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

Views and Opinions.

Blasphemy and the Child.

I POINTED out last week that the new Seditious and Blasphemous Teaching of Children Bill proposes, first, to restore a trial for blasphemy to a court of summary jurisdiction, from which it was taken many years ago on account of the serious injustices that occurred; second, it extends blasphemy to an offence that may be committed against any religion, which should make a great many rabid Protestant antagonists of Roman Catholicism sit up; third, unless a parent is able and willing to instruct his child as to the truth about religion no one else may undertake the task. While it is an offence for a man to teach children not his own that religion is contemptible or ridiculous, it is no offence for a parent to do it. In the eyes of the promoters of the Bill the parent is a licenced wrong-doer. If the parent is unable or unwilling to teach his child what he thinks is the proper view of religion, then the child will in all probability grow up either ignorant of the true nature of religion or will develop into a hypocrite. The alternative appears to be that children must grow up, religiously, either fools or hypocrites. But neither fools nor hypocrites have ever been made to feel unwelcome in the Christian Church.

One of the supporters of the Bill said that the object of the proposed measure was to prevent the child's mind being poisoned. Quite a laudable aim in itself. But what this speaker really meant was not that he objected to the mind of a child up to sixteen being poisoned, but that he objected to any other poison than his own being used. The child is to be carefully protected against the "poison" of Freethought, but there must be every opportunity for his having served out to him the "poison" of Christianity. A man may teach children the doctrine of hell-fire, in the brutal form advocated by the Roman Church or the lower class evangelist, but there is prison awaiting the one who teaches children that this is inculcating a beastly barbarism and that the God who ordains it is unfit for decent human society. You may teach what-

ever iniquities you please, you may ridicule, or use ribald language of any man's belief, provided the belief is not connected with religion. For, said Sir R. Craddock, any religion, however bad is better than no religion at all. Another member, who would certainly come under the Bill if an intelligence test determined the age of sixteen and not the number of birthday anniversaries one has had, asked "What kind of children are you going to have if the one great thought of religion is taken out of their simple little minds." There is something peculiarly appropriate in the words "simple" and "little." After all, it is simple minds and little minds that all religions have tried to keep in being. Jesus is said to have laid it down that unless we become as innocent and as ignorant as little children we cannot enter heaven. And unless one is as ignorant and as innocent as a child one certainly will not get a Christian's recommendation for entrance. But what have children done to deserve such a fate?

* * *

A very Old Story.

Sir R. Craddock and the Duchess of Atholl tried to harrow the feelings of members with lurid accounts of the things that were taught by the teachers in Communist schools. It must have been from sheer delicacy of feeling that neither speaker gave the names of either the teachers or the schools. The most curious thing we noted about the tales told by both the lady and the gentleman was the way in which history repeats itself. For these are exactly the tales that were told long ago about the schools started by Robert Owen, and from which religion was excluded; they were afterwards told of the Secularist schools, then they were told about the Socialist schools, and now they are told about the Communist schools. Probably neither of the two speakers knew the historic character of the horrors they were detailing, and that their secretaries would only have to turn up the old, old story and just alter names and dates. Probably these stories did impress many Members of Parliament, as they carried the second reading by 124 to 30, but then so many of them might have been of the kind that will get to heaven. Let us hope so. The company in the other place is quite sanely respectable, and the "Ayes" would never feel at home there.

Some of the speakers also shed tears over the statement of Lenin, that if he could control the child until it was eight he would make the world safe for Socialism. So would that method make it safe for any movement. It is what Cardinal Manning said of the Roman Catholic Church. It is exactly what the Christian Church has always tried to do, and it is now calling in the policeman to help them do it. Only three weeks ago we were insisting that the struggle for the child was the struggle for the direction of civilization. If Christianity developed even a moderate degree of mental impartiality on the part of

its advocates they would recognize that this is an inevitable aspect of all struggle for the control of social evolution. As it is, what is a virtue in the Christian becomes a vice in his opponent.

Complaint was also made that certain, unnamed, teachers were colouring their education with Communism. This may be true, but I question whether very many teachers have the courage to risk anything by doing so. But in any case it is a fact that thousands of teachers do colour their instruction with their religious views and do this with the full approval of parsons and other Christians. The cure for this is, at any rate, not the policeman; but to raise the status of the teacher by giving him a greater measure of independence and so creating a feeling of dignity in his work and of loyalty to the task.

* * *

Science and Atheism.

Communism figured largely in this debate, and this helped to illustrate the game that is at present being played by Christian organizations. It is clear that you cannot have a scientific sociology of any kind without its being substantially Atheistic. A scientific sociology must leave God outside its consideration. If it considers religion at all it can only do so in the same way that states of mind, whether relating to real or imaginary things, or as delusions of any sort have to be considered as influencing human nature. But, so far as the ultimately deterministic forces of human nature are concerned, science is bound to treat God as a sheer irrelevancy.

Now the Christian Protest Movement, which is the body behind this Bill, does not like Atheism, and it does not like Communism, and Communism, instead of its being treated as it should be treated, as a theory of social action and judged on its merits, is by both newspapers and preachers treated as though it were an obvious and unquestionable crime. So the game is to identify Atheism with Communism. In this way it is hoped to get those who are luke-warm in religion but very incensed against Communism to help in the fight against Atheism. While those who are really and chiefly frightened of Atheism, these being for the most part in the mental condition of our great grandfathers, are induced to join in the fight against Communism. All the time, of course, Atheism is not committed to any social theory whatsoever. I think both Christians and Communists know this quite well, although the latter hold that the destruction of religion is necessary. I also say so, but that this of necessity implies Communism or any other special social theory is quite another matter.

But a few words of plain speaking came, as one would expect from Mr. Maxton, who is so far above the majority of the House in courage and honesty of purpose that he appears wasted in that assembly. He said:—

It would appear that the only views which are to be prevented being taught to children are the views which I hold very genuinely and very sincerely, and which I think offer the only chance of getting a really decent world for people to live on their being applied. The people of the world will have to be freed from their belief in supernatural religions. What is the trouble in Ireland? What is the trouble in getting a peaceful India? What is the trouble practically in every corner of the globe in getting settled civil conditions? There are two things. There is the great class problem—the problem—the problem of a poverty-stricken mass and a few wealthy people—and there is the other problem of the superstitious religions which divide nations into warring sections—Mohammedan and Hindoo; Protestant and Catholic. These two problems are at the root of all the dispeace, of the social stress and

strain, and of the civil disturbances throughout the world.

The only teaching which I know which gets anywhere near to providing intelligent explanations and intelligent solutions of the trouble of the world is the Marxian teaching, which includes within it the idea of a supernatural God who is of one kind in Africa, another kind in Northern Ireland, another kind in China, and another kind in Japan. If I am to be asked to pay respect to all these different Gods I shall be asked to pay respect to something which everyone knows must be a lie, because if you believe the one God to be right you must believe the others to be false.

This passage contains some real home truths well and plainly stated. One of the greatest troubles in the world is to-day, as it has always been, religion. It divides people more than any other matter. It has been and is the cause of more brutality, more injustice, and more hatred than any other single cause. And whatever enormity has existed, moral, financial, intellectual or social, religion is to be found playing the part of aider and abettor. National problems would not be so acute as they are were it not for religion. The Bill we have been discussing is a case in point. In no other connexion would men so moralize actions which if performed in any sphere other than religion they would be the first to denounce.

And it is, as Mr. Maxton pointed out, the obvious falsities which all make up the bulk of religions that we are asked to treat with reverence and "respect"! Not that alone, but we are asked to go on pretending to children until they are sixteen that all religions are worthy of respect, and we must do nothing to cause the youth of either sex to even suspect that anything is wrong. I do not know any course of action that so obviously outrages the first demands of intellectual morality.

Why cannot these Christians have a little more faith in the nation's children? Why bring them up as though they were idiots or potential criminals? Liberty is as fine a thing for a child as it is for a man, and early instruction in the value of forming correct ideas, the cultivation of habits of mental independence, might easily give us a better generation than we have. We have had generation after generation brought up under the influence of one religion or another. Each one of these religions emphasize the fact that the balance with every other religion is on the side of evil. Do we really run a great risk if we try another plan and leave religion out of a child's education? A generation without religion could hardly have come nearer to wrecking the world than a generation with religion has come.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

MIND.

Through all his senses Man must live, and he
Records impression, which are then concealed
Within his mind. Varies, the sum revealed,
With individual receptivity.
A wider variant is the power of thought,
And the results thereby produced. Too few
Use eyes and ears to gain a clearer view
Of life, and profit thus. Most men gain nought
From all the teeming matters which invade
The heavy outworks of their minds; they see
And hear as they are commanded. They should be
Surnamed the Radio and Press Brigade.
Though culture has been brought to every door,
Man's mind is working less, than e'er before.

Anon.

Are People Less Religious?

"The Christian Church never left off burning people alive because she was ashamed of it, but only because there were too many people at last who objected to being burnt alive."—*Ingersoll*.

THE question whether religion is losing its hold upon the inhabitants of this country has been anxiously discussed at Church Congresses and Nonconformist Conferences. Despite much bluster on the part of Anglican priests and Free Church ministers, there is a growing suspicion that this nation is living on an inherited capital of religion which is being steadily exhausted.

Indeed, it is far more than a mere suspicion. The State Church insists on the indissolubility of Christian marriage, and the Divorce Courts are always busy. The Church wishes Easter to be observed as a Holy Week, and the public have transformed it into Holiday Week. All the Protestant denominations uphold Sunday Observance, yet find that Sunday is the most popular day in the week for excursions and open-air relaxation. Already a score of towns have taken advantage of the Sunday Cinemas Act recently added to the Statute Book.

It is also observable that in half the schools of the country, both primary and secondary, religion is taught in a half-hearted way. Even in those sheltered homes and select circles where the interest in religion still continues, the tendency appears to be to seek distraction in the ranks of the Christian Scientists, Spiritualists, Occultists, and sundry other Charlatanisms, which are growing at the expense of their Orthodox rivals.

The religious spirit is fast diminishing, and even among pious folks, the forms of religious expression are changing. Two generations ago all the priests of Christendom taught their unfortunate congregations that a hell of literal fire and eternal damnation awaited all unrepentant sinners. To-day only two religious bodies of any consequence have never damped a solitary spark of this flaming damnation. The Romish Church still holds forth on brimstone, and the Salvation Army, which caters for the least-educated of the community, includes hell in its trademark of "Blood and Fire." The High Churchmen of the Anglican Church, who play the sedulous ape to Rome, are still faithful to barbarism, and thus prove themselves worthy followers of a creed which outrages the spirit of the age.

A very worthy sergeant in the British Army used to divide troops into two bodies, "Church of England" and "Fancy Religions," and this rough-and-ready summary was not so inexact as it sounds. The Church of England is the most important religious body in this country, for the simple reason that it is the wealthiest, and it has in addition the support of the State connexion. Indeed, it is a child of Parliament, although Romish opponents suggest that it was "conceived in iniquity and born in sin." Therefore this particular Church's attitude towards religion is worth noting.

The first thing that an outsider notices concerning this powerful Christian Church is that it is a divided house. Legally, this State form of religion should be the "Protestant Reformed Church," of England. Yet sixty per cent of its clergy are Romanists in all but name, and have no more sympathy with Protestantism than they have with the wicked readers of the *Freethinker*. The Evangelicals, in their turn, never tire of calling attention to the Polynesian activities of their neighbours and rivals. Thus, we have the edifying spectacle of rival religionists, wearing the same uniform, with ideas as the poles asunder. One body insists on the extremest limit of ecclesiastical authority,

and the other shouts that every tub should stand on its own bottom. The ordinary Churchman can pay his money and take his choice of Sacerdotalism or Socinianism or cry "a plague on both your houses."

Bishop Colenso, many years ago confessed to having been taught commonsense on certain elementary points of Biblical criticism by a young Zulu. A shipload of dark-skinned critics would do no harm to the present-day priests. The clergy are far more concerned with the question of the loaves and fishes than with any matter of principle. The last lesson they can be forced to learn is that the live issue for intellectual people in these days is not "How can religious fairytales be sub-edited to make them palatable to the public?" but "What is true?"

The State Church ecclesiastics are trying to safeguard their position by revising and sub-editing the barbarities and obscenities of Biblical passages in the official Prayer Book. Such excision is a straw which shows which way the wind is blowing. For the Christian Bible is not an ordinary book. It is stamped as God's Word by Act of Parliament. It is forced, with all its unseemly passages, into the hands of little children at schools. It is even used as a fetish for swearing upon in Courts of Law and Houses of Legislature. Men and women have been robbed of their children, excluded from public positions, and even imprisoned, in its name. And people are still liable, at law, to penalties for bringing it into "disbelief and contempt."

It is plain that the attacks of the Freethinkers are slowly forcing the Churches into a defensive position which is increasingly hard for them to maintain. They are retreating and throwing their weapons and accoutrement away. Their apologetics are but feeble echoes of the thunders of yesteryear. "Any religion is far far better than none at all," they murmur with tears in their voices. Let a poor man worship the sun or moon, cats or crocodiles, a framed lithograph, an empty petrol-can, if he can find one in his street, but do not become an awful Secularist. Others are even more tearful and sentimental. They assure their congregations that whilst they can give up the story of "Adam" and "Eve" and the talking snake in the "Garden of Eden" as being partly legendary, they can still conceive a glorious creation as an eternal process, fulfilling for ever a divine plan. If the man in the pew, listening to this beautiful and persuasive nonsense, paused to reflect he might think that, in terms of this bright, cheerful doctrine, "Whatever is, is right," and that the National Secular Society and the *Freethinker* are as truly fulfilling the divine plan as the Bench of Bishops sitting in the House of Lords and blocking Democratic legislation. Which, as Euclid has it, "is absurd." Present-day sermons are awful brews, worse than that terrible mixture known as "husband's tea." So the old convict thought when he was implored by the prison chaplain to bear in mind the sermons he had heard and never to return. "Sir," said the departing man, with emotion, "no one who had ever heard you preach would ever want to come back again as long as he lives."

MIMNERMUS.

Heathenism and science, beauty, law, organization. The best culture of Christendom is based on Greek and Roman classics. Fathers send their boys to Christian schools that they may learn from the heathen; that they may acquire strength of reasoning from Aristotle and Plato, the bravery of eloquence from Cicero and Demosthenes, and the beauty of literary art from Homer and Horace Sophocles and Æschylus. That mighty army of genius whose trumpets still stir the world.

Theodore Parker.

Christianity and Sex.

(Concluded from page 251.)

In every reference in the most austere Greek thought to the desirability of restraining the sexual appetites, those appetites are expressly regarded as being of the same nature and on the same plane as appetite for food and for drink, and any merit attaching to restraint was looked upon as an aspect of the virtue of moderation, and not as a special virtue of chastity. Such a virtue was unknown to the Greeks, although nine-tenths of their philosophical thought and literature was devoted to the discussion of virtue and morality.—(Robert Briffault: *Sin and Sex*. p. 70.)

THROUGHOUT the Middle Ages this low and degrading view of women prevailed and was the constant theme dwelt upon by the saints and teachers of the Church. St. Anselm, the famous Archbishop of Canterbury, in the eleventh century, and regarded as the Augustine of the Middle Ages, while admitting the allurements of woman's "clear face and a lovely form," makes the following disgusting comment: "But, ah! if her bowels were opened and all the other regions of her flesh, what foul tissues would this white skin be shown to contain." Mr. Langdon-Davies, who quotes this sentiment from Anselm's poem *De Contemptu Mundi* (Concerning Contempt for the World), observes indignantly: "How vile the imagination that stooped so low in an effort to discredit the beauty of the world of flesh: yet Odon of Cluny went further in a passage where he asks who could wish to embrace *ipsum stercoris saccum*; but we must refrain from translating the foul saint's words and leave their Latin context for those who wish to pursue it."¹

Marbode, Bishop of Rennes, also in the eleventh century, looks upon women as so many Eves; and complains: "Of the numberless snares that the crafty enemy spreads for us over all the hills and fields of the world, the worst, and the one which scarcely anyone can avoid, is woman, sad stem, evil root, vicious fount, which in all the world propagates many scandals." He goes on to record her many wicked deeds, commencing with her committing the first sin, in the Garden of Eden, and concludes, she "stretches out a lion's jaw to devour her prey, the while she feigns heaven knows what nobility, and having by these specious guiles caught her victims, she devours them with flames of lust."² After citing another Christian poet, who compares woman to a "mad beast," and a "stinking rose," Mr. Davies observes, "in fact nothing could be found too vile for her. It is a pitiful spectacle to see these recluses, torn by what fevered spasms of disordered lust we can only guess, twisting the language of Catullus and Horace to the basest uses." (p. 253.)

Did all this denunciation of sex, tend to morality? It did not. On the contrary, as Bebel points out, during the Middle Ages:—

The enormously numerous clergy, chiefly consisting of healthy men, whose sexual desires were excited to the utmost by an idle and luxurious life, but which enforced celibacy compelled them to satisfy outside the pale of marriage or by unnatural means, carried licentiousness into all ranks of society and became a perilous plague for female morality in town and village. Monasteries and nunneries were distinguished from brothels by the greater lasciviousness of the life carried on within their walls, and by the ease with which the numerous crimes committed there, particularly infanticide, were concealed by judges who themselves stood at the head of this system of corruption. (*Woman: In the Past, the Present, and the Future*. p. 31.)

It is claimed that by making marriage a sacrament, Christianity ennobled family life. This is quite contrary to the facts. As Briffault points out, the Christian Fathers were not concerned with: "controlling or regulating, but at obliterating. They were not concerned with safeguarding the institution of marriage, but on the contrary with abolishing it."³ They declared that "Natural propagation was a snare intended to draw souls to damnation. The extinction of the human race was accounted the lesser evil." (p. 59.) Tertullian, the earliest Latin ecclesiastical writer, asks, "For why should we be eager to bear children . . . desirous as we are ourselves to be taken out of this most wicked world and received into the Lord's presence." He describes children as "burdens which are to us most unsuitable, as being perilous to faith."⁴ Tertullian lived between the years 160 and 230 A.D. Later, in the fourth century, St. Jerome, the most learned of the Fathers, who translated the scriptures into Latin, wanted to abolish marriage altogether: "'To 'cut down by the axe of Virginité the wood of Marriage,' was, in the energetic language of St. Jerome, the end of the saint."⁵ Sir James Donaldson, the Christian scholar, who studied the subject at first hand; confesses that:—

This antagonism to marriage had a great influence on family life. It is strange how seldom children are mentioned in the Christian writings of the second and third centuries. Almost nothing is said of their training, no efforts are mentioned as being made for their instruction. The Christians had come to the belief that the world had enough of children, and was fully stocked, and that every birth was a cause of sorrow and not of joy. (*Woman*. p. 180.)

We have seen the effect upon strong and virile men, of the attempt to suppress all sexual emotion. How they became obsessed with erotic delusions and hallucinations—which they attributed to the devil—often ending in actual insanity. The effect was equally bad on the women who renounced the world, took a vow of virginity and retired to a Convent. Denied a natural outlet for their sexual and maternal instincts by a natural union in marriage, they gave themselves up to a supernatural union and became brides of Christ, and gave vent to their suppressed feelings in some of the most erotic love appeals ever composed by women. Take the following appeal, addressed by Marie de L'Incarnation to Jesus: "Oh my love, when shall I embrace you? Have you no pity on the torments that I suffer? Alas! alas! My love! My beauty! My life! Instead of healing my pain, you take pleasure in it. Come, let me embrace you, and die in your sacred arms."

If that had been addressed to any living young man, the lady would have been considered very forward, and no better than she should be; but being addressed to her Saviour it is quite all right. The Church approves, and indeed, invites our admiration.

And what has been the result of the age-long war that Christianity has waged against sex? "After two thousand years of Christian morality," says Briffault, "Nowhere during that time has the Christian plan of suppressing sex, approached realization, least of all in Christian ascetic communities or in Puritan societies. The Christian societies of the first ages of Christian cenobiticism were, as Jerome himself bears witness, inflamed with lust."⁶ Undaunted by failure, says the same author:

³ R. Briffault: *Sin and Sex*. p. 108.

⁴ Donaldson: *Woman* (1907). p. 181.

⁵ Lecky: *History of European Morals*. Vol. II., p. 322.

⁶ Briffault: *Sin and Sex*. pp. 81-82.

¹ Langdon-Davies: *A Short History of Women* (1932). p. 252.

² *Ibid.* p. 253.

"Christian moralists still look forward, with incredible simplicity of mind, to some future time when the views of ascetics will be shared by all and universally acted upon." But, as he further observes:—

To stamp out the primal biological force which actuates life is not possible . . . In point of fact, the Christian plan has not only failed to achieve its purpose, it has in very marked manner achieved the very opposite. The Patristic and Puritan Christian plan for eliminating from life the disturbing factor of sex has had the effect of greatly increasing the evil which it was intended to abolish. (p. 83.)

The ancient Greeks were not sex inflamed and sex ridden as our civilization is. "The paganism from which Christianity liberated the world came nearer than any other culture to accomplishing what Christianity claimed to accomplish. Greek paganism was in a higher degree than any other culture free from sex-obsession." (p. 121.) The Greeks looked upon sex with that detached and clear sanity with which they viewed every aspect of life. It was a natural instinct, like hunger and thirst, and like them, to be indulged with moderation. They did not denounce it as vile, neither did they extol it as pure and noble. It was quite natural.

The campaign waged by Christian moralists for the suppression of sex is the cause of the increased sexual excitability which marks Christian culture. As Briffault rightly concludes:—

The system of Christian morality has poisoned life at its source, so that the whole Western outlook on sex is distorted, deformed, and diseased. St. Ambrose declared that, had it brought no other blessing into the world, the Christian religion merited to be recognized as divine on account of its having revealed the virtue of chastity. It might with more justice be said that had the Christian religion brought into the world this one curse alone, the poisoning of the sexual life at puberty, it merits on that account alone, the detestation of the world it has infected. (*Sin and Sex*. pp. 89-90.)

Much more might be written upon this subject. For instance, on the policy adopted by Christians in dealing with venereal disease; and the devastation caused among primitive tribes by the Missionaries insistence upon the adoption of clothes in tropical countries where they are not needed.

W. MANN.

Biological Concepts. 2.—Variation

ONE evidence of the inadequacy of Darwinism was the fact that it left variation unaccounted for. Darwin accepted variations as his starting-point, and then introduced "natural selection" to account for the transmission of some of them. In a word, Darwin may explain the survival, but not the arrival, of variations.

Hence the frequent criticisms. Hans Driesch, the German biologist, said,¹ "Natural Selection can only eliminate what cannot survive, what cannot stand the environment . . . but natural selection never is able to create diversities" (*i.e.*, variations). As Goodrich, the author of *Living Organisms*, remarks, "What selection can do is to preserve variation." It cannot account for their origin. Mr. Lunn uses this as an argument against Darwinism evolution in *The Flight from Reason*. In defence of Darwin, Delage makes the retort that no theory is expected to solve problems which it does not introduce: Darwin took variations for granted.

Prof. T. H. Morgan, who has tackled the problem left by Darwin, remarks that "Selection has not

produced anything new, but only more of certain kinds of individuals; evolution, however, means producing new things, not more of what already exists" (lectures).

How, then, do genetic variations come? I am, of course, referring not to the products of hybridization, but to variations arising in pure stocks. Since Mendel's time, controlled experiment, on the lines suggested by him, has revealed "the experimental fact that units of living matter with new hereditary properties do actually come into being in the normal operations of natural generation" (Hogben). This is known as the Principle of Genetic Variation.

These diversities, known as mutants or "sports," arise, not by any fiat of a "Great Evolver," nor need they point to the operation of a "Vital Force." The evidence tells us that they come by the action of determinable physical conditions. For example, in the case of the fruit-fly, *Drosophila*, the work of Muller has shown that mutants have resulted from the exposure of the parents to X-rays. It is thought by some biologists that the powerful "cosmic rays," investigated by Rutherford, and of late, by Millikan, which flood through space, may be a potent factor in genetic variation. These rays are more penetrating than X-rays or radium rays. Bones or coins can stop X-rays, but cosmic radiation will penetrate into yards of lead, and break up 20 atoms per second per cubic inch. "It may have been cosmic radiation which turned monkeys into men," as Jeans very crudely puts it.²

Come what may, the study of variation, like that of heredity, has been freed from the teleological entanglements in which Darwin left it. For consider, Variation unexplained leaves a gap. And what happens with Anti-Materialists when there is a gap in our knowledge? They bring in their traditional gap-filler—God or the Life Force, as the case may be. Examples most readily coming to mind are W. R. Sorley's *Interpretation of Evolution*. Mr. Lunn's *Flight from Reason*, and Mr. Joad's section on variation in his *Meaning of Life*; but these are not exhaustive.

Darwin believed variation to come in every generation. The philosophical implication followed. The hand of Purpose was at work everywhere and continuously, in a progressive unfolding of the divine plan. But Morgan has shown that the natural production of mutants is a break in the normal routine of stability.

"The structure of the chromosomes" (says Hogben) is fundamentally stable. From time to time there occur disturbances in this normally stable equilibrium. New heritable properties emerge into being in quite a discontinuous fashion. There is no self-evident reason why a particular stock should not remain indefinitely in a phase of stability. To the experimental geneticist there thus exists no difficulty in interpreting the fact that some animals have remained unchanged since the earliest rocks."

And to cap it all, variations may already, in the infancy of science, be controlled (*cf.* the fruit-fly). Where is the sense of the idea of an Almighty evolver whose purpose may be frustrated, or thwarted?

Further difficulties beset the theory of purpose. Will a variation be passed on? The old answer (Darwin and Lamarck) was, "If favourable, yes; if not, no." More fodder for the teleologists. "Selection" picked out "favourable" and "adaptive" mutants. Modern research has undermined such notions, as it is next hoped to indicate, in dealing with Selection.

G. H. TAYLOR.

¹ Gifford lectures, Aberdeen Univ., 1907.

² *Mysterious Universe*.

Dr. Maude Royden's Knowledge.

DR. MAUDE ROYDEN is in many respects the most interesting preacher of the day. As a keen anti-militarist and a woman with modern ideas on many subjects, she is deserving of respect. In general her intellect is vastly superior to that of most of the "higher" clergy—and lest this should seem a questionable compliment let us throw in most of the politicians as well.

Her "church" is usually crowded—with thoughtful well-bred women. She has a sense of humour. Unlike the Sunday audiences at Conway Hall and Queen's Road, her congregations are *not* "requested to abstain from applause." They clap, and even laugh aloud. Actually discussion is not forbidden. Sleeping in the pews is rare—except possibly during the musical "entertainment" (a solemn recrudescence of some of the worst music of the fourteenth century—if nothing more ancient is available).

Dr. Royden was invited recently to give a series of sermons in America. The invitation was cancelled on her reaching God's Own Country, because her pious hostesses learnt that Miss Royden occasionally smokes cigarettes.

At the "Guildhouse"—as her church is called, Dr. Royden cuts a cheerful looking figure, perched high above the congregation in a well-lighted white-painted (or whitewashed) pulpit, in a church as devoid of beauty as an ordinary Secularist lecture-hall.

In a recent sermon she asked the question, "Can We Know Anything About Jesus Christ?" She took as her text some passages from H. G. Wells's *Outline of History*, in which Wells finds that all the gospels "agree in giving us a picture of a very definite personality."

Amongst the other testimonials, Dr. Royden quotes "a great Hindu scholar," and a "Moslem lady," both of whom rejected Christianity (as presumably Mr. Wells does), but "who say exactly the same thing" as Mr. Wells, namely, that Christianity gives to the world a great "Person."

Mr. Wells, Dr. Royden and the two anonymous witnesses have some kind of Christianity in their mind, which may possibly be a great improvement on historical Christianity. The chief characteristic of Christianity for the believer and the unbeliever alike has been its creed. To reject its doctrines as the Hindu and Moslem and Mr. Wells have done would once have meant the torture-chamber and the stake, from which no amount of praise of the "distinct personality" of Jesus would have saved them.

Saint Paul, who said, "We preach Christ and Him crucified" was the earliest exponent of this theory—and is famous as the most doctrinaire of all the creedalists in history. Dean Inge admits that "doctrinal Christianity is doomed," but the churches will find that their idealization of Jesus is equally certain of shipwreck.

Credo and dogmas have some advantages over personality, they are more definite. To assess personality depends on the sentiment of the assessor. A creed or doctrine can be formulated by authority, and serve as the basis of a society, but opinions differ in praise and blame.

All this would be true of a historical or living character, the facts of whose life were established, quite apart from the frequent modifications in character from youth to age, and the newer knowledge which so often comes only after our hero's death. Tennyson's eulogy of Wordsworth might have been different had it been written many years later, when

we learnt of the late Poet's illegitimate daughter's history. Many people profess to see in Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Grey* signs of perversion which were never suspected prior to Wilde's unhappy trial.

In the case of a religious teacher who lived (if ever) nearly two thousand years ago, who wrote nothing at all, and whose alleged biographies are admittedly full of interpolations and contradictions, the Churches have been wise enough to formulate authoritative creeds as the bases of their various divisions.

These doctrinal divisions are big enough. They are infinitesimal compared with the number of estimates of Christ's character and personality—unless of course the original creeds and dogmas are still cherished. But it is not the orthodox Christian who wants to substitute a Jesus-cult for the "doomed doctrinal Christianity."

It is to the school of Renan, Mill and other heretics that we must go to find this glorification of the "person," and it is always at the expense of his "doctrine."

Dr. Royden makes the frank admission that "even if you select from the teachings of Christ some one truth which seems to you of supreme value and say, 'as far as this is concerned I am prepared to believe this and to make this my religion' you are quite likely to find that in the opinion of scholars this is a saying that Jesus of Nazareth never said at all."

Incidentally Dr. Royden in recommending a study of the Bible deplores the fact that the English Bible "has a bad record for cheapness, for it has in the past—though I hope this is no longer true—been produced by sweated labour." She dismisses the "critics who declare that this Jesus was invented by those who called themselves his disciples," she laughs at those who call him a solar myth, and she regards as "simply and frankly perverse" the idea that "the Cross is a phallic symbol."

When she reaches her real problem Dr. Royden seems to believe that the gospels make the character and personality of Jesus so clear and distinct that "we know that here was a real person." She thinks we can say that "Jesus could not have done" this and that. To reach this conclusion she must, like Tolstoy, discard texts which disprove her high estimate of Christ. "The most preposterous stories grew up round the person of Jesus," she says, and "there is something, even in the gospels, of these legends."

In her short sermon Dr. Royden found time to explain the absurdity of Jesus riding on two asses—a "literary flourish" by which the evangelist distorted the truth in order "to convince the Jews that Christ was fulfilling an Old Testament prophecy." But she never gets near a mention of Christ's own acceptance of the Old Testament "prophecies" concerning the Messiah, and of his failure to condemn any of the Old Testament atrocities. She never alludes to his own vile threats of everlasting fire for his enemies (Matt. xviii. 8 etc.), his recommendation of universal castration (Matt. xix. 12) or his teaching people in parables specially devised to prevent their profiting by his teaching (Mark iv. 11-12).

The modernist school of which Dr. Royden is a courteous, eloquent and cultured leader, must commit itself more definitely on the subject of miracle. Dr. Royden evades this. But if Jesus claimed to perform miracles he stands condemned as a fraudulent fakir. If he did not make such a claim there is nothing left in Christianity to talk about.

"Jesus Christ was a person in history," says Dr. Royden. Jesus Christ is certainly the centre of a million ghastly episodes in history. But anybody, real or legendary, could have served equally well. The Cross, the Rope, the Swastika, the Fasces, the

Union Jack or the Jolly Roger would have served the purpose of imperial, clerical, or revolutionary armies.

Jesus Christ is no more the central figure of Christianity than Saint Paul or the Virgin Mary. The Martyrdom of Man throughout the Christian Era has been "In the name of God," and to defend a creed.

George Moore, who lived very near to Dr. Maude Royden's church says (in "The Apostles") Christ as seen in St. Luke's Gospel is "a lifeless, waxen figure, daintily curled, with tinted cheeks, uttering pretty commonplaces gathered from 'The Treasury of the Lowly' as he goes by." That is one side of the gospel picture. Swinburne's "Galilean Serpent" is another, equally true. A finer, nobler one can be drawn by suppressing everything that contradicts it. These contradictions may be unimportant in other cases, but in a character we are asked to worship and imitate they form a fatal barrier to acceptance.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Acid Drops.

The new President of the National Association of Schoolmasters asks for the restoration of the "cuts" that have been made in teacher's salaries. He says that "hundreds of men teachers are coming to the conclusion that the present economic system is tottering to its fall," and this conviction is affecting their teaching. So he asks for an increase in salaries to prevent the schools being made the "forcing-beds of revolutionaries." We do not wish to argue here whether the present system is collapsing or not, although only a born fool would deny the inevitability of some radical modification. But Mr. Russell's argument amounts to advice that the teachers should be subsidized as supporters of the present system by an increase of wages. Teachers of that type appear to be quite untrustworthy trainers of the young, and the sooner they find some other occupation the better for the nation.

Dr. Scott Lidgett, President of the Methodist Conference, on an official visit to Plymouth, urged young people who were being influenced by the Group Movement to be "true to the historic Christ." He failed to explain how anyone could possibly be true to a myth. He also urged them to remain in close association with the Methodist Church, and to see that their intense experience did not cause them to isolate themselves from their fellows. The first injunction sounds as if the Doctor is very nervous lest his Church should lose its clients. The second injunction seems all wrong. The "fellows" of these pious young people who have just discovered Christ would benefit so greatly from the pious young people remaining in isolation. Nothing could be more boring than to be constantly badgered to attend Group Movement meetings or to be frequently greeted with the question, "Have you found Christ?"—with its implication, "I have, and how perfectly splendid it would be if you would only be like me." The Christian who has just "found Christ" is always a sublime egoist and craves the flattery of imitation.

Sir William Bragg is credited with the remark that:—

A good definition of civilized man would be, "A man who prefers to see a thing made rather than destroyed." This seems based on an assumption that the uncivilized man prefers to destroy rather than build. One would like to hear the evidence for that assumption. One would also like to suggest that a mere preference for making rather than destroying hardly entitles a man to being called civilized. The question of civilization appears to have some relation to the answers to such queries as—What is it that is made? What ideas and what ideals and motives prompt the making? For instance, the Christians built cathedrals, but the motive was not a civilized one; it derived from a fear similar to that which terrorized the life of primitive man. Again, Christians

preferred to destroy or banish the best civilized thought and culture of pagan Greece and Rome. What they created to fill the gap was something which for many centuries submerged the intellect of Western Europe. Christians introduced a system of doles and charities. Civilized men would have created a social order in which doles and charities were unnecessary.

A journal issued by the Presbyterians of Philadelphia has an unusually frank assertion of the role of the Christian religion as the defender of private property. In *Christianity To-day* (March) we read, "Man has a Divine right to God's holy inheritance of property. He had it in Eden and out of Eden—the earth. He lost it. But God in mercy has since assigned allotments and given title thereto—conditional on stewardship." Hence, "no God, no title or possession." This is a version of the doctrine that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof" which will sound pleasant in the ears of nations and landlords who have appropriated "allotments" without much regard to "stewardship." We fear the Treaty of Versailles made sad havoc of our contemporary's view that "God has distributed to each as He wills," and that the statesmen who devised that Treaty either did not believe, or at least did not care, that "He will ultimately require a reckoning." If the "distribution" of territory and "guilt" and "reparations" then and there arranged was the will of God, that will has never been revealed in a more odious or contemptible light.

A New Zealand reader sends a report of a sermon by Bishop Cherrington at St. Peter's Cathedral, Hamilton, in which that prelate deploras "the small place which the Church occupies in the lives of men of influence and in public life. They, and scientists, were not found in the churches, and it was a rare thing for a politician to openly worship God." The latter spectacle is not so rare in this country, but otherwise, these conditions are general. The Bishop proceeded to observe that, by way of contrast, "it was amazing how Christianity had spread among low-caste Indians," adding that this was in accordance with precedent as "it was among the slaves that Christianity first spread in the days of old." God, it seems, is not quite so troubled about the divorce of learned men from religion as is the Bishop. "He does not want them unless they humble themselves." It is not often that we hear a Bishop so clearly enunciate a truth not always recognized, that Christianity is a religion of slavery, and a humbling creed for men of character and courage. And it is only good for slaves who are content with their slavery.

The most "liberal" apologists for Christianity are often the most puzzling. A (recently deceased) American theologian, Dr. McGiffert, for example, abandons every supernatural element in the life of Jesus in the Gospels. He asserts that "we cannot be sure of his words as recorded in the synoptic Gospels at second, or even third or fourth hand, but we can at least form a fairly accurate picture of his controlling interests and of the spirit and general principles of his teaching." We are bound to say we agree with a more conservative Christian writer who, criticizing this passage, says "most of us will wonder how we can ever be sure of any of His words if he did not certainly claim to be the Messiah." Dr. McGiffert says that no positive decision can be arrived at as to whether Jesus did or did not look upon himself as the Messiah, which is only to say that no positive decision can be arrived at (apart from the "history" of the Gospels), as to whether he ever lived, and, if so, whether he ever did any of the things or said even one of the sayings attributed to him. Dr. McGiffert rejects the historicity of the Gospels, and is "agnostic with respect to the claims which they represent Jesus as making about his own person." Yet the learned Doctor lived, and, we presume, died, a Christian!

How sweetly innocent are some of our dear parsons! The Rev. H. W. Elsley, of St. Michael's Church, Tokyngton, has just awakened from blissful dreams of a conquer-

ing Christianity, and finds in our midst the awful effects of "infidel propaganda"—especially upon the "uninstructed," or the "half-educated" Rationalist. Mr. Elsley—though he himself could easily pulverize Secularism and Freethought—urges the readers of a religious paper not to ignore us altogether, though he admits it is not much use instructing a man about the Blessed Sacrament if he is sure that "Our Lord Jesus Christ" never lived. The perspicacity of these holy men of God really is astounding.

Mr. Elsley thinks the Church should counter the insidiousness of our cheap—but extraordinarily effective—literature by issuing some magnificently written counter-blasts herself, and he instances Father Paul Bull's "little book on *Science and Faith*." It seems incredible that there are still rev. gentlemen in these days who imagine any Christian pamphlet or even enormous tome could stem the irresistible tide of Freethought. But that is how it must be done, and we wish Mr. Elsley every luck in his magnificent proposal. But what a pity we can't expect him to come out of his stronghold himself and do battle for his faith. How anxious these unconquerable champions are that somebody else should do it!

Another nun's body has been exhumed prior to beatification. It seems that in 1830 she received three visits from "Our Lady" in person, who gave her "the commission to propagate the Miraculous Medal." Such signal favour direct from heaven was bound to receive recognition, so her body was taken from its coffin and "portions for veneration as relics were removed later by doctors." And this kind of thing takes place in an age of science and progress—in the year 1933!

As that great Germanic champion, Herr Hitler, is so prominently in the news, it should be pointed out that he is a Roman Catholic, and that 70 per cent of his Coalition Cabinet are Roman Catholics. The *English Review* points out also that Hitler "has carefully cultivated private relations with the Vatican for years past." This must be very gratifying to those Jews who became converts to the Faith—of their impeccable enemies, and who have been treated by their brothers-in-Christ exactly as if they had remained in the faith of their fathers. One would like to hear the opinion of English Jewish converts to Roman Catholicism on this outbreak of Anti-Semitism, coupling it, of course, with the fact that Hitler is "one of them," and that Roman Catholicism has always been the most violent and intolerant enemy of Judaism.

Mr. H. V. Milligan, who is an organist and choir-master in New York, has been airing his views about the quality of the hymns sung when he was a boy, "most of them being," he said, "about what poor miserable sinners we all were and how much happier we'd be when we are dead." He thinks "Jesus, lover of my soul" pretty bad, and does not like "Such a worm as I," and other pious gems which can still be heard in many a church and chapel. We are glad to say that Mr. Milligan has been severely taken to task by the Rev. H. L. Bowlby, who rigorously champions everything his fellow-believer denounces, and in particular such beautiful hymns as "Alas and Did My Saviour Bleed," and "Come, Ye Disconsolate," and other doleful ditties so beloved of real Christianity. We agree with Mr. Bowlby, and hope that the truly orthodox and saintly believers in Christ will fight to the last man to preserve every hymn printed in the good old hymnals of the more religious if less sprightly days.

A reader of a daily paper doesn't want the "old angry sort of sermon" back in the churches. She—a Victorian woman—remembers its effect on her as a child—(1) "to send me to sleep, and (2) to frighten me when I could keep awake." Let her be of good cheer; parsons are unlikely to revive that kind of sermon. They think their clients are best retained by leading them to believe they are the special pets of a dear Old Celestial Grandfather,

who couldn't get angry if he tried ever so hard, and who is perpetually snivelling over the indifference of mankind.

Doctors are said to be trying to discover the cause of measles. Is the problem, then, so very difficult? Why, every Christian knows the answer. God, who created all things, is the cause of measles. God said, Let there be infectious diseases, and there were infectious diseases. Ergo, it must be the Devil who prompts doctors to search for means whereby to circumvent the Divine Scheme of things.

Apropos of the forthcoming World Economic Conference, a pious journal says: "The Peace Treaties must be amended, in such a manner as that the scar of post-war vindictiveness shall be effaced once and for all from the visage of Europe." We think our friend might well explain why God who inspired the Allies to win the war failed to inspire them not to be vindictive. Or is it that he *did* inspire them to be vindictive? As God figured—according to the parsons—so largely in the war, it is only reasonable to assume that he figured as largely in the "Peace." Perhaps that explains the results!

According to Mr. John Buchan, M.P., "When people think, they always read." Presumably, he means that thinking people naturally turn to books in order to gather other men's opinions. That may be true. What one wishes was also true is that people who read would always think. This would bring about a tremendous revolution in the character of our "popular" newspapers and journals. And it might even result in fewer people attending the churches.

A Methodist paper says that Communism is a prevailing political creed in Battersea. But:—

Methodism has nothing to do with Communism as a political policy, but it has a vital obligation for holding or reclaiming the people for the Christian faith. Whatever may be the causes, only one in ten of the children are to be found in Sunday School, and in a population of 185,000 it is estimated that only 6,000 are in the churches on a Sunday evening. . . . The problem of the Church and its minister [Queen's Road Church and the Rev. J. A. Thompson] is that of reaching and redeeming the irreligious and godless crowds of Battersea.

We may suggest one way in which the reverend gent may achieve a certain amount of success. This is that he should endeavour to prevent all Secular amusement and recreation facilities in the borough on Sunday, and introduce "sacred" concerts and free refreshments, and other pious tactics. A certain number of intensely bored citizens—bored with the ideal Christian Sabbath—would assuredly be snared sooner or later.

Fifty Years Ago.

THERE are thousands of half-crazy individuals on this earth whose whole and *sole* idea seems to be how they can reach the right path leading to a so-called heaven, but who somehow generally manage to drop into lunatic asylums as makeshifts for half-way houses. They swallow every word of the Bible (without even reading it) and pray, moan and groan until they get almost as thin as one would imagine spirits to be—while they at the same time hate, persecute, and imprison those who happen to differ from them—feeling assured that by these means they will attain their object. Yet they are in no particular hurry to leave "this wicked world," but greedily keep their heavenly home in reserve for the time when they think they will have to go somewhere else.

They are welcome to go to their heavenly abode. We have not the slightest wish to accompany them—not only for the reason that we have enough of their antics on this earth. We should find the journey rather tedious, and our reason tells us that we shall fare worse in this Christian heaven than we do here.

The "Freethinker," April 29, 1883.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE,

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Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—W. Milroy, £1.

F.J.L.—Excellent letter, and should arouse thought in brains not already atrophied by over-instruction in religion.

TED SMITH.—We have already published warnings as to the fate awaiting very lengthy letters.

E. WRIGHT (N.Z.).—Gramophone record has been sent. Thanks for cuttings. For the other matter, this is, of course, in the hands of the next of kin, who are properly guided by the wishes of the deceased.

J. STEPHENS.—We do not think that Roman Catholicism has any particular attraction for literary men, but so far as newspaper men are concerned, who are often "literary" as all men are by courtesy "gentlemen," other considerations will explain their activities on the press.

H.B. (Bath).—We saw the correspondence at the time and agree with your opinion of it.

A. W. McILROY (Smethwick).—Thanks for your letter and enclosures. Pamphlets will be sent as requested. Your efforts re newspaper correspondence deserve all praise and more success than we fear is likely while so many so-called progressive papers jib at telling the truth about religion.

F.F. (Willesden).—The passage is in Newman's Lectures on *The Idea of a University*. It is often quoted to defend any kind of cowardice or compromise.

J.T. (Bloomsbury).—See "Acid Drops."

F. ROBERTS (Castleford).—Thanks for circular. Shall be mentioned.

H.E.F. (Mile End).—Re Brewin Grant. Yes. It was so.

LYCOS.—Next week.

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When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

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

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

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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.

The discussion between Mr. Cohen and the Rev. M. Flowers, at Swansea, on "Is the Christian Conception of God Reasonable?" drew a much larger number of would-be listeners than the Central Hall could accommodate. But the discussion itself was not all that could have been

desired. Mr. Flowers proved himself to be a very good speaker, but more than that is required to make a good debate, and his own personal convictions as to the value of Jesus Christ, interesting though personal opinions may be, gave very little good debating material. Such points as Mr. Cohen made were never dealt with, nor do they appear to have been understood, and many of Mr. Flowers' own points made against his case rather than for it. The pulpit is not usually a good training school for the debating platform, and Mr. Flowers, in this respect, suffered from his education.

Mr. Ithell Davies made an excellent Chairman, and acted with strict impartiality throughout. The audience gave him every assistance, since, as Mr. Cohen has found with other Welsh audiences in similar circumstances, its conduct was admirable. Both speakers received much applause, but no attempt whatever was made to interrupt, or to otherwise hinder the speakers in their work. There were many visitors from as far afield as Cardiff, and we believe that one result of the discussion will be to give an impetus to Freethought propaganda. Thus far Mr. Cohen's purpose in taking part in the discussion will have been achieved.

We hope that all Branches of the N.S.S. are bearing in mind the Annual Conference, which is to be held in London on Whit-Sunday. Every Branch should be represented, and as many individual members as possible. Every member must have his membership card with him. From what we can see the Conference promises to be more successful this year than usual.

Not for the first time by many we find a pleasant touch of scepticism in the wise and witty "At Random" feature of the *Observer*:—

One of the social columns speaks of "our hostess, a direct descendant of the Queen of Sheba." That is a very interesting tradition to have in a family (like the Anglo-Israelitish belief that King George is of the line of David). But the Queen of Sheba is really a very shadowy personage, and the only literature about her, apart from the Biblical story, goes no further back than the sixth century A.D. It is a very circumstantial story, but it was the way of holy men of that age to add picturesque verisimilitude to otherwise unconvincing facts.

Reviews of Freethought books are not without their humorous side—as witness the following review of J. M. Wheeler's *Paganism in Christian Festivals* recently published by the Pioneer Press. It appears in *The New Schoolmaster* for April:—

This is an attempt, logically and scientifically propounded, to show that the times of the year that are held sacred by Christian England, base their origin upon paganistic foundations. While one feels that what is in the book is true, yet one is forced to the question, "Why all this pother?" What does it matter? The book will interest without necessarily convincing or changing a point of view upon such facts as the birth and death of Christ.

This is a perfect gem? The thesis of the book is logically and scientifically propounded. It convinces one that the pagan origin of Christian festivals is correct. But it does not matter. A scientific and logical disproof of Christian doctrines will not change a point of view which is neither scientific nor logical. And these be our schoolmasters! Educational efficiency is advancing by leaps and bounds!

NEW TRUTHS AND OLD BELIEFS.

To be open-minded; to struggle against preconceptions, and hold them in due subjection; to keep the avenues of the intelligence free and unblocked; to take pains that the scales of judgment shall always be equal and fair; to welcome new truths when they have proved their title, despite the havoc they may make of old and cherished beliefs—these may sound like commonplace qualities, well within every man's reach; but experience shows that in practice they are the rarest of all.

Lord Oxford and Asquith.

Bradlaugh Year Centenary Notes.

X.—“THE MOB, THE SCUM AND THE DREGS.”

THE political group known as “The Fourth Party” (Lord Randolph Churchill, Mr. Gorst, Sir H. Drummond Wolff and Mr. A. J. Balfour) came into existence through the Bradlaugh Parliamentary crisis. These gentlemen saw a heaven-sent chance of embarrassing the Government. Lord Randolph Churchill was its leader. It is only fair to say Mr. Balfour took no part in the coarse political “sport” in which it engaged. Mr. Winston Churchill, in his *Life* of his father, describes how the latter took steps to resist Bradlaugh’s admission to the House. Religious bigotry and harsh and venomous denunciation marked his speech, which he concluded with a quotation from Bradlaugh’s *Impeachment of the House of Brunswick*. The words quoted were: “I loathe these small German breast-bested wanderers, whose only merit is their loving hatred of each other. In their own land they vegetate and wither unnoticed; here we pay them highly to marry and perpetuate a pauper-prince race. If they do nothing they are ‘good.’ If they do ill, loyalty gilds the vice until it looks like virtue.” Having read this Lord Randolph flung the book to the floor and stamped upon it! The anti-Bradlaugh campaign thus opened proceeded with unmitigated scurrility. In 1883 Lord Randolph stated that Bradlaugh’s supporters “were the residuum and the rabble and the scum of the population.” The “bulk of them were men to whom all restraint, religious, moral or legal, was odious and intolerable.” Bradlaugh replied to all this by a brochure entitled, *John Churchill: Duke of Marlborough*, and did not spare that noble history, which he subjected to a searching examination. The sub-title of this booklet was that at the head of this Note.

When Bradlaugh at length sat unchallenged in the House and Lord Randolph became its Leader, his Lordship’s efforts to placate the Member for Northampton were frequent and obvious. Bradlaugh’s magnanimity on all personal issues is proved by innumerable and well known instances. But Lord Randolph’s former insults to the electors of Northampton put him in a category of his own. Many times Churchill had to suffer the discomforture of the laughter of his own supporters at his expense caused by the once hated, but now almost universally respected, Bradlaugh, who had acquired a true Parliamentary manner which only gave force to his speeches and retorts. In the *Life* (Vol. II., p. 321) we find the following by one Jennings, who was helping in some special investigation of the Army and Navy Committee then going forward. “One odd effect of your Committee. Bradlaugh came to me this afternoon (July 27, 1887) said he had been reading the evidence, was immensely struck with it, that you had done enormous service already. I told him a little more about it. He said, ‘He has done so much good—must close up my account against him.’ Well, surely, I said, there is no use in keeping it up any longer. It only looks like vindictiveness. ‘Yes,’ he said, ‘I think I will close the ledger.’” It is known that an act of much generosity on the part of his old opponent which had come to Bradlaugh’s ears had helped to this decision. Even in so good, indeed so great, a Biography as Mr. Churchill’s *Life* of his father we could hardly expect austere, historical veracity to override filial devotion. There is no apology for the discreditable anti-Bradlaugh campaign, and, in recapitulating its incidents (Vol. I., p. 130) it would have been both generous and just to mention the fact that the House eventually rescinded the record of Bradlaugh’s expulsion. Mr. Churchill is silent on that matter.

A.C.W.

Nature’s God and God’s Nature.

WHEN a Freethinker is told by a poetically-minded and lady-like clergyman that behind nature we ought to see Nature’s God, he, very naturally, is disposed to enquire: Is Nature’s God the God of Nature displayed in the experience of personal prosperity, glorious sunny summer days and the profusion of smiling harvest fields; or is he the God of Nature red in beak and claw; of Nature displayed in the earthquake and flood; the howling arctic tempest; the murder of man; and the greedy ferocity and voracity of starving wolf, tiger and shark? And he is also disposed to enquire how the harvest fields could have smiled in profusion, order and beauty if the activities of man independent of all supernatural agency had not laboured throughout the ages to till the land and make it productive of food, clothing and shelter for human beings, and to provide safeguards against Nature’s storms, rigours, and cataclysms.

The priests and parsons insist, of course, that their Deity is the super-excellent paragon of benevolence and beneficence. And they get very restive when the personal nature of their Deity as manifested in the records of the Old Testament comes to be investigated by incredulous and capable thinkers.

Nature goes on her inexorable course without regard to belief or disbelief. The best that man can do is to take full advantage of her genial moods and to devise protection against her fierceness. And is not a great tribute due to man for what he has been able to do in this direction as *Man* uncontrolled and unhelped by any supernatural power? Great is *Man* at his best and greatly to be praised! Little is *man* at his worst when he yields to the soothsaying of fortune-tellers and witch-doctors. The Augurs of the twentieth century still wink at one another as they pass in the streets. But many of them fail to realize that in the pursuit and ascertainment of Truth (without qualification) *Man* is throwing off the hampering incubus of unverified traditions which have prevented that full development which is his birthright.

It is a pretty picture this of Nature’s God; but it is hopelessly out of count in the experience of the majority of people. When the early men said “Go to, let us make God in our own image,” they little understood what they were letting their descendants in for. However, men persisted in inventing a vast variety of Gods; and by doing so they laid upon themselves and their successors a bullying, terrorizing and intolerable tyranny; and set up serious obstacles to progress, enlightenment and mutual good will between man and man. In so far as the Deity of Christians is concerned, he is evidently, despite his supremacy, subject to several human weaknesses—his jealousy and love of praise and gifts and cajolement, being each specifically attested even in the pages of Scripture. Christians advertise that Christ’s coming to reveal God was necessary because the peoples of the earth had forgotten and wandered away from Jehovah. On the contrary, it was because the peoples had had too much of God and Gods; but it suited the ecclesiastics who were bent upon regaling and reinvigorating the Church and maintaining their own comfortable positions and influence, to adopt a new scheme which should present simultaneously what would appeal most strongly to the traditional Judaist and the idealistic Hellenist. *Man* had originally made God. God was now to transmute himself into *Man* without losing any of the qualities of his supremacy. The founders of the early church were clever, astute and far seeing. But the grip of their dead hands is relaxing by the pressure of Freedom.

IGNOTUS.

Disillusionment v. Emancipation.

A SERMON TO FREETHINKERS.

Not infrequently in the past have I had occasion to wonder why there is so little of the spirit of liberalism among Radicals, or why one finds so few genuine *free* thinkers among professed Rationalists; and I find myself asking the question: Are we, as a class who pride ourselves so much on our disillusionment, really emancipated?

There is a vast difference in these terms. Emancipation should mean freedom from the disturbing elements, and emotions arising from those superstitions which have bound us and our forefathers in past times; yet many who profess disillusionment seem far from free. They may deny God, but they still act as if they believed in one, or resented the fact that there is not one on whom they may lay the burden of their censure. They use the vocabulary of the Fundamentalists, especially as to cuss words, and not infrequently resort to his manners and methods. They assume a fundamentalistic premise and adopt a fundamentalistic attitude toward all who happen to have chosen a different premise or starting point. They call names; and they invoke curses in the name of all that is high and holy (at least they use the terms) on their "enemies." They "fight the fight," they "keep the faith," they "run (down) the race," and if they don't look for a "reward in glory," it happens to be due to their pet dogma, and not to their dispositions.

Back in the early nineties the late Gamaliel Bradford wrote in his journal the following words: "I had begun to find my balance. Not that I had arrived at any definite belief or creed, but I had come to dwell upon and appreciate the sweeter side of skepticism, its privilege of turning toward the light as well as toward the darkness, and the infinite preferability of the former course."

Now it has seemed to me for a long time that the last person in the world to get sad, sour or cynical, should be the Atheist. Surely, if he has no god to blame for the way things have come about, and he can't lay it on any one of us, he ought to be reasonably calm, even if his "New England conscience" still robs him of the right to be happy.

He knows (or should know as well as any one) that the laws of nature are impersonal. If the "gods of nature," granted the term, appear to be unfair in their distribution of diseases and disasters, surely it little behoves him to accuse them of any deliberate, diabolical and sinister purpose. As physicians, we don't go about looking for devils, even in Fundamentalists; but we look for natural causes and natural remedies.

And we do this without resentment. We may "fight an epidemic," but our warfare is based on the laws of sanitation, hygiene, and on our accurate knowledge of morbid processes learned through calm, dispassionate observation and experiment. Our weapons are not of a purely destructive character. We know we cannot destroy darkness by violence. We must light the lamp of knowledge. We may use guns of a certain sort, and gas bombs of another sort, in an emergency, just as we use knives and trocars, but our purpose is the alleviation of human suffering, not the damnation of sinful souls to everlasting pain. In the modern hospital we do not ask the ancient question: "Was it this man's sin or his parent's?" except for the purpose of finding out what we can do for both parents and children.

If this is "for the glory of God," so be it. Suffice to say that the scientific mind—the emancipated mind—whether dealing with patients in a hospital or

morons out of it, should have no place in its programme for resentment. The Rationalist, of all persons, should be big enough to manifest understanding, sympathy, tolerance, patience and goodwill.

We are all in the same boat. We really have no business to rock it—or knock it. If you can't pull an oar, yell for help, or sit tight, you'd better get out and walk. At least, you can be a good sport. Granted we are without God and without hope, if you choose; it only serves to emphasize our common cause and our common need.

Essentially the predicament is the same for everyone, high or low, born into this "vale of tears." All have the same primitive impulses to fear and rage and lust. All inherit traits from remote ancestors (many of whom were devils, in a way), and if we don't inherit all their superstitions and cruelties—their totems and taboos—we have little to brag about for being born in a more humane and enlightened age.

Indeed, we have little to brag about in being born at all. How futile to rave about accidents in a world where accidents seem well nigh the rule! Many of us would not be here to-day if it weren't for an accident. Our parents were not altogether to blame. They meant well. We would do the same ourselves—and we do—when we have the chance.

So, if God is not to blame, and our parents are not to blame, and our ancestors are not to blame—who is? Do we have to introduce a little Adam and Eve story of our own, in order to be able to "pass the buck?"

Oh, yes, we inherit "traits!" And some of those old dodges were quite as psychological as the newer ones. We love to have somebody to blame—a snake, a god, or a devil; and even to this day some are laying all their troubles to woman. We, too, have to "watch out" or some of those old goblins 'll get us.

For a long time I have wanted to write a little sermon for Freethinkers mainly. In modesty, I hope it will not be taken too seriously—too religiously. For, says a good old Freethinker friend: "Religion wouldn't be so bad if folks didn't take it so damned serious."

To illustrate how hard it is, even for Freethinkers to live down orthodox habits of mind, I trust I may be pardoned a bit of pleasantry at the expense of my friends, even if it involves a personality.

Now I happen to hold some individual notions regarding the story of Jesus, which will require a word of elaboration at this point. The kernel of my contention may perhaps be stated, in a word, to the effect that as Freethinkers maintaining the view that the story is not historical, we have a perfectly good moral right to take the same liberties with it that we would with any other fiction, classical or otherwise. Thus we may, if we have a taste for it, endeavour to reconstruct a more or less thinkable character from the record, a natural product of the times; one who *could* have lived and furnished the basis of fact around which the myths were built. This notion for certain reasons appeals to me more than the complicated "myth theories," with which I am perfectly familiar. Furthermore, it is not far from the position of many advanced scholars, including that leader of Rationalism, Mr. Joseph McCabe.

My approach is psychological rather than historical. It assumes that certain of the great truths which Jesus enunciated could only come from the mind of one imbued with the principles of Liberalism or free thought. Consequently we are justified in rejecting certain passages as creations of lesser minds, in a later period of church history, which by no rational inference could be accredited to the same individual.

Whether such a character *actually* lived in history is entirely aside from my point. The fact is that we have a story which has exerted a tremendous influ-

ence on mankind. What does the story tell as it stands?

Anyhow, right or wrong, I wrote the story* as I had conceived it, frankly stressing the uncertainties as to the authenticity of the records. In no place did I contribute any word in support of supernaturalism or theism in the old sense. But I did seek to emphasize certain moral values in the reputed sayings of Jesus having modern application. True, I used Jesus as a figure upon which to string ideas in an entertaining manner; and I took a great amount of pleasure in stealing him away from the Fundamentalists by the quotation of some of his outstanding words and deeds. I took the ground that he couldn't be a Rationalist and an orthodox Christian at the same time; and I thought I had perfectly good "Scriptural evidence" that he wasn't the latter. My method was rather free, I admit, somewhat unique and original from the author's angle, sincerely Rationalistic in purpose; not so much to convert the Rationalist as to intrigue the Orthodox. I am not defending my conclusions, however, or trying to stuff them arbitrarily down anyone's throat.

The point I wish to bring out is in relation to a letter received from the editor of a Freethought publication, who had read my manuscript and who opined with some regret, that his readers would "hardly stand for a work of this sort" because, in effect, I had "dogmatically selected certain passages of the New Testament and rejected others in order to bolster up a preconceived opinion."

Now I am perfectly aware, although my method was hardly dogmatic, that some of my conclusions were far from "orthodox," either from the angle of religion or secularism; but—Great Heavens! Is the Rationalist himself becoming so sensitive to offence that he must be protected in his reading, like an ordinary papist, from the contamination of a well-meaning though somewhat erratic brother in the faith? Frankly, are we not all in danger of becoming a shade too dogmatic at times, and may not our occasional attitude of mind tend to smack just a bit of the Fundamentalist shibboleth, to the effect that, because we are dealing with Bible literature, we must either "accept all or reject all?"

In other words, are we fully emancipated from Bible fetishism, or can we approach all religious literature with the happy freedom of an open and emancipated mind? Surely we are not anticipating a day of Freethought heresy trials! Nor do we need an *index expurgatorius*.

In short, may it not be possible that we—some of us—may be in danger of taking our own pet creed—shall we say it?—too damned *religiously*? When we reject the Bible as the "Word of God," do we commit ourselves to the old orthodox folly of having either to uphold or to damn every word of it "from cover to cover?"

As I suggested earlier, why do we have to goddam anything or anybody? Why employ obsolete terms? Why exalt the language of a theism or demonism which we consistently deny? Who wants to send anybody to hell—even a parson? Most of them are quite innocent victims of a faulty system. How do you know they are "devilish?" Ever see one—a devil, I mean? One does not button his collar behind nor don "customary suits of solemn black," as a rule, for pure "deviltry." Black, the negation of light and the symbol of death, is hardly chosen for gaiety. Who wants to go about every blessed day dressed for a funeral?

No, all these more or less unfortunate people deserve our genuine sympathy, if not our hearty good

will. We don't have to approve in order to tolerate. We don't have to curse everything we don't like; and the fact that we hear so much of this really *orthodox* language, even among our own elect, suggests to my benighted mind how hard it is for any of us to shake off the vicious superstitions of our own childhood and the childhood of our race; and how far—how very far—one must travel along the straight and narrow trail (or the broad road, if you prefer) that leads to "the sweeter side of skepticism" or from disillusionment to emancipation.

W. W. HARVEY, M.D.

Unconscious Propagandists of Freethought.

RELIGION, in a controversial sense, plays a very prominent part in our life here in Sydney (N.S.W., Australia). At intervals for some months we have had a case before the courts in which a woman, Ann Lennon, was charged with using unseemly language in the Domain—the Sydney equivalent of London's Hyde Park.

The charge was brought by the police, headed by Constable Hair, under certain legislatively-authorized conditions regarding the conduct of speakers in the Domain. Very scrappy reports of the proceedings in court were given in the daily papers, due to a hush-hush policy, prompted by a deathly fear of hurting, in any way, the religious susceptibilities of their readers. Still, it was clearly enough revealed that the charge against Mrs. Lennon resolved itself into this—that she discussed God in the abstract, and referred to God as "a great He-man, fond of the smell of burning flesh."

For this she was fined £10.

The address was delivered by Mrs. Lennon under the Sydney Branch of the Rationalist Association. From this conviction, there was an appeal to a higher court, presided over by Acting-Judge Nield. Here, Mrs. Lennon had the satisfaction of being represented by Mr. Piddington, K.C., a gentleman of the deepest scholarship and broadest views.

'Twas by the police that Mrs. Lennon's remarks were considered unseemly. Of considerable importance, therefore, was their evidence in support of the allegation to this effect. A few extracts from their statements in court show how highly qualified—I don't think!—they were to determine what constituted unseemly language in the discussion of a religious subject.

For example (I give question and answer just as they have been printed):—

"Under cross-examination by Mr. Piddington, Constable Hair declined to comment on the conduct of the ancient Jewish Deity.

"'If He ordered the slaughter of 25,000 men, women and children,' asked Mr. Piddington, 'would not He be bloodthirsty?'

"Hair: I don't know.

"Hair added that if the Kaiser had given a similar order he would consider the Kaiser bloodthirsty.

"'If one day you became Inspector-General of Police,' continued Mr. Piddington, 'would you order the wife, child, camel, and ox of a man who had been executed to be killed also—or would you regard it as bloodthirsty?'

"Hair: It would be a bloodthirsty order.

"Hair declined to say whether 'merciless massacre' was the same as 'a delight in bloodshed'; nor did he know whether there was a move afoot to disassociate the Christian God from the ancient Jewish God.

"'Do you agree,' asked Mr. Piddington, 'that if the Turks had massacred 25,000 men, women, and children it would have been barbaric butchery?'

"Hair: I don't know.

"Further police evidence included the statement by Sergeant Lindrum that, if the Bible said that the Jewish God had put to death 50,070 persons for looking into the Ark, then he would accept it as the truth."

Such, then, are the views of the police. Massacres or murders, if perpetrated by the Kaiser, ceased to be massacres or murders, if authorized by God. And, further, it

* *The Making of a Messiah*. (Bruce Humphries Inc., Boston. \$2.50.

constituted—in their benighted minds—unseemly conduct on the part of Mrs. Lennon to even hint at what God had been responsible for in this respect!

But there were even worse disclosures to come.

The hearing of the appeal occupied the better part of a week. Consequently it is only possible to give, within reasonable space limits, the highlights of the proceedings. These included the citation by Mr. Piddington of passages from a long list of world-recognized writers that utterly paled the remarks made by Mrs. Lennon.

Among these were Shakespeare, Cobden, Lord John Russell, Huxley, Carlisle, Milton, Mark Twain, and Gibbon. Others, too, he instanced—by the dozen. "From the Book of Genesis," says one of the press reports, Mr. Piddington went to Matthew, Arnold, Dante, and Homer."

Yet it was of no avail. They had not expressed themselves, it was held, in the Domain, or subject to the regulations governing that area. In other words they had expressed themselves through the infinitely wider, for ever enduring sphere of the printed word!

Come, now, to what must be regarded as the farce—or, if you like, infamy—of the prosecution.

This was supplied by the Judge, who appeared to urge, again and again, that the God of to-day was not the God of the past; that the present-day God was a very much more humane conception; and that "the address by Mrs. Lennon contained words identifying the God worshipped by modern Christians with the tribal deity of a primitive race."

Viewing the charge in this light, the words used by Mrs. Lennon were held to be unseemly, with the result that the appeal was dismissed.

Buckle has stressed the truth that the progress of the human race is due to the diffusion of knowledge. Hence it is that gods reflect the people of successive periods; that gone for ever is the God of the Jews; and that we have to-day a Judge declaring it to be a legal wrong to "identify the God worshipped by modern Christians" with "the tribal deity of a primitive race." What an advance in thought and outlook is represented by this judicial ruling!

But in it there is a shattersome kick-back for professing religionists.

The more enlightened the age, the less inhuman the god. Gods, from the first, have been the creations of the people. Thus, we have the efforts of Acting-Judge Nield and others to improve the God of the Bible—in other words, to bring him more into line with present-day demands.

But, if they dismiss the God of the Bible, what God—or pretence to a God—remains?

Religionists can't have it both ways. It must be one of two things—either the God that pervades the Old Testament, or nothing. And it is not clear that, in disowning this particular God, they are repudiating the very foundations upon which they base their belief in the God idea?

Of course this is an aspect of the prosecution that must have presented itself to many readers of even the restricted press reports of the proceedings. Certainly the charge was not brought with a view to creating and spreading disbelief in the Bible. But it had nevertheless this welcome, compensating side—however much we may regret and resent the conviction. Perhaps, too, the case will lead to Parliamentary action in the direction of a semblance of sanity being introduced into the regulations regarding the Domain.

May I just add a few lines as to the other ways in which religion here is being discredited—mostly through the conflicts among the antagonistic, bickering sects, waged in the press?

For example, Catholics in this State conduct their own schools. Recently, this led to the Catholic head, Archbishop Kelly, making the published statement that "it were better for Protestants that they were never born" than they should be brought up through the State-controlled schools. Naturally this evoked similar kindly remarks from the other side. Catholics, it was pointed out, figured just as prominently, if not more prominently, in the criminal records of the State—a pretty clear proof, it was contended, that the enormously superior

effects claimed by Archbishop Kelly for Catholic-educated children were not borne out when put to the test of experience.

And so on—from both sides, all so charitably and so Christianly—and in utter refutation of the principles by which Catholics and Protestants profess to be guided!

Finally, we have Archbishop Wright (Anglican) protesting against the holding of the show by the Royal Agricultural Society on Good Friday. Certainly from the Christian point of view this is a day that should be regarded as sacred. But for years the show has been held on Good Friday, with the attendances ranging from 100,000 to 125,000. The society's reply to Archbishop Wright was that it could not depart from the practice of the past.

Of course, in the 100,000-to-125,000 gatherings there is no end of professing Christians.

Is not the utter insincerity of their Sunday-to-Sunday protestations clearly revealed by so wholeheartedly giving themselves up to pleasure on a day that should be to them the most revered in the calendar?

Still, it all illustrates the drift from the toils of superstition—the indifference to religion that is more and more permeating the world; and many will join with me in welcoming the great propaganda service that is being done by the Good Friday show-date, if only for the reason that there is not the least hope of ever getting, in any of the Sydney dailies, the merest word of an openly rationalistic character.

FRANK HILL.

Correspondence.

FREETHOUGHT AND ATHEISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—“Hope” asks whether it is possible for a Freethinker to be an Atheist, and he suggests that the answer to this question should be in the negative because “the definite position restricts freedom more than a confession of ignorance.”

On this basis a Freethinker should, presumably, confess ignorance as to the reality of every God, Devil, angel and sprite that human imagination has invented. He should also adopt an indefinite position in regard to the question whether Jabberwocks, satyrs, dragons, etc., really do or do not exist. Further he should be open-minded as to whether two and two always make four, and should answer the question, “Do I, or do I not, exist?” with the words, “I really don't know.”

I imagine that “Hope's” difficulty lies in an inability to determine what constitutes proof or disproof of any proposition, such as “God (or satyrs, or apples) exist.” As I have frequently pointed out, this difficulty is almost entirely due to the absence of any instruction in schools or colleges concerning the functions and limitations of language, as well as to the paucity of books dealing with this subject. I have done my best, in a limited way, to tackle this source of mental ambiguity in the articles mentioned below; and perhaps if “Hope” will trouble to read them, his attitude towards the “freedom” of an indefinite position—especially in regard to the so-called “existence” of God—may be modified.

The articles are: “Language and the Abstract” (21 and 28 December, 1930), “Discussion” (31 May, 1931), “If there is a God” (30 October, 1932), “Does God exist?” (1 September, 1932), “God does not exist” (5 March, 1933).

C. S. FRASER.

FREETHOUGHT NOMENCLATURE.

SIR,—I am glad that the correct and incorrect use of such terms as Freethought, Rationalism, Secularism, Ethicism, Atheism, Agnosticism, Humanism, etc., etc., will be reviewed by you. This will be eagerly looked forward to by all your readers, particularly those who, like myself, are guilty of using any or all of these terms without much thought of precision or suitability.

I have always liked the term “Secularism” myself,

feeling that as an antithesis to "soul-saving" it represented more faithfully the real "driving" force in our propaganda. But I don't see how it cuts out communion with those Theists who have dispensed with "Revelation," and who seem to agree with the American poet (whose name I have forgotten), who said, "It seems to be his later will, we should not think of him at all." Freethought "as a refusal to subordinate one's mind unconditionally to any other mind or organization," seems to be beyond criticism, but even here do not Roman Catholics hold that the exercise of Freethought may, and should, lead to a person so subordinating himself? "Rationalism" is claimed for myself if not all of the religious sects, and is therefore not "rationally" the sole property of the latter-day Rationalist. But here, could not the Rationalist say exactly the same as could be urged for the word "Science," viz., that although the early feeble attempts to explain phenomena could be called science in its day, that is no reason for throwing the term overboard when the explanations have grown sounder, as knowledge has grown from more to more.

Regarding Atheism versus Agnosticism, the existence of intellectual timidity and dishonesty is a fact and can hardly be called sufficient attention to, and a term like Agnosticism is widely used by those who, rightly or wrongly, prefer a quieter life. But it has always seemed to me rather futile, and unnecessary, definitely to charge A B or C with such "crimes."

This brings one to a last point. Who is speaking authoritatively on such matters? Where can we go to and find an agreed volume of opinion such as we find in the definitions of Mass, Density, and Acceleration in Mechanics. Most of us realize that the Papal Church runs no risk whatever in making infallible pronouncements, when the medium is only "words"—"the counters of wise men and the money of fools." And even if the N.S.S. defines "Secularism" to-day, what of the N.S.S. of to-morrow, which will not have the slightest belief in Authority or Apostolic succession? It appears to me not only possible but probable, that we shall have neo-Secularisms to the end of time, and many of us will add—"a good job too."

T. H. ELSTOB.

CHURCH SERVICE.

A Reminiscence of Youth.

Onward, Christian Soldiers,

Marching as to war . . .

Singing Congregation . . .

Mixture as before . . .

Onward, onward, onward,

Onward, onward, on,

Onward to the lesson,

Chapter one, St. John.

In the beginning was the word . . .

Onward once again,

Christian soldiers, sermon time,

Now will bring you pain,

Save for some that, happy, sleep,

Through the tedious drone

Of "brethren," dear friends," and the rest . . .

Parson's monotone.

Now to the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost.

At last we hear his final words,

Rise, a stiff-legged host,

Once again a hymn sounds forth,

Yelled in happy glee,

And at last, into the air,

For a week we're free!

Herbert Shelley.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON,

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.): 7.30, Prof. F. Aveling, D.Lit.—"Man and His Work."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, April 24, Mr. P. Goldman—"Spiritualism and Psychology."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N): 7.0, Debate: J. T. Waddell and A. D. Howell Smith—"Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?"

WEMBLEY AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (Mitchell's Restaurant, High Road): 7.30, Mr. W. McCormack—"Freethought and the Drama."

OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, April 23, Mr. Tuson. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, April 24, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Sunday, April 23, 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.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (No. 2 Room, City Hall, Albion Street): 6.30, Sunday, April 30, A General Meeting.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. Jack Clayton—"Happiness."

OUTDOOR.

ASHINGTON, 7.0, Sunday, April 23, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Market Place): 7.0, Wednesday, April 26, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (West Regent Street): 8.0, R. Buntin, A Lecture. The *Freethinker* and all Freethought literature can be obtained at all meetings.

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