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

## Views and Opinions.

### Our Witch Doctors.

WHEN last week we wrote on the challenge to the West African witch-doctors issued by the Bishop of Accra and his Christian Council, we had only a very brief note issued in one of the newspapers. Since then we have read a fuller account, and from that we see that our treatment of the incident as a question between rival practitioners was an accurate statement of the facts. For the Christian Council was basing its challenge to the native witch-doctors upon an elaborate report of a committee of the Council appointed to consider the subject. In its report the Committee says:—

We are not prepared, as a committee, to affirm that no witchcraft stories have any basis in fact. Some of us take that view and some of us do not. But we are unanimously of opinion that many witchcraft stories have no basis in fact, and we unanimously deplore the fact that large numbers of Christians remain under the domination of the fear of witchcraft.

The members of the Council include representatives of the English Church, Wesleyan Methodists, Presbyterian and other Christian bodies. And these representatives removed from the chastening influence of Freethinking activities and a more scientific environment, straightway revert to the level of the New Testament, the early Christians, the Christian Church in its palmy days, the mentality of the New Testament Jesus, and the mental outlook of the primitive African. It admits that witchcraft is real—as a genuine Christian body it could hardly do otherwise, it merely challenges particular practitioners to “make good.” It is a fine illustration of what Christianity would become if it were left alone with nothing but its faith in Jesus to help it.

### The Church and Witchcraft.

Christianity did not, of course, invent witchcraft. It was as unoriginal here as it is in other directions. But its historic influence was as retrogressive here as elsewhere. West Africa gives us the belief in witchcraft naked and unashamed. The Bible with its “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live,” Jesus Christ with his intercourse with demons, and his belief in demonic and angelic agency gives us the material which keeps the cult of the witch-doctor alive, and the Christian Church is, so far as Europe is concerned, the institution which vivified a belief that might otherwise have disappeared much more completely than it has done. Even to-day the belief is strongest where belief in Christianity is least affected by modern thought, while in a less definite form it possesses enormous strength in the belief in charms, lucky days, prayers for rain or fine weather, recovery from sickness or protection from disaster. Superstition is all of a piece whether in a palace or a cottage; whether it is dispensed by an archbishop in a cathedral or in a back room in one of London’s “mean streets.” The Archbishop of Canterbury, the West African witch-doctor and the Pope of Rome are united in the closest ties of spiritual brotherhood. Understand any one of the three and you understand the lot.

It must always be borne in mind that the opposition of the Christian Church to the practice of witchcraft was not based upon its fraudulent or delusional nature, but entirely upon its unlawful character. It was the wrong kind of sorcery, or the sorcerer was unauthorized. Take the following from the famous document authorizing the suppression of witches and wizards, issued by Pope Innocent VIII. in 1484:—

It has come to our ears that very many persons of both sexes, deviating from the Catholic Faith, abuse themselves with demons, Incubus and Succubus; and by incantations, charms and conjurations, and other wicked superstitions, by criminal acts and offences, have caused the offspring of women and of the lower animals of different kinds, vineyards, meadows, pasture land, corn, and other vegetables of the earth to perish, be oppressed and utterly destroyed, that the torture men and women with cruel pains and torments, internal as well as external, that they hinder the intercourse of the sexes, and the propagation of the human species.

It was this famous bull which gave the official stamp to that terrible epidemic of witch hunting that raged in Europe for nearly two hundred years. Professional witch-finders were appointed, and as is to be expected from all such appointments witches and wizards were discovered by the thousand. And to be accused was to be condemned. One Bishop of Treves boasted that he had been responsible for the burning of seven thousand witches. In the province of Como a thousand were killed in a single

year. In Wurtzburg in February, 1629, there was a succession of twenty eight mass executions, and amongst these were no less than twenty-two children, the eldest fourteen years of age, and the youngest an infant. In this respect Protestants were worse than Catholics. Grey, the editor of Butler's *Hudibras*, says that he saw a list of three thousand witches that had been put to death during the Long Parliament. Sixty were hung in one year in Suffolk. In Scotland for thirty-nine years the number averaged about two hundred annually. The vast majority of those executed were women for, as Christian writers explained, the devil had more influence over women than over men. When Protestants went to America they took there all their primitive superstitions and all their intolerance with them. Ministers of religion counted their zeal by the number of witches they succeeded in getting executed. The last thing leaders of religion thought of questioning was the truth of witchcraft. Even men such as Henry More, the Platonist, were upholders of this belief, while so eminent and able a man as Ralph Cudworth, one of the greatest scholars of the latter part of the seventeenth century, said that they who denied the reality of Satanic intercourse "can hardly escape the suspicion of some hankering after Atheism." John Wesley, the founder of Methodism also said, at a moment when the mania was beginning to weaken;

It is true likewise that the English in general, and indeed most of the men of learning in Europe, have given up all accounts of witches and apparitions as mere old wive's fables. I am sorry for it, and I willingly take this opportunity of entering my solemn protest against this violent compliment which so many who believe in the Bible pay to those who do not believe in it. I owe them no such service. I take knowledge that these are at the bottom of the outcry which has been raised and with such insolence spread through the land in direct opposition, not only to the Bible, but to the suffrage of the wisest and best of men in all ages and nations. They well know (whether Christians know it or not) that the giving up of witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible.

\* \* \*

#### True Christianity.

In England the Witch Act of 1604 was not repealed until 1736. In Scotland the last witch executed was in 1722, but as late as 1773 the Associated Presbytery passed a resolution deploring the fact that witchcraft was falling into disrepute.

Now let us bear in mind that this terrible superstition, one which hangs like a black cloud over savage life, and which continues to exert an evil influence over many peoples who in other directions have achieved some degree of civilization, is one that is completely Christian. It was the Christian Church that gave this terror of witches a prominence in Europe which it would never otherwise have had; and by doing this it saturated life with superstition to such an extent that we are still suffering from its consequences. For you do not eradicate from people the habit of superstition by getting from them a formal repudiation of it. It leaves marks on one's mental outlook, it survives institutions, it confuses one's view of life for long after it has been theoretically rejected. In England no committee of the leading Churches would dare to issue a report such as that issued by the Committee of the Christian Council in West Africa. But in West Africa Christianity is more at home, it is breathing its native air, and it can express itself in accord with its deepest tendencies.

There are one or two other passages from this report that are worth noting. This, for example:—

The belief in witchcraft depends very little upon the personal experience of the believer. It is far more often held by the believer because it is held by other believers . . . The belief is in fact part of the common inherited tradition.

And this of the influence of the witch-doctor:—

His power to terrorise the weak-minded . . . his power to create or intensify an atmosphere of suspicion and malice; these are powers which, quite apart from any deliberate rascality on his part, make him a grave danger to society.

This hardly requires a change of words to apply in every particular to our own witch-doctors, and to their spiritual brethren in every country and in every age and stage of civilization. Evidence on behalf of the supernatural there never was. Belief in it is part of the social heritage, and this inheritance is of exactly the same significance as our rudimentary ear muscles or rudimentary tails. And by what right do our own witch-doctors who by an incantation change a bit of bread into human flesh and a drop of wine into human blood, or by prayers bring better weather, or richer harvests, or recovery from sickness look down upon the native witch-doctor? In what respect do these differ from their West African competitors? The difference is entirely that of status, and cost, and costume. Mentally and morally they are indistinguishable.

Nor do I know any better delineation of the distorting influence of the witch-doctor than is contained in the second of the two quotations. There need not be deliberate rascality on the part of the priest to account for the evil influence on life. It is inherent in his profession, and that this influence is not always as bad as it might be must be counted to the credit of the better social forces which work against the complete sway of religion. But a man cannot claim to possess powers such as are implicitly or explicitly claimed by the priest and not make for harm; and in every country in the world this harm is manifest. The West African sees it in the Christian parson, the Christian parson sees it in the African witch-doctor. Every priest sees it in every other priest, and each one is ready to trace it back directly to the religious influence that is wielded. The evidence for the evil influence of religion is furnished by religiousists themselves. The facts fully justify their respective denunciations. The Freethinker does but consolidate the cumulative verdict.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### Neurotic and Tommyrotic.

"The miraculous has become absurd, the impossible."  
Ingersoll.

"I would have all men come out of Christendom into the universe."—John Davidson.

THE Rev. C. C. Martindale, the Jesuit preacher, has for some weeks been attempting to answer the question: "What is a Saint?" His addresses have been broadcast, and radio listeners have had the pleasure of hearing a modern medicine-man's apology for holding opinions five centuries out of date.

For that is what it all amounts to in the final analysis. Ordinary readers can answer the question themselves by consulting *The Lives of the Saints*, a pathological work of morbid imagination. Why the British Broadcasting Corporation should inflict such pious nonsense on listeners is hard to explain, except on the assumption that they are catering for a handful of Romish worshippers. As for Protestants, they are supposed to be averse from these saints. But, like so many other things connected with religion, this is far more correct in theory than in fact. For

there is one saint—Saint George—who is known far better than Mr. Lloyd George. The Saint's alleged portrait is on the gold coinage and on some of the banknotes. Or, to be more precise, there is a design of a man on horse back, apparently killing a crocodile with a carving knife. This is meant to portray Saint George and the Dragon, and the human figure is supposed to be the patron saint of our tight little island.

This "George" of the coinage and the banknotes is simply a legendary figure. The chief exploit that we connect him with, the slaying of the dragon, is the one incident that is confessed, even by his warmest supporters, to be a mere solar myth—just another version of Apollo and the Python, Bellerophon and the Chimera, Perseus and the Sea Monster. But in this farce of a national saint, there is a *Box and Cox* element. There is an alternative and less respectable George, who is alleged to have suffered martyrdom under Diocletian. This second George is a ludicrous personage, and a cause of unseemly laughter. His record is a good example of the utter disregard for truth and even common sense that distinguished the early propagandists of the Christian Religion. This George Secundus was, we are told, killed three times, coming to life again on two of the occasions. Among the trifling things that happened to him were that he was roasted, beaten with iron rods, decapitated, and then thrown to wild animals. Coming to life again, he was set on a wooden horse, and a fire kindled under him. Sixty nails were driven in his head, and he was sawn in four pieces. These were thrown into boiling pitch. Again he came to life, and he was finally despatched on a wheel spiked with swords.

The other records of this truly amazing career of George have little to recommend them. He is described as a fraudulent army contractor, who got rich, and got promoted to the episcopal throne of Alexandria. When Julian came, A.D. 361, George was dragged to prison. The prison was burst open by a mob, and George was lynched as he richly deserved. His choice as patron saint of England must have been based on the assumption that we are a nation of shopkeepers. If this Saint George ever heard of England, which is very doubtful, he must have thought of it as a savage island at the other end of the world, and little as he can have known of England, England knew still less of this priestly profiteer.

Father Martindale would regard this story of Saint George as very edifying, but of what value is such imaginative nonsense to-day? Since, however, this Jesuit preacher plainly labours under the delusion that he is a person of real importance it is a pity that he cannot be enlightened. At present all priests and all clergymen have to make themselves cheap in all sorts of ways to induce people to attend places of worship. Father Martindale himself has to treat such legends with respect in order to bolster a dying superstition. If he lived at the other end of Europe, he would have less difficulty, for the inhabitants are even more innocent of education than the English, who leave learning behind them at fourteen years of age.

When the Education Act has run another hundred years or so people will realize, perhaps, that the dogmas of the Christian Churches are out of date, that their services are obsolete, and that their ministers and priests are anachronisms in a civilized country. The marriage service and the burial service, as at present phrased, ought to be unbearable to people who know the value of words and take them seriously.

Wishing to keep people under the domination of superstition, priests of all denominations object to

explanations and criticisms. They cannot tolerate that men should talk of these things too enquiringly. Even if the critics are right, the subject is taboo. Christians worship a being who never existed, perpetuate dogmas which are untrue, and empty forty thousand priests to perpetuate the tragi-comedy. So far from recommending any citizen to honour such legendary figures as Christian saints we suggest that it would be a kindness to strew the poppy of oblivion over their memory. Saint George, as we have seen, is a disappointment, and one of the most pathetic shams from which ever a great nation sought to extract exalted sentiment. So far as this particular Saint George is concerned, he was but a pious swindler. There is nothing whatever to celebrate. As for broadcast sermons, it is pleasant to recall the remark of a woman-listener: "I do so like listening to sermons on the radio, because I can suck oranges all the time."

MIMNERMUS.

## A Progressive Revelation.

WHEN I discussed the subject of "The Religion of the Old Testament" with the Rev. J. W. Povah, B.D., at Birmingham last month, I anticipated the lines on which he would interpret the message of the Hebrew Scriptures to the modern mind, and my anticipation proved well-grounded. I do not intend to review this discussion, but to consider the practical bearing of the kind of apologetic with which Protestants will probably try to meet historical criticism in the future.

Of course the fundamental answer to all theories of a progressive revelation, whether one is dealing with the Christian or any other so-called sacred books, is to be found in the facts established by Anthropology and Comparative Religion. But the historical and scientific criticism of the past half century and Christian methods of combating or reconciling it, are also important witnesses to "spiritual" values, and have produced a series of apologetic writings that form a remarkable chapter in the history of modern thought. The allegorical interpretation, by a later age, of early myths is at least as old as Plato, and even Augustine held that the divine commands in the Old Testament to do actions which he thought wrong, were the necessary accommodation of Yahweh's policy to the moral standard of the age. Let us never forget that Freethought has a history, and had one centuries before the advent of Christianity.

Whether there is any religious future for Judaism or not is a question which I am not concerned to answer. Personally, I find in the Old Testament a wealth of literary and historical interest which the Higher Criticism has certainly enhanced, and also a really "progressive revelation" from the Yahweh and morals of early Israel to the theology, the ritual and the ethics of the great prophets. "As long as the world lasts, all who want to make progress in righteousness will come to Israel for inspiration." These words are from the Preface to Matthew Arnold's *Literature and Dogma*, and the truth which they contain is not affected by the fact that we do not find in the Old Testament either the developed historic sense or any important contribution to physical science. What Arnold insists upon is the manifest consciousness, in the great prophetic books, of a changed religious attitude as compared with the older forms of worship, and an effort to win over the mass of the people to the prophet's own higher view. This zeal was not born of any desire to save individual

souls but of the nobler impulse to regenerate the nation secularly. Had there been a real progress in religious ideas from this conception of the prophetic vocation onward to the period of Roman domination, it is in a high degree improbable that either the New Testament or its Saviour-God, with the vast dogmatic system that has crystallized round them, would ever have existed in their present form. Some other syncretist system, more independent of the Jewish element, but always characterized by the persecuting spirit that animates creeds bearing a message of salvation, might have taken its place. For occult rites and ideas of redemption and a future life flourished luxuriantly at the time. Is it not declared again and again by Christian apologists that the New Testament gives the world "the hope of immortality" for the joyless existence in Sheol of the Old Testament? It has been the tragedy of Europe's religious evolution that the same revelation purports to provide the means of realizing that "hope." Nowadays, however, we hear much less than even in my youth of the new terrors which Christianity added to death.

In the age of the great prophets the Jewish religious system had outgrown the primitive superstition of sacrifice and substitution for guilt. To turn from such names in the literature of the world as Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Isaiah and Job, to the New Testament, with its stories of a virgin birth, a begotten son of God, a physical resurrection, a personal devil, sacrifice and atonement, and with it incorporation of Messianic prophecies completely misunderstood, is to move back to the repulsive features of the Old Testament reinforced by the fantastic imagery of the apocalyptic literature, by the mystery cults current in Greece, the Wisdom literature of Alexandria, and the mass of grotesque myths borrowed from every quarter of the Levant. Nor are these features, common to early religions, inessential incidents in the story, they constitute the core and centre of Christian doctrine. To-day we are so remote from the atmosphere of this New Testament superstition that we can hardly realize all that it meant in retarding man's appreciation of life and its real values. To refer to the apocalyptic element alone, it did incalculable harm by proclaiming that the end of the world was at hand and would be catastrophic. It was this "new covenant," neither literature nor history but a storehouse of texts fitted into a mongrel mythology, that for centuries quenched the spirit of Greek civilization. "The Orontes has flowed into the Tiber," complained the old Roman, significantly enough, for at the time when he wrote the Orontes was used as a great sewer at Antioch.

I have said nothing about the ethical and intellectual implications of a theory of progressive revelation. If any record of God's dealings with men indicate nothing more than the imperfect standard of thought and conduct of the existing level of civilization, in what respect does it represent a higher source than human nature? Paul, the Fathers of the Church, the faithful and their accredited teachers, for centuries regarded the Hebrew Scriptures as divinely inspired, and the "sacred" record could only be understood in one way at a given period. But it was reserved for the New Testament to stereotype the ideas of a semi-civilized age and engender a spirit of persecution that devastated half Europe, and is by no means dead yet. The heresies and disputes that form the subject of the most odious chapters in the whole history of religious rancour have their origin in the protests of the reason against the unintelligible dogmas of this "fuller revelation," and the questions involved remain as unsettled as ever. What an edifying story is afforded by the controversy between

Arius and Athanasius concerning the real nature of Christ!

The storm of excitement and vituperation, that raged round Genesis and geology, a little later round Darwin's *Origin of Species*, and a little later still round some of the clerical authors of *Essays and Reviews*, is fresh in the minds of men and women living in England to-day. The only thing that ever really mattered, amid all the turmoil, was the effect on the character of those defenders of the faith who were able to reconcile Genesis and science. At the moment when our daily Press is publishing "a remarkable revelation of the religious beliefs of scientists," it is historically interesting to recall that Buckland and Dawson did actually accomplish this reconciliation. Now even the Nonconformist conscience, except perhaps in Tennessee, finds that faith is strengthened by the frank acceptance of Darwin and evolution, and this no doubt is the evangelical ideal of intellectual honesty developed in the modern world after about nineteen centuries of Christian morality.

How much of "the faith once delivered to the saints" will survive this process of development? Some months ago a writer in one of the religious weeklies said that Christians have as much right as scientists to bring their views up to date. Orthodox Christianity was not always eager to concede this "right" to the scientist, for while humanity is periodically burning some of its Sibylline Books, science has no such repositories of the truth. Despite the Christian's "right" to be up to date, however, he is constantly complaining that our present intellectual environment makes the traditional creeds difficult for the modern man. A faith so well equipped with up-to-date apologetics might be a little more venturesome, and yet every form of Christianity that still counts for anything in the world is as full as ever of *argumenta ad hominem*, of anathema or appeals to authority and security and the selfish interests based upon them when it was unfettered by science or historical criticism.

Newman saw clearly enough that a religion claiming divine origin could be expanded, if at all, only by an institution that made the same claim. His *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, written in the very year of his conversion to Rome, is a masterpiece of special pleading to prove this. He accepts all that is implied in the authoritative claims of his Church, including the "right" to suppress erroneous views by whatever force is necessary. Nor is he in the least distressed by a consideration of the practical effect, in the course of history, of this orthodox creed when it was a dominant influence in Europe. On the contrary, Rome's traditional attitude to heresy is nothing more or less than the confirmation of her divine mission.

Protestants see in this uncompromising orthodoxy a fundamental difference between their principles and those of the Roman Catholic Church, but I cannot share this view. The reformed faith never gave to the world a single religious idea that in itself made for the unfettered investigation of its title-deeds or allowed the right to reject its authority. Denunciation of a corrupt ecclesiastical institution is not the same thing as Freethought. "The Reformation," said Ruskin, "succeeded in proclaiming that existing Christianity was a lie; but substituted no theory of it which could be more rationally or credibly sustained; and ever since, the religion of educated persons throughout Europe has been dishonest or ineffectual." But, retort the Protestants, religious experiences are facts and the New Testament, however it came into being, has proved itself capable of meeting the religious needs of men. Has it? Its teaching, more than that of any other religious system,

has resulted in a vast number of conflicting sects. Roman Catholics still need miracles, sacraments, relics, and these are all forthcoming; but devout Protestants denounce them as externalities which mean the extinction of "personal religion." True, Rome is feeling the pressure of what she significantly calls "Modernism," which is working like yeast in a section of her hierarchy and laity everywhere; but for all that she is making a little headway in Protestant communities. However, let the "one true Church" and those defenders of the faith who refuse to take refuge in her authority and unity fight out that issue between themselves. In the meanwhile we are making Freethinkers in both camps and hastening the final and inevitable struggle.

A. D. McLAREN.

### News From the Invisible World.

THE new spiritualism is only the old spiritualism brought up to date. Great as is the credulity of the average pious reader to-day it does not equal that of his forefathers. Tales of infidel death-beds and of supernatural intervention were common even a generation ago, but we hear fewer of them now-a-days, only because they are too "tall" for belief. An early nineteenth century booklet contains some good examples of the grosser kind of such stories. It is entitled, "News of the Invisible World, or interesting anecdotes of the Dead," containing a particular survey of remarkable and well authenticated accounts of Apparitions, Ghosts, Spectres and Visions. Together with some remarkable Dreams, Impulses, and other Ominous Circumstances which have led to the most remarkable discoveries. Some of which have been extracted from the works of Rev. John Wesley, and others (York. R. Goshaw, Coppergate, 1817?)

The "dreams" may have a curious interest, but the "discoveries" said to have resulted from them are rather amusing than impressive. Thus, "Lady Seymour, when a maiden, dreamed that she had found a net with nine finches in it. And it is very remarkable that she married the Earl of Winchelsea, whose name was Finch!" Here is a sample of what are called by this writer "figurative visions." "The mother of William the Conqueror dreamed when she was big with child of him that her bowels were extended over all Normandy and England." It does not require any supernatural aid to understand the next tale of "A murderer who could not escape." "One John Potterdale, a publican in Vine Street, Westminster, was hanged in October, 1727 for the murder of his wife. When in Newgate, and after trial, being asked why he did not endeavour to escape instead of continuing in the room with his murdered wife, he replied that as often as he attempted to withdraw he distinctly heard his wife's voice saying, "John, John stop, and see what you have done. You shan't and can't go," and "from that instant he had no power to stir." Of another order is the following. "Remarkable passages in the life of an extraordinary Magic Youth, while at school, in a small country village, situated about four miles to the Southward of the River Forth, Edinburgh; in a letter from a respectable young man, to his father in London, and inserted in a Morning Paper in October, 1792." This young man was not a magician but, as the details show, an epileptic. During his "unusual tempests" he foretold "that his father's house would suddenly be thrown down, and the event soon justified the prediction." After a hectic career due to his infirmity his father "sent his enchanted son to the East Indies," where "by the interest of his relations," he came to command a ship. "However his death was as remarkable as his life: for his vessel in fine weather suddenly sunk, and the whole company perished with him. There were four ships in company with our enchanted captain at the time he sank, whose officers all agree to this account of his exit."

It is, perhaps, unnecessary to say that this booklet records the Wesley Ghost at Epworth, *i.e.*, "The Demon that attended the late Mr. John Wesley." Of this ghost the Rev. Mr. Badcock observed, "I know not what became of the ghost of Epworth unless considered as the prelude to the noise Mr. Wesley made on a more ambitious stage: for it ceased to be heard when he began to act."

We come now to *A True and Awful Relation*, which, like those above mentioned, goes to show that, despite appearances to the contrary, even religion has undergone a change for the better, at least in form and temper, in the last two hundred years. There may be Christians who would swallow this "relation" to-day, but they would be hard to find, and if found would probably not confess their conviction. In the neighbourhood of Huddersfield lived E.B. "a respectable character both for piety and industry." Among many persons by him "brought to the gospel" was J.M., and between them there was "a mutual friendship which lasted for many years." But, alas, E.B. "forsook the good ways of God, fell from his steadfastness, and became an unbelieving apostate." He was a traveller who kept a cart which he drove through the country on business. "He was given to drink, blasphemed with the Atheist, scorned with the Deist, set his mouth against the heavens, and became a most profligate character." One day, driving home from an ale-house, his horses would not budge. He got into the cart and declared he "would drive to the devil." The horses immediately bolted, the cart was overturned, and E.B. was killed "by the load falling on him." J.M. (his old friend) sorrowing over this was "greatly affected, and wished to see his friend in his disembodied state." One night, just as he was going to bed, a voice called "J.M., J.M." three times. E.B. "stood before him at his bed's feet. He had on (to appearance) the clothes he wore when he met his untimely fate, and the room was immediately filled with a kind of gloomy light." Then the following conversation is recorded.

J.M. now said, E.B. is it you? E.B.: Yes it is me. J.M.: I wish to see you. E.B.: I was informed so. J.M.: Do you believe in God now? E.B.: Yes, I know to my sorrow. J.M.: Are the torments of the damned so great as the scripture would have us believe they are? E.B.: If all the devils in hell were assembled to describe them they could not give you the idea of a thousandth part of them. J.M.: Who are those with you (for there seemed two black appearances, visible yet indistinct, one on each side). E.B.: They are my guards. Immediately those two fiends fell forward with the greatest rage and fury to seize on J.M., but he cried out, "I plead the blood of Christ, I plead the blood of Christ, I plead the blood of Christ," three times, and they shrunk back again to their place. On this E.B. said: Aye, plead but the blood of Christ, and all the devils in hell can never harm you. J.M.: I fear you are not happy. E.B.: "Lost for ever, Lost for ever, Lost for ever." On his departure the room was filled with a strong offensive smell, like the smell of burning brimstone: at least this was the most exact description J.M. could give it.

The writer proceeds to point the moral to adorn this pretty tale. "How awful is the above account. The detail is exact and correct. There is nothing laboured; no new conceit but plain matter of fact; a relation unvarnished, and delivered with no other design than to alarm the careless and to set forth that great truth, 'Our God is a consuming fire.' J.M. is now alive, and his integrity such as to give the fullest assurance to every serious enquirer. Reader, be admonished. There is a God, and a just one. There is a hell, and a terrible one. Thy soul is immortal, and after death it will be required of thee. Wilt thou live in sin a few years and dwell in torments for ever? God forbid."

Finally, "a common hackney coachman" threatened by a pious person with the flames of hell was worried and told his wife about it, at which "his wife took fire, and used him with rough language, and went around ridiculing his fancy, and said her husband was going to hell at twelve o'clock." As the clock struck twelve "his wife damned him, and said it is twelve o'clock and

you are not yet gone to hell." With that he replied, "hold your tongue for I am going," and immediately fell down dead. With one touch of ordinary nature this story closes. "His wife was then almost in a state of distraction!"

It need only be added that the Christian religion as popularly taught and believed in this country at the date of this publication is not in the least misrepresented therein.

A.H.

## The Dawn of Culture in Asia.

At a time when Europe had barely emerged from savagery the East was evolving an ancient civilization. Unfortunately, our knowledge of primitive man is almost entirely restricted to Europe. In that area the remains of early man and his handiwork were first revealed, and it was the province of Western anthropologists to proclaim to an incredulous world the palpable truth of his hoary antiquity.

During recent decades, researches in the vast Asiatic continent—the traditional cradle of the human race—reveal the verity that the Eastern land-mass has passed through the same phases of evolution that mankind has experienced elsewhere. In the Near East, in India, and far beyond her furthest frontiers; in Siberia, and now in Western China, the evidences of Stone Age culture have been brought to light.

Later Palaeolithic remains are so far scanty, but we are assured that from the Mediterranean to far distant India men working in stone were actively engaged in their daily labours at the time when the gifted Stone Age artists in France and Spain were adorning their cavern walls with pictorial representations of the animals they hunted and their method of capture. Moreover, the contemporary Indian stone-users also painted their cave walls with hunting scenes that denote considerable artistic power. Fossil man is comparatively common in European deposits, but until recent years few remains were found elsewhere. Java and Galilee, it is true, have made invaluable contributions, and the human remains now discovered in China seem no more than the beginning of surprising revelations. As Asia was certainly the theatre of great human activity when Northern Europe was still held fast in the grip of the harsh Ice Age, we may await with confidence the advent of many important discoveries in the immediate future.

When Northern Europe was mantled from the Pole to Central Germany in its icy shroud, the geographical and climatal conditions of Asia were widely divergent from those that obtain to-day. The Black and Caspian Seas were combined in one immense sheet of water, which covered Asia as far north-east as the furthest confines of the Aral sea. The Persian Gulf was then far more extensive than it is in our time, while the Red Sea itself embraced a much larger area.

Cold air currents, and the presence of perpetual snow on Lebanon, the West Iranian and Armenian highlands, with an intenser glaciation of the vast chain of the Himalayas promoted more frigid and moister conditions than those that prevail in Asia now. The greater extension of the Red Sea, and the far-spreading waters of the Black Sea and Persian Gulf, made communication by raft, or along the land ridges, easily available between Asia and Africa, while affording facilities for journeyings between Asia Minor and Balkan Europe.

The diversity of Asiatic environment proved favourable to variation in racial type, and the different peoples, as Asia slowly assumed its present configuration, were later destined to blend their several cul-

tures to the enrichment of all concerned.

The wide-flung Asiatic continent—the largest land mass on the globe—may be arranged into three main areas. Each of these areas is distinguished by its peculiar human stock. There is the immense mountain range that stretches East and West from Asia Minor through Armenia and Persia, with one extension in the Caucasus, and another through Palestine and Syria. It is assumed, and it seems a reasonable assumption that this region remained untenanted by man throughout Glacial Times. Nevertheless, when the Ice Age ended, it became, as Christopher Dawson states, "the home and centre of dispersion of Alpine man—the tall, muscular broad-headed type which has been so important in history." (*The Age of the Gods*, p. 67).

The Semitic peoples also appear to have arisen in Asia. The vast territory of steppe and desert situated at the south of the highland area is regarded by several modern authorities as the cradle and nursery of "the long-headed, brown-skinned, dark-haired Semitic race." This racial division very probably relates to the Hamitic peoples of Northern Africa.

The third territorial division of Asia lies in the lowlands situated to the north of the upland region—the great Central Asiatic steppe. In the Glacial Period in Europe this area was covered by water, but in Post-Glacial centuries this inland ocean disappeared. The country became a great grassland, but as the seasons came and went, this region, after many vicissitudes, was ultimately transformed into a state of aridity which bordered on that of the desert. These secular changes apparently coincided with pronounced modifications in racial type. This phenomenon is largely attributable to the constant pressure of invading races driven outwards by the scarcity of food places, and the conversion of originally productive land into barren desert.

The ancient inhabitants of this region were seemingly a swarthy, long-skulled stock. But, with the coming of historical times, the country was peopled by men whose language was Indo-European and quite likely of Nordic strain. Then succeeded the incursion of Tartar and Turkish nomads who have occupied the territory for the past 2,000 years. Meanwhile, in their rich valley soils India and Babylonia evolved high states of culture. Again, the coast regions of the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean and Eastern Mediterranean became separate seats of civilization.

Costly and extensive archaeological researches have been conducted, both in the Old World and the New, among the ruins of many ancient cities. Excavations in Crete, led by our eminent archaeologist, Sir Arthur Evans, have made manifest the indebtedness of ancient Greek culture to the attainments of earlier races. The land of the Nile, again, has yielded many long hidden secrets to science, while in the old valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates, the pomp and circumstance of remote centuries have been restored by the excavator's spade. A fairly truthful picture is now presented of the happy valleys of old-time Mesopotamia and neighbouring lands that supplied the granaries of ancient Sumer, Babylon and Egypt. Recent research has also unveiled an astonishing series of extinct and forgotten cultures spreading in all directions from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea and ranging from Northern India to China. These were mainly agricultural communities, and the various peoples cultivated their crops with implements of stone. Copper was already known, although little in use. Their pottery, on the other hand, was beautifully made and decorated, and had reached an advanced stage of development.

In remote ages, a remarkable Stone Age race held

sway in Susa, the metropolis of the pre-historic State of Elam. This race was highly proficient in husbandry and its pottery, both in manufacture and design is among the very best dating from pre-historic times.

China was once the home of races who used stone implements in their agricultural operations, and these people, thousands of years since, produced artistically designed ceramics of a very fine quality. These cultures appear to have been those of peasant communities. Curiously enough, although these pre-historic farmers had tamed the pig, there is no proof that they possessed cattle, horses, or sheep.

Pre-historic India, notably in the valley of the Indus, was the scene of a long departed civic life. A city-dwelling people, these ancient Indians were well advanced in art and architecture and possessed at least the promise of a written language, as their pictographic script makes clear. They also were proficient in the production of painted pottery as were the various neighbouring races, whose remains have recently been disclosed.

Anthropologists differ concerning the early inter-course of pre-historic man and the extent of civilization's dependence on some special centre of diffusion. The evidence, scanty as it is, to some extent favours this theory, for there apparently existed some site or sites of primitive culture which extended an influence through Western Asia, the farthest East, and to Europe itself. The shapes and designs of domestic utilities and other products seem to have been diffused from their original home throughout all accessible lands. Then, as now, any useful art or invention, usually found acceptance and imitation in foreign communities.

Professor Gordon Childe in his admirable work, *The Aryans*, thus reviews the period in human progress which succeeded the primitive *food gathering stage*. "At the very dawn of the *food producing era* the shadowy but stately outlines of a mysterious civilization, majestic in its range, transcendent in significance for human progress are to-day beginning to emerge from the morning mists that cover the scene of history as the last glaciers retreat. It appears from the Yellow Sea to the Adriatic as the first manifestation of men who had made the great advance from a food collecting to a food producing economy."

T. F. PALMER.

### Villanelle.

My Lady with the Laughing Eyes,  
Was Aphrodite half so fair?  
Was grave-eyed Pallas near as wise?

What wit, what wisdom underlies  
The golden glory of thy hair,  
My Lady with the Laughing Eyes!

When thou wilt die then wisdom dies;  
Could Hermes' wit with thine compare?  
Was grave-eyed Pallas near as wise?

Into a rage great Hera flies  
When Zeus extols thy beauty rare,  
My Lady with the Laughing Eyes.

From out the foam thou didst not rise,  
Nor from the head of Zeus, but ne'er  
Was grave-eyed Pallas near as wise.

To thee might Paris give the prize;  
For never, by the gods I swear,  
My Lady with the Laughing Eyes,  
Was grave-eyed Pallas near as wise.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

### Acid Drops.

Preachers, we learn from a pious weekly, are more often right in what they affirm than in what they deny. We, for our part, are not prepared to assent to this dictum. Preachers during the past thirty years have affirmed hundreds of things which the modern theologian regards as erroneous, and have denied as many more which are now declared true. And the same result will happen to what preachers are affirming or denying to-day. From this it would seem that preachers are as likely to be wrong in what they affirm as in what they deny! And the only thing to be done is to lay the blame on our dear old friend "progressive revelation."

Apropos of suicide, a Christian paper proffers the following pious opinion:—

The general verdict on such an act is that a man who commits it is not at the time in sound mind. For, to say the least, suicide is a sin of presumption, of unbelief, and of cowardice. It is a challenge to the wisdom of God that he knows not the proper term of one's life, and to the sufficiency of his power and grace to help in time of need. Or it is a humiliating confession of personal lack of courage or of fortitude which makes one less of a man. If it is an awful thing to fall into the hands of a living God, what must it be to rush unbidden into his presence with the tokens upon one of dereliction of duty!

The Bishop of London, in a letter to the *Times*, expresses once more "the interest of those he represents in the moral effect of films on the people at home." We learn from his letter that the Public Morality Council has "direct contact" with the American film trade, and that Mr. Will Hays, on behalf of the latter, has a periodical pow-wow with their representative. The Council also appears to claim credit for some of the censorship actually done in the Censor's department. And it was, apparently, at the instance of these busy-bodies, that Mr. Shortt's recent "warning" was issued to the Trade. The Home Secretary's action in appointing a Consultative Committee, representing the licensing authorities to confer with the Board of Film Censors earns the Bishop's "appreciation," but if ever there was a case in which wisdom was unlikely to come from a multitude of counsellors this is that case. No representative of the public is called into these consultations. Perhaps it would be awkward to have an outsider present when delicate points are being considered such as exactly how much clothing a lady in a film must shed before she is in what the Film Censor recently described as "an attractive state of undress."

Why the assumption that suicide is "a challenge to God's wisdom that he knows not the proper term of one's life?" Suicide might possibly be one of God's expedients for closing that term. He is continually ending human lives by the cruel method of malignant germs, usually entailing great suffering. God may, in a spasm of loving mercy, utilize the method of suicide in order to release, quickly and almost painlessly, one who has endured great mental or physical anguish. Then, again, if a man is endowed with "Free Will," as Christians assent, this surely includes the freedom to end his existence whenever he may please. And so if he rushes unbidden into God's presence, that is merely a natural possibility bound up with the gift of "Free Will." Taking these two points of view into consideration, the Christian may well hesitate before condemning suicide. The Freethinker, of course, regards suicide from a different angle altogether.

Some well known people have been participating in a correspondence in the *Scotsman* on "The Blessed Dead." Whether we should pray for the dead or to them, and whether we can communicate with them or they can communicate with us—these matters have evoked an unusually well sustained discussion. From a bunch of

cuttings sent us by a thoughtful reader we are inclined to give first place among the contributors to Professor Whittaker of Edinburgh University. Rebutting the statement that spiritualism is a new science he asserted that "the famous men of science who patronized spiritism in its early days are mostly dead and have had no successors." Thereupon Rev. C. I. Tweedale and Mrs. Saintsbury, among others, produced lists of scientists—including a "Doctor of Commercial Science," who, on the whole, may be the best informed about modern spiritualism—and it is discovered that not one of them, except this gentleman, is under eighty years of age. And, the Professor retorts, spiritism is "one of the oldest things in the world," and was numbered among the "abominations for which God destroyed the Canaanites." Christian Scientists, and writers of several of the more orthodox sects took part, and the discussion seems to have wandered freely over the nether regions. A writer signing himself *Ora Pro Nobis* thinks the dead do not need our prayers, and a Church Elder fears that as the "expert theologians" are all at sixes and sevens about the problems of eschatology it is "not likely that finality will be arrived at in a newspaper correspondence." "Not likely" is good.

A writer in the *Manchester Guardian* gives the following extract from a report of Mr. G. K. Chesterton's speech at a meeting of the Chesterton Society:—

If philosophies were tolerated which denied God or denied private property, then new crusades and new crises were bound to happen.

This is monumental and sublime ignorance of the millions of inhabitants in the world who get on with living without even asking Mr. Chesterton to define his God.

Contribution to culture and world reconstruction by D. B. Wyndham Lewis in the *Referee*:—

Such was the fuss, excitement, flurry, bother, and confusion at Geneva at the end of last week, I hear, that a hasty ultimatum was drafted and sent to the Chinese ordering them in the League's name to return the Lindbergh baby, to take half a cup of prune-juice after the morning nap, to award half-blues for ice-hockey, and to take their hands off the Polish Corridor. Beachcomber in the *Daily Express* invented this style. It means that what I have said is all that I am capable of saying.

The *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch* opened its columns to four Scottish ministers to write in answer to the question, "What do you believe?" Our contemporary thinks it a matter for surprise that, as it turned out, "these clergymen, differing so much in age, training, and conditions of service," and who "might have been expected to differ widely," have now presented "the essence of a creed so brief, so simple, and so comprehensive that it could be preached from every Christian pulpit and accepted by all Christian people." What is this "essence?" Not one of the four is content with less than belief in the central dogmas of Christianity. It is true one of them says that the "essence" is really obedience to the command to "love thy neighbour as thy self." But that has always been the "essence" of Christianity, and it has not prevented its concrete manifestation taking the form of hatred, malice and all uncharitableness to all who do not believe in it and among those who do. We fear our Edinburgh contemporary will have to wait a long time before it finds agreement among all Christian people and in all Christian pulpits.

Miss Rosie Dolly of the famous Dolly sisters intends to enter a nunnery if her marriage is not a success. This is a left-handed compliment to the one and only establishment that deals in celestial marriages.

George Street, Glasgow, was the scene of disturbance between Catholics and Protestants. Men and women fought savagely with each other, according to a news-

paper report. The chances of saving the world by religion seem very remote if this is a tradesman's sample.

Mr. Baldwin delivered the first Sir Alfred Fripp lecture on "Happiness and Success," at University College. From a *Times* report it appears that there was not much in it for him to thank any of the leading divinity lights. He depended chiefly for his subject matter on Bertrand Russell, Napoleon, the French and American Declarations, Whitman, Rousseau, and Voltaire. His conclusion, a quotation from the Bible, was the only portion in the address marked "cheers." There was a slight omission in the quotation from Proverbs, but as his audience would doubtless have a good sprinkling of parsons, it would not be noticed.

The Superior of the Christa Seva Sanga—a missionary brotherhood—at Poona writes to the press to contradict "a childish but pernicious rumour" that "worship round a phallic stone painted red" is a feature of their religious ceremonial. It seems that what really happened was that "the over-zealous lady who spread this report suspected us of being Hindus in disguise, and mistook a small round depression in the ground in which we occasionally burn incense for the 'yoni' in which the Hindu 'lingum' stands." But whatever may be the facts in this particular case there is ample excuse for the mistaking of Christian rites for heathen or phallic ones. That they have a common origin and a close resemblance is established beyond question. The very Cross itself is of undoubted phallic origin.

Lord Halifax has been warning the Bishops against allowing dissenters to Holy Communion. That rite, he observes, could only be administered to them "after they had been brought back," not before. His lordship assured the ecclesiastical authorities that "whatever happens we shall never agree to any action of this sort." Behold how good and blessed a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

An Anglican preacher criticising "the older Protestantism"—whatever that is—for stating the case against priestcraft as meaning that "no man shall come between me and God," says "we know now that every man comes between us and God," and "every sin against the brotherhood is a sin against God." The only meaning of this appears to us to be that the one obstacle to good relations between man and man is God, and it is certain that where Christianity is strongest brotherhood is in its most precarious state.

## Fifty Years Ago.

ALAS! the priests cannot serve us so now. Their teeth are drawn, and their jaws can only mumble curses. Here is the way in which the Bishop of Santander has just been anathemizing the Liberal writers of Spain. "May God Almighty curse these journalists with the perpetual maledictions launched against the devil and his angels! May they perish with Nero, Julian the Apostate and Judas the traitor! May the earthquake swallow them up alive! Let them be cursed day and night, sleeping and waking, in eating, in drinking and in playing; when they speak, and when they keep silent! May their eyes be blinded, their ears deaf, their tongue dumb! Cursed be every member of their body! May their sepulchre be that of dogs and asses! May famished wolves prey upon their corpses, and may their eternal company be that of the devil and his angels." Our army swore terribly in Flanders, but even the curse of Kchama was as nothing to this.

The "Freethinker," April 2, 1882.



## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- HARRY ABBOTT.**—If you read the *Freethinker* with attention you will discover that our attack is on all religions—Christian, Mohammedan, Jewish, ancient and modern.
- R.C. (Edinburgh).**—We hardly think it possible to organize an effective boycott of the B.B.C. by licence holders as a protest against the present policy of the Corporation with regard to Sunday programmes. Continuous protest by licence holders—Freethinkers and others, seems the only feasible plan at the moment. But one has always to count on the studied dishonesty of the B.B.C. with regard to the number of the protests received, and its refusal to submit the question to a real test.
- TRESCO.**—It is a pity the *Referee* did not see fit to insert your letter, but the pile of accepted and unpublished manuscripts before us prevents its publication in these columns at the moment.
- MODERNUS.**—We quite appreciate your desire for improved organization among Freethinkers, and should like to see more done. The difficulty is partly geographical. We have been developing plans for greater publicity, but this involves considerable expense if pursued on a really adequate scale.
- J. BARRAM.**—The notice for Members' Meeting did not reach us until the day after we went to press with our last issue.
- P. MILLS.**—Glad to hear of the good work you are doing. The letter to which you refer was written in the early part of the war. It was an instruction to all recruiting officers that a recruit's desire to affirm must be respected without question. It should always be borne in mind that an affirmation may be made in every case where an oath is usually required.
- A.G.L.**—Very many thanks for cuttings.
- The "*Freethinker*" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.
- The *Secular Society, Limited* Office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.
- The *National Secular Society's* Office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.
- Letters for the *Editor* of the "*Freethinker*" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.
- When the services of the *National Secular Society* in connexion with *Secular Burial Services* are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- Orders for literature should be sent to the *Business Manager* of the *Pioneer Press*, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the *Editor*.
- The "*Freethinker*" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—  
One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.
- All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "*The Pioneer Press*," and crossed "*Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch*."
- Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

## Sugar Plums.

Now that Easter is over, we have but a few weeks between the time of writing and the Annual Conference of the N.S.S. The Conference this year is fixed for Manchester, and its central position makes it convenient for all interested to be present. We hope to see a record gathering. The Conference is held on Whit-Sunday, May 15.

All resolutions for the Conference should be sent in as early as possible. The right to place motions belongs to individual members as well as to Branches. Those who intend spending the week-end at Manchester should write as soon as they can stating their exact requirements. There will be the usual luncheon on Conference Sunday, and an excursion will be arranged for Whit-Monday.

We should be very pleased to hear from any of our readers who are subscribers to the Royal Hospital for Incurables, and who have votes to spare. We are writing on behalf of a lady, aged forty-seven, who has been for years crippled with Rheumatoid Arthritis. She is quite helpless, and this is her second year of application. If any of our readers have votes not already promised we should be pleased to hear from them. Further information will be given as desired.

The new Stockport Branch of the N.S.S. has been able to make its presence felt by initiating a discussion on the need for a brighter Sunday in Stockport. If there is a place in the country that needs brightening every day in the week it is Stockport. And on Sunday it is just an introduction to suicide. Freethought has done much to give the people a more civilized day of rest than it had, but there is a deal of work yet to be done.

The Home Office has now produced a new Sunday Performance Bill. It is the former (Clynes') Bill as amended in Committee. It is to be left to a free vote of the House of Commons. This fine sounding strategem means, technically, that the Party Whips will not officiate for these divisions. In fact it means (1) that the Government has not the courage to make definite proposals of its own and to stand (or fall) by them; and (2) that personal bias and political expedience will have a free rein. In view of what happened last time we doubt if it is worth while commenting on the forthcoming legislation. It is significant, however, that since then an emergency law has been operative which proves that Sabbath Observance cannot now be protected by Statute. There can be no security for a civilized Sunday, just as there can be no security against blasphemy prosecutions, or repressions of speech or writing, until the Sunday Observance Law, the Blasphemy Laws, and the even more dangerous and antiquated law of seditious libel, are swept into the limbo where they belong.

It is, in fact, impossible to prevent Sunday recreation and entertainment. Every issue of this journal, not to mention a large proportion of current works of fiction, science and theology, are offences against a law which no Government dare enforce without fear or favour, but the mere existence of which provides (as does the law of seditious libel aforesaid) a means by which private cupidity, organized bigotry, or political opportunism, posing as patriotism or piety, may interfere with the legitimate freedom of citizens, the proper liberty of the press, or the assured right of public meeting. We emphasize these major considerations for they are much more worth attention than the mere clatter of the Lord's Day Observance Society, or the humbug of mixing up charitable contributions with the pursuit of legitimate business, or the absurdity of dealing with a national issue by the cowardly deputation of responsibility to local nonentities. The present is supposed to be a "national" Government. The present Home Secretary is not a Christian and is a man of some culture and liberality. Is there any reason, except the fear of pious clamour, why a Government which owes its very existence to an alleged extra-party emergency should not tackle the Sunday question in a large and national, and not in a mean and sectarian, temper? We must add that the Clynes Bill, as amended in Committee, puts the clock back half a century so far as Sunday legislation is concerned, and if it is that measure that it is proposed to leave to the tender mercies of this Parliament we shall not be surprised if it emerges from their non-party attentions even worse than they will find it.

To say that God, if he exists, is stupid, is blasphemy. To say that God, if he exists, is wise, is reverence. Thus the difference between blasphemy and reverence is the difference between flattery and intelligent criticism.

Chapman Cohen.

## Anthropological Christianity.

(Concluded from page 205.)

AT Twickenham it was an ancient custom every Easter Day to divide two great cakes in the parish church, and distribute pieces among the young people. In 1645 it was ordained by Parliament that such a relic of superstition should cease, and that bread should instead be given to the poor of the parish. Loaves used to be thrown from the church steeple at Paddington, to be scrambled for, a practice followed in other parishes. This was a remnant of scrambling for the body of the sacrifice, as seen in the worship of Dionysus, or its distribution, as with the Meriah victim of the Khonds. At the village of Islip, Northamptonshire, every Good Friday, the baker of the village receives instructions from the Vicar to make a large cross of dough containing currants. This cross is deposited in the church, and at noon on Good Friday it is cut up and distributed to the parishioners. Dr. J. G. Frazer gives many instances of the corn spirit being eaten sacramentally. Sometimes "the corn spirit is conceived as an animal, this divine animal being slain and eaten." Again, as a substitute for the real fish of the divine being, bread or dumplings are made in his image (G. B., ii. 31). Dr. Frazer suggests that the loaves in human form, baked at Aricia, were sacramental bread, and that "in the old days, when the divine King of the Wood was annually slain, loaves were made in his image, like the paste figures of the gods in Mexico, and were eaten sacramentally by his worshippers." The interesting survival at Islip is one of many indications that the death and resurrection of Christ was like the death and resurrection of John Barleycorn, an emblem of the renewal of nature in the spring.

"Heaving" or "lifting" was a favourite pastime with the people of England on the Monday and Tuesday in Easter week. Sometimes it was practised within doors, but more generally in the public streets. People formed into groups, and from each one "lifted" they extorted a contribution. The ceremony was incomplete without three distinct elevations. The women's "heaving" day, Tuesday, was considered the most amusing. When a man was seized he was "heaved" and kissed, and forced to pay sixpence, "for leave and license to depart." The lifting or elevation was a sign of the raising of vegetative life. It was an indecent parallel of Christ being lifted up on the cross. The practice apparently prevailed among all ranks. According to Durand it was customary for wives to beat their husbands on Easter Monday, and on the following day for husbands to retaliate the chastisement upon their spouses.

In Lancashire, Cheshire, Staffordshire, and Warwickshire the "lifting" is still practised. On Easter Monday the men lift the women, and on Easter Tuesday the women lift the men.

Mr. Lyons, the Keeper of the Records of the Tower of London, has given an extract from one of the rolls in his custody, which mentions a payment made to certain ladies and maids of honour for "lifting" King Edward the First on Easter Monday. The sum that "Longshanks" paid for this luxury was no trifle, for it was equal to near five hundred pounds.

Not a century ago it was customary in Durham for boys to assemble on Easter Day, and at four o'clock to scour the streets and accost every female they met with the demand, "Pay for your shoes, if you please." The shoes were carried off by force provided pence were not forthcoming, money thus ob-

tained was either squandered at public-houses, or divided in shares amongst the freebooters. A like privilege was claimed by the women on Easter Monday. They began earlier in the day, and attacked every male they met. If their victim wore boots which could not easily be taken off, they would seize his hat, which they would hand about from one to another, until the owner paid sixpence for its restitution. In Yorkshire it was usual to stop those who rode on horseback, and strip them of their spurs. A plan pursued in other parts was to stretch a rope across the roads and demand hack-money. These were all relics of the change in position indicated by the death of the old king of the wood and the advent of the new one. In the thirteenth century, whenever an ecclesiastic appeared in the streets between Easter and Pentecost, he was sure to be seized, and could only obtain his liberty by payment of a fine. But the priests turned this inconvenient custom against the Jews, and Jew-baiting became the fashionable sport at Eastertide. In some French towns it was the practice to lay hold of a Jew, lead him to the nearest church, and openly buffet him on the face. In Rome they always baptize a Jew on Good Friday: it is said the same one serves every year. Mr. Story says he probably finds it worth his while, in view of the zeal of the Church, and in remembrance of the fifteenth verse of the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, if he ever reads that portion of the Bible.

The most important of the old festivities, and one in a line with the ancient rites found in Congo, Corea and Africa was the appointment of a Carnival King. We read of its being practised at Lostwithiel, in Cornwall, near where the prince of Cornwall formerly resided. The freeholders of that town and manor having elected one among them as their king, he was gaily attired and gallantly mounted, with a crown on his head and a sceptre in his hand, while a sword was borne before him. Attended by a large retinue of equestrians, he rode to church in solemn state, where he was met at the porch by the priest, and treated by him with much pomp and reverence. After service was ended, the "king" repaired, with the same formality, to a house prepared for his reception, where a grand banquet was given, in keeping with the pseudo-monarch's assumed dignity. After dinner he was disrobed, and descended to his former level. (Hone, E. D. B., ii. 441). In France this pseudo-king became a court officer, the king of the ribalds. His robes cost 270 francs. In Russia the court fool mounted the imperial throne and the Czar appeared before him to give an account of his actions and receive the admonition that promotion should be according to merit. In many places it was customary at this time to elect a mock ruler. At Weston near Bath a mock mayor used to be elected. At Randwick an annual revel is kept on the Monday after Low Sunday, probably the wake of the church, attended with much intemperance and ridiculous ceremonies in the choice of a mayor who is yearly elected on that day, from among the meanest of the people. They plead the prescriptive right of ancient custom for the licence of the day and the authority of the magistrate is not able to suppress it (Rudder, *Hist. Gloucestershire*, 639). The *Gloucestershire Journal*, April 14, 1888, chronicles a mock election and says, "The office is not much sought after, but if the villagers decide upon their mayor, and he hide himself, they seek after him and thrust the honour upon him."

It is stated that as the Emperor Charles the Fifth was once passing through a village of Arragon, on Easter Day, he was accosted by a peasant who had been chosen the "Paschal" or "Easter King," decorated with a tin crown, and a spit in his hand for

a sceptre. He demanded of the Emperor that he should take off his hat to him, "For, sir," said he, "it is I who am king." To which his sovereign wittily replied, "Much good may it do you, my friend: you have chosen an exceedingly troublesome employment."

It was in connexion with the custom of the king abdicating for a time that we still have the custom of kings washing the feet of beggars and distributing Royal Maundy charities on Maundy Thursday, the day before Good Friday. Each year of her life His Majesty gives two more silver pennies to one more poor man, and one more poor woman. Last year there were seventy-six men and seventy-six women. This old custom represents a commutation for the surrender of the royal life. As late as the time of James II. the king on Maundy Thursday washed the feet of so many beggars, the Emperor of Austria did so this very year. The old ceremony in England was "washing and kissing the feet of as many paupers as they were years old; after which money and food was given them out of a basket." (J. Ecclestone, *English Antiquities*, p. 317). The King was supposed to be the representative of Christ washing the feet of his apostles. In Seville the archbishop gives a splendid dinner to twelve paupers clothed gaily at the expense of their host and each is furnished with a basket to take away what they do not eat. In Rome the Pope washes the feet of thirteen priests to whom he gives a napkin and a flower.

Maundy is said to be from the *maunds* or baskets which were carried in procession and from which the royal gifts were given twelve baskets full. Possibly it is however from *mandatum*. It was also called Shere Thursday from the custom of making a sacrificial offering of hair. When the king dropped washing beggars feet, the office was performed by the chief Almoner, who soon gave it up also.

In the old churches the Sepulchre Show was the important feature from Good Friday to Easter. Every church had a sepulchre, in which a figure of the Christ or the dead year was laid. The ceremony of watching the sepulchre was kept up in England till the Reformation. It was said the second coming of Christ would be at this period, and therefore the sepulchre was watched. Really it was the same ceremony as watching the gardens of Adonis. On Easter Day the "Resurrection at the Sepulchre" was performed, the *dramatis personæ* being monks, clothed in habiliments suited to the character they assumed. I doubt not that some such drama was performed before the Gospels were written. The lights at the Sepulchre Show formed no trivial part of the attraction. One massive taper, called the Paschal, was lighted in each church. That at Westminster Abbey, in 1557, weighed three hundred pounds; that at Durham Cathedral was made of pure wax, square in shape, and extended to within half-a-dozen feet of the roof. Every church in London had a "sepulchre." Prof. J. H. Middleton tells in *Christ's College Magazine* (No. 2, p. 9) how at Christ's College, Cambridge, the host and crucifix were placed on Friday in the sepulchre and guarded by living watchers; on Easter Sunday they were taken out and a solemn service performed.

Lady Morgan in her *Italy*, describes the sepulchres there as watched night and day by hundreds in deep mourning from the dawn of Holy Thursday till Saturday at mid-day when the body is supposed to rise, and the resurrection is announced by the firing of cannon, the blowing of trumpets, and the ringing of bells, which from the preceding Thursday had been carefully tied up to protect them from the power of the devil.

The use of eggs at Easter was universal, a custom

still far from extinct. Throughout the North of England, *pace*-eggs—that is, Passover eggs hardened by boiling and tinged with the juice of herbs—were wont not only to be eaten, but played with in the fields, as though they were balls or bowls. In the Lake District, and other places, they send reciprocal presents of coloured eggs to the children of families between whom any intimacy existed. Sometimes eggs were "blessed" in quantities for distribution throughout the kingdom. The form of consecration appears in the Ritual of Pope Paul the Fifth. The Greeks also make presents of coloured eggs and cakes at Easter. In Russia, a routine of extensive visiting is adopted. An egg is given and exchanged at each visit. People go to each other's houses in the morning, and introduce themselves by saying, "Christ is risen." The reply is, "Yes; He is risen." They then embrace, give each other eggs, and drink a great deal of brandy. A good story is told of a Czar who made the customary salutation to a Jewish soldier. The soldier grounded his arms and replied "Christ is not risen."

At Passover, Jewish women place hard eggs on a table prepared for that purpose. Persians, also, present each other with coloured eggs on the 20th of March and following days, when they hold their great festival of the solar new year. To the philosopher and theology of the Egyptians, Persians, and other ancient nations, indeed, may clearly be traced the practice of distributing and presenting eggs at Easter. Among these people, an egg was regarded as emblematical of the universe, as well as a symbol of fecundity and new life. "Dyed eggs were sacred Easter offerings in Egypt," says Mr. Bonwick (I. B. in M. T. 24). A festival took place in the new moon of the month Phamenoth (which, like the Jewish Nisan, began at March 8) in honour of Osiris, when painted and gilded eggs were exchanged in reference to the beginning of things. The transference of the beginning of the year to January, has, in France been properly followed by the sending of eggs at that season. In Italy sometimes they are stained yellow, purple, red, green, or striped with various colours; sometimes crowned with paste-work, representing in a most primitive way, a hen—her body being the egg, and her pastry-head adorned with a disproportionately tall feather. These eggs are exposed for sale at the corners of the streets and bought by everybody.

The account of the blessing of a ship by Aputleius might almost stand for a description of the modern ceremony at Easter. "The high priest," he says, "carrying a lighted torch and an egg, and some sulphur, made the most solemn prayers with his chaste lips, completely purified it, and consecrated it to the goddess."<sup>1</sup> It will be seen that the significant customs at Easter take us back to pre-Christian times.

<sup>1</sup> *Chambers' Encyclopaedia*, article "Easter."

(The late) J. M. WHEELER.

## Does Paul Support Determinism?

THEOLOGIANs are necessarily casuists, and when casuistry becomes a habit of the mind it can make people capable of proving to their own satisfaction that black is white and the moon is green cheese. The libraries are loaded with ponderous tomes—the output of these masters of casuistry the theologians—and yet we are told time and again of the simplicity of the Truth as it is in Jesus; that the way of salvation is easy to find if we but have the will to seek it, and that as regards the scriptures the wayfaring man though a fool shall not err therein. Why then all the tomes?

The fact is that so many of these self-appointed spiritual guides of others are dead from the neck up.

The movements of their thinking apparatus have ceased to be flexible—their brains have become like mechanical toys that only work one way and a lot of them have had their springs broken and their motive power atrophied. Thus it is that broken in their own construction, they fasten upon the construction of others—that is of the word of Life. They are God's puppets or mannequins that move a certain way by the pulling of supernatural strings and wires. And when one looks to them for any original utterance on the questions of human organization and human destiny he is only repaid with a continuous "Baa-Baa-Baa" by way of reply.

Yet most of the clergy—and 99 per cent of the theologians are clergymen—take the Apostle Paul as their ensample, example, exemplar and prototype. Paul was a very active organizer and missionary if an egotistic and limited thinker. His quarrels with some of his prominent brethren proves him to have been the latter. Paul had a lot of personal force—individuality we may choose to call it; and when his opinions were challenged he was not amenable to contradiction. Of course he could not have done what he did if he had not been a dictator and adopted dictatorial methods. It is a testimony to him by the clergy of all the generations that have succeeded him, that his schemes as an ecclesiastical propagandist and organizer have been adopted and imitated. Nay, not only that; but his followers when compiling the Bible made Paul's letters part of the Word of God by majority vote!

Many of us have looked in vain, however, for a satisfactory reading by the theologians of the following sentences written by the Apostle Paul, and if they can be read any other way than as a confutation and condemnation of the doctrine of Free Will and a justification of Determinism it would be very obliging if some condite Christian would show that other way. The sentences are: "For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. (Rom. vii. 19.)"

It seems to the writer that these fifteen monosyllables may be found ringing through and ringing true with every expressed opinion of Freethinkers in the age-long controversy over Free Will and Determinism. And on this, Science is consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly, day by day and year by year adding confirmation to these words of Paul and furnishing further support to the argument of the Determinist of the twentieth century.

IGNOTUS.

### The Misadventure of Perotine. \*

IN the month of May, 1556, Perotine, wife of David Jores, a French clergyman, who was residing with her mother, Catherine Cawches, on the island of Guernsey received a visit from a woman named Gosset, who asked her for a loan of sixpence upon a silver cup. This article had been stolen by Gosset from a man called Le Courrone; and Perotine at once recognized it as his property. Thereupon, suspecting the thief, and wishing to assist Le Courrone, she lent Gosset the money, and retained the vessel. Then when Gosset was departed, Perotine told Le Courrone what had happened. He caused Gosset to be arrested, and, at her own request sent her under escort to redeem the cup, but, although he recovered his property, he either would not, or could not, withdraw the charge, Gosset being therefore indicted and condemned. Alas, the honesty of Perotine brought fearful disaster upon herself and her family. For next day at the trial of Gosset, a constable—probably the one who had gone with her to get back the cup—said, that in the house of Catherine Cawches he had

noticed a pewter dish from which a name had been erased. On this information, Catherine Cawches with her two daughters Perotine and Guillemine were imprisoned. They demanded an inquiry, and in the absence of any accuser, resort was had to the testimony of the neighbourhood touching their reputation. The evidence thus obtained extolled them very highly in every respect save one, the matter of religion. They were, according to their neighbours, "not obedient to the commands of Holy Church, and forsook the Mass." Hence, whilst escaping the suspicion of theft, they fell into that of heresy; and so the magistrates handed them over to the ecclesiastical authorities. The Marian persecution, which had already destroyed many lives, was still raging furiously. The three women were subjected to a somewhat lax examination, and they offered a general compliance. This gave dissatisfaction in certain quarters, and the clergy were told to give the accused stricter examination. The result was that on July 13 the clerical court found them guilty, and transmitted them to the secular power. Four days later they were taken to a spot outside St. Peter Port, where each one was bound to a stake. Their misery was about to be shortened by strangulation, when the rope broke before this could take place, and they collapsed upon the fire. At that moment Perotine bore a child. A man named House rescued it from the flames. It was a healthy boy, likely for life. They took it to the Provost. He bade them take it to the Bailiff; and the Bailiff told them to throw it into the fire. This was done.

The execution of the three women, though morally indefensible, was legally just, for they had been tried and found guilty of an offence punishable with death; but the burning of the child was simply a murder, for it neither had, nor could have, committed any offence against the law; and it had not been, even unjustly, sentenced to death. Moreover, as some one has observed, the Romanists attach immense importance to the rite of baptism, because they firmly believe that unbaptized persons are excluded from Heaven; and this belief has caused them to permit any responsible person of either sex to administer baptism in case of emergency, and to allow the use of other means than water if this is not at hand. Why then was the present infant not baptized before it was burned? There seems to be only one answer to this question. St. Augustine teaches that "unbaptized little ones will be punished with the eternal torment of the eternal fire." We are told that the mother was already dead when the child was cast into the flames. Thus she did not witness its cruel end; but, in the opinion of her persecutors, she was now in Hell, where, according to St. Augustine it would join her if it died without baptism, and then to the horrors of her situation would be added the torture of beholding for ever and for ever the unceasing agony of her child.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

\*The original authority for the above narrative is *The Acts and Monuments of the Church*, by John Foxe, who lived at the time of the occurrence, and inquired thoroughly into it. Augustine is quoted from his *Liber De Fide Ad Petrum*. There he says:—

Firmissime tene et nullatenus dubites, non solum homines ratione jam utentes, verumetiam parvulos, qui sive in uteris matrum vivere incipiunt et ibi moriuntur, sive jam nati sine sacramento baptismatis, quod datur in nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti, de hoc [saeculo] transeunt, ignis aeterni supplicio sempiterno pociendos, quia etsi peccatum propriae actionis nullum habuerunt, originalis tamen peccati damnationem carnali conceptione et natiuitate traxerunt.

Here Augustine teaches that infants who die in the womb of their mother, or who die out of it unbaptized, will be punished with the eternal torment of the eternal fire, because, although they themselves have done nothing wrong, yet, nevertheless, in being carnally conceived they have incurred the damnation of original sin [in virtue of their descent from Adam the first sinner]. Elsewhere, Augustine, in what I believe to have been an earlier work, his *Enchiridion*, says that infants being affected only by original sin will have the lightest punishment of all those who suffer in Hell. For both references see the *Sic et Non* of Peter Abelard (Marburgh, 1851, pp. 255, 425). Augustine supported the Synod of Carthage (A.D. 410) in condemning the doctrine that unbaptized infants are sent to a place which is neither Heaven nor Hell. (Hagenbach's *History of Doctrines*, Edinburgh, 1847, Vol. I. p. 366). In spite of this condemnation the *Limbus Infantium* or *Limbo of Babies* was a belief entertained by many of the Schoolmen. At their period, the clergy, to which they belonged, often kept concubines and begat bastards, thus becoming practically acquainted with the natural feelings of husbands and fathers.

### In Praise of Memory.

THE mother of the nine Muses was daughter of heaven and earth. Memory was a mother, in the words of Hesiod, who, "guardian over the corn-lands of Eleusis, bare, the Muses after union with their sire, the son of Cronus, in Pieria, to be a means of oblivion of ills, and a rest from cares." Greek genius had the same problem as that confronting the moderns in an effort to make the unready mind recognize the obvious. Myth was used by the poets, and when Hesiod and Pindar touched the subject there was truth to be understood by those who had learned and those who had to learn.

Temperament plays a great part in the texture of memory, but it is a human weakness—or strength, that the mind mostly retains all that is pleasant and agreeable of the past. Major troubles of the past are remembered and used as the working tools of experience, but small and large joys come to the mind at the bidding of dainty Ariel. From these remembered joys, with no tincture of regret, the mind draws the positive sun of sustenance. The mill-stones of the brains have here something to grind upon, and the result can be nothing but a reinforcement of energy for present and future use. Let him with good taste seeking neither for applause, nor advantage be confined in his choice in conduct; he is making the past endurable when it is recalled in the present.

Perfumes, music, the stage, the sound of a voice, all these stir the deep and quiet pool of memory. Learned professors may give us lengthy discourses and make out some sort of explanations. They are mostly academic, dry, uninteresting and almost outside the purview of life; if they are not all these they display the usual superficial treatment of a subject that still awaits adequate consideration of the possibilities of the mind. The kingdom of the mind has less explorers than spectators at a football match; this, not as a reproach against facts, but a chronicle of a dispensation.

All knowledge is perception plus recollection, and memory is the warder of the brain—to borrow from Shakespeare. Human memory, dissected, labelled, classified, each part explained and expounded by those who could botanize on their mother's grave, has not yet been brought to the homely fireside of life. Its possibilities in fulfilling the conception of a pagan such as Hesiod have never been sufficiently examined.

There is no obligation on the part of the individual to remember anything; there are penalties for forgetting the simple facts of experience—that fire burns or that water wets, but what I have chiefly in mind are all those recollections that are revived by the smelling of a

handful of hay, the stimulation of the memory by a recurring type of person in one's life, the clear images that arise when the mind is ordered back into the past for the best that is there. The explanation, free from technical jargon of relativity, time, and space, and all such paper covering devices, could be converted into some instrument, useful to the common man. Its only test would be its verifiable truth.

In the absence of light from so many oil-less lighthouses, my own ideas for what they are worth, are as follows:—

1. That memory is, as yet, a country of which the human race has no working map.
2. That the subject, having no money interest in it, does not offer any inducement for research.
3. That poets and essayists have been the only individuals who have made the subject, by sympathy, readable and interesting.
4. That Spiritualists have made the subject contemptible.
5. That William Blake, the sparks from whose anvil were suns enough for some worlds, came near enough to the question to interest and encourage all shades of opinion when he wrote: "The world of imagination is the world of eternity. It is the divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the vegetated body. The world of imagination is infinite and eternal, whereas the world of generation or vegetation is finite and temporal."

Tenuous, you may say, is your case; read Locke, Hume, Spinoza; what are you trying to prove? My answer is, I have read them, and I am not trying to prove anything. The above are but a few independent thoughts on a subject having materialism as the basis of the triangle for any investigation.

ADAM BREDE.

### Pies and Piety.

IN these unregenerate days, when the Church is straining every nerve to keep and to hold the sheep for the shearing, it is interesting to note some of the many devices used to accomplish that end. Treats, excursions, pictures, concerts—all attempts to gild the pill. Any and every attempt to lure the simple-minded into the fold, is tried with commendable zeal—result, a falling-off in church attendance. We must not be quite as simple-minded as of yore.

Perhaps the most ingenious, and, apparently, successful attempt to hold the affections of the man in the street, is one made at a Mission Hall in Sunderland. This is "run" by a Mr. Bell, and one must compliment him on his unsparing, and unselfish efforts to bring a portion of happiness into the lives of many needful cases. The hungry look up and are given—a pie.

Far be it from me to throw water on his self-denying efforts. He appears to have gathered a band of young men around him. All seem animated by the desire to help their more unfortunate brothers. Every Thursday night, I gather, they have a packed audience where every man receives a pie and a cup of tea. These are all to the good. The cup that cheers but does inebriate becomes a stimulating draught to a thirsty man. And the pies are excellent. I can vouch for their quality, for I had one myself at Mr. Bell's or somebody's expense. Its a poor heart that ne'er rejoices.

Oh, it was an exciting meeting! A queue formed long before the opening. It was not a large hall, but every seat was packed in good time. Even the window-seats held their quota, and one remembered the story of Eutychus who fell from a window during a religious gathering. Fortunately, for him, first-aid was immediately resorted to, and he was restored to life again. Presumably Mr. Bell would do the same in emergency.

On this occasion, not only were the hot-pies and tea an

attraction, but there was a debate as well. That is the way things are done in Sunderland. We play the concertina and the organ to minister to our sentimental nature. We exhibit massive texts, and sing flamboyant hymns to stimulate our spiritual appetite. We then feed our mortal bodies with pies and plenty, after which we are in a fit state to hear something for our mental palate. The discussion runs on:—

"Is there a God?"

Our friend, Mr. Brighton, took the negative. To one sitting in that packed audience, it was very thrilling to see Mr. Brighton rise to demolish the ladder that Mr. Bell averred he had set up. The latter followed the old Design argument, viz., that everywhere were to be found evidence of design. The clock and the bridge had a designer before it was made, consequently the universe, seeing it was governed by Natural Law, must also have been designed. This enabled Mr. Bell to get back to his First Cause. A Cause presumably Causeless. This also gave him a chance to talk about "Teleology" and "Ontology," though, to be fair Mr. Bell was studiously moderate, using the simplest and plainest language at his command.

Mr. Brighton makes a capital opponent. He is frank, fearless, chivalrous to his opponent, scrupulously fair, and a fluent speaker. Witty and humorous at times, he can point out the absurdities of the God idea, and drive home the salient points in the Freethought programme. He made the best use of his time in expounding the lessons that Christians need to be taught, and showed what a terrible responsibility rested on this God-assuming his existence.

It was a great night!

Mr. Keast made an excellent chairman.

ALAN TYNDAL.

## CONWAY MEMORIAL LECTURE.

PROFESSOR HAROLD J. LASKI will deliver the Twenty-third Lecture, entitled "NATIONALISM AND THE FUTURE OF CIVILIZATION," at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1, on Wednesday, April 6. Chair taken by Mr. H. N. Brailsford, at 7 p.m. Admission Free. Reserved seats 1s., to be obtained from Conway Hall.

## Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."  
FILM CENSORSHIP.

SIR,—Although I am one who in general sympathizes with the Freethought movement, I must strongly disagree with L'Aiguillon's criticism of the film censorship in a recent issue of the *Freethinker*.

There are two points which L'Aiguillon seems to have completely overlooked: (1) that films are produced and exhibited by quite irresponsible people interested not so much in beauty and morality as in profits. (2) That children of all ages regularly visit the cinema. These two facts are sufficient to render some sort of censorship of films imperative.

It is a trite saying that a race progresses through its children, and the modern child is subjected to few influences so powerful as the cinema. Even as things are, many films are atrociously bad. The Chicago Gangster becomes a dashing and debonair hero; law-breaking an exciting and quite legitimate pastime; the greatest things in life seem to be easy money, luxury, and lurid episodes in which young ladies undress.

In spite of a censorship, many films are so puerile, so banal and coarse, and some of their scenes so "daring" (as the posters take good care to inform the public), that one trembles to imagine what would happen if the censorship were abolished, allowing irresponsible business men, whose one consideration is box-office receipts, to exploit the cinema to the utmost. L'Aiguillon doubtless can define the boundary between "spiciness" and obscenity, but it is certain that that boundary would very quickly be crossed if the censor's restraining hand were withdrawn.

No, L'Aiguillon, the censorship must remain, there is a difference between freedom and licence. We have dispensed with religion, but we cannot dispense with morality—we are too perilously near the ape-man for that.

ARAMIS.

## Obituary.

MR. HARRY ALLEN.

ON Thursday, March 17, the remains of Harry Allen were cremated at the Manchester Crematorium. He was a member of the Old Manchester Branch of the N.S.S. and in accordance with his special wish a Secular Service was read in the presence of a number of relatives and friends. The circumstances of his death in his sixty-first year were rather tragic. An enthusiastic golfer, and President of the Heaton Park Golf Club, he was taken ill during the progress of a game on the previous Saturday and expired suddenly before medical aid could be obtained. The heartfelt sympathy of all his friends is extended to the widow and family in their bereavement.

MRS. MARGARET RALSTON.

WE regret to record the death of one of the oldest Freethinkers in Scotland in the person of Mrs. Ralston, wife of the late Robert Ralston. A "convert" to Freethought fifty-eight years ago, once the step was taken there was no turning back. The superstition we call Christianity was done with.

Up till three or four years ago a regular attender of the Glasgow Society's meetings, she heard and met all the leading exponents of Freethought. And being possessed of a retentive memory her recollections were many and well worth listening to. Many were her stories of the Lecturers and Debaters, Mrs. Harriet Law, Mr. Bradlaugh, and later his gifted daughter, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, Charles Watts, Joseph Symes, H. P. Ward and numerous others. Mr. Foote and Mr. Cohen in their struggle to establish the *Freethinker* early won her admiration and their success was a source of delight.

A good-hearted, kindly neighbour, always ready to help or to praise, she endeared herself to many who had no sympathy with her opinions.

Handicapped for years with rheumatism she never lost her cheerfully bright spirit. Her last illness was of less than a week's duration and was due to shock. She passed as if asleep on March 17 in the seventy-eighth year of her age.

In accordance with her express wish a Secular Burial Service was read by her old friend Mr. Thos. Robertson. In his address Mr. Robertson paid an eloquent tribute to her loyalty, her goodness of character and her courage.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

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

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.—A meeting will be held at White Stone Pond, Hampstead, near the Tube Station every Sunday morning at 11.30 a.m. Speaker to-day Mr. L. Ebury.

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.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, R. Dimsdale Stocker—"The Sense of Mystery in Life."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, John Murphy—"Goethe as a Man."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.7, five minutes from the Brecknock): 7.20, Mr. C. M. Kohan, O.B.E. (New Health Society)—"The Tasks of Preventive Medicine."

COUNTRY.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.—Ramble to Honey Well, on Sunday, April 3, meet at Paisley Cross at 11.15 a.m.—Come!

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

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

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(Under the auspices of the Survival League and the Rationalist Press Association Limited)

SUBJECT:

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IS THE EVIDENCE CONCLUSIVE?

BETWEEN

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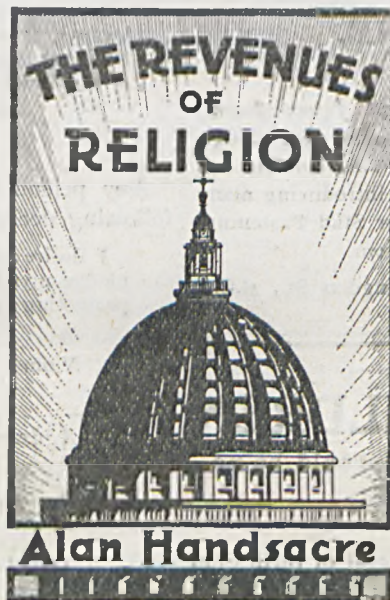
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