

# THE FREETHINKER

EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN  
— Founded 1881 —

VOL. LIV.—No. 33

SUNDAY, AUGUST 19, 1934

PRICE THREEPENCE

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## Views and Opinions

### Women in the Pulpit

In the "Acid Drop" column for July 29, I wrote a paragraph dealing with the resolve to continue the policy of excluding women from the Methodist Ministry. This paragraph elicited from a lady a letter administering a few good-natured "spanks," which I do not think were deserved. For although lightly written the paragraph was a summary of one aspect of a phase of history that directly concerns the Christian Church. The paragraph in question ran as follows:—

After many years of discussion the Methodist Conference has again decided that it will not have women in the ministry. That is a thoroughly Christian attitude. From the Christian standpoint all the evils in the world began with the wickedness of a woman, and when Jesus established his order of preachers, he took care that not one of them should be a woman. It is true that women followed him, and "ministered to him of their substance," but that has been the fashion in the Christian Church ever since it was established. Women should find enough glory in working to make the lot of the parson comfortable, without desiring to usurp his position. The Methodist Church is acting quite consistently with the traditions of the Christian Church, the teachings of Christian theology, and the example of "Our Lord." Besides it would put some men out of a job.

Very gently Mrs. Northcroft, editor of *The Coming Ministry*, administers the following reproof:—

Dear Sir,—Whilst sympathizing with you over your exasperation that the Methodist Conference has turned down for the present—the inclusion of women in their Ministry, your subsequent remarks, in your issue of July 29, that this decision is "a thoroughly Christian attitude," is not worthy of your columns, nor the remarks that "From the Christian standpoint all the evils in the world began with the wickedness of a woman." This may have been the old Semitic attitude, and possibly of some portions of medieval Christianity, but is not true as regards the modern aspect of Christianity.

As regards women in the ministry of the Protes-

tant Churches, the Unitarians, Salvation Army, Christian Scientists, and Quakers have never recognized any distinction between the sexes. The Congregationalists and Baptists now have women ministers with the same status as men, also, the Church of Scotland (Continuing). Other branches of the Protestant Church, such as the Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Churches of Scotland and Ireland, whilst prejudiced at the moment, are bound to come into line before many years have elapsed.

Your gibe at the methods of Jesus Christ is not a generous one. He was too wise to appoint women to an itinerant ministry in an unsettled world, but there is ample evidence that the broad principles he always observed with regard to the relationships of the sexes were carried over into the Early Christian Church, where, for some considerable time, women occupied places of distinction in the Christian ministry. It was entirely male influence which later displaced them, and usurped all the higher positions in officialdom.

Yours faithfully,

(Mrs.) D. M. NORTHCROFT,

(Society for the Ministry of Women).

I can assure Mrs. Northcroft that I was not at all exasperated at the Methodist Conference turning down the proposal that women should be admitted to the Ministry. It was to be expected. For it is not the first time that this has happened. Unless my memory misleads me, this identical proposition has been before the Conference several times during the past forty years, and has been rejected. Its rejection, therefore, cannot be based upon the circumstances of the moment or upon the suggestion put forward, that the resolution was inopportune because there were at present more ministers than there were pulpits for them to occupy. The opposition has its origin in something far deeper than that. And in view of this something my remark that the vote of the majority in the Conference represented a thoroughly Christian attitude is fully borne out by the facts. Indeed, Mrs. Northcroft admits the substantial accuracy of my remark, when she says that this "may have been the old Semitic attitude, and possibly of some portions of medieval Christianity, but is not true as regards the modern aspect of Christianity."

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### Religion and Women

Now if instead of the phrase, the "old Semitic attitude," we read the teachings of the Bible we are making a statement of undeniable fact, free from all camouflage. For Christianity is certainly built upon the Bible, and it is by bearing this fact in mind that we are able to treat the subject with due regard to historical accuracy. "Some portions of medieval Christianity," is also a phrase that suggests a late intrusion into Christian teaching and practice. The truth is that it was the general attitude of Christian bodies from the outset, and the medieval Church did

but consolidate and regularize this. Mrs. Northcroft says there is "ample evidence" that for some considerable time women occupied places of distinction in the early Christian Church. The facts hardly justify the statement. Certainly Paul's rule that women should be silent in the church, and that man was the head of the woman as Christ was the head of the Church, and that the wife must obey her husband as Sarah obeyed Abraham, hardly bears out the contention.

The truth is that women did occupy positions of distinction in some of the pagan religions, and this tradition was strong enough to secure for women in the very early Church some positions; not distinctive, but subordinate, and against this there must be placed the fact that as the Christian bodies grew in numbers and in strength, even these positions were taken from her. No less an authority than Principal Donaldson, one of the editors of the *Anti-Nicene Library* (a collection of the writings of leading Christians for the first four centuries of the Christian era) confesses that for the first three centuries he was unable to discover that the influence of Christianity tended otherwise than to lower the character of women, and restrict the range of her activity. His words are striking enough and precise enough to quote fully:—

The opinion has been continually expressed that woman owes her present high position to Christianity and the influence of the Teutonic mind. But an examination of the facts seems to me to show that there was no sign of this revolution in the first three centuries of the Christian era, and that the position of woman among Christians was lower, and the notions in regard to them were more degraded than they were in the first.

Donaldson, with others, finds the influence of Christianity making for a worsening of the position of women at the very stage where Mrs. Northcroft finds it making for their elevation. Those who are acquainted with the opinions which were held by the foremost Christian writers of the first three centuries will not charge Principal Donaldson with falsehood or exaggeration.

There is, too, a quite delightful ingenuousness in the statement that what I said is certainly not true as regards *the modern aspect* of Christianity. What sects are we to place under the head of "modern"? Some of those mentioned are very modern indeed. But the oldest of those named do not go back very far in Christian history. The older Churches—the Roman Church, the Anglican Church, the Presbyterian Church, join with the Methodists in refusing to have women in the ministry. And when we take the numbers represented, there is but a small minority left. It is too much to ask anyone to accept this minority as representing the true Christian tradition, and that the majority are standing for a mere heresy. And when we bear in mind the fact that the demand for the equality of the sexes has originated in Free-thinking circles, and has been most hotly opposed by religious ones, the matter becomes very curious indeed. I quite agree that in the future one may expect a larger number of Christians to agree that women may enter the ministry, but this will not be because *Christianity* has triumphed. It will arise from the same conditions that have compelled Christians to give up witchcraft, the belief in demonic possession, the burning of heretics, the doctrine of a literal hell, Puritanical Sabbatarianism, and other things that are in conflict with modern thought, and a better conception of human decency.

Mrs. Northcroft says I am "gibing" at Jesus in saying that when appointing his preachers he took care to see that not one was a woman. But it was a statement of fact, and it would have been quite safe

to have named one out of the twelve without its being considered extraordinary. Women teachers were not unknown to the pagan world, although they took no part in religious services among the Jews, and the inferiority of women in the Bible is very marked. Mrs. Northcroft thinks that Jesus was too wise to appoint women to an itinerant ministry, in an unsettled world, although she says in the early Church women occupied places of distinction "in the Christian ministry." I do not recall any examples at all of women occupying the position of a minister in the early church, although there are mention of women as deaconesses and also as door-keepers, and to such-like subordinate offices. But if it be true that she did occupy positions of distinction, then it would seem that either Jesus was wrong in thinking he could not trust women to preach in an "unsettled world"—whatever that phrase may mean—or that his immediate disciples paid very little attention to his counsels. I was not gibing at Jesus, but simply stating facts, and avoiding the foolish practice of making the teachings of Jesus embody the very highest form of human wisdom. That form of advocacy is often pushed to the point of dishonesty, but at its best it cannot help being foolish.

I do not know what the "broad principles" were that Jesus observed with regard to the relations of the sexes. So far as women followed him, and listened to him, and "ministered to him," there is nothing new in these things in any age. The practice of using women in Church life is quite common, and has been prominent in the Church in all ages. But it is not the use made of women, but the essential equality with men that is the question at issue. And here there is nothing to show that Jesus was a step in advance of the common Jewish religious practice. His "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" addressed to his mother, did not show extravagant respect to woman in one direction, nor did his "Touch me not" to Mary Magdalene, after his resurrection, while permitting Thomas to handle him, indicate much respect in another. The truth here is, as I have shown in both my *Religion and Sex*, and *Woman and Christianity*, that, as in so many other instances, the Christian Church involved a reversion to a lower type of religious belief. Not the inferiority of women, but the religious "uncleanness" of woman was the idea which ran through the whole of the Christian Church, and it is there to-day. The Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans had outgrown this primitive superstitious notion, but Christianity which revived the doctrine of an eternal hell, a virgin birth, a crucified saviour, and other crudities of religious belief, revived also this conception of the religious "uncleanness" of women. It is not fair to say that "male" influence displaced women from a position of distinction in the Christian Church. What distinction she had was due to pagan influences, and she lost that precisely in proportion as the Christian Church made its position secure.

Next week, I will outline exactly what was the influence of the Church on the position of woman in her private and public capacities. For the moment I suggest that this emphasizing of the good intentions of Jesus, and then falling back upon the wickedness or perversity of men to account for the absence of any evidence of that beneficent influence Jesus is assumed to have exerted, is suicidal in its consequences. And surely the spectacle of the overwhelming majority of Christians insisting that to have women in the pulpit is to fly in the face of the teaching of "Our Lord," and contrary to Church practice and theory, is to confess that the New Testament Jesus stands for one of the most colossal failures the world has ever known.

## The Contemplations of Christina

"He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness."—*Emerson*.

"Chanting faint hymns to the cold, fruitless moon."  
*Shakespeare*.

It is noteworthy that one family should have produced two such eminent poets as Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and a well-known critic in William Michael Rossetti. Christina shared with her poet-brother the delight in medieval colouring and theme, and in the sensuous appeal of verse, but unlike Dante Gabriel, she had a very strong strain of superstition in her character, and she soon lost her vision of a brightly-hued and romantic world, and turned her tired eyes to the contemplations of purely religious subjects.

At the first Christina Rossetti's verse exhibited a definite personality. It was, perhaps, her sex which rendered her lyrics more bird-like than her brother's verses. It can be nothing but her constant experience of ill-health which made her dwell so constantly on the morbid side of religion. Death, which to so many poets had seemed to be own brother to sleep, was to her an horrific shape, and was a perennial subject for her verse. The constant burden of her muse was the mutability of human affairs. And when to physical ailments were added love disappointments, entirely caused by religious bigotry, there is small difficulty in understanding how Christina Rossetti became a devotional poet; and one of such distinction that only Crashaw, Donne, Vaughan, and Francis Thompson can be held her compeers. And the Rev. Dr. Donne, be it recalled, mitigated his raptures concerning the Holy Trinity by writing poems on such mundane subjects as seeing his mistress getting into bed.

Many of Christina Rossetti's poems are very short, and are concerned with threadbare theological themes. In nothing is her undoubted power so much shown as in the fact that so few are commonplace. Had she not possessed genius, they might have sunk to the dead level of pious verse, orthodox in purpose, but contemptible in execution. The only trait she possessed in common with the generality of hymn-writers was a certain morbidity in dwelling on the idea of death and the purely pathological side of religion. She disembowelled the Christian Scriptures, and her brother, William, said, with rough justice, that if all the Biblical phrases had been deleted from Christina's devotional verse, it "would have been reduced to something approaching a vacuum."

Starting her poetical career as the one woman member of the famous Pre-Raphaelite enthusiasts, she, naturally, showed the effect of that romantic spirit in her first mature poem, "Goblin Market," and in the less extravagant, "Prince's Progress," both of which have some of the glow and rich tints of Dante Rossetti's and William Morris's early works. The meditative and introspective sonnets of even her later years have something in common with this early artistic impulse. But what a change was there! It is impossible not to deplore the narrowing down and petrifying of Christina Rossetti's poetic interest. Here was a woman of warm blood and a passionate sense of beauty, who, with better health and satisfied affections, might have interpreted the joy of life. Instead, she turned with morbid pleasure to the sickly delights of a barren religiosity. She was a paradox, an anomaly; a Puritan among Anglo-Catholics; a nun outside the walls of the Romish Church. Preoccupied as she was, with at-

tenuated religious emotions, her melodies with difficulty escape monotony. Yet, again and again, Nature will out, and the old, half-forgotten romantic instinct asserts itself. Actually, she had a strain of Secularism in her character, but religious bias forced her sympathies into wrong channels. To the real world she became indifferent. With actual life, its questionings, its humours, its perplexities, its despairs, its hopes, its loves, there is scarcely any sympathy in her writings. Beyond the walls of her own sheltered home her tired eyes saw little beyond a mad world rushing to perdition. Her idea of wisdom is to withdraw from the tumult and the shouting into an inner shrine of pious meditation, disturbed only by feminine anxiety for the fate of one out of a hundred religions.

Her piety was essentially of the womanly, prayerful, submissive kind, so attractive to priests of all ages and all countries. It asks no questions, it is posed by no problems. It only kneels in adoring awe, and gives money and service freely.

To such an one, the picture of "the world" is grim and forbidding:—

"Loathsome and foul with hideous leprosy,  
And subtle serpents gliding in her hair."

And she fears lest her feet, "cloven too, take hold on hell." It is this pathological view of life which blinds her eyes. When she notices the beauties of Nature, it is always through a religious haze. She could not rise to the art of Coleridge's:—

"hidden brook,  
In the leafy month of June,  
That to the sleepy woods all night  
Singeth a quiet tune."

Or the magic of Meredith:—

"Hear the heart of wildness beat  
Like a centaur's hoof on sward."

Nor could she alter the sublime defiance of Emily Brontë:—

"No coward soul is mine."

But she had a haunting music all her own:—

"When I am dead, my dearest,  
Sing no sad songs for me,  
Plant thou no roses at my head,  
Nor shady cypress tree;  
Be the green grass above me,  
With showers and dewdrops wet;  
And if thou wilt, remember,  
And if thou wilt, forget."

This, however, was an exception. Usually, her emotions were regulated and refined by ascetic priestly traditions, and this placed her at a great disadvantage among the singers of free utterance. At the worst she was never crude, extravagant, nor commonplace. She challenged comparison with the greatest of her sex. Elizabeth Browning is the inevitable foil to Christina Rossetti, and the two suggest each other by the mere force of contrast. The author of *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, *Casa Guidi Windows*, and *The Cry of the Children*, is the very antipodes of the woman who gave the world the shy, devotional *New Poems*. There is none of Mrs. Browning's wide range of subject, and the sister-poet lacks the splendid humanism of the other. Christina Rossetti, despite her undoubted lyric gifts, hardly stands the comparison. How should she? A delicate spinster, she held the Christian Superstition in the most absolute and most literal manner. Shadow, not light, was her nourishment, and her finest music was a delicate undertone. We long for something individual. Like the dying farm-labourer, we like something concrete. His friends tried to solace his last moments with the golden joys of heaven. He raised himself for a last word; "'Tis all very well for thee; but give I a game of darts at the 'Pig and Whistle.'" His

mortality, like that of so many of us, was unequal to raptures too severe. Christina Rossetti's life-work is, in its way, a criticism and impeachment of Christian Orthodoxy. In spite of its beautiful language, it explains nothing, and adds nothing to human knowledge, but leaves the world in the meshes of an outworn Oriental Superstition. Its priests usurp a place in the body politic out of all proportion to their merits. Like the fly on the wheel of a locomotive, they say: "We go round together." But the wheels of progress owe nothing to their magical pretensions.

MIMNERMUS.

## Prehistoric Times in Eastern Lands

DARWIN regarded Africa as the probable place of man's origin, but Asia is usually considered his most likely birthplace. The civilizations of Asia certainly support the latter view, as they date back to very remote times, and appear, despite their later divergencies, to have once conformed to a common type. Systematic research in the East began less than fifty years ago, but discovery has been great, and every acquisition tends to throw back man's prehistory into an increasingly distant past.

The Nile was formerly a much larger river than it is to-day, and near ancient Libyan tributaries of the stream long since desiccated, Old Stone Age settlements, and myriads of flint implements of the same pattern as those found in abundance in the Palæolithic deposits of France have come to light. But, while evidence of the presence of prehistoric man in his earlier stages is abundant, no trace remains of any later Neolithic or New Stone Age. In place of this, there flourished on such sites as those of Abydos and Nagada, in the Nile Valley, a fine Æneolithic culture which existed towards the close of the Stone Period, when copper was being utilized for various purposes of life. This phase has been approximately dated 5000 B.C. The energetic race that then occupied Egypt appears to have been related to the Mediterranean stocks.

Their husbandry was well advanced, for they cultivated cereals such as barley and wheat, while among their domesticated animals were the ox, ass, sheep and gazelle. Flint knives, sickles, ploughshares, and other implements of remarkably fine workmanship were in use. But their vases are so splendidly made and their decorative designs are so artistic, that we are bound to consider achievements so great as these as necessarily implying a long anterior period of development. As René Grousset states: "Drinking vessels carved out of sandstone, granite, marble, diorite, obsidian, alabaster or crystal, are among the most beautiful that have come down to us from prehistoric days. The jewellery is partly of Neolithic type—bracelets and necklaces of bone, ivory or flint—and already partly of copper, especially the pins. There are abundant examples of the ceramic art, including (to follow the probable chronological order) first vases of smooth red clay . . . and lastly red or buff pottery decorated in various ways." (*The Civilizations of the East*, Vol. I., pp. 4, 5.)

Archæologists have determined two phases of this ancient Egyptian civilization, the first being dated from 7500 to 5000 B.C. This culture was centred in Nagada, and reveals African affinities, while the succeeding period, which extended from 5000 to 3500 B.C., was seated in Northern or Lower Egypt and betrays Asiatic influences.

At a still later time the art products, which had become conventionalized, returned to an earlier realism, and denote an acquaintance with Chaldean and Assyrian models. This also suggests industrial and commercial intercourse between early Mesopotamia and the ancient Nile peoples.

So far, no Palæolithic remains have come to light in Elam or Chaldea, but, presumably, during this period these regions were still submerged. But when the waters had subsided in Late Stone and Early Copper Ages there arose a splendid civilization around Susa, the later Metropolis of Elam. At the level denominated Susa I., the archæologist de Morgan detected traces of an agrarian community (possessing herds of cattle) who still used stone, but who also had implements and mirrors composed of 90 per cent pure copper. Their pottery was exquisitely finished. Beakers, bowls and other vessels were thrown on the potter's wheel, an advance beyond the Egyptian ceramics of contemporary manufacture. Their painted pottery was fired in various colours and designs with geometrical motives. For what had once been palm trees, wild goats and wading birds, had become conventionalized into wavy lines, zigzags and other geometrical forms. A few products of this period, however, retain their earlier realism, the head of a hind, for instance, being vividly drawn.

We are compelled to agree with M. Pottier, that the art of prehistoric Susa demands a long apprenticeship for its evolution. René Grousset writes: "This art of Susa, which seems primitive to us because we are ignorant of its origins, was really the result of a process of evolution which had already gone on for thousands of years. Indeed, an incredibly ancient habit of picture drawing is already presupposed by their conventionalized representation of the human body . . . or again the aquatic birds with inordinately long but very elegant necks and legs. . . . This consideration alone would lead us to assume that before Susa I., there existed a Susa of incredibly remote antiquity."

In 1927-28, Prof. Herzfeldt's excavations disclosed the evidences of a prehistoric culture in Persia, which he considers as purely Neolithic in character. If his conclusions are confirmed this culture antedates that of Susa I. Indeed, he claims that this civilization was the parent of early Susa. In any case, intercommunication between these two cultures is clear. Their works of art bear the closest resemblance; but while artistic power at Susa at one period declined, in pre-Aryan Persia the art products progressively improved.

In Persian Kurdistan and Färs this progress continued into the culminating stages of the later Bronze Age, for the decorated vases of that period are painted with wonderful skill. It is well said "that the great animal art which was later to be characteristic of Mesopotamia appears both on these painted ornaments or on the seals and amulets likewise found at Nehavend; for instance, in a drawing of a prowling hyena, amazingly realistic in action, or in a group of a beast of a feline tribe devouring a beast of the deer tribe, a motive which has become classic in Sumerian art as afterwards in that of the steppes."

In Russian Turkestan again, near the Persian frontier, the Pumpelly expedition excavated three prehistoric settlements standing in succession. The earliest of these is dated 3,000 B.C., and the remains prove that the inhabitants cultivated corn, and had tamed sheep, pigs and oxen. This was a period of polished stone and copper.

The second and later site furnishes evidence of the domestication of the dog, camel and goat. The third culture ended about 2000 B.C., and was distinguished

by an extensive use of copper. These ruined sites, termed successively Anau I., II., and III., have also yielded a fine collection of painted pottery, while in the most modern settlement Anau III., there were figurines of the "naked goddess" similar to those found in Elamite and Chaldean remains of archaic times.

In other Asian regions kindred discoveries have been made. Interesting remains have been unearthed in North Western India. Sir John Marshall excavated a series of three settlements at Mohenjo-Daro in the Indus valley. The oldest of these dates back to 3300 B.C., the youngest to about 2700 B.C. The unknown dwellers in these cities wove cotton fabrics and owned oxen, sheep and swine. The Archaeological Survey of India discovered, at various depths, polished stone implements and copper utilities with ornaments of silver and gold. Excellent glazed and painted pottery was also unearthed, but the most striking discovery was that of hundreds of limestone tablets in use as seals, which were inscribed with animal figures such as elephants and tigers. There was likewise a strange pictographic script closely resembling the hieroglyph. The seals strongly resemble those of ancient Chaldea, while other remains are highly suggestive of Mesopotamian influences. Some, indeed, have regarded these ancient settlements as mere outposts of Mesopotamian civilization. Still, it is to be noted, that the plants and animals depicted on the seals are confined to native Indian types, while the pictographic script of this prehistoric race is decidedly distinct from the early Sumerian cuneiform inscriptions. But that these ancient peoples were in communication is shown in the recent recovery from Kish in Chaldea of a seal from the Indus of the period 2500-2350 B.C., which bears an inscription of Indian character.

Until recently, Palæolithic remains were unknown and unsuspected in China, but they were revealed in 1920, while from that year till 1924 Neolithic deposits were disclosed by the Swedish scholar, Dr. Andersson, both in China and Manchuria. The pottery and other relics indicate a relatively advanced culture. With reference to the Chinese ceramics recovered, René Grousset remarks that "the painted vases of Ho-nan and Kansuh may be reckoned among the most perfect works of prehistoric art." It is also noteworthy that the craniological inquiries conducted by Dr. Black, when studying the human remains found with the pottery and other relics, indicate the existence of the modern Chinese in that far distant age.

The combined evidences yielded by the several defunct civilizations passed under review plainly point to the contemporaneous existence of these ancient cultures when the age of polished stone artifacts was nearing its end. Egypt, Elam, Mesopotamia, Iran and North Western India, Western Turkestan and Northern China comprised these leading cultural centres. In common, they possessed domesticated stock, cultivated the ground and traded extensively with one another. At the dawn of written history there flourished a practically uniform phase of civilization which extended from Egypt to China, and the valley of the Indus. This has been termed the painted pottery culture, and it probably possessed similar arts and sciences, while sharing similar superstitions and material modes of life.

T. F. PALMER.

Many make pilgrimages to a shrine, whose devotion to God is great; and in inverse proportion to their sense of duty to man.

## Sin and Pain

THERE are many subjects dealt with by preachers which are stereotyped. To mention any one of them is immediately to conjure up a paraphrase of what will be said by the exponents of pious nebulosities. Thus, when the Rev. C. P. Thomas, preaching at a hospital service at Burton Latimer, Northampton, referred to pain, it was a foregone conclusion that he should attribute it to sin. It is not surprising also that he should contend that all suffering was due to man's own fault—due to the wilful selfishness in human nature.

There are many Freethinkers who, while laughing at the absurdity of such statements, view them as being too antiquated to be worth bothering about. If they were the statements of anyone with the following of a flat-earth theorist, we could well afford to smile and pass on, but they are made on such occasions as the hospital service at Burton Latimer, when the representative bodies of the town attend in force. It is the duty of the Freethinker to be ever ready to join issue with anyone who, addressing a large gathering, makes a pronouncement such as pain being due to sin.

Therefore I join issue with the Rev. C. P. Thomas, and ask him, as he admits it is often asked, why God, who, as he claims, has almighty power, does not put an end to pain and suffering, and further, why He ever allowed it to add to the unhappiness of life? His answer would be, as I have already indicated, that pain is due to sin, which is contrary to the will of God; God made man but gave him free-will, and, in exercise of that free-will, he has chosen sin. Man must learn by experience that sin brings misery in its train.

What a blessing must free-will be to God; for, if He could not resort to that, even the Christian could not escape the conclusion that God was at fault in regard to sin. But God cannot escape so easily, for, being omniscient, He must have seen the consequence of his granting the boon of free-will to man. The consequences of that boon was sin which is against the will of God, so He was very much at fault in granting something which would result in that which was against His will. I think it must be admitted that it could only be a God who thus wills something to be done which is against his will.

Assuming for the moment, however, that man has free-will, and has brought on pain and suffering on account of his selfishness, we should expect to see some relation between pain and selfishness. That is to say that the price of selfishness would be pain, and the reward of unselfishness comparative freedom from pain. But what do we find? There are people of all degrees of selfishness who have known nothing of pain beyond a temporary toothache, and there are, on the other hand the sweetest and gentlest of characters who have perhaps been martyrs to suffering all their lives. It is astounding, when one thinks of it, that, in these days, a minister can get up in the pulpit and suggest to people who may have relatives lying in the hospital, victims to dread diseases, that their sufferings are due to sin.

If it could be argued that the suffering of the individual was not due to any particular sin on his part, but to man in the mass, there would still be the difficulty that pain is not the experience of man alone. The lower orders of life experience pain, yet the doubtful boon of free-will has never been granted them. The Christian would not maintain that the lion sins when he attacks the unsuspecting hart, when the snake darts at its victim in the grass, or when the hawk swoops down upon its prey. Every second in the vast realm of nature pain is inflicted and endured

in silence, or resented with cries and yells which would wring any human heart.

Leaving then the nauseating vapourings of parsons, we recognize pain as belonging to the phenomena coming within the scope of physiology. So long as there has been life with a nervous system to record the reactions of the living organism to the things outside itself there has been pain. But sin, to use the parsonic phrase for wrongdoing, belongs to ethics which is purely an arbitrary code of human conduct. It is a sin to have more than one wife in the West—not so in the East. It is a sin in the eyes of a Christian to doubt the existence of God. The Free-thinker in asking what is meant by a God is conscious of no feeling of committing a sin. Having a plurality of wives may have its painful results in the West, but so might having a single wife. To admit that from certain wrongdoing pain may result is merely to state that certain causes will have certain effects; but to say that because from one cause (sin) an effect (pain) is experienced, therefore all painful effects must be the result of the one cause of sin is to argue absurdly. To argue absurdly, however, is the special forte of the parsons, and that is why one of their number can get up and tell people that their pains are the result of sin.

JAMES O. HANLON.

## Acid Drops

The Rev. W. Price, of Brackley, Northants, offers to the *Times* a really valuable suggestion in the way of decreasing road fatalities. He suggests that prayers for the avoidance of road accidents should accompany every religious service. But to whom are the prayers to be addressed? It is no use praying to the man on the road; he is not there and cannot take notice. It is no use praying to the police; they do all they can. Of course they can pray to God, but he already knows all about it, and has done nothing. Besides, he has frequently drowned people when they asked for rain, and burned up their crops when they asked for more sunshine. And if he lost his temper and started wrecking motor-cars the consequences might be very dreadful. We had better leave prayers out of it.

Bible "authority" is a queer sort of fish. Recently the Methodists had to decide what to call the head of their Scottish branch. "District Sales Manager," of course, was not even in the running. The Committee proposed to call him the "Chairman" of the Methodist Church in Scotland. The Rev. Mr. Hornabrook strongly objected. He was supported by Rev. Mr. Walters, who said "the title 'Chairman' was not to be found in the Acts of the Apostles," as if this were conclusive. He carried the conference with him. The Congregational Church has a Chairman, so has the Baptist (and others probably). But the head of the Methodists is called a President, a name we find in the Book of Daniel. If the President of the Methodists treats Believers in the way these Presidents treated Daniel, they will swear at instead of by this precious "authority." We wonder that Republican Christians don't re-name God as President of Presidents, instead of King of Kings.

The Rev. Ensor Walters has so long lived on religion that he predicts a terrible state of affairs when England does without his profession. "Britain without Churches," he says, "will mean Death." Death to whom and to what?

The *Methodist Recorder* describes a speech by Sir George Lunn, the famous Methodist Educationist as "an interlude of real Methodist humour." His best story was about an old minister (Thomas Champness) once laying his hands on Lunn's head and commending him

to God in these words: "There isn't much in this lad's basket, not so much as he thinks, Lord, but, such as it is, he brings it to Thee."

According to Archbishop Downey, the Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral, now being slowly built, will cost for its East-end alone, nearly £1,000,000. The money is coming in too, as the receipts this year are larger than those of any previous year. "What we want," insists the Archbishop, "is a continuous flow of money." This seems to be the burden of a continuous cry from all the Churches, and not for building alone, either. It must never be forgotten that a cry for money for religion will almost always bring it. The poor, the sick, the unemployed, can go hang, but we must have money for religion! It has always been a successful cry.

How often a liar calls other people liars, and abuses people while complaining of their abusiveness. Mr. Richard King writes (with less fatigue than readers read) on his one and only subject, "Silent Friends," in *The Tatler*, about some people he dislikes. He calls them "nagging Atheists." These awful creatures ("bounded by their own prejudice and envy") think ("in a fit of desperate depression") that "if the Creator made the world He soon got tired of it and leased it to the devil for so long as he cared to have it for his playground." In Mr. King's case, of course, such a mood would soon pass, and "once again our heart and mind regain their normal healthy aspect." This "desperate depression" is not the mood of a "nagging Atheist," it is the revolt of a Theist fed up with Mr. King's facile "optimism," which can believe that mosquitoes, tornadoes, cancer and other diseases, earthquakes and the Bishop of London were created by an all-wise, all-good God.

Prof. Findlay is still "at it." By which we mean he is still explaining that things mean something else. His latest—we wish it were his last—is that when Jesus of Nazareth "appeared" to Saul of Tarsus, Saul didn't see Him. "He appeared to me," says our interpreter, "is not quite the same thing as saying 'I saw Him.'" He finds himself wondering "what would have happened if Caiaphas had seen the Risen Lord." We hazard the suggestion that some local Findlay would have assured Caiaphas that the so-called "Risen Lord" had only "appeared," and that it didn't matter so long as nobody ever saw it "appearing." Dr. Findlay concludes with the extraordinary suggestion that "Jesus meant: Look long enough at a thing which might have happened any day, and you will see eternal truth in it." Eternal Truth, as we guessed, is not at all the same thing as truth.

The present moment seems hardly propitious for advertising boldly that "God is Love," as does a missionary society. For the newspapers are full of reports concerning disastrous floods and storms and heat-waves and fires, etc., etc. All these things may no doubt remind Christians that "God"—assisted by the Son and Holy Ghost—is still carrying on as heretofore, but other people may be sceptical about the love.

The Rev. C. P. Groves, delivering the "Fernley-Hartley" Lecture, told the truth when he said, "The less developed groups of mankind usually styled primitive people are no more primitive than we are." He proved his generalization by showing that although these "primitives" believe in all sorts of ridiculous deities, spirits of dead ancestors and what-not, "Above and beyond all these ancestral spirits," etc., there is "The Creator"—the very same deity that English Methodists, Anglicans, and Catholics believe in. One is just as primitive as the other. Exactly. That is the Free-thought case in a nut-shell, even if the "nut" is "cracked."

It is interesting to study the mentality of the new Methodist President, the Rev. William Younger. He has been preaching about that dreadful old story of Abraham

being willing, at God's direct command, to murder his son Isaac. "Abraham was the product of a period when the offering of a loved one as a sacrifice to a tribal deity was a widespread belief." If Mr. Younger repudiated the story on those grounds, he would have to throw overboard the defence of the yarn in the New Testament, where Abraham's belief in God is "counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4). Accordingly all that Mr. Younger does is to draw the "moral" that "God will never be satisfied with us until He sees that we are prepared to go through anything in order to be faithful to His redeeming will." What a murderous morality!

The Rev. S. Parkes Cadman, of New York, tells us that Secularism is "one of the diseases of modern life." We hope it will prove a fatal one to Mr. Cadman's creed.

Mr. F. C. Taylor, B.D., M.A., at Northampton Young People's Rally, preached to Sunday School scholars. He said that to many, Sunday School work was "a disheartening and fruitless toil," but it was "satisfying" to those who had patience. Mr. Towlson, speaking at the same Rally, said that the real work of the Sunday School teacher was not education but bringing children to Christ. He added that "a sense of humour is a great help." Was he trying to be funny?

Really it is time for *the Church*, that is, the Roman Church, to ask God bluntly what he is doing about the indiscriminate way in which his own churches are being struck by his own lightning. Only the other day, when a baby was actually being baptized in the Church of St. Piatchna in Co. Cork, lightning cracked the masonry above the door, and the pious and thoroughly-believing worshippers had a narrow escape. It's one thing for lightning to play havoc among Protestants and Infidels, but why, oh why among the genuinely Faithful? We wish the Pope would make a definite pronouncement on the matter; otherwise what is the use of being a Roman Catholic when lightning is playing about?

The society of ridiculous nobodies, the "Knights of St. Columba," have been protesting to the Ministry of Health about the giving of birth-control advice to married women at ordinary clinics. We were glad to note that the reply from the Minister was a thorough snub. The doctors at the various clinics could decide whether any woman should be given the information or not, and though this may not yet be enough, it is a step in the right direction. Anybody can obtain contraceptive information, either by buying a book or going to a qualified doctor or nurse, and these silly "Knights" are doing their utmost to prevent the poor from getting knowledge the rich can obtain with ease—including, it should be pointed out rich Roman Catholics. Why don't the "Knights of St. Columba" commence a campaign against the rich?

Even the *Church Times* has had to report, from the pen of Quiz, that several correspondents have been complaining that in a broadcast from a famous cathedral, the diction was awful. Quiz thinks that it "should be the duty of the deans and chapters to discover a cleric who has a clear and natural manner of expression." But is not that asking too much? Whether, as he contends, the wireless exaggerates "the irritating idiosyncracies of the parsonic voice," may be a matter of opinion; but those we have heard have even worse qualities of diction than those described. Still, almost all "clerics" are alike as soon as it comes to blathering about Our Lord, and their tone of voice which they think is necessary to use makes their broadcast service a veritable nightmare. Quiz is quite certain the cause of religion is not furthered by these wireless services. Why not agitate for something light, cheerful and funny on Sundays instead?

An anthropologist claims to have discovered a new civilization in Central New Guinea, the inhabitants of

which are "high-grade natives." We presume the usual fate awaits them. Christian missionaries will convert them, and turn the "high-grade natives" into low-grade Europeans. The best thing that could happen to Central New Guinea would be to keep the Bible out of it. For it has kept Europe low-grade for 1900 years. Low-grade physically, by its Christian indifference to physical well-being and hygiene, and its appallingly stupid notions about sex matters; and low-grade mentally, with its Christian encouragement of mentally and morally—using the word in its proper sense—poor types.

When the shoemaker warmly insists that all should wear shoes, anyone can understand and appreciate the inner or spiritual reason for his insistence. So, too, we hope that everyone will also be able to appreciate why the Rev. Wm. Younger (Methodist President) insisted, at the Methodist Conference, on the "value of the Church," and on the necessity for Christian men and women meeting together in some sort of tabernacle. According to him, the spiritual quality of those who attend a little tin chapel is as high as that found in larger praying-sheds. But "it requires in the ministry a spiritualized imagination and insight, accurate and intense, to see in the simple souls who gather in little chapels, the massive strength and the almost sacramental beauty of their personalities." For our part, we cheerfully admit that they are simple souls—very simple—but as we lack a spiritualized imagination, we find a difficulty in viewing them in anything but their true light, as stupid, ignorant, narrow-minded and superstitious bigots.

As the Methodist Conference accepted only 60 candidates for the ministry out of 136, the rejected candidates may be pardoned for wondering whether God has played a joke on them. In the first place they are visited by an insistent desire to become a minister, and then the Church rejects them. If the "divine call" received by the rejected was not a divine leg-pull, one must charitably assume that it was sent to the wrong address. In either case, the rejected were made to appear fools. The only thing to do is to prayerfully ask the Lord for an explanation.

The Rev. Benson Perkins, speaking at Leicester, was frank enough in referring to his denomination's last attitude to Labour. Making reference to the centenary celebrations of the Tolpuddle martyrs, he admitted that "the story of official Methodism in connexion with that event made sad reading." It is not easy to see any change as to "attitude," if attitude includes action. Certainly Methodism recognizes nowadays that Labour has votes, influence and money (collectively). Very few people, who depend on public support, should to-day candidly talk to the working classes like the first Lord Salisbury did. But Methodists (like all the other "religions") want favours from Labour. One speaker at the recent Conference said that Methodists ought always to be on the watch to see that governments and municipalities provided sites for churches on all new estates. The official Methodist view is that "Fundamental to a new social order is the spiritual regeneration of men and women."

We "listen-in" sometimes to a sermon by the Rev. James Reid, D.D., who explains in the *British Weekly*, that "It is better to trust than to understand," and that "If we cannot understand we can at least trust the Father." But how on earth can we even understand that He is our Father? Nowadays in civilized countries we are allowed to ask to see even a policeman's badge. May we not ask to be allowed to inspect our own birth certificate? Dr. Reid overlooks the fact that at the time "Our Father" was born, there was no Somerset House where "His" Father had to be registered. To-day we ought to be able to trace all details of our relationship with "Our Father." We are highly suspicious of the suggestion that we should trust a stranger in so intimate and personal a matter. Besides *our* Father happens to be dead!

Who says that Churches are designed to make men more happy? Dr. Thomas Yates, D.D., thinks otherwise. He advises us, "Do not think of Church as a centre . . . to make you happy and contented. It may be doing its best service if it makes you extremely unhappy." No doubt this is why the Gospel is called "good tidings of great joy."

At a service at Burton-on-Trent (where the beer comes from), the Rev. John Vivian told the story of his life. He was converted twelve years ago, after which, he says, "A rugged farmer led me on from step to step, till, eventually, I found myself in the ministry. I found there was nothing else I could do." This probably explains why so many people become parsons.

The Candidates for the Methodist Ministry were called up for judgment, so to speak, at Hinckley recently. Each one had to state in public why he joined the Methodist Church. Charles T. Standen explained that he had been made to attend compulsory services at an Anglican Church, so that it was quite a treat for him to attend some other church. Frederick Ritson said he really wanted ("aspired to") a business career, he had been "encouraged" by a couple of Methodist preachers, and he supposed he had better follow their advice. Another candidate thought it enough to say that his two grandfathers and several of his uncles had been ministers. Still another made the devastating confession that God had wobbled a bit in his case, or as he put it, "The call had wavered once or twice."

The Master of Balliol, lecturing on "The Churches and Democracy," professed to believe that "We are in debt to the seventeenth century puritans for their insistence upon the principle of human equality." He furnished no sort of evidence for this amazing reading of history. The popular idea of puritanism is the correct one—they were the greatest possible enemies, in England and America, of popular liberty and of human happiness. Their excesses made even an absolute monarchy appear, by comparison, far more friendly to human liberty and the rights of man.

"The Bible which Jesus used," is a phrase from a Sunday School lesson by the Rev. Leslie Church. He knows exactly which part of which Bible Jesus read aloud in the Synagogue. He adds that "there has never been a time when the Bible could be read so intelligently as to-day." This is perfectly true, but certainly not if "intelligently" means reading it in the manner of the Rev. L. Church.

That the Bible is "a nose of wax" has long been recognized, but it is interesting to see its use by people with the most extraordinary and fantastic delusions. That particularly pathetic one, the British-Israelite theory, is responsible for a new book on the World Crisis by Mr. J. Taylor Peddie, who has found that the reason for our failure to deal rightly with the economic question is going away from Bible teaching. Mr. Peddie is an absolute believer in the "dispersion" of the Israelites being due to God paying them back, so to speak, for not following his commandments. In this case, it is the "key" commandment from Deut. xxv.: "Thou shalt have a perfect and a just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have." A reviewer of Mr. Peddie's book says, "The correspondence shown between modern practice (on just weights and measures) and the financial dodges of the Israelites is highly interesting . . ." How happy must the British race be to find that they are only emulating the "financial" dodges of their true-blood ancestors, the Bible Israelites, and that God is paying them back by forcing them off the gold standard and giving them, more or less, increasing unemployment with its attendant misery and privations. A great book, the Bible!

Oswald Sitwell has been writing about the Buchman "groupers." He describes the "Confessions" as "deplorable." The one which he narrates in detail is decidedly interesting: "A young lady in evening dress went up on the platform to say 'Before I joined the Oxford Group Movement, I used to indulge in inferior thinking.'" Mr. Sitwell describes this as "a shocking anticlimax."

Prayer is always amusing when it is not tragic. Christians cannot make up their minds as to whether prayer is ever answered at all. They hedge when cornered about it. The Rev. Frank Lenwood, in the *Christian World*, talks just like a sensible fellow—half the time. He says about the ordinary prayer, "It's merely an insurance policy for yourself and your own people. . . . we should be ashamed to sponge on God for what we can get. . . . God does not need human initiative to spur him on." So, that, as the Movy man says, Mr. Lenwood simply drifts into the unintelligible. "Prayer is co-operation with God, and God needs our co-operation." "Prayer is God and Me." God then, is obviously inferior to man, who proves that he at least needs no gods to co-operate with him.

The Rev. Dr. E. E. Bradford is more Catholic than most of the "Reunionists," whose idea of unity in religion is simply gathering together the scattered orthodox believers. Dr. Bradford at least thinks that "to get the unity of a faith by all good men always everywhere, we must go further back (beyond Christ, Dr. Bradford means) back to the God and Father of us all." Is it possible that educated and tolerant men like Dr. Bradford really imagine that believing in God (any God) proves men to be good, or forms a basis for union? We cannot understand wherein a demoralized believer in a fiendish god is superior to a decent Atheist.

The British Lessons Council has issued a manifesto as to the use of non-Biblical stories in Sunday School teaching. While quite judicious in recommending non-Bible literature, it creates a sensation in its exposure of the "lessons" the children would miss if confined to the Bible. It gives a list of "vitaly important subjects," saying, "there are no stories in the Bible on these subjects suitable for conveying these truths to children." And to floor its opponents the manifesto declares that, "In no sense could Jesus be called a Teacher of the Bible."

### Fifty Years Ago

YES, God is the Unknown, and theology is the science of ignorance. Earl Beaconsfield, in his impish way, once said that where our knowledge ends our religion begins. A truer word was never spoken.

Now the unknown is the terrible. We become fearful the moment we confront the incalculable. Go through the history of religions, consult the various accounts of savage and barbarous faiths at present extant, and you will find that the principle of terror, springing from the unknown, is the essential feature in which they all agree. This terror inevitably begets slavishness. We cannot be cowardly in one respect without its affecting our courage in others. The mental serf is a bodily serf too, and spiritual fetters are the agencies of political thralldom. The man who worships a tyrant in heaven naturally submits his neck to the yoke of tyrants on earth. He who bows his intellect to a priest will yield his manhood to a king. Everywhere on earth we find the same ceremonies attending every form of dependence. The worshipper who now kneels in prayer to God, like the courtier who backs from the presence of the monarch, is performing an apology for the act of prostration which took place alike before the altar and the throne. In both cases it was the adoration of fear, the debasement of the weak before the seat of irresponsible power.

*The "Freethinker," August 17, 1884.*

# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412

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## Sugar Plums

The *Times* of August 8 reports that Don Alfonso Carrales, editor of the Freethinking journal *El Ates* (The Atheist) has been sentenced to two months' imprisonment and a fine of 500 pesetas, for having "scuffed at dogma." The offence consisted in a criticism of the Virgin Birth. This is the first case of its kind since the establishment of the Republic, and we hope its laws will be amended so as to make a second case impossible. It is quite evident that the Church in Spain exercises too great an influence, and for a man to be imprisoned for criticizing a doctrine so inherently absurd as the doctrine of the Virgin Birth should be impossible in any country that claims to be civilized.

Manchester saints are reminded that Mr. G. Whitehead will hold meetings during the week beginning to-day (Sunday). The local Branch of the N.S.S. will cooperate, and the officials will be pleased to give all necessary information concerning membership. Too many Freethinkers are shy of joining the movement. That merely helps the enemy, so we hope to hear of a big batch of new members to the Manchester Branch.

Stockton Freethinkers are getting to work, and as a step towards forming a Branch of the N.S.S. there, a meeting will be held at 1 Page Terrace, Norton, Stockton, to-day (Sunday) at 3.30 p.m., where all interested and ready to help, are asked to attend. Mr. J. T. Brighton's work in the district is largely responsible for the present activity.

What the real truth is about the Chinese, may be impossible ever to discover. China is a continent with dozens of Chinese types, and probably hundreds of dia-

lects. But in an American book, *Ways That Are Dark*, by R. Townsend, the author claims that those who know most about the country refuse to divulge their knowledge. This is what he says about the missionaries: "The missionaries do not care to tell the truth, because if the truth were known, continued support for their projects would be jeopardized." Mr. Townsend considers the Chinaman disloyal and treacherous, and one who delights in unspeakable cruelties; and that missionaries, who are "pilgrims without progress," are literally wasting good money. It would be interesting to know exactly how much money has been subscribed to converting the "heathen Chinese," and what good the conversions have been to anybody, inside or outside China. Is there a more utterly futile movement than that of missionaries? If there is, we should be glad to know it.

A large number of Christian clergymen in Birmingham have united in producing a manifesto of their beliefs. Whether they consider it something new, or something old which had to be said again in this age of unbelief we are not quite certain. But it follows the usual line of all such manifestos. It reaffirms their belief that "in the four Gospels, we have the main sources for the life and teaching of Christ, and careful and trustworthy records of the same." It also contends that modern critical study has emphatically confirmed the historic value of the Gospels; that the Church considers the Gospel records fundamental to Christian belief; that the Creeds are based on the Gospels; that the Church has been obliged to believe the Gospels and the Creeds; that the Incarnation, the Virgin Birth and the "bodily" Resurrection are all true; that Jesus is God is also absolutely true.

We think that such a manifesto is splendid. The Modernists who call Hell a "state," and who try to explain away Christian fundamentals (in the words of the manifesto), "as legends, fancies, poems and so forth," ought to be thoroughly sat upon. True Christianity is that which has been believed in by Christians throughout its history, and it requires belief in all its miracles and marvellous events. From the Immaculate Conception down to the wondrous cures at Lourdes, every supernatural occurrence which has been narrated of Christianity must be true; otherwise one is limiting the power of God, and putting the story of Jesus on a par with the story of Sinbad. We hope the Archbishop of Canterbury will have that manifesto read in every Church in the Empire. It will do more good than anything else we know to show the people what true Christianity really is.

Father Vidler has written a book on *The Modernist Movement in the Roman Church*. No one can possibly deny that even in the Roman Catholic Church there have been dissentient voices, at least on "interpretation." Where this Church scores over all other Churches, however, is its power to clear out the Modernist and excommunicate him entirely, penalties which not many Catholics are prepared to endure. Loisy's work, commencing with some mild criticism of the Gospel history, has resulted in almost its complete rejection, and the old priest is now definitely an Agnostic. Father Tyrrel was eventually excommunicated, and even Cardinal Newman, during his life, was certainly suspected of "heresy" by his Catholic contemporaries. By rigorously suppressing all independent thought, Roman Catholicism can claim to extirpate "Modernism," but it is there all the same.

In action one must compromise with circumstances, but we can at least compromise in the right direction. Half a loaf may be better than nothing at all to a man who is starving. That is a compromise between an empty stomach and a full meal. But half a brick is not a compromise, it is an insult.

## Oneself

It is rather a sad thought that one cannot get to know oneself; one is usually such an agreeable person to know. The difficulties of making one's own acquaintance would seem well nigh insuperable. It might at first glance appear that the very considerable opportunities for indulging in one's own society, offered by a lifetime of inseparable companionship, would have solved the problem of intimacy for each of us; but in fact this advantage is offset by the most formidable obstacles. Whenever we are brought face to face with ourselves we are found looking through rose-coloured spectacles into a magic mirror. If we believed in fairy tales we should be convinced that this was the work of some kind genie, who once took pity on the human race when he discovered that it was the victim of a psychological dilemma. On the one hand, no man can endure self-contempt, while on the other, it is equally impossible for any of us to go through life without at some time deserving it. That is the dilemma; and there would appear to be only one way out. We may imagine that the kind genie saw this, and cast a spell upon all mankind, by which each was enabled to see everything but himself. When he came to look inward the view suddenly changed, the air took on a rosy hue, and everything was tinted accordingly.

Formidable as it is, this is not the only obstacle to self-knowledge. It is impossible, even with a clear perspective, to know anyone really well unless there are mutual confidences, and it so happens that one of our greatest weaknesses is the fear of telling ourselves our secrets. These appear to lie behind the sealed lips of the Unconscious. To the question "Should the Unconscious tell?" we reply with an emphatic "No!" And the Unconscious carries out the injunction with such thoroughness that, when challenged by the Conscious in the Court of Self-Analysis, it will perjure itself even at the expense of our nervous health, and certainly often in defiance of the skilled cross-examination of a psychoanalyst.

It would seem that one must abandon the idea of gaining entrance to one's circle of intimates. But if one cannot hope to *know* oneself, the next best thing is to *be* oneself; for if one can neither know nor be oneself, then it becomes a matter of indifference who one is. It is therefore with the utmost regret that I have to observe obstacles to being ourselves almost as formidable as those which prevent us from knowing ourselves. Being oneself implies the possession of individuality, by which we do not mean simply identity. In order to possess identity, we require nothing more than a birth certificate and certain anatomical measurements, and, in the case of seafaring men, we might throw in a few tattoo marks. But individuality is a rare and enviable form of identity. By it one is marked out from the agglutinated mass in subtle ways. It is as if the individual had been separated off by the use of a surgical instrument, carefully dissected out from the human matrix, demarcated and rendered definite and whole. By such an operation he is given a separate existence. But how many of us have acquired this separate existence? How many can really boast individuality? Most seem to be happy living like flowers upon the main stem of society, blended with the mother plant and nourished wholly from its sap. We desire only to be one of the crowd, to feel the warmth and safety of our neighbour's shoulder, to be reassured and guided by its occasional nudges, to be supported by the strength it communicates from ten thousand like it, crammed like bricks into the stable edifice of the

mob, and held tightly together by the mortar of convention.

That few of us possess true selves is shown when we come to be left quite alone and are thus thrown upon ourselves. How very many people are hopelessly lost if compelled to wait an hour or so for a train on a lonely country siding! The trouble is that having had their own company foisted upon them, and, having been forced to entertain themselves, they have made the depressing discovery that there is no self to do the entertaining, at all events by itself. Separated from the herd, it is as if they had gone out of existence. Life to them is wrapt up in the fact of herding. It is under all circumstances a reciprocal affair, just as the see-saw is reciprocal. On the see-saw the movement at each end is absolutely conditioned by that at the other. The affair is wholly bilateral. In the same way, most people's lives seem to be wholly bound up in the reactions between themselves and others, separated from whom they actually cease to function. It is not suggested that any of us can escape completely from this relationship. Far from it. But until we have struggled into a position of partial independence, we cannot be said to have acquired individuality. The man who, when alone, thinks nothing, feels nothing, and does nothing that reaches the threshold of self-interest, ought really to procure one of those tickets we see on office doors and, fixing it on his back, cause it to be turned during hours of solitude so as to display the simple inscription "Out."

Those who might justly be registered "Out" when in their own company are really more numerous than is popularly supposed. They are, after all, simply the people with no ideas of their own, no personal opinions, no individual tastes, no original thoughts, nothing but a set of feelings common to the species *Homo Sapiens*, a set of ideas belonging to a certain time and place, and a collection of prejudices, wrongly denominated opinions, which reflect the mass mind of the society in which they happen to live. The caption about "geographical accidents" applies to more than people's religions. It is often a very apt description of the people themselves.

But how appalling to think of going through life without a separate existence! How tragic to think of living mentally like some psychological teratoma, some many-headed monster eking out its grotesque composite existence! If we are to be compensated for the undertaking called Life, it can only be through the attainment of self-expression. To gain that we must assert ourselves, but the assertion need not be aggressive, need not consist in what is called "throwing one's weight about." It may becomingly take the form of a resistance to that pressure from without, which would otherwise flatten us into an homogeneous mass. It will require us to be Free-thinkers in the deepest sense of the term. That will demand clearheadedness as to what is meant by Free-thought. We shall need the buttress of a philosophy. We must be able to see the fallacy in the conception of a State that reaches perfection through suppression. We must be incapable of mistaking stagnation for stability. We must not let the virtues of motion be obscured by the evils of commotion. We must beware of this vogue of tidiness which masquerades under the more attractive name of efficiency. We must perceive the exact parallel between the parent who deems children good when they are quiet and the State that takes the same view of citizens. We must resist the conclusion that Life renders up its best simply to good organization, or that universal happiness is merely a question of getting things done. We must resist the well-intentioned busybodies who would behave in the councils of the world as they do

at a Church bazaar; those fussing, managing people with their patent remedies and cure-me-quicks, who are prepared to set the world aright if only they may be granted the trifling condition of stopping up the mouths of their critics. I say unto you, my brethren, that you can only accept these people at the sacrifice of your individuality. They will reduce your lives to the primitive level of reflex action. They will make of your minds mechanisms that will respond to a slogan as the pupil of the eye responds to a beam of light.

I have heard of being unmanned. I have heard of being unsexed. But not until the present era has it been suggested that one might profitably be unselfed. O Horror! Far better to die and have done with it than live to eke out that cataleptic pseudo-existence!

MEDICUS.

## Dialectical Materialism

### I.—HEGEL.

It is not here my intention to appraise and criticize, but simply to present, the main tenets of Dialectical Materialism. The time is opportune in view of two things. One is the publication (July, 1934), of V. Adoratsky's *Dialectical Materialism*, the author being director of the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute. In the second place we have just had a reminder from within our own ranks, that it behoves each individual Freethinker to apply his thought to subjects other than theological.

Life is too short, of course, to investigate all subjects of a controversial nature: the range is too wide—auxiliary languages, vegetarianism, Communism, etc.—but no Freethinker will consider himself qualified to discuss *any* subject without *some* investigation. As a member of a Freethought society he may stand "at the pithead" (à la Medicus), but as an individual, he will not be satisfied merely to do this, but will probe into the matter until he has formed certain conclusions, which he is prepared to discuss and defend. Nor will he expect his society to commit itself to the official adoption of his opinions, but he will certainly be a greater credit to that society if he *has* some opinions, *i.e.*, if he has done some Freethinking.

Dialectical Materialism holds an unique position in modern philosophy; it claims theoretically to justify a course of political action, *viz.*, Communism. No other philosophy definitely purports to entail a politico-economic theory. No other political theory claims sanction from science and philosophy. Communism is presented as the natural extension of dialectics to sociology. It is based on the general notion of contradiction, manifested in human society as antagonistic struggle between two opposite enduring classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. It predicts the triumph of the latter, with Russia as the empirical demonstration. Because its scope is international, its scheme ambitious, and its methods so revolutionary, Marxism-Leninism, as it has come to be called, would appear to be a subject worthy of the investigation of the Freethinker.

For first-hand reference the translated works of Marx, Engels and Lenin are needed, while Stalin has written much, both on the theoretical and practical side. The essentials, however, may be preserved, if the reader restricts himself to *Capital*, *Theses on Feuerbach*, *Critique of Hegel* (Marx), *Dialectics of Nature*, *Anti-Dühring* (Engels), *State and Revolution*, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (Works, Vol. XIII.) (Lenin).

The ancient Greeks gave the name dialectics to the art of disputation. It was considered that in the course of an argument, rich in fertile ideas, the opinions of the disputing parties underwent a change, so that something new, of a higher nature, resulted. By analogy, all motion by means of contradiction came to be called dialectics, and this is the Hegelian sense of the term. By dialectics Hegel meant the progress of ideas by means of contradictions, a process developing towards a spiritual unity, the Absolute. Hegel believed that motion was universally produced in this way, by means of contradictions. Thesis (a) opposed to Antithesis (b) results in Synthesis (c). These three steps form the Hegelian "triad." For example, Thesis (Being) opposed to Antithesis (Non-Being) produces Synthesis (Becoming). Creation is not a completed act, static, inert, but an eternal moment; not done, but perpetually being done. It is the Absolute passing into activity. Because a thing cannot at the same time both be and not be, there is a sense in which it both is and is not, and reality is a synthesis of opposites; contradictory opposites result in a higher unity. Everything is in a fleeting stage, false if taken alone, and everything contains the possibility of something higher.

This development is the self-manifestation of the Absolute, or God. The Absolute Idea is first and last, and interpenetrates all. By ascending a graded series of triads Thought (interchangeable terms are Absolute, Idea, God, Reason, Thinking) reaches its goal, which is the return to itself as perfect fulfilment. The Absolute exists first as pre-existent Idea, then descends into conscious nature, awakens in man, and realizes itself in his institutions, Art, Religion and Philosophy. "As all things proceed from this point (The Absolute) so all return again." It is the centre which quickens all things (and in religion man places himself in relation to this centre.)

Each individual self is a manifestation of the universal mind, and in this way Hegel abolishes Fichte's egoistic universe, in which the external world is the "non-ego" ejected by the ego. This latter scheme, of course, issues in Solipsism (the world is all my fancy) and Hegel avoided this by positing his Absolute, which, existing objectively, accounts for the existence of other selves, and also of the outer forms classed as matter, but really the manifestation of Idea.

Hegel was the culmination of the Kant-Fichte-Schelling line. Kant had postulated "Categories" (*e.g.*, space, time, causality), frames into which the mind fitted the events of the external world. Hegel eliminated these, and set up his *Denk-Bestimmung*, which is, loosely, thought, or idea, in the process of becoming manifest. The rigid categories are replaced by the dynamic principle of Thinking. By subjecting Fichte and Schelling (*Principle of Identity*)<sup>1</sup> to further development, Hegel replaced Subjective Idealism by Objective, with absolute impersonal thinking the only reality, dipping into material forms and returning to itself in upward evolution of thought. "Understanding is a ladder let down to consciousness," whereby we may climb to our goal; the Absolute. Truth is reached, not by intuition or mysticism, but by the "rational evolution of common consciousness" towards the Absolute, a productive spiritual subject from which all issues. Everything is explained in terms of mind. Thinking is the basis of all.

Hegel's philosophy is usually called Absolute Idealism, but in *Materialistic Philosophy* (ed. Hibbert) it is somewhat aptly termed "Panlogism." Hegel

<sup>1</sup> See *Phenomenology of the Spirit* (Hegel, 1805), in which he broke away from Schelling after defending him against Fichte at Jena.

followed Spinoza, "without whom," he said, "there can be no philosophy." Hegel's Absolute is Spinoza's God as impersonal thought, or idea, to which all things, having, as it were, radiated, now converge by stages or "moments"—syntheses of opposites, every phenomenon having its own impulse to development.

In his *Philosophy of History*, Hegel unfolds the growth and extension of human operation. E.g., Various religious elements working to a higher synthesis are sorcery (China), phantasy (Brahmanism), self-contemplation (Buddhism), light v. darkness (Zoroastrianism), pain (Syria), mystery (Egypt), monotheism (Judaism), beauty and fatalism (Hellenism), utility and political power (Rome). Christianity brings the synthesis of humanism and nature-worship, and contains the highest idea of God (going out of himself as Christ, much as the Absolute descends to nature).

With regard to specific Christian doctrines, however, Hegel was an unbeliever. He rejected an anthropological God and personal immortality and creation. The creation of selves would violate their essential nature as syntheses, a denial of the process of becoming.

Since the external world is the manifestation of Idea, it follows that the Thing-in-Itself, as lying in matter, is eliminated. The only Thing-in-Itself is Thought (compare Bishop Berkeley). "When we abstract a thing from its qualities, all form, there remains the unqualified matter," which is an abstraction. There is no matter independent of form (quality). Form (active) and Matter (passive) are two aspects of the same thing, and the separation is rendered inevitable by the polarity of experience. The Thing-in-Itself, the substratum, is, as G. H. Lewes says, "the personification of a logical artifice" (Panlogism).

\* \* \*

G. W. F. Hegel is the startingpoint for the study of Marxian dialectic. His works were constructed from the notes of his students (he was a university tutor) and his admirers were many. He lived from 1770 to 1831, when nature kindly removed him from this mortal realm, cholera the medium, before his system had become obsolete. To-day, even his successors, the Italian school, severely criticize him, while in this country he has been championed, though not taken as infallible, by F. H. Bradley, and B. Bosanquet.

In his own day he had only to listen to the raving of Schopenhauer, who, in perhaps excusable indignation, remarked that the way to convert an intelligent student into a lunatic was to let him read Hegel. Cumbersome delivery and complicated phraseology were the mark of Hegel. A reputable critic like Prof. Wm. James says he "followed a deliberate policy of ambiguity and vagueness," and speaks of "his passion for the slipshod in the way of sentences, his unprincipled playing fast and loose with terms, his dreadful vocabulary . . . his systematic refusal to let you know whether he is talking logic, or physics, or psychology . . ." Lewes observed that he treated science with metaphysics instead of *vice versa*.

This, then is the philosopher whom Karl Marx studied in detail. With F. Engels, Marx borrowed Hegel's dialectical method (overlooked by Feuerbach), inverted it, so as to serve materialism and not idealism, and popularized dialectics, which was championed by Dietzgen, and later by Lenin. Marx seized on Hegel's notion of progress by the conflict of contradictions, the negation of the old and the creation of the new.

"But the dialectics of Hegel are idealistic. It is

the movement of thought that lies at the root of his whole philosophy. Marx, on the contrary, employed dialectics materialistically. He created dialectical materialism. Materialist dialectics is the general movement and development caused by the conflict of contradictions that takes place throughout the universe both in nature and society, and which is reflected in human thought. Dialectic Materialism is the philosophy and method of revolutionary Marxism-Leninism, an instrument for the study of transformation of everything that exists. . . . It involves practical revolutionary action." (V. Adoratsky, *Dialectical Materialism*.) Dialectics is "the science of the general laws of movement" (Engels), without which the separate sciences are condemned to groping in the dark. It gives the method for the investigation of any single case or region. And it points the way to revolutionary action.

Marx was concerned with standing the dialectical method the right way up. Hegel had transformed thinking to an independent subject, the demiurge of the world, and the real world was only the phenomenal form of the idea. "With me," said Marx, "the idea is nothing else than the material reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought." We shall next inquire to what purpose the dialectical method is put.

G. H. TAYLOR.

## Sedition

(Concluded from page 508.)

One of the most serious facts, in connexion with the Incitement to Disaffection Bill, is the profession on the part of many who welcome it that it is to be used to protect our rights and liberties. We are reminded of the outburst of Fox, when discussing the "Seditious Meetings Bill" of 1795. "Say at once, that a free constitution is no longer suited to us; say at once, in a manly manner, that on a review of the state of the world, a free constitution is not fit for you; conduct yourselves at once as the Senators of Denmark did—lay down your freedom, and acknowledge and accept despotism. But do not mock the understandings and feelings of mankind, by telling the world that you are free." (Quoted in *Constitutional History of England*, by Sir Thomas Erskine May, Vol. II., pp. 320-321, Tenth Edition.)

The only rights and liberties that are to be protected, under such a Bill, are those of the Capitalist class, and such as support the latter. The Bill is a political and economic instrument, to be used for the purpose of striking a blow at any attempt to improve the conditions of the working people, if such attempt does not appear to fit in with the idea of carrying on the existing form of society. It will strike at Free-thought propaganda, if and when required, to placate the more reactionary and less freedom-loving sections of the Churches. We must not accept the explanation that the Bill is to prevent the troops being seduced, and that only.

Should the Bill become law, it will be easy to prove that attacks upon Christianity are seditious inasmuch as they tend to undermine the authority and influence of the Established Church.

Such an interpretation could be used if only to narrow down the sphere of freedom of expression. There is the danger of the man who has become freed from religious influences becoming freethinking on social and political questions. Especially is this so in times of oppression and suppression. More so than in times of peace and comparative prosperity, when even the Freethinker may be inclined to settle down to such comforts of life as happen to fall to him,

and to take the present order of things as if we were in the best of all possible worlds.

Many of the more free and socially-minded religious bodies will be hit under the Sedition Bill, if they make a stand for such measure of freedom as they believe to be the right of everyone. So the merry game will go on, and we shall have, in England, "Heil Hitler," with variations.

No matter how strong may be the attack on Free-thought bodies, under the Bill, it must be remembered that the object will not be to do away with Freethinking in regard to religion and religious literature, as such. It will be for the purpose of preventing the Freethought movement evolving into a number of organized bodies bent upon propagating advanced ideas on social and political subjects. All the Freethinking in the world would not upset those who are concerned to put the Bill into operation if they were sure that Freethinking discussions took shape only as intellectual criticisms of scriptures and religions. Attacks upon the Churches would not matter, if the Churches were not such useful bulwarks against social revolution. It must be insisted that the Sedition Bill is to be used in the political and economic spheres, to prevent the development and spread of revolutionary social teachings. The teachings of Freethought bodies and of certain more open-minded religious bodies will be suppressed in-so far as they savour of social revolt.

There is one aspect of the question of sedition in relation to the troops which is not often touched upon. We are told that the army, the navy, and the air force belong to the King. Yet they are paid for by the people. In this case, why should only the so-called patriotic sections of the community have the right to say what kind of literature shall be distributed to the members of these forces?

The asking of this question reveals the class distinctions which exist in the minds of those who talk about saving the members of the forces from the influence of seditious literature.

After all, why should soldiers, airmen, and naval men not have the right to say which side they will fight on in the event of a civil war, or whether they are prepared to go out and blow to pieces the workers and others in subject countries? Obviously, because those with vested interests wish to keep together united forces with which to subject workers at home and abroad for their own ends. They are afraid of the members of the army, navy, and air force dividing to fight on the side of their own choice. So we must have a Sedition Bill to keep the troops from studying all sides of our social problems. If this were not so, in England and all other leading countries, except Russia, there would be no reason why the complete disarming of the nations should not take place.

The people in general have no desire to indulge in war. They join up and fight when they are made to believe their country is in danger, and they fail to see that the "scrap" is for the expansion of markets. Unfortunately, while the majority of people do not want war they are not sufficiently peace-conscious as to insist that a form of society in which wars are inevitable shall be destroyed, and a better one built in its place. On the other hand, professed peace lovers with some little financial stake in the world are too ready to take the side of the warmongers, if the patriotic drum is well beaten.

In the interests of peace and freedom, there is one way with the Sedition Bill. That is its complete withdrawal. Failing this the English Fascists will have the whip-hand.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

## Sin-Eating

WE have for some time been familiar with god-eating, originally, no doubt, a sacramental form of cannibalism, though among civilized peoples mainly, if not wholly, carried out in effigy or by Christian sects as "Communion"—following on the alleged statements of Jesus about the wine and bread at the Last Supper: "This is my blood"; "This is my body." Frazer, in the *Golden Bough*, cites many varieties of the practice.

I have not, however, been able to find in Frazer's work any account of the ceremony named at the head of this article. And mention of the practice here and there in other books led me to search for information, which I found in Hasting's *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*.

It may be useful to say parenthetically that "sin" no doubt originally consisted in the violation of a primitive tribal tabu or other important ordinance; that at a later date it became connected with spirits or gods, and so an offence against deity; that association with morals followed, and that it was then and is now by religionists loosely held to include some, if not all, ethical behaviour.

Sin-eating is a rite common in some parts of India, which is practised at funerals, in order, presumably, to relieve the dead individual of his liability to punishment for his real or supposed wickedness. When the King of Tanjore died in 1801, his corpse, together with two of his wives, was burnt. A portion of the bones was then mixed with boiled rice and eaten by twelve Brahmans. Thus was the load of wickedness transferred to the priests, who, we may suppose, were better able to bear or get rid of the burden.

Other forms of the ceremony are recorded, including some in our own country as late as the seventeenth century. In Hereford there was a sort of professional sin-eater. He was described as "a long, leane, ugly, lamentable raskell," who was paid for his services. The rite consisted in eating a quantity of bread and a bowl of beer over the corpse.

Of course the practices cited are forms of, or closely allied to, the magical transference of evil—of sickness, etc.—to inanimate objects, animals, effigies or other individuals. The methods, as described by Frazer, are "multitudinous," and include the following: burying things, such as branches of plants which have been rubbed on the affected part of the person so that animals or other persons who pass the place may take the disease and so effect a cure; tucking the hair in the bark of a tree—in an incision made with a chisel or other wedge-like instrument—and then violently wrenching the head away, in order to cure headache; holding a young frog in a baby's mouth to cure "frog" (Aptha), a mouth disease due to dirt and neglect (when a boy, a neighbour implored me to go and find her a frog for this purpose); by putting a paper containing appropriate words surreptitiously into another person's pocket; and so on.

Similarly, uncivilized or semi-civilized peoples suppose that they can get rid of public evils, in a wholesale way, by packing them on an animal, and then driving it out of the neighbourhood, killing or burning it, as in the well known case in *Leviticus* xvi. 21, 22: "Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send him away by a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities to a land not inhabited: And he shall let go the goat in the wilderness."

Of course, we now know enough of backward peoples to prevent surprise at such practices. And, having regard to the long medieval training of Western peoples in irrational modes of thought, and the strength of religious traditions, we are not surprised that such things have continued in more forward communities almost to our own day. But lively surprise is aroused by the fact that a considerable number of more or less enlightened people still maintain the "truth" and "inspiration" of a book containing such matter as that quoted, and recommend the indiscriminate reading of the book.

J. REEVES.

## Correspondence

### FREETHOUGHT IN POLITICS

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Stafford has changed his ground, and is therefore to be congratulated. On June 10 (p. 364) he advised "some limitation of speech during the period of building the new society," this "to apply to those who by speech and writing seek to persuade others . . ." He now writes (August 12, p. 509) defending the right "to suppress any attempt to put into action opinions directed . . ." Which is quite a different thing.

I had myself already denounced the "putting into action our opinions regardless of the well-being of others" (May 27, p. 325). That is a chaotic proceeding, which interferes with the liberties of others. But "seeking to persuade others by speech and writing" is an admirable proceeding worth fighting for, and which is only suppressed when the ruling powers are prompted by fear.

Mr. Stafford complains that "where social problems are concerned Freethinkers do not aim at a united front." Now what is the united front shown by Freethinkers to social problems? Simply this: they are prepared to fight for the freedom to have an opinion heard.

"Not enough!" says Mr. Stafford; "that will never get us anywhere. It is useless to halt there."

But who is halting there? Surely Freethinkers, as individuals, will support the political sect they favour, just as e.g., Mr. Stafford supports Communism, and I have already adduced reasons why political theories are not susceptible to the factual test, this resulting in divergence of opinion.

The remainder of his letter is a strong plea for Freethinkers to study Communism, and here I am in entire agreement, and have done a short series of articles on Communism's theoretical foundation.

Meanwhile I trust Mr. Stafford is at the same pains to convert some of his Communist friends to Freethought.

G. H. TAYLOR.

The Puritan has successfully infected persons who are antipathetic to Puritanism with his belief that there is something about the actor's profession which renders him peculiarly liable to lapses, because, presumably, he is engaged in work which involves him in the display of his emotions. The last person to reproach the actor in this respect is the Puritan himself, since, in spite of his profession of austerity, he has generally expressed his religious feelings in scenes of unparalleled emotion, and is accustomed to boast of his tears and trances as if they were signs of ineffable grace. All the great evangelists and holy men wept profusely on the slightest provocation, and the more lachrymose they became, the more highly they were esteemed. St. Augustine confessed that he wept "almost daily." St. Thomas Aquinas constantly wept and fell into faints. "Not a day passed," writes Tocco, "but he was ravished out of his senses," an assertion which may be extravagant, but must have had some foundation in fact. He often wept while praying, and very often, during Mass, would burst into tears. John Wesley caused men and women and little children to become intensely emotional, so that he himself had trouble in making himself heard above the cries and moans and lamentations of his congregation. There was a woman at Newgate who, while Wesley preached, broke out into "strong cries and tears," while great drops of sweat ran down her face and all her bones shook. She was one of a multitude of persons similarly affected. George Whitefield not only induced what seemed to be madness in those who heard him, but was himself violently upset by his own eloquence. "Such," said a Mr. Winter, who lived with him, "is the scope he gave to his feelings sometimes, that he exceedingly wept, stamped loudly and passionately, and was frequently so overcome that for a few seconds you would suspect he never could recover." His addiction to oratory seems to have acted upon him as an addiction to drink acts upon other people, for Mr. Winter, with

disgusting detail, states that sometimes he was only able to recover from his apocalyptic eloquence by vomiting. It is notorious that the after-effects of evangelistic piety on those who are subjected to it profoundly disquiet many pastors and parish priests who are less sympathetic to peripatetic preachers than they might be expected to be. The actor, then, will concede nothing to the devout man in this matter, but will strictly maintain that when it comes to displays of emotion, the evangelist has excesses that are beyond his capacity or his desire.

"The Theatre in My Time," St. John Ervine.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

### LONDON.

#### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCHES N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.0, Mr. H. S. Wishart—"Christian Fear, Christian Lies, and Freethought Victories."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, August 19, Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner: 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead: 8.0, Monday, August 20, Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Thursday, August 23, Mr. C. Tuson.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 7.30, Sunday, August 19, Mr. G. F. Green. Rushcroft Road, near Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, August 21, Mr. L. Ebury. Stonhouse Street, High Street, Clapham, 8.0, Wednesday, August 22, Mr. P. Goldman.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Sunday, Mr. W. B. Collins. 3.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Wood and Bryant. Platform No. 2, Messrs. Saphin and Tuson. 6.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Collins and Hyatt. Platform No. 2, Messrs. Saphin and others. Wednesday, 7.30, Two Lectures. Thursday, 7.30, Messrs. Wood and Saphin Friday, 7.30, Two Lectures.

WEST HAM BRANCH (Corner of Deanery Road, opposite the Library, Water Lane, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. C. Tuson.

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 3.0, J. V. Shortt (Hon. President, Liverpool Branch)—"The Existence of God." 7.0, "Mythology of Christianity."

#### OUTDOOR.

ACCRRINGTON MARKET: 7.45, Sunday, August 19, Mr. J. Clayton.

BRIERFIELD: 7.30, Thursday, August 23 Mr. J. Clayton.

BURNLEY (near Clifton Sports Ground): 8.15, Friday, August 17, Mr. J. Clayton.

BURNLEY MARKET: 7.30, Tuesday, August 21, Mr. J. Clayton.

BLYTH (Market Place): 7.0, Monday, August 20, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Dunne Square, Paisley): 8.0, Saturday, August 18, Mrs. Whitefield. West Regent Street, Glasgow, 7.30, Sunday, August 19, Mr. R. T. White. Edinburgh, "The Mound," 7.30, Tuesday, August 21, Mrs. Whitefield—"Comparisons." (Excursion Permitting.)

HAPTON: 7.45, Monday, August 20, Mr. J. Clayton.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Corner of High Park Street and Park Road): 8.0, Thursday, August 16, Messrs. J. V. Shortt and C. McKelvie. Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths: 8.0, Sunday, August 19, Messrs. A. Jackson and W. Parry.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. George Whitehead will lecture in the following places: Sunday, August 19, 3.0, Stevenson Square, Manchester, 7.0, Platt Fields, Rusholme. Monday, August 20, 7.0, Alexandra Park Gates, Moss Side. Tuesday, August 21 to Friday, August 24, 7.0, Corner of Liverpool Street and Langworthy Road, Salford.

MORPETH (Market Place): 7.0, Saturday, August 18, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Bigg Market): 7.0, Mr. F. Bradford.

NORTON (Page Terrace): 3.30, Sunday, August 19. Meeting for intending members of Teeside Branch N.S.S.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Would Have Memorial): 7.0, Wednesday, August 22, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue, Sunderland): 7.0, Mr. A. Flanders—A Lecture.

STOCKTON (Market Place): 7.0, Sunday, August 19, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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