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Letters to the Editor, etc.

Views and Opinions.

God and the Weather.

CLEARLY it is time that something was done about it. We have had one of the worst summers I remember. The rainfall has been abnormal, and everything is going to the very devil—only figuratively, because, as a matter of fact, if Christianity be correct, the devil and his angels would welcome the rain that most of us are swearing at. Hell is the only place where there is a perpetual shortage of water. Hell gets less than is required, and we get more than we can do with. That is a fair sample of the way in which a gracious and all-wise providence manages things. At present we have the farmers of the country nearly ruined with the perpetual rain, roads are rendered impassible, and those who depend for their living on a sea-side holiday influx are at their wits end what to do. In China it is even worse, for there the floods caused by the rain are so great that many thousands have lost their lives. Of course the Chinese are not Christians, and so in this part of the world good believers may excuse Providence not bothering about so many heathen. But in England, the country to which, if we are to listen to some of our religious advisers, God has committed the cause of civilization, one would really have expected something better. If God does not look after England, what will he look after? It is really time something was done.

* * *

Bombarding God.

I find I am not alone in this opinion. In the *Times* for August 20, the Rev. A. R. Tucker, rector of Leasingham, Lincs., writes:—

Owing to the abnormal rainfall this summer the present situation in agriculture is extremely gloomy. May I, living as I do in the heart of agriculture, on behalf of a harassed agricultural population appeal for the "Prayer for fine weather" to be used in all

places of worship at all services during the coming weeks of harvest.

One thing I am rather puzzled about in this letter is why Mr. Tucker should ask for the prayer for fine weather to be said in all churches and at all services? Why cannot Mr. Tucker undertake the job alone? Surely if he calls the Lord's attention to the way in which people are being flooded out, and the way in which crops are being ruined, that ought to be enough. Or is Mr. Tucker afraid that the Lord will not take his word for it? If that is the case he may freely give the address of the editor of the *Freethinker*, who will answer for it that in this respect at least his servant Tucker is not a liar. If a man's house is on fire one does not need to go round calling upon all the district to inform the fire brigade. A single call is enough, and the brigade turns out to do its duty. And why at all services as well as at all Churches? It looks like we must not merely bombard the Lord with a series of mass meetings to inform him of what he ought to know already, but we must go on holding these mass meetings until the weather undergoes an improvement. I think there is a text somewhere which protests against attempting to take the kingdom of heaven with force. Commonsense would imply that the warning stands equally well against attempting to convince God Almighty by means of a mass meeting.

* * *

A Forgetful Deity.

The prayer for fine weather is number two in the prayer book, and illustrates the uncertainty of things when one is dealing with God Almighty. The first one is asking for moderate rain. The second is a gentle reminder to the Lord in seasons such as the present. It reminds him that he did once upon a time send enough rain to "drown the world," but recalls the promise that he would never do it again, and therefore as a man of his word, or a God of his word, he is asked to send such weather as will enable us to receive the fruits of the earth in due season. Both these prayers are curious, as they seem to indicate that in the matter of rain God is inclined to be either parsimonious or extravagant. He either forgets the rain, or if he is reminded about it he becomes, as one of the characters in "Alf's Button" remarks, "too bloomin' wholesale." It is evidently ill-work jogging God's mind about the weather.

But the appeal to God to stop the rain, implies that he sends the rain, and that he is therefore responsible for the swamping conditions that obtain, and for the ruined crops and spoiled trade. Does the rector of Leasingham really believe this? Do the Church of England clergy really believe this? If they do, what is the value of the plea that prayer must not be expected to work a physical miracle, but is of psychological value because it strengthens a man's mind to face the ordeals of life when he feels he is in touch

with something greater than himself? In the light of that apology the prayers for fine weather and wet weather are so many pieces of elaborate humbug. If the clergy really believe that the prayers of a united people will bring fine weather in place of rain, or *vice versa*, then their expressed belief that prayer has a psychological value only is an exposed lie. Besides, a prayer for rain has not the usual excuse of "Not my will but Thy will be done." It was God's will to half drown the country and ruin agriculture. If he controls the rain the fault lies with him, the responsibility is his. Praying to him is a left-handed way of reminding him that his conduct has not come up to expectations. Among primitive peoples when the tribal deity does not provide rain he stands some risk of being deposed in favour of another God who pays more attention to his business. But the Christian is not nearly so manly in his religion. If the weather is good he thanks God for sending it. If it is bad he still thanks him. And in a few weeks we shall be having harvest thanksgivings all over the country, when Christians will thank God for the harvest he has not given, with never a thought as to the sarcasm implied in their thanks. They must trust to God being destitute of a sense of humour.

Man and his Past.

In the days when both Gods and priests were supposed to do something to justify their existence, it was the function of the medicine-man to induce the rain-god to send rain when and where it was wanted. To primitive people, who live mainly from hand to mouth, the rain-maker is a very important individual. Indeed, a great many religious customs have to do with fertility of one kind or another, with the growth of "the fruits of the earth," or the increase of cattle, or even the production of children. These things were under the control of the Gods and the people stood the medicine-man. Until very recent times these functions were still active. That is why with all the established religious bodies we have prayers for rain, or for fine weather, for an increase of cattle, or for children. The prayer book, the Bible, the Westminster Confession, all these old documents are illustrative and informative to those who know how to read them; but the only ones who truly understand them are those who no longer believe in them. They are as full of information as to primitive modes of thought as vestigial organs are of forms of life.

But the Gods are robbed of their powers, one after another. The production of rain is no longer a mysterious or a miraculous affair. Long ago scientists fathomed its mode of production, and to-day even the wireless sends out night by night a forecast of what kind of weather we are about to get, and never acknowledges God with a "By your leave." When cattle are stricken with disease, science no longer sees a murrain sent by God, but calmly diagnoses its nature, and a government official issues a "stand still" order until the disease has been stopped—and not by prayer. No one with any claim to educated intelligence really believes that prayers have any effect on the weather. Insurance societies, keen to anything that affects their business, will insure anyone against rain, but they make no difference whatever in the premiums in the case of anyone who offers to say prayers for fine weather. I was for some years on the committee of a County Cricket Club. There was also a parson on the committee, but hard up as the club often was, I never heard him suggest, when the question of insuring a match against rain came forward, that the club might save money by his praying instead of insuring.

But of one thing I am sure. If the rector's advice

is taken, and prayers for fine weather are offered in all the churches, and if we have patience, an answer to those prayers will come. The rain will cease, and the sun will shine. It will be as clear a case of answer to prayer as anything that the history of religion has to offer. Of course, that will not save the crops this year, but the Christian is a very tolerant animal, and he will thank God whether he has anything to thank him for or not, and praise him for his wisdom, even while he is proving by his conduct that God might arrange things in a much more satisfactory manner. A god who really managed the rain should be able to do his work properly without being advised by a number of his followers as to when he ought to send rain and when he should stop. And a people who have any real claim to be considered scientifically minded ought to be above using formulæ that find their justification only in the abysmal ignorance of primitive humanity.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A Plea for Paine.

"The world is my country, and to do good my religion."—Thomas Paine.

"Without fears, without desires, without ceremonies, he has used sheer reason, and played the philosopher."—Voltaire on Confucius.

WRITERS boast of the glories of a "fifth edition," but not one in ten thousand achieve uninterrupted sales for over a century. Yet this truly amazing thing has happened to Thomas Paine, the despised Freethinker, who, while alive was treated like a leper, and whose books were attempted to be destroyed time after time by his pious and powerful opponents. These works were so much in advance of his own generation that to-day, a hundred years later, they are still used as text-books by reformers.

Paine's fame is quite secure, for he has written his name too deep on history's page for it to be erased. Nor is this to be wondered at, for in a generation of revolution, of brave men and women, he was one of the boldest and noblest. A veritable Don Quixote, few wrongs found him indifferent. He used his pen of fire, not only for the democracy which might reward him, but for animals and slaves who could not. Poverty never left him, yet he made fortunes, and gave them to the causes that he loved. In the dark days of Georgian England *The Rights of Man* was a brave book for any man to write; but *The Age of Reason* was the bravest book ever written, for it challenged the entire priesthood of Christendom to a duel to the death. Not only was the author threatened with penal servitude in this world, and damnation in a subsequent existence, but scores of men and women were actually fined and imprisoned for selling so thunderous an engine of revolt.

Paine himself incurred the odium theologian than which there is no enmity so venomous and so unscrupulous. He was lied and libelled about to such an extent that his very name was threatened with immortality of infamy. Even so urbane a critic as Augustine Birrell, in his *Self-Selected Essays*, dubs Paine a "coarse writer without refinement of nature," and makes fun of the *Age of Reason*. Birrell was only "tickling the ears of the groundlings," it was an amazing criticism from a man who had gone out of his way to praise the robust William Hazlitt, and who has defended old Sam Johnson's very vigorous dialectics.

Another of Birrell's objections to Paine was that he was not a teetotaler, although he lived in an age of hard drinking. Gibbon, indeed, described the reverend dons of Oxford University as being "sunk

in prejudice and port," and Paine's numerous activities clearly absolve him from any really serious accusations of debauched living. In a case of this kind critics would do well to remember a story told of President Lincoln when some Puritan busybodies reported to him that General Grant was intemperate. "Find out what he drinks," said Lincoln, "and send some to the other generals."

It cannot be too often emphasised that Thomas Paine was not a mere scribbler, but a really notable writer. The proof is that his written words roused men for generations like trumpets that sing to battle. It was the live pen of Paine, no less than the swords of Lafayette and Washington, that made the great Republic of the West a possibility. Paine's hand was the first to trace the stirring words: "The United States of America." It is idle to pretend that Paine's works lack ordinary graces of imagery and metaphor." Paine's masterpieces are still an inspiration. "Where liberty is, there is my country," said Benjamin Franklin, and Paine's magnificent answer was, "Where liberty is not, there is mine." His words: "These are the times that try men's souls," was often quoted during the last war.

A democrat among democrats, Paine was always thinking of the poor and the oppressed. In his superb reply to Edmund Burke's theatrical tirade against the French Revolution, in which he reserved his compassion too exclusively for the sufferings of the nobility, Paine said: "Mr. Burke pities the plume, but he forgets the dying bird." Even Burke, a master of words himself, might have envied the felicity and brilliance of the illustration. The poet Shelley, a keen and discriminating judge of literary artistry, thought this so excellent that he used it as part of the title of one of his own pamphlets. Fine writing as it is, the thought is far finer. It embodies the watchwords of Democracy, the marching music that drove Paine himself forth as a knight errant of Humanity, that sent Lafayette to America, and Byron to Greece, and inspired generations of sweet-souled singers from Shelley to Swinburne to hymn the praises of Liberty.

No one can doubt for an instant Thomas Paine's passionate sincerity. His was a life of self-effacing sacrifice. He put aside ease and comfort to further the causes he loved. We can but admire the singular devotion of his life. Seeking no honours, nor applause, nor money, he made an imperishable name. At a time when commercialism is rampant, the pursuit of high ideals for their own sake, and not for any base or ulterior object, seems to us an exception so rare as to be scarcely credible. In a time of tyranny Thomas Paine remained ever faithful to his principles; in an age of superstition he cared only for truth. The critic, whatever his convictions, who scoffs and belittles a man such as that is something worse than a fool.

MIMNERMUS.

The Common Task.

PATIENCE to wake each morning feeling fit;
 Courage to get your forehead down to it;
 Hope for the useful labour of your hands;
 Faith that a just reward in surety stands;
 Contentment with the sameness of your lot;
 Endurance when the pace grows far too hot;
 Fidelity to stick it to the end;
 Love—and the comradeship of one true friend.

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

Onitsha, Nigeria.

Christianity and Paganism.

It comes as a shock, to those who have received a Christian training, to learn that there are critics who hold that Christianity is the enemy of civilization, and that it has been described by Professor Clifford, as "that awful plague which has destroyed two civilizations, and but barely failed to slay such promise of good as is now struggling to live among men."¹ In a letter to his friend Mr. Pollock, he observes: "I suppose it frightens people to be told that historical Christianity as a social system invariably makes men wicked when it has full swing. Then I think the sooner they are well frightened the better."²

It comes as a shock to the Christian who first hears this view of his faith, because all the histories current in our schools are compiled from the Christian standpoint, none would stand a chance of being accepted that taught the opposite view. By Christianity, of course, we mean primitive Christianity as taught in the Gospels; not the emasculated article which masquerades under that name in the Protestant Churches to-day, and was caustically described by Prof. Huxley as "faith in the ideal personality of Jesus, which they create for themselves, plus so much as can be carried into practice, without disorganizing civil society, of the maxims of the Sermon on the Mount." The difference between primitive Christianity and that of to-day, is, that the modern Christian does not attempt to practice literally all the teachings of Christ, where they affect his material interests, or those of the State, while the primitive Christian did, and instead of considering the interest of the State and working for its welfare he was its declared enemy. Christ himself declared that his kingdom was not of this world, and that the prince of this world was the Devil. The early Christians did not wish to make a better world here, they looked forward with joy to its immediate destruction within the lifetime, so the Gospel declared, of those who listened to Jesus.

The book of *Revelation* reveals the intensity of the hatred felt by the first Christians towards the Roman Empire and Pagan civilization generally. As a youth I was more attracted by the obscure and mysterious book of *Revelation* than by any other book in the Bible, with its gloomy and sombre pictures of calamity and death. I was fascinated with the beast with seven heads—upon each of which was inscribed "blasphemy"—and wondered how the ten horns, he was also adorned with, were distributed among the seven heads. I was impressed also by the four beasts "full of eyes within," and wondered how they used them. And by the dragon who was cast into the bottomless pit. But I think the horsemen provided the greatest sensation, beginning with the rider on the white horse who went forth "conquering and to conquer," and whom I compared with Napoleon, and ending with the pale horse whose name was Death, and who was followed by Hell.

To my inquiries as to the meaning of this infernal Circus, I was informed that it was an allegory, and that the Scarlet woman of Babylon represented Rome, and that the beast, with the number 666, represented the Pope. Of course this is the Nonconformist interpretation, which, of course is absurd, as there was no Pope in existence when the book was written, or until long afterwards. Nevertheless, all critics are agreed that Rome is the enemy aimed at, but not Christian Rome, it is Pagan Rome, and the Roman Empire that is the object of the writer's hatred. "Behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is," says

¹ Clifford: *Lectures and Essays* (1886) p. 179.

² *Ibid.*, p. 41.

the writer, and explains, "The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth." (*Rev.* xvii. 8-9.) The seven mountains are the seven hills upon which Rome is built.

The writer goes on to describe how the great city "hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously . . . Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire"; And the merchants cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying: What city is like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, saying: Alas, also that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour she is made desolate (*Rev.* xviii. 7-8, 18-19.) But the writer rejoices over the spectacle and declares that it is a true and righteous judgment of God. If we bear in mind that the first Christians were all inspired by this hatred of Rome, it will help to explain a great deal that happened afterwards.

The great Russian historian Rostovtzeff, observes, in his book *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* (p. 478). "Every reader of a volume devoted to the Roman Empire will expect the author to express his opinion on what is generally, since Gibbon, called the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, or rather ancient civilization in general." Yes it was Gibbon who was the first great historian to draw attention to the sinister part played by Christianity, so far as it was possible in that intolerant time. His work caused nearly as much sensation in the historical world as Darwin's did in the scientific world, and he was quite as severely attacked. Hume predicted that "a clamour will arise" over the famous fifteenth and sixteenth chapters, which Gibbon hardly seems to have anticipated, or, at least, its full fury. Hume's prediction was soon fulfilled. Says Prof. J. B. Bury:—

The "clamour" thus predicted was not slow to make itself heard. Within two years the famous chapters had elicited what might almost be called a library of controversy. The only attack, however, to which Gibbon deigned to make any reply was that of Davies, who had impugned his accuracy or good faith. His [Gibbon's] *Vindication* appeared in February, 1779; and, as Milman remarks: "This single discharge from the ponderous artillery of learning and sarcasm laid prostrate the whole disorderly squadron" of his rash and feeble assailants.³

The work was too solid to be overthrown by criticism. I was too learned to be ignored. As Freeman, the historian, observed: "That wonderful man monopolized, so to speak, the historical genius and the historical learning of a whole generation, and left little, indeed, of either for his contemporaries . . . Whatever else is read, Gibbon must be read too."⁴ It was clear that nothing would prevent the work from being read, however much the pious raged against it. At this juncture a saviour appeared in the person of the egregious Bowdler, who added another word to the language by "bowdlerizing" Shakespeare, and making him safe for prudes and Puritans. He now set about doing a similar office for Gibbon; the work, which was published in 1826, is entitled: *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. For the use of Families and Young Persons. Reprinted from the original text with the careful omission of all passages of an irreligious or immoral tendency. By Thomas Bowdler, Editor of the family Shakspeare.

Later, in 1856, a greater than Bowdler; no less than the classical scholar, Sir William Smith, the learned

author of a Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities, and several Classical Dictionaries, brought out an abridged edition of Gibbon, entitled *The Students Gibbon*. In the preface he informs us that "The most important omissions relate to the history of the Church, in which Gibbon too frequently displayed the hostility he felt towards the Christian religion . . . I have omitted entirely Gibbon's polemical dissertation on the causes of the spread of Christianity, and his account of the theological disputes of the Oriental sects." Of other theological disputes and quarrels, he says: "In treating of these subjects I have suppressed the sarcasms and innuendoes, by which, rather than by any open attacks, Gibbon sought to undermine the religion which he rejected." (*Preface* p. vii.) So Gibbon was made safe for the student.

Gibbon published the first volume of his famous work in 1776, and he summed up the result of his labours in the famous sentence: "I have described the triumph of barbarism and religion." One hundred and fifty-five years have elapsed since then, our knowledge has enormously increased. Let us see how it has affected Gibbon's claim.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

Will Atheism Win?

A FEW days ago I was sent a book which I wish every Atheist could read. Its title is *Will Atheism Dominate the World?* and it is written by a Mrs. Howe, who is Secretary to the Canadian Christian Crusade of Toronto. This institution, founded in 1928, aims "to warn Christians and keep them informed of the organized and persistent propaganda of Atheism in this land and in lands across the sea." Amongst other activities it issues pamphlets, and supports three foreign missionaries—two in Roumania and one in India. All this is a flattering compliment to the growing influence of anti-superstitious teachings; though why Roumania should be so specially favoured as suitable ground for anti-Atheist propaganda, one is only left to guess. We suggest that Roumanian Christians might return the compliment by sending missionaries to Canada. Perhaps they have done so already!

The book is a reprint of articles which appeared in *The Sunday School Times* of Philadelphia; it was published this year and costs fifty cents. I don't know if it is obtainable in this country, but I hope so; for although as a contribution to good literature it isn't worth a cent, it is worth untold gold to the cause of Atheism. An analysis of its contents will show the reason for this.

The question asked in the title is, of course, not answered. And this for the simple reason that, however confidently Christians profess to interpret the prophecies in the Bible, they never dare to be definite about their own. But to judge from the book as a whole, the answer seems to be a decided "Yes." And for this answer we will have, in great measure, to thank Mrs. Howe herself; provided that her book is as widely and intelligently read as I hope it may be. For it is, perhaps, the most encouraging report of the progress of common-sense that I have ever read; combined with the most inane argument in support of god-belief—and especially of that multiple variety called Christianity.

The book opens with a foreword by the editor of the *Sunday School Times*, the Rev. C. G. Turnbull, in which he naively says: "When the *Sunday School Times* announced that it was to publish a series of articles giving the facts of 'Atheism's World-wide

³ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th Edition. Article *Gibbon*.

⁴ Cited by J. C. Morison, *Gibbon*, pp. 104-5.

Attack on Christianity' . . . there was an instant expression of profound interest and a wide-spread demand for the articles . . . and issues were called for so largely that it became difficult or impossible to secure more copies." From which we gather that the usual topics of discussion in his paper had been falling rather flat—which is hardly surprising.

The editor continues, equally naively: "This is a welcome sign. It shows that God's people want to know the facts, however dark." (One wonders why God, who is said to be omniscient, does not tell them himself!) Every editor will agree that increased sales are a "welcome sign." But this editor knows very well that the "facts" which he serves up to his readers are all nicely cooked in the Christian oven first. For apart from mis-statements and false innuendos, Mrs. Howe evades, wherever possible, giving chapter and verse for the "facts" she relates—a typically Christian habit—and even goes so far as to say in one instance: "The name of both reviewer and author are withheld, as I have no wish to advertise such sentiments." Verifiable facts are the one thing which Atheists love and which, alas, Theists hate. The latter know too well how the truth tells against them.

Coherent analysis of any Christian apologetics is at the best of times difficult. For coherent analysis needs a coherent thesis—and that is something which no Christian is capable of presenting without risk of damaging his faith. In the present case, therefore, I must make the best of a bad job.

Part of the book is taken up with information about the progress of Atheism all over the world; and since it is a Christian who gives it, we may safely assume that, in this case at least, there is no exaggeration. For which reason I find it very cheering news. But we are also presented with a number of "horrible examples" of the effects of Atheism. We are regaled with stories—needless to say, without mention of names, dates or places—of anything from the return as a corpse of a daughter who had left her "beautiful home, from which she had been lured away through love of pleasure, smoking parties and unchristian companions" (O, shades of melodrama!) up to some yarn about "two young Atheists, society men, who had sought a new thrill from the experience of killing a younger lad."

This sort of mud-slinging is a popular pastime amongst those unable to reason intelligently—and to select the worst examples is a cheap method of blackening Atheism. But since no verifiable data are given, this method is beneath contempt. Even though it would be simple for Atheists to retaliate in kind upon Christians, there is no reason for them to degrade themselves by resorting to the contemptible tactics of religionists. One thing is quite certain; if an Atheist were compelled to adopt this method in self-defence, he would not be so cowardly as to conceal the means of verification.

Of course all Christians glibly assert that Christians who are "found out" in any delinquency cannot be true Christians. To which the obvious reply is that the criminals and wrong-doers referred to as Atheists by Mrs. Howe cannot be true Atheists. But, whereas there is nothing illogical for Christians to kill a fellow-being, when by so doing they believe that they are sending his imaginary soul to some imaginary future state of bliss, it is absurd to suppose that a true Atheist, who does not believe such things, would slay another human being whose only life is the present—and that for the sake of a "new thrill" (save the mark!).

Apart from this, it is easy for a person who has no idea what the word means to call himself an Atheist; and it is easier still for Christians to call someone an Atheist when he is nothing of the sort. But it is

easiest of all to hint openly that most, if not all, Atheists are criminals; and that most, if not all, criminals are Atheists. Whenever verifiable facts can be obtained, however, the exact contrary emerges—at any rate in this country. I cannot speak for Canada; but I don't suppose Atheists there differ so vastly from those over here.*

In addition to this "sob stuff," we get stories of Atheists who were completely baffled by the arguments of our Christian authoress. "Well, I would not take your faith away from you for anything I possess," one such anonymous Atheist is supposed to have said. (What an Atheist!) "When I asked her if she talked to Jesus personally, she was absolutely at sea," is said of another anonymous lady journalist. While at the very end of the book we get a priceless story "showing the weakness of an Atheist argument." It is this. A lovely anonymous Spanish girl of seventeen, referring to "God," said: "But how do you know for certain? You cannot see Him." To which the lady "did not reply at the time, but some days later" came out with the brilliant argument that she didn't believe in the girl's father, because she couldn't see him, and he lived thousands of miles away! (Can you beat it!)

Of course the poor child was utterly dumbfounded by this "logic." For, presumably, being too young or too lovely to have any common-sense, she was unable to reply: "But I could prove that my father is real by taking you to him, or asking him to come here. You could then not only see him, but touch him and hear him. And you couldn't do that with your god." If, in spite of this, the authoress had still persisted in disbelieving that the father existed, she would have had to admit that the girl was another case of "virgin birth"—and that might have been awkward.

The only argument—if it can be called such—for a "God" lies in the well-worn and wholly unprovable assertion that one can "talk" with him. "The one thing that seemed to trouble him," says Mrs. Howe, referring again to some unnamed Atheist, "was my telling him that there is scarcely an hour that my wonderful Saviour and I do not talk to one another." Again: "He seemed nonplussed (perhaps it was the same idiot again—we cannot tell, since no name is given) when I said . . . I had just been in communication with the Lord Jesus Christ personally a few minutes before." And so on *ad nauseam*.

Now, intelligent persons are perfectly familiar with the habit of holding "imaginary conversations." And whether these conversations are held with oneself, some absent friend, or some purely fictitious creature, such persons are not deluded as to their "mystic" or "spiritual" nature. But Christians—whose inward conceit is in direct proportion to their outward humility—readily delude themselves that they are talking with their "God." And having thus identified themselves with an imaginary omnipotence, they easily proceed to declare or believe their own fallible musings to be "inspirations" from an infallible being. Fortunately, despite all his attributed omnipotence and omniscience, "God" has never told Christians anything intelligent or intelligible. Hence Atheism.

As an argument in support of Christianity the book is infantile. As an argument for Atheism it is admirable. There is, naturally, the usual confusion between Atheism and Communism or Socialism, in spite of the remark in brackets that

* Statistics from the book *500 Criminal Careers*, by S. and E. T. Glueck (A. A. Knopf, New York, 1930) show that the religions of prisoners in the Massachusetts Reformatory give the following percentages: Catholic 66.3; Protestant 28.6; Hebrew 3.9; Other 1.2. Where are all the Atheists?

"every Communist is an Atheist, though every Atheist is not necessarily a Communist." And heavy weather is made of conditions in Russia, of which the authoress has no personal experience. There are also, as usual, the vapourings about "the unsatisfied longings left by the fundamentals of Atheism." And we get this priceless sentence: "Surely an impartial reader, knowing nothing of the pros and cons, would cling to the personal note in the God-given revelation." *Knowing nothing of the pros and cons* just about hits the right nail on the head!

Alongside of this we get—repeated twice, on page 37, and later in italics on page 109—that Sir Arthur Keith's declaration concerning man's ape-like ancestry was "completely refuted" by many men of well-known scientific standing and of "Sir Arthur Keith's position." Be it noted in the first place that *not a single name* is given of Sir Arthur's "well-known" refuters; and in the second place that denial of a proposition is not the same as refutation. The first requires no intelligence or proof; the second needs both. Perhaps such mis-statements (to give them a mild name) may sound convincing to Christians for whom they are intended, but they deceive no one else.

Finally, as a contribution to the world's mirth, I cannot refrain from referring to the "Series of Bible difficulties Answered," which are sprinkled here and there at the end of chapters—with no sort of relation to the subject in hand. For example: "Question: Why did the sun stand still? Answer: The reason is given in Joshua x. 3, and it is evident therefrom and from the context, that by sundown the victory was not nearly in accordance with the promise of verse 8, etc." Comment is almost superfluous! But "it is evident therefrom" that the question should have been asked without the first word. Then again: "Question: If Cain and Abel were the first children of the first family, why did God put a mark on Cain so that others would not harm him?" The answer is immaterial, though characteristically futile. What an intelligent person might have asked is: "If Cain and Seth were the sons of the first man and woman on earth, who did they marry—their sisters, or their mother? But—hush! hush!"

As I said at the beginning—I wish that every Atheist could read this book. And I also hope it will be read by all Christians. For they will undoubtedly be led thereby to enquire for more facts about Atheism—and amongst such facts they will certainly find a few that have not been tampered with for the benefit of the credulous. And if there is any solid foundation to the saying: "Truth will out," then Atheism will certainly dominate the world.

C. S. FRASER.

Supernatural religion will fade from this world, and in its place, we shall have reason. Superstition must go. Science will remain.—*Ingersoll.*

The Church no longer affords room for self-respecting scholars, and the next few years will see an exodus of them from its pale.—*Huxley.*

If you are telling the truth you cannot be too radical. If you are telling a lie, you cannot be too conservative.

Benj. Franklin.

I am not afraid of the word Atheist nor of the word Atheism, any more than I am afraid of the truth.

L. K. Washburne.

Christianity, Slavery and Labour.

MR. COHEN is to be envied, both as man and author. Witty, sound, and incorruptible, he never writes without being as completely informed of his theme as is possible to a modern. As the unquestioned leader of his school of thought and as editor of the *Freethinker*, he is often enough assailed, when he is not ignored; but he is not often answered, and never, to my knowledge, efficiently.

Of his particular ground he is master, and this book, *Christianity, Slavery, and Labour*, is a little masterpiece of concentrated facts and unquestionable inferences. Mr. Cohen's thesis is right, and he expresses it well and wittily. As a barbed shaft this seems to me perfect:—

Any claim for the creation of either legal rights or remissions of dues went equally against monk and lord. These were the two pillars of the existing system, they hung together; it was the only way they could resist being hung separately.

I know of no writer who could pack so much truth into so few words. If this be not wit, wit does not exist.

In my judgment this book is as good as anything that the author has done; if the reader involuntarily grinds his teeth as he reads of the senseless brutalities that have been perpetrated in the name of piety, he is compensated by the biting wit that Mr. Cohen has learned from Voltaire, the suave irony that he has found in Gibbon.

Above all, this little book is a model of concentration; a stupid and venal writer would have spun it out to five hundred pages; Mr. Cohen has compressed it into less than a quarter of that number, not a page or a word of which is superfluous; for Mr. Cohen's indictment is fact-founded and hence final.

From "Sunday Referee," August 9, 1931.

In the "Land of Liberty."

As an ardent supporter of the old paper, I wish to draw the attention of fellow Atheists to the deplorable conditions existing in Canada, and to the persecution and injustice which is inevitably ours should the Church succeed in regaining her lost power.

Here the Union Jack flutters proudly—and the Press prates unceasingly of British Rights—Free Speech, Liberty, etc. It seems that these privileges are reserved for the select few, at least theoretically they apply to all, but there are just these few exceptions:—

First.—One must be a Christian or believer in the Deity.

Second.—One must be an Imperialist.

Thirdly.—A supporter of the Government.

Apart from these little stipulations one may hold what religious or political beliefs one wishes. There is perfect freedom for everyone, and no intimidation is practised either by the police or any religious body—providing, of course, you do not think differently from the "old women" and priests who hold this glorious country in their grasping paws.

If only one professes to believe that "God's own country" (which incidentally is in the throes of a depression from which the Lord Almighty sees no reason to remove it) was created by a loving and almighty father, and that the Empire is the last word in efficiency, one is apparently a good citizen and entitled to vote, but should you hold such "pernicious views as Communism," or Atheism, you are of a "vicious type of humanity," and your powers of franchise should be withheld.

Such views were expressed and approved by the Grand Block Chapter of Canada, and found a prominent place in the headlines of one of Toronto's more important newspapers. Obviously such filth and disgusting lies could only originate in the mind of a Christian, and we members of this "vicious type of humanity" being in the minority must grin and bear the cowardly insults. Recently the Church in Canada was howling because Christians were receiving a taste of their own medicine, and although none of us condone the atrocities said to have been committed in Russia, still the Society of God has held sway long enough, and is now yelping like a

cur at the first bite. That yellow streak will come out sooner or later.

Another example of the progress of this country occurred a few weeks ago, when the University newspaper published an article stating Practical Atheism was rampant in the Colleges.

It seems an ecclesiastical student had confessed he did not believe the gospel he was shortly to spread amongst the people, but was persisting in his false position solely because he thought the doctrine would be of benefit to the public.

The conceit, imbecility and downright dishonesty in such a statement is astounding.

The editor of the paper, a minister's son, was threatened with all manner of dire punishments, from expulsion to arrest, after great excitement and much pandering by learned men, the matter was finally dropped—but the paper was suppressed.

Of course the editor was right, Practical Atheism is rampant everywhere, it is the only sane and practical system under which a civilized community can exist, unfortunately it is tainted with Practical Christianity in a small degree, but, Real Christianity as taught by the Holy Book! is such an impossible disgusting system that there is little fear of us ever degenerating to that level. Attacks upon our philosophy should be met with vigorous arguments and facts, and for that purpose we must organize and fight to the death. We who have found the truth must spread it amongst our less fortunate brethren, we must smash the idea of—the virgin birth, conception by ghosts, and god-eating before our children become contaminated.

I use this medium (knowing it to enjoy a fair circulation in Toronto) to call all fellow Atheists together, let us see if we cannot organize a branch of the N.S.S. in "Toronto the Good," and break the rule of the priests.

I should be delighted to hear from any colleagues willing to assist in the formation of a branch. We are a "vicious type of humanity" undoubtedly, but let our motto be, "Truth and Justice," and let us have the courage to fight for our convictions. My address is: 271 Royce Avenue, Toronto, Canada.

LOUIS F. ROBERTS.

Acid Drops.

We beg, very respectfully, to call the attention of Our Lord to the way in which things are getting mixed up. We have been getting half drowned in England. On the other hand there has been no rain on the Riviera for six months. In England the farms are being ruined with too much water, in the Riviera the crops are being lost for want of water. What is the meaning of it? Has heaven gone Bolshevik and determined to ruin the whole of Europe? Or is it an indictment of personal government? Anyway things could hardly have been arranged worse. Even the present government of Britain might have done better.

We are indebted to the *Liverpool Post* for the information that Sir Ronald Ross, who has just celebrated his seventy-fourth birthday, immediately after discovering the malaria parasite wrote:—

This day relenting God
Hath placed within my hand
A wondrous thing.

If that be true it is quite clear that Sir Ronald is a much better scientist than a theologian or philosopher. The picture of God, after keeping the cause of malaria to himself, relenting and showing Sir Ronald Ross the true cause, is very flattering to the latter, but other people are apt to wonder why God keeps these mysteries to himself until some human being is shrewd enough to solve them. We suggest that an inscription "How I traced God's methods of slaughtering human beings, and stopped him" might be more in accord with the situation—so long as we believe in a God. But perhaps, after all, Sir Ronald never wrote the lines attributed to him.

The *Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers Gazette* (Aberystwyth) calls attention in a leader to a statement by "a leading" but unnamed "churchman" that "the Church is God's instrument for the salvation of the world"; but "no artisan can work with broken tools. The Holy Spirit cannot work with a broken instrument." We thought the Holy Spirit, like the other two persons of the trinity, which, together with it, make God, could do all things. And so it can if the leader writer in the *Cambrian News* is right, for he says: "Outside of all organizations (i.e., Churches) there are still men and women, broken tools in the eyes of man, yet used of God in a wonderful way—a way that man knows nothing of to-day, but in a way which will be known only when the Books are opened in the Day that is to be." What these books are, and when that day is, would be news that would be worth publishing, but this journal has its own view of "news-values."

An Editorial Note in the same issue refers to "the fact that all the great men of Wales leave her borders for the choice plums of England." The "culture of the 'great men' is," it seems, "different from 'culture as Wales knows it.'" The former "can be sold to the highest bidder at a commercial price," but the latter is priceless and unsaleable (The *Cambrian News* is two-pence weekly). As to the former brand, "Wales wants none of it," and "for that reason lets its great men go with a feeling of relief." Of the real great men of Wales "the public press knows nothing, nor do they appear on platforms and make speeches, but they are none the less great." No doubt; not excluding the leader writer of the *Cambrian News*. Though what poor Mr. Lloyd George will think of this is painful to contemplate.

That stupid paper for stupid people, the *Morning Post*, has in its issue for August 20, a tearful article on the Army Chaplain. It complains of the "insidious campaign" of the Socialist, "who has no sympathy with religion," and wishes to see the compulsory Church Parade abolished. We think the *Post* is not quite just to the average Socialist in this country. Socialists here are very shy of interfering with religion, and prefer generally to submitting to all sorts of stupidities so long as the name of Christ is tacked on to them. Besides, so long as "Army discipline" is to be maintained, a soldier must not be treated as a wholly responsible being. He must be washed and dressed, fed and shaved, put to bed and wakened up by order, and if he is treated as a reasoning being with regard to religion, he may demand to be treated as a reasoning being in other directions. And that would mean an end to all Army discipline.

A pious reporter who visited a Territorial camp at Warminster was somewhat depressed at noting that the citizen soldiers were pitching their tents on Sunday. He thinks they should avoid doing this. Still, as God himself didn't show any disapproval of the usual malevolent kind mentioned in the Bible, the men may assume that no harm was done by Sabbath tent erection.

The Rev. G. T. Peet implores all Methodists to boycott every cinema that shows a "dirty" play or opens on Sunday. We may add that this nice-minded parson sees no harm in forcing the "Holy" Bible, with all its obscenities, into the hands of little children in the schools of the nation. Perhaps, however, this is thought desirable so that children shall be able to recognize "dirty" ideas if revealed at cinemas.

Speaking of the destruction caused by death-watch beetles, the Rev. G. H. McNeal says that, "the activities of the beetles in Wesley's Chapel are incessant, their appetites are insatiable, and their time is their own." There would seem to be no doubt that the beetles' Creator is tenderly looking after their interests. If the rev. gent. were only a little brighter, he might have perceived in this the theme for a thought-provoking sermon. Instead, he is trying to do what he can to circumvent the activities of God as revealed by the beetle. Curiously enough, he is not relying on the famous Christian cure-all—prayer. He is putting his trust in the ingenuity of builders and scientists.

The correspondence evoked, says *Radio Times*, by the wireless programmes constantly shows how often one man's meat may be another man's poison. Such being the case, may we humbly suggest that the B.B.C. should provide a palatable alternative to the religious items broadcast on Sunday, for the benefit of a very large number of listeners who find the religious items obnoxious? We may add that the hours of sacred silence ordained for the benefit of clergy is also unpalatable, and something more nourishing would be appreciated. When you come to think about it, is it not rather selfish of Christians to reduce everybody else to boredom while they are enjoying themselves so enormously in the churches and chapels?

Writing about the loneliness of provincials who migrate to London, "Candidus" of the *Daily Sketch* says:—

The traditional agencies of hospitality are the churches and the public houses. But they are no longer as active as they were. Time was when by going to a church you could get to know as many people as you wanted, and probably make some real friends among them. But churches and chapels are not what they were in this respect. They do not attract all types as they once did, and the week-end habit and motoring has made sad inroads into the social and clubable life of church-going.

This is another way of saying that the parsons used to exploit the gregarious instinct very thoroughly, but the peoples' changed habits have made the game less easy. The game still continues, of course. Indeed, it is the social or secular activities of the churches—and not the religious activities—which are instrumental in keeping large numbers of people still attached to a church or chapel. This may be satisfactory in one way to the parson, but unsatisfactory in another. The "social" adherents are difficult to infuse with religious fervour, such as is required for working up a great religious revival.

Seeing the following spiritual advice in the *Catholic Universe*, a reader of a Nonconformist paper is astounded that such teaching is still being given in this twentieth Christian century:—

Yes, a Catholic who deliberately eats a beef-steak on a Friday and is then run over by a motor car goes to hell, unless he receives the grace to make an act of perfect contrition.

It seems no worse than the belief cherished by thousands of Protestants, that persons devoting the Sabbath to recreation or pleasure will ultimately reach hell. It is interesting to note how the beliefs of one Christian sect shock the adherents of another. This "shocked" sensation is a delicate spiritual joy which is the inalienable privilege of the Christian, and which the wretched materialist cannot hope to appreciate. How awe-inspiring it is to reflect that it wouldn't be enjoyed if Christ had not died on the Cross.

The following is a portion of a letter sent by Cardinal Bourne to Sir Henry Lunn, a shining light of Nonconformity:—

The position of the Nonconformist or Anglican being wholly based on private judgment without a sure guiding authority, quite logically permits both to worship side by side as they may wish, although they may agree only partially in what they believe. The Catholic position, however, is based on authority. Catholics believe in one body of doctrine as revealed, and because revealed, by Christ to His Church. They believe that body of doctrine to be the one, true and only Faith, and they will not, and may not, join in any public prayers or worship with others who do not accept that body of doctrine in its entirety. Such principles may not be set aside for any social or sentimental considerations.

This serves the useful purpose of revealing the kind of "brotherhood" and "goodwill to men" manufactured by the Christian religion. What can we—the destroyers—put in its place!

The Patriot, an obscure journal of extreme monarchist and conservative principles is circulating, apparently to such English newspapers as will take it, propaganda for Roman Catholicism and against the Spanish Republic.

The *Merioneth County Times* appears to be one such paper, for in its issue of August 22 it prints, without protest or comment such statements as the following:—"To pull down the Church and the Crown (*i.e.*, in Spain) is not, as pretended to lop away the dead boughs of an otherwise vigorous tree; it is to destroy the roots from which sprang the power and security that enabled the old and magnificent Spain of Philip II. to dominate not only Europe but the new world." Again, "Our press (*i.e.*, the British Press) never rebukes "Treachery, treason, and juggling with figures," if "the culprit calls himself a Republican." Quoting with approval the statement of the Duke of Wellington (of Waterloo) that "a hundred years hence this country will be ruled by a democracy, which, of all forms of Government is the most damnable," the article also asserts that "when personages born to lead and inspire allow themselves to be lodged from the position the Almighty has assigned to them, our politics decline, and the credit of England wanes." The paper that prints this is a Conservative organ in that part of Wales where it circulates, but we doubt if it is the only one that is that will do propaganda for those who believe "personages," not to mention monarchs, are "assigned" to their positions by the Almighty.

Abyssinia is the oldest Christian State in the world. It has at present about two million slaves, and of the institution of slavery the priesthood is the greatest bulwark, and offers the most strenuous opposition to its removal. But the Emperor has now signified his resolve to abolish slavery. This has been promised several times before, and it remains to be seen what will happen. But if slavery is abolished we are certain to find Christian writers recording it as an example of Christian sentiment, although it is Christian sentiment that has all along kept slavery in being.

There is a well known story about the late Dr. Joseph Parker's protest when, on buying a grave at Hampstead Cemetery for the burial of his wife, he received a receipt describing it as being in "unconsecrated ground." As the law in this matter is a little more sane than in many, it is as well that it should be known. The Rev. Hawker of Morwenstow once observed to a dissenter who had lost a relative by death that he (Hawker) had not been approached about the funeral. "I thought," said the dissenter, "you would object to burying a dissenter." "On the contrary," replied the Cornish parson, "I should only be too pleased to bury the lot of you." All of which is prefatory to noticing that (according to the *Merioneth County Times*), in reply to an enquiry from the Joint Burial Committee of Barmouth and Llanaber as to whether the whole of a burial ground could be consecrated, the Home Office advised that it could not. "Consecration according to Roman Catholic or Nonconformist rites has no legal effect, and there can be no question of any religious body claiming any right to perform such a ceremony. Inasmuch as consecration might take place at any time, and need not be done at the opening of a burial ground, there was no necessity to decide the question until some application was made." It is to be noted that consecration by the established rite has "a legal consequence" (*i.e.*, puts up the charge), so those who have no use for the mummery of consecration are better off, or at least their executors are in this world, whatever may be the fate of the deceased in that which, according to all Christian rites, is yet to come.

Mr. St. John Ervine announces that he is writing a biography of "General" William Booth. We hope the "General" will be properly classified—as one of our great captains of industry, and a pioneer of "big business." There will, of course, be no need to add that he exploited the ignorance, credulity, fear and superstitions of the lowest social classes. That is common knowledge, and everybody now takes it for granted. A really clever biographer, however, ought to have no difficulty in explaining the exploitation as "uplifting of the masses."

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

H. MARTIN.—One cannot be sure in such cases. Lives of existing or recent monarchs are not written, they are invented. Who would have written an accurate life of the first four Georges without getting into prison, even though such a life could have got published?

H. B. KERR and "MEDICUS."—Will appear next week.

C. HEILIGENSTEIN.—The ideal early Christian Communistic movement is purely imaginary. It has about the same reality in fact as has the ideal ethical reforming Jesus.

W. MCKEE.—Thanks for address, but we shall not be travelling far south.

RYE MCKAY (Sydney).—You are wrong in thinking that Mr. Boyd Freeman is a Protestant in disguise. But we agree with you that his praise of Martin Luther is quite unjustifiable. As a matter of fact the Protestant Reformation threw back the world's release from religious control for a good two hundred years.

E. SMEDLEY.—Should be pleased to see the pamphlet. Would return when read.

A. MOLE.—You can get into touch with the Grand Orient of France by writing M. Cauwell, 24 bis Rue Kleber, près Paris, France.

J. BLSWORTH.—Pleased to make the acquaintance of an old *Freethinker* reader. What you are doing is an illustration that all of us may do something to help the Cause, if we will.

R. CHAPMAN.—We can always rely upon your not missing a chance of putting in a word for Freethought.

J. BRIGHTON.—Papers received. Perhaps when Mr. Cohen is again in the North some of these fire-eating Christians will seize the opportunity of replying to him while he is there, instead of waiting till he has gone away. Date booked for Sunderland.

Some letters are held over until next week.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen with Mr. McLaren will be attending the International Congress of Freethinkers at Berlin from September 4 to 7, as representatives of the National Secular Society. We must, therefore, ask the indulgence of correspondents for the issues of the paper dated September 6 and 13. Further those who write for Mr. Cohen's eye alone should mark their communications

"Personal." The Congress this year promises to be of importance to the future of the Federation.

We desire to call attention to the effort of the Leicester Secular Society to clear the debt from its Hall. The sum of £2,000 is required, and gifts may be made in the form of money, or saleable goods for the Bazaar which is to be held on November 14 and 15. Full particulars will be found in another column, and we hope that the appeal will meet with a ready and generous response. The Leicester Secular Society has held the flag of Secularism aloft for over half a century, its hall is a fine one in a fine position, and when this £2,000 is raised it will belong wholly to the Society. We wish it every success in its endeavour.

It was to be expected that the Roman Church would prove itself an active enemy of the new Spanish Republic. The Roman Catholic papers are already shrieking about the robbery of the Church, although the immense wealth of the Church in the country was a source of corruption and misgovernment. "Persecution" is another term that papers such as the *Universe* are working as hard as they can. In this case "persecution" means that the Church is no longer above the law, and that it can no longer suppress forms of religion other than their own. As a matter of fact, there is no persecution of religion in Spain. There is only a determination to see that the power which has worked so great harm in Spain shall no longer maintain its old position. And if the Spanish people care for their future they will see that their aim in this direction is not balked.

Meanwhile Protestant papers such as the *Christian World* are rejoicing that a new era of religious liberty is opening in Spain. Protestants are permitted to carry on their propaganda and their worship without any interference whatever from the Government. Jews have a degree of liberty they have never known there since Spain became entirely Christian, and the strong undercurrent of Freethought in the country, kept under during the reign of Alfonso, himself not above joining in the plundering of the people, is beginning to make its voice heard. There will be great temptations for the Government to take extreme steps against religious plotters, and it is to be hoped that the Roman Church will not be helped in the agitation it is conducting by unnecessarily harsh measures.

Will members of the Brighton Branch N.S.S. please note, Branch meetings will be held on the Third Thursday in each month at 164 Elm Grove. (Side door, bottom of Linton Street) at 7.30 p.m. The Branch is doing excellent work, and members encourage that work by attending the business meetings. The Branch Secretary asks saints visiting Brighton to introduce themselves at the open-air meetings inside the Level.

In spite of the wet weather Mr. G. Whitehead managed to hold twenty-six open-air meetings during the month in Scotland. A large number of questions were asked, and answered. Mr. Whitehead was also challenged to debate several times, but all the kind offers were refused.

Commencing on Saturday, August 29, Mr. G. Whitehead will be in the Manchester district for a fortnight, details will be found in the Lecture Notices column. The announcement in last week's *Freethinker* under the notice for Bolton Branch N.S.S., that Mr. Whitehead would speak in Bolton and Blackburn on August 29 and 30, is an error.

The Pioneer Press is publishing in the course of a week or two a new book by Dr. Arthur Lynch, under the title of *Brain and Mind*. Dr. Lynch is an informative and provocative writer, and even those who do not agree with him cannot help having their interest quickened in the subject with which he deals. The price of the pamphlet is sixpence, by post sevenpence.

Wayward Thomas Woolston.

GEORGE MEREDITH assures us that all men have their aptitudes. Herbert of Cherbury, Anthony Collins and other Freethought messengers proclaimed their philosophy in carefully measured terms. Collins' contemporary, Thomas Woolston was cast in a more aggressive mould. To him, as to Disraeli, invective was a great ornament in debate. His advocacy combined truculence and paradox. Were his writings regarded as those of a man whose dominating passion was to lead men back to the primitive purity of the infant Church, then we would be as seriously misled as the solemn religious editor who praised Samuel Butler's satire on the faith as an important defence of Christianity. For, although disguised by a desire to vindicate the allegorical character of the Old and New Testament narratives, Woolston's discourses served to pour scorn on the shortcomings of the clergy who interpreted the Scriptures in a purely literal sense, while sapping the very foundations of the Christian religion itself.

Woolston was born at the now notorious town of Northampton in 1670. For several years, he was a devoted student of divinity at Sydney Sussex College, Cambridge, where he was widely esteemed as a man of fine character, and gained considerable distinction for piety and learning. He took holy orders and became a fellow. He was at this time deeply influenced by the heretical Origen's doctrine of the allegorical meaning of the Bible stories which, for a time, he appears to have taken seriously, although in coming years he used it as a subterfuge for his onslaught on the reigning religion.

In his maiden essay, *An Old Apology for the Truth of the Christian Religion Against the Jews and Gentiles, revived*, Woolston contended that Moses was a purely mythical figure; that all the tales of the Captivity and Exodus were allegories, and that the miracles attributed to Christ and his disciples were indistinguishable from mere fiction. When Woolston proclaimed these amazing doctrines from his pulpit his congregation was quite naturally astonished. But the whisper went abroad that though the preacher was perhaps more than a little cracked, he seemed a clergyman of sterling character, and probably meant well.

Woolston now decided to resume his studies which he continued for fifteen years without publishing anything further. But in 1720 he began the issue of a series of publications, which was continued until his trial and imprisonment for his blasphemous discourses on the miracles. While professing to champion the theories of those early Christian Fathers who insisted on the really allegorical meaning of alleged historical events, Woolston delivered most bitter blows against the lucre-loving clergy and their literal rendering of Holy Writ.

In revenge the clergy deprived him of his fellowship. He then settled in London, and there he could have lived in easy circumstances had he not insisted on defraying all the expenses of the publication and sale of his works. These writings seem to have enjoyed a considerable circulation. Then, charged with blasphemy, he was tried at the Guildhall and sentenced to a year's incarceration and a fine of £100. This sum, as a result of his voluntary poverty, he was unable to pay. Woolston was also ordered to find securities to the amount of £2,000 against any repetition of his offence. But he proudly refused to retract his published opinions or promise to remain silent. His imprisonment, however, was mitigated as he was granted the fullest freedom accorded by the rules of the King's Bench. Moreover, he appears to have resided in his own house when he died. Wool-

ston's earliest biographer, whose identity seems uncertain, informs us that he viewed death with philosophic calm. For, a few minutes before his death he uttered these words, "This is a struggle all men must go through, and which I bear not only patiently, but with willingness. He then immediately closed his eyes and lips with his own fingers, seemingly with a design to compose his face with decency, without the help of a friend's hand, and then expired."

His grave is in St. George's Church in the Borough. Men tended to regard him as a victim of pious persecution. Clarke, to his credit, strove to secure Woolston's release, and Whiston the scholarly translator of Josephus laboured in the same cause. Widely as they differed in opinion, Whiston testifies that Woolston "was in his younger days a clergyman of very good reputation, a scholar, well esteemed as a preacher, charitable to the poor, and beloved by all good men who knew him." It is a sad commentary on the intolerance of the times that Whiston himself was driven from his mathematical chair at Cambridge, in which he succeeded the mighty Newton, as punishment for his unorthodox religious opinions.

It has been suggested as a possibility that Woolston's defence of Scriptural allegory may have been perfectly sincere. Yet the evidence appears overwhelming that Woolston, at least in his later years, utilized this doctrine as a mask for his purely Deistical convictions. That so ripe a scholar should depart completely from Christ was an idea distasteful to his clerical contemporaries. So the clergy preferred to regard him as slightly insane. Yet, whatever Woolston's deliberate intentions may have been, his discourses strengthened the sceptical movement and secured no converts to revealed religion. Skelton and Stackhouse considered Woolston a bitter assailant of the faith. Voltaire smiled with satisfaction, while Tabaraud, a keen student of Woolston, as Dr. Torrey states: "decides that Woolston was purposely attacking Christianity."

In his earlier essays Woolston seems to defend religion, while he is unsparing in his denunciations of professional Christians whom he stigmatizes as "hireling priests." Later in his career he expresses a profound admiration for the genius of Anthony Collins. From this period to the close of his life, Norman Torrey concludes that "it becomes increasingly evident that his allegorical method is merely a veil which he attempted (and with what success!) to cover his attacks on the literal word and the clergy who preached it. It was only by such methods that Woolston could attack so virulently the literal word and keep so long out of prison, even in 'tolerant England.'"

When animadverting on the marvel of the Gadarene exorcism Woolston anticipates much that has been written since. In common humanity, Woolston says, devil-possessed men should never have been permitted to desecrate the resting place of the dead. Even more remarkable, pigs were not known in the land where the miracle happened, nor could they be herded or used as food where Jewish law was observed. Again, a miracle worthy of performance should render some useful service, and there can be no moral justification for the drowning of the swine. Under the earlier English law Jesus would have been executed as a wizard, and Woolston actually suggests that the Jews would have been justified in punishing him as a thief. And, had a similar miracle been ascribed to Mahomet, Christians would have promptly denounced him as a sorcerer.

All the alleged miracles recorded in Scripture are pelted with pitiless ridicule. Woolston derides the story of Lazarus and the other tales relating to the restoration of the dead to life. But in his treatment of

the resurrection of Christ himself, Woolston perhaps displays his greatest powers of irony and invective. Immense was the scandal occasioned, and no fewer than sixty answers to Woolston's Discourses appeared. The cry of blasphemy arose, but Woolston remained calm. He reminded his assailants that: "If any of our School of Freethinkers should say of his opponent that he's profane and blasphemous, he would be reprimanded for want of wit, temper and good manners." And then turning on his pious persecutors, one of whom he names, Woolston asserts that: "Mr. Atkinson's Argument for the Persecution of me, is much the same with that, which John Calvin used for the persecution of that great philosopher Servetus; the injustice and cruelty of whose death and sufferings is a greater reproach to the name of Calvin, than the martyrdom of any Protestant can be to the memory of any Popish Prelate." Woolston assuredly did not hint a doubt or hesitate dislike, but invariably wrote and spoke plainly, and to the point.

T. F. PALMER.

Studies in the New Testament.

THE SEARCH FOR THE TEXT.

III.

In the first paper of this series, I pointed out that any man, not fully equipped according to the standard set by Biblical Critics themselves, who ventured to make any contribution to Biblical criticism adverse to Bible claims, and who happened to mistake a mood for a tense or vice-versa, would immediately be pounced upon as a hopeless and incompetent ignoramus. I had in mind the so-called *Reply* by Bishop Lightfoot to *Supernatural Religion*. The fact that such a mistake or such mistakes could be immediately rectified and that in any case they have no bearing whatever on any conclusions, is swept aside by the indignant Christian scholars. For them it is sufficient to point out a man said tense instead of mood, and his work must therefore be thoroughly and finally branded as outside the pale of controversy.

An illustration of this came my way the other day when one critic who did me the honour to read my article, wrote in indignant and contemptuous tones of my lack of scholarship, and my stupid mistake which no schoolboy could possibly make, and which showed how little I knew what I was writing about. After repeatedly asking what was the mistake, my critic triumphantly pointed out that I had written "indicative tense" instead of "indicative mood"! No other criticism except that what I had said had been said before and better said, was ventured, and the implication must be that therefore Bible claims had been completely vindicated. If not, for the life of me I cannot see how a slip of the pen could possibly affect my argument or even the fact that what I put forward had been said before and better said.

If Biblical investigators are now agreed that we don't know what is the true text of the New Testament, I am very glad they have admitted it. But as far as I am able to see they do not admit it in so many words. One has to read hundreds of volumes full of windy froth for the most part, apology upon apology, excuse upon excuse, before we can disentangle the plain truth that the true New Testament text is hopelessly and irretrievably lost. However much I may mistake a mood for a tense that fact emerges as clearly as the noonday sun on a hot summer's day, and no calling attention to any error on any part can alter it one scrap.

The early gospels were translated almost immediately into Latin. The Old Latin text is found in many manuscripts that have come down to us, and as these differ in thousands of places, which of them shows the true text? Nobody knows. Nobody can find out either. Nobody knew in Jerome's day, and Jerome lived between 340 A.D. and 420 A.D. When Jerome came to investigate the question he found that however much the Greek MSS. differed from each other, it was nothing like the way in which the old Latin MSS. differed from each other, and he made up his mind to revise the Latin translation. For the Old Testament, he found it necessary to learn Hebrew and to get Hebrew scholars to help him; and for the New Testament he put forward all he could and knew to get an approximately correct translation into better Latin than the Old Latin. He was by no means encouraged in his labours. He has left us a preface which shows his difficulties. "For who," he pointed out, "whether learned or unlearned, who should take the book into his hand and find what he read differ from that to the taste of which he had been accustomed, would not immediately cry out against Jerome, calling him a falsifier and guilty of sacrilege because of his daring to add, change and correct anything in ancient books? . . . For if reliance be placed on Latin copies, let them answer on which? For there are just as many exemplars as codices, and if the truth be sought on the ground of numbers, why should we not turn to the Greek original and correct what was rendered amiss by vicious interpreters, what was more perversely amended by unskilled presumers or what was added or changed by drowsy copyists?" What a delightful picture this gives of the handing down of God's Holy Word by God's chosen Church! If God did not look after the Latin translation, why didn't he? So as to allow Jerome to write as above and make another translation? What nonsense!

In any case Jerome could only use the Greek copies which he approved of, and his judgment on their value was surely not worth more than the judgment of anybody else. How could anybody say which Greek copy approximated the "originals"? What possible test could be applied?

Jerome's version was very unpopular in the Church in spite of the encouragement of Pope Damasus. And even a century later, Leo I was actually quoting from the Old Latin text. In fact, it took some centuries before Jerome's text began to be accepted and looked upon as God's Precious Word (in Latin) and it is with some revision, now known as the Vulgate.

Well, have we a Vulgate text in mint condition? Alas, no. The fortunes of the Vulgate text is a thorough farce. In some MSS. the Vulgate is mixed up with the Old Latin and even centuries before printing came, the various Bishops of the Church were in an awful stew about the corruptions and absurdities with which Holy Writ was filled—and by Holy Writ I mean, of course, the version produced or supposed to be produced, by Jerome. Unfortunately for them, all versions had to be copied by hand, and even though a special department dealing with mistakes made by copyists called a *Correctorium* was established, errors crept in just the same. In fact, the *Correctoria*, says Dr. Tregellas, "afford at times, good evidence against the modern Vulgate, showing that it exhibits a Latin text which has suffered ever since the thirteenth century." And yet Roman Catholic scholars actually talk about their Church alone having the true text of God Almighty's precious word. There are, as a matter of fact, over 8,000 MSS. of the Vulgate text, and most of these have never been examined. Those that have are absolutely hopeless for the Biblical critic. Dr. Kenyon says that "when we come to try and recover the

original text of the Vulgate, we are confronted with a task at least as hard as that of recovering the original text of the Greek Bible itself."

When printing was invented, and the Roman Catholic Church saw in it not only the invention of the Devil, but her utter surrender to its power, Pope Sixtus V., in 1589, produced a printed version of the Vulgate packed with all the credentials the Papal Power could enforce.

The Pope himself had read the whole of the proof sheets, which really meant that God, Jesus and the Holy Ghost guided his eye and hand. It fulfilled the whole of the requirements enumerated by the Council of Trent, and it explicitly insisted that it should be the great exemplar from which all future editions should be copied. And it even insisted that any Latin M.S. not conforming to its readings in every way should have no authority either. Unluckily, either the Pope or his Divine Mentors went wrong somewhere. This edition of the Vulgate is what the vulgar would call "a scream." It is packed with errors even too gross for the credulous Catholic. As Tregellas says, the Pope and "his coadjutors" did not know really what they had to do.

Anyway, this edition disappeared as fast as the authorities could get hold of the copies, and the next Pope, Clement VIII., produced another edition in 1592 packed with variations and different readings from that of Sixtus's, and he insisted that his alone was the true uncorrupted version of God's Own Word. And this is—more or less—the version in use by the Church to-day, though Roman Catholic scholars who know anything of their job, know also it is packed with faults which ought to be corrected, but which they cannot correct without admitting Clement to be wrong; and for a Pope guided by the Trinity to be wrong is unthinkable—or rather it is thinkable but had better be left alone. The fact remains, however unpleasant it may be to orthodox believers, that there is no Vulgate edition which can be relied upon. And even if there were, what possible authority has it? Merely because Jerome revised it from the Old Latin texts? What authority has any Old Latin text? Which is the "original" text and how did Jerome discover it? No one knows. No answer could possibly be given. Nothing but faith and faith alone in the infallibility of the Church can authenticate any text. Most Protestant scholars are beginning to find this out. The Bible and the Bible alone as the one grand Rule of Faith can only be insisted upon by the ignorant and stupid itinerant Evangelist. No one who has studied the making of the English translation—which will be dealt with in the next article—can talk of the Bible and nothing but the Bible as the Rock of Christ. It is pure nonsense.

H. CUTNER.

A little work a little play
To keep us going—and so good-day!

A little warmth, a little light
Of love's bestowing—and so good-night.

A little fun, to match the sorrow
Of each day's growing—and so, good-morrow.

A little trust that when we die
We reap our sowing—and so good-bye!

G. du Maurier (Trilby).

We are not here to enquire what we would prefer but what is truth?—Huxley.

If Christ Came to Ulster?

THE founder of Christianity is reported to have said that he came to bring a sword to the world; and the historical record of the bloody conflicts between nations as well as of internecine wars between sections of different nations would seem to prove the accuracy of his statement. The Christian Era notwithstanding the eloquent protests and strenuous efforts of Atheists to preserve peace, bristles with wars, many of them instigated by priestly influence.

It is many years since a book entitled *If Christ Came to Chicago*, was published and widely read. We British people are intensely interested in the communal crimes of other nations, while we conveniently affect to minimise our own. The wrong-doer can easily find reasons, explanations and excuses for his wrong-doing, and he can state them with the more confidence when he knows that a great mass of influential opinion will back him up. Thus in the end of the day the national crimes of Britain, for example, come to be toned down to "mistaken policy," or at the worst "administrative blunders."

A great many British people derive profound satisfaction from commemorating ancient battles on the very fields where they were fought. At one such recent commemoration the principal speaker concluded by saying that we were so disposed to think of our claims upon our country that we forgot the claims of our country upon us. The speaker did not develop this theme to any great extent. And the fat, comfortable, pious bourgeoisie of Britain have little time for anything that pricks their complacency. They in the main are "the country"—the poor workers are potential cannon fodder to whom when war is contemplated, the militaristic dope is administered; and who when it is launched, march away amid the crash of brass bands and wild hurrahs on a mad mission of indiscriminate murder of their fellow beings whom they never saw or see—and against whom they have no imaginable grudge of any kind. The present financial crisis is making the common peoples of Europe realize for whom their sons and brothers were murdered and mutilated in the Great War to end War. When the various common populations of all lands realize that they have a community of interest against the financial magnates, war will come to an end—not before.

Just the other week British Christians were pointing in horror—and exultation?—at the depredations of "republican mobs" in Spain, who were firing Roman Catholic Churches and Convents. But it is another story when Orangemen are detected setting fire to Convents in Ulster! Armagh has just been an impressive spectacle of the effect of 1900 years teaching of the "verities" of the Christian Faith. It seems that a Catholic procession returning from a demonstration were set upon by Orangemen, and this was the start of a regular religious Donnybrook. There was a mutual smashing of shops; there was a wanted crusade of pillage and arson; nine or ten shops were wrecked—even Woolworths did not escape! The Sacred Heart Convent Buildings and Parochial Halls were burned. The police had to charge again and again with batons in dispersing the rioters.

The ironical situation is that the King is the "Defender of the Faith" of the Orangemen; and it certainly seems high time that those who do not share that Faith should agitate for the deliverance of His Majesty from this paradoxical position. Revisal of the Constitution in this respect is clearly overdue.

What would Christ say if he came to Ulster? What would happen to him? Perhaps God alone knows.

and will not countenance, or approve of, such a visit. Christ would stand an uncanny risk of being dis-membered by gangs of rival demonstrators! Any-way, he would require to be well armed with modern weapons, otherwise he would run a serious risk of being killed by kindness. When is God going to save Ireland? She has been beseeching him to do so for centuries.

IGNOTUS.

The Book Shop.

For those readers who have a preference for rustic poetry, I can recommend the poems of John Clare, selected and edited by Edmund Blunden and Alan Porter. The volume is published with the usual good taste of R. Cobden Sanderson, and the price is 10s. 6d. net. It contains all that is representative of Clare, and the name of Edmund Blunden may be safely taken as a sign of trustworthy editorship. Clare does not, and perhaps could not involve the reader in miry metaphysics, but that fact is his charm. He writes and rhymes simply, but, to the country lover, who can smell the falsity in much of modern rural poetry, Clare puts down on paper a picture of the country, in many places as beautiful as those of Constable. There is a delight in remembrance; memory, able to torture, is also able to soothe and console, and the poet can sketch for all time, country sights and sounds, the clarity and truth of which find acceptance with those who have tasted the earth and found it sweet. I confess to being one of those who have no fault to find with the earth, it is more kind than some human beings, and I offer a chair and hospitality to all those from Homer onwards, who do not tear, insult, and lacerate the thoughts about mansions in the skies, and heavens incapable of proof. For a season, the mind is responsive to the shift and veer of fortune, it records pain and pleasure, is circumscribed by many limitations; he who can bring to it simple pleasure by recollection should not be lightly cast aside. Such a man, in my opinion, is John Clare; a breath of country air is necessary for physical and mental health. In the biographical introduction Mr. Blunden has investigated material sufficiently to give the lie to the damned twist in human nature that prefers to think the worst instead of the best. At the age of twelve or thirteen he was employed by a farmer and he saw a farm-labourer fall from the top of his loaded wagon and break his neck. This affected Clare's reason for a time. Many years ago I cut one of Clare's poems out of the *Freethinker*, and used it as a fitting book-mark for my copy of Shelley. The poem, which is included in the volume before me will, I think, stand the scrutiny of reproduction; it is entitled *Summer Evening* :—

The frog half fearful jumps across the path,
And little mouse that leaves its hole at eve
Nibbles with timid dread beneath the swath;
My rustling steps awhile their joys deceive,
Till past,—and then the cricket sings more strong
And grasshoppers in merry mood still wear
The short night weary with their fretting song.
Up from behind the molehill jumps the hare,
Cheat of his chosen bed, and from the bank
The yellow hammer flutters in short fears
From off its nest hid in the grasses rank,
And drops again when no more noise it hears.
Thus nature's human link and endless thrall,
Proud man, still seems the enemy of all."

Clare was a square-peg, and this misfortune is posterity's gain. He was one, whom, in Blunden's "Forefathers," "toiled in the brook, lolled in the shade," but he had to set his impressions down. His theology is nebulous, and unobtrusive, but he has my admiration. Half a day's reaping in a cornfield with a sickle racks the body, provokes an ache from a hundred parts of the body. In your sweep you behead wild peppermint, sorrel, speedwell, thistles, and toadflax; you are at the mercy of the weather, in finding bedding for cattle, and food for human beings, and Clare's love for beauty, in spite of the heavy demand of physical labour embroidered it with

song and recorded it in memorable lines. In glancing through the biographical outline in the volume, I find mention of the *Freethinker*, July, 1901; without flattery, this is a compliment. For Freethought, having a nose for the humbug, falsity, and rank impostures in the train of a Christian ethic has also a nose for the best that has been spoken and written. Without this dynamic it would have been dead years ago. This back-heel for the "no-sayers" whose shepherds consort with millionaires—sheep shearers whose days are numbered.

I wonder if readers have ever sampled the flavour of that Russian writer Nicolai Iyeskov. He can be obtained in numerous cheap editions. His *Cathedral Folk* and *The Sentry* are both worthy of shelf-room; this writer was a contemporary of Tchekov, and he wrote with a most vivid sense of reality keeping free of the obscure. Jarrolds have an edition of his *Enchanted Wanderer*, which I have just read. It is as laughable as *Don Quixote*, and its aim is as serious. In narrative form, it is the story of a monk so monstrously improbable, that one is left in no doubt about the author's meaning. Iyeskov was no friend of the Russian Church, and this becomes apparent in his style at a time when it was difficult to challenge or oppose those beautiful ideas of Russian shepherds enforced by the knout, prison and Siberia. A preface to this book by Gorki would serve as an excellent model of compression for Shaw or any other writer who mistakes length for depth. Of Iyeskov he writes, "His heroes are, of course, people of very doubtful saintliness, for they have no time to worry about their own salvation; they are continually concerned about the salvation and comfort of their fellow beings. They do not abandon the world for Theban deserts, virgin forests, caves and hermitages in which, alone with God, they implore him to grant them a pure and beatific life in Paradise." The Middle Ages had a surfeit of heaven gazers, and the results are known. No one will quarrel with them for they have been explained, but there is still lingering in many places the trace of their misdirection, which is not disguised by calling it Spiritualism or any other fancy name to conceal its true identity. The *Enchanted Wanderer*, whilst not being a cure for melancholy, will wrinkle the straightest face with laughter; the hero is Don Quixote's brother.

C-DE-B.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

RELIGION IN PRACTICE.

SIR,—The following "gem" is the reply in the "Enquiry bureau" to a correspondent, in the foremost Catholic paper, the *Universe* of this week. In page 8, last column, paragraph 2: "Yes, a Catholic who deliberately eats a beefsteak on a Friday and is run over by a motor-car goes to hell, unless he receives the grace to make an act of perfect Contrition."

Millions of people may eat beefsteak on Friday and yet it seems very unfair that God should send Roman Catholics to hell for eating beef, especially when they are his chosen people. Surely the Pope, who holds the keys to heaven can help matters by seeing that some consideration is shown to such erring Catholics. Likewise, all Catholics, have to pass through a period of probation in Purgatory, a mysterious field of fire, before they are allowed to enter heaven. Others, especially Freethinkers, do not get this privilege; they get no choice. Seemingly they are destined, by the Father of Mercy and Love, directly to the place of woe.

A. ANTHONY.

ALL EYES ON STOCKPORT!

SIR,—The action of the Stockport saints, who do not from their labours rest, and your incisive leading article of this week (August 23), together constitute a clarion call to the brethren and sisters in other centres contain-

ing public libraries, wherein the *Freethinker* is not to be found, to be up and doing in the blessed task of pressing for its admission thereto; so that its light may shine in darkness; that the benighted may by it be illumined; and that lovers of the Truth may be refreshed in the course of their journey through this "Wade." Amen!

IGNOTUS.

WHAT IS FREE?

SIR,—My sole object in writing, was to protest against the suggestion made by a correspondent, that a Catholic was to be treated differently from anyone else, because he was not a "Free man in a Free State," and I tried to point out in my letters, in what sense both terms were fallacious. If I have not pleased Mr. Fraser, I cannot help it.

I accept Mr. Fraser's correction in the second paragraph of his letter, as he *did* qualify his statement. Still, I am unable to comprehend in what way I am at fault in accepting the Pope's ruling in religious matters, if I think he can establish his claim to be taken as an authority. Surely, this is a matter men must judge for themselves. Mr. Fraser boasts that he is an individualist, taking no one's ruling unconditionally; but that is all the more reason why he should concede to other men the liberty he claims for himself. It would be the height of absurdity for an individualist to penalize other men because they happened to differ from him.

With regard to the doctor and solicitor, I cannot see that I stultify my reason by accepting unconditionally their opinion on Medicine and Law. I must do so, for I have no special knowledge of either.

The Catholic Church comes before the world with certain claims. It is open to men to examine them, just as it is open to men to examine the various cults and systems of thought, that are in open competition for men's allegiance. If the Dalai Lama's claim is better than any other, well there is no reason why a man should not accept it. But I am not concerned with it.

Bigotry and dogmatism are not the monopoly of religious men. There is such a thing as a bigoted Secularist, and there could be no better example of bigotry than the suggestion that a fellow-citizen should be penalized because he happens to hold a certain religious belief. The individualist, above all men, should be tolerant.

W. F. REES.

[This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.]

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LONDON.

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FINSBURY PARK N.S.S.—11.15, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—A Lecture.

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

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. L. Ebury—A Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, Sunday, at 7.30, Mr. E. Bryant; Wednesday, September 3, at Rushcroft Road, near Brixton Town Hall, at 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury; Friday, September 4, at Liverpool Street, Camberwell Gate, at 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury.

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, Mrs. E. Venton—A Lecture.

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COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S.—Saturday, August 29, at 8.0, inside the level. Messrs. Keys and Byrne. Sunday, August 30, at 3.30, Messrs. Legge and Byrne. Saturday, September 5, at 8.0, Messrs. Keys and Byrne.

BURNLEY MARKET.—Sunday, August 30, at 8.0, Mr. J. Clayton.

CLITHEROE.—Thursday, September 3, at 7.45.—Mr. J. Clayton.

DARLINGTON (Market Steps).—Sunday, August 30, at 7.30.—Mr. J. T. Brighton.

DURHAM (Market Steps).—Tuesday, September 1, at 8.0.—Mr. J. T. Brighton.

ENFIELD (Barnes Square).—Friday, August 28, at 8.0.—Mr. J. Clayton.

GREAT HARWOOD.—Monday, August 30, at 8.0.—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 City 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.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. G. Whitehead will lecture in Manchester commencing at Alexandra Park on Saturday, August 29, with Sunday afternoon and evening at Stevenson Square. Further details will be announced at meetings.

NEWCASTLE (Bigg Market).—Wednesday, September 3, at 8.0.—Mr. J. T. Brighton.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Board School) Thursday, August 27, at 7.30, Miss Marsh will lead a discussion on "Secular Education."

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