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Views and Opinions.

Spiritualism.

LAST week we published an article on Spiritualism from Mr. James Leigh, who is, we believe, associated with the *Two Worlds*, a weekly organ of the Spiritualist movement. I think it was intended as a comment, rather than a reply to the "Views and Opinions" published a week before, and Mr. Leigh's main contentions are that Freethinkers simply will not believe in Spiritualism no matter what the "evidence" produced, and that this prejudice is cloaked by attacks on fraudulent mediums as though there "were no genuine mediums or reliable researchers at large." So the article appeared, as I like my readers to see what the other side has to say, so long as something is said that is worth the reading. And Mr. Leigh's contribution touches some issues that are much wider than Spiritualism.

Mr. Leigh suggests that I wrote as I did because I was impressed by some recent exposures of mediums. I can assure him that they served as no more than an occasion for illustrating the persistence of folly, the ease with which rogues can exploit the simple-minded, and the utter uselessness of producing rebutting evidence to a certain type of mind. Exposure of photographers of ghosts, slate-writing mediums, materializing mediums, etc., appear to have no effect whatever where the average Spiritualist is concerned. These mediums still go on with the same performances, and they still receive justification in the Spiritualistic press. If some mediums are detected in a fraud so flagrant that excuse or misunderstanding is impossible, the critic is met with the retort either that others who have not (yet) been exposed are genuine, or that the exposed medium was not exposed on some other occasion, therefore he is good evidence of the "reality" of spirit intercourse. Or if a professional conjuror performs tricks that lead those who do not quite see how they are done to conclude that they do at any rate offer a perfectly natural explanation of

the wonders of the seance room, the reply is that these conjurors are really spirit mediums, either with or without knowing it. One wonders what is the value of experience if we are not to use what we do understand as an explanation of what we do not? If history were read on that line what on earth should we make of it?

As I said, I did not write to convert Spiritualists; I wrote chiefly in the hope of opening the eyes of those who are not Spiritualists. And I am quite sure that if those who attended a Spiritualistic performance did so in the same frame of mind with which they would attend a conjuring entertainment, and declined to take their own "puzzlement" as grounds for accepting all that is told them, there would be few converts. My own office is open on a convenient occasion to any medium, and I promise them I will not bother about any of the usual preparations to prevent fraud. I should be merely interested in what they are doing. But I do not think that any medium will be able to produce evidence of "spirit intercourse." Perhaps the massed volumes of the *Freethinker* would keep spirits away.

* * *

The Value of Experience.

Mr. Leigh, in common with most Spiritualists, harps upon the "experience" of believers and of the "evidence" they have received. Now experience is a good thing, and evidence should always receive attention, but—and this is a very big "but"—we must be careful to weigh the value of the evidence in terms of the ability of the witness to understand his experience. For example. If I give "evidence" as to the nature of the complaint of a man whom I saw writhing in apparent agony on the ground, and which as something seen forms part of my experience, the value of my conclusion will entirely depend upon my equipment before I had this particular experience. If I started with the equipment of the New Testament Jesus or a present-day savage my "evidence" would be that the man had been seized by an evil spirit, and the fact would be to me as clear as daylight. If, however, I started with the equipment of one with a fair acquaintance with modern science I should dismiss the spirit theory altogether.

I do not say that every medium is a fraud, no one who really understands all that goes on in Spiritualistic meetings does say so. But I am convinced of several things. First, that a large number of mediums are frauds, and that whole groups of spiritualistic performances are fraudulent, and I decline to admit that my inability to understand how a particular medium does his trick is insufficient to warrant my saying his performance is a trick, and that I must spend my time following every new performer before dismissing him as a trickster. One might as well decline to dismiss witchcraft until one had examined every new case that is reported.

But, nevertheless, I do agree with Mr. Leigh that where testimony is concerned "lack of practical knowledge" will prohibit one contributing anything of importance. Only I would ask him to apply this very sound principle to the testimony of the average Spiritualist—and I include among the "average" those men of science who are so often thrown at the head of the unbeliever. For the rule as to the value of evidence applies to all alike. A scientist "off his beat" may make as great a fool of himself as the Editor of the *Sunday Express* when giving his opinion on a matter of science. A man can only speak with wisdom within the confines of his own department. Outside these confines speech may be only a medium for folly.

* * *

How to Investigate.

Now putting on one side these ectoplasmic incarnations of dead men, portraits of ghosts, written messages from the dead, finger-prints of dead men, etc., as having been shown to be fraudulent over and over again, let us take another group of "experiences" altogether. Anyone who has studied Spiritualism, at both first and second hand, will recognize in much so-called mediumship exhibitions of dual or triple, or compound personality, and an exhibition of various automatisms perfectly well known in connexions quite distinct from "spirit-intercourse." And I would ask what kind of equipment the average Spiritualist—whether of the "higher" or "lower" type has to warrant his expressing an opinion on the subject. Dr. Hyslop, himself a Spiritualist, was driven to admit that few Spiritualists are aware that when one eliminates from Spiritualism all that may be explained by dissociation, how little there is left calling for explanation. To read of the elaborate precautions taken by so-called scientific investigators to prevent fraud, is like taking the blood-pressure of a sporting tipster in order to determine the value of his "tip" concerning next year's Derby. And as to the "evidence" of the rank and file Spiritualist, upon whom so many mediums live, I would ask Mr. Leigh to consider whether their equipment is such as to assure their detecting either the existence of fraud or the existence of abnormal or pathological mental conditions? And when we add to this the existence of some kind of a belief in a future life, and the desire to get into touch with the dead, the demonstration of the incapacity of the witness would seem to be complete. The curious thing is that while with every question other than a religious one it is expected that a man should have some kind of an equipment before commencing an investigation, no man is too great an ignoramus, no man is too stupid to be able to investigate a religious subject and to give an authoritative opinion on it.

So I am not impressed by Mr. Leigh's remark that "some of the most brilliant investigators of psychic phenomena have been men who were committed to a rationalist belief." In the first place I do not know exactly what he means by "rationalist belief." That term appears to cover in common usage a belief in anything from a fully-fledged god down to Atheism, and so has little value in controversy to those who like clear-cut terms and detest ambiguity of language. But my comment would be to the same end. I do not care who the investigator is or what are his conclusions. The first thing to be settled is his qualifications for undertaking the investigation. Mere experience is not enough, it is the capacity of the observer to understand and check his experience that is of importance. It is not enough to produce evidence, it turns upon the quality of the evidence. And the mixture of fraud, self-deception, and misunderstood

psychology that passes muster as proof of spirit intercourse is not to be settled in the way in which this question is decided—usually to the satisfaction of Spiritualists.

* * *

Mere Facts.

I can assure Mr. Leigh I am not trying to get rid of a subject by a "clever piece of phraseology." I am only pointing out obvious considerations that should occur to anyone who impartially considers the matter. It is useless replying that there is a vast literature running to thousands of volumes dealing with "psychic phenomena." There are many thousands of volumes dealing with the phenomena of religion, and the thousands of volumes are reduced to nothing at all by a simple understanding of the origin and nature of religion. It is useless, also, citing the names of distinguished and learned men who believe in Spiritualism. There has never yet been a delusion that has not been supported by distinguished and learned men. Otherwise these delusions would never have had the vogue they attained. No belief ever had more distinguished support than did witchcraft; it is not yet dead, but the volumes of testimony to the actuality of the existence of the devil and of human traffic with him, has not prevented its being dismissed as an idle superstition. Superstitions are built on "experience" and are perpetuated by authority.

Mr. Leigh appears to be under the impression that the Freethinker—if he is to live up to his name—ought to spend his time following up every reported case of spirit intercourse, and either accepting it or disproving it. Why? When a Christian tells me he has had a vision of Jesus, or has felt Jesus "within" him, I do not need to investigate his particular case. I recognize the symptoms as one with which every adequately equipped student is familiar, and can place it in its proper category at once. What is the use of experience and of an understanding of things if we are all the time to act as though the experience and the understanding did not exist? Mr. Leigh quite fails to recognize that his complaint of Freethinkers not paying Spiritualists the compliment of believing that there may yet be something in his disguised animism, despite a recognition of its nature, is beside the point. As a mere phenomenon the Freethinker does not condemn the whole of this self-styled "psychic investigation." He merely claims to understand it.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

I WOULD the stony-hearted God,
Who sits above on a white throne,
And hears his hapless children groan
When they are smitten with his rod,
Should stand before my judgment-seat:
To judge the Judge is only meet.

Assuming that I were the Lord
And he the prisoner should be,
The punishment I would award
Is that he taste man's misery;
When he should know one bitter hour,
I would restore to him his power.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

The Mormon Bible.

"Thus do I make my fool my purse."—*Shakespeare*.

"Most people leave their brains at home when they attend a place of worship."—*Mark Twain*.

THAT a mere schoolboy of fourteen years of age should have founded a religion is one of the curiosities of history. That boy was Joe Smith, the founder and prophet of Mormonism, the youngest, and one of the liveliest, of the religious systems of the present-day world.

It all happened about a hundred years ago. Most religions started so long since that the tracks are lost in the twilight of mythology. Mormonism is on a different plane. Grandchildren of one of the founders of that religion were speaking in London quite recently, and there are old men and women still living at Salt Lake City who knew some of the original disciples.

How did the whole thing arise? Joe Smith, an earnest student of the Christian Bible, living at Manchester, Ontario, U.S.A., "got religion." He not only attended a place of worship, sang hymns, and said prayers, but he had a brand-new revelation of his own. Remember, he was only fourteen years of age. One day he rushed to the local minister's house and told him that he had seen a bush afire, and two angels who had conversed with him. They told him that his name would be known the world over, for good or evil. Believers point out, with pride, that the name of "Smith" is known everywhere; but it is quite safe to add that members of that numerous and popular family do not all realize the divine importance of this prophet of Mormonism.

What the minister said to Joe is not recorded. Perhaps he told him the story of George Washington and the cherry tree. Maybe he patted his head and advised him to go and play. If so, the advice was not taken, for Joe started writing a full-length Bible, an up-to-the-minute Scripture, one hundred per cent American, yes sir!

Boys have done remarkable things in literature. Chatterton and Shelley, to name no others. But Joe Smith's Bible was an extraordinary effort. *The Book of Mormon*, as it is called, is a volume of over five hundred pages, written in imitation of the Christian Bible. It is not great literature, but, for that matter, neither is the Christian New Testament in the original Greek. (Translated from "canine Greek to divine English," said Swinburne, himself a master of language.) It was English brains that made these Gospels a work of art, just as Fitzgerald added the Persian Omar Khayyam, to the bead-roll of English literature.

Religious folks were not all litterateurs in the United States in the earlier half of the nineteenth century. Young Joe knew his audience only too well. Mad he may have been, but there was plenty of method in his madness. His story of the angels and the burning bush was a tall story, but his account of the origin of *The Book of Mormon* was a stroke of genius. Boy that he was, he realized that you cannot startle simple people with a commonplace. Accordingly, he stated that he found the sacred script engraved on gold plates in a stone box in a garden. All he had done was to transcribe the message. Hey! Presto! He prefaced his new Bible with signed statements from enthusiastic followers. These are still reprinted as a preface to the Mormon Scripture, just as the lick-spittle preface to that padded buffoon King James the First is used as a preface to the Christian Bible in the Authorized Version.

Cleverly, young Smith linked up his new evangel with current tradition, and he claimed that the alleged miracles of his new dispensation were as reliable as

those in the Christian Bible. Romish priests do the same with their side-shows at Lourdes and elsewhere. Greek Church priests work the same oracle. Yet Joe was a schoolboy, and the priests have the experience of centuries behind them in the sorry art of spoofing. So far Joe had done very well, better than Mahomet in the earliest years of his mission. Joe was crude and unsophisticated. Mahomet was a handsome man of middle life with a striking personality, and a born leader of men. Yet Joe Smith had the bigger following in the early years, and he had the advantage of becoming a martyr.

Rival religionists were jealous of the Mormons, and began, as they always do, to lie freely. It was rumoured that the Latter Day Saints were everything they should not be. Persecution followed, and Joe Smith was shot in a riot. The seal of martyrdom had been set on this infant church, which did not then number more than a few hundreds of believers.

Fortunately for the Mormons, they possessed a real leader in Brigham Young. He it was who assumed the prophet's mantle, and saved the tiny church from utter extinction. Young was a very different type from the dreamy youth whom he succeeded. Indeed, the new leader was far more like Columbus than Christ, and his practical handling of a desperate situation entitles him to a definite place in his country's history.

Mormonism is the youngest of religions, and because it is so modern, its origins can be checked at every stage. This makes the story fascinating and illuminative. Joe Smith had "a bee in his bonnet," but his story of the angels and the gold plates was swallowed by simple, worthy folk, who were honest citizens and good workmen. Not only that, but equally decent people thousands of miles away in Europe believed in it also. Still more, they were willing to give a tenth of their income to this Church. To-day, the Mormon Church is a wealthy organization, with a miniature Ecclesiastical Commission, not unlike that associated with the Church of England. But unlike its British rival, its properties are not slums, nor its employees sweated. Salt Lake City is a model city, an example of town-planning, and its temple, which holds 10,000 people, is a masterpiece of architecture. Mormons are of all nationalities, over 80,000 having emigrated from Europe, 36,000 being British, and Joe Smith's Scripture may be read in nearly all the tongues of Europe.

Does not this plain statement throw a lurid light on religious origins? Joe Smith was as mad as Delia Bacon, who started the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy. Yet his followers accepted his fiction at its face-value, just as the early Christians accepted their Bible stories and the ravings of the early "Fathers" of their church. Smith's persecution and martyrdom confirmed them in their faith. Brigham Young was the Saint Paul of Mormonism, supplying the practical, business-like touch which the original founder lacked. To-day the Mormon Church is a tribute to his sagacity and statesmanship, and Salt Lake City and numerous other townships and farm-lands, where once was primeval wilderness, are his lasting memorial.

Looked at impartially, the success of Mormonism is not due to the "supernatural" element. The original disciples may have been impressed by Joe's stories, but one cannot help thinking that the prospect of actually journeying to a land of promise was a sufficient bait to subsequent followers. "Paris is well worth a mass," said the Protestant Henry of Navarre, and the remark held true of America, especially to people living under hard conditions in Europe. Something similar may be noted in the case of Christianity. Its promise of heaven with golden streets was dazzling to men and women living under conditions of

poverty and slavery. The Christian doctrine of quietism under affliction made a further appeal. Nietzsche calls Christianity a religion for slaves, and not for supermen. It is a true criticism, and applies to the whole Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

"In the presence of Royalty lay the flattery on with a trowel," said Beaconsfield. Priests have always laid it on with a trowel when they made their promises. The glory of Mormonism and its similarities and peculiarities with other and older religions are so startling that they strike the observer with a sense of familiarity, like seeing the same man in different clothes.

MIMNERMUS.

The Glories of Prehistoric Crete.

THE earliest records of culture are preserved in unwritten characters. Perry, Elliot Smith, and others claim Egypt as the birthplace of civilization, while Flinders Petrie, the eminent Egyptologist, regards Elam as the most ancient seat of culture.

While men were still in the old Stone Age in Europe a highly æsthetically gifted race dwelt in the valleys of Mesopotamia. Perhaps contemporaneously and certainly shortly afterwards, Egypt established its first dynasty about 5500 B.C. "From that time onwards," declares Petrie, "the Egyptian maintained his records. For the earlier centuries we have fragments of the official annals giving every king's reign exact to a single day, and the height of the Nile for every year." (*Some Sources of Human History*, p. 23.)

In the Mediterranean Island of Crete or Candia, as the Venetians in later ages renamed it, a remarkable civilization had also arisen. Its inception is lost in antiquity, but Crete existed as an independent State as early as the Pyramid Period in Egypt, more than 4,000 years B.C.

Favoured by a genial climate, adequate rainfall, and with its fertile valleys enjoying a higher temperature than any other island in the Greek archipelago, Crete is very productive, and is capable of sustaining a considerable population. Moreover, with her contiguity to the coasts of Syria, Asia Minor, and Northern Africa, and her numerous city communities in contact with the sea, Crete was admirably equipped as a nursery for a culture of European type.

Archæological researches in Crete disclose several phases of cultural life. The prolonged prehistoric period of the island has been termed the Minoan, which came to an end with the introduction of iron. Throughout this period the dynasty of Minos (at least, so saith tradition) reigned at Cnossus. The earliest archæological remains date back to 4000 B.C., but these are so highly developed that they presuppose a long anterior era of evolution. At Cnossus and elsewhere deep deposits of Neolithic age have yielded pottery, stone implements and images in stone and clay. The ceramic ware of this Neolithic culture furnishes conclusive evidence of high artistic power. The porcelain vessels are beautifully symmetrical in outline, splendid in surface and decoration. The stone idols are very distinctive, and are markedly dissimilar to any discovered in neighbouring lands.

About 3000 B.C. the knowledge and use of metals began to displace the long-treasured stone. Pure copper utilities were now made, but these were soon superseded by bronze utensils. Copper was native to the island, but the tin, which with copper forms the alloy-bronze, was imported from abroad. This at least suggests the existence of sea-borne commerce. Again, at this time the Cretans commenced a close

imitation of Egyptian pottery in their native wares. This imitation is notable, both in body, colour and design. And, as bronze had long been in use in Egypt, there can be little question that the Cretans derived their acquaintance with this alloy from the Land of the Nile.

Profound peace apparently prevailed throughout Crete for many generations, and each of its city settlements may have retained a semi-independence. About 2000 B.C., however, two urban communities, which afterwards became great centres of Cretan culture, began to assume authority as overlords. The first to become opulent and powerful seems to have been Phæstus, but the Athens of Crete—Cnossus—soon eclipsed all rivals. Phæstus owned the productive Messara plain whose bountiful harvests were the main source of its wealth. Cnossus, on the other hand, was Crete's commercial centre and derived much of its affluence from its proximity to the sea.

Phæstus and Cnossus alike erected princely palaces, and solemn and stately temples during what are classified as the *First and Second Middle Minoan Periods*. Pottery, as it is less perishable than objects of wood, metal and other materials, furnishes the chief evidences of Cretan life. Yet, as Dr. D. G. Hogarth states: "Engraved stones and clay tablets or labels prove that a system of writing, which had already developed hieroglyphic characters from earlier pictographs, was in use; and the fragments of painted fresco the stone vessels, and the obvious imitations of metal forms by potters testify to an abundant and rich apparatus of domestic life."

The cities in Eastern Crete were less advanced. Cnossus retained its supremacy during the *Second Middle Minoan Period*, but about 1800 B.C. it perished in flames. Whether this catastrophe was occasioned by military aggression or through accident is not known. Whatever the cause of the conflagration, the city was restored soon afterwards with all its earlier splendour.

Several generations later, Phæstus was also reduced to ruin. And it is noticeable that after the fall of this city the stagnant communities of Eastern Crete recovered their former affluence. It is conjectured that the now overthrown Phæstus had been their oppressor.

Cnossus now displayed great magnificence and all its former glories were eclipsed. The city reigned without a rival, and its burnt palace was replaced by an even more imposing structure. This splendid edifice was adorned with a vast collection of artistic treasures, while it was furnished on an extraordinarily lavish scale. In 1900 the excavations of Sir Arthur Evans restored these hidden treasures to light, and their recovery not only constituted the outstanding archæological sensation of the time, but necessitated a revision of long accepted opinions.

With the return of Cnossus to opulence and power the East Cretan cities again declined. Perhaps the tribute levied by the ruling city reduced these vassal communities to poverty. Still, it may be fairly assumed that the cultural influences of Cnossus descended as a priceless legacy to later classic Greece. The various Hellenic traditions of the Age of Minos owe their inception to the period when Cnossus was the premier power on land and sea in the Greek archipelago.

At the apex of its power, Crete was the home of a luxurious race whose rulers dwelt in palatial stone structures. In fact, stone houses were in common use. The palaces were well-lighted, ventilated and drained. It has been said that the system of sanitation then in use was superior to any other for at least a thousand years afterwards. Again, as Hogarth tells us: "The precious metals were abundant; the

arts of sculpture, painting and engraving were far advanced . . . The clay tablets found in great numbers prove that book-keeping was understood, and that a decimal system was in use. The prevalent religion was of a comparatively high type, the idea of supreme divinity being expressed in feminine form, and the link with humanity being supplied by a son-consort."

The Cretan mode of government was apparently monarchical. Cnossus was long the centre of imperial power, and taxes were imposed on the minor city communities both on the island and in outlying dependencies. These prehistoric people were familiar with the sea and were doubtless in constant communication with Egypt and other foreign lands.

The fourteenth century B.C. proved a tragic time to Crete. Disaster descended, and, even when more peaceful times returned, the city states were seen to have suffered severely. The causes of the cataclysm remain conjectural. Still, on a reduced scale, Cretan civilization was preserved practically unchanged.

Time rolled on, and a few centuries later a widespread catastrophe occurred in Crete. The Achæans—the semi-civilized Greeks immortalized by Homer—invaded the island and appear to have destroyed its splendid civilization and culture. Crete, now overrun by an alien race, witnessed the extinction of its grandeur and glory, and in succeeding ages became little more than a traditional story or fading legend of far distant days. Although magnificent Cnossus and the many minor Cretan cities had fallen, never to rise again, their cultural impulse was not completely lost. It exercised a potent influence in many Mediterranean lands, and probably inspired historical Greece in its loftiest flights of science, literature, and art.

T. F. PALMER.

What Atheism Means to Me.

SOME twenty odd years ago a young student who was a sincere and active Christian, and who was, therefore, an unwavering believer in the existence and power of God, made a solemn vow.

Being certain of the need for a firm belief in the Deity as an essential to right living, he determined to acquaint himself with all the most convincing arguments which would enable him to impress this necessity upon the doubter and the unbeliever. His studies, however, drove him soon to the discovery that the chief link in the chain of Christian evidence was missing. The one fundamental tenet, the belief in God's existence, was invariably taken either as proved or as not requiring proof. This was all very well for discussions with such as were already convinced. But for those who demanded proof instead of assumption, something more was clearly needed as a basis of discussion than the usual arguments from Creation, Tradition or Personal Revelation.

The argument from Tradition failed in that it did no more than its modern exponents. It took God's existence for granted and made no attempt at proof. Personal revelation was unsatisfactory because it was no better than mere assertion without proof. However reliable an individual might be, his claim that the existence of (let us say) Umtipoo had been revealed to him personally would not, of itself, be proof that Umtipoo really existed. The argument from Creation was equally inconclusive. For if the Universe were proof of the existence of a Creator, then the Creator would be proof of the existence of a Super-Creator—and so on backwards indefinitely. Proof of a First Cause was as impossible as proof of a Last Effect.

With the inadequacy of these so-called "proofs" our friend the student was quite familiar. Yet, never having examined the sources of his own convictions, he was so sure of God's existence that he made a solemn vow to discover a least one proof that should be irrefutable. Since God was the most real of all realities, it followed that there must be some method of proving his existence even more conclusively than the existence of any other thing in creation. And since God was also the Truth, he confidently added the stipulation that he would debar no line of investigation and no conclusion whose truth could be proved, no matter how much these might appear to go counter to his preconceived ideas.

It is safe to say that, if the consequences of this attitude could have been foreseen, our erstwhile student's religious fervour would have prevented him from adopting it. He would have preferred, as so many persons prefer, to go through life with his head buried in the sands of illusion. But fortunately he had no cause to fear the truth more than his own predilections. So he was not tempted to take refuge in that coward's castle of religious bigotry and self-deceit which says: "I refuse to admit any evidence, however true, which contradicts my religious beliefs." And the result, though slow in arriving, was inevitable.

For fifteen years I, who was that student, struggled single-handed through a welter of religious ambiguity and obscurantism. Never in all that time did I read a single book by an avowed Atheist, Agnostic, Rationalist or Freethinker. I was not even aware of the existence of the last two titles; while an Agnostic was, for me, simply one who was too lazy to trouble his head about religion. As for the term *Atheist*, this was synonymous with the word *criminal*, and represented one who, knowing religion to be essential to morality, had deliberately abandoned it as an excuse for his immorality. My ignorance was, indeed, profound; yet truth would not be denied. In the end God, Jehovah, Allah, angels, devils, spirits and the whole phantasmagoria with which man in his ignorant imagination still peoples the world of reality, vanished into that limbo of useless nothings whence Baal, Osiris, Wodin and the rest of the pantheon of dead and forgotten deities have long since disappeared.

I need not explain in detail how my gradual conversion came about; nor how at a later date chance brought me in touch with those two great emancipatory organizations, the N.S.S. and the R.P.A. My purpose is to indicate what my new outlook means to me, and what I believe it can mean to anyone who might choose to adopt the Atheistic philosophy after having thoroughly investigated its *bona fides*. For Atheism has all to gain and nothing to lose or fear from the closest scrutiny—a fact which is proved to the hilt by the behaviour of its bitterest enemies, who steadfastly refuse to meet its exponents in open debate and who, in their written attacks upon it, invariably misrepresent its aims and vilify its adherents.

As may be gathered from what I have already said, Atheism stands first and foremost in my mind as an attitude of unswerving adherence to and acceptance of truth, no matter where it may lead. And by truth I mean conclusions and statements which can be verified by personal experience, and which do not depend upon mere hearsay evidence or traditional authority. This does not exclude the consideration of theories or possibilities. But it forbids the assertion as truths of propositions which are incapable of proof or which are as yet unproved. On these grounds it is an untruth to assert that God exists; and it is a truth to assert that God, in the religious sense of the term, does not exist. With any other meaning that may be

applied to the term we are not concerned, since to use it in any but a religious sense would be a plain misuse of language. It is as unjustifiable, for example, to say that the term God means Nature, as it is to say that Atheism is a religion.

Seeing that the fundamental assertion of Theistic religions can be proved false, it follows that all the other beliefs based upon it are suspect. The fact that these differ enormously in different religions—even in different sects of the same religion—is further cause for suspicion. But, to confine ourselves to the Christian religion, the main beliefs which I reject for lack of evidence are (1) the use of prayer, (2) the innate sinfulness of man, and (3) a life after death, with its additional hypothesis of rewards and punishments.

In the absence of a God prayer is obviously a waste of breath. But even on the assumption of a God it is equally useless. For, were it possible for everyone to pray so that his requests, if granted, would not clash with the requests of others, it would still necessitate a God that could change his mind. But since this would detract from his alleged omniscience the Christian religion emphatically declares that God cannot change his mind. This being so, why pray that he may do so, either in our own favour or in anyone else's? On the other hand, to treat prayer as a sort of fatalistic reminder to God to do what he always intended to do ("Thy will be done") seems not merely futile, but comic. Instead, therefore, of that servile bending of the knee to an imaginary power that promises to do everything, but in fact does nothing, Atheism teaches me to look confidently out and around upon life, with a view to increasing my knowledge and intelligence, so that when conditions arise which call for judgment and action I shall be the better fitted to deal with them effectively.

It is difficult to understand how any sane Christian can believe in the innate sinfulness of man and in the absolute perfection of his creator at one and the same time. The only possible explanation is that, like many other senseless beliefs, he has never troubled to think the matter over; or else that he has smothered the absurdity with that beautiful, yet wicked, word *mystery*. In no other sphere of thought would he tolerate such a palpable self-contradiction. To call it a *mystery* is identical with saying "I don't understand it"—and who but religiously-minded persons could assert and accept as truth a statement which they cannot understand? Here again is a strong indictment against religious teaching—it breeds prevarication and evasion of issues. In place of this Atheism takes the facts of life as they are known to be. The morality of man varies with the individual and depends upon a number of factors whose effects can, with increasing knowledge, be gauged with increasing accuracy. Man does not choose to do evil, knowing the good—a childishly illogical supposition. The relatively moral or social nature of his behaviour is in direct proportion to the influence of his inherited characteristics and his environment. Like disease—once fatalistically regarded as an act of God—crime, poverty and every other human ill is found to be amenable to control and capable of amelioration. Atheism denies that any one of them is inevitable and it gives zest to the battle of intellect which must be waged against them. In lieu of blame and punishment—which is revenge and sadism under thin disguise—it substitutes control and preventive measures.

Lastly Atheism asserts that when we die we are dead. This is usually such a severe blow to personal conceit that many are unwilling to accept Atheism on this ground alone. It undoubtedly accounts for the helter-skelter stampede from religion to spiritualism on the part of many otherwise intelligent persons. Yet I can assure those whose self-importance is a

matter of the most supreme importance that, as a former believer in "eternal" life, I find it no more depressing to realize that I shall not be alive five hundred years hence than to realize that I was not alive five hundred years ago. On the contrary, because I do not believe that I or anyone else will live when we are dead, I am a far keener and more interested participant in life and am no longer comforted into indifference towards the sufferings of my fellow-beings by the belief that God will straighten out his own mess in the Never Never Land. I grieve at the death of one near or dear to me just as any ordinary Christian does—and with greater logic on my side. But an imperative urge drives me so to act towards the living that whatever I do may be for the most lasting happiness of the greatest number. Happiness, here and now, is my supreme aim—because I know that others cannot be happy while I am not, just as I know that I cannot be happy while others are not. Bigotry, dogmatism, intolerance, fatalism and indifference—all of which are nurtured and preserved by the teaching of religion—cannot be admitted into the scheme of life which Atheism offers.

If it be asked why I choose the title of Atheist in preference to Humanist, Agnostic or some other alternative, the answer is that, as in other matters, I detest ambiguity. Everyone knows that the word implies one who does not quibble as to whether somehow, somewhere there may be something or other which might, by a stretch of imagination or a twist of language, be entitled to that nebulous name "God." And further it implies one who is opposed to all religious teaching on the ground that it is superstitious and perverse of right thinking. Atheism, to me, does not merely mean a fight against false and superstitious beliefs, but also a struggle against the one force in life which has done and does most to make for the unhappiness of mankind under the hypocritical pretence of trying to make it happy.

C. S. FRASER.

Acid Drops.

"I ask you to judge me by the enemies I have made," said Mr. Franklin Roosevelt, in one of his speeches during the recent election contest. This seems a rather good criterion to apply to the *Freethinker*. Who are its enemies? They are those who have an instinctive dislike to freedom of thought and speech. They are those who cherish antique traditions, customs, practices, ideas, and modes of thought. They are those who think that superstitious fancies as well as "laws" alleged to have been divinely revealed constitute the only true guidance for man, and who believe them to be superior to rational and scientific thinking. Among them are the defenders of every kind of vested interest and privilege. To have such enemies as these is the greatest compliment that could be paid to the *Freethinker*. By all means judge it by its enemies. That is an excellent mode of assessment.

Many have been the guesses to explain what is called dullness in the churches, and the latest comes from Blackburn. "The attempt to serve both God and Mammon by many so-called Christians is the cause of dullness in the churches." A better guess is that the dullness is to be sought in the mental dullness of those who patronize these places; undoubtedly the more mentally alert section of the people are not habitues. After all, could anything but dullness be expected from persons who believe that, once upon a time, the world was so wicked that God sent a bit of himself to be slaughtered in order that the more credulous folk might be "saved" and enjoy after death everlasting bliss?

A pious gentleman of Brighton tells a daily paper that "We say we believe in God, but are not our continual appeals to him our own acknowledgment that we do not?" This is a curious piece of pious logic. We should think it must be fairly obvious that people who do not believe in God don't continually worry him with appeals. Yet we are asked to entertain the notion that those who do continually whine out petitions for supernatural aid do not believe in God. What urges them to do it, then? Is it merely the expression of a bad habit learnt in childhood, or simply an exercise for the vocal organs in order to raise a thirst?

According to a reader of a daily paper, people have not less religious faith to-day, they merely have a different faith. "Instead of having faith with ignorance, they are beginning to have faith with knowledge." This doesn't sound very convincing. What has happened in recent years is that the spread of knowledge has converted multitudes of people who had faith with ignorance into people with knowledge and no faith. It may be said of those who have faith with knowledge that they fall into two sections—those who think in watertight compartments and do not allow their knowledge to disturb their faith, and those who have only such "knowledge" as their clerical instructors have carefully peptonized for easy digestion. By the way, we wonder what the Jesus who performed miracles, who believed in demons and a Hell with a real fire, and who taught belief in a personal devil—what would he think of the peptonized religion which is known to-day as "modern Christianity"? We fancy it would very much surprise him if he visited the earth to-day. For he knew and said nothing about "progressive revelation." To him, the current superstitions of his time, plus a few more of his own, constituted the final "revelation."

The Jesuit Sodality magazine *Stella Maris* is, we presume, produced by the learned Fathers of that Order. It contains a page of answers to correspondents. In the current issue one of the questions is "Is the lip-stick sinful?" The answer is as follows: "It is certainly hideous and repulsive. It is not necessarily sinful. It might be only foolish. We detest the Eton crop ladies; but that is only our view. It is not necessarily vanity to make oneself look pleasant and picturesque. Taste and refinement should direct us." So much for "spiritual direction." Taste and refinement may be opportune for Catholic ladies to-day, but they are not much in evidence in the lives and literature of the Saints who, for the most part, certainly did not make themselves look "pleasant and picturesque."

The *News-Chronicle* has reached the stage of favouring Sunday entertainments, with, of course, due restrictions, and one day it may even discover the existence of the *Freethinker* and the National Secular Society. But commenting on the Sunday question at Croydon it rather protests against the distinction between Sunday and week-day films, and says that if films are bad on Sunday they ought not to be good on Monday. This is quite promising—for the *News-Chronicle*. But it will take a long step towards grown-uppedness when it discovers that if a film is good enough for Monday it should be good enough for Sunday. But we must not expect too much at the time, for this last discovery would not please the Non-conformist conscience.

There is one question which the Lord's Day Observers, who believe that levitical laws should apply to that day, will never answer. It is the question as to what is or is not permissible as necessary work on the Sabbath. The Rabbinical theologians developed a vast and complicated body of restrictions. The greatest burden that might be carried on the Sabbath was not to exceed the weight of a dried fig. New tasks must not be begun near to the first hour of the Sabbath lest they should not be finished before its dawn. A scribe might not carry his pen nor a tailor his needle. Artificial teeth might not be worn on the Sabbath as that would involve carrying a burden. It was even forbidden to cut finger or toe nails; and no

lady might use a mirror on the Sabbath. Puerilities of this kind are almost without number in rabbinical writings and, in one respect, they are exactly like Christian sabbatarian restrictions. They involve the substitution of piety for cleanliness, hygiene, and work that is essential to tolerable personal and communal life. The question above mentioned is never answered because the modern sabbatarian does not really want to observe the Mosaic law; he only wants to prevent other people from enjoying a rational Sunday. He is his own judge as to what he shall or shall not do on the so-called Lord's Day: but he will not allow the same liberty to others.

We have a sickening flood of woeful tales about the poverty of the clergy and of various ecclesiastical concerns. The latest is a wail about the hard plight of the Cathedrals. Their choir schools are, it seems, being carried on with a minimum of expense, and it is suggested that the fine music associated with cathedrals will cease unless more funds are forthcoming. Nobody can pretend that public worship cannot be carried on, even in cathedrals, without paying boys and men to sing the praises of God. If there are those who prefer hearing them sung by good voices to singing them for themselves it is clearly up to them to provide the necessary remuneration. Organists, we hear, get "a mere pittance"; but most of them who are skilled do not depend alone upon that occupation. If a cathedral or a church must have a whole-time organist, why should it not, as a matter of course, pay him whole-time wages? This whining to the public with which the Church Publications Board is so busy only shows how much the Church still trades on its supposed national character, a character which, in fact, it never has had except by compulsion of law. No doubt there are poor clergy. But there are also rich Bishops and ample revenues (drawn from very doubtful sources in many cases), and it is disgusting that in a time of stress like the present it should be suggested that the public which can afford to help others should waste its generosity on providing for the churches, choirs, organists, and parsons of the stingy and wealthy established religion.

There was a nice mess in Glasgow during the recent municipal elections owing to the active intervention of Catholic and Protestant sectaries. Representatives of the Scottish Protestant League turned the contest in one ward into a religious fight. A pastoral was read in all the Catholic Churches urging the electors to vote against the Communists. The opponents of the Protestant League candidates were not Communists but members of the I.L.P. Now the I.L.P., at Blackpool endorsed secular education and birth control. But the I.L.P. candidates in Glasgow agreed to a questionnaire allowing religious instruction in Catholic schools, and got the support of the local *Catholic Observer*. The *Daily Worker* points out that the I.L.P. candidates only won their seats with the support of the Catholic Church. We doubt if our contemporary's hope that this will enlighten the rank and file will be fulfilled. It is, unfortunately only too evident—as witness the surrender of the L.C.C. the other day to Dr. Lidgett and the Bishop of London—that all politicians, national and municipal, lack the courage to stand up against clerical pressure. It does not matter a fig whether it is Catholic or Protestant, or whether it is about schools or Sunday cinemas, the pious organizations of the country can scare the politicians every time into surrender. And yet the Churches are a minority everywhere.

The humbug of the pretension that Britain went into the war to defend Belgium never took us in. Those who were gulled, and still cherish that illusion must have got a shock when they read their papers on November 17. It is now admitted that in 1908 Lord Hardinge (then Sir Charles) the Permanent Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, drew up a minute in which he said it was "doubtful whether England would move a finger to maintain Belgium neutrality" if violated by France, but if by Germany "the converse would be the case." Sir Edward Grey, then Foreign Secretary, acknowledging

this minute said, "I think it sums up the situation very well, though Sir C. Hardinge's reflection is also to the point." Bit by bit as the diplomatic documents of the pre-war years are being published, every position taken up in these columns from 1914-1918 is being vindicated and established. The *News-Chronicle* commenting on this revelation says "the innocent British public will rub its eyes with astonishment." The rubbing would have been avoided if it had not allowed its eyes to be blindfolded, in 1914, and ever since.

We hear little in these days of those supposed prophecies of Jesus and his mission in the Old Testament, which once loomed large in Christian apologetics. The prophecies proved to be records of past events. A correspondent points out that many of the most used of these texts are *prima facie* (at least as they stand in the Authorized Version) what they are now admitted to be, and so can never have been honestly held to be messianic prognostications. For example in Daniel vii. 13, "I saw in the night visions, and behold there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days and they brought him near before him." Here is plainly action that took place, if ever, as and when it was described. Another example is the most quoted of all the Old Testament prophecies, Isaiah liii., "He grew up," etc. He "was despised and rejected of men." He "was oppressed, yet he humbled himself and opened not his mouth." And so on. The history of literary criticism, especially as carried on by critics with some particular bee in their bonnets, affords innumerable examples of the wish being father to the thought in the way of discovering hidden references. It provides nothing quite so flagrant, however, as the manipulation by Christian apologists of the Old Testament text.

Sir Francis Acland, M.P., who is a Churchman and a patron of livings, told the following story in the recent unemployment debate in the House of Commons. "There was a rubbish tip in a northern town, and very bad land; but the unemployed tackled it, and the result, one plot in particular, was very good. A deputation from the Town Council went round to inspect it. One dear old boy, when he saw this improvement, held up his hand and said, "May the Lord be praised for all his abundant mercies." An unemployed man said "Yes, but you should have seen it two months ago when the Lord had it to Himself! We could hardly believe our eyes when we saw this reprinted, with the last irreverent words as a title in—the *Christian World!* The Lord is not safe from ridicule by distinguished churchmen and the religious press in these days. But the Blasphemy Acts are still available if a Freethinker should be guilty of such stories.

A Laymans Commission consisting of Christian Professors from American Universities has been investigating foreign missionary methods in the Far East. They affirm that "the case which must now be stated is the case for any religion at all." It is "no longer which prophet, which book. It is whether any prophet, book, revelation, rite or Church is to be trusted." They found the greater number of missionaries of "limited outlook and capacity." They find no use for "a shallow extension of a nominal Christianity, and they think that medical and education aid are "subordinated to exploit evangelism." Commenting on this a pious contemporary assents that "materialism and secularism (and nationalism) are today exerting a controlling influence in Asia, and this report is "emphatically not a comfortable one." It only confirms all that has been known and said about foreign missions by detached observers and writers for best part of a century.

The Cross borne by the faithful is, alas, oft hard and heavy. The Deity seems every now and then, to overlook the tremendous sacrifices made by his sheep. Here for example, is the *Southern Cross*, the wonder ship of Melanesian Mission, totally wrecked on its first voyage. Had the vessel been carrying the literature of the

National Secular Society or some of its infidel contributors, Mr. James Douglas and his fellow believers would have been able to understand the wreck and point a moral. But when the Lord was actually sending out shepherds with his own bright message to the ungodly, and thousands of Bibles, it really is hard to understand how he came, at the same time, to send a terrific storm and put the holy ship "on the spot." Will some earnest theologian explain God's motives at once? Perhaps the *Southern Cross* actually had a Jonah on board and couldn't get rid of him?

The Archbishop of Canterbury's remedy for the grave economic problems confronting us is "regular and sustained prayer. This leaves us in a quandry. Surely our worthy Primate doesn't mean praying when we should be—at least those of us who have work—working? He says frankly he doesn't mean "special days of prayer"; sustained prayers mean sustained prayers. Prayers day in and day out is meant perhaps. We pass on the suggestion to the B.B.C. Surely Sir John Reith, backed up by Mr. James Douglas, General Higgins and Mr. Chesterton ought to work the miracle!

The Roman Catholic Archbishop Downey recently told his hearers that he heard a Humanitarian Deist tell an audience in Hyde Park, "My 'ome is my 'eaven, my wife is my gawd, and my children are my hangels. That's my religion." Without names it is difficult to identify speakers, of course, and in any case the misuse of the letter h is a trifle. The sentiment, however, sums up love far better than the egregious Downey could, with all the authority of his Church behind him. When will these celibate priests realize that the love of man for woman and children transcends everything else in this world?

We always understood, that the one thing the Roman Catholic Church stood for was absolute unity. One Church all over the world and every member a brother. But somehow or other, the evil one is too strong for the Church—or the brothers. A correspondent to the *Universe* complains bitterly of the results of letting his would-be customers know that he was a Catholic. "Catholics," he says, "came to my shop to air their grumbles about the Church, and several ladies called for donations or to ask me to purchase a ticket for some Catholic charity. They made no purchases." He points out (without proof) that Jews, Baptists and Anglicans cling together, "but it seems to be different with Catholics." What a terrible shock such a confession must be to all recent converts to the one holy religion! But we are not surprised.

Fifty Years Ago

Does anybody ask that I shall seriously discuss whether an old woman with a divining rod can detect hidden treasures; whether Mr. Home floated in the air or Mrs. Guppy sailed from house to house; whether cripples are cured at Lourdes or all manner of diseases at Winifred's Well? Must I patiently reason with a man who tells me that he saw water turned into wine, or a few loaves and fishes turned into a feast for multitudes, or dead men rise up from their graves? Surely not. I do what every sensible man does. I recognize no obligation to reason with such hallucinate mortals; and if they pester me I scare them away with ridicule.

So with the past. Its delusions are no more entitled to respect than those of to-day. Jesus Christ as a miracle-worker is just as absurd as any modern pretender. Whether in the Bible, the Koran, the Arabian Nights, Monte Christo, or Baron Munchausen, a tremendous "walker" is the fit subject of a good laugh, as some consolation for the wickedness of superstition. The Christian faith is such that it makes us laugh or cry. Are we wrong in preferring to laugh?

The "Freethinker," December 3, 1882.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—J. Hopkins, 5s.
- R. B. PINDER.—Order safely received, the record will be sent as soon as supply is to hand. Thanks.
- W. WILLATTS (Queensland).—Thanks for useful cuttings. Will send as requested.
- W. L. ENGLISH (Crewe).—Shall have attention.
- J. O'M (Belfast).—We have already dealt with it.
- H. M. RYAN.—Glad to have your hearty appreciation. You may always rely upon parsons discovering that we cannot do without God. That is their trade. Both "Services Rendered," and "The Miracle at Verdun" are quite good, but if there were another war next week, while there might be a little less of the "moral uplift" business than on the last occasion, the lie-factories in each would get to work, repression would be greater than in 1914-18, and there would be the same cowardly surrender to mob clamour.
- R. BELL (Durham).—We cannot undertake to acknowledge or use every cutting sent us. We are very deeply indebted to all who send us cuttings. They provide us with information we should otherwise often miss.
- W. COLLINS (Stockport).—Pleased to have your high appreciation of the "Views" on "War and Peace." We do not know about reprinting the article, but we might prepare a pamphlet on the whole question.
- 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 connection 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.

To-day (December 4) Mr. Cohen will speak in the Town Hall, Stratford, at 7.0, on "The Psychology of Belief." Trams and Busses pass the door hall (Stratford Broadway), and the building is only a few minutes from the North Eastern Railway Station. Freethinkers should do their best to induce their Christian friends to attend.

The National Secular Society's Annual Dinner will take place on January 21, 1933. The success of the annual dinners of the past few years led to a little overcrowding at the Midland Grand Hotel, and it has been decided this year to hold the function at the Imperial Hotel, Russell Square. This is very centrally situated, and can easily be reached from any part of London. The price of tickets will be as usual, 8s. Early application is desired in order to facilitate arrangements being made that will ensure the comfort of all.

Mr. Cohen's meeting on Sunday last in the McLellan Galleries, Glasgow, was a pronounced success. Every seat in the large hall was occupied, including the gallery. The audience listened with the greatest attention to the address, and the speaker was heartily applauded when he resumed his seat. Among the many who had travelled some distance to the meeting we were pleased to see our old friend Mr. Andrew Millar, although he has not yet completely recovered from his recent illness. Mr. More, the President of the Glasgow Branch occupied the chair, and made a strong appeal for increased support for the Society. We are hoping to see this Branch very greatly strengthened in the near future.

The Liverpool (Merseyside) Branch N.S.S. continues to attract a full house at the Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, each Sunday evening, and there should be no departure from that to-day (Sunday), when Mr. A. D. McLaren will speak on "Pagan Survivals in the Roman Catholic Religion." The lecture commences at 7 p.m., and Mr. McLaren's name is a guarantee for a full and interesting evening.

The Sunderland Branch N.S.S. is expecting two big meetings to-day (Sunday), when Mr. R. H. Rosetti lectures twice in the Co-operative Hall, Green Street, Sunderland. The times and subjects are, 3.0 p.m., "The Churches and the Next War." 7.0 p.m., "Christianity v. Science; Anthropology." Admission is free with some reserved seats at sixpence each.

The Stockport Labour Fellowship has invited Mr. R. H. Rosetti to address two meetings in the Central Hall, Hillgate, Stockport, on Sunday, December 11. Tea will be provided after the afternoon meeting, and to help the catering department, will those intending to stay please send a post card to Mr. G. Burgess, 98 Athens Street, Stockport. The cost of the Tea will be ninepence per head.

Orders for the gramophone record of Mr. Cohen's speech on Freethought are coming in well, and they will be filled as soon as the records are received from the works. This should prove a good way of introducing Freethought into many a home where it is now unknown, save in some distorted form. Mr. Cohen has managed to compress a couple of lectures into two sides of a record, which should provide plenty of room for discussion. The price of the record is two shillings, or by post, carefully packed, 2s. 6d.

The Liverpool Branch in addition to its excellent work in its own district is always ready to stake out new claims for others. In response to an invitation Mr. McKelvie and Mr. Lloyd Owen, travelled from Liverpool to Chester to lay the Freethought programme before a Labour meeting. We are glad to learn that the presentation of the Freethought case was well received, and also that with a little labour a Branch of the Society might be formed at Chester. There are, we know, plenty of Freethinkers in Chester as elsewhere. All that is required is to bring them together and to find a few willing to do a little work.

"Can and Should the Development of Civilization be Independent of Religion," will be debated at the St. Albans Debating Society, Public Library, St. Albans, on Friday, December 9, at 8.0 p.m. Mr. R. H. Rosetti will take the affirmative, and the Rev. C. A. Hudson, M.A., the negative. Admission is free and members of the general public are invited.

The Secular Society, Limited, is issuing this side of Christmas *Paganism in Christian Festivals*, by the late J. M. Wheeler. This is a careful study of the non-Christian origin of Church festivals from Easter to Christmas, and should prove both interesting and useful to Christians and Freethinkers.

Rousseau: The Sentimental Pietist.

(Continued from page 741.)

"His cardinal fault is an insincerity which just when he seeks to convince, betrays himself unconvinced. Even his own life he treats in his *Confessions*, not as a history, but as a romance, begun with falsification of his mother's pedigree, and strewn throughout with lies.

Globe Encyclopædia. (Article Rousseau.)

ROUSSEAU, upon his arrival in Paris, endeavoured, not very successfully, to eke out a living by teaching, and copying music; while he dreamed of gaining the affection and support of one of the great French ladies; to take the place of Madame de Warens. Unfortunately for this plan, although the ladies were favourably impressed by his good looks, his shyness, and ingenuousness, so different from the bearing of the gallant of that day, the impression was not deep enough to produce the desired result, beyond invitations to dinners and social functions.

However, a post was found for him as private secretary to Count Montaigu, the French Ambassador to Venice, where he remained for a year, until dismissed. Count Montaigu an ex-captain of the Guards—has been described as "an ass and a black-guard, with a dash of the miser to boot."⁴ He treated Rousseau like a lackey and withheld his salary. Rousseau transgressed by giving out that he held the important office of Secretary to the Embassy, whereas he was only Secretary to Count Montaigu.

Returning to Paris, he demanded redress from the Government in no measured terms. He also told his story to Montaigu's friends, but only received the cold shoulder for his pains. He had not made good, and was considered a failure. His desire to rise and shine in that brilliant society being thus frustrated he was plunged from the height of his dreams of fame and fortune into the depths of despair, and his admiration of the the fine ladies and gentlemen turned to hatred, although he dared not altogether break with them. There is no doubt that to this time can be traced the beginning of the persecution mania which ultimately alienated all his friends and drove him out of his mind. As Diderot—who was his most intimate friend at this time—afterwards very truly remarked: "Rousseau wished the title Citizen only because he could not aspire to that of Monseigneur."⁵

We find him writing to Madame de Warens that his only ambition was to spend the rest of his life at her side, but that lady had enough troubles of her own by this time, and his letter remained unanswered. At this time he was lodging at the Hotel St. Quentin, a squalid boarding in a narrow, dirty street. It was here he became acquainted with Thérèse Levasseur who was in service there, and who played ever after such a conspicuous part in his life.

This girl, or rather, woman, for she was twenty-three—Rousseau being thirty-two—had recently come to Paris from Orleans, where her father had held a small position in the Mint, but was now unemployed and retired to an asylum. Her mother had been a small shop-keeper in the same town, but the business had failed, hence the exodus to Paris.

Thérèse had little to say for herself, and was the butt of the other rude and unmannerly boarders. Rousseau, probably from a fellow feeling induced by his own forlorn condition, took up her defence, and eventually took her away and placed her in an apartment. Of the modesty and simplicity which made such an impression on Rousseau, a writer observes, she: "looked simple because she was dull, and

modestly said nothing because she had nothing to say."⁶ Rousseau's latest biographer observes that: "Most people would not hesitate to describe Thérèse Levasseur as a mental defective."⁷ Her knowledge of reading and writing was most elementary, she had a way of spelling of her own. She could not remember the names or the order of succession of the months of the year. Rousseau devoted a great deal of time to trying to teach her to tell the time by the dial of a clock, but without success. She could not understand figures or do the simplest sums; and this was the woman the so highly sensitive and sentimental Rousseau took for his life's partner, and eventually married, but not until twenty-three years had passed by and she had borne him five children. "So here," says Mr. Vulliamy, "was a man who professed that he could never be attracted except by women of delicate nurture, of breeding and accomplishments, a man who thought himself qualified to make love to great ladies, associating himself for life with a sewing-maid whose mental attainments were not beyond those of a child of six."⁸

The explanation is simple; Rousseau had now given up in despair all idea of any conquest among the ladies in high society. He could not return to his dear "mamma," Madame de Warens, as he longed to do. He had to find a substitute, he needed some one to look after him, to keep his clothes in repair. Thérèse was expert with her needle, she was also an excellent cook. As Mr. Gribble observes:—

He was poor, and Thérèse was necessary to him. One need not look for any more subtle explanation of his fidelity than that. He needed her not only as a mistress but also as a housekeeper and a nurse. It was as a nurse, indeed, that he needed her most of all. He suffered from a malady⁹ of which he was always ashamed—a malady which made connubial intimacy embarrassing and called for incessant and intimate attention. Failing a devoted wife with a genius for self-sacrifice, he was best off—and he knew that he was best off—in the hands of a daughter of the people, of no too delicate sensibility, his social inferior, bound to him by ties alike of interest and gratitude. Thérèse supplied this want. (II. Gribble. *Rousseau and the Women he Loved.* p. 157-8.)

Although Thérèse lacked intelligence, she was crafty, and by no means the simple child Rousseau believed her to be; she understood him perfectly well and played up to his idea of her. With Thérèse came her mother and her mother's sons, daughters, and granddaughters, eight in all, who familiarly addressed Rousseau as Uncle; low characters "famished ones," a band of leeches! "Madame Levasseur, the pesteriferous old thing, who prided herself on her fine manners and polite ways," says Charpentier, "was a shrewd and clever woman, nicknamed by that good old soul, her husband, who was too soft with her, no doubt, and feared her as he did the plague, the "lieutenant criminal." She had a mind to make all she could out of Jean-Jacques."¹⁰ Her one fear was that he would become infatuated with another woman and take himself off. Whenever his friends came she took them off for confidential chats behind his back. He flew into rages, but all in vain. "I could make scenes, but I could do nothing," he confessed. "They let me have my say out, and then

⁶ H. G. Graham. *Rousseau.* p. 37.

⁷ C. E. Vulliamy, *Rousseau,* p. 87.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁹ This was a painful congestion, or paresis, of the urethra, causing retention of the urine, and consequent contamination of the blood stream, causing headaches, feverishness, and dizziness. It was, no doubt, this poison in his system that caused the profound melancholy and dejection, from which he sometimes suffered. He did not always suffer from it, as Mr. Gribble seems to suggest. It was intermittent.

¹⁰ Charpentier. *Rousseau.* p. 150.

⁴ Charpentier. *Rousseau, the Child of Nature.* p. 134.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

they went right on." (*Ibid*, p. 150.)

Rousseau's most intimate friend at this time was the warm-hearted Diderot, the friend of everyone except the Church and the Government. Diderot had friends everywhere. The Empress Catherine of Russia sent for him in order to learn philosophy at the fountain head from the Editor of the famous *Encyclopædia*. It is said that Diderot expounded it with such enthusiasm that she complained that her knees were black and blue from the thumps with which he emphasized his remarks, and she had to place a table between them for her protection.

At this time, 1749, Diderot was arrested by the King's order, and confined in the dungeon of Vincennes. Rousseau, who thought he was condemned to imprisonment for life, nearly went out of his mind, but calmed down when he learned that he was allowed to have visitors, and to walk in the castle grounds. Rousseau visited him several times a week. One day he arrived very excited, and waving a copy of the *Mercur de France*! In it appeared a notice that the Academy at Dijon had offered a prize for a discourse upon: "Whether the progress of the sciences and the arts has tended to corrupt or to improve morals." Rousseau declared his intention to compete.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

The Futility of the Church.

THE original and proper gospel of the Christian Church was the salvation of souls. What was actually meant by this is not quite clear. It certainly meant different things to different preachers, and these differences varied from slight variations in doctrine to renderings that were as wide apart as the poles. The specimens that were often brought forward as samples of the saved—or who brought themselves forward as having been saved—were not particularly good advertisements for the preacher, the Church, or Christianity. Generally it was difficult to find out what it was they had been saved from or for. The retired convict who discovered that he was more of a bungler than a burglar was not a very elevating specimen of the joys of Christianity. It may be that his conversion gave considerable joy to the heavenly hosts, but it cannot truthfully be said that it conferred benefits upon the inhabitants of earth. But the average man living in a world where a pressing problem is that of satisfying hungry stomachs is set wondering what heavenly harps, golden gates, and singing waters have to do with the question.

After all, the greater part of humanity lives in a world of its own making. The precious symbol of man is the family. Father, mother and child is his holy trinity. To make a home for them is the greatest thing in his life. Even if our present conception of home and home life is gradually dissolved, still there must be a home of some kind. Work and play, the joy of adventure, the making of art, the creation of music or poetry, the pride of craftsmanship, nothing can abolish the home, however much it may modify its form. It is at once man's haven of rest, his fortress, his symbol of independence. It is part of the impudence of the Christian Church that it should claim the home as its own creation.

But, as a matter of fact, the Church is not properly concerned with human welfare in this world at all. It is only of late years that it has taken to pretending otherwise. Thus it is not surprising to find the Bishop of Lichfield saying the other day that "a vast number of churchpeople are blind to the relevance of Christianity to the human problems of our time."

If this is so it is not because of lack of talk from the Church. In season and out of season thousands of sermons have been preached whining and threatening, wheedling and imprecating, all to the end of persuading the world that it must look to the Church for the solution of social questions. If numbers of Christians are losing their faith in the Church's ability to solve social problems, it is because the propaganda of Free-thought is producing its inevitable effect.

The Church cannot have it both ways. If Christ claims that his Kingdom is not of this world, and if he is the ultimate ideal to which all mankind must aspire, it is sheer futility to insist that the home is the Church's grandest work. The Church found the home here and she has certainly done nothing whatever to preserve it.

What does history say? In those far-off and almost unknown centuries rightly called the Dark Ages, what did the Church do to preserve the sacredness of the home, the inviolable right of every man, no matter how lowly, to his own castle? One has but to pose the question and it is answered with a derisive laugh. Serfs and slaves, with almost no rights of freedom, of justice, of manhood, comprised the bulk of suffering humanity for more than a thousand years. Living in this ease-loving age, it is almost impossible for us to imagine what their misery was. But the tales of revolting cruelty which have filtered through the ages to us are there in all their horrible nakedness.

Of course man must have laughed sometimes. Of course he must have been well fed on many occasions. But war, filth, plague, unending toil, stark injustice fill our histories. No wonder Winwood Reade wrote the *Martyrdom of Man*.

If the Church was absolutely unable to alleviate man's lot in the past, what is she doing now? Let me put aside the horror of the World War. We know the Church was on the side of the combatants, whichever side they were on. It was always the right side too, the others were all wrong. If a French and German and English priest were to meet now, it would be neither amazing nor amusing to hear their comments on the work of the Church of Christ during those bloody years which we now look upon as years of madness. We can get tired even of apologies.

But if the World War was over in 1918, what are we to say of the war which is being waged now, the economic war? It is useless to deny the existence of this war. However great the economic war was in the past, it is immeasurably greater now. It has filled the world with millions of idle people, sick with despair and hunger and misery. It is waging now with as fierce intensity as ever was the Great War, and the Church is standing by as helpless, futile, and ineffective now as it was then.

If the home is the Church's great secular ideal, what is she doing now to preserve it? What message can she convey, what hope can she offer to the home-makers? Let it be gratified that the people as a whole are living in better houses, in more decent surroundings than ever before in history. But to make a happy fireside for weans and wife one must have work, and in what way is the Church moving for that?

It is a problem which the Church leaders know has to be faced, for otherwise how can they insist on the relevancy of Christianity for anything else except heaven?—to which place they, in common with the ordinary layman, make desperate efforts to avoid going.

The *Church Times*, the organ of so many of our most respectable and dignified Christians, lately invited several famous Churchmen to deal with the Church and Unemployment. Their articles were by no means written with enthusiasm. A note of

pathetic sadness is discernable over everything they say. The problem is a grave one, and they were bound by their creed and faith, as well as by the tradition of their journal, to drag Christ in somewhere. But he was most difficult to fit in anywhere. Love ye one another may of course solve the trouble if it were universally applied. But if millionaires were to start giving their cash away and the Church its property, to say nothing of the less favoured members of the community giving everything they possessed to one another and to the poor, if everybody was to slobber over everybody else, if—but really no genuine Churchman goes into details of Christ's famous behest. They will depressingly admit with tears in their eyes that, human nature being what it is, we haven't yet reached the tremendous ideal of loving each other, and if pressed very hard, some will even admit Jesus himself seemed quite averse to straining for the same ideal. In any case, it would be quite impossible to get any Churchman to show clearly how loving one another would solve any genuine economic problem. It may be an ideal but in actual practice it is sheer fudge.

No, they go into less vague perhaps, but equally futile suggestions. We must show the unemployed our sympathy. That will butter the parsnips of course. We must remove the cause of their misfortune. How thunderingly helpful! It never seems to occur to our far-seeing Bishops that everybody, even without Christ's help, or the Churches', has proffered that advice. "Remove the causes of their distress" is surely a line out of a parody on the work of our wonderful Churches.

Another grand piece of advice in our present need is "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness." One would like to see a hungry out-of-work bishop, with no means and no dole, after a three days' fast following that precious counsel. Its fatuousness hardly needs comment. But it actually was followed by this, "There is only one standard to look up to that has deliverance in it, and that is the Royal Standard of the Cross." That, ladies and gentlemen, is how the Church would deal with unemployment.

Perhaps I am unfair in lumping such hopeless pronouncements together and saying they are the Church's. But I do feel, looking through the articles contributed to the *Church Times*, that they afford practically no help whatever to anybody who is unemployed; that they are nearly devoid of any plan of any kind even to alleviate the unfortunate unemployed; and that they show the most remarkable bankruptcy of ideas it has ever been my lot to encounter. A soup kitchen here and there, an occasional bazaar or charity concert, a "bright" service peppered with drawling remarks about the uplift of the Cross and the faith with perfect trust in the Lord, our Saviour, or Our Holy Mother—what earthly good are these in times of economic duress?

I ask is it not a fact that the Church claims it has produced some of the greatest minds that have ever appeared in the world? Is it not a fact that behind her is the power and might and love of the Almighty with his heavenly host of world well-wishers? Can they all do nothing? Are they all so shorn of ideas that the best they can offer is the story of the Child of Bethlehem, or the Grace of God or entry into the ranks of the Bodyguard of the Cross, or that the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life? Has anything in the whole history of the world, with such tremendous pretensions, ever equalled in utter futility, the Christian Church?

It is not we alone who believe this. For here are the words of the Editor of the *Church Times* himself in the "conclusion of the matter":—

It might appear from a superficial reading of what has been written (in the articles) that the Church is alive to the needs and to the danger. That is not, alas! the truth. These splendid efforts which we have noticed, together with others which we have no space to note, are mere oases in the vast wilderness of unemployment.

What a confession have we here! It needs hardly any further comment. Nearly 2,000 years of real Christianity has proved such a tremendous failure that the Church, bankrupt of ideas, but not of power, has only to open her mouth to prove to the world her utter futility. She may still hold up the Cross of Christ; but it is with an effort and a trembling. It is proof of the greatest failure the world has ever known.

H. CUTNER.

A Pilgrim of Light.

It is related of a certain Solomon Eagle, that during the Great Plague of London he ran through the streets of the city in a state of nudity, exhorting the populace to "Repent, Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." I am not concerned with the truth of this story, but desire to record an experience with a modern Solomon Eagle which recently happened to this scribe.

It was a Sabbath morning, the bells of the parish church were calling the faithful to worship, the birds were trilling their songs of praise, the youth of the parish were disporting themselves at the nation's prime industry, tennis, and this unbeliever was reading, in the quiet of his study, the current number of the *Freethinker*, when he was disturbed by a knock at the front door. Being alone in the house, I opened the door and was greeted by an elderly man, bearded like the pard, but not in the garb of Solomon Eagle, who pronounced these words, "Sir, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, Armageddon is nigh, and I call to adjure you to repent while yet there is time." My first instinct was to close the door on an obvious lunatic, but his voice was low and cultured, his manner gentle, and his whole aspect one of pious benevolence, therefore I decided to lend him my ears.

He directed my attention to the twenty-third chapter of the gospel according to St. Matthew, and the fourth verse, which he quoted:

For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

I desired him to inform me of the object of this quotation, very naturally assuming that he referred to our politicians. This earnest pilgrim of light assured me that he was not concerned with the evil that politicians do, but rather with the prophecies contained in Holy Writ. I informed him that I was a confirmed Rationalist, that I had no belief in the supernatural, and until tangible proof was forthcoming, I declined to burden my mind with a belief in an imaginary Creator evolved out of the ignorance and fear of the human mind, adding the remark, that if he had in his mind my conversion to a belief in the Great Joke, his pious object was as futile as the offer of a crutch to a dead cripple. He was not startled, nor yet did he appear amazed at my irreverence, but listened to my forthright confession of unbelief with a resignation which did him credit, merely observing that he respected all men's opinions, and did not seek to challenge them; his was the high resolve to make a house-to-house visitation, exhorting the dwellers to repentance, for by all the signs around us, the scriptural

prophecies were about to be fulfilled. That was his purpose, and it was enough.

Being myself animated by feelings of toleration towards all men of earnest conviction, I expressed my admiration of his unrewarded labours, and wished him support "all the day long of this troublous life." He discussed the numbers of so-called Christians in the world, who, he said, were quarrelling among themselves over points of ritual which were not concerned with our Lord's teaching; with this I acquiesced, directing his attention to the words of Shylock concerning the matter. "O Father Abram! what these Christians are, whose own hard dealing teaches them suspect the thoughts of others." This pilgrim of light was unacquainted with the quotation, and desired me to repeat it, expressing approval. On learning that the sea had been my calling, he related to me how he was in Devonport on a recent day, and witnessed the launch of H.M.S. Leander, at which ceremony there was, according to him, a priest of the Establishment who blessed the vessel as she took the water, while a choir sang loud hymns of praise, all of which he regarded as vile hypocrisy, for, said he, this minister of religion was invoking the Deity to sanctify an engine wrought for the destruction of fellow Christians, which was in direct opposition to the Divine will.

And so we discussed, with quiet toleration, for some fifteen or twenty minutes, these weighty matters, until this modern Solomon Eagle intimated that he had his pilgrimage to pursue. We parted with mutual expressions of respect, he bade me adieu, raised his hat from his grey head, quoting these words before he went, "Watch, therefore for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."

A philosophic observer might dismiss him as a religious fanatic: perhaps he was; if so, he was the mildest mannered fanatic it has been my lot in life to encounter, and I have been brought into contact with many of the species, both ashore and afloat. For my part, I was fascinated with such an example of the ineluctable problem of human credulity and spiritual egoism, and confess myself unable to comprehend that form of mentality. Staunch believers in the Eastern fable of Christianity who make it their business to proselytize, are usually as importunate as the suitors of Penelope, but this disciple was not of that sort. He exhaled mansuetude and lenity, and made no effort at conversion, so I must leave him to pursue his pious pilgrimage on a more or less hostile earth, and to me he remains an enigma, pursuing his self-appointed task "all for love and nothing for reward."

F. G. COOPER.

D. H. Lawrence: Rebel or Religious?

In *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, which Mr. Aldous Huxley has brought together (Heinemann) we get a more authentic view of the man than in any or all of his works. Here he speaks of himself and for himself more clearly than his several biographers have spoken for him. These lines are written not to quote the letters in order to prove these statements; but to protest against the view, revived with their publication, that Lawrence was a religious man. It is true he describes himself as "a deeply religious man"; but so have many other persons described themselves, or been described, with as little justification. Someone was busy the other day proving the profound piety of Swift! What is religion? And what is a religious man? Readers of this Journal need only recall or look up the issue of September 11, to get light on the inwardness of this vogue of inaccurate classification. "In some cases," wrote the Editor, "it is both possible and advisable to rescue a word from wrong and misleading conno-

tations." On the other hand, and implicit in this possible and advisable process, there is the need to stem the tide of invention of false connotations for words which, if, and in so far as, they have a meaning, do not and cannot mean what partizan experimenters in lexicography seek to make them mean. This may be illustrated by a gross example now current, viz., the confusion deliberately generated by reactionary writers and speakers between that harmless, natural and, within its own limits, noble nationalism which consists in the love of a nation's own language, literature, institutions and arts, and that economic nationalism which is the canker of international relations. Whereas, as Professor Laski so effectively demonstrates in this year's Moneure Conway Lecture, so far from there being any confusion or conflict between them, the nobler and healthier is the life of each nation the greater will be the chances of an extra-national understanding on the measures necessary to meet common needs and dangers. Nations "rightly struggling to be free," when they cease to be pre-occupied with their own struggles, will find time, inclination and interest for world problems.

Come we then to this labelling of persons and things as "religious," in which the label is a lie. A reviewer of Lawrence's *Letters* says that Mr. Huxley's Preface to that book suggests that Lawrence "was the type of man of whom saints are made." The average reader of the daily newspaper in which this appears will assume much more than, perhaps, the writer intended to convey. The "Saints" are, as to many of them, cases to be explained in terms of pathology, not piety. In this sense Lawrence may indeed have been of the type mentioned. Here we have then either a very confusing *double entendre*, or careless writing—not usual with the writer concerned—or misrepresentation, even if it be not intentional. Nothing is less like "sanctity" in its theological sense than Lawrence's *credo* of flesh and blood. Asceticism does not consist of those elements of which the only "religion" he had was compounded.

The fact is that Lawrence himself never escaped entirely from the taboo against which he was for ever protesting. Hence he calls himself "religious" and his fundamental belief a "religion." It was the antithesis of all that is implied by that term in the public mind and in the public press. Both from his writings, and from many criticisms of them during his life it has been inferred that he was a rebel. Now when he is dead, if only his religiosity be repeatedly proclaimed, and sufficient stress be laid on his having been of the "saintly" type, the vast multitude who know authors only from books or articles about them, will in due time think of him as some sort of a Christian after all! The case for calling a spade a spade in the matter of religion in general is made unanswerably in the Editor's article previously referred to. The particular example of it here examined may reinforce that case. If it be remembered how Lawrence was denounced; how some of his books were mutilated and banned; readers may be put on their guard against the reckless and cynical exploitation of every kind of genius by an abuse of language in the interests of religion. All is grist that comes to the Christian apologists' mill.

ALAN HANDSACRE.

A TASTE OF MR. DOOLEY.

Oratory: No Sir, whin a man has something to say an' don't know how to say it, he says it pretty well. Whin he has nawthin' to say and knows how to say it, he makes a gr-great speech. But whin he has nawthin' to say an' has a lot iv wurruds that come with a black coat, he's an orator.

Riches: If ye have nawthin' but money ye'd have nawthin' but money. Ye can't eat it, sleep it, dhrink it or carry it away wid ye.

Politics and Business: It seems to me th' on'y way is to keep pollyticians and business min apart. They seem to hev a bad infloence on each other. Whiniver I see an Aldherman an' a broker walkin' down th' shreet together I know th' Recordin' Angel will hev to ordhr another bottle iv ink.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

POST MARITAL CONTINENCE.

SIR,—Mr. Palmer, in his article on this subject, says that the idea of continence after marriage would seem revolting and unnatural to modern people.

He may be interested to learn that Miss Maud Royden (one of the representatives of so-called "liberal" religious thought, by the way) in a book on religion and sex published a few years since, actually suggested abstinence from sexual intercourse at any rate on the wedding night. She called the desire for this "the sin of the bridegroom." Apparently the bride had no positive feelings on the matter!

But this shows that the witch-doctors of savage tribes, and the religious folk of to-day, despite much-vaunted progress, still have much in common.

JOHN ROWLAND.

BROADCAST DEBATE?

SIR,—Apropos of your first paragraph under "Acid Drops," in your issue dated 27th inst., I should like to suggest the following programme to the B.B.C. :—

A series of six talks on the general question of "The Validity of Christianity," arranged as a debate.

1. Dr. Barnes, to be answered by
2. Bertrand Russell.
3. Dean Inge, to be answered by
4. Mr. John M. Robertson.
5. James Douglas, to be answered by
6. Mr. Chapman Cohen.

The discussions to be free of all limitations, especially as regards the defence, and conducted under the rule of a fair hearing to each and every speaker.

It would, of course, be sheer waste of time to send such a proposal direct to the B.B.C., but perhaps it could be brought to the notice of the Corporation through the medium of your paper? The above series would, I think, be much more interesting and instructive than the six talks on the question of post mortem existence.

EDWARD SIMPSON.

A SUGGESTION.

SIR,—If you are not asked for reprints in leaflet form of your this week's "Views and Opinions" "War and Peace," I shall be sorry, and shall not think so highly of your readers' appreciation of the world situation and your treatment of it as I otherwise might.

If you are asked for them in quantities that will make it possible for them to be got out at a moderate price, please give me the offer of two or three hundred.

ROBERT HARDING.

ENDING WAR.

SIR,—In your issue of November 27 you say: "The only way to end war is to make the idea of war objectionable to all." I fear you will make slow progress with the nations which it is particularly important to convert. The Japanese are very unlikely to regard war as objectionable or contemptible. They know too much history. They are well aware that Britain has grabbed a quarter of the world, and by so doing has gained the highest standard of life in Europe, while her overseas settlements have reached the highest standard of life that ever existed anywhere. They also know that the Japs are much more industrious than any of the English-speaking peoples, and yet from their cramped position and deficiency of territory they have a lower standard of life than anything known in Western Europe. They are preparing to fight for a place in the sun, and they have their eye particularly on the vast territories of Australia, New Zealand, New Guinea and Borneo, which are all owned by the British or the Dutch. When they hear Englishmen and Dutchmen making piteous appeals for peace, they merely smile.

The only way to abolish war, either now or a million

years from now, is to abolish the causes of war. These causes are mainly two, pressure of population and unjust distribution of territory. When all nations limit their numbers, and when there is an international land court to distribute territory justly, war will end very quickly. Until these measures are taken, no amount of contempt will have the slightest effect in ending war.

R. B. KERR.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD NOVEMBER 25, 1932.

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

Also present: Messrs. Quinton, Moss, Clifton, Wood, Le Maine, Easterbrook (W. J. W.), Preece, McLaren, Mrs. Venton, Miss Kough, and the Secretary.

Minutes of the previous meeting read and accepted, and the monthly Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to the following Branches: Newcastle, Blackburn, Stockport, Birkenhead, West Ham, Birmingham, Ashington, South Shields, Liverpool, Hants and Dorset. Reports were submitted concerning the Charles Bradlaugh Centenary Committee meetings, Swansea, Newcastle, Liverpool Branches, Mr. J. T. Brighton, The International Federation of Freethinkers, The Rationalist Society of Canada, also correspondence from Bloemfontein and Birmingham. The Chairman reported his speech had been recorded on a Gramophone Record, which should be on sale within a few days. The Secretary reported the Caxton Hall had been booked for a Social on April 1, 1933. Preliminary notices for the Annual Conference for 1933 were ordered to be despatched. It was agreed the next meeting of the Executive be called as circumstances required.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

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, Rev. C. Drayton Thomas (Member, Psychological Research Society)—"Can Death be Bridged?"

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Sunday, December 4, Lord Snell—"Democracy, Leadership and Character."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, John Murphy—"Economic Revival by National Action."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, December 5, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"The Tyranny of Words."

THE CONWAY DISCUSSION CIRCLE (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 7.0, Tuesday, December 6, Dr. J. C. Flügel—"Psychology and Religion."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, N.): 6.30, Mr. F. A. Hornibrook—"Body Cultivation."

WEMBLEY AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (Mitchell's Restaurant, High Road, Wembley): 7.30, Mr. A. Downing—"Why I Left the Church." Admission free. Questions and discussion.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Stratford Town Hall, Stratford, London, E.): 7.0, Mr. Chapman Cohen—"The Psychology of Belief."

WOOLWICH BRANCH N.S.S. ("Queen's Arms," lecture hall, Burrage Road): 7.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin—"Does Christ Matter?"

OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, December 4, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Sunday, December 4, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 3.0, Messrs. Bryant and A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Tuson and Wood. The *Freethinker* and other Freethought literature can be obtained during and after the 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, December 4, B. S. Woolen (Liverpool)—"The Story of Eden."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Shakespeare Rooms, 174 Edmund Street) : 7.0, Sunday, December 4, Mr. H. Lennard—"Mark Twain."

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Cafe, Godwin Street) : 7.30, Sunday, December 4, Rev. A. W. Bowes (Bradford)—"Whither Bound?"

BRIGHTON N.S.S. (St. Peters Church School, Richman Buildings) : 7.30, Thursday, December 8, Debate—"Is Christianity True?" *Affir.*: Rev. F. G. Fincham. *Neg.*: J. Cecil Keast.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley) : 2.30, Sunday, December 4, Mr. Jack Clayton—"Was Blatchford's Exposition of Determinism Sound?"

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (No. 2 Room, City Hall, Albion Street) : 6.30, Sunday, December 4, A. Russel—Robert Buchanan Poet and Rebel." Questions and discussion. Silver collection.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate) : 6.30, Sunday, December 4, Mr. A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A.—"Joseph Turmel the Excommunicated Abbé."

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Ishington, entrance in Christian Street) : 7.0, Sunday, December 4. A. D. McLaren (London)—"Pagan Survivals in the Roman Catholic Religion." Admission free. Reserved seats 1s.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, Rusholme, Road, Manchester) : 3.0, Sunday, December 4, Mr. W. H. Owen (Liverpool)—"Minor Prophets." 6.30, "Co-operation or Contribution?"

ST. ALBANS DEBATING SOCIETY (Public Library, St. Albans) : 8.0, Friday, December 9. Debate—"Can and Should the Development of Civilization be Independent of Religion?" *Affir.*: Mr. R. H. Rosetti. *Neg.*: Rev. C. A. Hudson.

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