of justice and pleads that the prisoner in the dock has been a member of his church for many years, the impression is different from that created by a local tradesman, did he attend and plead that he had served the prisoner for many years with fish, milk, or grocery? It is because the clergy are accepted at their own valuation. And of course it is a false valuation. At no time, whether in peace or war, have the clergy, as a body, stood out as worthy moral examples. Pulpit morals to-day are at a notoriously low level. Where Freethought is concerned, no Freethinker expects the clergy to be honest, and one might say the same where Christianity is concerned. And remember this, is not a modern development. There is perhaps no other section of society with such a black

moral record as that of the clergy. It is one of the outstanding features in the history of Christianity. And what is more, it is not an accidental feature. It was, and is an essential to the power and survival of the church. When we read of the rascality of the church in history, no one imagines this happened from sheer love of rascality. When in the fourth century the church introduced a maxim, that it was a virtue to lie and deceive in the interests of the church, it was not because the church preferred lying to truthfulness. It was a realization that if headway was to be made, lying and deception would have to be actively employed. And through the centuries of Christian history, lying and deceiving for the glory of God and Christianity, has been an easy and favourite, and widespread Christian method of serving the One above. When once lying, deceit, and dishonesty, are admitted as virtues, naturally the virtue spread to all departments of Christian activity. Hence Christian history bristles with frauds, forgeries and swindles. Fraudulent relics, fictitious history, forged writings, faked miracles, and fraudulent sepulchres of saints, is the illuminating testimony to Christian truth. In 1918 when the Russian Soviets took an inventory of the Alexander-Svirsky Monastery, it was discovered that the incorruptible body of Saint Alexander Svirsky, which had no doubt impressed thousands of Russians with the truth of their religion, was nothing but a wax effigy of the saint. Lecky, in his *History of European Morals*, tells of the lying legends which during the whole of the middle ages were deliberately palmed off as undoubted fact. The same writer in his *Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*, records the invention of tens of thousands of miracles for the purpose of stimulating belief in Christianity. Priests and monks wrote histories which were "Tissues of wildest fables, so grotesque, and at the same time so audacious, that they were the wonder of succeeding ages." In sex morals of the clergy, one has but to read Lea's *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy*, to become astounded at the ignorance, or, impudence of the clergy in daring to assail the moral character of other people. With such a history, with such a record, why in the name of commonsense, and common intelligence are the clergy as a body entitled to extra refined treatment, and commonly held to be morally superior to the ordinary run of decent men and women?

R. H. ROSETTI.

Precious Stones.

WHAT'S the best Birthday Stone? Let me make a suggestion,
 Lest the subject comes up for immediate mention!
 The old Washerwoman a Soap-stone most uses,
 And quickly the Builder his Corner-stone chooses.
 For Cooks there's the Pudding-stone, neat, nice, and handy.
 While for Grinders the Oil-stone comes next; and wild Andy
 Waves a Blood-stone aloft with his war-cry "Hooroo!"
 And of Boundary-stones Diplomats rave till all's blue.
 For Stokers the Fire-stone; and Astrologers find
 The Moon-stone most occult, when hidden behind
 The Meteor-stone, swift to its destiny speeding,
 An Astronomer's choice of Life's blind Force unheeding.
 A Boiler-stone pleases the Fireman; and what
 But a Wine-stone could satisfy Tom of the Pot?
 For Doctors the Gall-stone; while Chauffers, you know,
 On the Mile-stone their thanks and misgivings bestow.
 The Touch-stone for Goldsmiths, while a Paving-stone greets
 The Pedestrian's tread as he walks the hard streets.
 For Chandlers the Mill-stone; and a Pumice-stone should
 Teach the Druggist far more than a "birthday"-stone could.
 Comes next for the Alchemist that mighty unknown
 And age-long delusion the Philosopher's-stone.
 Last of all comes a Stone of which Gourmands all prate
 When a Feed by the fire adds a Stone to the Weight!

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

Acid Drops.

The Vicar of Weymouth, Rev. F. E. Corydon, has discovered that beach pyjamas are forbidden in the Bible, and therefore he is opposed to them. Deuteronomy says:—

The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all that do are an abomination unto the Lord.

So the Vicar calls upon all "openly and courageously" to drive out this evil. Yet there are people who think that the fool of the family is the one that takes up with parsonry is a generalization that does not apply! Mr. Corydon is not an uncommon type of parson even to-day, and was very common, once upon a time. Of course it is not always with beach pyjamas that they are concerned. Some of them are such dare devils that they will say they see nothing wrong in them. Then they take a courageous stand against eating ice-cream on Sunday, or burning the wrong kind of candles in church, or solemnly discussing whether a wafer can become real human flesh or not, or whether one should face East or West when asking Mumbo-Jumbo to send down enough moisture to make farmer Brown's grass grow. But the type is the same. And each one of them has a vote. And each one is counted as belonging to the cultured classes. And the country is in a glorious mess. And God looks down on his representatives and smiles approvingly. For when he has happened to have too-intelligent followers he has lost them sooner or later. But with the Corydons and the Winnington Ingrams he runs no risks. They are his for ever and ever, and so long as place, power, and pelf shall endure, Amen!

Scotland has become much more sober, according to the Report issued by the Scottish Royal Commission on Licensing. Public drunkenness is much less frequent. The commissioners attribute the change mainly to education, better laws, better housing, the higher price (as a result of taxation) of alcoholic liquor, and, perhaps most of all, to the greatly increased provision for games and the interest of the new generation in open-air pursuits. These explanations by persons in a position to investigate the matter thoroughly are convincing enough. But it would seem that there are certain people who would like to claim all the credit as due to their propaganda alone.

For instance, the *Methodist Recorder*, in criticizing a speech by a well-known brewer, and apparently referring to the state of sobriety in Great Britain generally, acknowledges that during the last fifty years a change for the better has taken place. But our contemporary asserts:—

The welcome result has been achieved by the persevering and self-denying efforts of courageous bands of teetotal workers moved by the love of God and man and appalled by the ravages of strong drink, by vigorous temperance campaigns carried out in the face of tireless and truculent opposition of "the trade," and by the earnest and systematic inculcation of temperance principles among the young . . .

The claim to have been solely responsible for the change may be highly flattering to the vanity of our godly "temperance" reformers, but it will be difficult to substantiate, in view of what the Scottish commission has said. The fact is that these reformers have stood for total abstinence and not temperance—a far different thing. They have not concerned themselves with disseminating good reasons for temperance. So that if there is now a more temperate use of alcoholic drink, the total abstaining propagandists can hardly claim that their propaganda has achieved the result we see to-day. Indeed, their intemperate advocacy has done some harm in certain directions. Their stupid attempts to make out that drinking a glass of beer is "sinful" or wicked have invested "booze" with a glamour to a certain type of intelligence, making it more attractive than it might be. Again, the impression given by many "temperance" tracts was that all poverty and misery was caused by drink. The falsity of such a notion led many who might

have been influenced by sound reason for real temperance to ignore such propaganda altogether.

Furthermore, the teetotal societies have done little or nothing—as teetotal societies—to improve education, make better laws, produce better housing conditions, provide greater facilities for wholesome hobbies and games and amusements, or arouse interest in open-air pursuits—all of which things we now know are very largely contributive to sobriety and real temperance. We may add that the case for temperance has, in large measure, failed to appeal to the ordinary man because it has so often been advocated by killjoys and Puritans, and it therefore became suspect.

Superstitions die hard. A reader of a daily paper harbours the quaint superstition that if clergymen were to visit all the schools periodically, there would be a reduction in crime in the future. The type of intelligence which believes that would not, we presume, be impressed by the fact that when the people and children of this country were most under the influence and instruction of the clergy, there was a great deal more crime committed. It has only been possible to close many of this country's prisons since religion has been largely ignored by the great majority. What we would prefer to suggest is that if rational instruction in regard to morality and ethics was given in the schools, instead of "Bible teaching," there might be a reduction of crime in the future. The kind of "moral instruction" now given, and based on fear of a Big Bogey in the skies, is of no use in developing and training a sound social conscience in the child. It merely teaches the child to do the right thing because of fear of the consequences of being punished for doing wrong. He often develops the type of mentality that abstains from wrong conduct only because he fears a policeman may discover the delinquency.

A pious contemporary thinks that a very hopeful sign of the times is the keen interest which is taken in religion by the general public. This interest, we are told, is such that it pays the *Daily Mail* to give up a large portion of its most important page to a series of articles by religious leaders on "Religion's Fight To-day." What a sign of hope! The *Mail* (and other newspapers) knows that a certain percentage of its readers are interested in religion in a negative sense—they doubt the truth of it. Naturally, catering for all these readers is a good move on the part of the newspapers. But one notices that despite all this journalistic religiosity, there are no signs of the churches doing better trade. We have said that large numbers of newspaper readers have an interest in religion in a negative sense. It is curious that some editor hasn't yet awoken to the fact that a few articles by a forthright champion of Atheism, examining the claims of religion, would greatly interest such readers. On the other hand, the fact may be appreciated, but the necessary courage is lacking.

A prison governor makes the suggestion that convicts should be made to earn the right to attend concerts and lectures given in jail. A suggestion we would make is that it would be an act of mercy to allow convicts, without working for it, the privilege of non-attendance at religious service, and of dispensing with the officious advice of chaplains and pious visitors. Of course, we may be told that most of the convicts like the services and welcome the attentions of the chaplain and pious visitors. In which case, there is nothing much more to be said, except that prisons are filled with Christians, not Atheists.

Life, says a writer, is a heterogeneous collection of irreconcilable phenomena. He must have been noting the irreconcilable doctrines and practices and beliefs of the various Christian Churches which claim—fantastically enough—that their religion came on earth to bring peace and brotherhood among men.

The *Methodist Times'* business-like interest in the pastime of "hiking" has the approval of a chapel parson of Tunbridge Wells. He issues a brotherly invitation to all Sunday "hikers" and other tourists to attend his services. This piece of altruism is worthy of the highest praise. But we rather fancy that our cordial friend has overlooked one thing. When people arrange to go rambling in the country all day on Sunday, they are on pleasure bent. This being the case, why should they spoil their pleasure by visiting a chapel?

When a writer in a Nonconformist journal (noted for Puritanism) exclaims "may we be saved from meddlers" and their "pestiferous interferences," we cannot help wondering whether he really reads the journal in which his essay appears. That journal specializes in meddling. It delights to meddle with cinemas, public houses, Sunday games, bathing costumes, (etc.), and would impose its narrow and stupid prohibitions and restrictions on almost everything that happens to give some pleasure or amusement to the ordinary human being.

Our contemporary, the *New Generation*, in a recent issue relates how Ireland has "diminished poverty" by "late marriage and emigration." The Irish Census of 1926 revealed the fact that the population of Ireland has declined in less than one hundred years by rather more than one half. 80 per cent of males, and 62 per cent of females of from twenty-five to thirty years of age are unmarried. But "late marriage and emigration" are not the only reasons for this remarkable state of affairs. This same Census shows that among the Irish working classes—overwhelmingly Catholic there has been no decrease since 1841 in the number of children raised by each married couple. It was a very moderate and friendly student of Irish affairs who said, some years ago, that "chastity in Ireland was not so much a virtue as a disease." Where birth control information is banned; where any "unblessed" union ranks with murder as a mortal sin; where the "chastity" of the nuns and the monks is held out as the ideal; where every child is taught that natural and healthy desires and functions are "sinful lusts of the flesh"; and where the most general marriage is both a "sacrament" and a sale (for most Irish brides, like most of the "brides of Christ," must have "dowries") it is surely gratuitous to talk about such improvement as has been made in the standard of living as being due to "late marriage and emigration." It is hard to think where youth, and all that youth means is suppressed in the interests of piety, or to "raise the standard of living," that all can be well. Students of the population question, to whom our contemporary appeals, will arrive at doubtful conclusions as to the significance of the Irish Census figures if they do not give due weight to that 93 per cent of Catholic citizens, and to what that means in terms of modern progress.

Captain Henry Harrison, in a book entitled, *Parnell Vindicated: The Lifting of the Veil*, and in which, according to the publisher's "Puff," this gentleman tells "the full story of one of the greatest love romances and political scandals of modern times," has ransacked all available records, including those of the Divorce Court, to achieve his purpose. What he omits is, we venture to affirm, a significant part of the story of Parnell's tragedy. He was the victim of a combination of Roman Catholic and dissenting piety, and of that religion established in this country to teach the superiority of our spiritual "pastors and masters." This book, born out of due time—for the real character of Parnell is not in doubt—is published at a time when in Great Britain the dissenters are vieing with the Irish priests in a concentrated attack on the liberties, recreation, and healthy pleasures of the people. Whatever the distinctions between Catholicism and Protestantism they have this in common—they fear knowledge, and the Committee Stage of the Sunday Performance Bill in England, and the activities of the Censor of the Irish Free State, are playing a pious duet to the tune of "thou shalt not."

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

H. S. BAYFORD.—Thanks. But you are mistaken about our "short vacation." We have had none yet, although we hope to get a brief holiday between now and mid-September.

T.L.—You are quite mistaken. We do not aim to get "converts" merely by pleasing readers. We aim at instructing, or if that word sounds too egotistical, say, putting a new point of view on old questions. If we can make Christians realize that there are points of view beside their own, and that these are worthy of consideration we shall have done no mean work.

C. MORRIS.—We know of no evidence that in any part of the world Christianity has in itself ever done any good to anyone—and even if it had there would still be the question of whether that good could not have been achieved in a better and a less expensive manner.

W. A. HARTE.—Thanks for information. We were informed the writer was a Catholic, but did not know whether the information was reliable or not.

H. NEIL.—We do not know of any English translation of Binet-Sanglé's work. It deserves to be translated. But an attack on Jesus appears to frighten most publishers.

C-DE-B.—It was Meredith, not Browning who wrote congratulating G. W. Foote on his work, and who forwarded a subscription to help. Meredith remained an admirer of the *Freethinker* to the end of his life. He knew good work when he saw it, and appreciated the reality of scholarship, rather than its parade.

G. H. TAYLOR.—Shall be glad to welcome Miss Wilde as a member. Hope to make the lady's acquaintance one of these days.

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

Sugar Plums.

Following Mr. Cohen's visit to Durham, Mr. J. T. Brighton held a very successful meeting there last week. There was a large audience, and the speaker had a respectful, and even sympathetic hearing. It will be remembered that Mr. Cohen went to Durham, in consequence of Superintendent Foster's letter to Mr. Brighton, telling him that he would not be allowed to speak again in the Market Place. The Superintendent had no power to issue such an order, and the fact of Mr. Brighton not being interfered with by the police may be taken as evidence that the Superintendent discovered that he had exceeded his powers. It is a serious thing for a police

official to threaten a man who is availing himself of his right to use a public place for a peaceful meeting, and it is hoped that nothing of the kind will be again attempted.

We see from the *Durham County Advertiser* that the Mayor of Durham has been giving a very effective reply to Mr. Cohen's recent lectures in Durham. Quite a brave man is the Mayor! He belongs to a type redolent of the pulpit, and delights in replying to one who is not present, but who remains quite silent when he is. We are not surprised that the Mayor's reply was effective. "For he himself has said it."

The *Acton Gazette* announces that Mr. Cohen will be lecturing in Acton in October, on "Socialism and Secularism." There is some mistake here. A little while ago the Secretary of the local I.L.P. wrote the N.S.S. Secretary that the Rector of Acton would be speaking to them in October on "Socialism and Christianity," and his society would like someone to speak to them on "Secularism and Socialism." He received a reply that one of our speakers would be sent to deal with the subject from the Secular point of view. But there was no promise that Mr. Cohen would come, nor has he the time during October to do so.

A few Freethinkers are keen on forming a Branch of the N.S.S. to serve the districts of Harrow, Wembley, Sudbury and Harlesden. Others in favour of the project are invited to write to Mr. P. Victor Morris, 43 Paxford Road, North Wembley, Middlesex, prior to the calling of a meeting to discuss preliminaries. These are districts where smug respectability is strongly entrenched, and where a live Branch of the Society can find a host of useful activities, so we hope the initiators of the proposal will receive an immediate response to their invitation.

The other week we published a letter from South Africa, in which the writer expressed a desire to form a Branch of the N.S.S., and asking sympathisers to communicate with him. The address of the writer was omitted. This is D. Walton, P.O. Box 864, Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia. We hope to hear that the letter evokes a good response.

We understand that a certain person has, in various towns, made approaches to N.S.S. speakers, and representing himself as a Freethought lecturer who has been doing some wonderful work, etc. We strongly advise all of the N.S.S. Branches to be on their guard in such matters, and to stand aloof until they have made enquiries of headquarters.

Mr. Whitehead has been holding some successful meetings in the Glasgow district, and writes that the questions asked have lately been of a higher order than is usual at out-door meetings. That is gratifying as showing that intelligent interest is being taken in the lectures.

Mr. Clayton has also been busy in his district—Burnley District—although he has been interfered with, as most of us have been, by the rain. Our English summer has about broken its own record this year, and rain plays the devil with open-air meetings. Neither a speaker nor an audience get very enthusiastic with a stream of cold water running down their neck. Revolutions very seldom occur in wet weather, and a fire-hose is about as good a disperser of a crowd as is a machine gun.

The test of truth is Reason, not Faith; for to the court of reason must be submitted even the claims of Truth.
Ambrose Bierce.

Faith is the effort to believe which our common sense tells us is not true.—*Elbert Hubbard.*

Religion and The Scientific Method.

THE story of how Robinson Crusoe, cast on an uninhabited island, gradually worked his way to comparative comfort is one of abiding charm. In our day a more wondrous and instructive history has been unfolded, telling how life has ascended from simplest to most complex forms, and how its highest product, man, the Crusoe of creation, has in a wild world of jungle, overrun by beasts, slowly won his way from the savage state, when his only implements were sticks and stones, shells, horns, and bones, to the triumphs of the printing press, the steam engine, and electricity.

But one theory of the past of humanity fits the facts. Man has sprung from a lower organism, and has gradually passed through stages which separate us more widely from our cave-dwelling and tree-climbing ancestors than the highest European is separated from the aboriginal Australian. Not that progress has been one continuous upward development. On the contrary, it has usually been circuitous. Not the finest but the fittest specimens survive. Man has had no divine instructor. He has slowly made his own way, and finds his best path after many blunderings in worse ones. It has been in fighting power that progress in the past has been most direct; for the simple reason that tribes with better weapons could make others take a diminished chance of life. Man's first weapons were "organ projections." His arms were lengthened and strengthened by some stick or stone found ready at hand. One easily traces the evolution from the simple stick to the perfect lance or club, from the rude stone to the polished celt, arrow head, lance tip, long sword, javelin, and battle axe, or from the stone missile to the latest projectiles. Long years passed before man, chipping his flints to procure fire, discovered the use of metals. The time difference between the stone arrow-head and the metal one, similar in shape, is vastly greater than that between the cross-bow and the modern rifle, yet in the form of our rifle we may trace its descent from the cross-bow, and the cross-bow we can see is derived from successive improvements on the bowed twig.

The principle evident in weapon development is true through the whole range of civilization. Those races with improved *morale*, with higher social institutions, as surely supersede the less developed as those with improved material forces. The evolution of man is the evolution of the humanities. In our religious beliefs, as in our arts and institutions, may be traced their descent from earlier and more savage forms. It is a long way from the animal's dread of another animal or the savage belief in a spirit supposed to reside in some ugly stone fetish to the conception of a supreme God superior to the universe. Real savages indeed do not have all the conceptions which go to make up the modern idea of God. Yet they possess its main germ in the belief in spirits, and the fundamental thought, that a power similar in some respects to man exists behind phenomena, is the same.

In the supreme domain of the mental and moral development of humanity the doctrine of evolution finds its most interesting and complete verification. The undesigned coincidence of independent testi-

mony, in all ages and nations, enables us to trace the course of men's faiths and institutions no less than of his arts or weapons. Yet, as in dreams the impressions of childhood continue to recur, so, in modern life, conceptions belonging to the childhood of the race are still urged upon us. In politics, in sociology and above all in religion, there are irrational elements, only to be explained as survivals from earlier forms. In the midst of what we call our civilization many relics of the mental and social condition of savagery and barbarism still remain. Until we know the past we shall not rightly understand the present nor take our best course towards the future. There are no more miracles in mental than in physical nature. Anthropology must take the place of the old theology which esteems the conjectures of the ancient savage as higher than the reasonings of the modern philosopher. It is conservative religion which keeps in check the workings of the modern mind, and therefore I have been largely guided in my selection of matter drawn from the vast field opened up by archaeological research by reference to the survivals of superstition seen around us. In the study of savage nations, isolated from the fierce but elevating influence of conflict with higher races, and in the records of early man, are to be found the real but forgotten "Foundations of Belief" the "Unseen Foundations of Society."

Partisans of the theory that savages are the degraded representatives of civilized races are now for the most part confined to professors of religion. They start with the assumption of a primitive revelation—which left man without such essentials to decency as soap and a comb. Unlike the evolutionists, they have no basis of facts. They are unable to explain why the alleged degeneracy has always taken similar forms in the most remote parts of the earth, and why these same forms are everywhere found among the oldest parts of civilized religion, ritual, myth, and mystery. M. Darmesteter justly remarks: "If savages do not represent religion in its germ, if they do not exemplify that vague and indefinite thing conventionally styled 'primitive religion,' at least they represent a stage through which all religions have passed. The proof is that a very little research into civilized religions discovers a most striking similarity between the most essential elements of the civilized and the non-historic creeds." The lowest savage tribes appear in somewhat similar conditions to those discoverable in geological records concerning early man; those in a barbarous stage are found to be represented in the earliest histories, while the higher civilizations of to-day possess some important features, such as rapid intercommunication, utterly unknown to the past.

While the general principles of evolution are accepted by competent judges there is still a timidity in carrying them out to their legitimate conclusions. Even evolutionists often fail to release themselves from the old tendencies and antiquated beliefs, and lack the courage and resolution to apply to the higher phenomena the methods found successful when dealing with lower forms. Preachers, who seek to reconcile the new truths to the old myths, still occupy the ground to the exclusion of teachers who explode by explaining their superstitions. When the curators of the Natural History Galleries of the British Museum at South Kensington arranged cases to illustrate the evolution of organs and their adap-

tion to their environment, an outcry was made that they were not there to teach Darwinism. The sufficient answer was that objects if arranged at all should be arranged so as to throw the most light on themselves. But this simple principle which has triumphed in biology has yet to be fully extended to sociology and religion. A naturalist holding the creation hypothesis would be sure to classify his specimens differently from one who accepts evolution. What to the one appears rudimentary or subsidiary may to the other have the utmost importance. So it is in dealing with the phenomena of human nature and society. Evolution is not Creation. He who holds to the latter theory is bound to envisage things from a different point of view, and allow for the possibility of miraculous intervention at every step, while the task of the evolutionist is merely to trace the most complex organisms back to their simple cells.

If we look for homogeneity among the diversity of human institutions and beliefs we must seek for it not in complex but in the most rudimentary forms. We must not simply study the anatomy of faith and custom but also its embryology. It is not sufficient to observe and classify the phenomena around us; it is necessary to trace their antecedents in the remote past. The dynamics of society are even more important than its statics, and though the record of the past may be and is still very imperfect, yet that which is known of human evolution is of profound interest, and contains lessons for human welfare that we cannot afford to ignore.

It is time for the evolutionist to speak with confidence as to his method, if with diffidence as to its results. A cripple on the right path will reach his end more surely than a racer on a false track. Belief in creation implies a fall, and is, indeed, a doctrine of despair. Belief in growth is an inspiration to endeavour. When it is realized that every art, science, custom and religion: every instrument we use, every word we speak, every sentiment we feel, can be traced to ruder and simpler forms, men, learning the laws by which they have become what they are, will take increased advantage of them. Evolution, hitherto blind or dim-sighted, become fully self-conscious, clear-seeing, will be a new guide to human life and human duty. They read amiss the lessons of all the past who deem the earth is ever to be the scrambling ground for individual benefit. Man is but a corpuscle in the higher organism of humanity in which truly he lives, moves, and has his being. Those who see that every advance is brought about by division of labour for common benefit; that man is indeed "the heir of all the ages" and owes what of worth he possesses to the toil, thoughts, and sufferings of those who have gone before; that we live by and should therefore live for others; will be foremost in ascertaining and maintaining the conditions implied in harmonious social life. They will be the foremost too, in setting aside those faiths and formulas no longer adapted to progressive humanity, assured that the race whose ideas and institutions most conduce to general well-being, will find these ideas and institutions slowly but surely spread, and like a superior species of organism, supplant and supersede inferior forms.

The true history of our race, the real Bible of humanity has yet to be written. It no more begins

with Adam than with Cadmus or William the Conqueror. The site of Troy was peopled by a race preceding the Trojan, but Homer knew not this buried city and no song celebrates its hidden wonders. At the time assigned to Adam there were civilized arts in Egypt and Babylonia which must have taken thousands of years to develop from savage forms; and those who know the simple instruments of stone, bone, horn, wood, and clay of the savage can appreciate the length of time necessary for their acquisition and to make his hand skilled in their use, so unlike the paw of the highest apes. *Natura non facit saltum*. Her processes are long drawn out and inexorable. Every page of human history, nay every atom of the moist red earth has verily been drenched in blood. The relics of the past are around us in the fallen and degraded. The brutal criminal, the idiot, are but reversion to earlier types unfitted for their present environment. It is science and science alone that can deal with the survival of the unfit, and it will do so in a spirit of humanity which will make civilizations of the past, based on slavery and restraint, appear but as pitiable barbarity. When the whole long drama of the education of our race is unfolded there will be no room for anger, indignation, or disgust. All will be absolved in boundless pity and universal love. *Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*.

The anthropologist must first of all recognize man as the animal, inheriting the body, instincts and passions of the brute. He does not end, but he does begin, there, and those who fail to front the fact are bound to go astray. If this view compels us to look backward on the past with humility, it enables us to look forward to the future with hope. And to the student of his kind, knowing the lowly origin of its highest achievements, there is no longer anything common or unclean. If he does not endorse the Hindu saying, *Tat twam asi*, he will at least take as his motto that of the Pagan Terence, *Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto*.

It may be questioned why I, who recognize that the superstitions of the past have served their purpose, am yet so decidedly anti-Christian. I answer that in my judgment Christianity has served its purpose, and the majority of educated persons have outgrown its real teachings. It is now mainly an organized hypocrisy, and to enforce its dogmas on the minds of little children, on the false pretence of education, and endow them in a State Church, is an iniquity an honest man should set his face against.

It is just because all the illegitimate forces of authority are used to uphold traditional religion that I maintain and exercise the right of criticizing the pretensions of those who seek to keep out the sunshine to give the more effect to their own rushlights, and if I stood alone in England I should desire to be remembered as one who made no pretence to the name of Christian and rejected its scheme of salvation.

(Late) J. M. WHEELER.

Freethinkers should make the Sabbath a day of mirth and music, a day to spend with wife and child, a day of games, of books and dreams, a day to put fresh flowers above our sleeping dead, a day of memory and hope, of love and rest.—*Ingersoll*.

What man don't know is what man should find out.
L. K. Washburne.

Old Jamaica.

I AM acquainted with an ancient mariner, who in his youth and prime sailed many distant seas, including those that flow and ebb about the West Indies. He tells me that in the latter region he encountered many interesting personalities among the natives. One, who had a gift of entertaining conversation, which my friend frequently enjoyed, would point to the sun shining in an unclouded sky and say: "Him, 'Old Jamaica,' my God. He grow my cane, my flowers, my fruit, my tabac; he give me light, he warm my body; when he go away, me sleep till he come back. *I see my God.* Where you see yours?"

This ancient mariner who has a well-stored memory, keen intelligence and a pretty wit, has adopted the playful habit when I meet him taking his constitutional, of referring to the Sun as "Old Jamaica" too. He will say, if it is dull and cloudy: "Hallo, how goes it? Not much show of Old Jamaica to-day!" Or if it is a bright and cloudless sky: "Old Jamaica is doing himself proud this morning!"

A very common saying among British people is that many of us do not value our blessings. And certainly it seems we do not value as we ought to do such sunshine as is available to us. Housewives, factory and shop workers, miners and school children are cooped up in prisons while "Old Jamaica" is putting forth his most glorious health-giving beams! We are a queer lot! We have no proper sense or idea of distribution of time, wealth or population. The mania to everlastingly produce, produce, produce, literally blinds us to the glories of nature, and especially to the warm invitation of "Old Jamaica" to disport ourselves in his vivacious company.

In most occupations the rigid hours of work remain the same winter and summer. It is utter folly. In Winter we ought to work the more—in Summer the less. Thus in Winter suitable hours for work would be 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.—for sleep, 12 midnight to 8 a.m., leaving the other 8 hours for leisure devoted to recreation, play or amusement. In summer we could do all that was necessary to be done by working from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sleep would occupy from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m., leaving the balance of 10 hours for leisure to be devoted to the most health-giving methods of recreation for both body and mind; *we all that time seeking as much as we could the genial companionship of "Old Jamaica."*

Yet in this respect we are doing rather better than we did. The sands of our seaside resorts testify to this: so do our hikers and bikers and sunbathers. Old Sol is coming into his own again; and maybe scientists can discover some means of rolling the clouds away and letting us have more of his glorious countenance in the good old summer time.

There is something charming and naive in the theism of the simple West Indian as stated to my ancient mariner friend with such unsophisticated and clear directness. Chummy, warmhearted, friendly, all-embracing, unquestioning, unselfish, adorable "Old Jamaica"! "He grow my cane, my flowers, my fruit, my tabac; he give me light; he warm my body . . . *I see my God.* Where you see yours?"

Thousands of years before the Christian Era civilized and loving and happy men and women in Eastern lands worshipped the same God as this West Indian, who declared his "simple faith" to my ancient mariner. But they, like him, saw much of their God for prolonged periods. Is it that the theism of the North Temperate Zone is suffused with the greyness of the mists, with the blackness of the heavy clouds that for so long hide "Old Jamaica" from our weary eyes? And is it because of this that

our blood becomes chilled, and that we are immersed in artificial schemes that clutter up our minds and atrophy our feelings? So that even when "Old Jamaica" does for a space throw the effulgence of his rays upon us, we are irresponsive and cynical, and refuse to be drawn out of our burrows? Oh, this diabolical self-centredness! Oh for the wide expanses; the sun-kissed ocean; the limitless azure sky; the sense of the universal kinship of Humanity! Good "Old Jamaica"!

IGNOTUS.

On the Sanctity of Saint Simeon Stylites.

THE saints are the star turns in the theatre of religion. They top the bill. New items are constantly being added to the programme, but, as the show has branches all over the world, it is not embarrassed by the number of the stars, though with these stars like some other luminaries we have heard of, "one star differeth from another star in glory." Alban Butler, the next best known authority on the *Lives of the Saints* after the Bollandists, died in 1773.

It has been left to a learned Jesuit, Father Thurston, S.J., to add to what he calls the "Church's Roll of Honour," all the additions needed to bring the list up to date; and so, "revised and copiously supplemented" by the rev. gentleman aforesaid, we have the *Lives of the Saints** in a volume for each month of the year, each volume containing all the "birthdays" of the sainted ladies and gentlemen which occur from day to day throughout the year. "Many new names" are admitted, but the editor confesses to having treated Butler's original text "with scant respect." That author, it seems, "while he wrote in English often thought in French," and hence "may jar upon the modern ear." This book, we are told, "is not intended for scholars, but for the pious. "Curiosity or vanity" (which here means intelligence) "stifle all affections of piety."

As for the purpose of this article one saint is much the same as another, we have taken one from the first volume, and from the early pages thereof, namely St. Simeon Stylites, who is celebrated on January 5. This paragon of sanctity, and the life he led, shall be summarized, if not in Father Thurston's words, at least without doing violence to them and their plain meaning. Simeon was born A.D. 459, the son of a poor shepherd in Cilicia. At thirteen he was "much moved" by "hearing the Beatitudes read in church," particularly "blessed are they that mourn; blessed are the clean in heart."

After being moved he had a long nap, and a vision which led him to "repair to a monastery near at hand." He lay prostrate at the gate for several days "without eating or drinking." He was at length admitted, and became a novice. "Though still no more than a boy," he "practised all the austerities of the house," and went on doing so for two years. Then he "removed to another monastery at Helindorus and much increased his mortifications." Here he had only one meal a week—on Sunday. Being commanded by the Superior to "moderate his rigours" he increased, but "concealed" them. Thus: Judging that the tough rope of the well, made of twisted palm leaves, was a proper instrument of penance, he tied it close about his naked body, where it remained, unknown both to the community and the Superior, till such time as it having eaten into his flesh, an ulcer was formed which betrayed him by its stench. Three days successively his clothes, which clung to it, had to be softened with liquids to disengage them with such pain, that he lay for some time as dead. For this he was dismissed the monastery.

Next Simeon "repairs" to a hermitage at the foot of a Mountain, Tejnassin. "After the example of Christ" he here "went without food for forty days and forty nights," after which he was found "stretched out

* *The Lives of the Saints*, 12 Vols. Burns and Oates & Washbourne.

the ground," and "almost without signs of life." But a priest came along and moistened his lips, gave him the sacrament, and he revived, and, what is more remarkable, kept Lent in this fashion during the remainder of his life." After three years at the hermitage, the saint removed to the top of the mountain, where he "made for himself an enclosure," and "fastened his right leg to a rock with a great iron chain." At this visitors "began to throng" up the mountain, and, to get away from them the saint started that disgusting and abnormal form of existence which has given him his peculiar notoriety. We will let Father Thurston describe this himself.

"In A.D. 423 he erected a pillar six cubits high, and on it dwelt for years; on a second, twelve cubits high, he lived for three years; on a third, twenty-two cubits high, ten years; and on a fourth, forty cubits high, built for him by the people, he spent the last twenty years of his life. Thus he lived thirty-seven years on pillars, and was called Stylites, from the Greek *Stylos*, which signifies a pillar."

"His pillar," continues his biographer, "did not exceed six feet in diameter on the top, which made it difficult for him to lie extended on it; neither would he allow a seat. He only stooped or leaned to take a little rest; and often in the day bowed his body in prayer. A devout visitor reckoned 1244 such profound reverences were made by him at one time. He made exhortations to the people daily. His garments were the skins of beasts, and he wore an iron collar about his neck. He never suffered any woman to come within the enclosure where his pillar stood. . . . He long concealed a horrible ulcer in his foot swarming with magots . . . In 528 according to Cosmos, on Wednesday, September 2, this incomparable pertinent, bowing on his pillar, as if intent in prayer, gave up the ghost in his sixty-ninth year of his age. "These facts," says Father Thurston, "are vouched for by the best historical evidence," and "the extraordinary manner of life which this saint led is proof of the fervour with which he sought detachment from creatures and union with God. The perfect accomplishment of the Divine will was the sole object of his desire." Comment would be superfluous, except to say that if this is "sanctity," and was the result of "doing the will of God" in an unusually thorough degree, the less saintly any man or woman is to-day, and the less they try to do God's will, the more likely they are to be regarded as suitable persons to mix with by their neighbours.

A.H.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."
CATHOLIC SUPERSTITIONS.

SIR,—After reading Mr. Rees' reply to Mr. Fraser's letter, may I, an ex-Papist, be permitted to state what I believed conscientiously, in those days, when I was entangled in the complicated net of Popish Superstition. I believed that certain images of Madonna winked, as in the case of the winking Madonna of Rimini, who is said to have winked a few years ago. I believed in bleeding crucifixes; in images that nodded their heads, shed tears, spoke to other images and to passers by, and that they possessed miraculous powers. I believed that St. Anthony preached to fishes, and St. Francis preached to birds, that, if I wore the scapular of Mount Carmel, that the Holy Virgin would remove me from purgatory to heaven on the first Saturday after my death. I believed as good Catholics, and Mr. Rees still believes, that Purgatory is a vast field of fire, where Roman Catholics pass through a period of probation before going to heaven. In this place of suffering all Romanists will be roasted by fire for an indefinite time. Even the most holy person, it is said seldom escapes from the flames.

If I eat meat on Friday, knowingly and died without confessing to a priest, I get no chance to go to the above place, as it would be a sin. I would have had no choice but go down to hell.

I learned later in boyhood that I was under no obliga-

tion to believe in most things, unless they were doctrines or practices which every Catholic is bound to believe under the pain of mortal sin. I was free to believe or not in the so-called miracles of Lourdes; but I could not doubt the resurrection of Christ, in the same way I doubted the resurrection of pagan gods, who have come down to earth at various times, and at the same time call myself a Catholic. Students of Comparative religion know about the hells, heavens and purgatories of pagan religions.

It is surprising that in spite of twentieth century's science, and the forward march of civilization that many Papists believe in such rubbish which will shock even cannibals. I have now escaped from the darkness of superstition, and I hope that mankind will not go back to the cave from which it emerged.

H. ANTHONY.

FREETHOUGHT AND FACTS.

SIR,—The name of Freethinker is to me the highest which a man can aspire to deserve, and there can be few of us who do not frequently fall short of the ideal Freethought that is free from the chains of false premises and faulty logic.

Mr. Seyd admits to arguing from false premises in his original letter, and I would now ask him to consider the logic whereby he now turns my statement that a Freethinker does not dislike facts, but makes the best of them, into an argument for liking Cancer. Obviously, my remarks applied to the class of facts to which Mr. Seyd referred when he wrote questioning the value of Freethought. The particular fact of cancer is in a different class from the general and inescapable fact of ultimate human extinction; the mental attitude I praised in relation to the latter fact cannot be inferred to have my approval when applied to the former.

When I or Mr. Seyd argue in the manner of his first letter, and the paragraph of his second one, in which he attempts to score a debating point, we temporarily fall short of Freethinking; and our best friend is the one who does not hesitate to get us on the raw. That is what my suggestion that Mr. Seyd was not a Freethinker appears to have done to him. His retort that he *is*, rather negatives his original contention that Freethought was not a cause capable of arousing him to any real enthusiasm, and I congratulate him on this evidence that he is that much further forward on the journey that will end in his becoming a complete Freethinker.

P. VICTOR MORRIS.

Obituary.

MISS ALICE BAKER.

THE death of Miss Alice Baker removes the last representative of a family that has played a notable part in Birmingham Freethought. Her father, Daniel Baker, who died about thirty-five years ago, was one of the old stalwarts of the Freethought movement, a staunch follower of Bradlaugh, and who gave his time, his energy and money to the promotion of Secularism in Birmingham. He was the principal supporter of the old Baskerville hall, and for some years the late Charles Watts was there as the resident lecturer. His daughter, while not so active as was her father, still gave the movement her constant support, and until failing health prevented a regular attendant at the principle meetings. On the occasion of our last visit to Birmingham we went, at her invitation to see her, and found her intelligence in the cause as ever, and although bedridden, taking a keen and intelligent interest in the work that was going on. We promised to see her when we next visited the City, and with a smile, she expressed a doubt whether she would last as long. Her calm expectation of approaching death was fulfilled by her death on August 7. It was the last glimpse we had of a brave and a good woman. Her cremation took place at the Perry Barr Crematorium, on August 11, and Mr. A. D. McLaren conducted a Secular Service before a large number of Birmingham Freethinkers, and friends.—C.C.

MR. JOSEPH CROMPTON.

ON Wednesday, August 12, at 3 p.m., a Secular ceremony took place at the Manchester Crematorium arising out of the death of Mr. Joseph Crompton, of Openshaw, Manchester. Deceased had attained the age of seventy-nine, and passed away in his sleep on August 8.

Mr. F. E. Monks, who conducted the ceremony, paid a tribute to Mr. Crompton's memory. A man of high character and sound principles, he was a Freethinker of long standing, and had given unswerving loyalty to the secular movement. Being able to look back upon the Freethought movement for half a century, he was able to view it in perspective and was often reminiscent of the days of Bradlaugh's struggle. He had continually supported the movement through the period of G. W. Foote's Presidency, right down to the present day, when he was an ardent supporter of the work done by the present editor of the *Freethinker*.

Besides relatives of the deceased the President of the Manchester Branch and other members were present, and the full hall at the Crematorium was in itself sufficient testimony to the respect in which he was held.

In the passing of Mr. Crompton, Manchester friends have lost a valued and respected colleague and to Mrs. Crompton we now endorse our verbal messages of sorrow in her loss.—H.I.B.

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LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. H. S. Wishart—"Savages, Christians and Humbug."

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrolds Road, North End Road): Saturday, at 7.30, Mr. F. Day and Mr. F. Bryant. *Freethinker* and other literature on sale.

FINSBURY PARK N.S.S.—11.15, Mrs. E. Grout—"Questions for Christians."

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.

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

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, Sunday, at 7.15, Mr. F. Bryant; Wednesday, August 26, at Rushcroft Road, near Brixton Town Hall, at 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury; Friday, August 28, at Liverpool Street, Camberwell Gate, at 8.0, Mr. C. Tuson.

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 HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (outside Technical College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. L. Ebury—A Lecture.

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

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S.—Saturday, at 8.0, opposite the Open Market, inside the Level. Sunday, at 3.30, the Level, speakers, Messrs. Jackson, Legge, Keys, G. de Lacey and Bryne.

BOLTON BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. G. Whitehead will speak on the Town Hall Steps, Bolton from Saturday, August 22 to Saturday, August 29, at 7.30 each evening. Sunday, August 30, at Blackburn, at 3.0 and 7.0.

PADIHAM (Recreation Ground).—Sunday, August 23, at 7.30—Mr. J. Clayton.

BURNLEY MARKET.—Sunday, August 23, at 3.15—Mr. J. Clayton.

DURHAM (Market Place).—Tuesday, August 25, at 8.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.—A meeting of Executive and Members will be held in City Hall, Albion Street, on August 23, at 3.30 p.m.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S.—Ramble from Helensburgh. Train from Queen Street, at 11.22 a.m. Meet at 11.0. Members and Friends invited.

HARLE SYKE.—Monday, August 24, at 7.30—Mr. J. Clayton.

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.

NELSON (Chapel Street).—Wednesday, August 26, at 8.0—Mr. J. Clayton.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S.—Bigg Market, Sunday, August 23, at 7.30, R. Atkinson—A Lecture.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Bigg Market).—Wednesday, August 26, at 8.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

PAISLEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Bakers Hall, 5 Forbes Place): Monthly Branch Meeting on Wednesday, August 26, at 7.30. All members are requested to attend.

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Church Street)—Saturday, August 29, at 6.30, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND (near Boilermakers' Hall).—Sunday, August 23, at 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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SECULARISM teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

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