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Letters to the Editor, etc.

Views and Opinions.

The Danger of Christian Unity.

THE quarrels of Christians form one of the outstanding features of European history. Few peoples have quarrelled with greater bitterness, ferocity or pertinacity, or about more ridiculous things. When we hear in mind that these quarrels centred around the meaning of a revelation that was directly sent by God Almighty to show the world the true way to salvation, whether the Son was as old as the Father, or whether men could be saved by being sprinkled with holy water or did they need a full-sized bath, it makes one feel as though the world had been dominated by lunatics inspired with the ferocity of gorillas. And the more fervent the belief the wider the differences of interpretation and the savagery of the fight. It has indeed been acclaimed as a triumph of the Christian spirit that of recent years leaders of the various sects could meet on the same platform without a contingent of police to keep the ring.

On matters of doctrine there has never been agreement among Christians, save where one sect was strong enough to enforce "club law." But in some directions they do seem to have been inspired by a spirit of unity, and when Christians are agreed it is always time for other people to look out. For these agreements between Christians have nearly always involved a curtailment of the rights or liberties of other people. When a single Christian sect ruled the roost it was downright blasphemy, punishable by branding, burning, or imprisonment to deny the truth of the doctrines of that sect. The "right" to inflict these punishments rested now with Catholics, now with Protestants, but it was always there so long as Christian unity prevailed. When Christian societies multiplied and Christians no longer agreed sufficiently to persecute on a denial of mere doctrine, it was decided that those who were outside might still be imprisoned for blasphemy if they discussed religion in a way that hurt the feelings of Christians. To-day Christian unity is also shown in believing that the only

entertainment available on Sunday is that provided by Church or Chapel. So other forms of entertainments are banned, or permitted only under conditions that are an exact replica of the rule of the Chicago gun-men. Or, again, all Christians are agreed that the only way to keep people religious is to dose them heavily while they are young. So all of them agree in keeping religion in the State schools, and in compelling everyone to pay for the teaching of a religion in which only a section of the community believes. Pick out a question on which all the Christian sects are in agreement and the harmonizing point will be found to be a question of the preservation of Christian vested interests and the curtailment of the freedom of other people.

* * *

Sects and Sauces.

What Christians call the bad side of Christianity—its quarrels—is in actual practice the one good feature it has shown the world. It has been as beneficial as the quarrels between kings and nobles, or between two burglars as to the disposition of the "swag." Honest men have benefited thereby. Voltaire in an oft-cited epigram noted that England had a hundred sects, but only one sauce. England might have done with more sauces, but not at the expense of fewer sects, that is, unless we could reduce the number of sects to zero. For the lesson of the past fifteen centuries is that freedom flourishes only in proportion as no single sect is able to have its own way. The only good done by Protestantism is that it checked the absolute power of the Roman Church, but so long as Protestantism could have its way it differed in no respect from the rule of the Church against which it had revolted. Christian sects have never ceased to persecute because they believed persecution to be wrong, but only because changed conditions no longer permitted them to do it.

For ourselves we have never lived in any fool's paradise on this matter. We have never blinded ourselves to the fact that if Christians can secure any considerable degree of unity between themselves it will be a bad day for everyone outside the Christian ranks. Religious liberty, and other forms of liberty will suffer. Freethinkers are still in a minority, and those who have a genuine love of freedom, and who think it something worth fighting for, are a still smaller minority. It is quite true that the freedom enjoyed by non-Christians has been won by hard fighting, but it is also true that the condition of that freedom is the dissensions that exist among Christians. We might multiply our sauces, but not at the cost of decreasing the number of our sects.

* * *

Another Education Block.

The latest example of the danger to public right when Christians agree is in connexion with religious instruction in State schools. It will be remembered

that the famous "compromise" of 1870 was entirely due to the disagreement of Christian sects. The Church of England naturally wanted its own form of religion taught in the State schools. In earlier days that was done. But Nonconformists were in 1870 strong enough to fight on this issue. Had the disagreement continued the result would have been an act of justice to the whole of the people. But an agreement was proposed, and accepted. A form of Christianity was to be taught in the schools with which both Christian bodies agreed, and the rest of the nation was compelled to pay for a religion it did not want and would not have. It was a repetition of the agreement of king and aristocracy with the poor commoners paying the cost of the unity. This agreement of the sects meant the creation of a position that ever since has stood in the way of making education what it ought to have been.

Now another agreement is being concluded between the sects, with the usual result of injustice to all outside their ranks. In a special article in the *Sunday Times* of November 6, it is stated that the recent amalgamation of the various Methodist bodies has paved the way to an agreement in the matter of religious instruction in elementary schools. For some time the Government of the day has been promising that if the Churches can submit an agreed plan, legislation will be introduced on the lines of that plan. It is important to note that agreement was to be between the churches. No one else, and nothing else matters. Now this "agreed" plan that has been reached is to scrap the "Compromise" of 1870, definite dogmatic religion is to be taught in State schools, it is to be "an integral part of the education given," and it is to be given by "men and women who are qualified for the task," while the education authority is to see that the religious instruction is "regularly and efficiently given."

Now if that means anything at all, it means that teachers will be appointed because of their religious beliefs, not on account of their educational qualifications. Those who are not inclined to profess belief in religion will either fail to get appointed or may say good-bye to promotion. It will mean more teachers playing the hypocrite with reference to religion than is the case at present. And we need make no mistake, if this agreed plan is brought forward the Government, anxious to get friends for the next election, will push forward on "agreed" lines, and will rush the matter through; and we may expect to find Mr. Macdonald, in spite of his solemn advocacy of the policy of Secular Education, announcing that in the present state of the country the establishment of religion in the schools will powerfully assist those who are working for economic recovery. In the end we shall see the parsonry more firmly established in the schools than they have been for over two generations.

* * *

What Can Be Done?

Now I want to make a special appeal to all those who really care for the policy of Secular Education, or, to put it in another way, those who do not believe in the State teaching religion. First of all there are the Trades Unions of the country. For many years in succession the Trades Union Congress passed, by an overwhelming majority, a vote in favour of Secular Education. Then Catholic influences got to work and the vote was discontinued. Now I am quite sure that the opinion of the majority of trades unionists remains what it was. I suggest that whenever possible trades unionists raise this question again at their local meetings. This is not taking part in anti-religious propaganda, it is merely saving the schools from the par-

sons. Similar resolutions should be passed by every organization genuinely interested in social reform. It should be remembered that the Government, any Government, will go so far as it is pushed. Friends of justice should take care to do the pushing.

Next the teachers. It is as much to their interest as to that of anyone to keep the parsons out of the school, either in person or by proxy. Let them at their local associations pass resolutions in favour of Secular Education.

Finally, there are the Freethinkers and all who are opposed to the State teaching of religion. The right to withdraw children from religious instruction remains, and is not likely to be removed. Every parent should take advantage of that right and withdraw his child from religious instruction. It is sometimes said, as an excuse for not doing so, that the child may be exposed to petty persecution. I believe that in a great many cases it is not the parent who is protecting the child. It is the child who is being used as a protection for the parent. To withdraw a child from religious instruction is an advertisement to one's neighbours that one is opposed to religious instruction in the schools, and many do not wish to have that known. The child, in such circumstances, becomes a mere cover for the parent. The parent who admits that he does not believe in religious instruction simply dare not permit his child to receive it. If he does he publishes thereby to the world his own neglect.

* * *

An Appeal.

It is quite clear that if in every district all who did not believe in religious instruction were to withdraw their children, the reign of the parson in the school would be practically over. The moral influence of withdrawal from religious instruction, of a dozen or twenty children in the majority of schools would be an education for everyone concerned. And it would be infinitely better for the child. A child's character is certainly not improved by learning, as it must learn sooner or later, that the religious instruction received was taught it because its parents lacked resolution. It is certainly something to the good in the make-up of the child that it shall be brought up recognizing from its earliest years the value of having an opinion of its own and taking some pride in that possession.

I make this appeal in all seriousness. All that any parent has to do is to write a note to the head of the school asking for the child to be withdrawn from religious instruction. No reason need be given and no questions should be asked by the school authorities. If any difficulty is experienced write at once to us, and we will see that the matter receives prompt attention. But it is high time that all who do not believe in the State teaching of religion should take practical steps to make their position clear and unmistakable. Otherwise they may find permeating the education of the child the influence of an order that is responsible for the writing of some of the darkest chapters in European history.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

AN APPROPRIATE TEXT.

For the United Kingdom Alliance.

The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth;
All the merry-hearted do sigh.
The mirth of tabrets ceaseth.
The noise of them that rejoice endeth.
The joy of the harp ceaseth.
They shall not drink wine with a song,
Strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it.

Sonnet (Isaiah xxiv. 7-9.)

A Romish Round-Robin.

"Rough work, Iconoclasm, but the only way to get at truth."—O. W. Holmes.

"The lie at the lips of the priest."—Swinburne.

In the old, dark Ages of Faith a clerk in holy orders was looked up to by the illiterate, ordinary people. Not only could he read and write, but he claimed extraordinary powers. As for bishops, these ecclesiastics aped the pomp of Royalty, and occupied much the same position in the body politic as witch-doctors in savage nations, and with the same satisfactory results to themselves.

Other times, other manners. Nowadays, everybody except a few degenerates and vagrants, can read and write. As a consequence the clergy have sunk correspondingly in public esteem, but they have not abated their fantastic claims in a single instance. People may laugh at comic curates on the variety stage, or stare at a parson in a barrel, but forty thousand priests still batten upon the people of this country, and absorb millions of money which could be employed in a far more profitable manner.

Yet, with a few exceptions, the bulk of these clergy are not educated in the modern sense of the word. It is true they learn dead languages and the patter of their sorry profession, just as quack doctors use a scientific vocabulary, but glibness of speech does not necessarily imply profundity or even exactness. The curriculum at theological colleges is cribbed, cabined, and confined. The students are taught that the world's clock struck at Jerusalem twenty centuries ago, and the hands have never moved since. Which, as Old Euclid expresses it, "is absurd."

The most hidebound of these clerical reactionaries are the priests of the Romish Church. In comparison, the ordinary Methodist minister, or even an average Presbyterian divine, is a man of culture and affairs. For the Nonconformists do read newspapers, periodicals, and books, and have some idea of the intellectual ferment of our own time in which we live. The poor Catholic priest seldom reads anything except purely Romish publications, and knows less of life than a common soldier living in barracks in the Andaman Islands. Indeed, they largely resemble the geni of the Arabian Nights, imprisoned in a bottle, and only looking over the edge once or twice in a lifetime.

The prelates of the Scottish branch of the Romish Church have just launched a pastoral letter upon their innocent flocks, and this outburst deals with the subject of Freethought in Great Britain in such a manner that it is sufficient to wake a bronze statue into smiles. Its restrained and judicial tone may be estimated by the bare statement that Freethinkers "will not shrink from drenching the world in blood or grinding the entire human race in appalling misery." Indeed, these awful creatures are hundred-per-cent demons, working under alleged supernatural direction. Here are the sober words of these right-reverend and very innocent Fathers-in-God:—

The preternatural genius displayed in organizing this Anti-God campaign makes it clear that the directing force is no mere human intellect.

You see, it all as clear as mud. After this outburst, it is a positive relief to hear from these high-minded but irresponsible prelates that the "Anti-Gods" possess no less than twenty periodicals, and that, the movement is Communist and Muscovite in origin, which looks as if our old friend, Mephistopheles had left the cast of Gounod's "Faust," and assumed the dress of a Russian Commissar. As Satan is now out for the pleasing purpose of "drenching the world in blood," it appears as if his character has

deteriorated, for in the opera he was no more than a very tame Torquemada.

This pastoral letter, be it noted, is the joint composition of the archbishops and bishops of the Romish Church in Scotland. This elaborate work of fiction has depressed the levity of these distinguished ecclesiastics, for the process reminds us of how Edward Gibbon, the historian, learnt Greek "at the cost of many tears and not a little blood." But, seriously, these Romish priests should have called upon some worldly-minded friends to examine their manuscript before risking publicity with such lugubrious and imaginative nonsense. They serve little purpose except to show that these prelates live in a balloon, and not on the earth amid real people. Even our old antagonists, the Christian Evidence Society's lecturers will smile at the highly coloured picture of a world "drenched in blood," and of a gospel of hate inspired by demons. They always hit hard, but they never sought to kill us with their mouths, as these priests do.

The yellowest of the yellow press, the London *Daily Mail*, promptly gave publicity to this Romish outburst. "Archbishops' warning of Anti-God Campaign" was the headline in the boldest of type right across a page. "Churches called to crusade" was a sub-title. And tens of thousands of people read the following day that the Anti-Gods taught murder doctrine for young people, and that Freethought pamphlets are shipped from Petrograd to this country. The journalists were earning their daily bread, but they protested too much and too loudly. They did not injure British Freethought by such ridiculous tirades, but they proved beyond cavil and dispute that both they and the Romish prelates knew nothing whatever of the subject in question. Perhaps they remembered the legal advice, "no case, abuse the plaintiff's attorney." Lawyers, however, do not unpack their hearts with words without cash being concerned. Maybe, it was the stringency of the collection that caused such holy hysteria among the right-reverend Fathers-in-God of a Scottish Church.

A common, or garden priest might be permitted to play the fool in his own parish without too much criticism. But the composers of this pastoral letter are not parish priests, but the cream of the Roman Catholic clergy of Scotland. "What a fall is here, my countrymen!" Once, this Church of Rome, and not so long since, could boast of a Newman and a Manning. To-day, it is perfectly plain, it has declined upon a period of ignorance, humbug, and vulgarity. But is it not playing it a little low down on the poor British Catholic thus to take advantage of his ignorance and lack of experience? The Education Act has run for over half a century, and even in North Britain Christian congregations are regaled with sawdust instead of the bread of knowledge. To a mere outsider a pontifical utterance by the higher ecclesiastics of an historical church would suggest restraint, sobriety, and some little regard for truth. But this pastoral letter was composed whilst the authors smiled in their dainty lawn sleeves.

It is enough to break a gentle critic's heart, and to turn his raven hair white, and curl it afterwards. These Romish prelates labour under the belief that they are living in the ninth century, and not the twentieth. It is a pity that they cannot be enlightened. Why should they imagine that they are making the nation's flesh creep with their jeremiads, when they are only causing people to raise their eyebrows, and smile. They imagine they have still a controlling voice in national affairs. They are merely a number of elderly men sitting in rocking-chairs, who think that their own movement represent the only real progress.

MIMNERMUS.

Rousseau: The Sentimental Pietist.

(Continued from page 715.)

The exaltation of emotion over intelligence was the secret of his most striking production; the same exaltation, by gaining increased mastery over his [Rousseau's] whole existence, at length passed the limit of sanity and wrecked him. (Lord Morley, *Rousseau*, p. 426.)

ANDREAS BJERRE, the great Swedish criminologist, tells us in his book *The Psychology of Murder*, of his surprise, and perplexity, when he discovered, among the most brutal and abandoned criminals, incapable of any feelings of pity or compassion for their fellow creatures, whom they only regarded as subjects for their passions and lusts, yet were frequently attached to their mother's by bonds even stronger than those commonly existing between mother and son. At first he was bewildered, and inclined to think that it was the survival of a primitive instinct, persisting after their moral collapse. This, however, was not the case; there was, in fact, scarcely anything in common with the mother-love of ordinary people. It turned upon the fact of their feeling of dependence, their need of support, their sense of insecurity. Forced into life against their will, they shrank from the struggle, and clutched at their mothers, like children who are terrified by the darkness and the unknown. One of these murderers traced all his misfortunes to the time when he left his mother's care.

There was a great deal of this weakness in the character of Rousseau; he could not endure either darkness or mystery. He tells us: "The aspect of the most hideous monster would alarm me little, I verily believe; but if I discern at night a figure in a white sheet, I am sure to be terrified out of my life." It was the same with any unpleasantness that he foresaw, or fancied he foresaw, about to happen to him, the lens of his vivid imagination magnified it a hundredfold. He declares:—

In proportion as the anticipation of it alarms and confuses me when I see it coming, so the memory of it returns feebly to my mind and dies out the moment after it has arrived. My cruel imagination, which torments itself incessantly in anticipating woes that are still unborn, makes a diversion for my memory, and hinders me from recalling those which have gone. I exhaust disaster beforehand. The more I have suffered in foreseeing it, the more easily I forget it.¹

Rousseau lost his mother at birth, but his aunt quite filled her place, and Rousseau always remembered her with affection in after life. When, at the age of sixteen, he arrived at Madame de Warens, as a convert to Catholicism, he at once adopted her as his new mother, although she was only twelve years older than himself, and always called her "mamma" even after he arrived at man's estate. When, at this time, Madame de Warens offered him a closer connexion, to save him, so she affirmed, from the temptations of the world he declared that he had regarded her as his mother for so long that the connexion seemed to him unnatural. However, this feeling was not strong enough to prevent the consummation. At this stage, says Charpentier: "The *Confessions* leave no room for doubt in our minds that Jean-Jacques felt disappointed and hungry for an affinity . . . His indifference to his mistress increased, encouraged by her tendency to grow rapidly stouter, so that, from being plump, she became actually fat. 'I was consumed by the need of love even in the lap of pleasure,'" he wrote. "I had a tender mother, a beloved friend, but what I wanted was a mistress."

He had one woman devoted to him as a mistress and a mother, now he wanted another, younger woman, as a mistress, and to be kept into the bargain, at Madame de Warens' expense! What he seems really to have wanted, was a harem.

At last the day arrived when, owing to the decline in Madame de Warens' fortunes, he was at last obliged to leave the idyllic life at Les Charmettes, and seek his fortunes elsewhere. Furnished with letters of introduction to some society people in Paris, Rousseau arrived there in 1742, at the age of thirty.

Paris at that time was at the height of its prestige and glory, the fruit of many generations of culture. It was intensely civilized, cosmopolitan and gay. Of course there were hideous contrasts, they are not unknown in our own cities to-day. "These Frenchmen knew how to enjoy themselves, how to pass their lives in a succession of charming entertainments, among thoroughly polite contemporaries. Their manners were gentle, precise, and delicate upon the surface; their talk was studied with allusions to drama, poetry, and philosophy, as no other talk in Europe."² It was the most brilliant society the world had yet seen. Outside the palaces of the Bourbons the old rigid barriers of caste had dissolved under the withering blasts of Voltaire's mockery. To have celebrity was enough to gain entrance into the highest society, which now inquired not about a man's ancestors, but what he had done. "Mon Dieu!" exclaimed the haughty Duc de Castres [a few years later] "everywhere I go I hear nothing spoken of but this Rousseau and this Diderot. Can you conceive it? Persons of no birth, persons who have not a sou, who live in a third story."³ Still more lamentable things were to happen to the aristocracy before the century was out.

Any young man of handsome presence with good letters of recommendation was sure of a welcome. At first his awkwardness, which Madame de Warens and every other lady who tried to correct was found incurable; and his want of knowledge of the conventional usage of good society, caused smothered laughter among the company; and titters among the servants behind the chairs. Rousseau rectified his manners but he never got rid of his awkwardness and was never really at ease in society. As Charpentier observes:—

He suffered, not at this time only, but doubtless his whole life long, because he could not appear to the salon born. He longed for a graceful manner . . . experiences convinced him that he could and should, even if he did not shine with the luster imparted by more showy gifts, make his way by sheer intelligence and force of character in the circles where elegance and formal manners reigned—for he loved these things in spite of his rustic tastes. (Charpentier: *Rousseau the Child of Nature*. p. 128.)

As the same writer also observes: "Jean-Jacques, at this period of his existence anyhow, cherished no hatred of the great as such, either born or made. He was simply looking up, like his fellow-authors, and hoping to rise by his talents above his natural station. He was asking that his plebian origin be overlooked for the sake of his genius, and that he be given the consideration to which it entitled him to. We shall see in time that his rancour and his espousal of the cause of the oppressed was the result of his feeling that he personally was being obscured and down-trodden." (pp. 127-128.) If Rousseau had found a place and settled down in that glittering society, we should not have had *Le Contrat Social*, with its resounding text "Man is born free, and everywhere he

¹ Lord Morley: *Rousseau*, pp. 267-273.

² Josephson: *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. p. 119.

³ H. G. Graham: *Rousseau*. p. 88.

is in chains," which became the Bible of the revolution.

It was at this time that Rousseau became acquainted with the woman Thérèse Levasseur, who exercised such a disastrous influence on his life, and more than any other cause contributed to his downfall.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

On Controversies—Old and New.

MILTON'S maxim, "let truth and falsehood grapple," is little to the taste of to-day. Controversy, like some other useful words, has taken on a new and an opprobrious meaning. "Don't argue," people say, angrily, as if they should say, "don't swear!" It is said that nothing could be less profitable than to rake over the ashes of an extinct controversy. The rake, being applied, will nevertheless often produce not dust but fire. The late Lord Oxford observed that "there is no subject worthy of the serious study of mankind upon which the last word has yet been said." Whether a particular controversy comes within this category may be hard to determine; but there were never more subjects worthy of the serious study of mankind than there are to-day. Old Sir William Temple, tired, as he confessed, of "those shining toys and follies that employ the thoughts of busy men," opined that "controversies that can never be ended were better not begun." If this opinion had ever been general, literature and life would have been duller and sadly poorer. Of one of the hardest of controversies, that between the Church of Rome and Protestantism, Mr. John M. Robertson says that in this "long drawn warfare English prose . . . acquired elasticity and vigour." More than one hundred years ago a sanguine Catholic divine published a work entitled *The End of Religious Controversy!* To-day, John Milner, a doughty fighter be it said (but not doughtier than his opponents, Drs. Blakeney and Cumming), is replaced by Fathers Woodlock and Knox, and for their opponents we have, shall we say, Mr. Ken-sit and Mr. Arnold Lunn—the latter, poor fellow, pathetically believing himself to be a Catholic!

To come to the contemporary aversion from controversy. If you say of a man that he is, or was, a controversial character, you defame him, or his memory. Like the candle-light by which some of the best of it has been done, controversy has gone out of fashion. The expedient (and evangelical) counsel to agree with your enemy quickly while you are in the way with him is more popular than most of the gospels. Debates are as rare as aristocratic ladies with large families. In Parliament most of them proceed in an atmosphere of somnolent indifference on the part of the forty or so hon. gentlemen whose presence is necessary to their continuance. (What is talked to empty benches is, however, frequently extracted from the Official Report for republication in one of those local journals which come to the rescue of M.P.'s who never get a line in the dailies). The dailies indeed give less and less space to argument, Parliamentary or otherwise; the Sunday's mostly ignore it. "Silly season" letter writing in pursuit of some wild hare, started by a news-editor short of "copy" in the holiday months, rarely rises to the level of argument. The subjects and the contributions are rivals in fertility. In clubs and drawing-rooms and on premises amusingly described as those of "licensed victuallers," argument—serious argument—is taboo. Debating Societies, Local Parliaments—with a few exceptions—practise grounds for professional spouters or ventilators for the verbosity of those who love to hear themselves talk. Working men's clubs are now all "social" clubs—whether called Radical, Labour or Tory. Debates there are kept off the bill as far as possible by the Entertainments Committee or by the Brewers' representative. "Look what we could make by a Dance or a Whist Drive?" "Bar-takings down again? Too many of these damned lectures!"

Herbert Spencer's dictum that if he read as much as most people he would know at little as most people has, perhaps, a bearing on the decline and unpopularity of controversial discussion, vocal and literary. There is much to justify the view that the man who has acquired a smattering of knowledge on all sorts of subjects by miscellaneous and uncritical reading is less likely to air and defend his own views, if he has any, than the old partisan who knew his own case. This is not the virtuous restraint of the well informed. (They, someone has said, are the only persons who recognize how ignorant they are.) It is the fear of being probed and disclosing his little knowledge even of the arguments for his own side. The stuff of real controversy is, first, thought and next, knowledge, both of your own and your opponent's case. It is not mere argument. "Argument," wrote Horace Smith "is with fools, passion, vociferation, violence; with Ministers, a majority; with Kings, the sword; with fanatics, denunciation; with men of sense, sound reason." Disraeli's epigram about the religion of sensible men shows that, at least so far as religious controversy is concerned, its decline, both in practice and repute, is not of recent origin. It is, of course, due very largely to the general indifference to religion, as well as to the change of attitude towards it produced by science and modern thought. Indifference is the antithesis of conviction; and rational conviction is judgment according to the evidence. The fundamental reason for the dislike of controversy is that, in regard to all the matters of most vital consequence, established creeds and conventions work to foster that dislike, to invest it with the garments of liberality, to have it believed that theological controversy leads to Atheism; that economic controversy (other than the trivialities of Party warfare), leads to rebellion or revolution; and that the strength of the good patriotic citizen is to sit still and allow his thinking to be done for him by those whom God or the "collective wisdom" have appointed for that purpose. Communism, Fascism, Toryism are all the foes of controversy. It thrives when men are struggling either for truth or freedom or both. The trouble of the world to-day is that it does not recognize that truth and freedom in their native reality, are being obscured by all those forces, religious, political, patriotic, national and international that are afraid of them. This growing contempt for controversy is one of the most depressing indications of success in this wicked work of blindfolding the minds of men and nations.

ALAN HANDSACRE.

"Common Thought for Common Problems."

EACH year the material benefits bestowed upon us by science grow in number. From a crude beginning of a mere conception of the roundness of the human dwelling science has now developed into a generous uncle, who annually showers upon us new comforts and amusements with which to while away our mortal span.

Yet it is not the material comforts which please us most about the advancement of scientific thought. Oh no—we pat ourselves on the back, in particular, because we say reason has triumphed over traditional dogma. We have been gradually breaking away, we persist, from the terrible past when our thinking was done for us by Church and State. Now every man is "working things out for himself."

In point of fact such a contention is ridiculous. That science has dragged itself free of the restrictive tentacles of Church and State, and has started to form opinions on its own is surely no reason for saying that the vast majority of men are thinking for themselves. Free-thought is confined to a small minority. For the most part we have not even begun to think for ourselves.

Let us cast our minds back to eighteen years ago when the world was plunged into the terrible catastrophe of the war. The gathering clouds had been obvious a score of years before that fateful day in August, 1914, yet people either shut their minds off from the subject, or recognizing its inevitability, ignored the consequences.

There was no concerted plan to stop it, no active spirit in opposition to it. Nobody wanted war, yet it came, and countless lives were squandered for some obscure cause.

Inflamed nationalists will immediately dive for the treaty box and pull out the Versailles Agreement as if to establish definitely the war guilt of Germany. Be that as it may, nothing alters the present facts that everywhere there are signs of a fresh grouping of Powers in preparation for another world war, for which we shall all be equally guilty in the tragic inability of any one country to see the right course and seeing—act upon it. To-morrow may find us rushing about with rifles, waving flags and receiving medals for wholesale murder. It is all because of an implicit faith, through ignorance, of the "rightness" of those set above us to mar the future of our country. Not a ripple of sensible agitation breaks the surface of the human stream as it flows towards the rapids ahead.

It is possible to put the blame on Cabinet ministers, in whose hands we trust ourselves with such a wonderful faith, because they are supposed to be specialists in these matters of international affairs. Yet it should be remembered that the menace of war can only be exterminated by a lengthy process in which it is not only desirable, but necessary, that mankind in bulk shall fully realize the difficulties. At the moment we are content to nod our heads in uninterested acquiescence to whatever our ministers propose, whether it be for good or bad. What is needed is that we should prod them disrespectfully in the back when they do wrong, push them forward when they lack initiative, and hold them back when they become a nuisance.

Then again, take the present financial crisis which has rocked the very foundations of our economic system. If a vote were to be taken as to the causes of the collapse, what a pretty diversity of opinion it would make. I should say that, of those who dared hazard an opinion at all, not one in fifty would alight on anything like the truth. So if we do not know the causes how are we to assist in an effective cure, and what hope have we of avoiding a similar economic dislocation in future. Here too, prior to the catastrophic fall in prices, the portents were of the gravest, yet we drifted into our present distress in the manner of approved fatalists. There are those, no doubt, who would argue that they expected that the interests of the countries would be safeguarded by advanced economic thinkers.

That belief, like the blind faith in Cabinet Ministers, is a common mistake. Our greatest economic and political problems are so bound up with traditional dogma, ancient prejudices and superstitions, that it is quite impossible for a handful of experts to rid them of the impedimenta, except with the wholehearted support of the human race.

For what, after all, are these men into whose hands each country is prepared to place its political and economic future. Strip them of their official haloes and titles, take them out of their traditional haunts and they become men like you and me, struggling with immense difficulties, susceptible to the same mistakes, with the same vaguely conceived ideals.

So while at first glance it might be possible to throw the onus on those in exalted places, on closer inspection it becomes increasingly plain that we have only ourselves to blame. The truth is that the majority of us do not know what we want or even what we ought to want, because we do not think.

Now and again we become inquisitive as to what is happening, as for instance, when our shares on the stock-market sink to nothing and we find ourselves practically ruined, if our sons are called to war, or there is talk of a revolution. We are roused in such cases to a spell of newspaper reading, but these "national organs of thought" are generally very pleased with life, as need they should be with a nice bank-balance and a proprietor dabbling in politics, and they quickly dull our suspicions.

The peoples of the world seem to be suffering from a strange inertia, but it is not a hopeless case. Few will

argue against the fact that it now seems only a matter of time before the malaise, which has done its best to choke us, is finally conquered. More and more people flock to the banners of science. Let us awake to a sense of participation in this world of ours. If we find that we lack knowledge to decide whether things are being conducted to the common good, then we should think hard and well. There will then be work for all no matter how diverse our abilities.

PETER REED.

Acid Drops.

Armistice Day has come and gone, and the annual performance has been gone through with all the usual solemnity, including that of wholesale begging in order to support men whose maintenance should be a first charge on the nation. As we have a year before next November we make one or two suggestions for next Amistice Day, which papers are permitted to copy—without acknowledgement, as usual:—

(1) As there was nothing in the last war different from other wars, save size and cost, two things which do not alter the character of any war, we suggest that instead of an Armistice Day, we have a Peace Day in honour of the dead in all wars, and that on that day public attention be called to the degradation and the brutality of war, with emphasis on the fact that war should be recognized by all as a step backward towards savagery. If other nations can be brought to co-operate in this, so much the better.

(2) Instead of accompanying the proclamation of war with reports of scenes of wild enthusiasm—more or less true—every one should be asked to wear black on the declaration of war, and all the time that a state of war exists.

(3) All ministers of religion and ethical teachers, including those in the higher schools, should undertake to give daily or weekly lessons on the inevitable evils of war, and should undertake to keep alive a spirit of humanitarianism during the whole of the time the war is in progress.

(4) All ceremonial processions should be formed mainly of civilians in civilian clothes. Military uniforms should be there merely as an acknowledgement of the Army and other Forces. This would place the emphasis where it belongs. For no nation has yet been saved by an army. An army can never, at its best, be more than the spirit of a people, exemplifying in war the qualities that have been developed in peace.

We could make other suggestions, such as the formation of an international court, which at the outbreak of war should proceed to adjudicate on the responsibility—negative—of those statesmen who were then in office. But the above will do as a start. We are sure that if they were adopted they would do more to make war stink in the nostrils of decent men and women than all the professional tears and lamentations that are sent up.

The new Sunday Racketeering Act is not working well. The L.C.C. has demanded the sum of £150,000 annually from the London Cinema proprietors as the price of their opening on Sundays. To this the Cinemas reply that to give this sum they require to open at 3 o'clock instead of at six. The L.C.C. would have given way, but the churches and chapels set to work in great alarm that this would mean instead of attending Sunday school young people would go to the Pictures. The hypocrisy of the Churches and Chapels is thus palpable. They opposed Sunday opening on the ground that there was no demand for it; now it is proposed to open on Sunday they reply that the demand will be so great as to empty their training stables for the Church. The first plea is thus openly admitted to be a lie. Their complaint is now, not that there is no demand, but that the demand will be overwhelming. But as the world is used to the parsons acting in this manner, no one seems a bit surprised.

This robbery of the Cinema Houses by Act of Parliament is one of the worst pieces of legislation of recent years. But even now, if these Cinema proprietors had the courage of hunted rats, they could put the Act out of action. If the London Cinemas were to close altogether on Sunday, they would draw so much attention to the iniquitous nature of the Sunday Entertainment Act, that a repeal of the Act so far as demanding this gunman's money might easily follow. But some resolution is required. The Cinema proprietors should make up their minds to fight this rule of the Sabbatarian to the end, and in the end they would win.

There never seems to be any real "economic distress" in religion. Money for religious schools, for missionaries at home or abroad, for religious excavation, for the building of churches and countless other religious activities seems to be had for the asking. The latest example is the £50,000 which British archaeologists have managed to get "to prove the Bible true." Twelve expeditions in Palestine, Egypt and Mesopotamia have been organized for this purpose. A number also have been organized from America, France, Germany and Egypt with the same object, presumably with other large funds. We can sympathize with all the people who have subscribed as well as with all the excavators. So far, not a single Bible miracle has been proven nor a scrap of evidence for the existence of Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, Joshua, Samson, nor even of David and Solomon. It is all very sad.

It has made even Prof. Garstang gloomy. It appears after his confident and "epoch making" work on Jericho, that he is now not quite so sure what really happened to the famous walls. Earthquake or miracle? That is the tremendous question he is out to settle once for all. The world—in spite of its problems of economics—is gasping for the whole truth on such a vital matter. Well, we can tell the worthy professor in advance one thing he will never prove, namely that the walls came down through a miracle. And unless he proves that, any money spent on "proving the Bible true" will be sheer waste.

Sir R. M. Banks, M.P., insists that this is the Age of the Catholic Layman to do battle with the forces of Paganism and Materialism. We had formerly, he says, the Age of the Monks who preserved the "Faith." Then the Age of the Friars who "carried the Message through the pestilence stricken cities." Then the Parish priests, then the Reformation with its "glorious martyrs." Then the age of the great Cardinals, Newman, Manning, Wiseman and Vaughan. Now it is the duty of the Catholic Layman to meet the present disruptive forces against the Holy Church. Leaving aside the fairy tales still told about the wonderful monks, friars and saints whose principal qualities consisted of hopeless ignorance and almost infinite filth, we certainly would like to see the gallant Catholic layman ready to fight for their faith.

Sir R. M. Banks admits it is now no longer a fight between Catholics and Protestants but a fight with "all genuine Christians on one side and the forces of anti-Christ on the other." Yet the courageous Catholic layman, directly he finds an opponent who is a Freethinker, runs away as fast as his legs can carry him. The only person he wants to fight is another—but not Roman Catholic—true believer. How often has Sir R. M. Banks himself stood up to Freethought?

Some interesting and knotty problems may arise if, as is suggested, Presbyterians and Congregationalists become one body. A considerable number of the broader Presbyterians drifted, in the liberal air of the eighteenth century, into Unitarianism, and, in the early days of toleration, erected some of the oldest chapels in the country which, being Unitarian in creed, are Presbyterian in title, and, presumably, in title deeds. One such nestles on the banks of the Kennett, just under Newbury Bridge, and another is at Knutsford, where

Mrs. Gaskell, the author of *Cranford*—which is, in fact Knutsford—is buried, and where her husband ministered.

The Congregationalists are preponderatingly of the theological "left," and their Deeds have as little of the "dead hand" in them as may be. The Presbyterians, however, other than the small body already mentioned, are less free both in the theological and in the legal sense. It would be interesting to know how the new Trust Deed which was signed the other day at the Albert Hall dealt with the varying testamentary dispositions of pious benefactors of Methodism in the days, only just ended, of its sundry, and sometimes sultry, divisions. Were we inclined, as the clergy and ministers of most Protestant denominations now are, to find Biblical authority for these comings together of hitherto differing sects, we might describe at least the hope and intention of these moves as "the removing of those things which are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." (Heb. xii. 27.) It must be noted, however, that in this passage, as in so many Acts of Parliament, we find the indeterminate "may" and not the confident "shall."

It is announced that the Anglican Bishops are to authorize a reception Office for receiving priests or lay persons from the Roman communion. They are careful to provide that this service can only be used in a diocese in which the Bishop authorizes it, and, in the case of priests, a Bishop must officiate, while, in the case of a lay person, the officiating clergyman must be appointed by a Bishop. Those innocent of the niceties of theology and church discipline may not see, at first blush, the humorous nature of these provisions. They become apparent if we take the reverse cases of clergymen or laymen of the Anglican Church going over to Rome. Any priest can receive such persons; but only after a period of instruction. Also, in the case of a layman he will, unless there is no doubt whatever about it (which, if the receiving priest is scrupulous, will be never), be re-baptized *sub conditione*. This also applies to a priest who, if he is single and proposes to become a Roman priest, will have to be re-ordained *de novo*. Rome does not recognize the validity of Anglican orders. But no Anglican Bishop, or clergyman authorized by him, would suggest that Roman orders are not "valid," or that any baptism administered according to the Roman rite—which, provided it is done rightly as to the essentials, may be done in case of emergency by a layman—can be called into question.

This new Office, is obviously a propaganda stunt in retaliation for the recent Roman Catholic boosting of the number of converts from Anglicanism. They are not only from that quarter. While the intellectual Roman Catholic, if he quits, quits Christianity altogether; and the intellectual Dissenter may quit Nonconformity for Rome (as in the case of Dr. Orchard), the only clerical secessions from Rome to Anglicanism, or most of them, may be suspected of having come about rather from a desire for domestic bliss than from objections to Catholic dogma. Quite a few Nonconformist ministers become Anglicans and, perhaps accidentally, also acquire a status and emolument which they had not succeeded in obtaining in the "Free" Churches.

If only all priests, clergymen and ministers who are faced by sincere intellectual difficulties had not to consider the material consequences of abandoning religion there would be an exodus from the churches that would put isolated departures from one to another of them in their proper perspective, which is that they are of no general significance whatever.

The Rev. D. P. King of Trinity College Mission, Stratford, at the Essex (Chelmsford) Diocesan Conference, having listened to an address from the Bishop of that diocese, said it was clear from what his Lordship had said, that "the Church was bankrupt of any ideas, as well as the politicians, scientists and bankers." Having

thus "ticked off" the Bishop, Mr. King had a tilt at the clergy. He asked them whether:—

In protesting against greyhound racing, were they perfectly pure in their motive, or was it because greyhound racing on Sunday might provide a further inclination for people to leave Church? A man living within a few yards of him was arrested for taking betting slips. He (Mr. King) was with that man the night before. His wife had just died, and he and his children were sleeping in the same bed with the corpse because there was no other room. "Do you blame that man," he asked, "for trying to make some money somewhere or other? That happened within twenty yards of where I live. Do you think the Church is honest or is looking at things in the right proportion if it stands up and complains bitterly against the growth of gambling when we have such appalling conditions of housing?"

This report, from the *Church of England Newspaper* is immediately followed by the information that the Cathedral at Chelmsford was to be flood-lit for a local electricity exhibition. It was decided to take this opportunity of regilding the hands of the clock! Comparisons are indeed sometimes odious.

The letter signed by Anglican and Free Church leaders, clerical and lay, as to the promotion of unity between these churches is a very damp squib indeed. Negotiations have been going on at Lambeth since 1930. It is only a few weeks ago that the *Church Times* on the one side, and the *Christian World* on the other expressed the view that nothing was likely to be achieved by these deliberations. The fact is that the business of religion, like so many other concerns, is faced by depleted custom and revenues, and, in these circumstances, combination, and what on the industrial plane is called "rationalization," is under consideration. There is, however, a difference between the religious business and others. Amalgamations are of the same or kindred trades; but in the case of Christians there is such a difference of opinion as to the commodity to be turned out, such a stubborn adhesion to existing methods on the one hand, and such a reckless sacrifice of the ingredients that have hitherto been generally thought indispensable on the other, that competition cannot be eliminated. The result is that the public, viewing this competition from the consumers' angle, is gradually becoming sceptical as to whether this commodity, once in such general use, is really necessary at all. The law of supply and demand might ultimately decide this, if one of the principal firms concerned was not in a position of privilege, and not entirely dependent, as are most of the others, on the public for support.

A number of Conservative peers and M.P.'s have just issued a document on the reform of the House of Lords. It advises cutting down the number of peers, but leaves the hereditary principle untouched. It is foolish enough to give the reason for this exception. "It would be dangerous to leave the monarchy as the only hereditary element in the Constitution." So, in order to avoid a quite ridiculous thing we must retain another one so that the first one may not be lonely. Whether one calls the head of a State, King or President, or anything else matters little, but surely the last word in absurdity is to have hereditary rulers or hereditary legislators. For a man to occupy an important post whether he is a jackass or a genius is utterly indefensible. Unfortunately we do not know how to breed supermen, we have, therefore, to fall back upon some method of selection. We do that in most things, but we leave it out when we are dealing with what are said to be the most important posts in the State. In the case of the hereditary legislator we do not carry it quite so far as pretending that the son is of necessity a man to admire for either ability or character. In the case of a king the rule is to profess to believe he has all the fine qualities that his predecessors in the position did not possess.

Two recent cases have drawn unusual attention to Church Courts, namely Stiffkey and St. Hilary. It is now announced that the Bishops will shortly propose a "reform" of these Courts. The reasons given for this

step are typical of clerical tergiversation. Stiffkey was a case of conduct; St. Hilary was a case of ritual, or, to be exact, "ornament." The first case had widespread, and, doubtless, unwelcome attention from the Press. Of the second nothing was reported but the judgment until the Vicar having refused to recognize either the Court or its judgment, Mr. Kensit, and one of the complainant parishioners, removed the condemned "ornaments" in circumstances which had a "news value." During and immediately after the Stiffkey case the Church Press (as noted here at the time) cried out for privacy for such proceedings. With these facts in mind observe the terms of an "inspired" paragraph as to the measure above mentioned.

The Bishops, it says, want to reform Consistory Courts because (1) "they (*i.e.*, the Courts) have not the confidence of Anglo-Catholics"; (what Court which enforced the law would have their confidence?) (2) because "it is preposterous that Bishops should escape the implications of their own Chancellor's judgment"; and (3) because such matters ought not to be "left open to the interference of outsiders." Not a word about "scandal." We will wager that when the measure appears its main object will be to give Church Courts privileges in the matter of *privacy*. The *Church of England Newspaper* came out with a strident leader demanding that "the Church Assembly should tackle without delay the problem of Ecclesiastical Courts and clerical discipline." Why? Because of the "horrible broadcast to the world" in the Stiffkey case!

The Bishop of Plymouth (Dr. Masterman), speaking in the Guildhall there made the extraordinary statement that the Church of England and the Co-operative movement are "both voluntary organizations." The only voluntary thing about the Church of England is voluntary contributions. Members of it pay and get nothing in return that has any material value. Members of the Co-operative movement get goods for their money and a dividend as well. Nobody is born a co-operator; but, at least in legal theory, everyone born in England is, unless otherwise labelled, a member of the Church of England. The one likeness between the two organizations is one which Dr. Masterman did not, and probably would not, mention. The dividends of co-operators are the subject of special exemptions from income tax. The premises of the Church of England are exempt from rates. This similarity does not counter the fundamental distinction between these two organizations. They are both business concerns; but only one of them can dip into the pockets of the taxpayers and ratepayers for contributions for the payment of its directors and officials and the upkeep of its business premises.

Fifty Years Ago.

It seems strange that anybody should be prosecuted for libelling a Ghost, and stranger still that the aggrieved Ghost should not be required to appear in a Court or even to send a blood relation. But this is a strange world, and the unexpected is always happening. Things may be ordered differently in some other part of the universe; but this planet of ours is, and always has been, the home of as much folly and stupidity as could well be concentrated in so small a space. The fool-crop, as Heine said, is perennial; and if you mow it down in one generation it springs up almost as lively as ever in the next.

Matters, however, were worse once, so we need not absolutely despair. Time was, that if you breathed a word against a Ghost, you were not even treated with the ceremony of a trial, but just had your brains knocked out on the spot. Now you are treated less summarily, and there is a chance of "the law's delay" mitigating the savagery of superstition. Yet the Ghost's friends are still so powerful and numerous that, if they once taste the pleasure of hunting down heretics, they are likely to continue the pastime until they are thoroughly satiated.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- J. CROSON (Oudtshoorn).—*God and My Neighbour* is long out of print, but we will try and obtain a copy for you.
- J. W. R. SILK.—Thanks for cutting. South Africa sadly needs a strong and fighting Freethought organization.
- G.T.—A good letter. Bury's *Freedom of Thought* is quite a good work in a little compass.
- J. HULME.—We do not think there is any substantial disagreement between us. We cannot, of course, define "morality" every time we use the word. With regular readers we must take something for granted. We have over and over again defined morality as being a physiology of social life, and that seems to answer what you say. We have no room at all for the clotted nonsense about the "Good in itself." As Socrates would have said that must mean something that is good for nothing. It is the ghost of a God without the justification that the God had for his existence.
- C. S. FRASER.—Excellent. Next week.
- MR. TAYLOR.—The falsity of the statement that the Church gets no money from the State has been made clear time after time. The fact that the Church is freed from rates and taxes means a grant of millions every year. The whole subject is dealt with in Alan Handsacre's *Revenues of Religion*.
- J.L.D.—Amusingly fallacious, but may find room for it next week.
- The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.
- The Secular Society, Limited Office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.
- The National Secular Society's Office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.
- Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.
- When the services of the National Secular Society in 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.

On Sunday next (November 27), Mr. Cohen will lecture in the McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, at 6.30. His subject will be "A World Without God." There will be a number of reserved seats at one shilling each. We hope that all our Glasgow friends will do their best to make the lecture well-known.

Mr. Rosetti paid his first visit to Glasgow on Sunday last, and we are very pleased to learn that the City Hall was well filled for his meeting. The lecture gave great pleasure to those who were present. We are not surprised to hear this, and we are sure that Mr. Rosetti will prove an ever-welcome visitor to the industrial capital of Scotland.

Prompt on the Chief Commissioner of Police and his advice to citizens to stay away from perfectly lawful public meetings, to which we referred last week, comes

the new Home Secretary with his announcement that he is considering "whether it is necessary to have any further powers to strengthen the law relating to processions." Now the law with regard to processions is never invoked except when public order is supposed to be threatened. A notable, and probably forgotten case, was the stopping of the Procession of the Sacrament at a Eucharistic Congress at Westminster years ago. This was, to be sure, capable of the defence that such a procession was in itself unlawful. That, however, was not the ground on which it was prohibited, but because one set of Christians threatened to disturb the peace by interfering with another.

Processions, whether ecclesiastical or civil, are mostly things of show and futility. The fooleries of the Lord Mayor's show still hold up traffic once a year in the busiest part of London, not, latterly, without protest. A fashionable wedding at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields often blocks that end of Trafalgar Square for an hour, while the police assist the obstructionists. Military formations, real, or bogus like the Salvation Army, are also permitted to march where they will. One of the biggest blocks of London's traffic that ever occurred was on the occasions of a Brewers' demonstration to Hyde Park some years ago. The May Day demonstrations in Hyde Park are always the occasion for more display of Police than demonstrations of equal dimensions but of a different "class." There is no more precious right of a democratic community than the right of public meeting and demonstration, including processions if it is thought they will add to the impressiveness thereof. Sir John Gilmore pretends that there is some "public concern" as a result of the recent demonstrations of unemployed marchers, yet it was authoritatively admitted that the marchers had nothing to do with the disturbances. It is private concern and not public interest that is at the back of all these political and official attempts to curtail the reasonable liberties of the community. In this pliant and pliable Parliament the chance of effective vigilance in such matters is hardly worth considering, and if there should be one M.P. with the courage to keep an eye on Sir John Gilmour we shall be both surprised and delighted.

The Denbigh County authorities have adopted a scheme for giving birth control information to married women. Women in poor circumstances, those who have been in mental hospitals, are tubercular, or suffer from other grave illnesses are among those who are to be informed. Local doctors and health visitors are to be circularized as to the facilities available. This, if a cautious and somewhat restricted move, is a move in the right direction, and we hope other Councils will follow Denbigh's example.

Birmingham Freethinkers will have an opportunity of hearing Mr. B. A. Le Maine (London) to-day (Sunday), when he speaks for the local N.S.S. Branch in the Shakespeare Room, 174 Edmund Street, near Livery Street, Birmingham, on "Christianity and Bishop Barnes." The lecture commences at 7.0 p.m. If the local saints, attached and unattached, will play their part the hall should be packed.

Arrangements are nearly complete for the production of a Gramophone Record of a speech by the President of the National Secular Society, Mr. Chapman Cohen. The speech will take both sides of a 10-inch record, and will shortly be on sale at two shillings each, postage sixpence extra. The suggestion came from Mr. S. R. A. Ready, Secretary of the Liverpool Branch, and was enthusiastically taken up at the last Conference of the N.S.S. By persistent pressure the President's reluctance was at last overcome, and every Freethinker will soon be able to possess a speech from Mr. Cohen which may be heard at any time.

Post-Marital Continence.

ABSTENTION from sexual intercourse for a few days after marriage seems a strange and unnatural proceeding to the modern man. Yet this observance has been, and is still regarded as supremely virtuous in various parts of the world.

The custom survives among savages, even now. It was common in ancient India, and traces of its former existence linger among the more backward peasantry of Eastern Europe. Post-marital celibacy probably prevailed as a religious rite in rural Rome and Greece. In fact, asceticism has been a pronounced feature of many leading cults, the Christian among them. The sinfulness of sex in general, and the wickedness of woman in particular, were the constant themes of the Church Fathers.

Little wonder, then, that so early in Church annals as the fourth century, the Council of Carthage, held in A.D. 398, decreed that: "When the bridegroom and bride have received the benediction, let them remain that same night in a state of virginity out of reverence to the benediction." Moreover, this enactment was incorporated in the Canon Law, and was subsequently added to the decretals.

This single night's abstinence from connubial bliss was later extended to two, or even three nights. In the Capitularies of the Emperor Charlemagne it is ordained that "the bride at the proper time, according to custom, be blessed in priestly fashion by the priest with prayers and oblations, and after she has been guarded by bridesmaids, as usage demands, and attended by her relations, let her, at the proper time, be legally asked and given and solemnly received; and let them for two or three days devote themselves to prayer and the observation of chastity, in order that good offspring may be begotten, and that they may please the Lord in their actions."

Deeply devout kings and their queens are credited with strict continence throughout the first three nights after marriage, and were accordingly acclaimed as models of virtue by an alleged celibate priesthood. But the reproductive powers of Nature were ever more potent than clerical authority. It became ever more apparent that while the doctrine of abstinence was accepted in theory it was constantly disregarded in practice. The Church deemed it expedient, therefore, to relax its earlier rules, and dispensations were granted for a money-payment by the ecclesiastical authorities. Newly wedded Catholics were thus permitted, without peril to their souls' salvation, to perform unhindered the natural functions of life.

The superlatively chaste conduct of the good, if worldly-wise Tobias, as it is depicted in the uncanonical *Book of Tobit*, was set forth as an example to be followed by the faithful. This Eastern tale tells us that one Sarah, a Jewess, had survived the loss of seven husbands who had died in rapid succession in attempting to break this taboo. These calamities, it appeared, were occasioned by the jealousy and resentment of Asmodeus, a demon spirit who was smitten by Sarah's charms. Sarah herself, was suspected of complicity in these crimes, and once having scolded her maid for some misdemeanour, the girl grew angry and retorted, "Would you kill me as you have already killed seven men, you murderess of your husbands?" Sarah was cut to the quick and even meditated suicide until she reflected on the humiliation this would occasion Raguel, her father. After all, God in his good time would send another lover to comfort her.

Now, it so happened that Sarah's cousin, Tobias, escorted by the archangel Raphael, was then on his way to Raguel's dwelling to lay his heart at Sarah's

feet. The angel assured Tobias that the family estate was his so soon as he married Raguel's daughter. The property was tempting, but the danger of wedding a woman who already mourned the loss of seven husbands needed careful consideration. But the astute angel soon set all Tobias doubts to rest. To defeat the demon, Tobias must remain continent for three nights after marriage and devote himself to prayer with his wife with all due solemnity.

During the journey to Sarah's dwelling, Tobias, when crossing the Tigris, captured a fish, and on Raphael's instructions he extracted its heart, liver and gall. The angel further advised Tobias that: "On the first night burn the heart and liver of the fish, and make a smoke with it, and the demon will be put to flight. On the second night thou wilt be admitted to communion with the holy patriarchs; on the third night thou wilt obtain the blessing that sons shall be begotten of thee safe and sound. But when the third night is passed thou shalt receive the virgin with the fear of God moved by a love of offspring rather than by lust that thou mayest obtain a blessing in respect of sons in the seed of Abraham."

So encourage was Tobias by the angel's assurance that he cast aside his misgivings and wedded the widow, and all Raphael's suggestions met with the happiest results. So soon as he smelt the stinking fish the demon Asmodeus fled, never to return. Everything proceeded smoothly ever afterwards. Raguel, however, had grown so accustomed to interrupting Sarah's husbands on the morning succeeding the bridal that he arose as usual before dawn, and accompanied by his servants, went forth to prepare the usual grave. When everything was ready for the reception of the dead, Sarah's father told her mother to "Send one of the handmaids to see if he is dead, that I may bury him before daybreak." When it was known that the bridegroom still lived, the servants filled in the grave, and a sumptuous banquet replaced the funeral.

Fear of the ghosts of the dead characterizes nearly all the innumerable instances on record of abstinence from carnal intercourse immediately after marriage. And that the banishment of the evil spirit Asmodeus formed the main motive of the original Tobias story is more than probable. For, as Sir James Frazer notes in his *Folk Lore in the Old Testament*: "Curiously enough, the three nights of continence, which these personages (Tobias and Sarah) are said to have observed for the sake of defeating the nefarious designs of a demon, are not so much as mentioned in most of the extant versions of the *Book of Tobit*, including the Greek, the Old Latin (*the Italia*), and the Aramaic."

During the period when the Canon Law was relaxed, and pious Catholics were granted permission by the Church to sleep with their wives on their bridal night, the clergy claimed their fees from their flocks for the privilege thus accorded. But the time came when the laity refused to purchase the dispensations issued by the Church. Frazer mentions the litigation that arose when the Bishops of Amiens insisted on the payment of their dues. These exactions became very unpopular, and, at last, "husbands refused to pay the bishop a fee for the privilege of cohabiting with their own wives on their wedding night. The bishop, on the other hand, stood stiffly on what he conceived to be his legal rights, and accordingly, the mayor and aldermen of Abbeville brought the case before the Parliament of Paris. They alleged that although, by common law husbands are freely allowed to be with their wives on the first night of their marriage, nevertheless the said bishop, of himself, or through his officials, did exact of the

said husbands, of some ten, of others twelve, and of some as much as twenty or thirty francs before he would grant them a licence to lie in the said first night with their own newly-wedded wives; otherwise he compelled them to abstain from their wives for three nights.' "

The Bishop of Amiens, on the other hand, claimed his dues, as being in accordance with the expressed judgments of Church Fathers, as dating from long established custom, and as receiving full authority from the enactments of Church Councils. Yet despite these several pleas the Parliament non-suited the bishop. Its judgment is dated 19th March, 1409, and the original document is still preserved in the National Archives in the French capital.

T. F. PALMER.

A Criticism.

(The Argument a Priori for The Being and the Attributes.)

IN the Prefatory Observations of a Book entitled *The Argument a Priori for the Being and the Attributes*, by Mr. Honyman Gillespie (re-published in 1906), I came across the following statement:—

"After his demonstration of the character of God, he discovered that his delineation was in accordance with the Divine Revelation made to the inspired Prophets of old."

Now this is a very ambitious statement. But reading on, I found another such statement:—

"These" (speaking of his three former works—*The Transitional Moral Attributes*, *The Relative Moral Attributes*, and the *Complex Moral Attributes*), "were all published together as the fifth edition, and have been described as the book suited to meet the argument of *Atheists*,"—"The hardest, closest, most irrefragable argument we have seen for many a day, and so far as we have discovered, without a single weak point," as a learned critic described it. I concluded that this must be a very formidable book, this book written by a man who demonstrated the character of God in accordance with the Prophets of old, so I decided to read on.

It was written in a manner designed to allow of no contradiction of conclusions once the Propositions were satisfactorily demonstrated; each Proposition being fully followed by a Prologomenon, Demonstration, Scholium and Epilogomenon. Now one would imagine that no Proposition, not satisfactorily proved or demonstrated, would or even could be maintained and used as argument. But in this book quite a number of such Propositions are so used. For example. In Division IV. the second Proposition is "God the Lord, who is the wisest of Beings is necessarily of Ineffable Moral Purity." The Demonstration is:—

"The reason why God the Lord must be conceived of as Morally Pure—or cannot by possibility be conceived of as being otherwise—is, because it is most plain that Moral impureness signifies, or involves, some defect or imperfection. And no absurdity could be greater than the absurdity which would couple the idea of any defect or imperfection with God, the Lord."

Now surely our critic would not have us believe that this is "hard, close, and irrefragable argument?"

But the Proposition, or rather the Sub-Proposition which led me to write this article was: "The Material Universe is Finite in Extension." Now to enable my readers to follow more easily his method of argument, I will give, in synopsis, the whole of the argument on Infinity of Extension from Proposition I. It may be dull reading, but I think that a thorough appreciation of this method of argument (which is the logical method) will be instructive to the reader. From this I shall go right on to the examination of the Proposition already stated.

He goes to very laborious lengths to prove that, because of the Infinity of Extension and Duration, the Material Universe must of necessity be Finite.

Division I., Part I. Prop I. "Infinity of Extension is Necessarily Existing."

He proves this satisfactorily by stating that even when the mind endeavours to remove from itself the idea of Infinity of Extension as having real and outward existence, it cannot avoid leaving still within itself the idea of that Infinity. No matter how we try to conceive of the external Infinity of Extension as non-existent, we will, by a reflex examination of our thoughts, find it beyond our power to do so. In short "Everything, the existence of which we cannot but believe, is necessarily existing."

Division I., Part I. Prop II. "Infinity of Extension is Necessarily Indivisible."

This Proposition is proved satisfactorily. To say (he says) that Infinity of Extension is necessarily indivisible is as much as to say that the parts of Infinity of Extension are necessarily indivisible from each other (Indivisible here meaning indivisible either really or mentally.) Now a thing which is actually divided from another must have superficies of its own, every way, and be removed or separated from that other thing, be it by ever so little distance. Being divided and being separated then, mean the same thing. Therefore it is an utter contradiction to say Infinity of Extension can be separated; that is, to say that a part of Infinity of Extension can be separated by a certain distance from Infinity of Extension; *there remaining Infinity of Extension after part of it is taken away*: the part of Infinity of Extension so removed, being removed from the remaining parts to these very same parts; *the part thus being at rest while it is taken away*: the part so removed away being removed from itself; *it still remaining*, inasmuch as there is necessarily Infinity of Extension.

Division I., Part I. Corollary from Prop. II. "Infinity of Extension is Necessarily Immoveable."

This again is proved satisfactorily. He says that when one speaks of Motion of parts, that is the motion of the parts of a thing among themselves, one supposes of necessity, a separation of the parts. And Infinity of Extension, being necessarily incapable of separation, is, therefore, necessarily immoveable. That is, its parts are necessarily immoveable among themselves.

Division I., Part I. Prop III. "There is Necessarily a Being of Infinity of Extension."

Either Infinity of Extension exists without a Support or Substratum, or it exists not without a Support or Substratum. As therefore it is a contradiction to deny that Infinity of Extension exists, so there is, on the supposition of its being unable to subsist without a Substratum, a Substance or Being of Infinity of Extension necessarily existing, though Infinity of Extension and the Being of Infinity of Extension are not different but are identical. This is again proved satisfactorily.

Division I., Part I. Prop. IV. "The Being of Infinity of Extension is Necessarily of Unity and Simplicity."

Because Infinity of Extension is necessarily indivisible it is therefore of the truest Unity. And as it is of the truest Unity, so it must necessarily be of the utmost simplicity. For what more (he says) can be included in simplicity than is implied in unity caused by a thing being necessarily indivisible, we can have no conception. As Infinity of Extension subsists not without a Substratum, there is necessarily a Being of Infinity of Extension, and that Being is necessarily of Unity and Simplicity also.

Now that is the end of his argument in direct connexion with Infinity of Extension, but the same process is gone through with Infinity of Duration. Assuming, therefore, that we have passed, step by step through the stages of Existence, Indivisibility, Immoveableness, Being, and Unity and Simplicity of Infinity of Duration, let us direct our steps to Part III., where he welds these attributes together as it were. It should here be mentioned that he now defines two sorts of Extension. The one sort, that which the *Material Universe has*; the other, the *extension of Infinity of Extension*. Therefore, to distinguish between these two kinds, he confines to matter, (namely to the distance of the extremities of matter from each other) the name of Extension and to the extension of Infinity of Extension, the name Expansion. Henceforth all mention of the word Extension will be in connexion with the Material Universe, and all mention of the word Expansion in connexion with extension of Infinity of Extension—hearceafter called Infinity of Expansion.

Division I., Part III. Prop III. "There is Necessarily but One Being of Infinity of Expansion and Infinity of Duration."

As Every Part of Infinity of Expansion is in

" " " Duration: and

" " the Being of Infinity of Expansion is in

" " " " " Duration.

It must follow that:—

The Whole of Infinity of Expansion is in

" " " Duration, and

" " the Being of Infinity of Expansion is in

" " " " " Duration.

He devotes another Proposition and Sub-Proposition to proving the one-ness of Infinity of Expansion and Infinity of Duration, but I have purposely omitted the further demonstrations, feeling sure that the steps by which I arrived at the Unity of the two will be easily followed.

Now I have traced but two Attributes. But in this book all the usual Attributes of God are thus proposed, proven (?) and accepted and welded together step by step, until at last we have one, grand, whole, God.

Now to the Sub-Proposition "The Material Universe is Finite in Extension." (In the arrangement of the book this follows the Corollary of Proposition IV., but in order to deal with it more effectively I have left it to the end).

Division I., Part I. Sub-Proposition. "The Material Universe is Finite in Extension."

To prove this he argues as follows. That no reason can be assigned for asserting the Infinity of the Material Universe, but one, and that, that the Material Universe is, i.e., must be considered to be, the Substratum of Infinity of Expansion. Now this is altogether too high-handed and arbitrary. His arguments for proving the Existence, Indivisibility, Immoveableness, Being, and Unity and Simplicity of the Infinity of Expansion and Infinity of Duration, are irresistible, and I accept the conclusions. But though it follows (Div. I., Part I., Prop. III) that the Substratum, Substance, or Being of Infinity of Expansion must of necessity be identical with it, it by no means follows that the Material Universe can only be conceived of as Infinite because of its hypothetical suitability as the Substratum, Substance, or Being of Infinity of Expansion. Decidedly No. I can give another reason for suggesting that the Material Universe is Infinite. And that is this. That for no other reason than that man cannot prove to me the finitude of the Material Universe can I suggest that it is Infinite. In point of fact I could as safely assert that, as he asserts the inability to consider the Material Universe as Infinite without its being regarded as the Substratum of Infinity of Expansion. To prove his original Sub-Proposition he assumes that: "The Material Universe is the Substratum of Infinity of Expansion." This is the Proposition which he seeks to disprove. It may be of interest to you to know that over twelve pages of Demonstration were required to disprove this Proposition. And all this because he had satisfied himself that the Material Universe could be considered Infinite only in the capacity of Substratum or Being of Infinity of Expansion. However, the Proposition stated is: "The Material Universe is the Substratum of Infinity of Expansion," and, after due reflection it will become evident that this is tantamount to another contention which is: "The Material Universe is a thorough plenum of Infinity of Expansion." He would have us bear in mind also that by a thorough plenum of matter, must be meant a material plenum in which no empty interstice, or hollow vacuity can be; for the supposition of a plenum in which there are, or can be, true vacuities would be the supposition of no true plenum at all. All of which is granted. He then proceeds to ask the questions:—

(1) "Are the parts of the Material Universe divisible from each other? and Are they moveable among themselves? For" he says, "if they be so divisible, then the Material Universe cannot be Substratum of Infinity of Expansion." Now although I am not trying to prove that the Material Universe is the Substratum of Infinity of Expansion, I must agree with him that:—

(a) As parts of the Material Universe are divisible from each other: and,

(b) As the parts of Infinity of Expansion are neces-

sarily indivisible from each other (Div. I., Part I., Prop. II.): and,

(c) As, finally the Being or Substratum of Infinity of Expansion is not different from it, but that both are identical (Div. I., Part I., Prop. III):

(d) It must follow that the Material Universe is not the Substratum of Infinity of Expansion.

(2) "Is the Material Universe a thorough plenum of matter with no vacuities?" And he emphasizes the fact here that a plenum with a vacuum would be no plenum at all, or at most a plenum only in words.

Now in answering this question he makes two fatal mistakes:—

(a) He does not prove that the Material Universe is not a thorough plenum.

(b) He assumes that his Demonstration of the Proposition—"Matter is Finite in Extension"—is satisfactory.

With regard to the former. So far from proving that the Material Universe is not a thorough plenum of matter he does not even attempt to answer the question, but satisfies himself with the statement: "Why suppose divisible and moveable, and therefore possibly vacuous matter, to be Infinitely Extended?" That statement constitutes his strongest argument against the Infinity of Extension of the Material Universe.

With regard to the latter. "It has been Demonstrated (he says) that matter is Finite in Extension." If you refer to my argument under Div. I., Part I., Sub-Prop. "The Material Universe is Finite in Extension," you will see that he does not Demonstrate the finitude of Extension of matter satisfactorily, therefore his subsequent question (3) is not in order. But we can devote a little time to this question also. The question then is:—

(3) "What then could avail the hypothesis of a plenum, with vacua, but without general limits? (That is without vacuum all round the limits of matter as a whole, seeing that the circumferential spaces of every internal vacuum limit the material extension all round the circumferences of those vacua.)"

Now it is quite obvious that a single vacuum anywhere in the Material Universe would destroy plenitude, as all lines converging on the vacuum would be stopped by its circumference; and this being the case, such an hypothesis could avail us nothing. But, who hypothesizes a plenum with vacua? We do not. He is barking up the wrong tree again. I can assert that the Material Universe is a thorough plenum because man cannot prove that there are vacua in the Material Universe. He himself cannot prove it, but must content himself with the supposition of the absurdity of such an hypothesis.

No more I think, need be said. But if I be accused of making a mountain out of a molehill, I would plead that, in proving this supposedly invincible "Argument a Priori for the Being and the Attributes" to be no more infallible than the Bible, the building of the mountain was worth while.

CHARLES G. MOTT.

Paris.

PARIS, which gives itself such airs, will die;
Its men and buildings crumble into dust;
Paris, the home of splendour and of lust,
Will be o'erthrown and will in ruins lie.
The gay metropolis beside the Seine,
Like an old harlot moves towards her grave;
No Notre Dame or Sacré Cœur can save
From doom this last vile City of the Plain.

Yet (like old Abraham) if I could plead
With Heaven to spare this town, to pass it by,
Because of one good thing in it, my cry
Would cause the stony heart of God to bleed.
This one good thing partakes of the divine;
It is, I need not tell you, good French wine.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

The Book Shop.

THOSE who remember the writings of Lafcadio Hearn will not forget his intense and deep affection for the Japanese race. It is true that his writings are "dated," and that he made a contact with Japan before the demoralizing corruption of Western civilization had thoroughly set in. In reading his studies there is the full flavour of an aristocratic taste, and it goes without saying that he admired the best that Japanese culture was capable of producing. That Japan has her moron inclination none will deny, as this is an affliction peculiar to nearly every race in the world. It will come, therefore, as a pleasant surprise to those who see with their eyes, and listen with their ears that Mr. Kaku Mori, leader of a militant section in the Seiyukai party, in a speech in connexion with the state of Manchuria, definitely turned towards the Asiatic traditional culture and ideals. The student will remember the small but influential book *Bushido* by Inazo Nitobe; he will also remember the ancestor worship which is part of the racial life of the Japanese, and he cannot forget that with this very definite ideal of the Sumurai there is a thrust by the intellect at something having enough human significance to make it memorable. Ancestor worship is the very negation of a break with tradition, and although there are changes in ideas in material things, the traditional side of a race is as fitted as the definition of a triangle by Euclid.

Readers will remember Henry Chester Tracey as the author of *Towards the Open*, a book which I still maintain is one of the most significant books of the present generation. Although it is a platitude to say so, it is nevertheless true; Tracey is a true son of Nature, but he brings something more than his predecessors to his creative work. He is a writer not mesmerized by specious talks of progress, and his point of view is very similar to that of Emerson, who made famous the saying of, "One world at a time." I have received a copy of *American Naturalists* by Tracey, the publishers being E. P. Dutton & Co., New York. In this book he takes as his subject certain men and women whom he calls "naturalists," and his writing shows that he knows his theme and presents it from his own characteristic viewpoint. He is at his best in the essay on Thoreau, and writing of him, in the following extract, he gives a very definite idea of Thoreau's attitude to life: "To the Greeks, Demeter and Kore; to me nature, or Nature, and without superstition. That is the supreme fact for me, through a lifetime." Readers, if they acquire a copy of this book will find that its significance lies in the fact that it does not move in the orbit of romance, nor in the dry world of science. There is a grip in Tracey's literary vocabulary. It appears on a high conversational level, free from affectation, clear in its meaning, and well worth the time given by the reader who reads for his own improvement.

If it were possible to know correctly and justly estimate an individual's character by the music he creates, it would be an interesting study to use this method on Mr. Noel Coward. It is true that an old German mystic believed that each person was a bell, and by the sound of his voice Boehme professed to know a person. On this basis Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert and Mendelsohn would at least be free from any verdict of pettiness. In the works of these composers there is a spaciousness of outlook which at least pays homage to the nobility of man, and it was with these thoughts that I became fascinated with a gramophone record entitled, "Someday I'll Find You"—Waltz (From the Film "Private Lives") H.M.V. B 6156, and, as far as I am able to find out, both the words and music are by Mr. Noel Coward. Readers familiar with the chord of the diminished seventh will know that there is in this particular chord a note of uncertainty which pervades what is three quarters of a major chord. In the gramophone record just mentioned there is the subtle atmosphere of melancholy, and it would seem Mr. Noel Coward just hovers between the two worlds of doubt and vigorous affirmation. Readers will be entranced with the original scoring of this record,

which in parts reminds one of the idyll of Siegfried, which was written by Wagner on the happy occasion of the birth of his son. In looking over the soiled pages of the history of mankind it would seem that all sorts of goals have appeared and disappeared, and the other worldsmen have only been too ready to lay coarse hands on the goal of happiness. If Mr. Noel Coward will take out of his music that peculiar something which is a no-saying to life he will be in the good company of Omar, who is in no doubt about the wisdom of:—

"Better be merry with the fruitful Grape,
Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit."

On looking over the above I find that this note has nothing to do with books. Perhaps I shall be forgiven if I call a gramophone record a musical page.

C-DE-B.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

A PROTEST.

SIR,—I desire to register my protest against the following paragraph which appeared in a recent issue of the *Freethinker*:

The *Saltcoats Herald* is true to the newspaper tradition where the *Freethinker* is concerned. A writer in the *Herald* deals with two recent articles which appeared in these columns. But he refers to the *Freethinker* as "a certain publication." It would be better to mention it by name. Of all the cowardly things that ever crawled the earth Christianity stands second to none.

I am the writer to which your correspondent refers. I contribute to *Ardrosson and Saltcoats Herald* under the initials "C.S." On the occasion to which the writer refers I chose not to name the publication concerned. Two marked copies of the *Freethinker* were sent to me unsolicited and the sender did not reveal his identity. Yet he has the audacity to infer that the followers of Christ are "cowards."

It is unfair to blame the editor of the *Ardrosson and Saltcoats Herald* because I (a correspondent) did not choose to give the *Freethinker* a free advertisement. He is blaming the *Herald* because one correspondent did not do as he expected him to do. Could a more idiotic attitude be imagined?

The paragraph in the *Freethinker* was surely not a "Sugar Plum," although it was under that heading. It savours more of the "Acid Drop." The last sentence in the paragraph is a nasty one, and shows that the writer has gone off the rails somewhere. If Christianity is a cowardly thing, why spend so much time, energy and ink, in running it down?

Has your correspondent ever pondered over the message given by Jesus Christ to His disciples? Even if we only regard Christ as a man we must admit He was a heroic figure and set a lofty ideal before his fellowmen. This is so obvious that it does not need to be stressed. The statements made by Christ could only have been made by a strong and courageous man. Surely the Editor of the *Freethinker* recognizes that Christianity is a powerful force in the world to-day. If he does not, why does he use all his time, etc., in endeavouring to combat its influence? I am inclined to think that the *Freethinkers'* quarrel is with "organized Christianity," not with Jesus Christ himself.

Perhaps some day soon I will be able to determine as to whether or not the writer of the paragraph referred to, and the sender of the three marked copies of the *Freethinker* are "one and the same person."

"C.S."

FREETHOUGHT IN GERMANY.

SIR,—From the earliest days of the Brüning Government, decrees have been formulated against the "propaganda of Atheists," and special laws have been accepted in the various State Parliaments backing up this acrimonious campaign. Especially bitter has been the

attack against the International of Proletarian Freethinkers and the good work it has achieved constituted a grave danger to the reactionary government, in that it was the only Freethought organization to refuse to bow before Kulturfascism. Now the Bruning Government has banned and disorganized all proletarian organizations of Freethought including their publishing houses. The work of these organizations constitutes a danger to "freedom of conscience" according to the Bruning Government.

The grave significance of this action to Germany will be understood by your readers, but I would also like to draw their attention to the fact that no Archbishop or Pope is clamouring for an "anti-persecution" campaign. This lack of action on the part of the clergy, who are so very much concerned with "freedom of conscience," need not deter, however, all Freethinkers from protesting against this preliminary step of a repressive campaign throughout Europe by the reactionaries, who believe in suppressing thought as a method of solving economic difficulties.

L. CORINNA.

AQUINAS AND CAUSATION.

SIR,—Mr. Taylor writes an interesting article in your columns of November 13, on the subject of Mr. Lunn's *Flight from Reason*, but I do not quite follow him on the subject of the First Cause.

He quotes the following argument, cited by Mr. Lunn from Aquinas:—

Some things move. Therefore they are moved. But this cannot go on indefinitely, or there would be no First Mover, and thus nothing moved. And so we come to a First Mover, who "is understood by all to be God."

I feel that a little comment is necessary on the fact that Mr. Taylor attacks this argument firstly by asking why the First Mover should be God, and secondly by appealing to the modern conception of causality as a web and not a chain. The quotation seems open to more direct dealing, for it is intrinsically bad logic. Mr. Taylor appears to concede something to Aquinas "if reason be identified with medieval metaphysics." But the logic remains absurd no matter what philosophic conceptions we employ. When Aquinas says, "Some things move. Therefore they are moved," it is tantamount to saying that nothing will move unless it be moved. He then works his way from this very premise to the conclusion that the First Mover moved without being moved. That is to say, the conclusion contradicts one of the premises on which it is based. Perhaps this is part of Mr. Lunn's *Flight from Reason*.

It is interesting to look even more closely at the quotation. Aquinas is made out to say "But this cannot go on indefinitely or there would be no First Mover, and thus nothing moved." Why can it not go on indefinitely? The premise we are working from merely tells us that in order to move a thing must be moved. There is nothing about that which precludes us from going on indefinitely. It would be more to the point for Aquinas to have continued, "And this must go on indefinitely or we should arrive at a First Mover, which would be absurd since he would have moved without being moved." And it will not do to say that the First Mover might have moved something without himself moving, or the whole argument breaks down. We might illustrate how it does so by re-arranging Aquinas in this manner:—

Some things move. Therefore they are moved. But the things that move them do not necessarily move themselves, in doing so. Therefore there arises no necessary question of going on indefinitely, and thus no necessary question of a First Mover.

It is no use. Take it how you will the logic is grossly faulty. But Mr. Lunn says it is "undoubtedly valid." Might I, without offence, suggest the way in which he is unconsciously reading it so as to produce this illusion?

Some things move. Therefore they are moved. But this sort of thing cannot be allowed to go on indefinitely, or we should be left without a First Mover. But we simply must have *that*. And so we come to a First Mover.

MEDICUS.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4, near Clapham North Station): 7.30, Mr. J. Ebury—"Is Freethought Reactionary?"

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Sunday, November 20, Inspector Taggall—"Women Police in the East." Questions invited.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D. Lit.—"Morality and Modernity."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, November 21, Mr. A. D. McLaren will speak on "The Intellectual Environment."

THE CONWAY DISCUSSION CIRCLE (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 7.0, Tuesday, November 22, H. Levy (Professor of Mathematics at the Imperial College of Science, University of London)—"Is Science Ethically Neutral?"

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, N.): 6.45, Mr. A. Kohn (Socialist Party of Great Britain)—"Socialism and Religion." Visitors welcomed.

WEMBLEY AND DISTRICT BRANCH (Mitchell's Restaurant, 114 High Road, Wembley): 7.30, Sunday, November 20, Mr. E. C. Saphin—"Why was God Invented?"

OUTDOOR.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Sunday, November 20, Mr. C. Tuson, 3.30, Messrs. Bryant and A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant and Tuson. The *Freethinker* and other Pioneer literature can be bought during and after our meetings of Mr. Dunn, outside the Park in Bayswater Road.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, Price Street, Birkenhead, near Hamilton Square): 7.0, Sunday, November 20, Mr. J. V. Shortt (Liverpool), President Liverpool (Merseyside Branch N.S.S.—"God in Birkenhead.")

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Shakespeare Rooms, Edmund Street): 7.0, Sunday, November 20, Mr. B. A. Le Maine—"The Christianity of Dr. Barnes."

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Cafe, Godwin Street): 7.30, Sunday, November 20, Mr. Harvey (Bingley)—"Towards a Better Religion."

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Pavilion Restaurant (Morley's)): 8.0, Tuesday, November 22, Mr. H. F. Latimer-Voight—"The Life and Work of Charles Bradlaugh."

BURNLEY (Barden House Club, S.D.P.): 11.0, Sunday, November 20, H. P. Turner—"The Birth of Horus."

CHESTER LABOUR PARTY (Peoples' Hall, Delemere Street, Chester): 7.30, Wednesday, November 23, Mr. W. Ll. Owen (Liverpool Branch N.S.S.)—"Economic Freedom—Some Snags."

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S. (Branch Rooms, Front Street): 7.0, Sunday, November 20, Mr. T. W. Raine. A lecture.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Sunday, November 20, Lecture—"O.I.C. No. 2." Speaker, Mr. Jack Pickford. Questions and Discussion. All welcome.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (City Hall, Albion Street, No. 2 Room): 6.30, Sunday, November 20, Mr. D. R. Smith—"Spiritualism." Questions and discussion. Silver collection.

HANTS AND DORSET BRANCH (36 Victoria Park Road, Bournemouth): 6.30, Sunday, November 20, A Lecture.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Sunday, November 20, Mr. A. M. H. Robertson—"A Glimpse of Modern Russia."

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