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Views and Opinions.

Christianity and Myself.

IN answer to a question. When I was quite a youth I reached a very definite conclusion concerning Christianity. I had never believed in it, and so had no reason to invent excuses for it for existing, or for myself for not accepting it at its current value. I could not take up the pose that I surrendered my belief with regret, nor did I invent a feeling of envy for those who could still retain the "child-like faith" of those around them, nor did I feel sorry that I was growing up and was no longer satisfied with the complacent ignorance of immaturity. From my early youth also I had no belief in either a God or a future life, and this enabled me to take a rather detached view of my surroundings. Later I began to think that at that age I was either very abnormal, or that the talk of well-placed heretics of parting with the deepest regret with their early beliefs, and envying the serenity of those who could still believe, was just a heritage of the intellectual cowardice received from centuries of Christian influence. I was always interested in religion and in Christianity because I recognized what a great part religion had played in the history of mankind, and that to leave religion out of our survey was to fail to understand human evolution. My interest in Christianity was, and is, exactly what a reviewer wrote when describing one of my books, that of a student wandering through a museum of natural curiosities. It was something that was there and one had to find its place in the world and explain its operations. I never hated Christianity, because I never thought it worth hating, and one only properly hates something which one places rather high. Hatred is, after all, rather a lofty kind of passion, and should be reserved for lofty things. Vermin are not hated, they are simply disliked. To speak of hating a mean thing is an abuse of speech. One may have a contempt for it, but not hatred. Detestation, or contempt properly expresses one's attitude towards what is essentially ignoble.

Learning and Unlearning.

And that was my prevailing impression of Christianity. It was something essentially ignoble. I could see nothing to admire in men and women loudly proclaiming they deserved damnation, and joyfully thanking God that someone else had borne the brunt of their iniquities. That kind of thing, even though used symbolically, could not have an elevating effect on character. Nor could I find anything noble or praiseworthy, or intellectually satisfying in proclaiming aloud that one could not remain honest or decent unless one were under the supervision of an almighty policeman, and that if there were no future life then there was nothing worth doing save to eat, drink and be merry. These things struck me as very strange in a world such as the one we live in, and while I was completely unimpressed by the theory I felt that it was necessary to understand how it came to be where it was. I daresay that if I had sprung from Christian parents I should have taken a different view, but in that direction I experienced good fortune. I started my intellectual life with less of a handicap than most; and if I had everything to learn I had far less harmful instruction to get rid of than have ninety per cent of others. And to start life with a light load is a splendid start. One is able to go straight forward and simply learn, without spending most of one's time in unlearning. The religious rule is to turn out children who are copies of their parents, with, if possible, their parent's stupidities and absurdities intensified. The sound human rule would be to turn out children who are better than their parents, and are able to soar above the follies and superstitions of the generation from which they spring. Parents cannot do too much for their children, but they can very easily *teach* them too much.

* * *

A Poor Creed.

But one feeling about Christianity I had so soon as I settled down to understand it. I felt it was one of the most magnificently mean creeds that littered the face of the earth. It seemed a splendid instrument for gratifying all that was mean in human nature under cover of expressing lofty ideals and noble motives. It talked much of humility and meekness and purity; and excelled in the practice of arrogance, egotism, and lack of consideration for those outside the range of their sectarian interests, and evidenced obsession with a kind of inverted sexuality that left a trail of uncleanness in its path. I found Christians talking much of laying bare their souls to God, but as God never talked back they were unable to know what he thought of the specimens submitted to him. I found them proficient in the mouthing of moral sentiments and finding this a very satisfactory substitute for healthy conduct. With a fervid propagandist zeal for improving other people, the Christians seemed

to lose sight of the fact that some little attention should be paid to home affairs. His sense of superiority was, indeed, a negative product derived from a contemplation of the badness of other people. It was this that gave, and gives, to the average Christian such a glow of moral worth when he is dilating on the vice of those abroad or the sinners at home. In a thousand and one ways I found the Christian throwing up a moral smoke screen between himself and his real motives. He could be neither daringly good nor honestly and decently bad. Whether it was selling opium on an international scale, annexing land from natives in various parts of the world, covering the seas with battleships or the land with armies, some highly religious or moral motive had to be found for what was being done. He never clearly saw himself from the beginning to the end of his life; and there is little wonder that when his real friends tried to show him as he was that the portrait was rejected as a caricature.

There was one further thing that demanded consideration. Christianity had always seemed to possess a weird fascination for "sinners"—whether of the historic heroic type, or poor snivelling specimens in the shape of converted burglars and wife-beaters. But I knew that miracles are no more possible in the world of morals than in the world of atoms. Character is not changed in the twinkling of an eye, despite the torrent of sanctified lying on this head that has been poured out by Christian preachers. The converted man is the same man as the unconverted, even though his qualities may now find some other method of gratification. Character is a question of development, and development is development, not miraculous transformation.

The Mobilization of Vice.

Now these things I have been describing were, and are, too wide spread to be accidental. Some causal connexion between them and Christianity there must be and it is not very difficult to discern what and where this is. Let me take, for example, one of the most detestable of the intellectual vices, intolerance. This is in science the unforgivable sin, in literature it is deprecated, even in politics any man will resent with indignation the charge of being intolerant. But if a man is intolerant by nature what can so easily transform this vice into a virtue as religion? He does not hide it, he boasts of it and counts it unto himself for righteousness. He will boast that he will not look at the other side, or read the other side, or listen to the other side. It is true he will not call his conduct intolerant, neither will his friends. He will call it a strong religious conviction, and they will refer to his profound religious belief. Nothing occurs to rouse him to a consciousness of the cultivation of one of the most evil qualities of human mentality; on the contrary, it rises to the rank of a virtue, his religion has moralized it. He feels the better for being intolerant, and is actually honoured for cultivating a quality of which every decent man or woman ought to be ashamed. I do not mean, of course, that intolerance is confined to religion, but I do mean that religion is the one thing that enables a man to cultivate it without sinking in the estimation of those around him.

Now that gives one of the outstanding influences of Christianity in civilized life. It does not remove many of the ugly features of social life it moralizes them. It has, for instance, neither abolished, diminished, nor humanized war, but it has been the great inventor of moral justifications for it. It has not taught men to be more truthful, but in preaching and writing it has developed the use of falsehood in its service. So much is this the case that in all the innumerable slanders that have gone forth from Christian pulpits concerning those who differed from Christ-

ianity, I cannot recall a single case in which the slanderer has lost grace in the eyes of the Church. It has never encouraged a man to look straight at himself, and to face the motives that were actuating his conduct. Christianity did not invent the meannesses of human nature, but I know of nothing that has done more to favour their expression. Of Christianity one may say as one may say of other things, men may have been good with it, but they would have been better without it.

* * *

Question and Answer.

I commenced these notes with an answer to a question. This was put to me by one of my religious readers. He wanted to know why I hated Christianity so much. I have replied that I do not hate it at all. Real hatred should only exist, I might say can only exist between equals. There is nothing essentially mean about hatred; it is a strong masculine passion and should be spent only on strong masculine things. For mean things one can only feel contempt. But in relation to Christianity even that statement needs some little qualification. Christianity as a bundle of primitive beliefs and savage ceremonies is full of interest to anyone who takes a lively and intelligent interest in human evolution. In that respect one can examine it with just the same kind of feeling that one has towards the primitive forms of life that one finds in a museum of paleontology. It is when we find these beliefs and practices seriously put forward for the acceptance of a civilized community, and find them "rationalized" into something they have never meant and never can honestly be made to mean, that the evil is done. It is then that a belief acts as a poison in the social and intellectual life of a nation. And one does not hate a parasite. One is simply disgusted with its presence and anxious for its removal.

I hope I have answered the question asked.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Messrs. Facing-both-Ways.

"You do not believe, you only believe that you believe."—S. T. Coleridge.

"Clericalism, there is the enemy."—Gambetta.

"More life, and fuller, that we want."—Tennyson.

"Mankind thinks slowly."—C. R. W. Nevins.

THE present-day Free Church clergy never tire of telling their congregations that the brotherhood of mankind is one of the primary elements of Christian doctrine. Church of England priests echo the noble sentiment, with the polite reservation that there may be big brothers and little brothers. All priests now ignore their former patriotic platitudes concerning their deposed "God of Battles," and bid men and women turn their eyes to the "Prince of Peace," and the "Carpenter of Nazareth." The founder of the Christian Religion, they tell us now, proclaimed: "Blessed are the Peacemakers." The clergy themselves have, however, never earned for themselves this benediction, although the Romish Pontiff sought to impose "the truce of God" several times during the late world-war, forgetful of the fact that little could be gained by postponing wholesale murder for a few hours on Christmas Day or Good Friday. Such minor palliations are of small moment compared with the grim fact that the entire clergy, as a body, never set themselves in opposition to militarism itself.

Turn to the history of our own country, and refer to the record of the so-called Church of England since the Reformation. Britain has waged over a hundred wars, great and small. She has fought Frenchmen,

Germans, Dutchmen, Spaniards, Russians, and even Irishmen. Outside Europe, she has fought Abyssinians, Chinese, Hindoos, Afghans, and Americans. In every instance, this Church of Christ has been the maid-of-all-dirty-work of the Government of the day, blessed the regimental flags, christened the battleships, and organized the Te Deums for victory. The official Prayer Book, issued with the sanction of both Houses of Parliament, blandly assumes that justice is always on our side, and reminds credulous worshippers that "there is none other that fighteth for us but only Thou, O God," which is a bit hard on the admirals and generals, to say nothing of the rank and file.

In the late world-war, whole nations, professedly Christian, were engaged for years in wholesale slaughter, in which twenty million of lives were lost. Europe was a streaming slaughter-house, in which perished much of the best of the manhood of one entire generation. It is a complete and perfect indictment of the Christian Superstition, which has proved itself the most harmful and hypocritical thing on earth. The millions who professed to be followers of this "Prince of Peace" were entirely unaffected by peaceful teaching. When passion or self-interest was aroused, every commandment and every precept was forgotten. Nor is this all of the sorry story, for a few persons were actually treated as criminals for even attempting to take the Christian Religion seriously, as with the Conscientious Objectors and the Quakers in England, and some Communists and Freethinkers in Europe and America.

So far as the priests of the numerous Christian Churches were concerned, the profession of purely Christian ethics was a delusion and a mockery. Whether they were Romish Cardinals, Anglican bishops, Nonconformist divines, or ecclesiastics of the Greek Church, the fact remained the same. As for the brotherhood of mankind, no one remembering the awful treatment of Jews and Freethinkers throughout Europe for many centuries can but see that Christian doctrines are of one aspect, but its practices of another.

These same priests are now very anxious to persuade everybody that they have had a very important share in the improvement of the condition of the people. They wish to forget the world-war, and their own shameful share in it. Hence it is not surprising to find in a Church of England hymn-book of a pathetic appeal to the sympathies of the British working man. Listen to the dulcet tones of the clerical syren:—

"Sons of Labour, think of Jesus
As you rest your homes within,
Think of that sweet Babe of Mary
In the stable of the inn,
Think, now in the sacred story
Jesus took a humble grade,
And the Lord of Life and Glory
Worked with Joseph at his trade."

Once the ecclesiastics had nothing but the sternest rebuke for the working-class. For the Luddites breaking machinery in the dull despair of starvation the law then provided the hangman, and the Bishops showed no pity. Robert Owen arose with his plans for co-operation, and the Bishops called fiercely upon the Government to put down these heretics. When Joseph Arch sought to organize the agricultural labourers, a Right-Reverend Father-in-God suggested that the horse-pond was the right place for an agitator. In its weakness the Working Class Movement always found the Bench of Bishops among its worst enemies. To-day, when the Labour Movement is a force in politics, and a power in the country, the Bishops try to patronize the workman.

Without unduly elaborating the matter, this change

of front is disingenuous and by no means clever. Is it possible that the growth of the Democratic Movement has frightened the forty thousand priests, and that they are preparing for the dreadful day when the Red Flag flies at Westminster? Someone ought to remind the Black Army of clergymen that it is within the bounds of possibility that a State Church, a sacred caste, and medieval beliefs, may be nothing but a survival in the twentieth century, and that the Christian Superstition is of the things that perish. The collapse of the Churches is too complete to be glossed over by the glamour of false sentiments and assumed heroics. Let the Democrats disband the black army of priests, and work out their own social salvation without the fables of an Oriental faith. What is wrong is that the clergy commercialize our credulity, exploit ancient ignorance, and impede the wheels of progress.

"Why do you blow hot and cold with the same breath?" asked the boy in the fable. Why do the clergy always shout with the biggest crowd? In war time in this country the priests place the Union Jack among the sacred articles of their religion. When peace comes that flag is placed behind the vestry door. The clergy only insulted the Democratic leaders until the Labour Movement became too large to be ignored. Now, the priests seek to "noble" the Labourites, so as to keep their own place "in the sun" should Democracy be returned to power. Abyssinia is a Christian country, but human slavery is one of its most thriving industries. The entire Christian priesthood of that country religiously shut their eyes to the evils of forced servitude, as they have done for nearly twenty centuries. Abyssinian priests act exactly as our own Archbishops, Bishops, Cardinals, and Nonconformist divines. They fawn on whatever party is in power, lie freely, and bully the weak. They act just as the politicians act. But the politicians do not pretend to be a sacred caste apart, the anointed of "God," nor do they threaten their opponents with eternal damnation. Politicians may be shifty, but they are better men than the priests.

MIMNERMUS.

The Cosmos of the Dark Ages.

THAT Aristotle was one of the supreme intellects of the world must be acknowledged by all. Yet, his cosmical scheme, when placed above criticism by Catholic authority, became a sad stumbling block to the advance of truth. Dissent from Aristotle's dicta was regarded as both arrogant and impious when the Pagan philosopher's cosmogony was declared orthodox by the Church's representatives.

Yet Aristotle himself never claimed finality for his scheme. He stressed the tentative nature of his conclusions. "Mine," he writes, "is the first step, and therefore a small one, though worked out with much thought and hard labour. It must be looked at as a first step and judged with indulgence." Aristotle's caution fell on deaf ears, and for more than a thousand years the Christian world bowed to the Greek's provisional theories, and pioneers in natural science were everywhere confronted with opinions proclaimed as sound Catholic doctrine.

Freedom of thought and expression were in some measure secured in classic Greece, and in the City of the Seven Hills the Athenian spirit pervaded the minds of the best citizens and patricians, both in Republican, and Imperial Rome. But with the decline and eclipse of Pagan culture, and the rise and triumph of an alien Eastern creed which penalized inquiry, while placing a premium upon credulity, the indepen-

dent spirit of the past receded more and more from the minds of men.

It is one of the large ironies of history that the Christian cult, which traces its inception to the life and ministry of Jesus, should accept as final the philosophy of a Pagan thinker who lived centuries before the Nazarene's cult was born. Yet, for more than a millenium, the supposed *ipse dixit* of Aristotle constituted a supreme court of appeal when any independent investigator advanced theories or announced discoveries of a scientific character. Copernicus was derided as a puny opponent of the divinely inspired Aristotle, and when Aristotelian ecclesiastics and metaphysicians were invited to look at Galileo's discoveries for themselves, they shook their heads, re-read their Aristotle, and determined to run in the old ruts till the day they died.

When we compare the majestic view of the universe revealed by modern astronomy with the fantastic structure of the ages of faith, the latter strikes us as childish and absurd. For Aristotle had provisionally pictured the universe in spherical form, and the sphere was regarded as the most perfect of all possible forms. This idea was warmly welcomed by the Christian Fathers, for obviously God utilized the most perfect form when he created the world. So to suggest that the universe had any other shape was to incur the suspicion of infidelity and wickedness.

In terms of this scheme the sun, moon, planets and stars moved round the earth—the centre of the material universe—in their several spheres. Friction arising from contact of material sphere with sphere gave forth "the music of the spheres" which provided endless pleasure to God and his angels in heaven.

Aristotle did not invent this system himself. It dates back at least to the age of Eudoxus who, according to Dreyer, was the earliest seer that ventured beyond philosophical speculation concerning the architecture of the universe. Eudoxus strove to explain the recorded movements of the heavenly bodies, and crude and fanciful as the scheme now appears, we must acknowledge that it rests in some measure upon observation; that it represents a marked advance on the ideas of primitive races, and that early Greek astronomers lacked those instruments of precision everywhere in use in modern temples of science.

All our concepts are moulded by our experiences, immediate or remote. It was part of the reigning belief that the sphere and circle were the most superb forms shapen by the hand of God. For, while the sphere was the divine masterpiece of form, the circle constituted the most perfect path, and therefore the celestial orbs moved in circles, and to audaciously imagine that they ever pursued any other course was to impugn the perfection of the Almighty's handiwork.

Forty-five hollow spheres made up Aristotle's universe. The sphere possessing the greatest velocity is that one outlying all the others because, being most distant from the earth, it has the longest journey to make in the twenty-four hours of the day. God himself resides in the outermost sphere and his holy influence extends to all the other spheres. But owing to the long distance of our globe from God's dwelling-place his benign influence is lessened. This is supposed to explain why toil and trouble, sin and sorrow are perpetually present among men, while beyond the orbit of the moon, perfection and harmony constantly reign.

Aristotle's universe bore many resemblances to that adopted by Ptolemy, who supposed the movements of the Solar System just as they appear to the unaided senses. To deny that our planet formed the universe's centre was, in the then state of popular ignorance, exceedingly unwise. Still, that some subscribed

to the heliocentric doctrine advocated by the old Greek astronomer Aristarchus is suggested by the gibes and sneers of orthodox writers. That clever author if pitiful reasoner, Lactantius who flourished in the fourth century, not only regarded our globe as the universal centre, but championed the theory of a flat earth as well. Langdon Davies, in his lively and entertaining *Man and his Universe*, caustically remarks that, "Lactantius understood the ancient astronomers about as well as William Jennings Bryan understood Darwin." An inveterate obscurantist, Lactantius condemned scientific study as worse than worthless.

A very weird and wonderful cosmological scheme was propounded by Cosmas Indicopleustes. This writer issued his thoughts to the world in his *Christian Topography*. This work is largely devoted to an exposure of the vain heathen doctrine of the earth's rotundity. In unmeasured terms, Cosmas trounces those miserable creatures who chop logic and pretend that earth and heaven are spherical as paltry blasphemers sunk despairingly in sin whose turpitude induces them to revel in such impudent nonsense as the doctrine of the antipodes and other follies.

In the scheme of Cosmas himself, the earth appears as a quadrangular plane some 400 days' journey from east to west, and just half that distance from north to south. In his famous *Conflict Between Religion and Science*, Professor Draper thus summarises Cosmas' views concerning the earth, which he asserted "is enclosed by mountains, on which the sky rests; that one on the north side huger than the others by intercepting the rays of the sun produces night; and that the plane of the earth is not set exactly horizontally, but with a little inclination from the north: hence the Euphrates, Tigris and other rivers, running southward, are rapid, but the Nile, having to run uphill, has necessarily a very slow current." This concluding reference to the slowness of the current we can very well believe. But what a picture of sixth century Christian science!

Dante, who lived from 1265 to 1321, has been acclaimed the first outstanding name in letters after the darkness of the Middle Ages. A splendid forerunner of the Italian Renaissance, the sublime poet nevertheless participated in the misconceptions of his age. Dante's cosmic scheme is portrayed in his masterpiece, the *Divina Commedia*. This product of the expiring Medieval Ages seems as unreal as the designedly fantastic and grotesque scenes of Goethe's *Faust*. In Dante's poem a flaming hell is placed at the earth's centre. Purgatory is located on a solitary mountain rising from the sea in that region of the earth opposite man's abiding-place. This height is arranged into terraces, and its apex is the site of the earthly paradise from which man was expelled in consequence of Adam's transgression. Our earth is surrounded by a series of spheres, and above the outermost of these, reposes the empyrean paradise, the abode of the blest who spend eternity in the presence of God.

This strange picture owes much to the influence of the scheme attributed to Aristotle. Not the vulgar alone, but the best instructed people of the period viewed Nature much as Dante described her. The days of Copernicus, Galileo and Bruno were yet to come. Then, the battle began between advancing science and stationary theology. In astronomy, geology and biology, the triumph of science over her ancient enemy has proved complete. It is only in the more obscure problems of psychology that the mystics seek shelter from the principle of natural causation which dominates all the other domains of secular knowledge.

Let There be Light.

(Concluded from page 477.)

By accident, or by design, in this May number of *Life and Work*, thirty-five pages after the place where Dr. Patrick's article appears, there is printed a message to the members of the Woman's (sic) Guild of the Church of Scotland, from their retiring Hon. President, the Duchess of Atholl, D.B.E., M.P., which in the main is a lament about and an attack upon Continental Militant Atheism. Incidentally it may be observed that in these sporadic assaults upon Freethought, the Church of Scotland is doing what it never did before. It is bringing up its very biggest guns to show up the horrid and baneful and destructive and debasing effects of Freethought propaganda. Not long ago the writer took occasion to criticize an article in *Life and Work*, by Professor Simpson, probably one of the first six laymen in the Church of Scotland and an eminent scientist, warning the Scottish people against having anything to do with that unclean thing, Russian Atheism, while ignoring the fact that there is a considerable body of British Atheism actively organized and numerically strong in our very midst. And now we have Her Grace the Duchess of Atholl. She is all for unity. To her the outstanding fact in the world to-day is the formation of the "Communist International of Proletarian Freethinkers," with headquarters in Berlin, but said to be directed from Moscow, and having branches in several Continental countries; and she is fearfully apprehensive that a branch may be formed in Britain and its anti-religious propaganda extended. She tells us that "the attempt is to be made to root out everything spiritual in every form from human life; and in the first place, naturally enough, the attack is to be aimed at children and young people." The appalling thing to the complacent members of the social stratum to which the Duchess belongs is that the poor should be allowed to exercise their mental faculties and to think independently for themselves upon such a subject as religion. Why not retain the good old system when the parish minister was the spiritual autocrat over all the people of the parish? What other does she mean by saying that "we must have but one thought; how to set forth the main facts of the Christian Faith in such a way as to make it intelligible to our young people and to endeavour so to show forth that all-pervading love which is the essence of the Christian Faith as to make clear to them that love, not hate, unity not cleavage is the greatest message ever given to the world."

"Further," she says, "we must try to show that only through love can come consideration and tolerance, and, only through these, freedom of thought, speech and action; and that therefore the practice of Christian love is essential to the progressive welfare of mankind as indeed it has been the inspiration of all that is best in our civilization."

Brave words! Love, Love, Love! With Matthew Arnold we say: "Words, Words, Words. Words may tell this way or that way!". Is the Duchess so ignorant of history to be unaware of the fact that there have been innumerable instances of magnificent self-sacrificing love long before Christianity was heard of? That civilizations higher than our own existed long before the days of Christ! Again do I repeat with emphasis that Christians in their limited view can only think in centuries. Freethinkers think in aeons. Christian authority has withheld knowledge, distorted truth, and persecuted and burned and slain millions of unoffending and innocent and virtuous human beings. What are the real implications

of the message of the Duchess? It involves the admission that after the opportunities of all these years since the Reformation the Church of Scotland has not been able to teach its people the rudiments of Christianity! The thorn in the side of the leaders of Scottish Presbyterianism is that the youth of to-day are in revolt—that they will not obey authoritarian dictates—that they choose to read and study and think and find out for themselves. Upon what ground or with what justification does the Duchess make the glib assertion that Freethought instils hate and causes cleavage? Let her examine the lives of the great pagan and freethinking statesmen, poets and philosophers; and then let her compare these with the lives of the most prominent Christians, and declare what conclusion she reaches after a full and impartial consideration of the facts. Freethought stands for a higher and more exacting and self-effacing kind of love than has ever been preached by Christianity. The pioneers of Freethought in the last and the present century have carried the message of human emancipation from ignorance, fear, greed and disease into every section of society, and their reward has been hate, obloquy, misrepresentation and slander. The Duchess of Atholl adduces not a jot or tittle of evidence in substantiation of her averment that Atheism is hopeless and bitter—that it is insidious and destructive. Atheism is the only discipline that offers a really high and lasting hope—that seeks to infuse sweetness and light into the life of every human being born into the world—that longs to establish a universal human brotherhood, and to break down the barriers of caste and class, which keep people apart and perpetuate hate, suspicion, envy, and malice, all which Christianity has failed to eradicate; it openly proclaims, *its* faith in the market place; on the highways; from the house tops. Is there anything insidious in these methods? It is the sworn and implacable foe of hate, ill-will, distrust and greed. And it knows that humanity is only to be elevated when humanity has been fully informed and enlightened by the widest knowledge *on all subjects*, and delivered from that besetting, blighting and debasing fear which is the child of ignorance.

With these aims in view, let Her Grace be advised, there are banded together, *here, now, in Britain*, thousands of ardent reformers who decline to be deceived by the fine words of Christian Professors. For they have found out by painful experience that these fine words butter no parsnips!

IGNOTUS.

Spirit Messages.

I WOULD have liked you, reader, to know Gerald Cumberland. To him I owe an investigation of Spiritualism which has left me still divided between two attitudes of mind—a reverent awe of the *Unknown*: of those steady, unchanging, harmonious and spiritually disconcerting Laws which appear to sustain the Universe; and a deep-seated contempt of sham and fraud, in all its multifarious forms.

Alas! sham and fraud, aided by their twin-sisters delusion and credulity, are very much to the fore, when one begins to study the "Occult."

Gerald Cumberland brought me into touch with John Cuming Walters (*The Manchester City News*), who had his M.A. degree conferred upon him by the University for a commendably patient thesis on *William Hazlitt and His Times*.

Walters, also, is a Spiritualist—a fervent one. But he is also a hard-headed business man! I would that I had the pen of a Dickens to make you see the humour of seances which Gerald Cumberland turned to lucrative literary use (as in his *The Pull in the Blue Room* already mentioned), during half his lifetime.

Intellectual freaks in Manchester, dear reader? Their name is, and always has been, Legion! Let me add that—taken in the right mood—it is good to turn from the grind and sordidness of one's daily effort to earn one's bread-and-butter, and to gaze wistfully upon the follies of others. You must, however, have a genuine sense of humour!

At one seance twelve of us sat about a table: oblong, of light deal, without covering, and with only four legs. There were two accredited "mediums" in the company: the lady at the foot, near a draped window, and her husband at the head, with his back to a warm fire. The lamp-light was turned low.

We had tiltings, and then we had raps. But the messages! The messages! It took quite ten minutes to spell out, patiently, letter by letter the following:—

"There is no death! What seems so is transition. This life of human breath is but the doorway of a life elysian whose portal we call death!"

The misquotation intrigued me: I was anxious, very anxious to learn the name of the one quoting.

"Encouraging!" I commented. "But . . . new?"

"New, maybe, from the one who sends the message," came the answer.

"And who may that be?" I enquired. The name was spelled out letter by letter, and it was (but you can guess!)

H-E-N-R-Y W-A-D-S-W-O-R-T-H L-O-N-G-F-E-L-L-O-W

So Longfellow's memory was going? He could not quote his own verses accurately, let alone bestow upon us something new!

I entreated the august shade for a new poem. But he was coy.

We sat four hours, and in the course of the four hours we were favoured with—not quite so blindingly illuminative, as might have been the verse from Longfellow had it been expressed for the first time!—this speech from Socrates:—

"I hail twelve lovers of the Light! I hope you are all well! I am a Greek. You are English. But I love you. Love is the secret of the Divine. I was poisoned—by hemlock. I froze from the toes upward, and I did not die until the poison touched my heart."

Now, wasn't that an amazingly "worth while" message to get from the Founder of a Great School of Thought?

Tennyson came to us. So did Shakespeare. So did Bacon. So did Byron. (The two Elizabethans were not allowed to argue about their dual claims to the authorship of the *Plays*—for all that Shakespeare accorded us was "All the World's a Stage, and all the men and women merely players!" He then went home!)

I thought the word apt enough—Players. Players at the Art of Being Ridiculous! Intellectual Freaks, every man Jack and woman Jill of us! On the way home that night, beneath a vault of blue, filled from nadir to nadir with glorious stars, I filled my lungs to their fullest capacity. I said one word—one little, little word!

Damn!

Now I ask you, reader, what on earth is the use of mortals investigating things beyond human comprehension unless they have educated themselves to think? Culture without training, credulity without faith, bookishness without erudition, argument without knowledge, and deduction without logic! All this appears so pitifully childish! One thinks of Mrs. Morris, while waiting for Mr. Justice McCardie to deliver his sane and unbiased judgment of her claim against the press for damages on the grounds of "Misrepresentation," hailing him in a deep-throated masculine voice as "Brother Judge," and . . . teaching him his business!

At one assembly (this time of Theosophists, and not of Spiritualists) I was gravely informed by a middle-aged woman of gaunt eyes and chalk-white complexion: "You were a lizard in your last incarnation!"

On the mere ground of "bulk" can you wonder that I felt aggrieved?

"That's rather a come-down, isn't it?" I murmured. "I have had so much exchange of blood with mosquitoes on the malarious West Coast of Africa that—well . . . Sometimes, moreover, I dream of flying, you know! Couldn't you let me be a bird?"

"No, no! You were a lizard!" the pale, gaunt-eyed woman persisted. "I am trying to help you, to open your eyes to your spiritual powers, and you won't be helped. I'm afraid you must have been a poisonous lizard as well!"

"How annoying!" I cried. "What did I live on?" "Oh, insects, I suppose. Now, I—I was a leopard!" I shrank. "Great heavens, were you?" I asked tremblingly. "Are you still savage?"

Her gaunt eyes glowed with eagerness. "Only when I become gloriously angry. Then I bite! This is the way I walked . . ."

She proceeded to undulate across the room, swaying from the hips downwards, quintessentially and indescribably "lithe"—cat-like in the extreme!—I took the chance to accost another Theosophist who was passing, and enter feverishly into conversation with him. I considered any further *tete-à-tete* with Lady Gaunt Eyes might prove a somewhat risky job!

"I wonder whether you remember your last incarnation?" I asked the gentleman—a portly man with mutton-chop whiskers and an indigestive sort of nose.

"Oh quite a lot, quite a lot! Memory returns to me both when I'm awake and when I'm asleep. I was a priestess in the Temple of Isis!"

"A priestess?" I echoed. "So you have—er—changed sex?"

"Sex is not a matter of importance on the Astral Plane," announced Mutton Chops. "We are above all that. The biggest problem with me to-day is that I can't find my twin-soul."

Shades of Marie Corelli, and the 'Eighteen-Nineties, when we all raved about *Ziska*.

I hurried away. I felt infinitely lonely amid all that freakishness. Yet as I passed from the room I heard the lady saying earnestly to a man who looked very like a prosperous draper:—

"Now you were a lizard in your last incarnation!" I wondered what on earth the draper would make of that?

Gerald Cumberland and I used to chuckle over these oddities. But Gerald ultimately told me that the great secret of Occultism was for the student to be able to identify himself (or herself) with any objects in nature—with the wind, the flowers, a star, a piece of rock or a precious stone. We had some wonderful hours together "trying it on." But Gerald wickedly whispered to me one afternoon in Manchester, after a visit to the cosy little Bodega in Brook Street, that he could fancy himself a cloud much easier after the third whiskey-and-soda than he could after the third glass of iced lemonade. I saw his point well enough:—

From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
The sweet buds every one,
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,
As she dances about the sun.

Reader, don't misunderstand me! I am *not* decrying the Supernatural. But we must take Occultism as a student would enter for a course of study in Biology or Medicine or Therapeutics. It is the inconsequence of the Mrs. Morris of the Occult World that moves me to both derision and discomfort. Inanely clever—cleverly inane! Insanely subtle—subtly insane!

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

Onitsha, Nigeria.

THE GAME OF LIFE.

It is a very plain and elementary truth, that the life, the fortune, and the happiness of every one of us, and, more or less, of those who are connected with us, do depend upon our knowing something of the rules of a game infinitely more difficult and complicated than chess. It is a game which has been played for untold ages. Every man and woman of us being one of the two players in a game of his or her own. The chess-board is the world. The pieces are the phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are the laws of Nature.

T. H. Huxley.

Acid Drops.

Some letters have been appearing in the *Daily Telegraph* concerning the advice of the Archbishop of Canterbury to his clergy not to marry unbaptized persons. Many of these serve only to illustrate the arrogance and impudence of genuine Christians. Of these a fair sample is one provided by G. B. Lowe, M.A., M.R.C.S., of Bexhill. This gentleman with a profound ignorance of the situation writes that the marriage of unbaptized persons by the clergy would "degrade" a faculty of the ministry into a State licensing. Mr. Lowe seems to be unaware that the clergyman can only marry anyone in virtue of "a State licensing." He is licensed by the State to perform a marriage just as is a Registrar. The authority of the Registrar and the parson is on exactly the same level and is received from the same power. The use of the word "degrade" in such a connexion is a fair sample of that insolence which is characteristic of Christians dealing with those outside their system of primitive tomfoolery. It is not degrading for the clergy to receive appointment from the State, direct or indirect, it is not degrading for them to take part payment from the State, but it is degrading for them to play their part as honestly as their avocation will permit. The Christian sense of right and wrong is very, very peculiar.

We should much like to see someone test the right of a clergyman to refuse to marry anyone who desires it. He is a State official, appointed to do certain things, and we see no reason why if an application was made to a court to order a parson to carry out his duties why such an order should not be obtained. Of course, he could refuse to carry out the order, but that would at least involve his resignation. We point out elsewhere in this issue how Christianity distorts a man's sense of what is right. Here is a good illustration, for there is no other occupation in which when a man takes pay for doing certain things he can refuse to do them without being accused of dishonesty. In connexion with Christianity moral obligations have very little power.

The Bishop of Buckingham, preaching at Aylesbury, at the "annual festival of altar-servers," is reported to have "traced the history of worship down from the early ages of sun-worship to pagan gods." The *ensemble* seems to have been as appropriate as the theme. The altar itself is of pagan origin, and the "servers" are the assistants of sacrificing priests. In the Mass, or what passes for it in Anglican churches, they help the priest to wash his fingers at the "ablutions," a rite which reeks of association with bloody offerings. Crucifers, torch-bearers, thurifers, as well as the common or garden servers (or acolytes) to the number of 150 processed round the church on this occasion, not to mention choristers, an Archdeacon, and any number of priests and deacons. After such an elaborate ceremonial the participants were told by the Bishop that "it is difficult to define the underlying principle of worship. His difficulty was perhaps, in defining the difference between these proceedings and those of the priesthoods and temples of pagan times from which they sprang, and to which they greatly resemble." "Worship," said the Bishop, "did not consist in what they got, but rather in what they gave." Exactly. Worship and revenue are closely allied, and even the word "money" itself is said to be derived from moneta, an attribute of a Roman Goddess (Juno), and the ancient Roman mint was established in her temple.

Mr. Isaac Foot, M.P., declares that the problems now confronting the nation will not be solved unless they are solved on the basis of the New Testament. We admire Mr. Foot's touching faith in the New Testament as a solvent of national problems, but we cannot share it. Look at all the Churches. Most of them, if not all, have grave problems for solving, and some of the problems have existed for many years. There are also grave problems connected with the relations between the Churches. If Christians cannot settle their own family problems with the aid of the New Testament, there is no ground for supposing that the New Testament will solve

any nation's problems. If this nation, and other nations, wish to solve their problems, there is enough accumulated philosophy, thought, knowledge and experience available for the solutions, and there is no need to turn to the other-worldly notions, sentiments, and fancies of a wandering religious fanatic who is presumed to have been God and who is alleged to have lived and died nineteen centuries ago.

Messrs. Belloc, Chesterton and Knox ought to have the time of their lives protesting against the latest pronouncements of the Bishop of Birmingham. Preaching at Worcester Cathedral before the British Medical Association, he actually said, "The golden age of humanity lies in the future; behind us lies a morass of ignorance and dirt." This surely ought to make the average Roman Catholic literally fume with rage as most of the past 2,000 years was directed by his particular vicars of Christ. But Bishop Barnes went further. He actually condemned "faith" healing! Considering that this hopeless form of superstition comes direct from the Holy Book, we are bound to conclude that the Bishop is becoming sceptical of the Divine Word—or perhaps of the results accomplished by its literal acceptance.

He added, among other infidel comments, "The prejudices and superstition which at any time may arise to check the progress in conquest of disease are often rooted in mistaken religious ideas. So there arises a demand for superstitious medicine and a belief in faith cures." Reads like one of the comments so often printed in the pages of this journal, does it not? But what exactly is a "mistaken religious idea" when the idea is implicitly based on the Bible? Does it mean that the Bible is mistaken?

One would never have believed it, but according to a Hindu convert to Romanism, the Faith was first planted in Malabar by "St. Thomas, the Apostle." It seems incredible anyone can believe "doubting Thomas" is anything but a manufactured myth, but everything is possible with religious converts as with their particular God. Indeed this convert, rejoicing in the name of Mar Ivanios, is quite convinced that all India is ripe for conversion! Credulity cannot go much further than that. As usual, the *Universe* gives a photograph of the distinguished convert blessing pilgrims, who are, also as usual, grovelling in the mud before him. What a picture of human stupidity!

The milk of human kindness and love so powerfully generated by Christianity was again in evidence a week or so back in Liverpool. For a whole week "sectarian disturbances" raged and a Protestant mob chased a Catholic priest and injured him, and both the Anglican Cathedral and Catholic Church were stoned. The religious crowds were dispersed by fire engines turning their hoses upon them—sufficient, we admit, to damp anybody's religious ardour. But surely those holy people who got most of the water should have been fired by even more fervour? Where are our devoted martyrs nowadays?

That well-known adept at popular journalism, Mr. Hannan Swaffer, says "I have never written fiction because I am chained to fact." It is difficult to see how one can become a highly paid expert in popular journalism unless one does write fiction. Perhaps, however, the secret of success in this direction consists in the ability to convince oneself for the time being that what one is writing is fact, which is not quite what Mr. Swaffer wishes his readers to conclude.

Evidently anxious to dispel unworthy suspicions, the Rev. Aldom French declares that Methodist Union is a great spiritual movement with a high spiritual purpose; it is not designed to save Methodism but to save the people. Perhaps. We fancy that the ecclesiastically minded Methodist parsons who engineered re-Union have no illusions about its real and primary purpose. It is a case of hanging together to avoid being hanged separately.

Field-Marshal Sir Wm. Birdwood says that "We are told that we won the War; we have not yet won the Peace." Quite so. Still, we must exercise patience. God Almighty took four years to win the war for us. If only he had intelligence enough to win it in the first week, winning the Peace would not now be so gigantic a task. If the Christian peoples had two-penn'orth of spirit in them, they would organize a Day of Reproach all over the world, to point out to God that his prolonging of the war is responsible for the widespread misery and poverty that exists to-day.

The Rev. Thomas Barratt said to a pious gathering, "We are told we must evangelize or perish. Yes, but there is a greater truth than that. We must evangelize or England perishes." How like a parson it is to imagine that if he and his tribe perish the nation also will perish. There is nothing like the belief that one is a special pet of Almighty God for turning a man into a super-egoist.

The wisdom that comes through mediums at Spiritualistic gatherings is so staggering that one may readily grant that not many human beings on the "earth plane" would be capable of it. Still less would they feel like printing it. For example, the *Two Worlds* gives this choice piece of advice from the spirit world, headed "Flood the world with prayer."

You do not know who to pray to? Never mind, Pray!
You do not know how to pray reverently enough? Never mind, Pray!

You do not know . . . what to pray for? Never mind, Pray! Thus shalt thou tune-in with Omnipotence. Now no ordinary human being would be capable of this. Most people in their blindness to the wisdom that is dispensed to Spiritualists at all odd times, would imagine that they ought to know either what to pray for, how to pray, or who to pray to. But nothing of the kind. Keep on praying, even if it is something like this:—

O thou, who art we know not what, we who do not know how to do what we are doing, ask that thou wilt give us we know not what, but we feel that we shall get it, even though we may not know when we have got it. But we are certain we shall be all the better for having we know not what, we know not when, and from some one of whom we know nothing.

The man who cannot perceive the terrible spiritual uplift of prayers of this kind, and who fails to realize the incomparable beauty of Spiritualism, is fit for nothing better than to be a regular reader of the *Freethinker*.

Dr. L. P. Jacks has been visiting U.S.A., where, he told a reporter "a terrific struggle is going on between God and the Devil for the possession of the soul of the people." This is very stale "news," for the same struggle is supposed to have been going on since Adam and Eve "fell." Dr. Jacks admits that "the same struggle is going on in England and everywhere, but you are more acutely conscious of it in America. All over that country God and the Devil are going at it hammer and tongs, and make no end of a noise about it." When the reporter asked him who would win, Dr. Jacks said, "It will be a near thing," and added, rather oddly, "there's no reason to believe that God will lose." Nevertheless this distinguished theologian can hardly be said to be guilty of over-confidence in God's prospects.

Truth will out—even in a sermon. Canon Raven in a midday sermon said, "when the war came we called like children upon God to do a mighty miracle that would undo once for all the harm human beings had done. But God did not give us a miracle." Yet, says the Canon, "without God we cannot succeed!" Why? Because "He does not work apart from man." We have always thought so.

Two items of news about a garden party at Prescot Vicarage (Lancs.), to raise funds for the Church. (1) "A baby show was arranged, but abandoned owing to lack of entries." (2) "An ankle competition was substituted," and the local M.P. acted as judge. The party was "successful," and the church will keep on "carrying on!"

How did Canada come to be called a "Dominion?" Well, it was like this, according to a *Liverpool Post* correspondent. Various proposed titles had been rejected when Sir Samuel L. Tilley, reading the 72nd Psalm, came upon the verse, "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea and from the river to the end of the earth." This Psalm is "now known as the Psalm of Canada." Perhaps Sir Samuel also had in his eye the next verse but one, "They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow down before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust." This has a real "imperial" flavour.

The Very Rev. Edgar Rogers, one of the "Deans of Peculiar" (i.e., Bocking), preaching to the assembled members of the Buckinghamshire divisions of the St. John's Ambulance Brigade, said that religion was "a tremendous fellowship." "Tremendous" is surely an ill-chosen adjective, since the bigger the area over which the activities of religion are surveyed the greater the evidence becomes that, whatever it is, it is not a "fellowship." The St. John's Ambulance Brigade is, we believe non or multi denominational, but the work that it does in giving "service, kindness and devotion," humane and valuable as it is, has little in common with the original "Brothers" who "spent themselves for the sick who came to pray at the 'Holy Places' in Jerusalem." The spirit that leads men and women to give their service and First Aid on all sorts of occasions when accident and illness are possible, and the practical and skilled character of that service, is born of an idea of "fellowship" much larger than that of the contending divisions of those who believe in "doing good unto all men, but especially to them of the household of faith." First aid comes from man. "God help him" is the last hopeless exclamation of those who know that all human aid has been exhausted.

Fifty Years Ago.

THAT persons should be subject to imprisonment and to deprivation of all their civil rights to the end of their days for impugning the Christian mythology, or for making fun of the old Jew God, Jahveh, and this at the instance of any malicious, bigoted, or interested prosecutor, is simply monstrous, and would be incredible were it not true. Be it remembered, too, that the laws which apply to the present prosecution of the *Freethinker* go a great deal further. It is, according to law, a misdemeanour to say anything in derogation of or despising the Book of Common Prayer. It is an offence punishable by imprisonment to speak against the Church as by law established. Such laws, like the lawnsleeves in the Lords, are an anomaly in the present secular age, and bespeak their ecclesiastical origin. So late as 1839, no fewer than ten persons were sent to prison for the offence of staying away from church without excuse, and received for this atrocious crime an average incarceration of 24½ days each. What the law decrees against blasphemy to-day it decreed two centuries ago against both blasphemy and witchcraft, and upon the authority of the same book, which declares that "whoso entices to new gods shall be stoned" (Deut. xiii.), and "thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Exod. xxii., 18). Judge Hale, who made the celebrated dictum that Christianity is part and parcel of the law of the land, condemned witches to death on the express ground that it was commanded by Scripture. Witchcraft and Blasphemy were alike punished in the name of the contemptible deity. But just as any other part and parcel of the law of the land may be challenged, altered and swept away, so may Christianity. The pains and penalties of the law have not sufficed to keep it free from criticism. A succession of noble martyr spirits have suffered pillory and prison for the right of freely expressing their opinions on this persecuting faith, and, to-day, if these barbarous laws were fairly put in force against all alike, there is not a high-class publisher in the land who would be safe.

The "Freethinker," July 30, 1882.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- H. F. BRITTON.—We are very pleased to know that the *Freethinker* is so much appreciated among your Canadian friends. But why are they not individual subscribers? Thanks for cuttings. Very useful.
- R. CHAPMAN.—Very sorry to hear of the death of John Smith. If he is the one we have in mind, he was indeed a very sincere follower of the movement, and we have very pleasant recollections of him.
- F. LORD.—Pleased to have your appreciation of Mr. Clayton's lectures.
- R. BUNTIN.—Paper has been sent as requested.
- C. MORGAN.—Will bear in mind your suggestion that last week's "Views" should be included in the next volume of *Essays in Freethinking*.
- J. CLAYTON.—You are not likely to hear more from the police on that point. Courtesy and firmness are always best in such cases.
- SPENCER M. DE GOULIER.—Subscription received. Pleased to know that you "cannot get along without the *Freethinker*." We should like to hear of about a hundred thousand people who felt the same need.
- BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Glad to hear of your pleasant and successful picnic, and note that you intend repeating the function in September. If you send a notice we will see that it goes in.
- E. HENDERSON.—Many thanks for names, paper being sent for six weeks.
- GUY ALDRED.—The obituary followed our usual lines. No names were given of those present. The slight in your case was, thus, purely imaginary.
- J. JACKSON.—We did not need the assurance that the Moscow orders to form an Atheistic League in this country was bunkum. It was that on the face of it, and could deceive none but readers of the yellow press.
- 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.

A correspondent writes: Reading an interesting history of *The Royal Parish of St. Martin-in-the-Fields* (by John McMaster) I came upon the following: "It is supposed by some people that St. Martin's popularity is due more to the fact that the festival day, November 11, comes about the time of the tasting of the October brew of ales, and he is often regarded as the patron Saint of publicans, brewers, vintners and all good drinkers. But November 11 was the feast day of Bacchus, and when by the Christians the day was allotted to the memory of St.

Martin, the feasting and drinking did not cease, and (sic) St. Martin got the credit for all the drinking for which Bacchus was responsible." Whether this is irony or apologetics it is hard to say; but as St. Martin is supposed to have died in A.D. 397 it looks as if Christian *practice*, as well as Christian *doctrine* was largely identical with that of its pagan predecessors.

The Liverpool Branch N.S.S. can be relied upon to do whatever is possible towards making Mr. G. Whitehead's visit well known and successful. Beginning to-day (Sunday) a number of meetings, to be addressed by Mr. Whitehead, have been arranged, and full details will be found in the Lecture Notices column. A well supported platform impresses the casual listener, and the local Branch appeals to all saints in the district, whether members or unattached, to help by their presence.

Messrs. Brighton and Clayton continue to address well-attended meetings in Durham and Lancashire. The carrying of Freethought into obscure villages by means of lectures is not easy, and demands courage. Both speakers are courteous and tactful, and with the addition of courage awkward situations are usually quite manageable.

A busy minister's Diary (in the *Christian World*) contains a grave warning against long sermons. A lady who has a slot meter, regularly put in a shilling before going to church, leaving the dinner to cook. A strange preacher; a longer sermon; gas out; cold and half-cooked dinner; lady gives up going to morning service. "Seek ye first," etc.

In a recent article in this journal (p. 395) a member of the British Medical Association made some timely observations upon the religious features of its forthcoming Centenary meetings, and the pilgrimage to Worcester in honour of its founder. The pilgrims have now been to Worcester with all the civic and ecclesiastical ceremony as arranged. At a service in the Cathedral Dr. Barnes was the preacher, and expressed his anxiety lest pseudo-religious prejudice should impede the good work of science, and his fear that there might arise "a demand for superstitious medicines and a belief in faith cures" in his own Church. He referred to "the irrational belief that consecrated oil has in virtue of its consecration some therapeutic value," and deplored the possible introduction of services for the anointing of the sick. We know not what the 500 doctors who heard this sermon thought of it, and of the preacher's wish that "social leaders"—whatever they are—"and religious teachers should join with men of science in the discovery of truth." As our contributor urged in the article above-mentioned science, including medical science has advanced by way of "danger and persecution" by those whom Dr. Barnes represents (or, as most of them would say misrepresents) and it should "keep its mind free from the shackles of preconceived ideas." It is the Church, not medicine, that reaps any kudos that comes from such performances as that at Worcester.

Mr. G. Whitehead reports a series of very successful meetings in the Bradford area. There are definite signs of an increased interest in Freethought, and many are no doubt finding the message as given from the N.S.S. platform, clean, honest, and uncompromising, refreshing in contrast with the ambiguity, suspicion, and evasions of the political world.

AN APT TEXT.

An old-fashioned white-bowed clergyman was invited by his son, a High Churchman, to preach at the latter's church. The old man had never seen what his son called "High Mass" before. He could not make head or tail of the service. When the time came for the sermon he solemnly announced his text. (Matthew xvii. 15.) "Lord have mercy upon my son, for he is a lunatic."

The Gospel of Pain.

(Concluded from page 469.)

"No pain, no palm. No thorns, no throne.
No cross, no crown."

William Penn. "No Cross, no Crown."

THE early history of Christianity, as taught in our schools and colleges, is a tissue of falsification and misrepresentation. Indeed, it is only during recent times that it has been studied in an unbiased and scientific manner, like any other religion; and the results of this research are still unknown to the general public.

According to the popular belief, the Pagans delighted in seeking out the Christians, and if they declined to bend to, or acknowledge the Pagan gods then they were thrown into the Arena to be torn to pieces by wild beasts to make a Roman holiday. This view has been impressed upon the public imagination by popular pictures of the Roman Arena, with the old patriarch gazing up heaven, and surrounded by his converts; while the wild beasts are seen prowling in the background scenting their prey.

Now, in the first place, the Roman populace did not attend the Arena to see defenceless people torn to pieces, and if that was all that was offered to them for their money, there would have been a riot. What they paid for was to see an exhibition of skill, courage, and strength in combat.

The Roman Government tolerated all religions that obeyed the laws, and refrained from conspiring against the State. It not only tolerated the first Christians, but it protected them from the persecution of their co-religionists, the Jews. We have ample testimony of that in the New Testament itself.

At Corinth, when Paul was brought before the Roman Consul, Gallio, charged with persuading "men to worship God contrary to the law," the Consul dismissed the case, declaring, that if it had been a matter of wrong, or wickedness, he would have judged them; but as it was a case of religious belief, he told the prosecutors: "I will be no judge of such matters. And he drove them from the judgment-seat." (Acts xviii. 12-16.)

Again, when Paul was accused, at Cæsarea, before Festus, the Roman Procurator; he was asked whether he would not prefer to be judged at Jerusalem, rather than be sent to Rome? Paul replied, no, "I appeal unto Cæsar." He had more confidence in Pagan tolerance, and justice, than in that of his former co-religionists. Then King Agrippa arrives, and Festus relates how Paul was charged before him, but not "of such things as I supposed: But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." Then Agrippa declares that he will hear the case in Court next day. To Agrippa, then, Paul makes a long speech, explaining his religious beliefs, which it is safe to say, that any London Magistrate of to-day, would have nipped in the bud. To this discourse, Agrippa replies: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." (Acts xvi. 28.) But what he actually said—it is correctly translated in the Revised Version of the New Testament—was the contemptuous remark: "With but little persuasion thou wouldst make me a Christian." Upon which he was sent to Rome, where he arrived after various adventures on the way, and was allowed to live in his own house, and openly preached the Gospel, without interference: "for two whole years." (Acts xviii. 30.)

That was the attitude of the Roman Government towards the Christians, when they first emerged from

obscurity. It was regarded with contemptuous indifference, as a new superstition; but entitled to protection from persecution, like all the other religions of the Empire.

But the Christians were not content with this. They vehemently declared that the Pagans were idolaters. They did not dispute that the Pagan gods existed, not at all; their grievance was that they did exist, but that they were not gods at all, but devils masquerading as gods, and as such not to be tolerated. In accordance with this obsession, they raided the temples, interrupted the services, and smashed the beautiful statues of the gods and goddesses, which are the admiration and despair of our artists after the lapse of nearly two thousand years.

Suppose a crowd of Bolsheviks raided St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey, and acted in this manner; would they be tolerated? They would not. No Government could tolerate it. It was not as a religion of Love, that Christianity impressed the Pagans, as most Christians to-day believe. It was regarded as an evil and pernicious superstition; whose chief characteristic was hatred of mankind, this is the testimony of Tacitus and Suetonius, Roman historian of that period.

Lecky, the historian, says: "The greatest and best of the Pagans spoke of it as a hateful superstition, and the phrase they most frequently reiterated, when speaking of its members, was 'enemies' or 'haters of the human race.'" As the same historian further observes:—

When the Roman learnt what fate the Christian assigned to the heroes and sages of his nation, and to the immense mass of his living fellow-countrymen, when he was told the destruction of the once glorious Empire to which he belonged was one of the most fervent aspirations of the Church, his feelings were very likely to clothe themselves in such language as I have cited. (Lecky: *History of European Morals*. Vol. I., pp. 413-414.)

It is now admitted by historians, both ecclesiastical and secular, that the number of early Christians who suffered martyrdom has been very grossly exaggerated; and those who did suffer were not sought for and hunted down like heretics were by the Inquisition. The difficulty was to keep them away from the Courts. One day, the pro-consul of Asia, Arrius Antonius, was astonished at the spectacle of all the Christians in the town besieging his Court claiming the right to be martyred. He was furious, he ordered a few of them to be punished, and to the rest he said: "Be off, then, you wretches! If you wish so much to die you have precipices and cords."²

Were these fanatics inspired by love for their Saviour, or for love of humanity? They were not, they were inspired by love for themselves. Upon this point we can cite the testimony of Conyers Middleton, who was not only a famous scholar, but a Church of England clergyman. He says:—

But the principal incentive to martyrdom, was the assurance, not only of an immortality of glory, and happiness in another world, in common with all other pious Christians, but of extraordinary and distinguished rewards, and a degree of happiness, proportionable to the degree of their sufferings. For while the souls of ordinary Christians were to wait their doom in some intermediate state, or pass to their final bliss through a purgation by fire, it was a general belief, that the martyrs were admitted to the immediate fruition of Paradise, and that the fire of martyrdom purged all their sins away at once.³

Also, says the same scholar, the belief: "that this world was near its end, made them the more eager

² Renan: *Marcus Aurelius*. p. 36.

³ Middleton: *Free Inquiry*. Works. Vol. I., pp. 334-335.

still to snatch that crown, which would entitle them to such high privileges." (p. 335.)

Christianity, from the very beginning, taught the virtue and necessity of suffering. Pain and suffering are blessings in disguise, for which reward will be given in Heaven. The more misery on earth, the greater the joy hereafter. One has only to look at the Art of the Middle Ages to see how the ideal has changed from that set by the Greeks. As Metchnikoff observes: "The intimate connexion between the depreciation of human nature due to Christian doctrine and the inferiority of the art of the middle ages cannot be denied."⁴ And he cites Taine, who, in his *Philosophie de l'Art*, writes of the period as follows:—

If one considers the stained-glass windows or the images in the cathedrals, or the rude paintings, it appears as if the human race had become degenerate and its blood had been impoverished; pale saints, distorted martyrs, virgins with flat chests, feet too long and bony hands, hermits withered and unsubstantial, Christs that look like crushed and bleeding earthworms, processions of figures that are wan, and stiffened, and sad, upon whom are stamped all the deformities of misery and all the shrinking timidity of the oppressed.

The triumph of Christianity was the apotheosis of pain and suffering. The evil spirit of pain, crowned with thorns, emaciated with fasting and suffering, occupied the throne once devoted to the Pagan ideal of beauty, of a sane mind in a healthy body, inspired by joy and happiness.

Pascal was right, when he declared that illness was the natural state of a Christian, it is the state in which he should always wish to be. There are still a good many who hold this view, especially among Roman Catholics. *The Times Literary Supplement* (July 14, 1932) reviewing a Roman Catholic work dealing with saints and other eminent Catholics, observes:—

Father William Doyle, a Jesuit chaplain, who was killed at the front, has attracted posthumous attention since the publication of a diary in which he jotted down his experience in asceticism. We learn that he used to stand up to his neck in icy ponds, undress and roll in furze bushes, or lie in nettle beds. Little is known concerning Matt Talbot, a simple Dublin workman, but there has been much devout conjecture since his sudden death in the street, for when his body was taken to the mortuary there were found on it chains deeply embedded in the flesh and rusted.

That is the real Christianity of the Gospels and the early Christians. The Protestant version we have today is a mere caricature and travesty of the original faith. To teach that Christianity triumphed over Paganism because of its moral superiority, or through the love of Jesus, is utterly false. Christianity triumphed through fear. It was a stampede from "the wrath to come," which was close at hand; and the price of Salvation in the next world, was renunciation and suffering in this.

W. MANN.

⁴ Metchnikoff. *The Nature of Man* (1916). p. 14.

CRITICISM.

A critic should be aware of the responsibilities imposed by his art; he should respect the technique of his craft. He should not be cheap, he should not be shallow, he should not be insincere, either in praise or blame, but above all in these modern times, he should not be insincere in praise.

Criticism and the Bible.

(Continued from page 476.)

II.

If we take into consideration in conjunction with the foregoing traditions the close lingual connexion between the Hebrew and Arabian tribes, and the fact that the tribe of Judah, together with the residue of the gentes or mispacha of Simeon and Levi, had pushed their way beyond Kadesh, through Edom, into that part of Palestine which is west of the Dead Sea, we are able to sketch the following picture as a probable representation of the approximate course of events:—

From north-west Arabia, in the region of the ancestral seat of the Midianites, a tribe or part of a tribe, which later formed the trunk of the tribe of Judah (Hebrew Jehuda), was pushed out, by pressure upon its rear, towards the north. Gradually it advanced as far as the oasis of Kadesh. There, it came into collision with the two fraternal phraties or gentes, Simeon and Levi, who had hitherto been in possession of the oasis. A struggle now ensued between the latter and the new-comers for the possession of the springs of Meribah and for the holy place there—the fiery pillar in the thorn-bush. The Beni-Levi and the Beni-Simeon fell upon the camp of Judah, killed a part of its forces and damaged and therefore desecrated the "steer statue," the image of the ancestral-god of the Beni-Judah, who according to all appearances was thought of as dwelling upon a mountain.¹⁶ The Beni-Judah, however, took revenge. They overcame the Levites and Simeonites, possessed themselves of the oasis of Kadesh, and assimilated the survivors among the vanquished, in their tribe; not however as equals but, in a sense, as bondsmen.

The Beni-Judah must have remained at the oasis of Kadesh for several generations. During that time the cult-customs which they had brought with them, intermixed with those which they found at Kadesh. The Beni-Judah came to regard the burning bush as a re-appearance of their old tribal god. In the course of the next generations the legend arose that the "El" of the fiery flame was really Judah's own god who had followed his tribe from his earlier mountain-seat in a column of fire, and had settled down in Kadesh at the same time as his posterity. This view finds expression—if also with all sorts of local variations—in different passages in the books of the Old Testament. In one of these legendary reports, Yahwe first of all has his dwelling on Mount Seir, south-west of Kadesh, and then later on migrates to Kadesh:—

"The Lord came from Sinai
And rose up from Seir unto them (i.e., unto the Beni-Judah)
He shined forth from Mount Paran
And he came to Meribah-Kadesh
From his right hand a flaming fire."¹⁷

Thus, for the Beni-Judah, the notion of their old mountain-dwelling god—Sinai is questionable—came to be associated with the flaming pillar in the thorn bush of Kadesh.

How stood matters with the Levites and Simeonites? They clung firmly to their old traditions. For centuries, the legend about the earlier existence

¹⁶ Whether this mountain was Sinai or some other is immaterial for our reconstruction.

¹⁷ Deuteronomy xxxiii. 2. The last two lines of the verse in the English translation are garbled, as the line, "and he came with ten thousands of saints," shows on the face of it.

of Yahwe on Sinai remained something quite strange to their outlook. For them, Yahwe was he who flamed in the thorn-bush, he whom their forefathers had worshipped there in his holy place from time immemorial. This is the explanation for the peculiar phenomenon that in still later times the Levites ignored the Sinai-legend, and at the same time looked upon themselves as being the oldest worshippers of Yahwe, who had also proved themselves the best custodians of his old rites and usages.

Thus it is said of the Levites in the "Blessings of Moses" :—

"For they have observed thy word (Yahwe's word)
And kept thy covenant."¹⁸

From Kadesh the tribe of Judah, in victorious struggle with the Amalekites and Edonites, pushed their way into the mountains of the land of Judah, allied in different ways, in order to secure support, with Edomite totem-groups or gentes¹⁹ and then established themselves west of the Dead Sea. There they passed over gradually from a pastoral life to a widespread agriculture.

This phase of evolution is very clearly depicted in the "Blessings of Jacob" :—

"Judah is a lion's whelp :
From the prey (through booty) my son, thou art gone up :
He stooped down, he couched as a lion,
And as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?"

"Binding his foal unto the vine,
And his ass's colt unto the choice vine;
He washed his garments in wine,
And his clothes in the blood of grapes :
His eyes shall be red with wine,
And his teeth white with milk."²⁰

It is superfluous, of course, to say that all this was sung long after the realization of what is made to appear in the Bible as a prophecy. It is a retrospect in poetical imagery of the history of Judah, recounting the time long past when Judah pursued the life of the herdsman and pounced like a lion upon its desert prey, and eulogising its present agricultural life and prosperity; but, therewith, Judah changed also its conceptions about gods and cults.

Man is not so much what he eats as how he acquires what he eats! Men cannot change their mode of living, cannot revolutionize their economic relations to the external environment and to one another, without in the long run revolutionizing the pantheon. Since in actual practice the gods exist for man, and only on this basis does man acknowledge in fact his relations of dependence upon them and perform his duty towards them, since, in short, the relation between man and his gods is an exchange relation, a *do ut des, do ut facias*, with the profit on the side of "thy humble servant," therefore, a god that is not able to supply what his worshippers need most, must either become transformed to meet what is now "socially necessary," or man must turn to someone else's god who has already acquired recognition as a providence who is able to meet the current demand. That was the situation in which Judah found itself after it had passed over from a nomadic pastoral economy to a settled agricultural economy.

The nomadic tribal god, Yahwe, discards his old and essentially nomadic features and qualifications and becomes a tutelary god of the fields and of agricultural work, whose principal concerns are the pro-

pering of the harvest and the bestowal of sunshine and refreshing rain. Inevitably, the other side of the exchange relation is also simultaneously and appropriately changed. The cult of the sacrifice assumes another direction. Beside the human and animal offering, there appears the offering of the "first fruits of the field," of corn, bread, wine and oil. Permanent places of worship, with different kinds of altars for different kinds of offerings, are set up. To these places of worship, to which the dwellings of the priesthood are attached, lands, dues (tenths) and gifts are assigned.

In this connexion there began a new epoch for the descendants of those who had once been the guardians and custodians of the Yahwe-flame in Kadesh, the Levites. The Beni-Judah had divided the land among themselves according to thousands and hundreds, and devoted themselves to the pursuits of cultivators and shepherds. Some landed property in the north-eastern part of the territory annexed from Edom, was allotted to the Simeonites. This property, however, was not contiguous. It was scattered about in the midst of the lands of the Beni-Judah.²¹ The Simeonites did not therefore constitute an independent political community but had apparently to render certain obligatory services to the surrounding mispacha of the Beni-Judah, in return for their landed possessions. The final outcome of this position of the Simeonites was that they were completely absorbed, in the course of a few centuries, into the surrounding population, and are scarcely ever mentioned in the later history of Judah.

It was quite a different story with the Levites. Generally speaking, they received no landed possessions, and they soon found themselves compelled to creep into the good graces of the prosperous settlers of the Beni-Judah and seek some kind of support from them. They soon found employment in the cult-establishments or sanctuaries that were springing up in increasing number in Judah.²² Since they or their fathers had one time been the keepers of Yahwe's holy place at Kadesh, they were esteemed as the best authorities on the rites and usages of the old cult and on the religious jurisprudence. Nevertheless, in most cases, they were not employed as chief priests. The higher offices of the priesthood were more or less monopolized by the ruling gentes among the Beni-Judah. Those Judaist priests, at a later period, distinguished themselves from the Levites, under the name of Aaronites.

The Levites once they had got a footing in the priesthood, set about raising their status and advancing their claims. A number of favourable conditions helped them to realize their ambitions. In consequence of the increase in the number of the holy places, the extension of the cult of Yahwe over the land of the tribes of Northern Israel after the rise of the kingdom of Judah, the centralization of Yahwe-worship in Jerusalem in the reign of Solomon, and the rapid development of religious ceremonial, the Levites, although they were repeatedly and vigorously obstructed and harassed by the Aaronites, rose to a more and more important position. They did not, however, attain to the high-water mark of their power until after the return from Babylon and the re-establishment of the kingdom of Judah.

W. CRAIK.

(To be concluded.)

¹⁸ Deuteronomy xxxiii. 9.

¹⁹ These appear in the Old Testament under the names of Caleb, Kena, Shobal.

²⁰ Genesis xlix. 9 and 11.

²¹ There is quite a detailed description of the allocations to the Simeonites in the Book of Joshua xix. 1-9.

²² Deuteronomy xviii. 1-8.

Catholicism and Communism.

THERE was a time, not so long ago, when all that was hostile to the Roman Catholic Church was described as "Liberalism." Liberalism on the Continent, not to be confused with the anæmic variety associated with what used to be one of the two great Parties in this country, was, and indeed still is, synonymous with anti-clericalism. On the Continent, as here, Liberalism, in the political field, is under a cloud. Hence, although Liberalism, according to the largest, loftiest and international meaning of it, was never more widely spread than to-day among those who think, Catholicism, with its eye, not on the thinkers, but on the masses, ceases to use this term to describe its most deadly foes. To-day it calls them Communists or Bolshevists.

Thus in the recent Papal proclamation Atheism was made identical with Communism, and Russia the supreme example of the results of its profession and practice. The Church may be "always the same" in theory and doctrine; but in tactics it is the most opportunist influence in the world. With what consistency this tactic is applied may be seen when we note the line taken by its practitioners, not (as in the Pope's message), when speaking to all nations, but when dealing with one nation in particular. In the *Dublin Review* (July) is an article by Sir Charles Petrie on the Spanish Revolution. He asserts that the Church has not been attacked "because it is Catholic, but because it is Christian. He declares that the present regime in that country cannot be defended "on any other grounds than those of Bolshevism." It is amusing to put this comment beside another, by a Protestant writer, "Historians," in the *Churchman's Magazine* (July). He says: "Spain's Government appears to have proved itself capable of governing, and countering the insidious attacks of Papists and Communists." If the Catholic Church were really concerned to defend law, order, and constituted government, would it be at one and the same time denouncing Bolshevism and denouncing a republican Government that is no more Bolshevik than the Government of this country?

Republicanism, like Atheism, does not imply Communism. The United States of America can hardly be put into the latter category. So long as Kings were powerful and obeyed, the Catholic doctrine of sovereignty was "Divine right." But when it became evident that theory would be increasingly abandoned in favour of more or less constitutional and democratic Governments the Church put the stress on the "constituted" and took it off "monarchical"; in short, whatever Government it is right, always provided it does not attack the privileges of the Church. The Government of Malta, for example, is not Bolshevik by a long way. Yet because, for a period, the head of that Government stood out against the political encroachments of the Catholic hierarchy, and defended what is, at least in theory, the British doctrine of "religious equality" under the Crown, he was opposed by all the forces the Vatican could command. (This, by the way, adds a sinister significance to a recent and abject surrender.)

It is always denied that any Jesuit or other theologian actually taught that "the end justifies the means." The whole controversy as to whether this tenet in these very terms was ever enunciated by a Catholic theologian—there are scores of passages in Moral Theology that sound uncommonly like it—is a waste of time when, in this matter of apologetics and Catholic propaganda, it is as plain as a pikestaff that this is precisely the "principle" upon which the Vatican accords its favour or asserts its hostility to Governments. The Revolution in Spain was not a revolution against Christianity, but against a combination of King, Church and Army which tried to carry on the sort of Government that was universal in the days when Christianity was the religion of all Europe. In Spain the Church supports Monarchy only because the new Government supports liberty. In the United States it supports a Republic because it is the "constituted Government," not because it is a Republic. Because there is a growing danger that men everywhere, tired of war, sceptical of religion, easily

moved, as was the electorate of this country in 1931, to play for "safety," the key-note of Catholic propaganda is the identification of Atheism with *Revolution*. Over a large proportion of the literate world the terrors of religious doctrine have ceased to make men afraid. Another scare-crow was necessary, and the Church, fearing Atheism as much or more than the Englishman, and a good many other people, fear Revolution, tries to harness the latter fear to the service of its waning authority. It is a transparent and cynical policy. It means that the Church, no longer exercising her "spiritual" authority in the modern world with the aid of the secular arm, will present Christianity, and herself as its most powerful defender, not as a faith, but as an insurance against the loss of those material and secular amenities which are more and more the concern of mankind. "Liberalism," like Atheism, has, to a large extent, ceased to alarm men. Whatever alarms them most for the time being will, for as long as we can or need think of, be made to serve her purpose regardless as ever of any interests but her own, and, in those interests, not less resourceful and unscrupulous than in the past.

ALAN HANDSACRE.

The Prison Chaplain.

Six years ago the present writer in pursuing his journalistic work, interviewed the chaplain of a prison, and as a result wrote a glowing account of the good work done in prisons by chaplains—according, of course, to the chaplain.

A friend of mine who has been in nearly all the prisons in the country tells a different tale in his *Shades of the Prison House*, just published by Williams and Norgate at 12s. 6d.

I want here to ask everyone who can afford it to buy a copy of this 180,000 word volume, which is two and a half times the size of an ordinary six shillings novel, and everyone who cannot afford a copy to see that it is in every branch of every public library. Not only will you then have something really worth reading, but you will also be giving concrete assistance to an ex-prisoner, who after thirty years, in and out of prison, is now trying to run straight.

In this article I shall touch on only one aspect of the book, that which gives the truth about prison chaplains as seen by a prisoner, but there are hosts of abuses, grievances and hardships exposed, and numerous reforms suggested. It is significant that although prison life hardened Stuart Wood, the author of *Shades of the Prison House*, he still has heart enough to work for prison reform.

Very early in the book we are told that the majority of prison chaplains saw nothing wrong with prison life, for they had been nurtured in the Mosaic code of which the prison system is a logical application, and even a humane chaplain was bound by standing orders to support the governor. Wood's first interview with a chaplain is worth giving in full, for it is a delicious if tragic instance.

"I was taken to see the chaplain. He was a man of about fifty, tall, and bearded. Same procedure as before. Cap off, stand at attention. What's your name?" I imparted the information. "I'm," he went on looking at my papers, "I see you are here for stealing a gun. What made you do that?"

"Well Sir," I began, "you see it's like this. I didn't steal the gun. You see—" Raising a nicely manicured hand he cut me short "Well no doubt that will be settled at your trial. Good morning."

Wood saw the same chaplain once more. This was on the eve of the trial. The chaplain poked his head round the door, said, "I see you go up to-morrow. Good morning," and was gone. This was at Reading Prison where the souls of prisoners were looked after so well that there was a chapel service at 8.30 every morning, which "was just a part of one's punishment." A prisoner turning his head right or left was sentenced to three days' bread and water in close confinement, and

on Sundays the sermon consisted of a string of clichés rather the worse for wear, telling the prisoners how grateful they should be to Society for giving them an opportunity to repent.

At Winchester the chapel service only aroused thoughts of contempt for the cruel mockery of preaching a religion of brotherly love to men and women who were governed by fear and treated with hatred and contempt. If a prisoner were punished the chaplain opened the cell door, advised the delinquent to obey the regulations, and that was all.

"Why bandy words," asks Wood, "with a black-coated hypocrite who was little more than a warder in broadcloth and a clerical collar. His religion was that of the drill book and he hadn't sufficient originality to compose and preach a sermon of his own."

Mr. Wood makes allowances now for chaplains, for they are so hemmed in with restrictions, but nevertheless he does not think he has ever met so poor a crowd.

Further on in the book Mr. Wood gives his experiences as a lurker, that is to say a man who lives by telling hard luck stories. He admits then that he always avoided the wealthy parson, for "if you want sympathy, understanding and help you will get all three from a parson who cannot afford a new overcoat oftener than once in five years. Go to the type who leaves £50,000 at his death and you will get a month."

At Parkhurst, as indeed at many other prisons, when Wood refused to go to chapel or to kow-tow to the chaplain, the chaplain who was also librarian, would try to curtail the books which Wood was entitled to have to read, and when at Parkhurst lectures and debates were allowed occasionally Wood offered to give some simple talks on evolution, but the chaplain intervened on the grounds that the faith of some of the prisoners might be unsettled.

During his last imprisonment at Wandsworth, Wood asked a friend to send him Robertson's *History of Christianity*, Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, Vivian's *Churches and Modern Thought*, and a few others. The chaplain banned them all as being subservient to the Christian religion. Wood refused to accept the chaplain's opinion of what was, and what was not, suitable reading and petitioned the Home Office, and was finally allowed to have the books he required.

These few examples from many reveal that the prison chaplain is not a type to admire. Indeed Wood declares that prison chaplains generally speaking are the lowest and the least educated of clergymen, which, as most Freethinkers will agree, is saying a lot.

NECHELLS.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD JULY 22, 1932.

THE President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Quinton, Hornibrook, LeMaine, W. J. W. Easterbrook, Ebury, Preece, McLaren, Mrs. Venton, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting were adopted, and the monthly financial statement presented. New members were admitted to South London, West London, Swansea, Sunderland Branches and Parent Society. Under correspondence, matters connected with Birkenhead, Birmingham, Montreal, and lecture reports from Messrs. Whitehead, Brighton and Clayton were dealt with. Enquiries made by Mr. A. C. Rosetti concerning the production of a Gramophone Record of a speech from the President were before the meeting, and finally accepted for carrying out the proposition. It was agreed to print a further supply of propagandist leaflets for distribution.

Owing to holidays, it was decided the next meeting of the Executive be held on September 30. The meeting then closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,
General Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH.—Preliminary Notice. A members meeting will be held on Sunday, August 7, 4.30 p.m., at 436 Hackney Road, London, E.2.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, July 31, Mr. L. Ebury. Leighton Road, Kentish Town, 8.0, Thursday, August 4, Mr. C. Tuson.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town): 8.0, Wednesday, July 27, Mr. L. Ebury. Friday, July 29, Streatham Common, 8.0, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Sunday, July 31, Brockwell Park, 6.30, Mr. C. Tuson. Wednesday, August 3, Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, A Lecture. Friday, August 5, Streatham Common, 8.0, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): Wednesday, July 27, at 7.30, Messrs. Tuson and Wood. Thursday, July 28, at 7.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin. Friday, July 29, at 7.30, Messrs. Bryant and Le Maine. Sunday, July 31, at 12.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 3.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Bryant and Wood; Platform No. 2, Messrs. B. A. Le Maine and Tuson. 6.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Wood, Tuson and Bryant; Platform No. 2, Messrs. Hyatt and Saphin. Monday, August 1, 3.0, Messrs. Saphin, Tuson, Bryant, Hyatt and Le Maine. 6.0, Messrs. Saphin, Tuson, Bryant, Hyatt and Le Maine.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

ACCRINGTON MARKET 8.0, Sunday, July 31, Mr. J. Clayton. BISHOP AUCKLAND (Market Place): 7.0, Wednesday, August 3, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Level, North-west corner): 7.30, Friday, July 29, Messrs. Legge, Trery and de Lacy. Friday, August 5, 7.30, Messrs. Keast and Keyes.

BURNLEY MARKET 7.30, Tuesday, Aug 2, Mr. J. Clayton. CHESTER-LE-STREET (Bridge End): 8.0, Friday, August 5, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) Branch N.S.S.—Mr. G. Whitehead will address a series of meetings as follows: Sunday, July 31, Queen's Drive (opposite Walton Baths); Tuesday, August 2, Edge Hill Lamp; Wednesday, August 3, Queen's Drive (opposite Walton Baths); Thursday, August 4, corner of High Park Street and Park Road; Friday, August 5, Leighton Square; Saturday, August 6, Queen's Drive (opposite Walton Baths). All at 8.0.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Socialist Club, Arcade, Pilgrim Street): 3.0, Sunday, July 31, Members Meeting. Bigg Market, 7.30, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Church Street): 8.0, Saturday, July 30, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

TODMORDEN, 8.0, Thursday, August 4, Mr. J. Clayton.

INDOOR.

BURNLEY (St. James's Hall): 11.0, Sunday, July 31, Mr. J. Clayton.

ACADEMY CINEMA, Oxford Street

(OPPOSITE WARING & GILLOWS). Ger. 2981.

Sunday, July 31st

Premiere L. S. Trauberg's Russian Talkie

"ALONE."

Last Days

"MUTTER KRAUSEN."

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(CAMBRIDGE CIRCUS). Temple Bar 6056.

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The Secular Society, Ltd.

CHAIRMAN—CHAPMAN COHEN.

Company Limited by Guarantee.

Registered Office: 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Secretary: R. H. ROSETTI.

THIS Society was formed in 1893 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularization of the State, etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up.

All who join the Society participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, one-third of whom retire (by ballot), each year, but are eligible for re-election.

Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords in *re Bowman and Others v. the Secular Society, Limited*, in 1917, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

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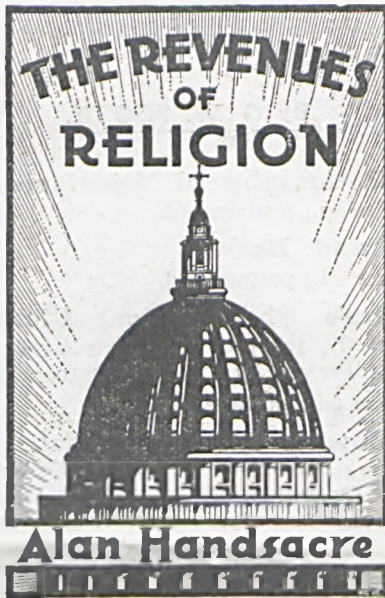
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