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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
<i>The Way of Salvation—The Editor</i> - - - -	257
<i>A Peculiar Patron-Saint—Mimnermus</i> - - - -	258
<i>Definition and Meaning—C. S. Fraser</i> - - - -	259
<i>The Dawn and Dusk of Earthly Life—T. F. Palmer</i> - - - -	261
<i>Still More Misfits—Monsters—J. Reeves</i> - - - -	262
<i>Freethought in Poland—J. Cang</i> - - - -	266
<i>Shelley and Atheism—W. Kent</i> - - - -	267
<i>How Freedom is Narrowed—Ignolus</i> - - - -	267
<i>Labour and the Church—H. T. Buchle</i> - - - -	268
<i>The Book Shop—C-de-B</i> - - - -	269

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

Views and Opinions

The Way of Salvation

NONE of us can make certain of bequeathing to our children a good sound physique. In spite of all we may do, some hidden physical weakness that has been latent for generations, may develop in our offspring. Neither can we be sure of securing for our children the possession of a strong, well-balanced intellect. Many a fool can claim a clever man and woman for his parents, and a genius may appear as the progeny of ordinary folk. The laws of heredity are obscure in their operation, and where the mental qualities are concerned, biologists often tend to darken counsel rather than help in enlightenment.

But a study of Christianity will convince us that there is at least one thing that parents can do if they wish their children—religiously—well. Let them make sure that they cultivate a fair stock of bad habits, before good ones become so engrained that they make the lodgement of their opposites difficult, if not impossible. This task is really not a difficult one, because the "Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness" has seen to it that bad habits can be acquired with greater ease than good ones, and they are not so quickly lost. Of course, we cannot be sure that, even when we have given them this good Christian start that they will continue along the road on which we have set them. But we have done our best to give them a bad beginning in order that they may achieve a good ending.

* * *

A Great Truth

Two things recently brought this cardinal aspect of Christian ethics to my mind. One was a picture in a daily paper illustrating the first religious talking film that has been made. The picture showed a parson talking to a couple of burglars. The satisfaction of all was expressed in their faces, and while it was a play, yet the producer had been quite correct in his appreciation of the central truth of Christian teaching. The parson appeared to be delighted to welcome these burglars, after he had been bored to death by a congregation in which the husbands did not beat their wives,

the wives get drunk, or the children go early to prison. And the burglars evidently felt their religious value—a far greater value to the Church than if they had been ordinary men practicing the commonplace virtues of everyday life.

The other thing that impressed upon me the religious importance of bad habits was my picking up again, after many years, a volume by that professional advertiser of the Salvation Army, Harold Begbie. This gave an account of a long list of thieves, drunkards, etc., who had spent the larger part of their lives in developing those bad habits, the renunciation of which had opened for them the gates of salvation. Without these bad habits they would never have been heard of, they would never have devoted their declining years to the service of the Lord, they would never have been able to stand on a platform as a glorious example to others. They would have died unknown; their virtues would have been unsung, they would have had no place in the literature of the Christian world. They would not have died so good if they had not lived so bad. Whether they owed the possession of their bad habits to the thoughtful care of Christian parents, or whether they acquired them by sheer persistence, I do not know. But the result is there for all to ponder.

* * *

True Christianity

Now while the principle involved in what has been said, has always been evident in Christianity, it has never been quite plainly avowed—that is if we set on one side the recurring principle of Antinomianism in Christian history. But as this taught that a Christian could do no wrong, and things which were sinful with others were not sinful with one who was saved, the matter hardly applies. We are concerned with the fact of the emphasis that the Christian Churches have actually placed on the value of bad habits. They have benefited by it, as they have benefited by the belief in the Devil, but they have been ungenerous in their acknowledgements in both directions. Yet it is deeply embedded in Christian teaching. It begins in the New Testament, at the Crucifixion, in the touching story of the men who were being crucified with Jesus. What these men were being executed for we are not told. The only information is that they were malefactors. Neither of them professed regret for the life he had been leading, but one of them asked Jesus to remember him when he came to heaven. The response was that he should go that day, with Jesus, to paradise. Had this man not lived on the cross he would never have died on it, and he would never have had the distinguished honour of being the first of the believers in Jesus to enter paradise. Without his early development of bad habits he would have gone through life unknown and have died in a condition of undistinguished mediocrity. With merely good habits he would never have died on the cross, he

would never have met Jesus, he would never have found salvation, he would have just gone his own road to hell. If any man ever had cause to say "Thank God for my bad habits," it was that malefactor on the cross.

* * *

The Value of a Past

To that example Christianity has remained true during the whole of its history. Anyone who will look into the matter will probably be astonished to find out how many of the Christian "Saints" paved the way to salvation by contracting some very, very bad habits. From St. Augustine onward the story runs, down to the modern revival meeting. Ordinary unimaginative people may denounce the "evil lives" of many men and women, but it may well be that these decried ones are building better than their detractors know. These men and women would never have awakened to the need for salvation without that instinctive wisdom which had led them to store up the material for a glorious conversion. I think it was Walter Pater who said that the public was just a dung-hill on which to breed a genius, and it may be said, from a Christian standpoint, that the evil a man may do, the lives he may wreck in doing it, is the raw material out of which the Saint and the hero of the conversion platform is made. Without these bad habits the revivalistic platform would be bereft of its brightest ornaments and myriads who are now in heaven would be elsewhere.

Wise in its generation the Churches have never laid their great emphasis on keeping men good from infancy. They have never laid chief stress on the people they have kept from doing wrong. There would be no more advertising value in that than there would be in Keatings advertising the number of people who had kept themselves free from verminous visitors without using their powder. It is they who have been far-sighted enough to develop bad habits who are valuable to the Church. The cry is "Repent and be saved," and how can a man repent if he lacks the proper material? The value of a "saved" man at a revival meeting, or at an Oxford Group gathering lies not in what he is, but in what he has been. At any of these gatherings the man without bad habits would be of no interest whatever. At a revival meeting it is the converted criminal who is the centre of attraction. The women look at him admiringly, the men envy him for the "good time" he has had, the boys look and wonder in what way they can emulate his past, so that they may make sure of having such a glorious present. It is the saved blackguard who is to shine as a precious jewel in the Saviour's crown, not the unimaginative performer of the humdrum virtues of ordinary life.

* * *

A New Commandment

So a new commandment I give unto you—or rather I put Christian philosophy into plain language. "Whoso would be saved let him take unto himself during his youth bad habits, so that when the time cometh he may have that whereof he may repent, and so gladden the hearts of the godly and make the angels that are round the throne rejoice. For how shall a man waken to his own need for salvation if he hath not done that which, if he leaves undone, affords him no ground for repentance, for forgiveness, and for the wearing of a heavenly crown? When a man who feeleth sick goeth to a physician he is straightway questioned as to what bad habits he hath, and when these are confessed he is told to give them up. And soon after he doeth so, he is a whole man. But if he hath no bad habits, no past ill-deeds that teareth at his soul, if he cannot give up smoking, or drinking, or

over-eating, or late hours, then is the physician greatly harassed and the man's position is like unto that of a ship labouring in a storm, but which hath no cargo that it can throw overboard and so save the vessel.

"So unto all parents who wish their children well, I say, give your children bad habits, for these in their later years will pave the road to salvation. For what shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world, and yet lack those 'secret sins' through the confession and renunciation of which he may enter paradise? To be saved a man must repent, and the more of which a man may repent, the greater shall be his reward. Harken not to those who say that the evil consequences of what a man doeth are not removed by his repentance. It is a man's own soul that must be saved, and such cannot be done without repentance of old sins, even though it may offer no security against committing new ones. So, therefore, let all parents take heed. Let them give their children bad habits, for it is in the giving up of them that the Gospel of Christ opens the way to salvation."

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A Peculiar Patron-Saint

"What gasconading rascals those saints must have been if they first boasted these exploits or invented these miracles. These legends, however, were no more than monkish extravagances, over which one laughed inwardly."—*Charlotte Brontë*.

"General opinion is no proof of truth, for the generality of men are ignorant."—*Clifford*.

PROTESTANTS are supposed to be averse from Saints. But, like so many things connected with religion, this is far more accurate in theory than in fact. For there is one saint who is treated with some respect and much advertisement in this Protestant country. Saint George's alleged portrait is on the gold coinage and on some of the banknotes. Or, rather, there is a design of a man on horseback, apparently killing a very large cockroach with a carving knife. This is meant to portray Saint George and the dragon, and the man is supposed to be the patron-saint of our tight little island, or, rather, of the southern part of it, for Scotland has a saint of its very own.

The inclusion, during recent years, of the bellicose Union Jack among the most sacred symbols of the religion of the Prince of Peace has led to a renewed interest in the personality of this saint. Indeed, there is a Society of Saint George, which, with the help of the yellow press, seeks to perpetuate the saint's record. Therefore, it may prove of some interest to be informed who this particular saint was, and his connexion with English history.

It is with profound regret that we find that the saint's biography is unpleasant reading, and quite unsuited for the perusal of Boy-Scouts and Girl-Guides, and the more youthful "buds" of the Primrose League. Historians agree in disclosing a pitiable story of a misspent life. From the highest to the lowest, from the august Edward Gibbon to the once-popular Professor William Smith, they describe the saint as an unadulterated scoundrel, eminently fitted for the researches of the criminologists of the Crimes Club. Even Emerson, a cultured critic, can find no redeeming traits in the saintly sinner's character. Hear what the great American has to say:—

George of Cappadocia, born at Epiphania, in Cilicia, was a low parasite, who got a lucrative contract to supply the army with bacon. A rogue and informer, he got rich, and was forced to run from justice. He saved his money, embraced Arianism, collected a library, and got promoted by a faction to the episcopal throne of Alexandria. When Julian

came, A.D. 361, George was dragged to prison. The prison was burst open by the mob, and George was lynched as he deserved. And this precious knave became in good time Saint George of England, patron of chivalry, emblem of victory and civility, and the pride of the best blood of the modern world.

Napoleon is said to have dubbed us "a nation of shopkeepers," but this undue devotion to the memory of an oleaginous scoundrel shows that business men have their limitations. It is all very sad, but Saint George himself is the trouble. Whether we identify the saint with the dishonest army-contractor of Alexandria, or the other man with the similar name, he is equally unsatisfactory. The chief exploit of the "other fellow" is the slaying of the dragon. Some people, not wholly illiterate, regard this as a mere fabulous invention, such as the stories of Perseus and the sea-monster, Apollo and the python, Bellerophon and the chimera, and many another legend. This dissolves George as a solar myth. It also disposes of him as the Christian crusader, champion of chivalry, and patron-saint of England.

The other tales told of this particular George serve to show to what depths of imbecility human credulity can sink. This George was, we are told, killed no less than three times, pleasantly reviving on two occasions. Among the other trifling things that happened to him were that he was burnt to death, beaten with rods, crushed with rocks, beheaded, and thrown to wild animals. Coming to life again, he was sawn in pieces. These fragments were thrown into boiling pitch, but he again came to life, being finally despatched by being broken on a wheel. The whole farrago of nonsense is as true as the Gospels, but not more so. What has all this nonsense to do with England, or even with common sense? Only in one fable is he described as having even visited this country. If pious Christians, and the members of the Royal Society of Saint George, believe that the decrees of Providence are affected by saintly intervention, of what use is this particularly shady Saint George? Is he not one of the patron saints of Germany and Austria as well as of England?

There is no getting out of the quandary. Saint George, in either version, is one of the most complete shams from which ever soft-hearted and soft-headed folk sought to extract religious sentiment. His story may have appeared as true in the Ages of Faith to the unlettered and unsoaped members of the Greek Church in the East of Europe, but what concern have decent people in England with the thieving provision merchant of Alexandria, or with the central figure in a solar myth? Every schoolboy should know that Saint George's vogue came to England with the Crusades, though the legend was known long before. As a Protestant country, we do not need a patron-saint at all, and Romish priests must rub their hands with satisfaction when they recall that such a saint still figures on the coinage and currency of a non-Catholic country.

Custom makes cowards of so many people, but it is no use pretending that the bulk of the population in a civilized country can be made to care for a meaningless blend of classic myth and deceased Cappadocian. Why not throw over the whole farce? So far from recommending any citizen to wear an artificial rose in honour of a still more artificial saint, we suggest that it would be better to forget the army-contractor of Alexandria. There is too much Newgate Calendar about the creature. The patron-saint is a sham, and there is an end of it.

The surprising thing is that such legendary nonsense should receive lip-service in the twentieth century, in a country pretending to civilization. Such childlike credulity seems altogether out-of-place in the case of grown men and women. To study it is to

essay an inquiry into the psychology of a crowd and an ignorant one at that. Let there be no mistake on this point. Roman Catholics, who are the chief offenders in this matter, are mainly ignorant folk. They are not allowed by their pastors and masters to read any books or publications criticizing their own religion. They are told bluntly that by so doing they are in danger of eternal hell-fire. Some colporteurs of Protestant Bible Societies are ill-treated in Catholic countries, for a zealous Romanist will no more read a non-Catholic version of the Christian Scriptures than he would read the critical works of Chapman Cohen. No Catholic may even become a Freemason, because the priests object to all secret societies other than their own. If a young Catholic attends a Freethought lecture, he sins more grievously than if he robbed his own mother.

Indeed, it is the priestly control of education which is the main prop of superstition in this country. There are forty thousand priests of all denominations in this country alone. They all bear the title of "Reverend," and it is permissible to ask what they do to entitle them to be revered. In reality these priests are modern medicine-men engaged in precisely the same work as their coloured prototypes in uncivilized countries. They tell us of deities who get angry with us; of a fearful devil who must be fought; of angels who fly from heaven to earth, and of saints to be supplicated.

And, closely examined, the priestly profession is no more honest than fortune-telling. Many a poor old woman has been sent to prison for taking money from a servant-girl, after promising her a handsome husband and six children, but these priests are allowed to take millions of money for promises of good fortune in the "beautiful land above." In the Christian Religion the Devil possesses as much power as the Holy Trinity, and more place. Unless it is so, Christian worshippers tell a manifest lie in every prayer and supplication. For they declare that they are, and always have been, miserable sinners, and there is no truth in them. To what depths do priests lead their innocent followers. For ignorant folk always ascribe mysterious and omnipotent authority to things they do not understand. That is the secret of the power of all these medicine-men, Christian and otherwise.

MIMNERMUS.

Definition and Meaning

In proportion, as we fail to use words correctly—and I do not mean merely in matters of pronunciation or grammar—so will the conclusions which we reach by verbal means be illogical or incorrect. And our failure to recognize, and so to check, faulty usage on the part of others will also lead us unconsciously to accept their incorrect reasoning as correct, and their false conclusions as true. Humbug, credulity, unreason and emotionalism are all best served by our ignorance concerning the proper use of language, that one instrument upon which we rely in almost all our thoughts and activities, and without which civilization would be impossible.

The prime essential to any logical discussion is the possession of clear meanings for the words we use (and in particular for the nouns) such that these meanings can be intelligibly defined by us when necessity arises. In ordinary conversation we do not as a rule aim at the solution of specific problems. Precision of meaning is, therefore, of no great import in such cases. But if we set out with the intention of reaching some logical conclusion, a slight variation of meaning during the course of a discussion may be disastrous. Even if it does not lead to disagreement, it cannot fail to produce

confusion, misunderstanding and waste of time in argument concerning irrelevant side-issues.

Furthermore, however much we may flatter ourselves that our own meanings are perfectly understood by ourselves, we are often faced with the fact that they do not appear to agree with those of another person. So, unless we are content to disagree, and therefore to abandon the idea of reaching any conclusion, we are compelled to explain our meanings in order to continue the discussion. It is not enough for us to declare, usually with some irritation, that our meaning is obvious or that the other person is dense. The habit of saying: "You know perfectly well what I mean by so-and-so," is nothing less than a cloak to conceal our own inability to define the meaning we have in mind, if any.

It is, therefore, of paramount importance to clear-thinking and reasoning that we should understand not only what constitutes the *meaning* of a word, but also what constitutes *definition*. And since we cannot learn or explain what *meaning* is unless we can *define* the word itself, it will be well to begin with an explanation of the nature and purpose of definition.

Definition of a term (*i.e.*, a word or phrase) is simply the attempt to make that term more understandable, either to ourselves or to another person, by stating its equivalent in other words or in different phraseology. Another way of saying the same thing is this: the purpose of defining a term is to provide information concerning that term which is not apparent in the term itself, or from the context in which it appears. Definition, as applied to terms, is synonymous with explanation. In order that the purpose of definition may be effective in its results, there are certain rules which should be observed.

(1) *Except in special cases, the definition of one word cannot be satisfactorily accomplished by means of another single word.* For example, to define a "jest" as a "joke" does not explain much, if anything. On the other hand, to define a "saurel" as a "fish" does explain something, though not much. The reason for this is that the word "fish" is more widely understood than "saurel"; whereas "joke" and "jest" are both equally well understood. So we get the second rule.

(2) *A definition should always be in terms that are believed to be, or known to be, simpler or of more common use.* This does not mean that one should promptly resort to baby language. We must judge of the terms we use from the reactions of the person requesting the definition. If the definition is to clarify our own thought, the only test of its efficacy must be our own honesty of purpose. It is an easy, though a useless, thing to humbug ourselves.

(3) *A definition should be such that the terms used refer more closely to the facts of experience and reality than the term which is being defined.* Language does not at present provide us with any clear-cut categories of words in regard to their closeness to or remoteness from the facts of experience and reality. Nouns range through a scale which extends from the nonsensical and imaginary at one end, through varying degrees of abstraction, to the concrete and "proper" at the other end. The following series, however arbitrary it must perforce be, should help as a guide to the principle just stated. Jabberwock; centaur; fairy; spirit; personality; life; digestion; patriotism; fear; shape; colour; heat; green; famine; thunder; tree; animal; dog; mastiff; London. Verbs, too, run through a similar scale. For example: anticipate; suppose; visualize; invent; diagnose; exist; think; feel; come; see; walk; eat.

(4) *If a definition appears to be as unintelligible as the term which is being defined, the only method to adopt is to continue with the substitution of other*

terms until some are found that prove to be more intelligible. The two foregoing rules are seldom obeyed even by persons reputed to be clear thinkers. We often find abstractions being defined in terms of other abstractions. For example, "beauty" is defined as "an æsthetic value"; "faith" is defined as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"; and so on. Far from simplifying or explaining anything, these definitions merely add to the already existing vagueness by multiplying the abstractions.

(5) *A definition should not consist of purely negative information.* A definition which only tells us what a term is not, is no definition at all. Thus, to define a "zebu" as "not an insect, nor a republic" is as useless for the purpose of definition as to tell someone that an angel is not an elephant. It is nevertheless true that an efficient definition should be such as to exclude wrong information. But this exclusion should be effected by the scope and accuracy of the positive information given, not by the piling up of negative information. The giving of negative information should only occur as an adjunct to positive information when the latter needs special qualification, or in the case when the person requiring the definition assumes that the term implies something which it does not imply.

(6) *The person requiring a definition should indicate the nature of the information required by first stating what he understands by the term himself.* If this rule is not adhered to, much time may be wasted in providing information that is already known. Besides, the request for a definition may be prompted, not by a genuine desire for information, but by a wish to confuse or to find fault with any definition given. The rule is necessary, therefore, to prevent both waste of time and perversity in discussion.

In addition to these rules there are certain other facts which should be noted. (7) *An absolutely perfect or complete definition is impossible.* Any definition which purports to be absolutely perfect can easily be shown to be inadequate from some point of view or other. This does not, however, preclude the possibility that (8) *a definition can be made to fulfil the requirements of any particular discussion, or part of a discussion.* Only in this limited sense might it be said that a definition can be "perfect" or "complete." Yet in the interests of clear thinking and unambiguous terminology it would be preferable to call such definitions "adequate." (9) *Whether a definition is adequate or inadequate to the purposes of a particular discussion depends upon the degree to which it is accepted by the parties to that discussion.* This principle is made clearer when we observe the contrary situation, namely, that in proportion as the parties to a discussion disagree about a definition, so does that definition prove the more inadequate to the discussion between them. But (10) *the mere statement that a definition is inadequate does not rule that definition out of court.* A perverse disputant may make this assertion merely in order to confuse the issues. But such an assertion is not valid unless the person making it can provide a more adequate definition of his own. In this connexion it should be borne in mind that (11) *the adequacy of a definition has no relation to its truth or correctness.* For the correctness or truth of a definition depends upon several factors. The definer of a term may intend to mislead his hearer. Or he may be using a term incorrectly. Thus, he might through ignorance or inadvertence be accustomed to use the term "contention" in place of "intention." His definition of the first word would then be a definition of the second, and so would be incorrect. Again, the definer might use incorrect terms in his definition, even though a correct meaning was

attached in his own mind to the term he was trying to define. Thus, he might know from experience what a "shark" is, but in defining the term he might say: "A shark is a mammal that lives in the sea," using the term "mammal" in mistake for "animal." It follows that while a definition purports to give information about a term, the information given may be false.

Finally we should realize that some people are really ignorant, while some do not wish to be enlightened despite their request for definitions. In the first case, if they are not proud of their ignorance and are sincere in their purpose, definition may have to assume the form of elementary education. In the second case all definition will be useless. How we may determine whether a person is sincere or insincere is not a matter that comes within the province of this article.

In my next article I shall attempt to explain the term "meaning" with particular reference to its use in the phrase "the meaning of words."

C. S. FRASER.

The Dawn and Dusk of Earthly Life

SEVERAL celebrated writers have striven to picture the coming reign of righteousness among men. Campanella's *City of the Sun*, Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, and Harrington's *Oceana*, are included in these idealistic achievements. There are also the semi-scientific productions of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells, while a work* akin to theirs, perhaps exceeding them in brilliant speculation has appeared from the pen of Dr. Desiderius Papp, an author whose writings have been commended both by Albert Einstein and Bernard Shaw.

This remarkable volume is, from first to last, as fascinating to the reader as a thrilling novel. Yet all its startling suggestions are carefully based on the ascertained truths of modern science, and it attempts to portray the past history and future progress of the human race when, having obtained complete control of its earthly abode, sterility ultimately supervenes, and the mournful picture is presented of a nearly extinct race, whose sole survivors are a few bald and toothless patriarchs calmly awaiting the coming of inexorable death with the certainty that they are the last representatives of human kind.

The book opens with a thrilling description of a sun's explosion in far-away regions in stellar space. The many evidences of dead and dying suns are reviewed, and the time scheme of the starry universe is displayed as dwarfing to utter insignificance not only the evolutionary development of terrestrial life, but the entire existence of the solar system itself.

The second chapter deals with the genesis and progress of living Nature in a manner most attractive. The problem of the length of time available for future advance is then considered, and it is concluded that the future of life will extend to a time that baffles all possible computation.

That vainglory which causes men to regard their special culture as the crown of creation, perhaps bemused the earlier animals that in succession were destined to dominate the globe. "Like the children of the twentieth century," writes Dr. Papp, "the cave-dwelling contemporary of the mammoth of the Ice Age felt himself to be a permanent institution of Nature, the only fixed and immutable pole in the flux of phenomena."

Many are the vestigial relics from an animal ancestry that linger in the human body, while some of our functioning organs show signs of decay. The diminution in dentition and the thinning of our hairy covering are perhaps signs of the coming toothlessness and baldness of mankind. Dr. Papp urges that when the chemist compresses "the nutritive value of a rich meal into a few pills in his retorts, the hour will have come when the last lingering human teeth can disappear." Then let us hope a fond farewell to all forms of toothache! Powerful jaws will merely be cherished as curiosities and: "By the side of the monstrous mandible of the Heidelberger, the mandibles of contemporary man will repose in the glass cases of the museums of the future. They will be stared at in shuddering astonishment as reminders of the animal past of the human race."

As for our hirsute adornments, we are warned that the coming race will be permanently bald. Hair becoming unnecessary for protection, razors for shaving will be required no longer. Most men will view this prospect with equanimity, but women, whose hair is their glory, may not welcome their predicted depilation. Dr. Papp, however, leaves no hope, for he avers that "Nature will not spare woman, any more than man. . . . The tresses of Eve's fair daughters, black, brown, and golden, which have enthralled men's passions through the ages, will succumb to the depilatory processes of Nature. The women of the future will be bald!"

Human progress has thus far depended on man's hand and brain, but the future superman's triumphs will coincide with a greatly increased complexity of his great mental organ and the evolution of supplementary senses. If a million years have accomplished "the miracle of crowning an ape-like creature king of his planet; of raising a forest-dwelling primate to be master of the forces of electricity and radiation, of elevating a cannibal cave-dweller to the mental greatness of a Goethe or an Edison, then we may anticipate from the future development and full maturity of the organ of mind prodigies of progress."

In the year 100,000 all our most prized inventions and appliances will have long been discarded, and relegated to museums. Passengers who journeyed on a torpedo train some years earlier at a speed of 500 miles an hour, and thought this a wonderful achievement are in 100,000 A.D., smiled at for their simplicity. The moon was visited and explored, and the planets were reached and studied with rather disappointing results. A great disillusionment awaited those sanguine supermen who landed on Mars when they discovered that the Martians had prepared a civic reception in advance of their arrival. But all attempts to interchange courtesies with the Martians proved abortive. We are assured that, "a painful impression was left that the Martians understood them perfectly, while *their* thoughts remained hidden from the earthlings. Great was the surprise of a member of the expedition who strayed into a museum, to find there not only a very exact map of the earth, but also the skeleton of a human being moulded in plaster, and by its side in a glass case the artificial skeleton of a gorilla. The earthly guest had scarcely recovered from the shock produced by this unexpected discovery when his glance fell on a large photograph covering the whole wall. He stood petrified with wonder. The space-exploring telescope of the Martians had here revealed an earthly secret and retained it in a photograph such as human eye had never seen: the picture of an earthly landscape, and the life and death struggle of two great lizards of the Chalk Age.

"That same day the expedition left the planet Mars. Proudly the earthlings had set out as conquerors; crestfallen and bewildered they returned."

* *Creation's Doom*, Trans. by H. J. Stemming, Jarrolds, 1934, 12s. 6d.

In this book many cosmic problems are studied in a markedly lively vein. The risks the earth runs from the eruptions of titanic volcanoes; the Glacial and Tropical Periods destined to alternate through coming ages; the disappearance of the British Isles through the destructiveness of the sea; the lessening and final extinction of solar light and heat and the shattering of our satellite, the moon, are anticipated events all described in glowing terms. Indeed, the scientific range of the imagination is permitted romantic play.

Despite all its triumphs and glories through all the untold ages of future human life, relentless death embraces at long last the whole race of man. Mother Earth, having surmounted all the perils that reside in the sinister energies of stellar space, while her human offspring have proceeded from one astounding triumph to another, calmly awaits the day of *Homo's* death. In past ages of the earth's history the Ammonites and Trilobites, the Fishes, the Amphibians, the Reptiles and the Mammals have all in turn reigned supreme in the world's affairs and their proud inheritor, man, is not exempt from the fate that has befallen his predecessors. "In that far-distant future," predicts our author, "the races of mankind, old and feeble like an octogenarian, will have parted with power of reproduction. No longer will they kindle the spark of a new young life at their own flagging flame. Although stellar intermeddling may have spared man for immeasurable ages, although he may have subdued the physical forces of the earth by his technical contrivances, and by the arts of his laboratory have penetrated to the very core of the arcanum of life, he must succumb to the senility of his species, to the spermatoc weakness of man, to the barrenness of woman."

Man's proud and protracted ascendancy is succeeded by the dominion of insects. After a long and bitter contest between ants and termites for supremacy, the former prove victorious. The social structures and remarkable intelligence of the ants have long commanded the admiration and wonder of naturalists. Darwin declared that the tiny brain of the ant seemed the most wonderful piece of matter in the world. In the days to come these insects grow to giant stature both in body and brain. After a reign of countless ages, they too decline and fall, to be succeeded, as the sun, shrinking in size, with sadly diminished light and warmth, verges towards total extinction, while a race of unicellular creatures dominates the dying earth, until intense cold renders all life impossible. The dark sun, with his graveyard planets circling round him, after wandering through space for ten thousand ages, at last encounters another extinguished luminary and from this collision new stars are born.

T. F. PALMER.

Still More Misfits—Monsters

THE reference here is not to occupational misfits (whether at the B.B.C. or elsewhere), nor to the marvellous creature said to inhabit Loch Ness, nor to the wonders of classical mythology and later folklore, but to the real monsters of the biologist. These are abnormal forms of plants, the lower animals and human beings. All are, of course, perfectly natural results of the evolutionary process, of "Nature's experiments," of internal disturbance, or of what may be called accidents in the course of development. And though there is, at first sight, a repellent element in some of the phenomena—as there is in many parasites (it is estimated that half the animal kingdom belongs to this category) and diseases, to say nothing of earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes, lightning, floods, etc.—it is desirable that we should possess a general knowledge of the facts, and recognize their bearing on our ideas and beliefs.

In this article it is proposed to deal only with human prodigies. And of these, much authoritative information is to be found in the chapter on "Monsters and Malformation," in Prof. Sir Arthur Keith's book *The Human Body* (Home University Library Series). He describes a variety of preserved specimens in the museum of the Royal College of Surgeons. Recently I was able to examine the large similar collection in St. Bartholomew's Hospital museum, and saw ('in the flesh,' except that a few were in skeletal condition) examples of most of the abnormalities here cited.

Of course everybody has heard of the Siamese twins, two united individuals who were widely exhibited in this country; and the Two-headed Nightingale is equally famous. Other recorded cases are the Scottish Brothers and the Biddenden Maids. These lived until adult. In other twins a much greater degree of accretion and coalescence has occurred, and in many cases the children were born but to die. This, though pathetic, is the only fortunate feature connected with such births, as survival would have resulted in much unhappiness for all concerned.

In the museums mentioned there are examples of practically all modes and degrees of union. The children may be joined back to back, front to front, side to side, and end to end. In "Bart's" Hospital there is a striking specimen of the last form, in which the lower ends of the bodies are fused, producing a trunk of double length, with a head and a pair of arms at each end, and a pair of legs projecting at right angles from each side of the point of union. In other cases one of the twins may be "parasitic" on the other, and only a head or limbs may be present, attached to the surface of the more fully developed infant. Still more remarkable is the case of the boy who died at sixteen years of age from a tumour in which his twin was completely enclosed.

Again, there are headless children born, or the skull and brain only may be wanting. Heads may be joined, face to face or crown to crown. Feet may be united, and legs so completely fused that visible toes constitute the only external indication of the two organs.

Conversely, there are cases of division of parts. The body may be single below, with one pair of legs, and double above, with two heads and two pair of arms; or *vice versa*, with one head, two arms and four legs. In one of the latter instances the child lived for eight and a half months, and was described by the famous biologist, St. Hilaire. Division of fingers and toes, producing more than five digits on the hands and feet, is not uncommon; and a case of a divided hand is known, each half bearing its own set of fingers.

A few other of the numerous cases of malformation of organs may be added. The brain may cease to develop at what is practically the ape-stage, and, of course, imbecility is the result. The eyes may fuse, to produce a single organ in the middle of the forehead (the well-known Cyclops form; which, though rare in human beings is not uncommon in the pig); and there is often above the eye a small "trunk," shaped like that of an elephant, "representing the rudiments of parts which are normally incorporated in the development of the nose." The jaw may protrude like that of a dog or cat; or arrest of development of the jaw may result in that dreadful deformity, agnathia, when the face passes into the neck without the normal boundary between them. The heart may lack the septum between the ventricles, so that a duly purified blood supply to brain and body is impossible (and this may be regarded as a reversion to the fish stage of evolution); division of the lower, originally general passage (cloaca) may not eventuate (the lowest mammalian stage); the facial organs may fail to join normally, and we get the well-known hare-lip and cleft palate (the one the fish and the other the reptilian stage); and so on.

Naturally we bring these facts into juxtaposition with the old notions of supernatural creation, design and control; with the statement that, "All things were made by Him"; which has been recently expanded by Father Ronald Knox into the following: "One true God and Lord may be known with certainty by the natural light

of human reason by means of the things that are made." We think of a deity noting the fall of a sparrow and numbering the hairs of our heads. And we wonder, for example, whether the numbering extends to the thick coating of hair with which occasionally the whole human body is covered—"like a terrier," writes Keith. We think also of the "Dermoid Cysts," those remarkable structures which may occur in any part of the body, and contain—not only tufts and masses of hair, but—bony plates with teeth of various shapes attached! (These are apparently produced by wandering generative cells, which either should not have been developed at all, or should have remained in the head.)

J. REEVES.

Acid Drops

Some very interesting aspects of the character of Jesus Christ are unearthed by preachers. Thus the *News-Chronicle* reports the Rev. L. D. Weatherhead, a well known Methodist preacher, as being able to make biblical characters "spring to life with a phrase." Thus, after the resurrection Jesus "became known to (his disciples) when He broke the bread. Jesus had a funny way of snapping a roll in halves when He said grace," "Snapping a roll in half!" It sounds like a scene from a Jerusalem Lyon's teashop. We have not the whole of the sermon reported, but one would expect Mr. Weatherhead to go on describing Mary Magdalen as a "Nippy," and to say that when the Twelve had finished their meal, Mary found twopence under each plate. There is nothing like being completely realistic when one is about it.

The Rev. Leslie Weatherhead also says the problem for the Church is not the prodigal son, but the "elder brother"—meaning "that part of the parable which touches 99 per cent of the congregation." Mr. Weatherhead made some very frank criticisms of his church at the Methodist Convention the other day. "I am sick of it," he said as he described very contemptuously the old-fashioned revivalist who "delivered addresses dropping with age, and dripping with emotion." As, however, he favours the "Group" methods of revivalism, there is little to recommend his "positive" advice. He must, all the same, have created a sensation at the Convention where he described most of the Methodists who are fifty-five or older, as never having had any real religion, but, instead of it, "a spurious substitute which is a sham and a dreary lie." We would agree that the creed of most Christians is dreary, but why call it a lie? And why call it a substitute? It is real religion right enough.

There is a game called Pin Table Bagatelle, in which the aim is to shoot a given number of little balls into numbered circles. This game is played in "Fun Fairs," and when a player gets a certain total, which he may in about one game out of twenty, he wins a packet of cigarettes worth about threepence. Now, at the Old Bailey, on April 17, a man was charged with using these tables for the purpose of gambling, and a judge and jury solemnly decided that this was a contravention of the Betting Act, and as such calculated to deprave the morals of the people of this realm. The man charged was found guilty of this terrible crime, and all the high-minded moral reformers, and spiritually-minded religious idealists will now sleep easier at nights at the administration of this blow to a glaring moral evil. When such temptations are held out to the public, five or ten cigarettes to be gained for the mere outlay of two shillings or half-a-crown, the moral consequences are incalculable. It might lead people to take part in the gambling of rubber, or oil, or gold booms. Whatever we may not do in this country we never forget that our prime aim is to be moral.

The latest rev. gentleman to find out that Christianity has never been tried, is Dr. Percy Dearmer. Preaching at Westminster Abbey, the other day, he "traced the various aspects in which the Churches had presented the

Saviour to the World throughout the ages," commencing with the Good Shepherd to the "sterner representations" of last century. "The Christian religion," declared Dr. Dearmer, "had been caricatured, brutalized and vulgarized, but had seldom been fully preached or sincerely practised." He added, "Christianity had not failed; it had never been attempted." This is a very common excuse, but it is a terrible indictment of the wisdom of God in giving mankind His revelation. If Jesus, the Apostles, the Church Fathers, the Popes, Cardinals, Monks, Priests, Jesuits, Arians, Athanasians, Catholics, Salvation Army Generals, and rank and file, and the rest of the 623 Christian sects haven't yet been able to get the Message across, what Holy use is it anyway? What a pity it is Dr. Dearmer simply will not tell us what he means by "Christianity."

What a lucky man the Pope is! According to the *Universe*, during the past Holy Year (what with the increase in armaments, the danger of war, the widespread poverty and the persecution of the Jews, it really was a Holy Year), no fewer than 43,000,000 Masses were offered for the Pope. In addition, 64,122 full "stipends" (whatever this may mean) and 78,511 partial "stipends" were "contributed for Masses for the same purpose." Mexico, in particular, helped in the glorious work. There, 1,199,309 Masses were offered for the Pope's intentions, and the laity gave no fewer than 17,439 full Mass stipends. England only managed to get in 100,000 total Masses, rather a poor showing when one considers how the Pope's heart bleeds for England being still left out of the fold, and no means of compelling her to come in. Germany, however, compensated for this by offering 13,513,349 Masses, 10,450 full stipends, and 29,806 partial stipends. Ireland got in 536,269—not bad for such a bright jewel, and the U.S.A. managed 17,000,000. And the net result? Alas, nothing! The old world carries on much the same as if the Masses were never offered, or as if they were the Mumbo-Jumboings of savage witch-doctors. The All-Highest is positively ungrateful.

Whether Mussolini is still "sceptic" or rapidly becoming Catholic in the interests of his country, we have no means of knowing. But he lately gave an interview to two English Catholic business men, who declared that "he enquired earnestly about Catholicism in England, that great and noble country, and expressed his pleasure at the development of the Church," and also that the Catholic land movement here insisted upon principles "designed for the preservation of the family unit." It seems incredible that Mussolini should care tuppence about Roman Catholicism in England, but this kind of thing is spread wholesale among believers in the one true Church as part of that insidious propaganda in its interests which helps to keep them within its folds and makes them believe that great men really believe in its absurd and incredible claims. Roman Catholicism is always dangerous—dangerous to Freethought and free speech, and, above all, dangerous to liberty. And for Freethinkers the lesson is plain.

The Catholic Truth Society has during its existence sold 1,331,311 pamphlets. Many of them have been translated into numerous foreign languages, and the Society has had a large increase of membership. And what then? Well, almost nothing. It is Catholics who buy the pamphlets, Catholics read them, and Catholics swear by them. But the real test is, how many *Freethinkers*, not believers in Christianity, but out and out Freethinkers, have been converted through reading one or more of these pamphlets? How much genuine knowledge has been disseminated by these interminable hosannas to "saints," relics, miracles, mythical legends, and the whole absurd paraphernalia devoted to bolstering up the ridiculous claims of Roman Catholicism? What a relief it is to come out into the clear daylight of Secularism with its earthly duties shorn of the fear of God, hell, purgatory, and "sin!"

That something doesn't work in the Church in spite of the enormous sale of Catholic Truth pamphlets, and the millions of Masses offered up every day, is the plaint of

that illustrious convert, Dr. W. E. Orchard. "Why is there not a greater flow of converts?" he asks. He thinks, with rare disingenuousness, that it is because people don't like the discipline of the Catholic Faith or are "repelled by the mentality or the morals of some Catholics they know or have heard about." Perhaps it is not exactly disingenuousness, though. Perhaps he does not like to tell his credulous readers that converts do not troop in because the Catholic Church has been found out; that it is false alike in science, history, philosophy and morals; and that it is based on crude superstition and fear. A man may have a "vocation" for religion—he may be deaf to arguments about it. We cannot discuss it with him. But for the mass of people who think for themselves, and are prepared to investigate the claims of the Church, unbiassed in opinion and without fear, the Roman Catholic Church must appear as some absurd appendage to primitive and savage rites based on the silliest myths of the past. Why does not Dr. Orchard face the issue with Freethinkers?

No matter how much unemployment may be about, or even the direst poverty, a bishop has only to say he wants to build more churches and the money is very soon forthcoming. The Bishop of Carlisle appealed for funds to build three churches in the new housing areas at Carlisle, Barrow-in-Furness and Kells, and £15,000 was raised as a thanksoffering within a year. The Bishop hopes to raise the other £15,000 in two years, and we are quite sure he'll get it. This building of new churches all over the country is sufficient proof of the hold Christianity still has on people, and the necessity for Freethought. It is proof also, that nothing can be more ridiculous than to say that our fight is over because there is a little Modernism about, or because a clergyman here and there no longer believes in the Virgin Birth, or all the miracles. The war between Freethought and superstition is still being bitterly fought.

Lord Snowden is now writing, according to the publisher's blurb, "the story the whole nation has been waiting for," and the account of his youthful religious experience is worth more than a mere note. He learnt "to love the fine old hymns," and still gets "a glow of religious fervour," when he hears them sung. He gives this one, however, as an example of "repulsive imagery":—

There is a fountain filled with Blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

He is not the only child who "wondered how a fountain could be supplied from the blood of one man, and still more how bathing in a flood of blood could remove evil stains," and not the only grown-up critic who hopes that this "gruesome hymn" might be expunged from hymn books. A thousand, more or less, similar ones could be expunged without loss to decency.

Lord Snowden nearly got "converted," and he says he might have been a Wesleyan minister or a President of the Conference, had he done so. "What trivial incidents," he writes, "may sometimes change the course of a person's life!" The question is, would it have been better for England had Lord Snowden got religion badly—or for himself? We leave his admirers to puzzle out the answer.

The B.B.C. has its admirers—the clergy. We cannot call them imitators of the B.B.C. because the clergy were first in the field by many centuries. But a Nonconformist minister, the Rev. Maldwyn Hughes, preaching in Westminster Abbey, dwelt upon the "rich diversity existing in Christian sects." This diversity applies to the B.B.C., and that institution and the Churches manifest it in the same way. Both permit diversity when it cannot be prevented, and both take good care that no straightforward criticism shall be made against the Christian religion. There is liberty in the Christian Church. So there is in a prison cell. No

matter how closely the doors are shut, within the four walls of a cell the inmate is allowed to walk about at will.

What a paralysing influence religion does exert on the minds of even able men. Here is Sir Philip Gibbs, who delivers himself of this:—

No civilization has ever survived after the downfall of its gods. Its doom is declared when the faith and idealism which formed the basis of its laws, the inspiration of its art, and the meaning of its life is challenged by scepticism and then abandoned in disbelief.

Words, words, words! We venture to say that if Sir Philip had to sit down and explain what he means by this he would be unable to do so. What faith and idealism is it which forms the basis of laws and art? He surely is not so foolish as to mean that art and law cannot flourish, cannot exist apart from belief in the gods. After all, Sir Philip Gibbs is an educated man, and he really ought not to talk like Billy Sunday, Gypsy Smith, or the Bishop of London. Laws may change and art may seek many sources of inspiration, but to make them depend upon some Mumbo-jumbo is to sink to the level of the savage.

Rev. Leyton Richards, of Carr's Lane, Birmingham, says it is disloyalty to Christ, "fundamental disloyalty, which inevitably ensues when men try to square the processes of war with the gospel of Jesus Christ." This seems straightforward enough of all conscience. Then Canon G. N. Tredennick, a neighbour of Mr. Richards in Birmingham, addressing a Church Parade of the British Legion at Sparkbrook, says of all conscientious objectors: "Speaking as a Christian minister, I say those people ought to be shot at sight." The shot ones would include Mr. Leyton Richards. "We are not divided; all one body we; One in hope and doctrines; one in charity." All of these are excellently exemplified in the two illustrations given by our Birmingham pastors and masters in the faith.

A reader of *Film Pictorial* thinks that "Either our present daily and Sunday paper film-critics are an innocent and easily shocked lot of individuals, or the public is a hardened crowd of sinners." Perhaps, however, the film-critics are not really shocked, but merely pretend to be in order to suggest their own moral superiority over the generality of Cinema patrons. They may also think it a good policy to keep in with the more puritanic of their readers.

Fifty Years Ago

LEARNING is very well in its way, but common sense is a great deal better. It is infinitely the best weapon to use against Christianity. Without a knowledge of history, without being acquainted with any science but that of daily life, without a command of Hebrew, Latin and Greek, or any other language than his own, a plain man can take the Bible in his hand and easily satisfy himself it is not the word of God. Common sense tells him not to believe in contradictory statements; common sense tells him that a man could not have found a wife in a land where there were no women; common sense tells him that three millions of people never marched out of any country in one night; common sense tells him that Jesus Christ could not have "gone up" from two places at once; common-sense tells him that turning devils out of men into pigs is a fable not half as good as the poorest of Aesop's; common sense tells him that nobody but a skunk would consent to be saved from the penalty of his own misdeeds by the sufferings of an innocent man; common sense tells him that while men object to having their pockets picked and their throats cut, they want no divine command against theft and murder; common sense tells him that God never ordered the committal of such atrocities as those ascribed to him in the Bible; and common sense tells him that a God of mercy never made a hell.

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FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

"LOGICAL."—We quite agree with what you say regarding the quality of certain people. Unfortunately prejudice dies hard with most people, and the task of careful thinking is not a popular one. Pleased you think highly of the *Letters to a Country Vicar*. It appears to be doing good work. We sent a copy to the Vicar himself, but we received no acknowledgment.

A. FORBES.—We hope to see much activity in the North during the coming summer. The mere fact of an "election" does not prove the absence of coercion. A vote is only of value when it is freely given. Where it is obtained under duress it is worthless.

J. L. ORTON.—Second received, but will have to be held over until next week.

H. WILSON.—Do not be misled. No form of autocracy, or dictatorship can maintain itself without the first principle of Freethought, which is the right to criticize anything and everything, being abrogated.

A CORRESPONDENT writes informing us that Dr. T. R. Glover is not a parson, but a distinguished layman of the Baptist Church. We stand corrected. It is a terrible thing to call a man a parson, when he has done nothing to deserve it.

A. WILSON.—Thanks for cuttings.

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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.

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad) :— One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."

Sugar Plums

Secretaries of the N.S.S. Branches are reminded that the names and addresses of delegates to the Annual Conference at Bolton, on Whit-Sunday, May 20, must reach Headquarters by May 5. Requirements for Hotel accommodation, and Conference lunch, should be posted to the General Secretary, 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, without delay, or disappointment may result. We hope to see every Branch represented, in addition to a large number of private members. The Conference discussions promise to be interesting.

In Lord Snowden's *My Life*, which is being published in *John Bull*, there is an interesting note on John M. Robertson. Lord Snowden says :—

I consider the two best debaters I have known in the House of Commons to be Mr. J. M. Robertson and Mr. Ellis Griffith. Mr. Robertson was a Scotsman, who had made his way in the world through sheer native ability. He was a poor lad, the son of an Arran crofter. . . . He was entirely self-educated. He became one of the most cultured men of his time. He was a great Shakespearean

scholar, an authority on philosophy, and a leading writer and speaker on Rationalism. . . . He took an active part in public debates on Secularism, and it was this training which made him a formidable debater. In the House of Commons he would tear an opponent's case to shreds with remorseless logic. Later he was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade, and that was his undoing as a Parliamentary debater. There was no scope for his gifts in that position.

Freethinkers in the Manchester district are asked to note that to-day (April 29) the Failsworth Secular Society will hold its "Annual Spring Services," in the afternoon at 2.45, and in the evening at 6.30. The speaker on both occasions will be Mr. F. E. Monks of Manchester. His subjects will be, afternoon, "God as a Fiction," and in the evening, "Humanity's Gain from Unbelief." We hope the local saints will note the date. Both the speaker and the Society are well worthy of support.

Will West Ham Freethinkers please note that the local N.S.S. Branch meets on the first Thursday in each month at 62 Forest Lane, at 8 p.m. Members are expected to be present, and it is hoped that unattached saints will attend at the first opportunity and become members.

Both Dr. Norman Haire and Mr. Anthony Ludovici, in their debate on Birth Control, the other day, disclaimed any connexion with religion. In fact, Dr. Haire openly avowed himself an uncompromising Freethinker, and ridiculed the idea that what the Bible said, or what reverend gentlemen said on the question in dispute was of any value whatever. Dr. Haire, speaking for Birth Control, gave a clear and forceful exposition of the problems of over-population from the Neo-Malthusian standpoint. Mr. Ludovici's main arguments were expressed more subtly, and he based his case against Birth Control, not only on the fact that the "sex-cycle" was different in men and women, but also on the grave dangers, according to some doctors, which the practice of contraception brings in its train. Miss Ellen Wilkinson made an effective Chairman, and the debate was followed with great interest by a very appreciative audience.

One of our readers has three year's issues of the *Freethinker*, which he is willing to send to anyone who can make use of them. We shall be pleased to forward the name of anyone who cares to have the volumes.

Christian intolerance and Christian superstition make a fine pair. The Christian missions in Palestine will have to be curbed if the mandated territory is to have a fair chance. An immense amount of work has been done by the new Government. All males over 25 have votes, and there is no sort of interference with liberty of opinion. Hydro-electric undertakings on a very large scale have created vast new industries, irrigation has made the land immensely more habitable. Malaria, which was the curse of Palestine for ages, has been stamped out. Trachoma is now being tackled by the same scientific medical genius.

These plans are constantly hampered by Christian fanaticism, whose motive is openly and unashamedly sheer superstitious sentimentality. Dr. Christie (D.D., not of course, M.D.) a Protestant missionary, boasts in the *British Weekly*, that in regard to certain improvements involving the raising of the surface of the Sea of Galilee :—

We tried to rouse the Christian world, and we have reason to believe that ultimately Roman Catholic influence compelled its abandonment.

The whole experiment of Palestine improvement will be ruined if the only criterion of approval or ruthless opposition is whether, as Dr. Christie puts it, "the whole cradle of Christianity is to be spoiled." Or as a local native journalist puts it, "It is a choice between preserving a very doubtful relic or a million lives of real babies—the citizens of Palestine's tomorrow."

Freethought in Poland

THOUGH a Catholic country the movement of Freethought in Poland is considerably large. The "Polish Association of Freethought," in Warsaw counts about 10,000 registered adherents and more than double that number of sympathisers and friends scattered over the country. Two papers, one called the *Freethinker*, and the other *Freethought Rays*, are published at regular intervals to a constantly growing number of readers. As under the Tsar, who ruled Poland till the War, no Freethought was allowed, the movement is naturally very young. It was started in 1922; but its activity is increasing rapidly. Freethought in Poland is now penetrating to all classes of society, from high officials down to the poorest peasant in the remotest hamlet.

As in other countries, so also in Poland, the movement is preaching the use of reason and independence of thought. And just as in every country, Freethought in Poland has to fight battles of its own. In possibly no other country has the clergy such strong an influence as in Poland. No one can marry without the permission of the Church and its priests. Only in one part of Poland, namely that which was formerly under German rule, are civil marriages permissible. This most abnormal position in which citizens of the same State enjoy different rights in different parts of the country, compels the Freethinker to make a vigorous fight over here for the introduction of civil marriages over all the country. As it is, many Poles travel hundreds of miles to avoid marrying in Church. A Freethinker from Eastern Poland must travel 600 miles to marry in a Registrar's office in Western Poland. A few months ago the Freethinkers were almost on the door-step of success. The Polish Government actually proclaimed its decision to introduce generally civil marriages. But the pressure of the clergy was so great that the Government, even the Pilsudski Government, which is the strongest that Poland ever had, had to give in. The proclamation was withdrawn. Civil marriage is still impossible in the main parts of the country, and Freethinkers have to start fighting again.

In addition to marriage the Church controls the registration of births. No child can have its birth registered in the books unless it be christened first by the priest and besprinkled with Holy water, or, if Jewish—circumcized. There are at the present moment thousands of children in this country who, not having been baptized, are outside the pale of citizenship. Their names figure in no register in the country. They are "the unknown citizens." They cannot be brought to the State schools, nor be called up to serve in the army, nor fulfil any duties, nor enjoy any rights. They have no names even. If a child is born to a Freethinker in Poland, it can only be registered in the local private books as male or female. Its name is omitted since names are only given during the Christening ceremony in Church. To avoid this abnormal situation of having a child without a name, without rights and duties, many parents, of course, have to give in to the all-powerful clergy and Church. And this brings in its train another unfortunate result. All children must be taught religion in school, whether the parents wish it or not. Compulsory religious instruction is a law in the country, and all that the Freethinker can do against it, is to leave the folds of the Church altogether—an alternative many decide upon. The scandalous marriage-laws and the compulsory religious instruction at the schools are responsible for a good many departures from the Catholic faith in Poland.

Up till recently the question of the right of secular burial was among those the Freethinkers had to fight for. They had to fight for the rights of reason from their birth till after death even. Catholic cemeteries refused to bury the bodies of Freethinkers, and the other cemeteries followed suit. Compelled to accept them, they usually put them in graves near those of murderers or other criminals, near the fence of the cemetery. Such graves were destroyed after fifteen years, in accordance with the law. Now, thanks to the work of the Freethinker the Government has passed a law by which special community cemeteries have to be provided where all citizens are equal.

The channels by which Freethought is spreading widely in Poland are many and various. It is characteristic that teachers are greatly instrumental in making Freethought reach the people. The teacher is the pioneer of reason and Freethought in the villages and townships. He has against him the all-powerful and all-influential priest. But in many cases he is the victor. The criticism and dislike of the Polish peasantry to the priest stands the teacher in good stead. Like no other peasant the Polish is very sceptical about the merits of priesthood. The peasant, like other primitive human beings, is religious. But he dislikes the priest. In the Polish villages there are to-day about a hundred current proverbs all directed against the clergyman. "A priest has a heart of steel," "Where the priest arrives there the devil will soon be too." "The man who listens to the advice of a priest is as doomed as if the devil would marry him." "The priest turns out one devil but introduces ten in his stead." These are only a few of many the peasants use in describing the priest's greed, vice, laziness and falsehood. The Polish peasant has even some critical proverbs about the Pope himself, and says, "that you can easily become a Cardinal, if the Pope is your cousin." It is therefore no wonder that the majority of the Polish peasant youth is anti-clerical and a great number also wholly religious. The Polish Association of Freethought is organizing special courses for teachers and young peasant leaders, instructing them in their work of spreading light and reason in the country. During summer-time Freethinkers are visiting the scouts, especially the Red Scouts of the Polish Socialists, and giving lectures about Freethought, distributing at the same time propaganda leaflets.

The clergy, of course, are doing all they can to oppose the progress of Freethought. In the villages they control the post offices to see which of the congregation receive the *Freethinker* or other such papers. There have been cases when the priests have confiscated the papers sent to the peasants in their villages. Many Freethinkers have to keep secret for fear of persecution and terror. Yet, despite the difficulties, the movement is growing rapidly, and its leaders, like Mr. Jablonski, who is the chief editor of the Polish *Freethinker* in Warsaw, and the mainspring of the movement can rightly claim a progressive future for Freethought in Poland. The movement has yet many difficulties to overcome. Some of them are common to all countries. Others are specific to Catholic countries like Poland. Nevertheless Freethought is progressing in Poland. It has penetrated to the villages, and has even got a footing in the universities, which were until recently the stronghold of priesthood and religion. Even to the University of Posen, the most Catholic of all towns in Poland, Freethought has penetrated. If the movement continues to develop at its present speed the "Polish Association of Freethought" will soon be abreast of similar organizations in other liberal countries.

J. CANG.

Warsaw.

Shelley and Atheism

(A SURREJOINDER)

MIMNERMUS has a genius for turning a blind eye to the thrusts of an opponent. I might almost say a blind eye to his whole attack. For there are some passages in his rejoinder that lead me to doubt whether he actually read my contribution.

For example, "it is not to the point" that I should have been secretary of a literary society, or that I have written books. This was all said in reference to my qualifications to discuss Dickens, and he does not deign to answer one of my questions about him. More audacious still: "against all this the correspondent sets four lines of poetry" (I will deal later with the value of "all this"), and, again, this is "all he can manage to drag in to bolster up his case." This after I have cited Shelley's essay *On Life*, his *Essay on Christianity* and a passage of Trelawny!

Why does Mimnermus refuse to discuss Shelley's prose writings? Has he never met them? He gives me a superfluous lesson about the nature of poetry—I am not sure if I am placed in a Sunday School class with the "pious people," if so I might ask what is "a catechism of devotion"?—without explaining why a poet who is Atheist in prose becomes a theist in verse and personifies a spirit of the universe. A few analogies from other poets might have helped. His argument is double-edged. When Freethinkers claim that Shakespeare was akin to them, it may be submitted that you must not "construe rigidly" Prospero's speech in *The Tempest* or Gloucester's bitter cry in *Lear*.

Can Shelley be regarded even as an occasional Atheist in his last years? Here is a sentence from a letter dated November 17, 1819. "One might imagine God, when he made the earth, and saw the granite mountains and flinty promontories flow into their craggy forms, and the splendour of their fusion filling million of miles of the void space, like the tail of a comet, so looking, so delighting in his work." Here is another passage from the *Essay on Christianity* (has ever Atheist written of it so sympathetically?)—"the Omnipotent God—that merciful and benignant Power who scatters equally upon the beautiful earth all the elements of security and happiness."

Shelley did not recant, says Mimnermus. Few of us practice that humility freely. I suspect that many readers of the *Freethinker*, like myself, once were Christian propagandists. How often do we refer to the fact now? Few of our hearers know of it, and our present utterances are sufficient evidence of our change of convictions. Shelley, too, was less likely to do so expressly because he was not a platform propagandist. Yet, as Mr. Robertson, points out, he did recant Atheism by implication. This is from his essay *On Life*. "The shocking absurdities of the popular philosophy of mind and matter, its fatal consequences in morals, and their violent dogmatism concerning the source of all things, had early conducted me to Materialism. This Materialism is a seducing system to young and superficial minds."

Really the coolness of Mimnermus is astounding. "Certain critics" are not named. I suppose it was hoped that his readers, naturally forgetting what I had written, might fancy these were of the professional literati, say Matthew Arnold, Prof. Dowden or Sir Edmund Gosse, instead of Freethought leaders like J. M. Robertson, Joseph McCabe and H. S. Salt. These, too, are to be classed indifferently with Smith, Brown, Jones and Robinson! I suppose if I quote J. A. Symonds (*English Men of Letter* series) he also will be so degraded. "Shelley can only be called an Atheist, in so far as he maintained the inadequacy of

hitherto received conceptions of the Deity, and indignantly rejected that Moloch of cruelty who is worshipped in the debased forms of Christianity." This view of Symonds (not a Christian, and included in McCabe's *Dictionary of Modern Rationalists*) is borne out by *Prometheus Unbound* (written three years before Shelley's death) which Mimnermus cites. If Mimnermus chooses to regard this poem as an attack on any and every God he may, but I think here he will stand alone. Mrs. Shelley would not have supported him, but I fear even she will be scorned as an interpreter of her husband's thought as against himself.

I have never suggested a complete somersault, but simply a modification of earlier views. Shelley says nothing of mere inartistic crudity in the passage from the essay *On Life*. I am sure he was never disposed to any form of intolerance or pious aloofness from those who maintained in maturity views he had avowed in youth. It is "not to the point" to tell me he was "a militant iconoclast," and "frankly irreligious," and when we are given such excellent training in the art of clear thinking and discriminating religious terminology, I am surprised at Mimnermus's looseness. Thomas Paine was just as much so, and he, an avowed theist would have endorsed the quotations from *Queen Mab*. I do not know what evidence there is in a bookseller's placard. It is on a par with the incident in the Pisa Post Office.

It seems difficult for Mimnermus to understand that one can have a passion for truth, which is more than a passion for Atheism. My own attention was drawn to the matter some years ago because, regretfully, I found it impossible to support a Freethinking friend who took a lecturer to task for glossing Shelley's heresies. Mimnermus may impute to me some disingenuous leanings to piety, some latent desire to cast a pinch of incense on Christian altars, but I should like to know to what he ascribes the disposition of Messrs. Robertson, McCabe, Salt and Symonds to mislead the public.

W. KENT.

How Freedom is Narrowed

WAR, of course, is the most noticeable destroyer of Freedom. People under martial law only enjoy a bare minimum of individual liberty. But it is to be remarked in times of Peace, that insidious, silent forces which prevent the expansion of freedom, and so keep many unthinking persons in a state of mind favourable to a future war, are always operating with more or less effect. What we need is an appreciation of and an enthusiasm for personal liberty which, if sufficiently widespread and keenly enough felt, shall frustrate the bloody aims of the international usurers and gangsters when they decree that another war shall take place.

In the intervals, longer or shorter, between wars, the peoples can be taught to think in terms of Peace and Humanity instead of in terms of strife and nationalism. But the disquieting feature of the present time is that so many misuse the results of the operation of the gregarious instinct in man. It is always well to be on one's guard against organizations and institutions which are fervently blessed by authoritarian representatives. Even the most innocent-looking association, established ostensibly for benevolent purposes, may be a powerful agency for the limitation of individual freedom. The humanist who stands outside of and detached from all the conventional bodies—churches, parties, guilds, societies, and so-called philanthropic and charitable agencies and organizations, is able to observe how by identifying himself with one of these, the individual member frequently

sacrifices part of his personal freedom. After all, personal freedom carries with it a proportionate amount of personal responsibility; and the great majority of those who become members of several societies experience a feeling of relief, because, although they may have to conform to rules and regulations which limit their freedom, they are enabled to get rid of their responsibility—or at least the greater part of it—which they conceive is then undertaken or shared by the organizations in which they have become units. A comfortable feeling—if a dangerous one. It is based upon the loosely expressed doctrine that "Union is Strength," while Union in many forms may be proof of the most despicable weakness or refusal to face the facts of life.

The Rulers of the world and the armament makers do not want people to think in terms of Peace and Humanity. That at all costs they must prevent—if they can! The sordid feeling of nationalistic rivalry must be sedulously nourished! The international gangsters and usurers have many things in their favour. They know, when their edicts are published, that it is only a negligible minority of freedom-loving individuals who will take a stand against them and endure the inconvenience if not the danger of persecution and possible ruin that may be involved in disobedience to the call of the drum and of King and Country. It is not by any means "nice" to be hooted at, jeered at, cursed at, and spat upon by former comrades. It is not conducive to personal comfort or good health to have to be consigned to a dank and loathsome cell, or to be assigned foul and menial duties like constantly cleaning out latrines and soil privies, and to receive no reward but kicks and stale bread for one's service. It is nicer, much nicer, to have been bred up and trained to acquiescence in the maxim that the majority *must* rule, and that we *must* therefore co-operate or serve with it. That is the breeding and training which many of our "between wars" associations under the benison and benediction of Church Prelates and prominent statesmen give us! And so we subsist (though hardly "live") under the soothing shade and shelter of our patriotic associations; sing the same choruses and dance to the same tunes.

The banding together in associations now begins at a very early age. The international crooks and hooligans must catch men young if they are to mould them to their heart's desire. So we have Boys' Brigades, Cubs, Brownies, Boy Scouts, and Girl Guides. The time children now spend at home is very short; and this is another relief from responsibility for lazy and indifferent parents. Home has become merely a sleeping place for many children. The greatest supporters of these youth organizations are most eloquent in their plea for the maintenance of family life. But their actions belie their professions. Clerics in particular are bent on inoculating the minds of children with the fables of supernaturalism, and in keeping their freedom nicely narrowed down so as to make them suitable cannon fodder one day—at the disposal of the clerics and others—when they give the signal for another war.

Is association for unselfish and philanthropic ends then to be condemned wholesale? Not so. But the association that lays any ban upon the free expression of individual opinions *on any subject*, and that discourages personal initiative by making members submit to the mass, is to be utterly condemned. In his right hand the humanist holds justice—and in his left compassion. These things are constantly menaced by the divisive and enmity-producing missions of religion—the world-force that has embittered feelings and darkened counsel.

IGNOTUS.

Labour and the Church

A SOCIALIST VIEW.

MOST of the vast army of sceptics in England are not anti-religious, they are merely non-religious. They justly maintain that every man has the right to his creed and the right freely to discuss it.

No one would quarrel with this attitude if the Church limited itself to the "spiritual" affairs of its followers, but it quite obviously does not. It thrusts its way into every sphere of human activity, forcing its social doctrines on believer and unbeliever alike. Whether one is considering the primitive tribal society, the city state, or the modern nation, one can scarcely overestimate the enormous influence which organized religion exercises. Only those who are utterly ignorant of history and sociology can persist in the belief that religion is unconnected with politics. It is a social factor which cannot be ignored.

Labour must determine whether this powerful force is ally or enemy, and it should have no difficulty in arriving at a decision. The Church has resisted progress with monotonous consistency, and though on occasion, when reform has been inevitable, it has changed sides at the last moment to snatch a little glory, it will require a more subtle trick to redeem itself in the eyes of an enlightened and progressive people.

Yet it must by its very nature conserve; its tenets are drawn from the dim shadows of the past, it cannot advance beyond those tenets, and it is afraid that civilization will move forward and leave it hopelessly in the rear.

One may argue that, whatever its past record, the Church of England to-day is innocuous, that it has learned the lessons taught by France in 1789, and Russia in 1917; but now as much as at any time does the Church rank among the greatest enemies of the people. The Parliamentary records of the majority of our bishops would make the most diehard of our Tory peers blush with shame.

Dr. Headlam, Bishop of Gloucester, started the New Year by deploring the excessive wages paid to civil servants, and condemning efforts made to restore the panic cuts of two years ago. We should like to know what service my Lord Bishop renders the community as compared with, let us say, a postman; yet, unless I am sadly misinformed, the average postman does not receive a salary of £4,300 per year. In the same masterly effort the bishop tells us that "to over-tax the rich man causes him a great deal of annoyance." Every Socialist knows that whatever happens the rich must not be annoyed, poor, dear things.

The Bishop of Exeter, in a lengthy harangue against Birth-Prevention, is reported to have said that a large population means more work, and therefore less unemployed! This presumably is the Church's contribution to the solving of the unemployment problem. Perhaps, if the learned Bishop had a little sympathy for the poor, he would understand the plight of the man and wife with an unlimited family and a very limited income.

Another friend of the people, that little ray of sunshine, Dean Inge, writes in the *Daily Express Encyclopaedia* as follows: "There is some danger in creating an educated proletariat, always a dangerous class." He is right. Even as the ascendancy of the capitalist class depends for its existence upon the ignorance of economics of the wealth-producing class so is ignorance of the true nature of religious exploitation the foundation-stone of every church.

The Church and Capitalism fight shoulder to shoulder against the liberty and happiness of the common people. Capitalism wants a war, and every pul-

pit becomes a recruiting platform; capitalism wants cheap labour, and the Church condemns birth-control; capitalism wants humility and uncomplaining service from the worker, and the Church teaches him from infancy to order himself lowly and reverently to all his "betters." And in return for these services the Church is presented with property of a value that would turn even Henry Ford green with envy.

The Labour Party, of which I am a member, must face the problem squarely. Is it conceivable that a Socialist policy can be put into practice without coming into conflict with the Church? Is it conceivable that the Church will readily sacrifice its coal royalties? Is it conceivable that the Church will sacrifice its slum property that the people may have better homes? That it will surrender its strong hold on agriculture? That it will promote world peace when the arrival of a missionary is so often an excuse for the arrival of a gunboat? Is it conceivable that the Church's innumerable Inges will concede equality of opportunity in education?

The writer is not suggesting that every religious-minded man should be driven from the Labour Party, but it is of paramount importance that if the Christian within the movement is to be a source of strength instead of one of weakness, he must be free from the bias of organized religion. He must be a Socialist first.

While many readers may not share my political views, they nevertheless cannot fail to agree that if Labour is consistent it must sooner or later be rid of the subversive influence of the Church, and, unless the movement is to be split from top to bottom at the moment when power is within its grasp, at the moment when there is most urgent need for complete unity, Labour must be rid of the Church now.

H. T. BUCKLE.

The Book Shop.

It was Beethoven who wrote, "He who understands my music shall be quit of the miseries of this world." This was a courageous statement even if the aim of a man in this direction was unattainable. Beethoven's pronouncement at least offered hope, and was devoid of the usual load of choctaw that goes with a discussion of art. Music as an aid to living is outside the scope of this series, but is very severely inside the wholesome track of free thought in the matter of its being an accomplishment by the noble among risen animals, and not fallen angels. I take it that an affirmation from the Free-thought angle is worth a thousand muddle-headed and futile struggles with the conception of original sin, the word sin to a Freethinker being merely a noise in the throat and nothing more. Fortune and misfortune or joy and sorrow are the common lot of mankind; in many ways what belongs to us comes to us. When hearing a duet in a scene presented by Nikita Balieff in the Chauve Souris the music made a lasting impression, and it also caused many inquiries to be made with a view to securing it in some form or another. All these attempts were unsuccessful, but quite by accident a friend with a loan of slabs of music, *i.e.*, gramophone records, sent this very piece of music, which is embodied in a Violin Solo played by Albert Sammons—Caprice Viennois—Vocalion D—02002—The Aeolian Co. To those who have a taste for the exquisite in harmony, and are able to catch happiness on the wing I recommend this record as a musical scoring rich in simplicity, and being very near to the heart of man's desire for one world at a time.

Mr. Will Dyson, the well-known cartoonist, who is obsessed with the idea of making the world fit to live in, gives a dignity to writing in his latest book, *Artist Among the Bankers*, J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 6s. net. The twin superstitions of high finance which enslave the body, and religion which enslaves the mind, make a

lovely pair riding astride the shoulders of mankind. Mr. Dyson writes in the dry light of clarity, and he is not without a close knowledge of man's struggle in history. The author sets out to blow the gaff on the cause of unnecessary economic misery and suffering, and one may sense in the following extract, his mental background:—

The new slavery to finance is exactly similar to the old slavery to Nature in its results; they are Want in various forms. The old dread of maleficent Nature had an attendant retinue of bloody superstitions. The superstitions are reproduced to-day in relation to the new man-made maleficence—Money. There are the same taboos, talismans, sacrifices—except that they are phrased in the terms of Bankers' economics.

The cartoons reproduced in the book fit his thesis and help the reader to see his points through the medium of laughter and downright contempt for a system that the inhabitants of Borneo would not have even as a gift. How our religious professors can square the praises of the faithful at harvest thanksgivings when coffee is thrown into the sea, maize burnt as fuel for engines, the growth of hops restricted, fresh fish used as manure, and unemployment regarded as a curse is not our conundrum. Mr. Dyson explains causes, and like any writer worth his salt can point the way to a better order of human affairs. The mind of the Freethinker, nimble in varying degrees through a study of what one calls Christian metaphysics, will be quite capable of seeing the fallacy in the financial bear garden where the control of credit makes square wheels for all the vehicles you and I have to ride in. The control and issue of credit by the banks is the religious equivalent to the phrase "Thus saith the Lord"—the high curve of suicides these last few years is the melancholy and unwholesome result of an acceptance of it. But luckily there are signs of an awakening to the facts; even Lord Harewood can see that all the gold in the world dropped in the Atlantic Ocean would be no loss. At the risk of bursting our braces we say to this Amen.

Tired of land for a while, Mr. Eden Phillpotts soon finds his sea legs in his rollicking verses recounting, *Song of a Sailor Man*, Ernest Benn, Ltd., 6s. net. In reading it, one is pleasantly reminded of R. L. Stevenson, Jack London and John Masefield. Some puck-like influence must have taken Mr. Phillpotts by the ear and whispered that something in mock-heroic metre would make a change from prose—there is a certain fascination in the metre:—

"Of old the lad who ran away to sea,
Given a nerve and pluck to do the deed,
Would often struggle to prosperity,
Welcome the life afloat and win good speed;"

but the author cannot avoid dropping pearls in the narrative about Neddy White, the Sailor Boy. Here is one recounting the voyage:—

"And 'Cormorant' sailed into Carlisle Bay
While moonlight faded in the morning's arms."

The story is interspersed with songs, and a section of Part III., *The Lover*, recalls Byron's lovely lines of Haidée in *Don Juan*. I like Mr. Phillpotts' grip on the wholesome side of humanity, but then one must not be a chicken to be able to have the wisdom of the serpent together with the mildness of a dove. Mr. Phillpotts knows all this, and is an aristocrat who will not deny his brother man.

I believe it was Cardinal Newman, with whom the phrase of "gentle disputation" became associated, but a reading of my copy of *Letters to a Country Vicar*, by the Editor, was a liberal education in the art of persuasion by one who knows the other man's case. In addition, it was a reminder of Spinoza's saying, "I see the mud in which this man sticks." I wonder if the Editor's delightful epigram on page 13 has been overlooked: "Religion is the one thing that appears to develop as it withers." This must be my excuse for mentioning a desirable book already reviewed in these columns.

C-DE-B.

Correspondence

THE MONGOLS

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. B. J. Beuley asks your readers to compare the description of the Mongol invasion, in my article, as "hideous" and "noxious," with the account given of them by Mr. Williamson, in his *Evolution of England*.

I hope that after they have done so, they will compare Mr. Williamson's account with the history of the Mongols, as recorded in the monumental work of Sir Henry Howorth, *The History of the Mongols*. And, *The Mongols: A History*, by J. Curtin. They will then find that Mr. Williamson's account is totally misleading. The Mongols were as ruthless and cruel as Red Indians. When they took Merv they spent four days in driving the people out, and then slaughtered the lot. After looting the city they went on to Nashapur, twelve days distant, where they slaughtered every living thing, even the cats and dogs. They then constructed three pyramids of heads, one of the men's, one of women's, and one of children's. For fifteen days the destruction of the city continued, until the place disappeared altogether, and the Mongols sowed it with barley! At Herat it is said that one million six hundred thousand people perished in the conflict and subsequent slaughter. The general practice, however, in the multitude of other places taken was to reserve for slavery the young men, and all the desirable women. The fate of the slaughtered was to be preferred. The repulsive appearance of these squat, slit-eyed, brawny horsemen "with faces like snouts of dogs," seemed to paralyse all resistance.

Why Mr. Williamson went out of his way to introduce this misleading account into a history of England, with which the Mongols had nothing to do; or why Mr. Beuley—if he was aware of truth—thought fit to cite it against me, I have not the faintest idea.

The Mongol conquest was indeed the most hideous, in the extent, in the numbers slain, and the cruelty exercised, in the history of the world.

W. MANN.

THE RIGHT USE OF REASON

SIR,—Athos Zeno (*Freethinker*, April 15) does not appear to realize that the difference between logical and illogical reasoning as presented in your article really covers his point about using our reason as an instrument of "self-justification." For even in such circumstances our beliefs might be valid, e.g., a child whose parents were Freethinkers, and who desired to follow their example, and as he grew up rationalized his Freethought. To be a Freethinker simply because your parents were such is as logical a reason as the millions of Christians and Hindus who believe in Christianity or Hinduism simply because their parents did, and which is responsible for this country being mostly Christian, and India mostly Hindu. Such "reasons" have no logical connexion with truth, but they might lead to truth although the odds are against it.

J. A. DAVIES.

THOSE SILENT WITNESSES.

The honeyed sweetness of a smile; the assurance of the profound glance; and all that is sublime in bodily expression cannot be accurately conveyed by means of oral or written evidence: on the other hand, the contempt, hatred, or indifference shown by the curl of the lip, the shrug of the shoulder, and the wink of the eye are more convincing than the multitude of proofs furnished by tongue, or pen. The divinely sweet, likewise the odoriferously vile, atmosphere is created, and felt in silence; and the most brilliant speaker or writer at his best is not equal to the task of reproducing them.

Society News

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.

THE Seventeenth Annual General Meeting was held on Saturday, April 21, in the Clarion Cafe, Manchester, when the following Officers were elected: President, Mr. S. Cohen; Secretary, Mr. W. Collins, 4, The Bungalows, New Mills Road, Hayfield, Nr. Stockport; Lecture Secretary, Miss K. F. Brocklehurst; Literature Secretary, Mr. C. McCall; Auditor, Mr. C. E. Turner; Committee, Messrs. C. H. Black, Bayford, Hall, Monks, Miss Castle and Mrs. McCall; Conference Delegates, Miss Brocklehurst, Mr. Cohen and Mr. Collins.

Reports were presented of the previous season's working and a financial statement showing that expenditure had again been largely in excess of income, due mainly to a falling off of subscriptions, and expenses due to increased propaganda. It is hoped that members will kindly note.

Without doubt the number of unattached Freethinkers in Manchester and District is largely in excess of those who are members of the Branch—we invite them to join us and take an active part in the work we are doing. Those, who for business or other reasons, do not wish to be openly associated with the movement, can render valuable help by a donation to funds to carry on our propaganda.

W. COLLINS,

Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4 by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

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

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 68 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, April 30, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"What are 'Rights?'" Last meeting this session.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.40, Mr. Paul Goldman.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.0, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Bushcroft Road, Brixton): 8.0, Tuesday, May 1, Mr. L. Ebury. Stonhouse Street, Clapham, 8.0, Wednesday, May 2, Mr. L. Ebury. Aliwal Road, Clapham Junction, 8.0, Friday, May 4, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 3.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Bryant and Collins. Platform No. 2, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 6.30, Messrs. Wood, Hyatt and others. Wednesday, 7.30, Mr. W. P. Campbell Everden.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 6.30, Members' General Meeting. Members please attend.

OUTDOOR.

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Market): 7.0, Mr. Jack Clayton—A Lecture.

BLYTHE (Market Place): 7.0, Monday, April 30, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths): 8.0, Sunday, April 29, A Lecture. Corner of High Park Street and Park Road: 8.0, Thursday, May 3, A Lecture.

NEWCASTLE (Bigg Market): 7.0, Sunday, April 29, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NORTH SHIELDS (Harbour View): 7.0, Tuesday, May 1, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Would Lane, Memorial): 7.0, Wednesday, May 2, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

The Secular Society, Ltd.

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

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