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Views and Opinions.

Dope.

In another part of this issue we publish a letter from a reader in Vienna on a recent "Views and Opinions" dealing with Socialism and Freethought. After the article appeared we received a number of letters, criticising or approving, but as many of these went over the same ground, and some mistook denunciation for argument, only a few were published. We were not taking a vote of readers, but were interested in getting their points of view. The issue raised in the letters, and dealt with in our notes, was whether such a society as the N.S.S. and such a paper as this one ought to undertake the advocacy of Socialism, or whether the N.S.S. ought to give the Freethinkers of the country a lead in the direction of Socialism. Our own point of view was that this is not the task of either the society or the paper. In our judgment our task is to bring into one organization, so far as is possible, all who believe in the complete secularization of the State, the harmfulness of religion as applied to everyday life, and in freedom of thought, speech and publication. Outside of such common purposes and aims there remains, and must always remain so long as society is healthy, the same opportunities for varieties of opinion on ethics, economics, politics, and sociology that exist at present. The chief distinction would be that whereas differences are to-day largely treated as undesirable, they would then be regarded as desirable, and they would continuously advance to a higher and higher level.

* * *

Freethought and Socialism.

I do not know whether Mr. Wilshere is an Englishman or a foreigner, but I assume that he is at least in close touch with both the Socialistic and the Freethought movements on the continent, and print his letter mainly on that account. And it is clear that

when Mr. Wilshere says that "Socialism has made the shattering of religious superstitions one of its aims," he has Continental Socialism in view. In this country, while it is true that nearly all the early Socialists were Freethinkers, present day Socialism, with the exception of one small body of Socialists, not merely does not attack religion, but talks religion on every possible occasion, and loudly proclaims the Christian character of its aims. Freethought to-day receives little direct assistance from English Socialism. Nor is it quite clear that Socialism anywhere makes Freethought, as I understand its sociological implications, and its aims. The right of the individual to express and propagate any and every opinion on any and every subject is not, so far as my observations go, one of the professed aims of Socialism either in this country or elsewhere. I need only add here, that it *was* the professed aim of the Socialistic pioneers, and it could and should be a part of a scientific sociology, but between what *was* and what *might* be, and what *is* there exists a wide difference. The truth is that there exists more than one theory of Socialism, and while one might permit freedom of thought another might easily discard it as a mere shibboleth. This is not the place to decide which is the more admirable theory, but it is worth while, in the interests of clear thinking, to point out that "Socialism" is rapidly becoming a "blessed word," and while to one it involves a very militant Atheism, to another it involves "the establishment of Christ's reign on earth." The one thing in which all schools of Socialism agree is a denunciation of "Capitalism," and the faults of that are so obvious that not many will be found to deny their existence.

* * *

Agreement with a Difference.

There is one passage in Mr. Wilshere's letter with which I can heartily agree, if he would permit a little alteration. This is:—

Therefore by propagating Freethought, by bringing to the knowledge of the people at large that they have been the dupes of a system of religious fraud for the last two thousand years, one cannot help but be of assistance to Socialism and antagonistic to Capitalism.

Which I would amend by an alteration of the last sentence to:—

cannot help but be of assistance to creating a scientific sociology, or the creation of a social State in which the interests of the whole shall become the conscious aim of each.

I agree that so far as people are made genuine Freethinkers, and so far as their minds are cleared of all sorts of superstition, so far, we are helping to create a useful form of citizenship by enabling men and women to elaborate a scientific sociology, whether the form reached be that of Socialism or any other 'ism.

I also agree that Socialism is an atheistic system. I have said that many times, although to say that Socialism is Atheistic is not the same thing as to say that Atheism is Socialistic. From my point of view, which is, I submit, a strictly logical one, any social theory is Atheistic which does not take a form of supernaturalism for its basis. But if I hold that Socialism is Atheistic, I say exactly the same thing of Conservatism, or Liberalism, or Capitalism, or Fascism, or Autocracy. And this is because the principles of any one of these may be laid down without any necessary reference to God, a soul, or a future life. Each of them, including Socialism, deals with social and economic forces as deterministic in character, and proceeds on the assumption that, within the limits of our knowledge, they may be directed and modified in action in the same way that scientists modify and direct other natural forces. If anyone will take up an authoritative treatise on any or all of these theories of sociology he will find that they leave religion out as decisively as does a scientific treatise on physics. It is true that some scientists will drag in religion, but the same is true of some Socialists, and also of some of the advocates of the other theories named. But their belief in religion no more follows from their sociology than the God of Professor Jeans follows from his science. It is also true that some social theories may more easily permit the intrusion of religion than do others, but that does not affect what has been said.

* * *

Science and Pseudo-Science.

I may illustrate, in another way, the statement that while Freethought makes for a general enlightenment all round, and so helps struggling humanity to elaborate a more scientific sociology, it is yet committed to no definite form of economics or definite theory of sociology. It is undeniable that from the earliest generations religion has been closely connected with a number of different social facts and institutions—morals, the family, etc. The older the institution is the closer the connexion. And it is also clear that even to-day there are a vast number of people who take this historic connexion as causal in character. They are convinced that the institution cannot exist for long apart from religion. Now a scientific Freethought does not deny the association, nor does it deny that to early generations this connexion appeared to be self-evident. The case for Freethought here is that morality, marriage, the family, government, any and every social institution is essentially independent of the religious form in which it is expressed, and it asserts that it is a necessary part of scientific education to establish this distinction. When the religious pleader argues that society will disintegrate if religion is destroyed, the Freethinker replies, rubbish, society rests on the gregarious instincts of human nature. When we are told that morality will die if we give up the belief in God, the Freethinker replies, nonsense, moral laws represent the physiology of social life, they may be modified, new "values" may be created, but morality can only disappear with the dying out of the human race. And so on with numerous other instances that might be given. Religion may be mixed up with anything, but the work of the ages has been to clear religion out of the various departments of active life, and so leave society to function in a freer manner and with greater benefit to its members. It is one of the things of which Freethinkers should be proud that Freethought has been the greatest instrument in this work of liberation.

What is "Dope" ?

I agree also with those who say that under Capitalism religion is used as a "dope" to keep people content when they should be discontented, ignorant when they should have knowledge, passive under injustice when they should be actively resistant. No one can believe this more firmly than I do, or express it more strongly than I have expressed it; and I have given plenty of historical evidence in support of the charge. All this really belongs to the elementary phase of the attack on religion. The mere diversion of human energy as seen in the performance of religious ceremonies, the money spent on the up-keep of religious institutions, the historic teaching of the duty of obedience to constituted power (which is found more strongly emphasized in Soviet Russia and Fascist Italy than it is with the most conservative in this country, and which is one of the most disquieting features of the time) the manner in which the oppressed have been told it is their duty to submit, and that all will be set right in some future state—these and other things are quite enough to prove the case against religion in general and against Christianity in particular. The mentality created by the teachings and practices above outlined must be destroyed to the point of representing no more than a casual aberration if social progress is to be made certain.

But "Dope" is a very elastic kind of word, or, at least, it admits of a very elastic interpretation. As used in controversy it should mean a word that befogs, or bemuses the mind, the substitution of a word for a thought, and unfortunately that is true of many other words beside "religion." "Patriotism"—quite a good word in its way—may become, as was seen during the war, the very worst kind of dope. "Anarchy" or "Socialism" or "Communism" serves a very powerful dope to the readers of the *Morning Post*, and "Capitalism" or the "State" will serve as dope for an entirely different class of person. There is no substantial difference, certainly little sociological difference between the "dope" of those words and that of God or of "Christ and him crucified." Any word or phrase, if used often enough, becomes inevitably associated with profound trust or distrust. In the end the reaction to the word is the one that is aimed at by those who use it, and when this reaction is firmly established with either a group or with a nation it takes the place of thinking. And when that stage is reached we need a genuine Freethought to help us out of the confusion in which we have landed.

But agreeing with this I still do not see why religion is an essential part of capitalism. I do realize, quite clearly that Freethought would not be regarded by the rulers of a capitalist state as in their interest; but, then I really do not think that it would be regarded by the rulers of any State as in their interest. Certainly, up to date, no State has ever encouraged it. But I will deal with this next week. I have already overstepped my space.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

1564.

SHAKESPEARE, whose master mind all thought could range,
Was born in the same year that Calvin died;
For this sour preacher of the Crucified
Mankind received a glorious exchange.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

A pity about the people! they are brave enough courages, but they have heads like soapboilers.—Schiller.

Shakespeare's Religion.

"I am convinced that Shakespeare was the unparalleled humanist in the literature of the world."

G. W. Foote.

"Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubim."

Matthew Arnold.

ORTHODOX people repeat, with the faithfulness of gramophones, the statement that Shakespeare was a Christian. They wish to claim the greatest of the World's writers as one of themselves, and from time to time publish volumes of special pleading, which would have brought blushes to the hardened face of an Old Bailey advocate. Lengthy disquisitions, as numerous as "quills upon the fretful porcupine," have been published to demonstrate that Shakespeare was a Puritan, a Spiritualist, an Evangelical Christian, and other things beyond count. Baconians dispute Shakespeare's claim to his own books. Other surprising people allege that the alleged Christian Trinity inspired his works. One of the most interesting works is that by Father Bowden on *The Religion of Shakespeare*, in which the author seeks to show that the great dramatist was a Roman Catholic. This book is the work of a man who has read Shakespeare, and its scholarship is sound as far as it goes. It is, however, a monument of misdirected energy, and criticism, sharp as Shylock's knife, soon pricks Father Bowden's pretty bubble. Shakespearean commentators, adepts at bringing startling meanings out of the great dramatist's text, as a conjurer brings eggs, birds, and rabbits from a hat. But this attempt to prove the author of "Hamlet" a Romanist easily surpasses ordinary legerdemain, and leaves the reader wondering, if not gasping.

At the outset we are asked to observe, as a proof of the poet's genuine Romanism, how he employs Catholic vestments and ritual as symbols of "things, high, pure, and true." Why, think you? Because he makes wily old Henry the Fourth say that he kept his:—

"Presence, like a robe pontifical
Ne'er seen but wondered at."

This, be it noted, is a phrase which as much recalls non-Christian as Roman Catholic sacerdotal pomp. Unbelievers employ such similes daily. The monasteries were destroyed, it is alleged, through avarice. Therefore Timon's tirade against "gold, yellow, glittering, precious gold" must be Shakespeare's protest against the greedy nature of the Reformation. Nay, is it not clenched by the detail that "this yellow slace," as Shakespeare says, "will knit and break religions?"

This curious perversion is applied to a number of phrases which Shakespeare used with all a poet's licence. A handful of customary, everyday expressions put dramatically into various mouths, such as "God rest all Christian souls," of Juliet's talkative nurse, are cited as proof that Shakespeare was a devoted disciple of the Romish faith. One precious morsel may be quoted. Portia says playfully to her lover:—

"Aye, but I fear you speak upon the rack,
When men enforced do speak anything."

Father Bowden, with a plenteous want of humour, actually demands, "Is not this an expression of contemptuous disbelief in all the evidence upon which so many pretended Papist conspirators suffered the death of traitors." Where cannot such an eagle-eye spy Roman Catholicism? He would find it embedded in *The Analects of Confucius* and *Alice in Wonderland*. Even the pretty conceit of Lorenzo about the stars:—

"Still giving to the young-eyed cherubim."

must be also a proof. We admit cheerfully it need not have been drawn solely from the pages of that old Freethinker, Montaigne. It was the tradition of fifteen centuries, and of antiquity before that. Why need Shakespeare have been a Catholic, therefore, because he employed a tradition common to Christian and Pagan alike.

Father Bowden is on firmer ground and far happier when he is dealing with the religious opinions of Shakespeare's relations. He reminds us that Mary Arden, the poet's mother, came of a Catholic family. The probability is that she was herself a Catholic, but there is no evidence either way. Shakespeare's father is not so doubtful. He was a member of the Stratford Corporation during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and must have conformed to the Protestant religion. The result seems that Shakespeare himself was brought up under a probably Catholic mother, and a father who was, at least, a professing Protestant.

Father Bowden has not only failed to prove his case, but he has given it away completely. If the circumstances of Shakespeare's childhood were, as Father Bowden depicts, the more clearly is emphasized Shakespeare's own revolt from the Romish Church.

This assertion of Shakespeare's Catholicism is a most unwarranted inference. Shakespeare was so ignorant of Catholic ritual that he makes Juliet ask the friar if she shall come "at evening mass." No Catholic could have made that mistake. "King John" is, obviously, not the work of a Romanist. The purport of "Love's Labour Lost" is to show the uselessness of vows. The Duke, in "Measure for Measure," playing the part of a friar preparing a criminal for death, gives Claudio consolation. Not a word of Christian doctrine, not a syllable of sacrificial salvation, and sacramental forgiveness is introduced. The omission is most significant.

Moreover, Shakespeare's poems and plays are full of eloquent passages directed against the celibate ideals of the Catholic Church. In a wonderful line in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," he pictures the forsaken sisterhood of the cloister:—

"Chanting faint hymns to the cold, fruitless moon."

Elsewhere, in a more Rabelaisian mood, he refers to something being as fit "as the nun's lips to the friar's mouth," and other equally striking passages might be quoted. Shakespeare's own view of life is never ascetic nor pious. He was himself known to be irreligious, and the epitaph on Mrs. Hall, Shakespeare's eldest daughter, clearly implies that his life has not been one of piety:—

"Witty above her sexe, but that's not all,
Wise to salvation was good Mistris Hall,
Something of Shakespeare was in that, but this
Wholly of Him with whom she's now in bliss."

She derived from her father her powers of wit, but none of the influences which conduced to her salvation.

The one fatal objection to Father Bowden's whole contention is that neither Queen Elizabeth nor King James could have publicly favoured Shakespeare if he were a Papist. Nor could the Pembrokes have given him their patronage. Father Bowden, however, does make one point. He shows quite clearly that Shakespeare was no Puritan, no conventional Reformation Protestant. In no sense was Shakespeare a bigot. With equal interest and equal ease he portrays Hamlet's philosophy, Wolsey's pity, and Falstaff's blasphemy. In his great tragedies he deals with the deepest issues of life and conduct, but he never points to the Cross as a solution. In an age when religious wars and schisms convulsed all Europe, it is remarkable that Shakespeare turned his

back on Christianity. Not, observe, from hostility, for he was too free from prejudice for that. It was from the knowledge that, as a philosophy of life, it threw no useful light over the deeper abysses of human thought, and over the awful tides of human circumstance. On these momentous questions his own views were Secularistic. The greatest of the World's writers stood outside all churches and all religion. In this, as in his humanism, he seems to have been telepathic with "the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come."

MIMNERMUS.

Religion and Mr. H. G. Wells.

It is an outstanding fact that while many of our leading modern writers are producing works that cannot be claimed as virtually Christian in their general conception and exposition of life, they are nevertheless writing much that helps to prolong the reign of all kinds of religious belief. Some of these beliefs are very definite and many are exceedingly vague, but they make it possible for the priest and parson to maintain the power of the Church to an unwanted degree. Frequently this power is "made manifest" when and where the average person might least expect it to be felt. As in Parliament, in the case of Blasphemy, the Sunday Question, and the question of Education versus Religious Instruction in the schools.

That the chief facts and the main teachings to be found in many popular present-day works are subversive of a religious interpretation of the universe is true. On this score the critical reader, who is prepared to test his author, may be left to take care of himself. He should be able to detect the gesture that is often made toward religion in general, and Christianity in particular.

Unfortunately, a large percentage of readers on finding an "up-to-date," "advanced," "well-known," writer making kindly statements about religion and Christianity are apt to take those statements at their face value. There is the idea that if a novelist who has shocked religious and moral susceptibility says something favourable about the old creeds, even if newly done up, it must be right, and so, after all, one should not give up religion and especially Christianity altogether. If the novelist has made his way into the spheres of science and of history, his support of religion is considered to be all the more valuable, even though his science and his verifiable history run counter to the religious theory of things.

As an instance we may take the *Short History of the World*, by H. G. Wells. On reading through this work we find that Mr. Wells has not mastered religion, but religion has mastered him. He can expound the law of evolution and yet write as if it has very little effect upon a religious interpretation of the universe. He can study the religions of the world and proceed to write like a theologian when he comes to deal with Judaism, and Christianity.

On page 9 he says, "there was a time when a belief in organic evolution was for rather obscure reasons supposed to be incompatible with sound Christian, Jewish, and Moslem, doctrine. That time has passed, and men of the most orthodox Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Mohammedan belief are now free to accept this newer and broader view of a common origin of all living things."

It is quite true that for many years Christian and other theologians have been in the habit of trying to adapt "evolution" to Christianity, or Christianity

to "evolution," but the reasons for holding the two to be incompatible were not obscure to our orthodox forefathers. They knew that the law of evolution does not leave any room for their creationism; and they did not do any supposing about the matter. Living beings cannot have appeared when, during the evolution of the universe, certain conditions and those only made such appearance possible and inevitable, and at the same time have been specially created by the Lord God Almighty.

The law of evolution is according to science; the theory of creation is according to religion and no amount of theological writing will reconcile the two. If Mr. Wells understands the subjects with which he deals he must know this, and should say so, or leave the relation of science to religion alone in a popular history, instead of throwing dust into the eyes of his readers.

Perhaps, however, the mastery which religion has obtained over Mr. Wells, in spite of his understanding of human nature and his acquaintance with modern knowledge, is greater than one might expect. The theologian rather than the historian is at work in the following, "foremost of these Jewish ideas was this, that their god was invisible and remote, an invisible god in a temple not made with hands, a Lord of Righteousness throughout the earth. All the other peoples had national gods embodied in images that lived in temples. If the image was smashed and the temple razed, presently that god died out. But this was a new idea, this god of the Jews, in the heavens, high above priests and sacrifices." (p. 80.)

Evidently, the object of this passage is to give the impression that the Jewish religion was much more pure, or as we are usually told, much more spiritual than any other early religion. We are expected to believe that the members of a one-time unimportant people, living a nomadic life, with next to no culture contact, managed to evolve a monotheistic conception of a deity so sublime that it has never been surpassed. Somehow or other, if we are to believe Mr. Wells, this early evolved idea of one God and him only was passed on by the nomadic Jews to those who subsequently lived the pastoral and agricultural life, and then the city life; and God was thought of as the "invisible" and the "remote" without spot or blemish. By means that are not explained the Jews managed to escape going through the phases of religious evolution so characteristic of other peoples. They gave to the world a "Lord of Righteousness throughout the earth," who lived in a "temple not made with hands," although the Jews, according to their own scriptures worshipped at numerous local cults, and the priests and prophets of the god Yahve had to perpetually strive to establish his exclusive worship, and, as organization developed, tabernacles and temples made with hands became the order of the day. No repository of religious beliefs and ritual, as relating to a smaller body of people, could contain much more of the crude than does the Old Testament.

Whether temples made with hands existed or not, the early Jewish worshipper could find his object of worship at his sacred place—a natural rock, a well, a spring, a tree! or his abode might be in a mountain.

The idea of a "Lord of Righteousness throughout the earth," could mean no more to the Jews at one time than it could to any other people, and that involved their supremacy under the gods' leadership; and evidently the Jewish people were not unanimous as to which god should prevail. Otherwise there would not have been so much crying out, from time to time of "thou shalt have none other gods before me." That is the cry of the priest trying to establish the power of his particular god, not the command of a god who is supreme.

It is doubtful whether at any time the Jewish conception of a god, even when freed from many of the grosser elements, has ever been more than nationalistic, except to a few of the more choice thinkers in Israel.

Even if it were true to say that the monotheistic idea of a god was first given to the world by a Jewish thinker, it would not be true writing of history to represent that idea as characteristic of the Jewish people as a whole, especially with the Old Testament still at hand. What is Mr. Wells going to do with a god who has a shaving parade with a hired razor. (Isaiah vii. 20), or with one who could smell a sweet savour when beast and fowl were offered up to him (Gen. viii. 20-21)? The Old Testament reeks with burnt offerings and the blood of animal victims, and the idea of a sacrifice unto the Lord, in all its savage and barbaric significance, is an outstanding feature of the old book.

One sometimes wonders how it comes about that men who are leaders in the world of literature of their time, can persist in reiterating trash about the sublime conception of God handed down by the Jews, when, apart from Biblical Criticism, the reading of the Bible itself should be enough to destroy such an idea. Is there anything sublime about the conception of a God who could give the following command: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour." Ex. xxxii. 27, etc.

How every man was to slay his brother, his companion, and his neighbour, and a body of the faithful was to be left alive at the end of the performance is not told; but no doubt the passage embodies the deep mystery of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man; and that explains a good deal. Other passages might be quoted to prove how gross an idea of God was frequently held by the Jews, but the reader may be left to entertain himself for an hour or two with the Bible. He will then be able to do much towards correcting what Mr. Wells and many another "great" writer has to say about the Jewish idea of God.

If anything further is needed to illustrate the way in which religion has mastered Mr. Wells and made him incapable of treating of Christianity and whatever is closely connected with it in a critical manner, it is to be found in the sections of the history wherein he deals with Jesus.

"Our only direct sources of information about the life and teaching of Jesus are the four Gospels. All four agree in giving us a picture of a very definite personality. One is obliged to say: 'Here was a man. This could not have been invented.'" (p. 140.)

Now, if there is anything outstanding with regard to the so-called life of Jesus, it is the fact that the Gospels do not present us with "a picture of a very definite personality," and alongside of this is the further fact that almost any kind of a life of Jesus can be built up according to the writers requirements.

Mr. Wells being a novelist, is able to give away the secret process, although he was by no means the first to use it. All you have to do is learn how to "distinguish the core of the story from the ornamental." (p. 141.) Then, if you can write, the more volumes you fill the better; but, as you proceed, it must be remembered that Mr. Wells has already been in the field and found the "definite personality." With a good memory, you will be able to argue with him when he says, "we are left, if we do strip his record of these difficult accessories, with the figure of a being, very human, very earnest and passionate,

capable of swift anger, and teaching a new and simple and profound doctrine—namely the universal loving Fatherhood of God and the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven." (p. 141.)

Why one should "strip the record" if it is a real record of the life of Jesus, or how the accessories are to be got rid of and the facts left behind, if "our only direct sources of information" are the "four Gospels" is not explained. Neither are we told wherein the description of Jesus given by Mr. Wells in the above quotation is that of a definite personality; and yet, Mr. Wells writes history—and novels.

One is reminded of the *Encyclopædia Biblica* article on the "Gospels," in which nine "foundation-pillars for a truly scientific life of Jesus" have been discovered, but even they are not certain.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

Cant, Contempt and Christians.

THE almost unique event of a militant Freethought journal achieving its jubilee almost inevitably causes one to think of the changes that have occurred in the sphere of theological controversy during the last fifty years of constant fighting against superstition, years filled with all the varied experiences of a long campaign—victories and defeats, rejoicings and regrets, conditions and regrets, conditions sometimes getting worse, at other times improving, but with a forward movement all along the line towards a saner outlook and a freer society. During that half century the lot of the Freethinker has altered considerably and the change has, in general, been for the better. It is common knowledge that, even so recently as fifty years ago, the Freethinker ran many risks in giving expression to unorthodox opinions; economic boycott, calumny and ostracism, were only too often meted out to him, and his life was one of loneliness. His chance of mixing with others of his own outlook was small, because they were scattered all over the country, and the Christians around would have none of his company: he was literally "sent to Coventry."

But, despite the fact that Atheism and militant Freethought are still ardently hated by the Christian, the Freethinker can now openly admit his beliefs with less fear of trouble than formerly, thanks largely, if not solely, to the magnificent work done by courageous predecessors. Of course, such Christian weapons as slander and underhanded economic pressure are still used whenever possible, but circumstances have changed too much to admit of their being used with the same chance of success.

But amongst all the changes of the last fifty years there is one that seems striking, the change in the attitude of the Freethinker to the Christian. Whereas formerly it was the Christian who would not admit the Freethinker to the circle and avoided him like the plague, it is now to an increasing extent the Freethinker who cold-shoulders the Christian, treating him as one outside the pale. The striking thing is not merely that the two have exchanged roles, it is in the mental attitude of the Freethinker to the Christian and his beliefs. In the past the Christian looked upon the infidel as taboo, as a danger to the community, a pest to be exterminated, and seriously considered him as unfit for human society, branding him as immoral if not actually criminal. And yet the Freethinker, living an exceedingly lonely life as a result of this treatment, sought the company of Christians. He treated them seriously and sought by argument to change their views, he debated their senseless propositions and gave careful consideration to the nonsensical dogmas they held. His position was inevitable admittedly, but what a change is to be seen to-day.

He still leads a comparatively lonely life but not because of Christian taboos, they accept him now as a decent, if eccentric, citizen, but because he finds it unbearable to spend time in Christian company. If he is to be bored, he prefers to be alone instead of in the company

of some Christian mouthing the stock rubbish of fifty years ago.

A few moments conversation usually suffices for the Freethinker to learn whether or not a new acquaintance is a believer in one of the many forms of the Christian superstition, without even putting a leading question. On most topics—politics, science, foreigners, evolution, patriotism, etc.—the opinions trotted out by the average Christian shriek forth their origin. They are noticeably priest-stained platitudes, mass-produced items from the "paragraph press," and, on scientific matters, almost invariably decades out of dates. Little or no mental exertion has been needed in their acquisition, in fact, they are not opinions so much as mere slogans and pack cries, and echoes of nineteenth century theological conflicts. They are the regurgitations of minds trained, not to think and analyse problems in an attempt to arrive at truth, but to absorb without question nearly all the statements seen in print in the daily press or heard from a platform, and to accept, also without question, the present state of affairs as being good, if not the best possible. Many of the subjects on which this type of Christian holds "opinions" are not matters for debate at all, they are matters on which scientific pronouncements have long been accepted; such subjects, for instance, as evolution, war, the existence of God, the virgin birth, etc. But the addle-brained Christian ignores all modern ideas, he goes merrily on, mouthing his *démodé* clichés.

So that day after day, in the office and workshop, the Freethinker is forced into contact with men to whom shibboleths serve as logically reasoned convictions: he cannot argue with them, they meet argument with either vindictive aspersion or supercilious smirks, and in any case, their need is not discussion so much as re-education. And the Freethinker who puts before them other points of view and exposes many of their fallacious ideas is considered at best a crank, at worst a contentious nuisance. He does not get ostracized much now (the taboos of fifty years ago are being broken) but his Christian acquaintances smile pityingly at his "fads" and change the conversation. As a result he becomes daily more disgusted with this prostitution of the human mind to the level of a storehouse for worn-out slogans and useless platitudes, so he tends outside his working hours to mix less and less with Christians. He needs intellectual companionship, the society of men and women whose ideas are the outcome of study and thought, people who realize that progress is only possible through the constant clash of ideas. That companionship he will not obtain from the average Christian. So whenever possible he foregathers with his own clan and leaves the Christian outside, treating him with good humoured contempt and looking upon him as unfit for intellectual society. Christians nauseate him with their canting trivialities, and he has no time for even the slight intimacies of mere acquaintance with them, friendship with its closer ties is quite out of the question. The only place where he can now bear with them at all is massed in front of the platforms in his lecture halls.

The result is that the Freethinker's present state is very similar to his original one—loneliness; but its causes are different, and the fact that his clan is increasing helps to mitigate the condition. But his loneliness now is at least self-chosen and is infinitely preferable to the company of Christians, with their half-witted, smug smile of mental inferiority. It is far better to be bored in silent solitude than in the noise of human dictaphones grinding out exploded fallacies and antiquated puerilities.

My argument may call forth the reply that apparently Freethinkers are becoming conceited prigs, or it may be met by the Christian's usual vacant smile of superciliousness. To the former I would answer that, if the Freethinker is proud of himself, the records of even the last fifty years will show that he has good cause, he has played a great part in the intellectual progress of humanity. To the latter that, when all is said, the Christian is, in beliefs anyway, relatively near the savage, and one does not choose semi-savages for intellectual companionship.

L'AIGILLON.

Acid Drops.

As a contribution to the peace of the world, a new bombing machine was the other day christened the "City of Canterbury" by the Mayor of the City. To be completely appropriate it should have been named Canterbury Cathedral. But one cannot have everything.

As we go to press the voice, or rather the vote, of the people is being registered. We will venture only one prediction of the result, namely that, whatever it is, it will be hailed as the voice of God. At the outset the Archbishop of Canterbury pronounced an eloquent and irrelevant eulogy of Mr. Ramsay Macdonald. On the eve of the poll the Bishop of London "solemnly warned" the electors that "if the country goes wrong tomorrow," grave material consequences would ensue. A layman present at this diocesan conference protested that this was not a political meeting, but a clergyman retorted that the Bishop's words—which related to a possible fall in the £ sterling—were "spiritual guidance." The Bishop of Winchester appealed to his diocese to return "not an architect, but a life-boat crew." Several responsible political correspondents observe that Mr. Arthur Henderson may retain his seat because of his fine record of service as a Free Churchman. A religious organ remarks on the proportion of Labour candidates who are or have been local preachers. God is on both sides, but, in this contest, as in so many others, political and otherwise, he may be counted upon to be on the side of the big battalions. When the new House meets the Chaplain will say prayers, and we have no doubt they will be as effective as they have been hitherto.

The Rev. Leslie Weatherhead has been telling a pious audience how to gain a "living experience" of Christ. It cannot be engineered, he says! and neither argument or explanation can give it to a man. What the would-be Christian has to do is this:—

Look at Jesus with the mind. Imagine he is with you day after day, and keep on looking until he becomes alive for you.

Quite so; imagination is a wonderful thing. By the process outlined above, one would create in the mind all kinds of devils, fancies, and bogies, and make them as real as "the living Christ." Imagination and auto-suggestion are no doubt very useful for manufacturing devout Christians, but we have yet to be convinced that rational human beings can be made that way.

It is in a report in the *Bucks Mail* (October 7) of a meeting of the Mixed Conference of the Aylesbury Rural Deanery that we found an interesting notice of a discussion on the Church Livings Commission. The clergymen there assembled "voted strongly against amalgamation" of parishes. One of them, Rev. A. M. Berry (Horsenden and Hmire), said he was in charge of two parishes four miles apart, and lived seven and a half miles from his church"; but a layman unkindly suggested that "this was an exception to the rule." The Rev. J. R. Hack said "the real problem of redistribution was to discover some means whereby a stream of clergy could be diverted from the smaller parishes to the larger zones of population where the church was fighting for its existence. There were many parishes where the population was too small to monopolize the services of one clergyman." It is awkward, however, that, in the "larger zones" aforesaid, the population is too large to be coped with by one clergyman. Thus the clergy seem to be divided between those who are idle and isolated, and those who are lost in the crowd; but as the Report of the Assembly's Commission says, "area is often more important than population"!

Rev. H. Maurice Relton, Professor of Dogmatic Theology, King's College, London, and a Pimlico Vicar withal, writes to the *Spectator* (October 17) a long screed proposing "a day of national rededication and consecration to the ideals to which we are committed as a Christian nation." Why? Because, so far as we can make out, it has once more been discovered, this

time via General Smut's recent address to the British Association, that "thinking laymen have emancipated themselves from a discredited nineteenth century materialism," but "are still uncertain and bewildered as to the direction in which science is now pointing, whether to a wider agnosticism, or to a richer world beyond Agnosticism." Quoting General Smuts as saying that, although science forges ahead, "the ancient spiritual goods and heirlooms need not be ruthlessly scrapped," Professor Relton suggests that the way to find out which way science is now pointing is "to rise above the slogan of equality of sacrifice for all to a nobler vision of the glorious inequality of the cross." And, in a final paragraph, he tells the "most devout religious people" what form this "rise" should take. They are advised to "double their subscriptions to Church funds!" And the "reason" for all this is the "national emergency"—too good a chance for the clergy to miss.

A terrible crime is charged against certain people in Dublin by the *Irish Independent* (October 12), backed up by the *Catholic Times* (October 16). These persons, called "communists and irreligionists," are actually being so wicked as to "take advantage of the liberty granted under the Free State Constitution." They have been "addressing meetings outside the Pro-Cathedral" and elsewhere, describing the Pope as "the champion of the capitalist order," and the forthcoming Eucharistic Congress as "a demonstration of bourgeois activity." According to the *Catholic Times*, the "authorities"—presumably police and municipal—state that "these people sail as close as they can to the wind, but take care not to contravene the Blasphemy Laws and so give rise to prosecution." The Lord Mayor is reported as attributing this to the circulation of irreligious newspapers, which is also, apparently, possible—though the Irish Censor sees that it is risky—under the "liberty granted by the Free State constitution."

Article 8 of Saorstát Bireann (The Free State Constitution) is as follows (*italics ours*):—

Freedom of conscience and the free profession and practice of religion are, subject to public order and morality, guaranteed to every citizen, and no law may be made either directly or indirectly to endow any religion, or prohibit or restrict the free exercise thereof or give any preference or impose any disability on account of religious belief or religious status, etc.

It does not want half an eye to see that this clause, whatever it may do to secure freedom for religion and religious people, does not provide any guarantee for non-religious people or for the free expression of their views. "Morality," in a Roman Catholic State, means Christian morality, and the Censor in Ireland, does his best to prevent modern ideas from being preached or spread. Even "public order" may be, and has been in England interpreted by the authorities as meaning protecting a gang of religious hooligans, and stopping the utterance of anything which does not suit their pious and touchy tempers.

It is true that Article 6 of the constitution aforesaid provides that "the liberty of the person is inviolable, and no person shall be deprived of his liberty except according to law"; but if the law is of the sort that set up the Irish censorship; and the "authorities" openly confess to keeping a watchful eye on anyone who dares "to take advantage of the liberty given to him," how much liberty really exists? If anyone said at that meeting outside the Pro-Cathedral, Dublin, what is said every week in Hyde Park about the Christian religion, he would soon find out that the present powers that-be in Ireland, strong as they are against other violations of the constitution, are as weak as putty in the hands of the clergy when the liberty that is involved is that of "irreligious" persons or opinions.

The Irish Free State now comes within the shadow of Martial Law. Any political considerations are not the concern of this paper, but a State so essentially Catholic does not appear to have much indebtedness to Rome for

allowing it to get in its present condition. It is to be hoped that the Irish Free State will quickly emerge from such military restrictions as contribute little or nothing to true progress.

Probably to meet the money shortage a man has been discovered making some. As his reward he has been sentenced to five years penal servitude. It is highly speculative as to what would happen if we had the famous miracle repeated in our time of the loaves and fishes. There is no doubt that someone would want to tax it.

Whilst the Archbishops of Canterbury and York are calling the nation to prayer, the Northampton Agricultural Wages Committee has ratified an order increasing the hours of the agricultural workers from fifty to fifty-four in the summer and from forty-eight to fifty in the winter. This is pretty good going in a Christian country, and illustrative of the saying that the eyes of the fools are in the ends of the earth.

The *Daily Mirror*, and other journals reported, on October 23, an incident at the Salisbury Diocesan Conference the day before. "A clergyman made an appeal for lightening the sufferings of the insane. Poignant interest was attached to the incident by the subsequent disclosure that the speaker was a patient at a mental home." This unfortunate gentleman said: "Since the Church relinquished the art of healing in favour of medical men, the insane have been dreadfully neglected. The Church used to heal those possessed with devils. Why can it not do so to-day?" The Bishop of Salisbury said he was "deeply touched" by this speech, and thought the incident "rather a beautiful one." We hold no brief for mental homes or hospitals, as asylums for the insane are now called, but there can be no question that the present study of mental illness, the relation between certain physical conditions and it, and the prevention, treatment and cure of mental disease, if still in a comparatively experimental stage, are a very great advance on what was the case before science took the place of religion in this department.

We have received the following comment on this incident from a reader who was for some time a patient in a mental hospital in the not very distant past. He writes: "One of the things which impressed me most was that, although every facility was afforded for patients of all religions to attend public worship within the hospital, only the worst types of cases regularly attended. Nor was there the least pressure upon anyone to do so. On the contrary, exercise in the grounds coincided in time on Sundays with the services, and was by most patients who were fit for it preferred to them. There were three chaplains, but they never in my hearing spoke any word of a theological kind to any patient; but only a cheery greeting as they passed somewhat hurriedly through the wards. Games, like billiards and cards, were permitted on Sundays: and when music was available it was not of a sacred character, often very much the opposite. I formed the opinion that most of the best and most skilled of the nurses were of a sceptical turn; and although most of the doctors attended one or other of the services from time to time—Roman Catholics, staff and patients, of course, were permitted to make their "compulsory" attendance at Mass—one would never have known that religion had any part in the establishment but for the services on Sundays and the visits of the chaplains. Even in case of death it was satisfactory to observe that no minister or priest was called in unless the patient either desired it, or was known to be a practising member of some religion. That "medical men" in mental hospitals "dreadfully neglect" the patients, is not the opinion or the experience of one who has every reason to be grateful and satisfied with their expert attentions."

According to a religious journal, Mr. Philip Inman, the house governor of Charing Cross Hospital (who is a Methodist), was offered for the hospital £100,000 on terms, by the founders of the Dublin Sweepstake. Mr. Inman's reply was that, no matter what the terms were,

the hospital would not accept any money from such a source. We hope Mr. Inman is as scrupulous and particular where bequests from wealthy donors are concerned. It would be very deplorable if suffering people were to benefit by medical attention paid for by money acquired by doubtful means—such as, for instance, "cornering" the world's supply of cotton and selling it at greatly enhanced prices.

We often observe signs that the population tends to increase faster than the "spiritual" provender for it. Thus there has been a Commission of the Church Assembly on the necessity of a redistribution of clergy to whose ranks recruits have long been a decreasing quantity. It is terrible to think that "several hundred incumbents are working single-handed in parishes that require a staff of two or three"; while there are at least 1,000 "cures" of souls with a population of under 500, and the shortage of clergy means that the Church "is losing a remarkable opportunity of work offered by the big housing estates being erected in the neighbourhood of towns." We are astonished to observe that the Commission, in estimating this shortage of clergy to population, takes the "parochial" and not the "congregational" figures for the latter. This is the same practise which results in any prisoner who says he has "no religion," or that "God only knows what it is," is put down "Church of England." The Church would be the first to say that it is unfair to blame it for all the criminals so described; but surely it is just as unfair and unreasonable to estimate the shortage of clergy, not by the use which people make of the services of those already available, but by the number of those who do not go to church, or go to some other church than the Church of England?

The dominant factor in the world crisis, declares Lord Hampton, is that the world is riven with enmity and suspicion. Well, when hasn't the world been riven with enmity and suspicion? As regards the European portion of the world, we know that such a state of affairs has been in existence throughout the Christian era, and so we may conclude that the gentle and noble influence of the Christian religion and the Churches is not all it is claimed to be. Nor need this arouse any surprise, for one of the most potent excitants of enmity and suspicion has been religious differences of opinion. The world should now be in a position to realize that when Jesus said, "I come not to bring peace but a sword"—and he should have added "an enmity and suspicion"—he really meant what he said. So now let us venerate him as a true prophet!

We observe that a Nonconformist weekly has been urging its readers to buy National Savings Certificates for reason of thrift and provision for the future. And one surmises that a "progressive revelation" has come through, superseding the Biblical injunction "take no thought for the morrow," and the Christly teaching that God can be trusted to care for man as well as sparrows. The new revelation appears to have been infected with the spirit of the age, for it seems to run that Christian people must not take this Biblical teaching literally, should leave off relying on God, and should make their own provision for the future. A very sensible sort of revelation is that, but not properly Christian.

The *Methodist Recorder* says:—

Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell, in a lecture at Oxford, has awakened memories of ancient controversies, by his assertion that life is a resultant of the structure and composition of protoplasm, and not a super-physical detachable principle. We have been told for many years that science is trembling on the verge of proof of this assertion, but apparently the proof is not yet forthcoming. For our part, we await, unmoved, the issue of the experiments which are being made. We do not believe that any theistic issue is at stake. No discovery of the mode of origin of life can throw discredit on the belief of the Christian man that its ultimate origin is in God. New teachings as to the nature of the universe do but emphasize the truth that "He himself giveth to all, life and breath and all things."

We hope the writer will not mind our adding that, after this "truth" has been accepted, there still remains a further question—Who made God? We regret to say that "new teachings as to the nature of the universe" do not furnish any help in answering that question. Which is a pity, for Atheists are interested in the ancestry of God, and Christians ought to be.

Also from the *Methodist Recorder*:—

The cause of evangelization of Africa has been given unexpected support in an address by Mr. Julian Huxley. He said that "it was quite possible that a century hence Christianity would be enjoying a new lease of life in Africa, while it declined in Europe." We may accept the former part of the statement, while claiming permission to doubt the accuracy of the prognostication contained in the latter part. We could wish that the Christian Churches were more awake to the glorious possibilities of a Christianized Africa. The door is open wider in that vast continent than anywhere else. A revival of Christianity in Africa would react upon Europe, and would do much to prevent the decline which Mr. Huxley thinks will come to pass.

We agree that the Christian religion has "glorious possibilities" in Africa. So many of its fundamental notions and its ritual and practices are based on primitive thinking. And therefore the mind of the uncultured native of Africa should have no difficulty in assimilating them. What is possible is that if Africa ever becomes properly Christianized, European history will repeat itself in Africa. The blood-thirsty religious drama played in Europe during the past nineteen centuries may be re-played among the Africans.

As to whether a revival of Christianity in Africa would react favourably upon Europe, we should say that the reaction would more likely be unfavourable. When large numbers of educated people in Europe had once rejected the Christian religion, they would not be likely to give it a welcome because great masses of uncultured African natives had adopted it. Their conclusion would be that the Christian religion was best left in its natural setting—the jungle clearing.

An American Protestant has written a book entitled: *Will America Become Roman Catholic?* The author negatives the notion. His conclusion is: "The issue to-day is not whether America is to be made Catholic, but when America is to be made Christian." When? Surely there are ample signs that America is Christian. She has Tennessee, Prohibition, Puritan "Blue Laws," huge armaments, and a gigantic statue of Liberty looking away from America.

Fifty Years Ago.

BEING once questioned with a certain whining solemnity as to his immortal soul, he laughed long in uncontrollable laughter. A very sublime being truly is this Sigvat, to expect and claim immortality! But I fear that the universe can do without me, as me, though my being is part of its being. When I die, Nature seizes on my effects, administers my estate, duly distributing my property. I, who am dead as this Sigvat, still continue my interest in the general life by every particle of my being thus distributed, and by the enduring existence of all that I have ever rayed forth—from attraction of gravity, attraction and repulsion electrical, to thought and emotion of humanity. Nothing is lost, though the walls of the *Ego* have given way and let in the floods of the universe. It is quite right to call death dissolution; it may be also solution, resolution, evolution. Immortality! why, the most of us don't know what to do with this one little personal life, and might well wonder how we came to be promoted to the dignity thereof. The claim to immortality is the claim to be trusted with millions of pounds because one has shown himself unfit to be trusted with sixpence. Leave me, O comical little men, with your talk about eternity; go and try to live a single happy and rational day.

The "Freethinker," October 30, 1881

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

P. BYRNE.—We can hardly re-issue all the striking things that have appeared in the *Freethinker* during the past fifty years. We are, however, pleased to know that you have such lively recollections of some of its contents.

SCRUTATOR.—We agree that the question of the value of either Socialism or Freethought is not to be decided by correspondents calling each other names. There is a deal of religion in many who think they are quite free from its influence.

MR. F. S. HAUGHTON of The Station, Ricall, York, would like to get into touch with some Freethinkers in his locality.

C. W. HUBAND.—The article may be re-issued as a leaflet.

A. B. MOSS.—Thanks. We quite agree with you that the superstition of the supreme ethical excellence of Jesus Christ is one that needs killing. It is almost as absurd as the Virgin Birth. It is, of course, nothing more than a rationalizing of a mixture of timidity and loose thinking.

N. WILSHIRE.—It is the rule of the office never to send the addresses of contributors to anyone. But a letter addressed c/o the *Freethinker* will be duly forwarded.

S. LANSON.—Wheeler's *Footsteps of the Past* will be ready for sale almost immediately. It is a work that none of our readers should miss.

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

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

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.

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.

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Footsteps of the Past, by J. M. Wheeler, will be ready for sale by the time this copy of the *Freethinker* is in the hands of its readers. The volume is by one of the most painstaking scholars the Freethought Movement has ever had in its service, and should be in the hands of every one who wishes to understand the real nature of religion. The work extends to about 250 pages, is well printed on good paper, and well bound. We cordially commend it to every one of our readers. We hope to see published other works by the same author. The book is issued by the Secular Society Limited at the low price of 3s. 6d. Postage 3d. extra.

Mr. Cohen's meeting on Sunday last at Leicester was, we are informed, one of the best of this year, in spite of the attraction of election meetings. So the Society was justified in not cancelling the meeting, as Mr. Cohen had suggested. Mr. Hassell, vice-president of the Leicester Society, occupied the chair and the lecture

itself was followed with interest and obvious appreciation. To-day (November 1) Mr. Cohen is taking a Sunday off, but the next Sunday he will lecture in Sunderland. It is many years since Mr. Cohen visited the town, and, we are informed that the visit is being looked forward to with expectations.

Prior to the Leicester meeting a very interesting function took place in the club room of the Society. The members entertained their President, Mr. Sydney Gimson, to tea, and presented him with a very handsome memorial of his lengthy and valuable services to Freethought at Leicester. This memorial took the shape of an address detailing the high appreciation of his work and character, splendidly inscribed and illuminated on vellum by Mr. A. E. (we are not quite certain about these initials) Roberts, of Leicester, splendidly bound in full tooled morocco, in morocco case. Leicester Freethought owes much to both Sydney Gimson and to his father, Josiah Gimson, and although the former's natural modesty was put to a strain in listening to eulogies of himself and his work, it is well that such expressions of appreciation are made to those who have so richly earned them as has the present recipient. We know of no man in the country who has worked harder and more unselfishly for Secularism than has Sydney Gimson.

The Roman Catholic bigots of Durham have derived very little satisfaction from their encounter with Freethought. On their credit side there is a savage attack upon an elderly gentleman, but against that, increasing crowds of decent citizens await the arrival of the Freethought speaker. Mr. J. T. Brighton reports another visit to the city, where he addressed his largest meeting. A marked feature was the good order and sympathetic attitude of the large audience.

Mr. G. Whitehead will lecture to-day (Sunday) in the Bristol Street Council Schools, Birmingham, at 7.0 p.m., on "An Atheist's Morality." Mr. Whitehead's recent and successful open-air work in Birmingham should ensure a good audience on this occasion. The local saints should at least do their best to secure it by making the meeting well known.

Mr. S. R. A. Ready, Secretary of the Liverpool Branch, writes that in spite of the elections, Dr. Carmichael had a good and appreciative audience to his lecture on Sunday last on "Body and Mind." Mr. Ready speaks in terms of high praise of the skill and force with which Dr. Carmichael dealt with this subject, and the success achieved in making a difficult topic easy of understanding. From what we know of the lecturer we are not surprised at the testimony.

The Infidel.

My goldfish swims around his bowl,
Swims ceaselessly, by night, by day:
I wonder, Has this fish a soul?
He cannot kneel, but does he pray?

He never seems to fall asleep,
Nor rest his ever-moving fins:
I wonder if a fish can weep
When thinking of his grievous sins.

And does my goldfish think of God,
And thank him for his daily toil?
Is he less righteous than the cod,
Whose putrid liver gives us oil?

I have not seen him seek a priest
To ask him how to save his soul;
He surely is a wicked beast,
My little goldfish in his bowl.

I think that I must punish him;
That I will give him to the cat;
This godless fish can only swim:
Now, tell me, what's the good of that?

BAYARD SIMMONS.

The Literary Lord of Twickenham

ALEXANDER POPE'S permanent position as a poet and man of letters has been keenly controverted for the past two hundred years. At heart a Gallo, who cared little for religious things, by the accident of birth and upbringing a Papist, the author of the famous *Essay on Man*, when inspired by his sceptical friend Bolingbroke, presented to the world his remarkable justification of the ways of Nature's divinity towards mankind.

Pope's paternal grandfather appears to have been a clergyman of the English Church. His son, the poet's father, while officiating in a merchant's establishment in Lisbon, was there converted to the Roman Catholic faith. Returning later to London, he opened a shop in Broad Street, then removed to Lombard Street where his celebrated son was born.

The civil and religious disabilities then imposed upon Papists precluded the boy's entry into public school or university. The lad was consigned to the scholastic care of several incompetent priests whose training methods were primitive indeed. But inborn ability rose superior to these disadvantages, and although Pope was never at any time a finished scholar, at the noticeably early age of eighteen he commenced his career as an acknowledged poet. Pope's *Pastorals* were then composed, and although they were not published until he was twenty-one, the manuscripts had been previously perused by leading contemporary critics, and served as a useful introduction to the veteran Wycherley, the comic dramatist of the Restoration.

Pope was born in 1688, and his first writings appeared in 1709, when Queen Anne had been seven years on the throne. For a time, Wycherley acted as Pope's guide, philosopher and friend. He was the means of the rising poet's introduction to the literary life of London. There his brilliant abilities were immediately recognized, and friendship were soon formed with Addison, Steele, Arbuthnot, Swift and other leading lights of the republic of letters.

Pope's *Essay on Criticism* was acclaimed as a marvellously penetrating analysis by men of standing in his own day, but it seems somewhat stale and common-place now. Still, Leslie Stephen is probably right in his contention that in estimating the value of the *Essay*: "The only fair question, in short, is whether Pope has managed to give a lasting form to some of the floating commonplaces which have more or less suggested themselves to every writer. If we apply this test, we must admit that if the essay upon criticism does not show deep thought, it shows singular skill in putting old truths. Pope undeniably succeeded in hitting off many phrases of marked felicity. He already showed the power, in which he was probably unequalled, of coining aphorisms out of commonplaces. Few people read the essay now, but everyone is aware that 'fools rush in where angels fear to tread.'"

Again, in the *Essay on Criticism* occur the lines that were surely never written by a sincere Catholic:—

"Learning and Rome alike in empire grew;
And arts still followed where her eagles flew;
From the same foes at last both felt their doom,
And the same age saw learning fall and Rome.
With tyranny then superstition join'd,
As that the body, this enslaved the mind;
Much was believed, but little understood,
And to be dull was construed to be good;
A second deluge learning thus o'errun
And the monks finish'd what the Goths begun
At length Erasmus, that great injured name,
(The glory of the priesthood and the shame!)
Stemm'd the wild torrent of a barbarous age,
And drove those holy Vandals off the stage."

Windsor Forest and the *Rape of the Lock* were other notable products of Pope's youth. These poems were highly praised by his admirers, although damned with less than faint praise by his critics and detractors. Both have fallen in public appreciation since. In any case, they are seldom read. It was with the publication of Pope's "translation" of Homer's *Iliad* that the former's fame and influence were alike established. With his small Latin and less Greek, Pope was debarred from reading the original either with pleasure or profit. But through careful reading and study of Chapman and other translators, Pope produced an English version of the Greek masterpiece which took the literary world by storm. The work was published by subscription, and so numerous were the subscribers, and so appreciative the reading classes generally, that Pope was placed in a position of affluence. Out of the proceeds of the early sales he purchased the house and grounds since known as Pope's Villa at Twickenham. Amid these charming surroundings he resided during the rest of his life. The instantaneous success of the *Iliad* made him the outstanding ornament of literary London, as well as a conspicuous figure in the reception rooms of statesmen and magistrates.

Despite the exonerating efforts of that fine writer, the late Prof. W. Minto, and others, there is conclusive proof that Pope's personal character was far from ideal. He was generous in his dealings with his parents, but with his enemies and even with his friends his conduct was occasionally as crooked as his carcase. Morbidly jealous and spiteful, all appearance of rivalry, or even legitimate criticism, were to Pope anathema. The *Dunciad*, which some consider his most durable achievement proved a convenient medium for his pitiless satire and general defamations of the writers who had affronted him, or whom he chose to regard as dunces. It is true that some of the pretentious scribblers whom he pilloried live only in Pope's scathing lines and notes. Some, however, appear to have been scarified from motives of malevolence and resentment alone. Lewis Theobald was one of these, for this great pioneer in Shakespearean emendation, as Churton Collins has shown, gave mortal offence to Pope when he produced an edition of our great bard immeasurably superior to that begotten by Pope himself.

Pope's departure from the Catholic religion is distinctly pronounced in his *Essay on Man*. The principles expounded in the poem vary, and lack coherence. Insanely optimistic throughout, it never faces the hard problem presented to theism by the everlasting paradoxes and evils of existence. The unmerited pain and suffering which sadden the every-day experiences of human and lower animal life are swept aside with the assertion that:—

"All nature is but art unknown to thee;
All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
All discord, harmony not understood;
All partial evil, universal good:
And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
One truth is clear, *Whatever is, is right.*"

Yet, illogical and inconsistent as much of the poem is, the work remains a literary masterpiece. As H. D. Traill cogently declares: "The poet's mastery of terse and epigrammatic expression is here seen at its highest; and it has been asserted, no doubt with truth, that the *Essay on Man* contains more lines which have won their way to the rank of universally familiar quotation than any other poem of equal length in the language."

With the completion of the *Dunciad* Pope promptly began the composition of the *Essay*. Swift's influence over Pope predominated throughout the *Dunciad* period. It had now waned, and Pope, ever

dependent upon his friends, had become the more or less docile disciple of the deistic Bolingbroke. As Minto notes: "Pope was peculiarly fitted by nature to take the impress of his surroundings—plastic, sensitive, eagerly covetous of approbation. Affection and admiration were as necessary to his life as the air he breathed." Dean Swift introduced Bolingbroke in the first instance to the poet, and their acquaintanceship ripened into an intimate friendship that remained unbroken until Pope's death thirty years later.

Henry St. John's, Viscount Bolingbroke's brilliant political career was shattered by the triumph of the Whigs and the accession of the House of Hanover. Having received a pardon for his treasonable practices in endeavouring to restore the reign of the Stuarts, the Tory statesman and arm-chair philosopher returned to England from foreign parts and settled near Uxbridge, where he resided within easy riding distance of Pope's villa at Twickenham. Pope was delighted with his sparkling companion, and in the course of conversation, and by means of manuscript and letters, he imbibed the deistic teachings of his mentor. We have now every reason to believe that Bolingbroke suggested the subject of the *Essay*, and there exists documentary evidence to prove that he also supplied its leading arguments leaving to the poet the congenial task of providing the splendid epigrams and illustrations that adorn the text.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be concluded.)

A Thought for the Week.

To the Christian intelligence the overwhelming proof of the truth of the Virgin Birth is that such a thing never occurred before, it has never occurred since, and will never occur again. It is utterly impossible to apply the canons of cold reason to such an event. Its acceptance raises faith to the highest levels of which profound religious conviction is alone capable. *Lucianus.*

The Old World of Common Sense

(Concluded from page 679.)

In a previous article we said that, whatever realities we may imagine behind experience, we have to admit that, as far as we can understand them, they eventuate in it, and are only valid as philosophic conceptions in so far as they remain consistent with it. We arrived at this conclusion by taking the instance of the modern conception of space-time, but we wish now to apply this idea generally to the whole range of metaphysical thought.

Suppose we regard the Universe as an expanding series of relationships, by which we mean a series of relationships within relationships, wheels within wheels, thought of as extending indefinitely. We ourselves exist in the relationship called experience. It may be that we are able to get into touch with another class, or grade of relationship, if only through a mathematical conception. Of course we could not imagine this other class, because we can only imagine what could conceivably be experiential a fact that deserves the attention of those who think they do not understand anything about the new physics because they cannot imagine the fourth dimension. But if we assume that we have at least got a formula, mathematical or other, which connects our class of relationship (experience) with some other, we must remember that our ideas of what is true and what is false are necessarily wrapt up in experience. We may, by working from this basis, extend our philo-

sophy to a class of relationship beyond our own, but clearly if we do not start from the only type of fact we actually know, and work outwards towards less known forms of existence, we can get nowhere.

It is quite absurd to think of ourselves commencing with a class of fact outside experience and then working back to experience only to contradict it with a metaphysical theory. The position of the philosopher who concerns himself with ultra-experiential theories is at best that of the scientist who concerns himself with a region yet unknown. He commences with the only sort of foundation available to him, namely observed data, and then speculates as to the nature of things unknown. But everything must tally with the originally observed data. It may happen that even these are wrong; we are quite alive to this objection. But if they are, he can only discover the fact by using some other observed data that are right. In no circumstances can he propound a theory which, purporting to represent a truth *beyond* experience, shall be deemed to have such scientific validity as to contradict what is manifestly established *in* experience. Thus if there exists a category of relationships beyond experience, our only hope of getting even into speculative touch with it is to commence with assured experiential data and, throughout all our enquiry, to remain faithful to these, finally testing our theories against the "old world of common sense."

Now what does this mean to us Freethinkers? What is its connexion with Freethought controversy? It is this: The Church offers us a theory of life and the world that is ultra-experiential. Its formula, not space-time but God, is clearly in this category. We do not take exception to the mere idea of an ultra-experiential theory, but to the practice of contradicting experiential facts in order to keep it alive. Take a particular instance among hosts of examples that could be found in all spheres of thought. Suppose religion offers us a theory regarding the existence of personality apart from the physical body. Suppose, further, that support is obtained from someone like Sir Oliver Lodge on the grounds that modern physics lends itself to conceptions of non-material existence. We say, "Very well. So far so good. But you must not press this theory of non-material existence so far as to contradict the observed relationships which experience has revealed to us, and the necessary deductions that follow from them. Your theory might conceivably *arise* out of these, but must not *contradict* them, and we do in fact know that the interdependence of personality and material conditions is as soundly established, by scientific enquiry and logical inference, as it is possible for it to be. Further (and this is a point we often forget) it is more scientifically respectable to argue from these known relationships to any question of possibly independent existence than to start from facts not primarily related to physiological science and try to argue towards a theory directly concerned with that science.

To return, then, to General Smuts, the subject of the original article, it is clear that he is apt to mislead the multitude by saying that modern physics has made a break from "the old world of common sense." Once we understand just how far this break can go, and more particularly just how far it cannot, we are in a position to put a proper interpretation on his statement and assess to it a correct value. And when we have done this we see that there is really no break at all; at all events not such as to open the way for a cluster of fantastic notions at variance with the established principles of science. Nevertheless, such a statement will be avidly seized upon by innumerable members of the clergy and used as a weapon for re-

storing a world of superstitious fancy. This can only be met by a better understanding of elementary philosophy, and that is why I would urge all Freethinkers to acquaint themselves with the issues in question, and to do all in their power to penetrate the maze of obscure and misleading language of which even our leading scientists are increasingly guilty.

MEDICUS.

[We regret that in the first instalment of this contribution the proof appears to have been passed without correction. Will readers therefore note the following. Par. 5, line 5 read "Because of all this we say," 15-18. "The common-sense bus expresses a relation between something and our sense organs that is embodied in the word experience. And you do not make experience unreal because you show that it does not give you at first hand the material for a dependable calculation.—ED.]

Christianity!

FOR two consecutive days the sun has been shining over Clayburn by the sea. Clayburn is one of those popular resorts where the poor people of big industrial towns find sanctuary for one brief week from the worries and weariness of ordinary life.

For one brief week they desert dismal and ugly streets, cramping rooms, and the rounds of domestic toil, and seek the threshold of the open sea—the great expanse of kindly sand on which they can disport, barefooted, with reckless abandon—gambol, play rounders, and cricket, or sit in circles for laughing amusement. And the sun shines out over the beach of Clayburn as if in full sympathy with the revellers.

It all resembles a huge picnic of inveterate joymakers in which the children play a pre-eminent part. Bare-legged and slightly clothed in rainbow colours, they run about, laugh, dig sand, paddle, attack father, ride on the donkeys and indulge in all the childish prerogatives of expansive liberty. And parents join in or sit by with approving smiles.

On the other side of the promenade a host of catch-penny stall-holders do their best to allure people to try their luck and get "something for nothing." The owners shout and rave and show how pennies, if properly thrown, will ring the magic bell, or effect some artifice that will put money into the winners' pocket—and bring it out again. Another man, with wonderful philanthropic airs, dramatically throws two shillings' worth of seaside rock into a huge bag and gives it away—for a shilling. But the vast majority of people ignore these blandishments and find the sand, sea, and sun the best investments on which they stake their whole lives.

Presently their attention is attracted by the singing of hymns. A number of Evangelists have appeared at an austere wooden booth that encumbers the sand, and a loud harmonium is brought into action. Half a dozen voices are screeching "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," and other mournful hymns, and soon the people are urged to give up their games, the children to stop their frolics, and in lieu thereof be seated as "penitent sinners" on hard forms for the third service of the day. Under such pressure from the speakers many people sit down and children copy their parents as if from an implied command. More hymns are sung, the burden of which suggesting that children should hasten to a "Happy Land, Far, Far Away"; and that sinners "should surrender all." When the audience is at full strength and the psychological moment arrives, Christians are fervently exhorted to apply the surrender all principle by contributing generously to the collection box, in order to "help the poor of the poorest cause." The man who takes round the box stops in a challenging sort of way at every person. Coppers taken carefully from delapidated purses rattle down into the box.

A hundred yards up the beach another band of Evangelists break out. Their tent is pitched in the heart of Joyland and flaunts a big streamer to the effect that the Church Army Mission is ready for action. Half a dozen good looking young men, dressed in khaki uniforms, circulate pleasantries among the crowd and entice chiefly

women and children to fill up the seats and "seek salvation." The first hymn contains the following verse:—

Just a few more years with their toil and tears,
And the journey will be ended;
Then I'll be with Him, where the tide of time
With eternity is blended.

The children are told to sing the doleful refrain over and over again. Collection boxes are taken round while others are tied to the railings of the promenade for passers by. The speaker instructs his listeners on the sin of pride and on the virtues of living in all meekness and humility.

Another hundred yards further on the Salvation Army uncover a platform and start an orgy of concertina playing and bellowing of hymns. A young man with pleasant smiles gathers up the children and seats them on wooden chairs in a half circle. The crowd is yet small, so he calls out two little girls, whom he names Big'un and Little'un (because one is a shade taller than the other), sets them on the platform, and encourages them to sing the refrain of a hymn in duet fashion. With much nervous tension they struggle through it and are then wheedled into singing it two or three times again. The crowd gathers at this unusual spectacle and the young man's eye begins to beam. The youngsters have served their purpose. The concertinas start again, and the air becomes electric with evangelical fervour. The begging mat is spread and attracts the coins, but not before the full quota of sacrifice is extorted does the service end.

Meanwhile the sea ebbs and the sun goes down over these hosts of poor people, who, for one brief week of the year, desert the towns for the joy and freedom of the shore.

V.W.G.

St. Stephen of Hungary.

THE perverse jumble of Roman characters—a Hungarian newspaper—reminds me that I have missed St. Stephen's Day again this year.

On August 20, in the roar of churchbells, in the orgy of flamboyant flags, processions, special theatrical matinees, maddening heat, crowded open-air baths and cafés, solemnly thickened editions of newspapers, speeches of "leading" statesmen, Budapest celebrates the day of St. Stephen, the first King and, what is more, the first Christian Ruler of the country, who died in 1000.

Who was St. Stephen—and why the first Christian Ruler (Apostolic King) of Hungary?

It is fashionable to speak of Hungary of a thousand years' standing—an opinion, that the *Daily Mail* and the new patron saint of Hungary, Lord Rothermere, unflinchingly endorse—as if the evolution of the national state had been a finished process at the end of the ninth century. The historical fact is that somewhere about 896 (I take the date from Hungarian schoolbooks), the Magyars conquered the plains held in the Carpathians' crescent embrace, from some obscure group of Slavonic tribes. The transition to a medieval feudal community lasted its normal time, about two centuries; but the map of pre-war Hungary is shown and described to Hungarian children as a unit, a state with definite boundaries, solidarity and national purpose, in existence—with slight interruptions—ever since 896 . . . The theory is, obviously, that *Arpád*, ancestor of the first royal dynasty, entered the plains through a certain north-eastern point of the Carpathians, and immediately took possession of them with his forces, right down to the Adriatic Sea. Have a look at the map!

For more than a hundred years after that, the ancient Magyars seem to have been the Bolshevik Bogey of "civilized" Europe. They rushed about on horseback, looting, plundering and—to quote from history-books—"softening their meat under the saddle . . ." They visited Germany and Switzerland. They robbed the monastery of St. Gallen. A prayer of the period ran—

"E sagittis Hungarorum
Libera nos, Domine!"

(From the arrows of the Magyars, save us, Oh Lord!)
In short, they were a merry bunch of heatlarks.

they were not meant to keep arrows, saddle-softened meat and other national characteristics. The dark and impenetrable forces of History were silently at work. They were to become Christians. For this task, Stephen was chosen, by heaven, after all probability. He was duly "converted" by an Italian bishop (?), St. Gellért, whose statue, on the hill named after him, overlooks now the Danube at Buda, cross in hand. It is a common way of presenting this conversion in Hungarian schools as a spiritual change, a revelation of higher truths in a royal soul, a voluntary abandonment of Paganism and confession "unto" salvation. It is a recognized method of teaching early Hungarian history in Hungarian schools to view this change in the moral outlook of a "nation" as a definite turn towards Western civilization—represented by the Western Christian Church—as the first step in Europeanization of the Magyars, originally a Mongolian tribe.

Teachers of Hungarian history do not stop for a moment to consider the inherent difficulty for a man like Stephen, head of a vandal community, of warriors, semi-nomadic families, to grasp metaphysical subtleties, fantastic panaceas, immanence of earthly powers, original sin, submission and transcendental responsibility, even if we are inclined to admit a Pagan's belief in an eventual after-life. It is admissible that barbarians believe in immortality, in the indestructibility of the soul; in fact, only barbarians do. But to overlook, in the interests of historical facility, for the sake of that despicable simplicity, that Alfred-and-the-cakes sort of history; to overlook the main (and, in the double sense, vital) difference between a barbarian immortality and a Christian one, is rather more than sheer ignorance. The barbarian heathen believes in immortality as a prolongation of mundane bliss: Christianity preaches the Other Side as an aftermath; either as a Reckoning or as a Redemption. Count Keyserling, commonplace comedian as he is, has a very lucky comparison of the Christian Everlasting Life and the Nirvana; it all depends, he says, on the climate, the richness of vegetation; a heaven is Paradise for a North-European Christian; but for a Hindoo a supreme Good can only mean utter annihilation; relief from the teeming, dazzling, rotting, pregnant vegetation of their zone; from visible existence and consciousness. It is, therefore, very unlikely, even in the moderate climate of the Middle Danube, that a leader of fierce and often savage warriors, like Stephen in the X. century, could have been much impressed by the naïve exposition of Christianity by Bishop Gellért. The Magyars were a people in the second stage of religious metaphysics, if one may say so, having passed from the stage of crude materialism and resignation towards external, natural forces and now trying to control them, to propitiate Powers Beyond Reach—but not conscious yet of social and political motives in any systematic worship, of spiritual power vested in priesthood and the latent exploitation of such a potential energy. They were a people of fierce imagination, harsh and sanguinary sentiments, already vaguely and innocently superstitious; they shed the dark blood of bulls, and listened in ecstasy to the yells of sacrificed humans, in the serene warm nights of the *Alföld*. Their rites were the ceremonies of blood and swords, of smokes and rapturous shouts and quivering cattle, stone-altars, violent horses, with strange women across the saddle, heads of foes, stuck on lances, flowing black moustaches—and now fancy Bishop Gellért saying to their prince: "Sire, this is all wrong!"

And yet when, as the history-books say, St. Stephen embraced Christianity, he did so with a vengeance. Recalcitrant Pagans, loath to part with a more plausible, a more vivid, an infinitely happier faith than this new, unfamiliar and deadening, half-hearted monotheism, were ruthlessly persecuted and punished with a true Christian thoroughness, with that savagery which always characterizes the fresh paint on creeds. Wholesale persuasion is of no use in such cases: and there was no press . . . Stephen, however, found the means of propagating a religion of Love and Forgiveness. *Koppány*, Saga, a Pagan, leader and his entire family, so the heroic saga runs, were killed after monstrous tortures. Stephen was evidently not only a forerunner of the Holy Inquisition, but also of a somewhat exaggerated interpretation of Dora.

All this might dawn upon the innocent student of Hungarian history as a surprise. What prompted Stephen to "embrace" Christianity, a faith derived from a barren Semitic monotheism and Jovian ritual—for, let us remember: the philosophical reinterpretation of ethics within Christianity properly began not earlier than with the growth of heresies? A person of such persuasions as those which the Hungarians of the Xth century held, probably laughed at a threat of hell-fire. Clearly, there was no need for those people, including Stephen, to "embrace" Christianity. Their religion must have been essentially democratic. A bloody ritual cannot be enforced from above, dictators will not, in any form, preach violence. *The less refined a ritual is, the more democratic is the creed in question.* Spiritual authorities will always suggest meekness, obedience and submission.

And that is what Stephen did. His was a growing nation: the imposition of a central authority under these given circumstances was impossible. Christianity gave its sanction to an "apostolic" royal rule. It is, to say the least, unreasonable to suggest that Stephen cared for anything else, e.g., ethical teaching, spiritual values, in enforcing Christianity to a nation of self-reliant pagans.

St. Stephen's grave was found: his body returned to dust, as all sensible bodies ought to do. But his right hand remained whole. Wonders never cease . . . This Holy Right (Szent Jobb)—I have seen it—is a like heap, of dung, I believe; covered in some red and gilt cloth, enclosed in a glass shrine. On the twentieth of August, this shrine is carried round the royal castle district in Buda, in a magnificent procession. Hats are raised; ecclesiastical garments are devotedly kissed, incense is burning. Nobody doubts the miracle. The little heap under the scarlet cloth in the glass shrine is obviously St. Stephen's holy right hand, the Szent Jobb. According to leading articles of the Hungarian press, it points straight to the nation's destiny . . .

F. ABEL.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."
SOCIALISM AND FREETHOUGHT.

SIR,—Referring to the recent articles and correspondence with regard to the attitude of the *Freethinker* in political matters, may I venture an opinion on a point, which as far as I recollect, has not been discussed.

Whether the *Freethinker* holds itself free from any or every political theory or party or not, it is consciously or unconsciously furthering the aims of Socialism.

Among the European political parties, it is the Socialists, who openly combat the doctrines of Christianity, it is the Socialists, who, with pamphlets and literature, sold far below the price of production, bring to the notice of the public at large the monstrous swindle and abominable history of the Christian Church, it is the Socialists, who are in the foremost row in damning warfare, slavery, priestcraft, and it is the Socialists, who combat drunkenness (opium number 2 for the people) by rousing dormant reasoning and intellectual powers and giving an insight into the machinery of political life.

All this is done by the *Freethinker* also.

It is not the Freethought Movement, which must maintain Socialism as its guiding idea, but Socialism, which has made the shattering of religious fallacies and superstitions one of its aims. No European Conservative Party needs Freethought, no Liberal and, as has been seen during the last few years, no Labour Party has made the slightest attempt to put an end to the most outrageous swindle of the last two thousand years, known as Christianity. Why not? Are politicians other than Socialists deaf and blind? Are their powers of reason stunted in matters of religion? Has the quantity of literature on Christianity since Constantine been concealed from them? Do they continue to force a certain section of the community to contribute large sums to the upkeep of a superfluous body of idle drones, because they are honestly convinced of the truth of the Christian doctrines and the infantile fables contained in "God's Word"? Certainly not.

Religion, however, and it does not matter much, whether Catholic, Church of England or any other Christian sect, is just as necessary for the European capitalist system of government as the police and army. The capitalist state needs the policemen in black just as much as it needs their colleagues in blue and khaki.

Therefore by propagating Freethought, by bringing to the knowledge of the people at large that they have been the dupes of a system of religious fraud for the last 2,000 years, one cannot help but be of assistance to Socialism and antagonistic to Capitalism. If Freethought were in the interest of the latter, even the most thickheaded of "God's children weak," would be enlightened in a very short space of time. It would be repeatedly drilled into their hard skulls by the capitalist press. There would be no need to send deputations to members of Parliament to request them to support a Bill for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws. They would go in no time and perhaps be replaced by laws against superstition.

Because Freethought is *not* in the interest of a capitalist state, but on the contrary one of the weapons of that lurking enemy Socialism, it is obvious that all forces available must be mobilized to thwart and combat it.

NORMAN WILSHERE.

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine; at 3.30, and 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Hyatt, McLaren, Tuson and Wood; Wednesday, at 7.30, Messrs. Tuson and Wood; Friday, at 7.30, Messrs. McLaren and Le Maine. Current *Freethinkers* can be obtained opposite the Park Gates, on the corner of Edgware Road, during and after the meetings.

INDOOR.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (London Co-operative Hall, 249 Dawes Road): 7.30, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"Christianity's Harmony with Science—Anthropology."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): Monday, November 2, at 8.0, Mr. H. Preece will open a discussion on "Our Universe."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Kingsley Martin, Editor, *The New Statesman and Nation*—"What is the World Coming To?"

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, John Katz, B.A.—"Germany and the World Crisis."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4, Hall No. 5, near Clapham North Station, Underground): 7.30, Mrs. J. Chance—"The Cost of English Morals."

THE CONWAY DISCUSSION CIRCLE (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, W.C.1): Tuesday, November 3, at 7.30, Prince D. S. Mirsky—"Philosophy in Soviet Russia."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.7, five minutes from the Brecknock): 7.30, Mr. F. A. Hornibrook—"Physical Fitness."

WEMBLEY AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (Zealley's Cafe, 700 High Road, Wembley): 7.30, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"The Mythical Christ."

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S.—Branch meetings at 161 Elm Grove (corner of Linton Street) on the third Thursday in each month at 8.0. Will members please take note.

NEWCASTLE, Bigg Market (weather permitting)—Wednesday, November 4—Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SEAHAM HARBOUR (weather permitting)—Saturday, October 31, at 7.0—Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND (weather permitting)—Sunday, November 1, at 7.0—Mr. J. T. Brighton.

INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Boilermakers' Hall, Argyle Street, entrance in Lorn Street): 7.0, Mr. J. V. Shortt (Liverpool)—"Christians and Morality."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Council Schools): 7.0, Mr. G. Whitehead (London)—"An Atheist's Morality."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. J. Pickford—"Evolution of Vegetation."

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (City Hall, Albion Street, No. 2 Room): 11.30, Mr. J. A. Reid—"Karl Marx." At 6.30, Mr. Percival Jolliffe—"The Biological Aspect of Life." Questions and discussion. Silver Collection.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Buildings, 41 Islington, Liverpool, entrance Christian Street): 7.0, Ronald H. S. Standfast (Birkenhead)—"To-day's Need for Atheism." Current *Freethinkers* on sale, also large and varied stock of literature.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Dramatic Performance of "George Dandin," preceded by "Augustus in Search of a Father."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus, Hall No. 5): 7.0, Mr. W. H. Harris—"The Mechanism of Life."

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