

*The*

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

Views and Opinions.

Religious Bogies.

PERHAPS I am very peculiar. Perhaps it is other people who are peculiar. Obviously I cannot be expected to give a decisive answer, and it is quite clear that I cannot be expected to accept an answer from others as settling the matter. But there are certainly many things on which I differ from the other fellow, even when he happens to be, generally, with me. For example, I could never quite appreciate the furious indignation some Freethinkers displayed over the famous watch story. It was said that on a particular occasion Bradlaugh had pulled out his watch and challenged the deity to prove his existence by striking him dead within three minutes. I heard Christians repeat the statement in horror-stricken tones, and Freethinkers radiate it with voices quivering with indignation. And yet, all I could ever extract from the story was a laugh. Bradlaugh challenging the deity in this way would be on a level with my offering to box the champion of the world—provided he was never made aware of my proposal.

And the story was such an old one. It began with people merely offending God, and for that he choked or blinded them, or paralysed them, or affected them in some other of the pleasant little ways in which God held intercourse with his people. Or, worse still the ill-doer got converted and died a Christian. For no one at that stage believed that a man could be so daring as to challenge the existence of the deity. The wicked Atheist story could only originate at a time when God was believed to do something. Nowadays Christians appear to believe that God is mainly occupied in doing nothing. He did something a long time ago. To-day he has retired from business, and the money spent in his worship may be regarded as a very handsome old-age pension. At any rate the watch story left me untouched. If the story had been true Bradlaugh would only have been offering to God the kind of challenge Christians used and in-

vited when they really believed in his activity. And if God had really existed he would have been justified—as gods go—in striking him dead. For Bradlaugh had done him irreparable injury. Thousands might have gone on believing, and have died as silly as when they left Sunday school had it not been for Bradlaugh. To have killed Bradlaugh would have been much more sensible than allowing him to live, and rob heaven of its prospective denizens. Finally, I can assure anyone who cares to repeat the watch episode that he is quite safe. If he announces his intention, there is not an insurance company in existence that will count it as an extra risk. The odds are infinity to one on his safety.

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Death Beds.

Another thing on which I appear to differ from a great many is with respect to death-beds. I still receive many letters from different parts of the country asking whether Bradlaugh, or Foote, or some other well-known Freethinker died a Christian. Of course, I do not like to hear these stories about great Freethinkers any more than I care to hear that they all got drunk, or beat their wives, or indulged in some other form of rascality. But if all the stories were true, I do not know that I should be very much concerned, except to try and discover why so many men having lived sensibly died foolishly. Certainly it would not affect my own opinions. For one really ought not to hold any opinion because the other fellow does. John Smith ought only to agree with Plato when Plato agrees with him. That does make it quite clear that Smith and Plato are two persons. On a question of fact we are often compelled to take another man's word; but opinion is quite another matter. That I must form for myself, and in that case the opinion I hold must be my own. So that I was never very much interested as to whether Freethinkers did or did not die shrieking for Jesus to save them. I have heard of Christians who were reduced to that same pitifully low level, and as we are all human, it might be just possible that owing to the disintegrating influence of disease some Freethinkers might be reduced to the level upon which so many fervent believers normally live. I always hoped it was not true in the case of the Freethinker, I was afraid it was true in the case of the Christian. He might naturally be expected to face death with the same pitiful outlook he had retained during his life. It is bad for the Freethinker to forget what one has learned, but it is beyond expression regrettable for the Christian never to have learned at all.

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Edison's Beliefs.

I really commenced these notes *apropos* of the death of Edison. English newspapers have published paragraphs concerning his opinions on religion.

Similar paragraphs have also appeared in American papers. But in one respect the American papers seem to be better than our own. In England the newspapers generally aim at telling people what they think it is good for them to know, with the results that in all matters of religion the general rule is to keep out anything that looks like a direct attack upon religious beliefs. The consequence is pure dope. It illustrates the most cowardly and the most contemptible form of lying. The American press seems to adopt the policy that so long as an item is "news" it may have a place. The result is that whereas in England we have only known that some of Edison's friends think he had a belief in religion, in America there have been statements from the other side asserting that he had no religion at all. In England the desire is to create the impression that the man who gave us the earthly gramophone ought to be an authority on heavenly harps, and if a man helps in the development of the electric light, he ought to be an authority on the immortality of the soul.

Thus, in a copy of the *New York Evening Post*, dated October 19, I find a summary of opinions on the subject. Some of Edison's family say that he had an open mind on the question of immortality, which means nothing at all. Edison's doctor, Herbert S. Howe, as evidence of this open mind, cites him as saying, "Well, if there is a hereafter it doesn't matter, and if there isn't a hereafter it doesn't matter either." That certainly doesn't sound very impressive evidence on the part of people who want to make Edison religious, if they can. It is also stated that the inventor's well-known Agnosticism was not Atheism. The kind of Agnosticism and what is meant by Atheism are not stated. Anyway, we are quite familiar with this kind of thing, we know how often it is used by those poor timid souls here who do not care to have it known that they really are Atheists, and who must bless T. H. Huxley, who so thoughtfully provided a respectable alias for them—and for himself.

On the other hand, Mr. Joseph Lewis, President of the New York Freethought Association, repeats what was said to him some time back in the course of an interview, by Edison himself, and which was published soon after in these columns. Edison wished Mr. Lewis well in his work, he said that the worst of it was that "Preachers got hold of the children from six to seven years of age, and then it is almost impossible for others to do anything with them." He, moreover several times contributed to the work of the Freethought Association (Mr. Lewis has been thoughtful enough to retain photographic copies of the cheques) and contributed to the fund for sending Paine's *Age of Reason* to schools and colleges. Decidedly the Freethinkers appear to have the better of the argument. And as the world goes it is safe to assume that any public man who publicly expresses himself *against* religion, is likely to be expressing only a little of what he feels. Christianity may not have done much in some directions, but in that of coating public life with a slime of sheer hypocrisy it has met with unquestionable success.

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#### The Paralysis of Piety.

So much for Edison and his religious beliefs. As I have already said, I don't care the value of a brass button whether Edison, or Bradlaugh, or Foote did or did not believe in Christianity before they died. And the kind of man who will go on believing in a God because on his death-bed someone told him that Edison thought there might be one, is quite safe from anything that I or any other Freethinker may do. He will never cease to be religious, and being what he is, he is probably less of a nuisance in a church

or chapel than he would be out of it. After all, even fools have a right to some bit of ground they may call their own; and a man of that stamp stands as one of God's children, and nothing that one can do for him or to him will ever accomplish more than to change the form of his stupidity.

My personal interest in the man who is horrified at the watch story, or who finds himself convinced that there is a God, or believes in the resurrection of Jesus because someone who was trained a Christian reverts to his infantile beliefs just before death, these men interest me only as studies in mental pathology, or as illustrative types of undeveloped humanity. When the domesticated dog wishes to lie down before a fire in a modern dining room, he tramps round and round before settling down with a satisfied grunt. It is a survival from the time when the wild dog trampled the grass in order to be sure that nothing dangerous was concealed therein. So with men. Long ago crouching in their forest lairs they shivered and shook before the wizardry of their medicine-man, and carried about them to their death the mental scars caused by their education. The years roll by, the forest clearing gives place to the cathedral or the chapel, the medicine-man to the priest, the congregation sings hymns to the music of an organ, instead of droning songs to the beating of a tom-tom. But the type remains substantially unchanged. It is the primitive incurious, unreflective, mentally timid type unchanged in all its essentials. They can be seen on all sides, more numerous than many believe, and highly resistant to genuine improvement. *And each one of them has a vote.*

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## Undiluted Religion.

"Speedy end to superstition, a gentle one if you can contrive it, but an end."—*Carlyle*.

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

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

A SALVATION ARMY circular, distributed in the East of London, states that this organization is the sole repository of "undiluted religion," and, of course, invites support on that account. It is a large claim, but religious bodies have seldom been remarkable for modesty or sobriety of statement.

The first Salvation Army, according to Christian tradition, was not a conspicuous success. It is said to have been "sold up," including its managing director, for "thirty pieces of silver." Twenty centuries later another Salvation Army was started by William Booth, which proved so very successful that it celebrated its jubilee amid the plaudits of the press, and the blessings of distinguished members of The Royal congratulations were fulsome, and almost as much stress was laid on the social work as the religious activities of this Salvation Army. Indeed, the Royal congratulations were fulsome, if not sentimental. King George referred to the Salvation Army's "mighty achievements," and of its "works of love and mercy"; whilst Queen Alexandra dwelt on "the great and beneficent work for mankind, initiated by its first General." The "glorious free press" of England took up the Royal refrain, and thousands of columns of the most colossal silliness appeared in print concerning the Salvation Army and its so-called philanthropic work.

The plain truth is that this Salvation Army is the most reactionary religious body, save the Romish Church, in England. The Army's trade-mark, "Blood and Fire," proves it beyond all cavil and dis-

pute. It is "gross as a mountain, open, palpable." In a country pretending to culture and civilization the motto should be sufficient to make the bronze lions in Trafalgar Square roar in indignation. It means, in plain language, that all must wash in the blood of Christ, or fall into the fire of everlasting hell. It may be Christian teaching, it may even be the quintessence of the teaching of Jesus, but most certainly it is not "great and beneficent work for mankind," as the newspapers of this country pretend.

So much for "undiluted religion." The value of the social work of this Salvation Army is exaggerated out of all proportion. Salvationists have all to be teetotalers? What real effect has that on Britain's consumption of alcohol? Salvationists have all to be abstainers from tobacco. The sale of tobacco and cigarettes has more than doubled during the past few years. As for the alleged restoration of tens of thousands of women and girls from lives of vice, it has not affected the condition of our towns, or the statistics of prostitution. Royal persons and the sycophantic press may bless the Salvation Army shelters and the "beneficent work" at Hadleigh Farm Colony, but what have Trade Unionists to say about these matters? There is no "charity," Christian or otherwise, in the very business-like Emigration Department of the Salvation Army. The emigrants pay their fares, and the Army officials take the usual commission from the railway and shipping companies. The boasted "Suicide Bureau" of the Salvation Army is almost as farcical as the "Suicide Club," so happily described by Stevenson. The former is supposed to have saved thousands from self-murder in its many forms, but it does not appear to have affected the annual statistics concerning suicide.

The flamboyant journalists claim that the Salvation Army took religion into the slums. Just so! And the slums are no better for it. The whole country is seething with industrial unrest. Working men and women are no longer to be cajoled into giving other people money in order to fight an imaginary devil. They are looking askance at the greedy, and probably Christian, landlords, slum-owners, and profiteers. They have been bullied long enough with the lullaby that "the earth is the Lord's." They have discovered that in this country the earth belongs to the ground landlords, a distinction with a difference.

People have been hypnotized by the big drums, trumpets, and tambourines of the Salvation Army. Look at the figures concerning converts in any issue of the *War Cry*, and then add them together from the time that periodical first added to the gaiety of the nation and disputed with *Punch* the position of a comic paper. The grand total is simply enormous, yet the number of Christians grow steadily less. Despite the testimonials from the "upper circles," the thing is a riotous jest.

It is a bad joke also for the Salvation Army to confine its output of "undiluted religion" to the working-class. If its officials are really interested in social problems, let them go to the West-end of London, and tell the idle folks there that it is immoral to draw rent from slum property, and to draw dividends from sweated labour. Let them go to the collieries and railways and notice that men are exposed to death and mutilation in earning royalties and dividends. Let them tell their titled patrons that it is immoral that women should sew fashionable garments for a few pence each, and that half-starved, little children should roam the streets night and day. Three millions of men and women to-day are unable to find work to do, and are living from hand to

mouth in the richest country in the world. Endless recitals of the "old, old story," coupled with threats of hell and hopes of paradise, will not satisfy people in these serious times. And all the artful aids of showmanship, the drums, trombones, and tambourines, will not hide the stark fact that Christianity is an evangel for slaves, and no longer suited to the requirements of the citizens of a free country. England will never be civilized whilst it has a Christian majority. An educated democracy will never stand in silent adoration before the highly-coloured lithograph of a saviour who never lived. Such an action may be "undiluted religion," but it is also undisguised superstition.

MIMNERMUS.

## Masterpieces of Freethought.

X.

THE ORIGIN OF ALL WORSHIPS.

By DUPUIS.

BEFORE me lie three thick quarto volumes. They are the first edition of one of the most learned works ever written by a Freethinker; indeed I am not quite sure if it is not *the* most learned work. The title page is as follows: *Origine de Tous les Cultes ou Religion Universelle par Dupuis, Citoyen François. Tome Premier a Paris, Chez H. Agasse, rue des Poitevins, No. 13. L'an III. de la Republique, une et Indivisible. Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité.*

This first volume has 556 pages and sixteen pages in the Preface. The second volume is divided into two parts, 302 pages and 304 pages, and the third volume, also in two parts, has 367 pages, 355 pages, an index of 104 pages and sixteen pages explaining the numerous plates in each of the three volumes. Such a monument of industry and learning leaves one breathless—for though almost unknown to the present generation of Freethinkers, it is safe to say that no anti-religious work has had such a profound influence on the study of the history of religion as this famous *Origin of all Worships*.

As I turn over its pages with its enormous wealth of classical allusions, its constant reference to historians, travellers and philosophers of all ages, I simply stand aghast. I can find no words to describe a work which must have taken the author years and years of writing and correcting. It appeared in the full tide of the French Revolution, at a time when the whole world of moral values was changing, when an almost complete break with the past, in history and custom and ideas, was taking place and when, almost for the first time since Christianity had conquered the world, the challenge of the people to king and priest resulted in a blow to established things from which they have never recovered.

Dupuis himself was one of those wonder children that appear now and then in this extraordinary world of ours, and had he put his genius to the service of Christianity, he would, no doubt have taken his place with the greatest Christian scholars, with Jerome and Augustine, Bossuet and Bellarmine, Newman and Manning and Lightfoot. But his attack on Christianity embodied not only an explanation of many of its principal characteristics; it went further, it actually denied the historical existence of Jesus Christ and, than that, no more deadly sin could happen in the eyes of the priest.

Charles François Dupuis was born in 1742 and died in 1809—the same year as our own Thomas Paine. He very early showed signs of scholarship, and like his father, might have been just an ordinary school-

master. He attracted the notice, however, of the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, who sent him to the College d'Harcourt with brilliant results. He soon obtained his M.A. degree, and at twenty-four years of age became Professor of Rhetoric in the college of Siseux. He married in 1775 and received a Chair in the College of France, and his fame was almost complete when he delivered the funeral oration in Latin, for his University, of Maria Theresa of Austria. He is said to have invented at this time a sort of telegraph with which he could correspond with signs, with a friend living in another town, at Bagneux. He destroyed the apparatus, however, when the Revolution took place.

His particular bent was for mathematics and astronomy and he studied these subjects with Lalande and two priests, Leblond and Barthelemy. The result was that he commenced making notes for his great work and published in the *Journal des Savants* a few fragments, and in 1781 gathered them together in one volume. His ideas were received as much with enthusiasm by his learned friends as they were bitterly criticized by those sharp-witted enough to scent the heretic. In 1788 he was elected a member of the French Academy, and in spite of his critics, was able to bring out in 1794 the work which forms the subject of these articles. It should have appeared in Prussia under the auspices of Frederick the Great, but the death of this King deprived Dupuis also of the Chair for Literature in the Academy of Berlin. Unfortunately, though the work caused a profound sensation, especially among priest and scholars, it did not have quite the success its author expected among the people—for whom, in the main, it was written. Dupuis was under no delusion as to the cause. 2,220 pages require reading, no matter what the subject, but when it happens to be a terrific thesis, a polemic against the established religion with new ideas, and the complete negation of a God who had reigned supreme as a sort of Divine Person for over 1,200 years, it really was too much. Such a work requires nearly unlimited leisure for study. It requires a certain scholarship in advance. However much one would like to dispute statements, there is no time to prove what, to a man of immense learning, is already proved. Dupuis took for granted something of his own vast knowledge in his readers—an impossible position.

He therefore issued a popular abridgement in 1798—though one can read between the lines of the Preface to this abridgement that he was terribly disappointed. He still felt that the little work should conduct the reader to the big one, but in case it did not, "they will have," he says, "an extract of the principles of the new system and a detailed-enough explanation of the discoveries to which it led, and a new route opened to a study of antiquity. There will also be a few new things not found in the original volumes. And I have," he adds, "left out as much as I could of the necessary high scholarship, so that the book will attract a greater number of readers; for to instruct my fellow-men and add to their happiness has always been the aim of my studies."

Dupuis retired, at the approach of the worst excesses of the Revolution to Evreux, but he was elected a member of the Convention, and he invariably was on the side of moderation. During the trial of Louis XVI, he showed great courage, and with Paine and a few others, voted for the imprisonment, but not the death of the King. He spoke as follows after sentence of death had been pronounced: "I hope that the majority vote will make for the happiness of my fellow citizens, and it will do so if the sentence can survive the severe examination of Europe and posterity." Brave words at such a time! It is good

to think, like Thomas Paine, he had no hand in condemning the unfortunate Louis to death, and it is on record that, in spite of the risk of the guillotine to himself, he managed to save many victims from the fury of the revolutionaries.

Against his wish he was made secretary to the Convention, was given the post of looking after the laws relative to public education. He spoke often and in particular should be remembered for his championing of the liberty of the press with the famous (or infamous) Louvet de Couvray, the author of *Faublas*, the work which roused the ire of Carlyle but which surely is amusing and typical of the days which preceded the French Revolution.

He took part in the politics of his day, wisely and temperately till 1802, and was then given the decoration of the Legion of Honour. Then came several Academical posts in literature and fine arts, and the publication of several other works on his pet subject, and finally, in 1809, he retired to Bourgogne, where he died at the age of sixty-three. He left several manuscripts, but in spite of his great fame died a poor man, his widow receiving a pension of only 1,200 francs from the Institute.

I have dealt at length with the life of Dupuis because so little is really known of him. His great book is referred to often, but who has read it? I frankly admit I have not—the first Free-thought masterpiece I have not read, dealt with in this series. But as I turn over the pages and stop to read some, I can only repeat my amazement at such erudition. Dupuis left nothing to chance. He ransacked ancient literature to prove his thesis, and he quotes fully and generously. Mr. John M. Robertson in his *Short History of Freethought*, says Dupuis "took an important step, not yet fully reckoned with by later mythologists, towards the mythological analysis of the Gospel narratives." He is right, many of our own Rationalists have not yet arrived at anything like the position of Dupuis. They have not read him or made the least effort to find out what he stood for.

What was the origin of all cults? Is there an answer to such a question? Has Dupuis, if not actually solving the problem, provided us with a key?

I shall try and deal with these questions in the following articles.

H. CUTNER.

(To be continued.)

### Rondeau.

I CAN make you dream; this art I know;  
Just how to take your hand and lead you—so—  
Away from this grey world of grime and toil  
Unto a land of honey, and sweet oil,  
Of warmth and sunshine, where soft zephyrs blow.  
Words are our chariot; by them we go;  
Words, cunning words, that cause the eyes to glow.  
With words, and well-placed pauses as a foil,  
I can make you dream.

Behold my servants; marshalled in a row  
They wait my orders; I command, and, lo,  
They storm your fastness; they proceed to coil  
Around the heart and set the blood aboil—  
What magic from a poet's pen can flow!

I can make you dream.

BAYARD SIMMONS

Hope ever urges on and tells us to-morrow will be better.—*Tibullus*.

Death and taxes are inevitable.—*Haliburton*.

## Metaphysics for the Materialist.

It is now time to retrace our steps. In *Freethinker* No. 19, it was shown how the concept of self-existence is a necessity of thought. In No. 24 it was held that a metaphysics based on empirics could worthily supplement the latter, and that the Materialist should compete with his metaphysicist rivals in their own field. In 26, 27 and 31, these rivals were discussed, and finally I aimed at indicating how a metaphysical tenet might better orthodox Materialism. Let us now see on what lines the Materialist (by which term I shall henceforward understand, Emergent Materialist) should frame his metaphysic.

Having in mind those rival theories already discussed, and basing our observations on the behaviour of substance given in empirics (*i.e.*, science and everyday life), we assert:—

1. Substance is not a tool in the hands of God, nor does it show signs of being pulled to an End.
2. It is monistic, deterministic in behaviour, and constant, and therefore is not inoculated or acted on, or in any way concerned with other alleged principles of existence.
3. It has self-existence, phenomena not being merely the eject of mind.
4. It is not intelligent or purposive, and so can neither be benevolent (pro-human) nor malevolent (anti-human).
5. It is active and creative, and among its (formal) creations are mental and living events.

By the first assertion we join issue with transcendental teleology, with the second we oppose Interactionism; the third and fourth meet Idealism, in its objective and substantive aspects respectively; the final assertion contends that substance, single, creative and relatively unintelligent, is all that is required as datum for a workable metaphysics.

For the moment these assertions are in dogmatic form, but every hypothesis can be viewed, in that way, prior to experiment. How are we to show they are true? Obviously, what is wanted is a criterion of truth, and, according to the standard of truth used by science (see *Freethinker* No. 9), we proceed to inquire whether our assertions are assumed and acted on in everyday life—which is the final court of appeal as to whether we are talking sense or nonsense. The one true philosophy is that which is in practical use, and the philosopher's task is to reconstruct in thought, and then in words, the world he finds in actuality; this after he has consulted the report of its behaviour given by science. To minimize the risk of error he should then refer back to empirics, and see if *his* speculative corresponds with *the* actual. Would his reconstruction, lifted from paper to practice, meet with the same reward in the realm of action? Would action be prosperous and consecutive? Would the beliefs which preceded action be adequate and not redundant? Would anything in our experience be left permanently isolated?

It should not be too difficult to specify which philosophy is established in practice. For these thousands of years some philosophy has been working. Which has it been? Was it the primitive savages? No; his hypothesis passed away. It only remained so long as he, owing to fear and insufficient knowledge, was unable to test it thoroughly. Likewise, all philosophies pass that do not permanently satisfy the demands of practice. They are rehabilitated, modified, developed—as Vitalism may be said to bear analogy with primitive animism—but all to no avail. Determinism is the only principle that has been at all

serviceable, and Determinism suggests Materialism.

With regard to the above assertions:—

(1) We exert our will, thus asserting it to be an item in the web of causation. And so we refute transcendental Teleology and Fatalism.

(2) Science has no evidence that substance is tampered with, or has something pumped into it from an outside source, or that one of its offspring has sprung so far that it has quite broken bounds, and now inflicts on it a special causal law of its own. Determinism demands that all phenomena are interrelated; there is no gap anywhere, and this is supported in contemporary science, with its new law of conservation. Matter, light, electricity, energy, are merged one into the other, so that we can no longer speak of the conservation of this or that or the other. We can speak of the conservation of the whole. What is lost here is gained there. To quote J. S. Huxley, "We assume that the universe throughout is composed of the same matter, whose essential unity, in spite of the diversity of its so-called elements, the recent researches of physicists are revealing to us." [*Essays*]. Confirmative of this, Prof. Thomson says, "As men of feeling, our prejudices tend to pluralism; as men of science, to monism." We know that the elements in living bodies are not different from those in non-living; we note known elements in stars and other bodies (*e.g.*, iron in ærolites) and so we might go on.

(3) We act as though substance existed in its own right, and not as though its phenomena might be withdrawn at any moment by the mind which ejected them. Something must exist in its own right, and we have no need to go further than substance. And so we proclaim the redundancy of Idealism.

(4) We do not approach the universe as though it were going to help us, or as though it were going to hinder us—systematically. The universe is neither benevolent nor malevolent. It may wreck us as a ship is wrecked, but it is not *systematically* malevolent. It may yield a good harvest here and there, but it is not *systematically* benevolent. The substance of the universe is treated as unintelligent, and holds no brief either for optimism or pessimism. Thus we reject the spiritualistic or mentalistic theory.

The fifth assertion requires an article to itself. (See *Freethinker* 42 and 43.)

Yes, Materialism has no lack of adherents in practice. It is the philosophical doctrine which is in daily use—in Piccadilly, in the science laboratory or in the Christian pulpit. But its popularity on paper, and in theory, is not wide, and this is not difficult to understand.

To return to the questions, what, how, and why, we might answer thus:—

What?—Substance; active, creative, self-sufficient and (relatively to some of its creatures) unintelligent.

How?—Determinism.

Why?—No validity, apart from animal behaviour.

To a purely hypothetical and omniscient observer outside the universe the process is monotonously fatalistic. But *within* the process (and that is all we are concerned with) Fatalism has no application; it is merely a pose. Fate is not made entirely, but is in the making, for man has part control of his own destiny. Every object, in fact, in virtue of its size, shape and composition, has part control of its own destiny.

Materialism rules out religion and fatalism alike. Both teach dependence, one complete, the other partly active and partly passive. The one says, "God will provide," or, "Do this and God will provide"; the other says, "Poor, pitiable, impotent man. Your

doom is fixed, a slow, sure doom, pitiless and dark. Of what avail are you against the mighty Power that tolerates you for a moment? Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent Matter rolls on its relentless way, a trampling march of unconscious power." The fallacies of Fatalism are obvious, and do not require a 10s. 6d. book on them so late in the day.

The Materialist avoids both. He is not going to land safely in the lap of a loving heavenly father. Nor is he going to lie down to fate. Man he regards as an item in the cosmic system, not as a fly on the wheel. He is part of the continuum of cause-effect; he has will—not "free" will, but will. He does not wait cringing for the inevitable blow of fate. Neither does he, normally, expect answers to his prayers. Nature has dealt him cards; he must play with them. But he must use them rationally, sanely. He must orient himself. He must try to realize exactly how unimportant, and exactly how important, he is. To be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins? Not if he can help it! Yet probably so.

Religion calls us to dependence—active or passive. Fatalism calls us to resignation. Materialism calls us to action.

G. H. TAYLOR.

### Your Gramophone.

THE recent reduction in the price of records will have been welcomed by all music lovers, for it is now possible to get a regular concert in the home at quite a small cost, and as the pleasure can be repeated again and again, and shared with friends and visitors, the wonder is that everyone has not a gramophone.

One of the most remarkable series of records is undoubtedly the Sterno 12-inch records, each priced at 2s. 6d. Among the best of these are some to suit every taste.

On No. 8015 Louis V. D. Sande, baritone, sings the Toreador Song from Bizet's opera Carmen, while on the other side Alexander Kirchner, tenor, sings Lohengrin's Narration.

On No. 8013 the orchestra of the Stadtischen Opera Berlin plays selections from Carmen itself, and the same orchestra on No. 8008 plays the overtures to Il Seraglio and Marriage of Figaro.

Among other 12-inch records are renderings of Fingal's Cave, Hungarian Rhapsody, Light Cavalry, Il Pagliacci, and Tannhauser.

To me 12-inch records are always more satisfying than 10-inch, because one does have time to settle down to enjoy oneself before having to rise to turn a record over.

For that reason H.M.V. records Nos. C 2210 to 2213 appeal strongly to me, for they are the Royal Choral Society's rendering of Coleridge Taylor's Death of Minnehaha.

I don't know how many Freethinkers read their Hiawatha, but there are some instructive passages in it. On these records the Royal Choral Society sings and tells us how Hiawatha rushed into the forest crying to Gitche Manito the Mighty to give food for the starving Indians. Gitche Manito takes no notice, and Minnehaha dies leaving Hiawatha sorrowing.

Very different are the three records D 1735-1737, which record Haydn's Symphony commonly known as the Surprise played by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. These records are the kind one could play until they are worn out and still not tire of them. The Surprise Symphony (so called because of the sudden unexpected drum taps which come into the quiet slow movements, and which Haydn intended to wake the sleepy English audience to attention) has been called "plain sailing for the unmusical man" and the description is not inapt.

Glorious melodies abound and the grace and delicacy cannot fail to delight even the veriest lowbrow.

Of the 10-inch records much may be said, but nearly all of them make me wish they were 12-inch.

H.M.V. B 3830 has the Coolies of Sumatra and the Caravan, and played by Marek Weber and his orchestra contains all the magic of the Orient.

McCormack singing the Garden Where the Praties Grow and The Harp that Once Through Tara's Halls, enthral all who hear H.M.V. DA 1171; while Lily Pons, on DA 1190, singing the Bell Song from Delibes' Lakme astonishes the listener with her crystal clear yet mellow voice.

The best of the Sterno recent 10-inch records are easily 758 Leggett's String Orchestra playing Mendelssohn's Spring Song and Grieg's Anitra's Dance, and No. 680 The Pagan Three playing and singing two fox trots, of which The Song of the Islands is a waltz rendered marvellously effective by the Hawaiian guitars.

To finish, allow me to list some other records according to the types, so that readers will be able to pick a good selection. Every record mentioned is worth buying, but space forbids a detailed account of each

Bands :—

Sterno 737 Gladiator's Farewell and Entry of Gladiators.

Sterno 8009 March Hongroise and March Militaire.

H.M.V. C 2228 Selections from Dorothy.

H.M.V. C 2092 Selections from Tales of Hoffman.

Songs :—

H.M.V. C 2177 Peter Dawson singing Kingfisher Blue and Jhelum Boat Song.

H.M.V. B 3888 Raie da Costa Singing Would you like to take a walk (about the only new song worth hearing) and The Match Parade.

Sterno 700 Robert Carr singing that philosophical song from the Maid of the Mountains, "Live for to-day," and that other sentimental gem, "A Bachelor Gay."

Orchestras and Instrumental :—

Sterno 699 Meyrowitz's Octette playing the Barcarolle from Tales of Hoffman, and the Cavalleria Rusticana.

H.M.V. DA 1157 Kreisler playing Serenade Espagnol and Jota.

BAY.

### CONSISTENCY.

The world of nature is consistent. Summer follows the spring and autumn the summer with precision. The promise is always kept: were it not so it would be impossible for men to rely upon anything, and the world would become a futile and empty thing. We, however, pass through life without thinking very much of this fact. We take it for granted that things always will go on as they always have done; that the sun will rise the next day in the normal course of events and the rain will fall and harvests ripen. Yet if for twenty-four hours the laws of Nature failed in their consistency no power of man, in spite of his undoubted mental capacity, could move the universe to yield those things that it now yields so easily and so willingly. Whatever has been said by Nature through her actions will be fulfilled. She does not make rash promises or rash threats. She does not suggest to men who are unruly in their conduct or who neglect her laws unnecessarily that she will punish them by cutting off their supplies; the rain falls upon the unjust as well as upon the just, and the sun shines upon the most recalcitrant of sinners. It is rather strange when we contemplate these things to realize that there is no such thing as punishment in this stage of Nature's laws. We in our smallness of mind imagine that we can bring our fellow-men to some sort of appreciation of our own limited views by making threats, most of which we do not intend to carry out. This may truly be said to be contrary to Nature; it is not the sort of thing that is done universally, and if we attempt to guide our normal happenings by natural laws we shall avoid this inconsistency and trivial method of expressing our dissatisfaction. . . —A. Stephen Noel (in "Pitman's Journal, September 5, 1931.)

## Acid Drops.

Mr. Arthur Porritt, editor of the *Christian World*, says:—

I have an instinctive feeling that whatever was truly patriotic in the verdict of the nation last week had its inspiration in an exaltation of spirit that amounts almost to religious emotion. Such an uprising of the national spirit might conceivably be transmuted into one of those waves of religious fervour that time and again in English history has swept over all classes and redeemed the soul of the nation.

In the same journal ("Topics of the Week" column) a writer avers that:—

Three dreads entered the public mind and explained the result of the election—the dread of Trade Union domination of Parliament, the dread of political interference with the banking system, and the dread of the £ following the German mark down the vicious spiral through inflation necessitated by over-spending. In the wholesome fear of these three perils the election cast aside party affiliation and loyalties, and gave the National Government its almost unhealthy overwhelming majority.

So it appears that three dreads, or great fears, not unconnected with the electors' personal welfare, produced what Mr. Porritt calls an exaltation of spirit that amounted almost to religious emotion. That is quite likely—we would leave out the "almost." For the fundamental basis of the religious emotion created by the Christian creed is fear—the believer's personal fear of what may happen to him in a here-after. We have yet to be convinced that there is anything exalted about fear and the emotions and actions it gives rise to, whether that fear be political or religious.

Our scepticism of the efficacy of prayer is not abated by Mr. Arthur Porritt. Premising that "Both Macdonald and Mr. Baldwin are high-minded men, deeply religious men"—poor Sir Herbert Samuel!—Mr. Porritt goes on to say that these gentlemen "will be sustained in the discharge of their duty in they are conscious that the prayers of good men and women are being offered on their behalf." Then comes a little story. Thus:—

One day in 1915, when the war was going badly for the Allies, the late Sir Stephen Collins chanced to meet Mr. Asquith in the inner lobby of the House of Commons, and, drawing him aside, told the heavily-burdened Prime Minister that thousands of simple Nonconformist people all over the country were praying for him. Asquith, who was really an emotional man at heart, looked at Sir Stephen through tear-dimmed eyes, and in a broken voice replied: "That is indeed a comfort to me, Sir Stephen. My burden is almost too much for one man to carry; but I assure you that it is made lighter, if I know that good men and women are praying for me."

Mr. Asquith (Lord Oxford) was never lacking in courtesy. He may have made this remark to Sir Stephen Collins, who, like the former, is dead; but in his Recretorial Address to the University of Glasgow, he expounded another, and we think firmer resource in human difficulty, when he said: "it matters little whether we take a high or low view of what man's efforts can actually achieve. There is a noble optimism which, in spite of all disappointments and misgivings, holds fast to the faith in what man can do for man."

Assuming that the result of the election really was the answer to prayer asking God to help the nation, one has to assume that the means by which the result was achieved also reveal the hand of God. So one has to make the obvious inference from the complaint of a reader of a pious contemporary who says: "May we not demand a better standard of manners and truthfulness in politics? From the day of the beginning of the election-campaign, newspapers and politicians, at other times level-headed and fair, began to distort the truth

and to misrepresent their opponents." Well, God had to get the right people in Parliament somehow, or else the faithful would think he was ignoring their prayers. And so one sorrowfully concludes that God was inspired by the Jesuit excuse that "the end justifies the means."

From a religious journal we learn that at no time in the last thirty years has the Free Church element in the House of Commons been so small as now. "Save for a small handful of stalwarts, the members whose Free Churchmanship might be relied upon in any question affecting Free Church life and interests have failed to hold their seats." We hope we are not expected to infer that Parliament is any worse off because many religious cant-mongers, pledged to watch over the interests of Free Church ministers and pastors, are now missing? For ought we know to the contrary, the clearing out of much of the Free Church element may be a part of God's plan—in answer to prayer—of succouring the nation. In any case, there is wealth of consolation in that typically Christian piece of philosophy—"it's all for the best."

The assumption of the humble Christian that the earth was created specially for man is not so believable as it once was. A contemporary points out that:—

It is still an undecided question whether men or insects will ultimately rule the Earth; sometimes, as we look round and survey the world, it must seem that the insects have a chance of winning.

But there is hope. It appears that out of 60 British insect pests 21 have been attacked in vain so far, 17 with promise of success, and 22 with complete success.

One may add that if man wishes to survive on the Earth, he will have to depend on his own ingenuity to defeat his insect enemies. Naturally, he can hardly expect help in this direction from his Heavenly Father, seeing that God is supposed to have created these insects and endowed them with the capacity of being "pests" to man. By the way, should a truly Christian man, such as the editor of our contemporary is known to be, describe the insects as "pests"? Of course, from the point of view that the insects have, during human history, caused appalling suffering, misery, and death to mankind, a non-Christian might do so. But in view of the assumption that God lovingly designed and fashioned the insects to be as they are, to call them "pests" savours of Blasphemy in a Christian.

*Film Weekly* suggests that film-producers are being "reformed"; sexy, "naughty," and over-sophisticated films are slowly being eliminated in favour of "nice" pictures. Our contemporary expresses the hope that the producers will not go to the other extreme. Screen drama, it is suggested, should have some recognisable relation to real life; sex films had the effect of bringing real people, with human emotions and weaknesses, into pictures. *Film Weekly* adds:—

It would be a great pity if the advantage were sacrificed in silencing the parrot cry of "cleaner films" raised by some critics of the cinema who detect evil when none is intended or implied. Get rid of unsavoury people and incidents by all means, but stick to human characters.

Cinemas are, of course, primarily intended as places of entertainment. They will cease to be that if the films are to be made to conform to the narrow notions and prejudices of the Puritan who solemnly imagines that the cinema is a medium for inculcating "moral lessons" and "uplift." It is to be devoutly hoped that Puritan influence and agitation will not be allowed to de-humanize the cinema.

Dr. Herbert Gray says that those who love Christ enough to follow him must accept the company that gathers round Christ. It has always been a motley company, and was so, he says, from the beginning. He adds, "Notoriously Christians are a queer lot. But those who follow Christ must accept their friendship. There is nothing else for it for they are round our

Master." Quite so; and if anyone should be interested in the reason for the "queerness," we may suggest that Jesus never said high intelligence was commendable in the sight of God nor glorified it into a virtue. Added to this is the fact that the virtues he did commend are primarily slave virtues. Naturally, then, those that gather round Jesus seem a queer lot to anybody who really values intelligence, and the attributes of courageous and independent men and women.

God's one attempt at authorship, the production of the Holy Bible, was—as we have said before—a sorry failure. Apparently we are not alone in coming to such a conclusion. For the Rev. Dr. A. Herbert Gray says: "Think of the amazing number of laborious days theologians have spent in trying to attain to some successful statement in words of its living truths. And then realize that most of these statements are irrelevant for the man of to-day." Now, on the assumption that the human mind is an echo—albeit a faint one—of the Great Mind which created it, one may well suppose that as man has the capacity for making and enjoying a joke so has his Creator. Naturally, a Great Mind could conceive only a gigantic joke. How uproariously comic must have been the long drawn out spectacle of man trying to elucidate the exact meaning of the Holy Bible. Then there are the squabbles, the feuds, the persecutions, the tortures, and the murders—all adding to the humour of the original jest. Christians claim various attributes for their God, and we see no reason why a superlative sense of humour should not also be included. The evidence of it has been on view for nineteen hundred years.

According to a reader of a pious weekly, "Man is a spiritual creature, placed in a physical world temporarily, and given a physical body to meet the demands of his environment . . . Man's work in this world is to prove himself a spiritual creature by bringing the physical side of his nature into complete subservience to the spiritual." Presumably, then, man's experiences on earth are purely in the nature of a training to fit him for Heaven. And that training consists entirely of struggles with his physical environment and physical body. What a queer sort of training that is! In Heaven man will have no physical body and consequently no animal instincts and feelings. And as all his "spiritual" experience has been gained here in connexion with such instincts and feelings, what manner of use can such experience be to man (or his "soul") in Heaven? As this is a Christian conundrum, there is no hope of finding an intelligent answer to it.

The late Rev. "Profit" Baxter is as dead as the dodo; but his ghost, in the form of cheap publicity for the paper which he founded, still walks the earth. A Golders Green reader sends us a handbill which he rescued from a heap of them which had been left by a not very conscientious bill-distributor on the floor of an omnibus. It is a single sheet, printed on both sides. On the front an advertisement for the *Christian Herald*. On the reverse, the following: "A man once said to Moody: 'I can't believe,' Moody replied: 'Whom can't you believe?'" That is all. The man's answer is omitted; but no doubt the answer was "'You'"—hence the omission. The danger of asking questions is that you may get an unexpected reply. Another *Christian Herald* leaflet had on the front page "Unbelief in the Dock." On the reverse it read: "Put your unbelief in the dock for a moment. Has it brought you happiness? Has it given you a Moral uplift? Has it answered the problem of your sin? Has it settled the question of eternity? No." This answer, unlike that to Moody's question, is printed. Why? Because the answer of any intelligent "unbeliever" to these four questions would be in the affirmative. Religious prophets always have more cunning than humour.

The higher clergy have been active in the recent troubles in Cyprus, and we have noticed that, as Cyprus is a British possession, the newspapers have adopted a different tone with regard to the clerical hooligans of Cyprus than they adopted in the case of those of similar

character and dignity in Spain. Circumstances alter cases, but the piety of this nation is the same everywhere, and so is its most scrupulous (and Christian) officialdom. So we read: "Sir Ronald Storrs, the Governor of Cyprus, with the approval of the Minister for the Colonies (Mr. J. H. Thomas) has decided that the cost of repairing Government property destroyed during the recent disturbances, must be made good by the Greek Christian inhabitants of Cyprus, *excluding Government officials.*" This is a good example for the authorities in Liverpool and Belfast to follow next July 12.

It is awkward for the Anglo-Catholics that the Prayer Book describes masses as "blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits." But this is mild language compared to some used by predecessors of the Anglo-Catholics who would have dispised that name in what are called "the spacious days" of the Virgin Queen. Pilkington, one of Elizabeth's bishops thus describes the ritual of the mass:—

"How many toys, crossings, blessings, blowings, knockings, kneelings, bowings, liftings, sighings, howlings, turnings and left-turnings, mockings, mowings, sleepings, and apish playthings, soft whisperings and loud speakings, have we to consecrate our own devils withal or [before] it can be gotten, done."

(*Pilkington's Works* (Parker Society) p. 498.) Nor is a rhyme found in an Elizabethan Commonplace Book once the property of the Lady Elizabeth Cope, more reverent. It runs as follows:—

"O presumptuous undertaker,  
Never cake could make a baker  
Yet a priest would make his maker  
What's become of all ye Christs ye priests have made?  
Do those hosts of hosts abide, or do they fade?  
One Christ bides, ye rest do flie  
One's a truth, the rest's a lie."

In this (as will be seen by the last line) we have "poetry" and piety combined.

### Fifty Years Ago.

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL talked great nonsense at the Conservative banquet in Hull last week. After demolishing Mr. Gladstone and the whole Liberal cabinet, he finished his magnificent oration with a reference to Mr. Bradlaugh. This is what he said:—

It should not be forgotten that the contest with Mr. Bradlaugh, which was the one great parliamentary victory which the Conservatives could boast of till now, was initiated by Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, and that, thanks to the undaunted attitude of the member for Portsmouth, our ancient House of Commons has not yet become the platform for the disloyal, a lecture-room for the immoral, or a temple for the Atheist and his hideous crew.

Now there is not a word of truth in this passage. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff's attempt to keep Mr. Bradlaugh out of Parliament was defeated by Mr. Gladstone's resolution that the member for Northampton should be allowed to affirm at his own risk; and Mr. Bradlaugh actually sat in the House for months, during which time the Wolffs and Churchills never wagged their impudent tongues against him. It was only when Sir Stafford Northcote, in violation of his public pledge, and with the assistance of the Speaker, raised fresh obstacles after the decision of the judges as to an Atheist's right to affirm, that Mr. Bradlaugh was excluded from his seat. Further, Mr. Bradlaugh never once used his position in the House of Commons to advocate his views on any questions except those dealt with in Parliamentary Bills; nor was he recognized there as particularly immoral. His name is not notorious in questionable circles of the West End of London. And as to the "hideous crew," Mr. Bradlaugh looks more of a man than Lord Churchill, although he owes less to the tailor and spends less time on the cultivation of hair on his upper lip. Randy Pandy should not provoke personal comparisons, for he is about as insignificant a whipper-snapper as one sees in a day's march, and if he were not a Lord he might be taken for a barber's clerk.

*The "Freethinker," November 13, 1991.*



## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—Bishop W. M. Brown, 11s.

Mr. P. J. MAYNARD writes, "It has perhaps not escaped your notice that after the Church offered up special prayers that the nation should be 'guided aright' in the election, all the six clergymen who were in the House of Commons were 'chucked out.'" We had noticed the fact, and if it was an act of the Lord, it should be placed to his credit.

F. LAWES.—Yes, even in the most strongly entrenched Christian positions the old superstition is weakening. But there is still a great deal to be done before we can rest in security that what has been won will be retained. It is the spirit of foolish compromise and timidity that we have to be on our guard against.

C. AMERY.—Nothing would please us more than to be able to re-issue a series of the old Freethought classics at a popular price. It would show where the real work was done, and how much the world owes to men and women whose names are now practically unknown. But it would mean considerable loss in cash, and at present we are unable to face it.

L. HUTCHINGS.—We have pointed out time after time, but without avail, apparently, that the *Freethinker* stands on its own. It does not benefit in the slightest degree from legacies to either the National Secular Society, or to the Secular Society Limited. What losses are incurred in the maintenance of the *Freethinker* has to be made good in other directions, and as best can be done.

Mr. A. W. DAVIES writes that in his new edition of the *Mysterious Universe*, Sir James has corrected some statements apparently to remove misinterpretation placed upon certain of his statements by the pulpit and religious writers. It is a pity that men in the position of Sir James takes so much trouble to provide ground for misinterpretations. These men ought by this time to know their parsons and the general press.

Mr. W. C. ENSOR writes protesting against the deliberate misrepresentations of Socialism by its critics. We sympathize with Mr. Ensor, but what we have said concerning Sir James Jeans applies to this case. Socialists have not always been careful to free their statements from ambiguities.

C. ALTMAN.—Your quotation from the *Catholic Encyclopedia* is a very telling one. But the most telling things are the facts. It is under Christianity that war has increased in range and in destructiveness. It is the Christian nations of the world that have moralized war as they have moralized other evil things.

G. BEESON.—Afraid your letter would lead to discussions rather out of our line. Many thanks for your offer to do what you can to make the paper known.

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

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

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.

## Sugar Plums.

To-day (November 15) Mr. Cohen visits Glasgow, and will lecture in the City Hall, at 11.30, on "Freethought and Reform," and at 6.30, on "The Disease that Kills Religion." The usual good meetings are expected.

The two meetings held by Mr. Cohen in Sunderland were a great success. The hall was quite full in the

afternoon, and overcrowded in the evening. If other meetings are arranged it will be well to seek a larger hall. There were many visitors from the towns around Sunderland, and among these we were glad to note such old stalwarts as Mr. J. Bartram, of Newcastle; and Mr. Ralph Chapman, of South Shields. There were numerous questions after the lectures, but it was evident from these that Freethought propaganda has been much neglected of late years in the town. On the other hand the interest with which the speeches were followed was most marked. Mr. J. Brighton, who has been giving open-air lectures in the town with considerable success, took the chair at both meetings.

The Leicester Secular Society is making a bold attempt to clear off the mortgage on its hall by way of raising a sum of £2,000. One of the efforts it is making is to hold a bazaar on November 14 and 15. It invites gifts of money or articles for sale, and we hope that a generous response will be forthcoming. The Leicester Secular Society has done good work for the movement, and although the present is not a good time to raise large sums of money, still, even if the whole of the sum is not realized a very good step should be made towards clearing of this burden. We hope the wealthier members of the Freethought Party will make due note of what has been said.

Early in December there will be published a new book by Mr. Cohen, entitled *Selected Heresies*. The book consists of selected arguments—not mere passages—from Mr. Cohen's writing over the past thirty-eight years. In addition to the numerous books and pamphlets he has written, there are about 2,000 articles from which to choose. It thus presents arguments on all phases of Freethinking, with numerous excursions into the regions of ethics, science and sociology. The book should be useful to all as a guide, philosopher and friend, and in addition will make an excellent gift book for Christmas and the New Year. The published price will be 3s. 6d. Orders received before date of publication will be discharged post free.

*Three Things that Matter*, by W. G. Bond (Watts & Co. 5s.) is reminiscent of the curate's egg. The three things that matter are science, religion and philosophy. The first, which covers the largest chapter in the book is excellently done, and the reader is provided with a clear sketch of the work of science. The second gives a good outline of the present standing of orthodox religion in relation to modern thought, although we do not see why, when cathedrals and churches have been divorced from their present uses, they should be devoted to "Meditation on the Great Mystery." That sounds much like exchanging the bamboozlement of the present religion for the bamboozlement of a religion of the same kind. The chapter on philosophy, might profitably have been omitted altogether, for it is splendidly inadequate. Mr. Bond does not appear to have first-hand acquaintance with Spinoza, and evidently finds it difficult to understand one who is a clear but severely logical writer. To take Spinoza's use of the term God, and his identification of God with the universe, as being more than a concession to the philosophical vocabulary of his day, is not to understand Spinoza at all. It may surprise Mr. Bond to learn that Spinoza's philosophy is as Atheistic as it could be. As to philosophy in general Mr. Bond does not seem to be alive to the fact that the great and indispensable work of philosophy is co-ordination and not that of spinning cobwebs out of one's own inner consciousness. And the fundamental concepts of science are really philosophical in character, and often enough in origin. In fact, if scientists were better acquainted with this there would be less foolish talk in scientific circles than there is.

Two other small volumes come from Messrs. Watts (*Seeing Ourselves*, by Dr. Bernard Hollander, and *The Search for Man's Ancestors*, by Professor Elliot Smith, each 1s.). Dr. Hollander's essay takes more the character of a number of shrewd observations upon frames of mind and aspects of character rather than a formal scientific, but will probably prove of greater value to a number of readers on that account. Professor Elliot Smith's book

is one that none should miss. Its purpose is well set forth in the title and the story is told with remarkable thoroughness, considering it is told in less than sixty pages. Nothing material is, so far as we can judge, omitted, and the author has given us a genuinely scientific treatise in a way that makes it as fascinating as a novel. The manner in which from a tooth, or a piece of bone scientists track down the earliest ancestors of mankind is as "intriguing" as a novel by Edgar Wallace. The book has a number of illustrations which adds to the attractiveness of the work.

A debate will take place in Todmorden Town Hall, Lancs., on Tuesday evening, November 17, at 7.30. The subject for debate is "That State Education should be entirely Secular." Messrs. J. Clayton and E. Clapham will take the affirmative, and the Revs. H. B. Brain and H. Burnley will take the negative. Mr. J. Clayton will open the debate. It is hoped the local Freethinkers will make the debate well known, and see that their Christian friends attend.

Birmingham saints are reminded that Mr. A. D. McLaren will lecture in the Bristol Street Council School to-day (Sunday) at 7.0 p.m., on "The Mythical Christ." The subject should tempt every Freethinker in the district to take at least one Christian friend. Mr. McLaren has a pleasing way of giving a scholarly lecture in simple language.

It is not often that Mr. G. H. F. McCluskey is heard from the N.S.S. platform, it is therefore with pleasure we note his lecture on "Religion and the Poets," on behalf of the Plymouth Branch N.S.S., at Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus, at 7.0 p.m. to-day (Sunday). We are sure the lecture will be interesting, and there should be plenty of discussion.

Mr. B. A. Le Maine will lecture this evening for the Fulham and Chelsea Branch, Co-operative Hall, Dawes Road, at 7.30, on "Religion the Enemy of Man." We hope there will be a good gathering of local Freethinkers and others.

The new Wembley Branch is making headway. As an evidence of its activity we are glad to see a number of reports of its meetings have appeared in the *Wembley Observer*, and also letters bearing on its propaganda. We hope the success of the Branch will continue.

## The Literary Lord of Twickenham

(Concluded from page 699.)

POPE'S *Essay on Man* was his most ambitious performance, as Stephen notes, and it gave the poet a Continental reputation. It was translated abroad, was extensively imitated, and created considerable discussion. Pope's imposing endeavour to justify the Divinity in his dealings with mankind proved a dismal failure. Philosophically, the poem is farcical. Pope veers from Pantheism to Deism without any attempt at reconciliation. Stephen's strictures on the didactic aspects of the *Essay* are warranted. He asserts that: "The reasonings of the *Essay* are confused, contradictory, and even childish. He was equally far from having assimilated any definite system of thought. Brought up as a Catholic, he had gradually swung into vague Deistic belief. But he had never studied any philosophy or theology whatever, and he accepts in perfect unconsciousness fragments of the most heterogeneous systems." Still, with all these disadvantages, Pope has presented the world with a poem of enduring power.

The famous lines on superstition recur to the memory:—

"Force first made conquest, and that conquest, law;  
Till superstition taught the tyrant awe,  
Then shared the tyranny, then lent it aid,

And gods of conquerors, slaves of subjects made:  
She 'midst the lightnings blaze and thunder's sound,  
When rock'd the mountains, and when groan'd the ground,  
She taught the weak to bend, the proud to pray,  
To Power unseen, and mightier far than they;  
She, from the rending earth and bursting skies,  
Saw gods descend and fiends infernal rise;  
Here fix'd the dreadful, there the blest abodes;  
Fear made her devils, and weak hope her gods;  
Gods partial, changeful, passionate, unjust,  
Whose attributes were rage, revenge, or lust;  
Such as the souls of cowards might conceive,  
And form'd like tyrants, tyrants would believe.  
Zeal then, not charity, became the guide;  
And hell was built on spite, and heaven on pride."

Pope's theology was more a matter of emotion than of firm belief. Vague and indefinite, he lacked that fervour of stern conviction which promotes persecution. The Romanist teaching of his family and school life was humanized by the poet's contact with the secular world. During the eighteenth century dogmatic creeds had rapidly disintegrated in cultured circles. Even Pope's clerical acquaintance, Swift, was a sceptic in disguise. Bolingbroke's heretical opinions were notorious. Tindal, Toland, Woolston and Collins were all active; and Shaftesbury certainly influenced Pope. Moreover, as a leading biographer says, "as a member of a persecuted sect he had learnt to share that righteous hatred of bigotry which is the honourable characteristic of his best contemporaries. He considered the persecuting spirit of his own Church to be its worst fault." Again, in his youthful *Essay on Criticism* he noted that the Catholic claim to the exclusive possession of the keys to heaven's gates inflames the spirit of persecution. This protest led to estrangement with contemporary Catholic friends.

Pope may have dimly divined the unknowable when he surmised an underlying reality in all modes of faith. Although he never seceded from his father's creed, and remained a nominal Romanist till the end, he was truly Catholic only in the sense of being a universalist. When Atterbury suggested Pope's conversion to the established religion on the death of his father, although in his reply Pope acknowledged the social advantages to be gained, he nevertheless feels that the change would cause pain to his mother with whose peace of mind he is more concerned than with any religious speculation whatever.

Pope corresponds with Swift in a similar strain in 1729. "I am of the religion of Erasmus, a Catholic," he writes. "So I live, so shall I die, and hope one day to meet you, Bishop Atterbury . . . Dean Berkeley, and Mr. Hutchinson in that place to which God in his infinite mercy brings us and everybody." And without question Pope would have welcomed Bolingbroke to the same celestial abode.

A man of Freethinking tendencies, Pope had no desire to incur the charge of having abandoned the prescribed Catholic religion to obtain worldly advantages denied to all members of the unreformed communion. Several eighteenth century Protestant divines display deistic sympathies, but they all frowned on those who were more advanced than themselves. Pope did no more than certain superfine sceptics of a later day who held their skirts when Bradlaugh or Foote were present, when he stigmatized Toland and Tindal as shameless enemies of religion. Pope's timid disposition forbade him to countenance open unbelief, and he was the last man on earth to sully his respectability by lending his support to unpopular opinions. It was one thing to favour Freethought in secluded discussion with trusted intimates, but quite another to publicly proclaim dissent from current beliefs. The first, at its worst might be considered an amiable weakness, while the last appeared quite criminal to conventional minds.

Yet, even those who most carefully screen themselves from sectarian suspicion, are not merely suspected, but openly accused of infidelity. Several passages from the *Essay* could be declaimed by secular advocates without anyone supposing that the author was anything save a Freethinker. Moreover, the general attitude of the poem is non-Christian, and it might have been composed by a Pagan monotheist. Yet, Pope was horrified when he was assailed as a confederate of the Freethinkers.

As we have said, the *Essay* had been translated and was widely circulated on the Continent. Voltaire and his colleagues were eagerly spreading scepticism in France. A Swiss professor, Crousaz by name, read the *Essay* and charged its author with wicked unbelief. On the other hand, the humanist Lessing in Germany dissected Pope's metaphysics in truly philosophical style. Voltaire, for the moment, eloquently acclaimed Pope's optimistic effusion. But the Lisbon earthquake and other disasters shook the French Deist's faith in the theory of the best of all possible worlds, and *Candide* still constitutes the keenest satire on placid optimism ever penned by mortal man.

When Crousaz's attack was published in English Pope became seriously alarmed. Bolingbroke was over the water, so help was denied from him. But Providence, still moving in a mysterious way, furnished a timely if incongruous champion in the notorious Bishop Warburton. A pushful, domineering, and unpolished man, Warburton started life as an attorney's clerk, and while in humble circumstances he was associated with Theobald and Concanen, two foemen of Pope's. At this period he was contemptuously critical towards Pope's achievements. The writings of Warburton, notably his *Divine Legation*, won him recognition, and from 1736 onwards he was considered a leading theologian.

When the *Essay on Man* was originally published Warburton is said to have spoken very disparagingly of its merits as literature, and to have denounced its teachings as Atheistic. Yet, when Crousaz censured Pope for his impiety, Warburton strode forward to his defence. The blustering theologian became fulsome in his flatteries of Pope, and naturally the nervous poet was enraptured at this unexpected support. Warburton was eagerly invited to enter the Twickenham circle, and was never tired of extolling Pope as the most penetrating critic of his age and country. The pleased poet made him his literary adviser, and left him his copyrights when he died. His MSS. he bequeathed to Bolingbroke.

Warburton was not a time-server for nothing. Pope's praises lent prestige to Warburton, which his literary abilities would not otherwise have gained. Other advantages accrued to Pope's dictatorial defender, for the poet introduced him to Allen—the original of Squire Allworthy in *Tom Jones*—and Murray, later to become Lord Mansfield. Leslie Stephen reminds us that: "Through Murray he was appointed preacher at Lincoln's Inn, and from Allen he derived greater benefits—the hand of his niece and heiress—and an introduction to Pitt, which gained for him the bishopric of Gloucester."

When Pope felt death approaching he had just completed his fifty-sixth year. The worldly-wise Bolingbroke attended the poet's dying hours on one side of the bed, while the truculent Christian, Warburton, watched on the other. Pope contemplated the end with equanimity. One zealous Catholic recommended the ministrations of a priest. Pope replied: "I do not suppose that it is essential, but it will look right, and I heartily thank you for putting me in mind of it." A priest administered the last sacraments of the Church, and Pope died the following day.

Bolingbroke and Warburton quarrelled bitterly now

Pope was no more. Bolingbroke was ever regarded as an affectionate friend. Pope's real sentiments regarding the pious Warburton are more equivocal, as he refers to him in a letter as "a sneaking parson," and this probably represents his considered judgment of the man.

Pope cannot be placed in the first rank of British poets. Still, his influence on the later development of English prosody was very considerable. The late H. D. Traill's judgment is well worth citing. "The position of Pope," he contends, "in the history of poetry is easier to fix than his rank among English poets, for the importance and splendour of Pope's contribution to the development of an English *poetic art* are beyond the denial of anyone conversant with the facts . . . But one must admit that to the taste of the present age there occurs a certain coldness and artificiality in his portrayals alike of the face of nature and the passions of man." T. F. PALMER.

## Holy Shop.

(Concluded from page 717.)

ONE of the most famous of the pilgrimage places was the Holy House of Loretto. (We say *was* because these places come into, and go out, of fashion. Lourdes seems to be the most popular place to-day). These mad-hatters were told (and believed) that this house was the very house in which the Virgin Mary lived in Nazareth along with such incidentals as her husband Joseph and the children (Joseph's "virgin" wife had several children). This house was transported by angels to Loretto—at least so they say, and so people, lacking sense, believe.

(We quote from an eye-witness's account.) . . . "They have erected an altar in the very place where, they say, the Virgin was on her knees when the Angel Gabriel entered (to tell her something) and upon the altar is an image of the Virgin, of wood about four and a half feet high, which is the miraculous statue . . . She has changes of clothes for working days, holy days and Sundays—all sorts of colours—and mourning clothes for Passion Week. They shift or change her clothes with abundance of ceremonies. I was there one Saturday when the priests undressed her. They took away from her the suit of purple she had on in order to dress her in a green gown. They first took off her veil, then her Great Robe or Mantle Royal. Afterwards her gown and upper and under petticoats. Last of all, with a great deal of reverence they pulled off her smock to put on a clean one. I leave you, Sir, to guess what thoughts this may probably impress on the imagination of those who perform the ceremony and the spectators. The people that are present upon their knees all the time beat their breasts and nothing is heard but sighing and groaning, with words and ejaculations, Holy Virgin of Loretto help me! and such like. As soon as the image is quite naked these sighings and groanings are doubled, but decrease again as they dress it. I cannot imagine what should be the cause of this change of tone except it should be this; that when the statue is quite undressed it more strongly affects their imagination, and makes them think that they are the very Virgin in person, and that this therefore is the nick of time for them to pray with the greatest fervour. They dress her in a green suit of apparel extremely rich—the veil they put on her head is much more costly, cloth of gold, all powdered with great fine pearls. After this they put upon her head a crown of gold thick beset with precious stones. Next they put on her neck jewels,

her pendants and bracelets of diamonds, and many great chains of gold about her neck, to which were fastened abundance of hearts and medals of gold which are the presents which Queens and Catholic princesses have bestowed on the image out of devotion, in testimony that they have resolved to be its slaves. The whole adorning and furniture of the altar was equally sumptuous. Nothing could be seen but great pots or vessels, lamps, basins and candlesticks, all of gold and silver and beset with precious stones. All of which by the light of a vast quantity of candles afford a lustre whose beauty ravished the eyes . . . it is no wonder to me that many do aver themselves to be sensible of an extraordinary devotion . . . this effect being by some ignorant people supposed to be a particular grace of God appropriated to that place . . . no less than a continual miracle. But the extravagances committed here are a sufficient argument against this opinion. *They kiss the walls all round about the chapel, they lick the bricks with their tongues, they rub their beads against them, they take thread and having compassed the chapel with it, make a girdle of it, which they say is very efficacious against witchcraft and all manner of ills.* The priests in the meantime are not unmindful of their gain; they have persons placed everywhere in the chapel, who press the people to give alms and to have masses said for them to our Lady . . . a crown a piece for every mass, and they promise to say them all at our Lady's altar. 'Tis certain that the priests recover money for about 50,000 masses per year . . . it is impossible for them to say above 10,000, so that all the rest must be choused of their money. Those that are rich bestow great presents on the wooden statue—necklaces and bracelets of pearls and diamonds, hearts of gold, medals, candlesticks, lamps embossed, pictures of gold and silver and prodigious weight and bigness. Many present her with rings and most precious jewels as a token of their espousing her—she has above fifty gown and is the most sumptuously dressed piece of wood in the world."

Wall kissing and brick licking are nice hygienic pastimes, eh? Holy Shop calls them piety. What you like to call Holy Shop I leave to your own fancy. Obviously, only semi-lunatics will part with their cash to such obvious swindlers as the Vatican gang, and it is the gang's policy to produce feeble-mindedness by its ritual, etc., so that the poor dupes will pay, pay, pay.

Coming down to recent times there was *e.g.*, the swindle of selling the straw of the Pope's pallet. Every person of ordinary knowledge knows how, when Italy became a united nation the Pope was left with just the Vatican. Here he was independent and wealthy, living in the tremendous palace like a millionaire. But he sulked in it and refused to come out of it. Holy Shop set up a legend about the Pope being a prisoner. The tale told to the ignorant chattels was that he was a poor persecuted prisoner living in a dungeon with only a straw pallet to sleep on. And the Shop sold tons of the straw!

Dr. Robertson in his book *The Roman Catholic Church in Italy* (published 1903) tells of some curious things he came across. He has a chapter entitled 'The Church; "The Pope's Shop." There have (he says) actually been coin-in-the-slot blessing machines (may be there now for aught I know.)

"Specimens were to be seen in 1900 in the Corso, Rome, about half way between Piazza Colonna and Piazza del Popolo. You put your coin in, the cinematograph goes round, there appears a procession of courtiers, the Swiss Guards, and attendants bearing the Pope in a Sedan chair. When in front of the spectator the attendants stand aside, the Pope turns

towards the window of the chair, raises his hand and gives his blessing. There is an inscription to the effect that this blessing is equivalent to that given personally by the Pope in St. Peter's." "Cheap Blessing Pictures" of the Pope, similarly guaranteed are a kindred novelty.

Then he tells of the St. Anthony Bank. It issues shares, on which is written, "Mortgage obligations for five francs divided into ten coupons of fifty centimes, each founded upon the spiritual treasury of good works, prayers and holy masses of the Institute of Bethlehem . . . On the coupon it says, "Coupon for 50 centimes payable here below in cash and repayable in heaven at the Bank of St. Anthony."

He gives a description of the Santo Bambino, the famous doll-image of Jesus, "a doll about three feet high on a cushion in a glass case—clad in rich robes, a crown on its head, a regal order across its breast, and embroidered slippers on its feet. From head to foot it is one mass of dazzling jewellery, gold chains, strings of pearls, diamond bracelets, and rings, which not only cover the neck, arms, and fingers, but are suspended, intermixed with crosses, stars, hearts, monograms and every kind of precious stone to all parts of its body. All this display of wealth, great in itself, is really only suggestive of that untold quantity which it has brought and is daily bringing . . . people are continually kneeling before this dumb idol, offering petitions and leaving gifts, whilst letters containing requests accompanied with post office orders and cheques to pay for the same arrive by post.

One Church had a baby Jesus, *i.e.*, a wooden doll of some sort representing Jesus, and it got old and shabby. So they had a raffle, and sold the old baby Jesus and bought a new baby Jesus."—probably with a bit of profit accruing.

"Every village has its Madonna, and the towns and cities scores. All these Madonnas have different names and are credited with different powers so that their worshippers are sure to find by applying to one or another the article that they want. Each of them, in a silk or satin gown, and gay ribbons, a tinsel crown on its head, a sceptre in its hand, a puppet on its knee and a money-box at its feet is simply a dummy salesman in the Pope's Shop, parting with pretended powers to credulous customers for value received in cash.

An Italian said, "Whenever the Church wants money it pulls out another saint. For every new saint means a new festival day, and all such days are as the Italians say 'priests' market days.'"

"Tons of candles and oil are sometimes got by a church on the festival of its saint. On such an occasion I have seen the church itself surrounded, and all the roads leading to it lined by the stalls of dealers in candles. These were bought by the poor people, carried into the church and handed to the priests. A certain number were consumed on the altars, but I have seen *cart loads* being afterwards removed . . . to be turned, I am assured by those in the know, into cash. The candle trade is a profitable branch of Papal business. Divorce and liberty to marry within the forbidden degrees of consanguinity are still sold by the Pope for money . . . the Duke of Aosta was permitted to marry his niece for a fee of some hundred thousand francs, and I personally know uncles and nieces who were similarly allowed to marry on their disbursing sums supposed to be proportionate to their means."

Latin countries nowadays are dealing with the Vatican gang more as it should be dealt with than are Nordic countries. Dr. Robertson tells of the "New Penal Code" of Italy, which threatens severe punishments to those priests who abuse their office to

the damage of the nation and its free institutions. A priest has not to disturb the peace of families"—if a man finds that a priest is frightening his wife by talk of spiritual pains and penalties (say for sending the children to a school not approved by the priest the man has but to lodge a complaint and the priest has either to stop his annoyance or stand the penalty. There is a clause about "damaging legitimate and private interests," under which falls any attempt by a priest to get hold of a dying man's estate. (This sort of scandal had to be legislated against as far back as the Roman Empire). Dr. Robertson says: "I know a case of a peasant in a Riviera village being induced by a priest to leave his money to the Church. His sons returned from America and took the priest to court, the will was set aside, they received the whole inheritance and the priest was sent into penal servitude . . . an almost analogous case happened in Ireland with very different results. On the death of their father two sons returned from abroad. They found that a priest had, when visiting their dying parent, taken a lawyer with him, who then and there drew out a will in favour of the Church, *setting aside one already existing in their favour*. They took the priest to court, but lost their case; they then appealed against the decision but lost again, and had the expenses of both trials to pay . . . a Dublin banker told me quite recently that so great is the spiritual and physical terrorism and constraint exercised by the priests at the death beds of Irish people of means, that as a rule such persons do not make wills at all. They prefer to die intestate and allow the Government to make the division of their estate. That is found to be the only way of keeping these brigands of priests from enriching themselves.

In *Priests and People in Ireland*, Mr. McCarthy says that one of the main objects to the achievement of which the concentrated energies of the priests are directed is "terrifying the enfeebled minds of the credulous, the invalid, and the aged, with the result that the savings of thrift, the inheritance of parental industry, are alike captured and warnered into the sacerdotal treasury."

C. R. BOYD FREEMAN.

### Semper Idem.

THE proposition that man has within himself every quality necessary for his regeneration, and that he needs no supernatural assistance to attain his fullest development is one whose truth is constantly being demonstrated to the observant. It is one, however, to which no parson will assent, for it destroys at a stroke the basis of his existence.

To combat such an assertion and to reinforce his professional prestige, the parson is in fact quite ready to sacrifice (not himself—that is never part of the contract) but those fine expressions of human affection which, he would have us believe, he attempts to foster.

Toc H is a case in point, as a brief study of its history will show.

Probably the only legacy of the Great War of which we can be truly proud is the brief glimpse we got of the potentialities of human brotherhood—of the strength of the bonds that can unite men of every class whose faces are turned towards a common object. Here surely lay the hope of the future—the promise of limitless progress. But how to preserve this camaraderie and to transmit it to the generations yet to come? The most notable attempt was made by Toc H, an association born in the War, and reformed shortly afterwards under the standard of

"Service," quickly attracting to its ranks men of all degrees, without distinction of class. The average member was completely untroubled by the "spiritual" side of the movement, and paid it only a formal respect. He had nothing odd or quaint about him—no soulful yearnings or morbid desires—he was the average man in fact—no churchgoer eager to experience the ill-bred joy of "doing good" to those unable to resist, but a man rejoicing in the light-hearted company of his fellows and anxious to increase the happiness of everybody he met.

Work was eagerly undertaken among the young, the blind, unemployed, sick and all who had not had a square deal from life or had played their hands badly. And the movement in its early stages flourished exceedingly—drawing its strength from the love of humanity inherent in all men, and sinking all its differences in the common ideal of service. All its differences, that is, but one. The priest was there, and introduced the first element of discord. Although social barriers were levelled, the religious barriers were as high as ever, and each sect worshipped its god after its own fashion. This, so the parsons said, by a process of thought too involved for a layman to follow, made only for a greater essential unity—whatever that may mean.

Not content with the preservation of his identity, in a movement where so many other identities had been so willingly abandoned, the parson next viewed with considerable misgiving the undoubted fact that a basis of simple humanity seemed quite sufficient to ensure great and lasting success to the society. To counter this, the suggestion was broadcast that true love of man was only possible when it was a reflection of the love of God—an outrageous statement which was accepted because it apparently meant nothing practical.

Growing bolder, the parson then said that service to man must not be mistaken for an end in itself—it was merely a means (one of many) of bringing men into closer touch with God, and its value was to be estimated by the extent to which this object was realized. This code of selfishness—a direct negation of the original purpose of Toc H as understood by its members—was emphasized by the appointment in branches of an official called the "pilot," whose duty it was to feel the spiritual pulse of members and to advise them in matters affecting the soul.

The members, thus encouraged to gaze into the pit of their stomachs, quickly became less effective in social work, and a neurotic tendency became evident. Earnest young men went into "retreat," sentimentality became rife, and "spiritual reactions" were talked of with relish. More frequent religious services were held and regular church-going was enjoined upon all members—each to his own church, upon the principle, it is presumed, that any church is better than none.

At last the cloven hoof appeared without disguise. It is the custom for each branch to elect its own padre or chaplain—who at first could belong to any of the Christian sects. But a dreadful day came when it was discovered that some branches had chaplains who believed in one God only instead of the orthodox three. This, of course, was not to be tolerated for a moment, and an outraged professional pride deprived the men of office. They could be ordinary members if believed in one God only, instead of the orthodox their consciences permitted (for Toc H was still open to all comers, duke and dustman, rich and poor alike—*provided they were Christians*. What a basis for human brotherhood!) but the spiritual leaders must only be men of the pure undiluted faith.

To such a sorry pass had the movement now come that members were scarcely surprised to hear that it

could hardly be expected to survive by God's help alone, and that this unorthodox society, formed to view the relations of men from a new angle, proposed to assist the Lord with the orthodox power of the purse. An appeal was immediately launched, sponsored by no less a personage than the Prince of Wales, for £250,000.

Lest there should be any argument afterwards, the parsons let it be known without delay that this money was not to be devoted to the propagation of any social work, as members might reasonably have expected. The servants of the Christ who said "sell that thou hast and give to the poor," knew better than their master. They claimed the lot, for the endowment of chaplaincies! What devastating naivete! What a tribute to the members' intelligence!

And so a movement, full of promise, a movement, it seemed, at last based upon something fine and lasting in human nature, and calculated to unite men in the service of humanity, has become a tool of the professional parson, who, when faced with the enthusiasm and greatheartedness of youth, eager for the adventure of life, can do nothing but take a collection.

"ALPHA."

## Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."  
A CORRECTION.

SIR,—In my article for November 8, the word "workshop," in the quotation from Lecky's *History of European Morals*, should be "worship."

I noticed the error, and corrected it in the proof, but it seems to have been overlooked. However, I must say, this is a very rare occurrence, it has only once happened before—many years ago—during the thirty years I have been contributing to this journal.

WALTER MANN.

## Society News.

### NEWCASTLE BRANCH.

IN spite of the many wet Sundays and unusual inclement weather in the early part of the year, which made the customary outdoor meetings on the Town Moor impracticable, an active propaganda was carried on in the Bigg Market, where up to the present forty-four lectures have been given, to large audiences, six of which were given by Mr. George Whitehead, the remainder being due to the efforts of Messrs. Brighton, Keast, and Atkinson. To all of these special thanks are due for the strenuous efforts required to be heard amidst the clamorous din characteristic of an open market place, where all manner of views are advocated, and where frequently passing trains, and huge busses, are apt to detract from any eloquence of voice, or words of wisdom the speakers may have to offer. Yet our speakers have been attentively listened to by large crowds, and hundreds have doubtless heard the gospel of Freethought for the first time. A fair amount of literature has been distributed and sold. Many deep impressions, and some conversions, are known to have been made, the full results of which time alone may reveal. The work has been carried on by a few ardent workers, while many unattached Freethinkers who might help financially, or otherwise, appear to be quite indifferent, whilst the octopus that has destroyed two civilizations is steadily spreading its tentacles around us and buying many valuable sites, building churches, schools, convents, etc. Should a similar state of lethargy and indifference of Protestants and Freethinkers prevail in other towns as exists here, it may not be amiss to remind them that Catholicism still holds to its dictum of "death to the heretic." So that it would be well to hearken in time to the words of the poet who wrote:—

"Hear a word, a word in season, for the day is drawing nigh,  
When the Cause shall call upon us, some to live, and some to die."

J.G.B.

## Obituary.

### MRS. SARAH ASH.

ON Tuesday, November 3, the remains of Sarah Ash were cremated at Golders Green Crematorium. For some time her health had given anxiety to members of the family, and eventually the end came through Cancer at the age of seventy-seven. To the very last she remained faithful to her Freethought beliefs, and by her death the Cause loses a loyal comrade. Simplicity and affection marked the last farewell at the Crematorium, where a short service was read by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

### LONDON.

#### OUTDOOR.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrolds Road, North End Road): Saturday, November 14, at 7.30, Messrs. F. Barnes, P. Day and C. Tuson.

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, Tuson and Wood. 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, No. 11 bus): 7.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine—"Religion, the Enemy of Man."

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8, near Marlborough Road Station): 11.15, Mr. John Russell, M.A.—"The Alcestis of Euripides."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"Equality: Do We Wish It?"

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, R. Dimsdale Stocker—"The Social Conspiracy Against the Individual."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): Monday, November 16, at 8.0, Mr. A. D. McLaren will open a discussion on "Clericalism."

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, Mr. C. Bryant—"The Myth of Immortality."

THE CONWAY DISCUSSION CIRCLE (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): Tuesday, November 17, at 7.0, J. P. Gilmour (Chairman of Board of Directors, R.P.A.)—"The Problem and Philosophy of Pain."

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. G. Whitehead—"The National Situation in Industry."

WEMBLEY AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (Zealley's Cafe, 100 High Road, Wembley): 7.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin—"The Phallic Element in Religion."

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Council Schools): 7.0, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"The Mythical Christ." On Thursday, November 19, in Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street, at 7.30, the Rev. J. W. Povah, B.D.—"Amos and his Successors." Discussion, no collection.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Boilermakers' Hall, Argyle Street, entrance in Lorn Street): 7.0, J. Paul (Neston)—"Religion and the Child."

BURNLEY (Barden House Club).—11.0, Mr. J. Clayton—"The Christian Myth."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"Religious Experience." Questions and discussion. All welcome.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (Saloon Hall, Candlerigg) : 11.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, President N.S.S. and Editor of the *Freethinker*—"Freethought and Social Reform"; 6.30—"The Disease that Kills Religion."

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Buildings, 41 Islington, Liverpool, entrance Christian Street); 7.0, Sami Cohen (Manchester)—"Christ-i(ns)anity."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—The Jubilee Bazaar of the Secular Society. Open Saturday and Sunday at 3.0.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, 120 Rusholme Road) : 3.0, Mr. S. Wollen (Liverpool)—"The Story of Eden"; 6.30—"A Ghost and his Baby."

PERTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Independent Labour Party Hall, Union Lane) : 2.30, Special meeting (members only) to discuss important business. Full attendance requested.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus, Hall No. 5) : 7.0, Mr. F. H. McCluskey—"Religion and the Poets."

PAISLEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Baker's Hall, 5 Forbes Place) : 7.30, Mr. Robert T. White—"Secularism and Politics."

RATIONALIST PRESS ASSOCIATION (Glasgow District), Grand Hall, Central Halls, 28 Bath Street) : 3.0, Professor Lancelot T. Hogben, D.Sc., M.A.—"Materialism and Modern Science."

TODMORDEN (Town Hall).—Tuesday, November 17, at 7.30, Debate—"That State Education should be Entirely Secular." *Affir.*: Messrs. J. Clayton and E. Chapman; *Neg.*: Rev. H. B. Brain and Rev. H. Burnley.

WILLI, someone adopt bright healthy baby girl. Full surrender, no premium. Good home essential, Freethought for preference.—Box 35, FREETHINKER, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

**Rationalist Press Association (Glasgow District)**

Grand Hall, Central Halls, 25 Bath Street, Sunday, November 15th, at 3 p.m.  
Professor Lancelot T. HOGBEN, D.Sc., M.A., University College, London.

"MATERIALISM AND MODERN SCIENCE."  
Violinist—Miss May Russell.

Questions and Discussion. Silver Collection.

**ACADEMY CINEMA, Oxford Street,**

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