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

Views and Opinions

The Damned Truth

THE other day a native seaman told a magistrate at the Grays Police Court, when asked to swear to speak the truth, "I speak the damned truth." As the case occurred in this country the "native" should have been an Englishman, but on the principle that made Mr. Winston Churchill say that we were not aliens in India, and that every Englishman dislikes being called a foreigner when he is abroad, one suspects that he was a coloured man. The grades here are rather plain. Englishmen are Englishmen wherever they are. Other white men are foreigners wherever they may be. And every coloured man, brown, black, red or yellow is a native, and while a foreigner may be, theoretically, as good as an Englishman, a native is definitely and unmistakably his inferior. The slums of Whitechapel and the mansions of Mayfair will be in cordial agreement on this issue.

All the same this "native" must have been either a man of great courage, or peculiarly well *uninformed* if he imagined that the way to keep out of trouble is to tell the "damned" truth about anything. A permitted truth may be told with safety, and an established truth with profit. For these are the truths that you are expected to tell. But a "damned" truth, a truth that has been formally, correctly and spiritually damned, can be told only at great risks. In the main it is not done. Respectability will not have it. Self-interest condemns it. It is the customary truth that is required. The truth that is a "damned" truth is usually only advocated by the few who don't care a damn whether it is damned or not.

* * *

A Dangerous Thing

A very big book, nay, a history of human progress might be written under the title of "Damned Truths." In the history of Christianity that religion has heartily damned, with bell, book and candle, almost every thinker who stepped ahead of its teachings. And if

we pass in survey a longer period and a wider area than that covered by any one religion, we can trace the life-giving procession of "damned" truths. Listen to this from Xenophanes, written nearly twenty-five hundred years ago:—

If oxen and lions had hands, and could paint with their hands, and produce works of art as men do, horses would paint the forms of the gods like horses, and oxen like oxen.

What a "damned" truth! Man makes God in his own image! Was there ever a single truth that has been so heartily damned as this one? All experience has supported it, and all established truth has damned it as false and mischievous. Nay, the very men who have most heartily condemned it are precisely those who have been offering evidence to the world of its accuracy. Horses, if they could think enough would make gods in the shape of horses; and man if he could think a little more coherently would recognize that in this respect he is on no better and no higher level than that of an educated gee-gee.

Here is another damned truth, dating from about a century later. Give me atoms and I will make a world, said Democritus, and ever since the world has been damning the truth embodied in the statement—even though it has all the time been demonstrating in practice the fact that some form of atomism, whether of matter, or force, or energy, is indispensable to science. But certainly all established truth recognized that if the deterministic principle is openly accepted it is fatal to religion. In the rarified atmosphere of pure science the gods soon cease to breathe.

* * *

Dealing with the Damned

Just about two and a quarter centuries ago the established truth concerning the Bible was faced with the actual truth, and that was promptly placed in the category of truths that are damned. But in spite of this the damned truth made itself heard, and many scores of men and women were placed in prison for serving as mouthpieces. Brave old Carlile spent over nine years in gaol, mainly for uttering this damned truth, although he was hardly less backward in voicing other truths that had been placed in the category of the damned. Carlile, and his fellow workers and successors said, as did the witness at Grays Police Court, "We are going to tell the world the damned truth"—about the Bible, and the world was horrified at such impolite behaviour. To-day that truth is not damned quite so thoroughly or quite so openly as it was; in fact, it is not so much damned as obscured. Bits of the established truth are dropped, and little pieces of the "damned" truth have been substituted. This manages to confuse the two kinds of truth, and that which was damned becomes to numbers of no greater value than the truth that was established. The truth for which so many went to prison was thoroughly damned because it actually told the unvarnished

truth, then so much of the "damned" stuff is mixed up with the established truth that it loses much of its noxious character. To-day this mixture runs the risk of becoming the established truth as a whole, and so is likely to be found to be damned useless.

Consider, also, how promptly the truth about sex, and marriage and divorce was raised to the level of a "damned" truth so soon as a few made up their minds that it should be told. Established and respectable truth was shocked that young people should be told anything about their own bodies; for while the story of the stork was not believed in, yet it was well that everyone should act as though it were. The prevailing conception of marriage certainly needed overhauling, but it was good enough for "Our Lord"—who never risked anything by experimenting in the direction of matrimony—so it ought to be good enough for those who had experienced the fact that the rose of marriage might contain a great many large and painful thorns. So, once again, those who thought they ought to tell the "damned" truth, had to suffer boycott and vilification, and even imprisonment. Telling the "damned" truth always requires courage, and one has to be prepared to pay the price if one will express it.

* * *

Truth and Life

Life, said someone, is "just one damn thing after another"; and one might say that development, growth, is just forcing one damned truth after another to the front. In ethics, in sociology, in science, in art, wherever we turn this is observable. What is the belief that the care of the poor, the sick, the ignorant, are primary social duties, but a once "damned" truth? What is the doctrine of evolution but another truth of the same order? The movements of the earth round the sun, is a truth that was emphatically, officially, and religiously damned. So is the idea that disease came through man's ignorance, and not from the anger of God. That poor "native" gave vent to a useful phrase when he said that it was his duty to tell the "damned" truth, even though it may not have got him off; and an established truth might have served him better for the moment.

Each generation seems to produce a mass of "damned" truth, a fact on which the future may meditate. It does this in every department of life. Putting on one side, for the moment, existing conditions, one has to go back a long way to find a period when the truth was more generally and more heartily damned than it was during the war years of 1914-1918. The peculiarity about this period is that during that time authority hardly troubled to conceal the fact that truth was not damned because it was believed to be false, but because it was felt to be inconveniently true. It was a "damned" truth to publish the belief that Germans might be decent human beings, that a British General might be either a fool or a rogue, or that a British soldier might misbehave himself. Many publications were suppressed for no other reason than that they said Germans might be quite decent fellows, or that British soldiers had no ill-will against the "enemy." I have specially in mind two plays by Miles Mallison, which were suppressed for no other discernable reasons than these, but I have in addition quite an interesting collection of these war-time damned truths, and they prove interesting reading to-day.

After the war had ended—or was interrupted—the popularity of creating damned truths grew in favour. It became the set rule exercised over the larger part of the inhabitants of Europe. Truth was openly classified as established truth, official truth, and "damned" truth. And in those countries in which this rule is

not openly set forth, one might well paraphrase the old tag about there being "lies, damned lies and statistics," and say that there are now, in even the better placed countries, newspaper truth, official truth, and that the most useful of these is the latter. But it is part of the irony of things that no sooner does a "damned" truth come into its own and is transformed into an established truth than the old process is seen at work. Once established, its champions fight to protect it from attack, either because of financial interests involved, or, more commonly, because of sheer love of position and power. It is then some new ideas are "damned," and the same fight is waged again.

But, as in orthodox Christian theology, it is mainly the best people who are sent to hell, so I think there will generally be found greater vitality and more truth amongst the opinions that are "damned," than amongst those which have received the applause of the majority.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Honest Thomas Hardy

"Care I for the limb, the thews, the stature, bulk, and big assemblance of a man? Give me the spirit, Master Shallow."—*Shakespeare*.

"Your terms, your colours, and your figures, Keep them in store, till so be ye indite High style, as when that men to Kings write."—*Chaucer*.

ONE HUNDRED AND SIX representative younger writers presented an address of congratulation, together with a copy of the rare first edition of John Keats' *Lamia*, to Thomas Hardy on his eighty-first birthday. It was well and happily done, for the veteran was then the greatest writer using the English language. After his early years of stress and struggle, it is pleasant to think of the calm sunset of his age. Hailed everywhere as a master, he had honours heaped upon him, from the tributes of contemporary authors to University degrees and the Order of Merit.

Hardy's first published work, *Desperate Remedies*, dated as far back as the "seventies" of last century. From that beginning his reputation steadily increased until he occupied the proud position of being able to dispense with praise or blame. From *Far from the Madding Crowd* to *Jude the Obscure*, his splendid range of novels commanded attention. The characters, too, from Bathsheba to Sue Bridehead, seem taken from real life. The heroine, as in *Two on a Tower*, who woos a lover younger than herself, was frequent in these novels and in real experience. She is almost ignored by the circulating-library writers, whose tons of books proclaim their industry rather than their ability. Women, however, in Hardy's pages are not invariably charming, but they are very feminine, and their moods and whims are depicted by a master-artist. Indeed, in his knowledge of "the concrete unknowable" Hardy was as wide and true as Shakespeare, and as modern as Meredith. He was no less successful with his men, from Gabriel Oak in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Michael Hinchard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, to the hero of *Jude the Obscure*.

Over his works Hardy sowed broadcast a most delightful, ironical humour. Not one of his rustics, of his working-class folk, but had a special originality, a native pleasantry, and a cast of drollery. Few writers have used such abundant irony. In one of the greatest of his novels, *The Return of the Native*, the chapter in which he introduces the characters bears the heading, "Humanity appears on the scene hand in hand with trouble." In his masterpiece,

Tess of the D'Urbervilles, the dramatic effect of the tragedy is heightened by the grim comment:—

"Justice" was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Æschylean phrase, has ended his sport with Tess.

A master of the lash, Hardy was as detached as Fielding, as fertile as Meredith. Dubbed pessimist, there was no lack of comedy in his novels, which were saturated, in his sunny moods, with the comic spirit, apparent to anyone who possesses taste and perception enough to discriminate between a Molièresque humour and a slap-stick Laurel and Hardy farce.

Hardy was no less successful as a short-story writer. Indeed, his mastery is unchallengeable. If *Wessex Tales* and *Life's Little Ironies* had been written by a Continental artist, they would have been acclaimed to the skies. They are as perfect as anything by Daudet or Maupassant, and reveal far more delicate and faultless work than any of the Russian or Scandinavian writers.

What shapes arise as you recall Hardy's finest work! Where in all his contemporaries' books is there nobler work than the poignant scene of the bridal night in *Tess*; or that other scene showing the dying Jude and the choristers; or the quiet figure of the bereaved girl in the closing scene of *The Woodlanders*, as wonderful a piece of art as Turner's painting of "The Fighting Temeraire"? In each of these is struck the consummate tragic note, as in old Æschylus and our own Shakespeare. They wring the heart like personal experience. For they are life sublimed by passing through an imagination of elemental force.

Freethinkers cannot fail to note the essential Secularism in these admirable stories. Even in the earlier books, amid their picturesque colour, their delightful atmosphere, their delicious pastoral scents and sounds, there is a frank and free Paganism. As the author advances in reputation, and grows in intellectual power, the note gradually deepens, until in *Tess*, it grows into a cry of defiance, and, finally, in *Jude the Obscure*, a great sob of pain, recalling the biting words in the greatest of all tragedies:—

"As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods,
They kill us for their sport."

A further proof of Hardy's many-sided genius is that he also achieved success in poetry, no less than in prose. As he got older, he turned more and more to verse, and wrote with all the zest and enthusiasm of a young poet beginning his career, instead of a veteran who had enriched the literature of Europe with masterpieces for two generations. His poetic masterpiece, *The Dynasts*, alone would have made the reputation of a lesser man. It is full of dramatic power, and saturated with the pure stuff of poetry. Another volume, *Satires of Circumstances*, shows his keen vision and understanding. Take, for example, that fine and imaginative poem, "God's Funeral." The author pictures a slow procession across a plain at twilight, and bearing a strange form. He listens to the lament of the mourners for the being they have themselves created, and whom they cannot any longer keep alive:—

"Framing him jealous, fierce, at first,
We gave him justice as the ages rolled;
Will to bless those by circumstance accurst;
Long suffering and mercies manifold."

"Sadlier than those who wept in Babylon," follow the mourners, and some of them refuse to believe that all is over, and "dazed and puzzled 'twixt the gleam and gloom," the scene closes. It is a daring piece of work, and recalls Heine's vision of a dying god having the last sacraments administered to him, albeit there is none of the terrible irony of the Continental poet.

Nineteenth century literature was so sugary, so full of romantic imaginings, that such writing brings a sense of largeness, a reminder of the great winds and waters and wide horizons of the West Country, where men and women knew how to live and how to die, not submissively but fiercely. Circulating-library readers were ill prepared for Hardy's books, and primly straightened themselves as his genius passed. Fortunately, there were others who perceived the distinction conferred on literature by his bright and particular talents.

The advice to us all of this "unsubduable old Roman," was to face the facts of life and trust humanity:—

"The fact of life with dependence placed
On the human heart's resource alone,
In brotherhood bonded close, and graced
With loving-kindness fully blown,
And visioned help unsought, unknown."

Not to know Hardy's best work is to miss some of the greater effects of modern English speech. His sympathy was such that it covered everything, like the arch of the sky. On the title-page of his masterpiece, *Tess*, he quoted Shakespeare's beautiful words:—

"Poor, wounded soul,
My bosom as a bed, shall lodge thee."

Such wide sympathy enlarges our ideas of life and the world. It was characteristic of the veteran. For, as his brother-writers reminded him in that birthday-address, he always wrote in the high style, and had crowned a great prose with a noble poetry.

MIMNERMUS.

"Burn the Libraries"

MR. H. G. WELLS, during his temporary relapse into Theism, wrote the following: "The first purpose of God is the attainment of clear knowledge, of knowledge as a means to more knowledge, and of knowledge as a means to power." This was rather startling in its incongruity with the reputed character of the gods of some at least of the great religions, and markedly of the two which spread over the more westerly parts of the world. According to Christian and Mohammedan exponents, the attitude of their gods, if any, towards learning is presumably indicated by the saying "Burn the Libraries, for their value is in this book" (The Koran, or the Bible). Hence the disappearance of the scientific and other natural knowledge and rational ideas of the Greeks and Romans, the loss of the Roman educational system, and the subsequent obstruction to the discovery and spread of knowledge (*The Index Expurgatorius*, the Inquisition and other persecution, the embargoes on publication, discussion, teaching, and the like).

Of the two high gods indicated, we may fairly regard Allah as the more enlightened, as the Moslem religion did not prevent the outburst of intellectualism in the near East and in Spain (the "Moors"), accompanied by a rapid general development of civilization in the ninth and succeeding centuries, while Christian Europe wallowed in ignorance and semi-barbarism. We note, of course, the educational efforts of our King Alfred and of Charlemagne; but these were so limited and short-lived as to be practically negligible, and darkness continued. After the time of these monarchs several centuries (eighth to ninth century) were needed to redevelop civilization in Christendom to a stage about equal to that of the Romans; and Christian superstition and ecclesiasticism had largely to be broken down before systematic

scientific, historical and other natural investigation, and systems of education, were re-developed.

As regards the obstruction by religion of free and genuine intellectualism, we find useful points in Bertrand Russell's *Education and the Social Order*. They include the following:—

(1) The dogmatic teaching of propositions (e.g., immortality) which most or all enlightened people regard as at least unproved and unprovable tends to close the mind, and to discourage critical thinking. And as teachers are expected to instil such doctrines into their pupils there must result a tendency to intellectual dishonesty, especially on the part of those teachers who are the more thoughtful, acute and informed, and who are therefore more likely to doubt if not to disbelieve what they must teach.

(2) It is impossible to instil the scientific spirit into the young so long as any propositions are regarded as sacrosanct and not open to question. An established creed is surrounded with emotions and taboos; and in claiming that it contains "great truths" the tendency is to set up criteria of truth other than those used in science and other real knowledge, and also to discourage due intellectual scrutiny of propositions.

We must expect that the increase of religious instruction in schools—due to the general adoption by Local Education Authorities of "agreed syllabuses," which involve the teaching of Christian dogma in the council as well as in the sectarian schools—will form a deplorable set-back to the full secularization of education and the State. And this will probably be accentuated if the present proposal to broadcast religious lessons to the schools is adopted.

We now note also the interference of religionists in secular subjects of instruction. The Roman Catholic "Vigilance Committee" has for some years been bringing pressure to bear on publishers and Education Authorities to refuse to issue and to use history books which contain passages (about the Reformation and other topics) which are considered to be inimical to the Papal Church. And I am informed that at least one series of books now contain slips stating that such passages do not appear. Whether the surrender has been general I do not know.

And now we have with us the attempt of Fundamentalists to prevent the teaching of evolution in our schools. If this should be supported by one or more of the larger churches, we may see still another withdrawal (possibly burning) of useful books. We have just been reminded that this was done a few years ago in parts of the United States. A cable informing us that the attempt just made to get repealed the law which in Tennessee forbids the teaching of "any theory that man has descended from the lower animals" has been defeated by 67 votes to 20.

J. REEVES.

A Jew has his Sabbath Day on a Saturday morning, but in the afternoon he can do what he likes and through Lent he fasts. A Gentile has his Sabbath Day on a Sunday and keeps it up all day.

An Archangel means an angel belonging to the Holy Arch.

St. Paul then dealt with virgins, idols, and other like matters.

In those days there were lights in Egypt called the Israelites.

Samuel was the boy in the Bible who used to clean up for Eli and take him tea.

In some churches you are shown into your seat. This is done by a beacon who often carries a light.

Joshua was the son of a Nun. He would have been a very good man, but he was called.

From "Latest Howlers," by Cecil Hunt.

A New Discovery!

John B. Robinson, he

Sez they don't know everythin' down in Judee.

IN former days "Little Dolly Dream" used to be declared to be "the Pride of Idaho." But it would appear that her fame has been eclipsed by Dr. Frank B. Robinson, 226 Fourth Street, Moscow, Idaho, U.S.A., who is described in a press advertisement as a "noted psychologist, author and lecturer," and the discoverer of "a new and revolutionary religious teaching based entirely on the misunderstood sayings of the Galilean carpenter," baptized by Dr. Robinson with the classic name of "Psychiana." The name seems happily chosen, and a philological interest might suggest its being compounded of "Psyche," and "Anna," the prophetess mentioned in the Gospel according to Luke.

Anyway, this "Psychiana" of Dr. Robinson's makes formidable claims to public attention. "Psychiana" we are told believes and teaches that it is to-day possible for every normal human being, understanding spiritual law as Christ understood it, to duplicate every work that the Carpenter of Galilee ever did—it believes and teaches that when he said "the things that I do shall ye do also," he meant what he said, and meant it literally to apply to all mankind through all the Ages. We are further told that after a long search for truth, Dr. Robinson finally came to the realization of an unseen power or force so dynamic in itself that all other powers and forces fade into insignificance beside it, and he learned to commune directly with the living God using this mighty never-failing power to demonstrate health, happiness and financial success. Dr. Robinson offers to send free and post paid a copy of his treatise on his wonderful discovery to any person who writes for it.

Now this is something like the real thing. Dr. Robinson offers to show any normal person how to use the same identical power which Jesus used in performing his so-called Miracles! It looks as if the number of Christian Science was up! How Mrs. Eddy's followers will regard this theft of their thunder remains to be seen. But that Dr. Robinson has secured a following is attested by the fact that he is enabled to meet the cost of big advertisements broadcast in the British Press, and to offer everybody a free post-paid copy of his treatise; so—the health and happiness propositions apart—he has certainly so far demonstrated a measure of "financial success" for himself. And is not this some inducement to others to throw in their lot with "Psychiana"? Hurrah for Psychiana! (to parody the words of the old sea shanty).

It is rather a slap in the eye to the many distinguished oculists, physicians and surgeons, who for generations have been deeply engaged in the search for cures for blindness and lameness to be told that they have been wasting their time. If they had not been purblind leaders of the blind, they could have found out and drawn upon this mightiest of dynamic powers for the means of restoring sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and healing to cripples. The history of medical research would appear to be simply a record of proofs of human ignorance and futility. All the time there lay to the hands of men the source of healing, and the foolish scientists ignored it and passed it by! "Psychiana" is a bit of a bombshell for the medicos!

But we have a saying, "*Mens sana in corpore sano.*" A diseased body may likely contain a diseased mind. Not having seen Dr. Robinson's full treatise we cannot tell whether he deals at length therein with ail-

ing minds. But seeing he refers us to the things Jesus is said to have done, we look through the New Testament in vain for any instance of Jesus' concern for empty, weak or diseased intellects. The things he is said to have done were invariably in the nature of physical healing.

It does not therefore appear that "psychologist" is a suitable description of Dr. Robinson. Psychology is a science of the play of the mental apparatus. Its concern is with the thinking part of man. If a man's mental apparatus is impaired, warped and faulty in its working, his reactions to experience are bound to be unsatisfactory. Of course it cannot be argued that because a person is healed of his *bodily* ills, his *mind* will at once become healthy. The mind will remain as the product of the nutriment upon which it has been fed. Like the body, the mind grows by what it feeds on. But it is quite possible to find an empty or flaccid mind in a strong and healthy body—while one may encounter a vigorous, well nourished and resolute mind in a weak and unhealthy body. So after all, the matter is not so simple as Dr. Robinson would appear to suggest. The mightiest dynamic power may be the progenitor of Robinson. Is that necessarily a good thing for human beings? And even if all the acts of healing done by Christ were verified, we would still be faced with the fact that there were many sufferers who were his contemporaries who never benefited by his ministrations.

The greatest desideratum for every son of man is a well equipped and understanding and compassionate *mind*. The things that have militated against the acquisition of a mind of that kind are the belief in and acceptance of superstition, myth and magic. Dr. Robinson's "remedy" cannot be placed outside one or other of these categories. And it is a remedy that purports to satisfy personal selfishness—it professes to give the individual health and happiness—and financial success! Therefore its appeal is effective only with lower minds. "The greatest thing in the world is Man, and the greatest thing in Man is Mind."

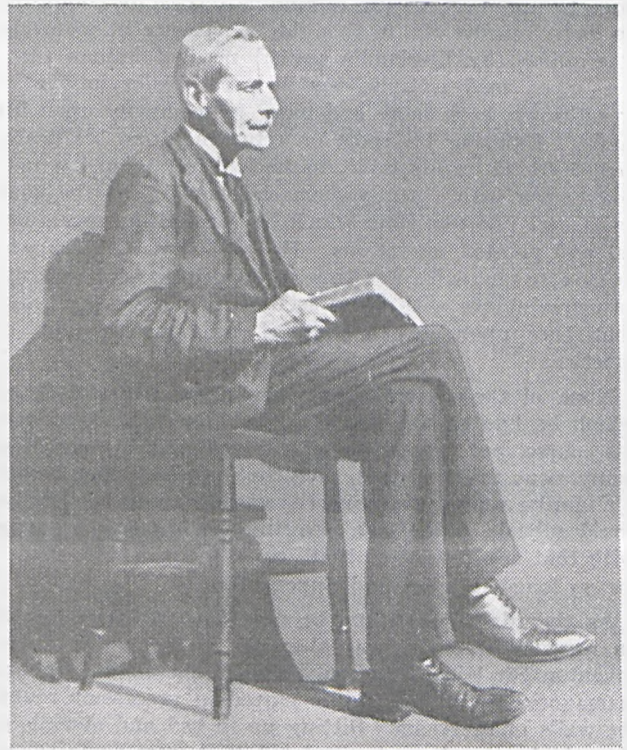
The remarkable thing is that the sayings and doings of Jesus are year by year, and decade by decade, receiving new interpretations from his professed disciples! Men of God are for ever engaged in casuistical enquiry, so that what was cheese yesterday is chalk to-day.

It cannot be doubted that in all classes and professions are to be found many *rudimentary* minds. They may not be actually diseased, but they are either empty or show no evidence of having developed. That is why an appeal like Dr. Robinson's can depend upon a favourable reception. That is why the followers of Mrs. Eddy are so numerous. The Christian Scientists went one better than the old-fashioned Churches. They joined to the assurance of bliss in the hereafter, the promise of healing and relief from physical pain in the here and now. And they excluded a personal devil and the old-fashioned material hell.

"They" may not know everythin' down in Judee. But it does not appear that Dr. Robinson knows any more than "they" do!

IGNOTUS.

Walter Mann



My father, Walter Mann, for so long a faithful fighter in the war against religion and superstition, merits a worthier pen than mine to write of him. I was born in 1900, but for years before that my father was contributing articles to the *Freethinker*, and of those days I have only insubstantial reminiscences of his, telling of the great days of Foote and Bradlaugh and Annie Besant, and John Burns in Trafalgar Square with hordes of Victorian working men.

My father was a working man. He worked at the bench as an engineer's pattern-maker, until modern slave-driving methods drove him to retire. He was then at the Sunbeam Works, at Wolverhampton, where my mother died in 1916. When his three sons were married and dispersed, he came to live with me for the last ten years of his life. He lived a semi-hermit life in his own room, surrounded on all sides by shelves stacked with multitudinous volumes on science, religion and psychology, where he attended to all his own wants and affairs, for his independence was almost a mania. And here, he would often say, he reached the happiest phase of his life, having independence, all his time to call his own, and easy access to the Mecca of all students, the reading room of the British Museum.

First and foremost he was a student. And all his study was directed to one end—the accumulation of evidence and argument against the old superstitions that still are powerful for mischief in the world. This was the task to which he adhered with undeviating persistence for fifty years, since first he realized that the huge and monstrous devils and hells that had been the mainstay of the religion that had scared and terrified him in the home of his childhood were lies, foul and abominable lies, and all the suffering his lonely mind had borne from them was unnecessary. I believe his earliest memory was of when he was a tiny tot of three, being taken on a visit to poor folks in Gravesend by a very religious aunt and being lifted up by her to see the unsuspected contents of an unfamiliar long box as part of his education, and a holy lesson to sober down any frivolous tendencies in his nature. A hideous old hag lay in her shroud in the coffin and he shrieked with fright. His righteous and God-fearing parents had no sympathy for him in the ensuing nightmares, leaving him alone in his dark attic to the horrors of the night.

He was reared in the very gloomiest religious atmosphere, and when he came of age, swore he would fight it. With no weapons other than his determination and his pen, he did.

The indecorum, if not the profligacy, of a large number of the English clergy during half of the eighteenth century, is exhibited by too many contemporary witnesses to be considered as the exaggeration of novelists, satirical poets, travellers and dissenters. Ridicule, pity, indignation, produced little or no change for more than a generation.—*Knight's "England."*

So all the spare cash he ever had was spent on books, and they were all bearing on the question of religion. He left stacks of notes behind, and it was his intention and hope to round off his life of humble service by compiling an encyclopaedia of Freethought, a pleasure of which he was robbed by England's annual need of human sacrifice—7,000 road victims. As he grew deafer in age he was thrown back more and more for company upon his books. Entering his room on returning from his death-bed, I found on his table, as he had left them his note book, open with a neatly-sharpened pencil, and the book on Albert Einstein from which he was culling more useful and pointed quotations. He said that his idea was to give to men with less time or opportunity for reading, an acquaintance with those sections of noteworthy books that bore upon any aspect of religious thought or practice.

None of the various scents that crossed the trail on which he hunted for fifty years led him to deviate from his course, not even the rise of Socialism that carried so many away to other wars. All the upheavals that rocked his family around him, and the world around his family, could subside at the last, and discover him still at grips with that mighty power that has held the minds of men for so long—religion and superstition.

As regards superstition, he related a curious story of an occasion when he was sleeping at the house of the inventor, Sir Hiram Maxim, when in the night a phantasmagoria of sinister shapes moved in procession round the walls of the room. Sitting up in bed and staring at them in horror, he yet wondered if it were some scientific test, imposed upon a hard-boiled Atheist by the unassessed American humour of his host, or if it were but an accidental series of shadows. He was too polite to charge Maxim with it at breakfast next day, and it remained a mystery in all but the certainty that it was not ghosts.

At home he gave us complete freedom to think as we pleased and believe in any god real enough to present evidence of himself to us. None ever did.

He regarded himself as one of those humble sappers who toil out of sight at the foundations of the enemy's citadel where their unceasing labours at last breach the walls. Upon whatever activity he was engaged, it was coloured by the fight. Even the jokes he told each Sunday at our table involved some point of superstition or theology, and I have no doubt he was revolving some question of what ironical jests "the Clerical Falstaff" might have made, on the judgment day, of god's peculiar management of affairs, and not paying all the attention to the material universe that is so normal to Christian practice, when the juggernauts of the road crashed upon the pavement where he walked and, struck him down.

Although he appeared to recover physically from that accident, I think the shock stayed with him, for he was seventy, and the following accident may have been due to traffic panic caused by the first; or even, maybe, exaggerated precaution. Anyway, the machines killed him.

He lived, with multiple injuries, in hospital for a week, growing fainter day by day, but not realizing he was dying even at the end, when he lost consciousness and died in his sleep. But two days before the end the telephone called to know if the patient would like a religious minister to come and help him at all. I carried him the message; he would have liked to know that it was somewhere recorded that he smiled with the shadow of his old smile and said "No—they needn't let God know I'm here."

E. L. MANN.

The world is nourished on a little truth and on many lies. Humanity is debilitated and has difficulty in accepting truth, all pure. It is necessary that man's religion, his morals, his government, his poets and artists, should present truth to him smothered in lies.

Romain Rolland.

Treasure on Earth

THE land-owning interests of the Church of England (and, to a lesser degree, of the other churches also) must, by now, be fairly well-known to Freethinkers. Such books as Alan Handsacre's *The Revenues of Religion*, and Graham Peace's *The Great Robbery*, should make them sufficiently clear. There must, however, be many who do not appreciate the way in which the Church and the "landed gentry," combined into one solid reactionary bloc, are responsible for much that is wrong with the world at the present time.

Let me give you one or two examples. Mr. Herbert Morrison has declared that he is in favour of creating a beautiful embankment South of the Thames, comparable to that already on the North bank. Well and good: aesthetically, the proposal has everything to recommend it. But what will be the one sure and certain result of that? The Ecclesiastical Commissioners, the largest land-owners in that area, will reap some millions of pounds as a direct result of Mr. Morrison's excellent and progressive idea.

Take another example. The very moderate measure of slum clearance which is being carried out under the direction of the present Government is in jeopardy in just the same way. It is well-known that the Church of England is the owner of some of the worst slum-property, and it will, as a result, stand in the way of all measures of this kind, whilst, when clearance is forced, it will take care, via site-value compensation, to get as good terms as possible. And that money will come from out the tax-payer's pocket.

The greatest bar to progress, then, is the land-owner. As things are at present the rent of land (again let me remind you that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners are very great land-owners) is the first charge on all property, the first bar to all forward measures. But, with all due respect to our friends the dialectical materialists, there are few thinking people in Britain who would agree to "liquidate" (I hope I use the correct term) the land-owner by means of bloody revolution. Nor does "compensation" seem the right way. It is unfair that the Church and the "landed gentry" should be bought out, by means of bonds or otherwise, if there is any possible alternative to be pursued—and there is.

In the past, the House of Commons has stated the immemorial rights of the people, and embodied them in a Declaration of Right. This could be done again. If the House would pass a Declaration of Common Right to the Land, stating that from a certain date, to be agreed on, all land would revert to the Crown as trustee to the people, many of our present difficulties would disappear. Land, remember, has never been private property, though many of our less enthusiastic Socialists, with an eye on their own few acres, would not admit the fact. But ask any lawyer: he will tell you that land is only held for life. No one has absolute property in land.

I am not putting forward this idea with the suggestion that it is new: I know that it is not. Nor am I trying to tell Freethinkers what they should think: that would be foolish indeed. But I am suggesting that unless we tackle this thing at its source the Church will continue to keep its strangle-hold on the mass of the people, teaching degrading superstitions with all the force of acknowledged authority.

Karl Marx's famous saying that the Church of England would rather part with all its Thirty-Nine Articles than with one thirty-ninth of its income has been often quoted, but few of those quoting it seem to have realized that almost all that income is derived from land, via the various routes of tithes, ground-rents and mining royalties.

Here, then, is the real root of the question: until we deal with it the power of the Church will continue to grow. As communities increase in size and in complexity land values inevitably increase, and, with them, the power of the Church. Prospects for such a plan, I know, must seem small enough. That home of feeble mediocrity, the House of Commons, is not given to thinking of essential questions. But I ask my fellow-Freethinkers to consider things carefully. If the Land

Question is not tackled somehow (and I have suggested one way of tackling it) we shall not dislodge these priestly robbers until many generations have passed. And, holding the beliefs that we do, we naturally do not want to wait for the passage of many generations.

JOHN ROWLAND.

Acid Drops

The perpetuation of religion has been largely achieved by force, and there is not very much difference in the application of this principle to-day. It is a question of whether it is open force or whether it is disguised. In Germany Hitler closes the Churches that preaches a religion he does not like, in order to maintain a State religion those behind him desire; and in Vienna, religious instruction is being given under the protection of soldiers with rifles and fixed bayonets. It seems that the students objected to Roman Catholic teaching, so the lessons are given while the soldiers see that it is taken.

The Rev. Dr. P. D. Thomson, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, complains that Nationalism is tending to take the place of religion, and the State itself to take the place of God. We have considerable sympathy with this last statement; but why blame Nationalism? It is no more than an illustration of the fact, upon which we have so often dwelt, that a large number of those who believe they are without religion are still carrying about with them the ghost of a god. When people talk of the State as though it were something existing in itself, and could find any other justification for existing, except so far as it made for the betterment of individuals, they are simply applying to the State their theological concept. The blame really lies with religion, that leaves such a poisonous residuum behind it that very many simply switch their religion over to the sociological field, and change the name of their deity. This is so common a phenomenon that we often wonder what proportion of the population have achieved a scientific Atheism. Not nearly so large as many imagine. Of that we are quite certain.

Mr. Maxton, M.P., is one of the few clear-minded men, too good for Parliament, who can see the fallacy in the frequent newspaper statements. What Germany thinks or what France thinks, or the pathetic spectacle of one man speaking for a nation. The following is not the usual Parliamentary vintage:—

If the German situation, which was the biggest menace to world peace was going to be solved it was going to be solved by the German people who were at this moment in the cells, but were not a different German people essentially from those with whom we were in friendly association three or four years ago. British diplomacy should be directed towards making the German voiceless people have a voice again.

There is some frankness in the remarks made by the *Methodist Recorder*, in connexion with the moral results of the war. Dr. T. R. Glover recalls that "the most outstanding figure among Wesleyan Methodists" assured Cambridge Christians "that the war was creating the religious regeneration of England." Dr. Glover never believed it. He leans to the view that "religion meant nothing to eighty per cent of the army, i.e., the adult manhood of England." He does not apparently believe that religion has made much headway since the war—greatly, of course, to the nation's loss. "An obvious effect of the Labour Movement," he says, "is a falling-off of the ministry," but its obviousness is less apparent to us than to Dr. Glover. He seems curiously unobservant, like most hopeless pessimists. He sees nothing at all of the steady undermining of faith in religion which has been the special work of the N.S.S. and the *Freethinker*. Dr. Glover's 80 per cent figures ante-date the war, which no doubt increased the percentage, but it was no momentary conversion. This nation and others has outgrown supernaturalism. Dr. Glover's plaintive "Perhaps," which, he says, "sooner or later

everyman must face," is too vague to convince anybody. The rack, the stake, the prison and social obloquy have failed; if it were not for the finances accumulated during the days of persecution eighty per cent of the churches would have closed their doors long ago.

Canon Hannay (George A. Birmingham) must have felt amused while acting as Chairman at a Discussion on Religion and Advertising, at the Royal United Service Institution. It was an ideal spot for such a debate. Surrounded by guns, models of battlefields, and all sorts of war relics, the clergymen who took part in the gathering must have felt they were at the very gate of heaven if not already inside the House of the Lord of Hosts. The Rev. Aldom French asked What is Advertising, and What is the Church? The Rev. Vincent Howson seemed to think the main objection to advertising was that "it would cost money better spent in other directions." We can guess the name and address of some of those "other directions." But we think the pro-advertisers won. We recommend the "Agony Column," or in the list of "Lost, Stolen or Strayed," or in the third category of "Births, Marriages and Deaths."

The Regent Advertising Club also had a debate on the question of "advertising" the Church. It is amusing to think that a number of members actually thought the Church did not advertise or advertised in the wrong way. Of course, it is always advertising, and has never ceased for 1900 years. The optimists in the Club managed to get a vote in favour of putting "whole page spreads" in our national dailies; and one enthusiast imagined the membership of the Church would thereby increase by half-a-million! A "lay-reader" thought half-a-dozen nearer the mark. But really, would any advertisement, no matter how successful a "lay-out," get intelligent people these days to believe in miracles, or hell, or the devil? Could an advertisement even get an unbeliever to admit the existence of "God"? A man might buy a brand of cigarettes through an advertisement, but a "brand" of the Church? What rubbish!

Censorship in Ireland—according to the *Manchester Guardian*—is becoming more stringent than ever. Books and newspapers have to submit to an official censorship, and there is an "unofficial" one in the shape of bands of armed Republicans which attacks everything British it can. The B.B.C. broadcasts, however, cannot be kept out, and perhaps they act as a sort of counterbalance. One thing is notable in Catholic Ireland, though. The de Valera Government is finding it difficult to pass a Bill to prevent the sale of contraceptives. We should like to know why from an *English* Catholic bishop?

For those who talk so glibly about the "re-union" of the Churches, the words of Pious IX., delivered on August 10, 1863, should be noted:—

... But most well known is the Catholic dogma, namely, that outside the Catholic Church no one can be saved, and that those who are contumacious against the authority and definitions of the same Church, and from the unity of the Church and from Peter's successor the Roman Pontiff, to whom the saviour committed the custody of the Vine, are obstinately cut off, they cannot attain the eternal salvation.

The Roman Catholic Church simply dare not depart from these words whatever individual priests may say or hope. And they mean, "Believe and be saved; or disbelieve and be damned" Nothing could be clearer.

The *Church Times* admits that the lay tithe-owners have put up a good case, as far as legal property rights go, before the Tithe Commission. It adds:—

It is true that the origin of their property is bad, resting as it does, on the confiscation of monastic property. Even if we allow that the dissolution of the monasteries was either justifiable or necessary—we should still say that a great injustice was done when, instead of restoring the tithes to the parishes from which they were taken, they were made over to laymen as private property. . . . It is certainly desirable that such an un-

popular charge as the lay tithe should be got rid of by some system of redemption at an early date at its actual value.

But would it not be best, if tithes were altogether got rid of? If not lay tithe-owners have as much right to extort tithes as the churches. But the whole thing is an abomination.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, at a recent meeting of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, said he "had only one criticism to make. I want to bring young people into this great work. Where are they?" Alas, where are they? Probably finding it far more helpful to mind their own business than to convert unwilling negroes, Japanese, Chinese and other races to Christianity—apart from the sheer waste of good money. It is good, however, to find that the Archbishop recognizes the difficulty of roping in the "young people." We consider this a splendid sign of their sanity and good sense.

Roman Catholics are now trying to censor the "two-penny" libraries. They complain that there is no "supervision" of the books issued. The St. Vincent de Paul Society wants to co-operate with the Public Morality Council and the Westminster Catholic Federation, to put a stop to "unsuitable" books being issued. England, in fact, would be just as happy a place as Ireland in such matters if these impudent and more or less unnecessary societies had their way. Why don't they emigrate to God's Green Isle, where they can censor everything they like as far as we are concerned?

Euthanasia—the doctrine which teaches that people who are suffering from some absolutely incurable disease should be put to death—is also under the Roman Catholic ban. Bishop McNulty thinks "it is based on a disbelief of the human soul." It is also, he declares based on the fallacy "that pain is necessarily evil"; and he insists that there is only "one real evil, and that is sin. Out of every other so-called evil good can be drawn." In fact, to shorten life, "may jeopardise the patient's salvation." We don't know whether Bishop McNulty has ever seen a blind, deaf and dumb man, paralysed from his chest downwards; or an incurable cancer case living only through morphia injections. If he has, has he any idea of the *attention* these people require—often, alas, from relatives. We would like to know what good comes from these poor suffering people who are mostly suffering violent agony? What good is their suffering to society? There may be reasons against euthanasia, but the religious ones are sheer bunk.

Now that "Blessed" Thomas More is about to be canonized, Mgr. Hallett has gathered together a crop of stories showing how divine intervention was obtained by or through, More. Mgr. Hallett probably believes the lot, and any more than can be raked up, no matter on what evidence. One of the ridiculous stories say that "Blessed" Thomas's youngest daughter, coming to after being unconscious through illness, said that she had seen herself saved from eternal damnation through her father's prayers. Another says that Margaret Roper's maid wanted to buy some linen, but remembered her purse was empty when she got into the shop. Upon opening the purse, however, she found it full. This proves More's "intervention" with God, as convincingly as possible.

But since the proposed canonization, these stories have been multiplied a thousand times. Crowds of people have been given money, found jobs after many years of unemployment, had their rent paid, have had legal difficulties settled in their favour, sold unsuitable houses or got better ones, all through the simple expedient of praying to the "blessed" martyr. And as for cures, "one of the best known and careful Catholic doctors writes of an apparent cure of cancer"; a nurse got cured of lupus lasting ten years; disseminated sclerosis, after eight years suffering, was completely cured; cancer of the bowels was also completely cured. In addition, gallstones,

double mastoids, septic pneumonia and many other more or less fatal diseases disappeared like a puff of wind, through praying to Sir Thomas More. One wonders whether the credulous lay-believer is a bigger liar than the wily priests fostering this kind of humbug. But where "the faith of our fathers" is concerned nothing too preposterous seems to come amiss. The more improbable or idiotic the story, the better chance it has of being believed.

A writer in the *Church Times* writes woefully about the "Joys of the Establishment"—in Malta. It has its comic side for the Freethinker. The pampered and privileged Churchmen feel outraged if mankind cease to provide them with expensive churches and costly bishops. An alien church in a Catholic island wants a Cathedral of its own which the local Protestants (if any) cannot, and the local government will not pay for. It appears that John Henry Newman, before his conversion to Catholicism, suggested that the Valetta Catholic Cathedral should be handed over to the (Protestant) Church of the English invaders. We can guess what Newman, when he became a Catholic and a Cardinal would have said to the proposal. And all this wickedness which aims at making Protestants support their own church and pay for their own places of meeting, fills this writer with indignation. Incidentally, it throws a side-light on what Christians mean by "persecution" . . . of Christians.

We rejoice when we see Christians (and other citizens) doing their best to propagate Peace principles. We are at the same time very sick of the pretentiousness (to put it mildly) with which Christian Peace propagandists advertise their religion as if it had anything whatever to do with peace except to oppose it whenever it passes the "safe" stage. For instance, a Poster is issued by the "Northern Friends Peace Board," which says:—

MANY MEN SAY . . .
CHRIST SAID . . .

Decent citizens would be ashamed to make the tragedy of war and the advocacy of peace a mere shuttlecock between rival sectarians. When it suits Christian interests, what "Christ said" is whatever the mob of the moment is saying. Christianity never prevented a war during all the centuries when men *believed* in it. It obviously cannot assist peace now that men *disbelieve* in it. Individual Christians who desire Peace should speak (and vote) as peace-loving citizens, appealing to humanity in the name of humanity.

Christianity will be in very evil repute in India after publication of the facts vouched for by the Rev. Handley Ingle. He says, "Several weeks ago a servant of our Mission Compound at Madurantakam was bitten by a snake, and in spite of all we could do, he died within five hours." He appeals for funds. No wonder. He should also appeal for a new edition of the Holy Bible, omitting Christ's alleged promise to allow all who believe in Him, to handle snakes with impunity. Of course Jesus may have meant only British missionaries could do the snake trick, but this ought to be made clear in copies of the Bible circulating in lands where there really *are* snakes.

Twenty-one charges were set out against the Rev. S. R. S. Colquhoun, before the Archbishop of Armagh, for "conducting public worship in a manner not in accordance with the rubrics of the Church of Ireland." He was accused of all sorts of things, such as, "omitting the Lord's Prayer, also the Ten Commandments, making the sign of the Cross before the sermon, repeating a prayer while standing on the west side of the Holy Table, causing a bell to be rung when performing the manual acts, elevating the cup and paten at the consecration, allowing the *Agnus Dei* to be sung, incense to be used, and a cross and lighted candles to be placed on the altar." There were also many other "crimes" against the Church of Ireland, which should cause true believers to shudder with horror. Mr. Colquhoun got "a month to submit answers to the charges." But, seriously, could tomfoolery be better exemplified?

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTÉ,

EDITORIAL:

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

Telephone No. : CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. H. TURNER.—We do not know that we have any cut and dried theory as to the best way out of the European tangle. But we are quite certain that a situation dominated by a number of political parties, each of which, quite properly cannot trust the rest, and when each is trying to gain an advantage over the other, is bound to make for trouble. We are also certain that preparations for war lead to war, and when private interests are allied with, not war, but war-scares, war is very likely to occur. A conscious internationalizing of interests would do much to prevent war, so would the creation of an international force prepared to prevent any country imposing its will on another by force. We are also convinced that if war is to be prevented, each nation will have to give as well as to receive. Above all, those who can bring home the real nature of war, its cowardice and its inevitable brutalization under modern conditions, will be doing a valuable service in killing the war-spirit. We must make war, and militarism generally, stink in the nostrils of decent men and women as we have already, in many cases, made them contemptible and ridiculous.

II. WALKER.—There is only one fitting word of criticism with regard to astrology. That is—Rubbish. The exploitation of this phase of superstition by some of our newspapers is a disgrace to journalism.

W. S. BRYAN.—We note your appreciation of our "Views" on "According to Plan." We do not think it will be reprinted as a leaflet, but probably it may appear in next series of *Essays in Freethinking*. There is no prospect of the B.B.C. as at present constituted, and until our public men show greater self-respect, permitting freedom of expression in matters of religion.

C.M.—These discoveries of manuscripts which bear out the truth of the Jesus story appear periodically, and disappear. Their chief use is to induce a general feeling that Christianity may be true. The fact is that if all of them were genuine they could not prove the truth of the gospel story. They could only prove that at a certain date there were numbers of people who believed in a god-man. And no one has ever disputed that.

FOR Distributing the *Freethinker*.—"Worker," 2s.

"TAB CAN."—Next week. Sorry, crowded out of this issue.

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

The "*Freethinker*" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.

The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1357.

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

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

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

The "*Freethinker*" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—

One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

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

The Earl of Peterborough (1658-1735) the successful commander of the allied expedition against Spain, afterwards looked with contempt upon his military vocation. He said, "a general is only a hangman-in-chief.

Knight's England.

Sugar Plums

To-day (March 31) Mr. Cohen will deliver his concluding lecture this season in the Jubilee Hall, Stockton-on-Tees, subject "Do the Dead Live?" Admission will be free, but there will be a limited number of reserved seats at sixpence each. Mr. Cohen hopes to meet a number of his Tyneside and Teeside friends, both old and new.

The Annual Conference of the N.S.S. will be held this year in Manchester. There will be the usual business sessions, at which all members of the N.S.S. may attend and vote. Membership cards will have to be shown to gain admittance. A public demonstration will be held in the evening in the Picture House, Market Street, Manchester. Motions for the Agenda may now be sent by Branches and private members to the General Secretary, 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. The Annual Conference means a lot of work for the local Branch, but Manchester has had previous experience, from which we feel justified in promising efficient arrangements and a successful Conference. The proceedings at this Conference promise to be more than usually interesting.

We dealt, the other week, with a correspondent who was surprised to learn that the *Freethinker* was not yet paying its way. We do not know of any Freethought journal that ever has paid its way, save in spasms, and we lean to the opinion that by the time a Freethought paper has got to the point of paying its way, there will be little need for its existence. But the boycott and the lack of advertisements are the chief reason why a paper such as this one does not come nearer to paying its way than is the case at present.

All our friends can lend a hand towards breaking down the boycott, which means increasing the sales, and so placing the *Freethinker* in a more satisfactory financial position, in addition to making it more serviceable to the Cause. They can insist on their newsagent getting and delivering the paper promptly when it is ordered. Many might induce their newsagents to take and display an extra copy or two, and make themselves responsible, for a limited period, for unsold copies. They may take an extra copy and hand it to a friend, or they may send us the names and addresses of likely readers, and we will post copies for four weeks on receipt of postage—one half-penny per copy. But once again, we can reassure all concerned that the *Freethinker*, having left its Jubilee behind it, intends one day celebrating its centenary. It has a history unrivalled in the records of Freethought journalism, and will live up to its traditions. It is entirely a question of making the fight a little easier for those on whose shoulders the responsibility rests.

Fear and Religion, by C. McKelvie, 16 pages, supplies a very useful little propagandist pamphlet at a very popular price. Mr. McKelvie examines the part fear has played in the building-up of religious belief, and also its reactions on present-day positions. The price of the pamphlet is one penny, and those Branches doing open-air work should find it useful at their meetings during the summer. It is issued by the Secular Society, Ltd. Orders of not less than twelve copies will be sent post free.

Messrs. Watts & Co., have added to their Forum Series, a reprint of Sir Arthur Keith's article in reply to the attack on Evolution by Sir Ambrose Fleming, with additions, under the general title of *Darwinism and its Critics*. It should prove very useful at the present juncture, and may lead many to follow up with a study of the general principles of evolution. The price of the essay is sevenpence in paper covers and one shilling in cloth.

We are asked to announce that a Social has been arranged by the West London Branch of the N.S.S. on Thursday, April 4, at 7 p.m., at the Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W. All members and friends of the London Branches are cordially invited. We hope to hear of a good attendance, as an enjoyable evening is assured.

Christianity and Mythology

READERS of the *Freethinker* should not let themselves be easily persuaded of the triumph of Christ-myth theories. There is really no prospect of the mythological solution of the problems of Jesus and the New Testament being accepted in scientific circles. If Freethinkers advocate such a solution they will be departing from the solid foundations of truth and scholarship, and the consequences for Free-thought must be disastrous.

It is difficult to discuss the theories of the late John M. Robertson, since unhappily he is no longer here to defend them. He had, I believe, some ground for his complaint that the central theses on which he challenged criticism were evaded and ignored. But he was himself in part responsible for this neglect. He was, as Mr. Cutner says, a master of controversy. He revelled in it. He was a pertinacious, resourceful and formidable debater. As I discovered in actual discussion with him, he was very reluctant to admit a mistake, even when the admission only concerned a minor detail. Discussion with him was apt to be involved in a fog of petty detail, and so to become interminable and wearisome. For that reason, scholars shirked public discussion of his theses. It is a mistake to suppose that the strength of his positions discouraged critics.

Actually the verdict of scholarship is against John M. Robertson's findings on almost every point. I cannot, of course, substantiate this assertion in a short article, and I must confine myself to points relevant to Mr. Cutner's article of February 17. It is vital to J. M. Robertson's thesis to show that there was in Palestine a pre-Christian cult of "Jesus, Son of the Father." This proposition founders on the fact that up to the establishment of the Christian worship of Jesus, "Jesus" is in common use as a personal name among the Jews. As soon as a genuine Jesus-cult really appeared, the Jews ceased to use Jesus as a personal name. The title, "Jesus, Son of the Father" is Robertson's translation of Jesus Barabbas. Whether the translation is right or not, Jesus Barabbas is a personal name and not a cult-title. Both names, "Jesus" and "Barabbas," are attested as personal names in Jewish sources. "Jesus Barabbas" as a personal name is attested in some manuscripts of the gospels. There is no evidence worth mentioning in favour of the supposition of a pre-Christian Jesus-cult. There is definite, and I should say, conclusive evidence against it. The references in the Talmud to various men named Jesus form part of the evidence against J. M. Robertson's thesis.

Mr. Cutner does not appear to have read the latest survey of the evidence of the Talmud. Here is the verdict of a Jewish scholar, Dr. Klausner, whose competence and freedom from bias, no educated reader will question.

There are [in the Talmud] reliable statements to the effect that his name was Yeshu'a (Yeshu) of Nazareth: that he "practised sorcery" (i.e., performed miracles, as was usual in those days) and beguiled and led Israel astray; that he mocked at the words of the Wise; that he expounded Scripture in the same manner as the Pharisees; that he had five disciples; that he said that he was not come to take aught away from the Law or to add to it; that he was hanged (crucified) as a false teacher and beguiler on the eve of the Passover which happened on a Sabbath; and that his disciples healed the sick in his name. (*Jesus of Nazareth*: J. Klausner, p. 46.)

The evidence of the Talmud is actually fatal to Christ-myth theories.

Mr. Cutner realizes the difficulty presented by the fact that the Jews never questioned the historicity of Jesus in controversy with the Christians in the first

and second centuries. This silence of Jewish opponents is so damning to the Christ-myth hypothesis that it must at all costs be broken. Like Mr. Bryant and other advocates, Mr. Cutner relies on a passage in Justin Martyr's dialogue with Trypho, a Jew. Unfortunately, the passage is only of use to him when it is misunderstood. Incidentally, Mr. Cutner attributes to Trypho the sentence, "We have not believed empty fables." This is something which Justin said to Trypho, and not vice versa. But the point of Trypho's argument is not that Jesus did not exist, but that Jesus is not the Christ. Actually, the passage implies that Trypho believes in Jesus as an historic person, and knows something of his history, because he claims that the facts about Jesus do not tally with the Messianic expectations of the Jews. To suggest that Trypho denies the historicity of Jesus is as silly as to suggest that anyone who thought the Tichborne claimant a fraud must be presumed to have doubted the existence of the claimant. This particular argument is typical of the whole Christ-myth case. Every argument advanced in its favour turns out on examination to be a nail in its coffin.

Mr. Cutner writes slightly of the late F. C. Conybeare's assumptions that Mark is the earliest of our gospels, and that there is another source, "Q," behind the canonical gospels of Matthew and Luke. Mr. Cutner thinks Conybeare should have advanced arguments in favour of the priority of Mark, and he thinks that the fact that "Q" no longer exists as a document is a "secret" which Conybeare should have disclosed to his readers. Such judgments show that Mr. Cutner is himself ignorant of the history and present position of the literary criticism of the gospels. Everyone is entitled to assume the priority of Mark. Arguments must be advanced by those who dispute it. Robertson never accepted the priority of Mark, and nowhere justified his dissent from the conclusions of modern scholarship. As to "Q," Robertson himself accepted an early and now discarded form of the Q-hypothesis. He never troubled to bring his scholarship up-to-date in this field. But it ill becomes Mr. Cutner to scoff at "Q" as merely "inferred," when Robertson himself believed in some kind of "Q," and when Robertson's own main theses are a tissue of hazardous inferences. Moreover, the proof of the priority of Mark, and the hypothesis of "Q" are strictly scientific discoveries. "Q" was *not* inferred by Christian theologians to back up their case for the authenticity of the canonical gospels. Mr. Cutner's assertion to the contrary is either simple ignorance or patent misunderstanding. In any case, the foundations of the Christ-myth are ignorance and prejudice, and it is distressing to find Free-thought hand in glove with obscurantism.

H. G. WOOD.

SCIENCE AND LIFE

Bear in mind that we are living in times when social conditions as a whole, are still governed by beliefs and prejudices which are not only outside science, but directly opposed to it, that it behoves us to replace the theological by the scientific regime in every department of human activity, and that your task would be rendered vain unless you made your conduct, private or public, conform to the conception of nature which the careful and unprejudiced study of it had led you to form. Bear in mind that, at the present moment, this very science which you love, and which arms you with such great resources, is assailed by a countless host of reactionary spirits led by a band of fanatical monks. Bear in mind the spirit of theocracy is at this moment furiously attacking the spirit of enquiry; that it is time to look to the defence of our liberties.—*Anatole France*.

Parents' Sins. Heredity

To those who assume to know from one who is willing to learn.

It says in the Old Testament that "The sins of the fathers are visited on the children, to the third and fourth generation." This is, apparently, a statement of fact, whatever definition we give to the word "Sin." Shall we call mistakes, culpable negligence, thoughtlessness, culpable or otherwise, sins? There are, of course, sins of omission as well as of commission. It seems to be a law of nature that children should suffer the penalty of their parents' wrongdoing. Yet are not all laws of nature, laws of God? If so, and things are unjust when judged from the point of view of human law, would it not be logical, if not right, to designate them also Divine Injustice? There is no question about the injustice of visiting the sins of parents on the children, whether it be natural or Divine. I should like Theologians to explain how it can be reconciled with Divine Justice.

We naturally expect the latter to be not inferior to Man's sense of justice. Children also suffer from their parents' misfortunes and mistakes. This also is a law of nature—is it a law of God? Is not God—the Author of Nature—responsible for the sufferings of these little ones?

Similar considerations apply to Heredity. We know that heart disease, tuberculosis and pernicious anemia are inherited and transmitted to children from their parents and grand-parents. If there is an intelligent Originator of all things, why should He ordain that some should inherit suffering and disease from a previous generation, while others escape, and these not always the most worthy? It is not humanly fair or just. Is it then Divinely fair or just? It would be difficult to judge deserts by merit, because we know of people whose lives are one prolonged pain and misery, yet who, strictly speaking, deserve robust health and happiness. We also know of people whose lives are evil and wicked, who are practically without conscience, yet who enjoy health and are without ache or pain.

The Theologians' favourite argument (used to exonerate his God) is, that the latter could not approve of goodness save by endowing man with freedom to do evil: in fact that there can be no goodness where there is not a choice of evil. The Theologian believes an Almighty Being (who knows the end from the beginning) endows man with a certain quality of freedom, and by so doing escapes the responsibility of how he uses that freedom.

To escape responsibility for the evil resulting from freewill, this Being would have to be FINITE in knowledge and foresight. A finite God is inconceivable. (Of course, so is also an infinite God). Then, how about the innocent victims of Man's evil-doing, of "Man's inhumanity to man," of disastrous laws, etc.? To say the Originator of all things is not responsible, is to justify this injustice, this suffering of the innocent; only a conscienceless unfeeling monster would do this. There is no getting away from the fact that an Infinite Intelligent Personality (freedom or no freedom) must have intended the injustice and suffering which exist around us. Does not the knowledge of the end from the beginning, the knowledge of how man would use his freewill, imply responsibility for the result of its exercise? Neither does the fact that Man has in himself the power to obtain a racial advantage out of evil and misery justify the sacrifice of the individual for the benefit of the race. This may be a law of nature denominated "survival of the fittest," and will explain man's improvement, man's

progress from a lower to a higher condition of being.

We learn from past mistakes and instinctively combat evil, remove injustice, because this best preserves the race. We all have in us an inborn urge of unconscious self-preservation to fight all evil, to hunt down all injustice from its source: this is how the natural law of "the survival of the fittest" works. This law works sometimes quite independently of individual merit. A Socrates, a Christ, deserved a better fate; but they were not fitted to survive the social conditions under which they lived. Society would not kill them now; society would honour them for their sterling merits of character, which were the real cause of their death.

But who is responsible for the long string of suffering and misery that the present mental, moral and physical condition of the highest type of civilized man implies? The individual has had to suffer and be sacrificed, not only that the many should survive, but that the many should improve, morally and physically; for this improvement implies preservation.

Who is responsible for the arrangement of things, that the individual should suffer through the long ages up to now, from no fault of his own, by means of heredity; by means of inherited effects of parents' sins and mistakes; by means of the direct infliction of pain and torture from a wrong sense of justice? Moreover, who is responsible for the suffering caused by disasters and accidents, by thoughtlessness and inattention, by culpable neglect and carelessness, by selfishness and the direct actions of the criminal? And among animals, who is responsible for the pain inflicted by cruelty and inhumanity? Who made certain animals the natural enemies of others, whose instinct is to tear, rend and devour?

Directly man puts into his conception of the universe an Almighty, personal, omniscient Being, and endows Him with the best and noblest of the feelings and sentiments of humanity (in an exaggerated form if possible), he makes this Being directly responsible for all the misery and suffering of the human and the brute creation. I would prefer not to believe in the existence of such a Being, rather than believe He could be such a monster of evil.

I shall be told by the theologian that the existence of good and happiness in the world presupposes the existence of a good God; as Matthew Arnold puts it: "The Power, not ourselves, working for righteousness." Strange logic this, considering that much of this "good" consists in combating and removing the effects of the evil this God has permitted to exist. A thousand "goods," a thousand happinesses, do not compensate for a single evil, a single injustice.

It is only in eliminating the idea of a Divine Being, that there is any merit in man's combating evil and removing injustice. To me the Way of Divine Wisdom is without merit, when it endows man with freedom of choice in order that men and women may attain perfection on stepping-stones of other peoples' sufferings.

OTHO GEO. MEDHURST.

The ten commandments were given to Moses, but he passed them on quickly because the stone was very heavy.

The Bishop without a Diocese is called a suffering Bishop.

One incumbent is one who is a nuisance in church.

Elisha is one of the early heroes of the Bible. He was the man who led such a good life that he went to heaven in a cab.

St. Francis was what we should call nowadays one of the Bright Young Things, but then they didn't call him names because he was too good.

From "Latest Howlers," by Cecil Hunt.

Youth and Christianity

ONE of the more blatant characteristics of a large proportion of the pre-war generations is a thinly-veiled hostility to the activities, mental and physical, of modern youth. An entire lack of any attempt at sympathetic understanding is evinced by the whole-hearted and rather selfish condemnation levelled at Youth's attitude to Christianity in general, and the Church in particular. The mere fact that many young people are unattracted by the doctrines of Christianity as portrayed in the Church, and the life they see around them, by no means justifies the older generations in adapting a superior and judiciary attitude to what they superciliously condemn as a wave of callous paganism breaking over youth. Rather should they examine more closely their own lives, and see what interpretation of Christianity they have set before youth.

The openness of mind which youth brings to the problem enables it to form a somewhat idyllic and probably more accurate, estimate of the true principles of Christianity, than more mature reflection can achieve. With these principles in mind, what must youth's reaction be to such modern problems as armaments? It sees so-called Christian people manufacturing, and, until recently, openly exporting war materials to combatants, regardless of who or what they are; Christians virtually encouraging nations to kill and maim one another in order to increase someone's bank balance; it sees these same Christians exporting hand-grenades that may some day be used to mangle and blow into thousands of unrecognisable pieces their own countrymen. Examples of this type of thing can be multiplied hundreds of times; is it, therefore, surprising that youth sees something wrong in every-day Christianity, and shuns it? Christmas is, at least in Christian theory, the time of peace and goodwill. How can youth reconcile that with the principle behind an item of news which appeared in a prominent daily newspaper a day or two previous to Christmas, 1934, to the effect that the shipyards of the Mersey and the Clyde were anticipating, as a Christmas gift, orders for the construction of new warships? Admittedly ironical, but one cannot condemn youth for despising a Christianity whose offering of peace and goodwill takes the shape of warships.

What of the Church itself? Here, again, youth is confronted with the antithetical problem of reconciling the Church's theoretical antagonism to war and bloodshed with the knowledge that the Church was, or, at least, until very recently, had been, in receipt of a considerable income from armament firms. Admittedly the Church has, so far as was possible, vindicated its position by repudiating such sources of income, but the mischief has been done; the Church has accepted money from firms dealing in bloodshed and death. Youth cannot be expected to reconcile that with Christianity. Even more potent in alienating young people from the Church is the knowledge that there are still many clergymen whose satisfying balance at the bank is due in some measure to the fact that some armament firm is paying a substantial dividend; a dividend wrung from the blood of human beings.

While Christianity remains a doctrine of word but not of deed for many people; while those whose duty it is to care for the spiritual welfare of a nation are, in some cases, virtual traffickers in human beings; while there is any connexion at all between armaments and the Church; how can intelligent youth be condemned for repudiating the Church? The criticisms of pre-war generations—pregnant with jealous

selfishness—are largely invalid. Youth is not fundamentally pagan; it is just unable to reconcile the essentials of Christianity with their modern interpretation.

J.S.C.G.

An Omission from Genesis

CHAPTER VII.

1. And at evening Noah said to his wife: Go to. Am I a minder of animals? Have I not sons who walk before me in the care of the beasts, both clean and unclean?
2. So of an evening Noah said: Let no person or creature or whatsoever draweth breath come nigh unto me, for it pleaseth me to write up the Log of the Ark.
3. For Noah had made a desk of gopher wood. Two cubits high was the desk, whose top was a cubit in breadth and a cubit and a span in length.
4. Moreover he made a stool for the desk. Of gopher wood was the stool, a cubit and a span high, with the top thereof a span.
5. And Noah cunningly wrought the desk and stool of carpenter's work. And because that he had to sit upon the stool Noah rounded his corners and his edges.
6. Furthermore, that the splinters of the stool and the desk might not prick his skin Noah polished their surface; with polish mingled of the wax of the bee and the turp of the pine polished he them.
7. For he said: It seemeth me good that I sit upon the stool at the desk, and be still and at ease.
8. Now before he entered into the Ark Noah had prepared him a book. Of the dry pith of the papyrus were the leaves thereof, of a span wide.
9. And he took him thin boards of gopher wood, and fair linen and the skin of a calf, wherewith he bound together the leaves of papyri.
10. Then said Noah: Behold, none but I, even I, shall write therein.
11. So he inscribed upon the cover of the book the word Log in his own hand, of letters an ell high.
12. And Noah caused to be made within the Ark a cabin. None might enter therein but Noah, neither might any look upon the log; to read what Noah had writ therein.
13. Moreover Noah had placed within the cabin the stool and the desk with the Log thereon, and a pen, of the sort called fount, because that it never drieth up if kept filled.
14. And Noah commanded his sons and his wife, and his sons' wives, saying: Let no person come near my cabin when I write my Log, or he shall be cursed.
15. Moreover Noah spake the word, saying: Of the creatures which sojourn in the Ark, both clean and unclean, those that creep after their kind, and those that walk after their kind, and those that fly after their kind, not one shall enter the cabin wherein I write my Log, or it shall be cursed.
16. So of an evening Noah entered into his cabin and sat upon his stool at his desk, to write the Log of the voyaging of the Ark for that day.
17. But the door of the cabin he left ajar, saying: peradventure the creatures fight after their kind, and there be a rumpus, the greatness whereof my sons cannot quell.
18. Wherefore it may be that I shall perforce need to go forth and speak the strong words, whereby the tumult is subdued, for all things are under my hand.
19. But the dogs which had no name were quiet beyond the manner of dogs, uttering no sound, content to lie under the table and receive aught at the

hands of Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives.

20. But at the hands of Noah received they a goodly portion.

21. For Noah said: Behold these dogs without name. They are an example to my sons, and my wife, and my sons' wives, for they neither whine nor beg, wherefore give I them a goodly portion.

22. But Noah's sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives smiled in scorn.

23. Save Ham, who grinned from one ear even unto the other, after the manner of his posterity even unto this day.

24. Now it came to pass as Noah wrote in his Log that the dogs which lacked a name came to the door of his cabin, two of their kind, even male and female.

25. And seeing the door ajar they put their noses unto the space, whereby they smelled the savour of him which cast unto them goodly portions.

26. Whereat they could not be restrained, but pushing open the door wider they entered in and lay by the desk with sighs of content.

27. Then was Noah's anger at first kindled when he perceived the door being thrust open by two creatures.

28. But seeing them to be the dogs which had no name he refrained from cursing, and suffered them to lie, knowing that they were silent of tongue.

29. Now the fountpen wherewith Noah wrote was not of cunning workmanship.

30. But it delivered the ink in blobs, whereby the fair whiteness of the Log was fouled.

31. Or it dried up at the wrong season, so that no words could be inscribed upon the page.

32. Wherefore was Noah wroth, and lifted up his voice, saying: Cursed be he that fashioned this pen. When the rain of the Flood descendeth upon him may he then know how this pen blotteth.

33. And when the waters do not assuage may he wish for them to dry up as suddenly as this pen which he devised ill.

34. Wherefore Noah shook the pen with great violence as he repeated the damnatory words, whereat the dogs without a name twitched their ears.

35. And Lo and behold! Suddenly the ink spirted from the nib, descending in blobs upon the backs of the dogs without a name.

36. But they, being creatures of humility in the presence of their master, did but lift the lid of one eye and lower it again.

37. Wherefore is that action called unto this day a wink, because that it was caused by the wet ink which Noah shook upon their backs.

38. Then was Noah's anger appeased and his wrath softened.

39. And he called his sons and his wife and his sons' wives unto him.

40. Saying: Of a truth I have not seen such patience or trust in any creature, no, not in all which entered the Ark, whether of humankind or beast.

41. Wherefore shall these dogs without name be honoured of man, and allowed to enter freely into all his habitations.

42. And Noah's wife said: Yea, verily, and because they took the spots of ink upon their backs, whereby the polish which I put upon the floor is unhurt they shall lie unrebuked under man's table and receive of his hands the goodliest portions.

43. But Ham was an undutiful son.

44. And when he heard the words of his father he grinned from ear even unto ear, so that his mouth bore likeness unto a large slice of watermelon.

45. Wherefore Noah cursed his son Ham, saying:

Thy seed shall pray that they had skins as white as the whiteness of the dogs without a name.

46. Moreover, the spots of black shall remain upon their backs for ever as a testimony to them, so that the sons of Ham shall wish they had as little black upon them, and were as loved of man, as these dogs without name.

47. But Shem and Japhet smile privily at the dogs without a name, having spots upon their backs whereunto Noah shook the ink from his fountpen.

48. Moreover the sons of Noah repeated with laughter the cursing words which their father had uttered against the fountpen.

49. Wherefore are the dogs called Dalmatians even unto this day.

A.R.W.

Worth-while Biography

Gerald, A Portrait, by Daphne du Maurier (Gollancz, 10s. 6d.) is a book which interests apart from its theme. It raises once more the question of the whole duty of a biographer. The Voltairean maxim that to the dead we owe nothing but justice, appeared revolting to the early Victorians, and unkind to the mid-Victorians. The late Victorians, however, were hearing the word Truth reiterated rather tiresomely; even Tennyson had written *Better die than lie*. The fact had to be faced that there had sprung up a strange new genus possessed of a passion for truth, at a time when enthusiasm for anything was definitely *démodé* and un-English. Froude, and other early experimentalists in this school, had an uncomfortable quarter of an hour. Up to their time, when Eminence departed this earth, tremendous care was exercised in seeing to it that the "official" biographer was bound fiercely by ties of kinship or friendship. Then there was a sure and certain hope that the choice of facts would be "discriminating." No tag met with livelier acceptance than *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*.

As a consequence the "official" biography, like most other things so labelled, has become deservedly suspect, and those who want the truth consult such a volume mainly as a compendium of dates and chronological sequence, the remainder being discounted. When "loyalty" called, the biographer distorted the facts with almost as little conscience as a modern press man. A few years ago a book appeared which met with general abuse because it purported to throw light on (amongst other things) the domestic relations of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Dickens. "Why rake this up?" was the querulous plaint of those who regard facts as the most plastic and accommodating of media. The answer is that there are large numbers of people who are interested in Charles Dickens, the man, and not at all in Charles Dickens, the myth. It affords them no kind of satisfaction that Mrs. Dickens should suffer an injustice in order that the conventional Dickensian halo should be preserved. If one is told that it is Dickens who matters and not his wife, then the retort must be that this position is not only indefensible, it is not decent. It should be interesting—it might even be helpful—to learn how any public man met, or failed to meet, his domestic difficulties. Those who love Dickens will love him in spite of his faults, and, if he be grand enough, because of his faults. Again, if our affection for an author is primarily because of his artistry, the merits of *David Copperfield* remain the same, be the writer black, white, or, as is invariably the case, a shade of grey. Different things must be kept apart, a trite maxim, much honoured in the breach.

Many have loved Gerald du Maurier, who never met him save as a mummer. They feel confident that his representation of Harry Dearth in *Dear Brutus*, for instance, told them something about him, and that without any outrage to his artistry. They will find from this volume that their impression was sound—he was the dearest of men:—

He wished to know more about birds. He wished he knew what went on at the back of a bird's mind. Did they only think of food and sleep, or did they get fond

of each other? Of course that was the only thing that mattered really. The whole meaning of life boiled down to one thing: affection; being fond of another. Men and women. Not necessarily being physical, but being companions, swinging hands, yawning in company, eating side by side, saying, as one picked one's teeth or scratched one's head, "A funny thing happened this morning driving the car"; little intimacies, little conversations, humming a tune; not talking; eating cold beef and cos lettuce.

If one could do that in life one had not done so badly. If one could do that, living was worth while.

This extract from a letter of his, written after the war had been raging a few months, expresses one of the most horrible memories of the war—a memory apt to be covered up in that welter of blood, mud and misery—the almost wholesale demoralization of a nation:—

People under the influence of drink—in their cups, as it is called—are supposed to show their true selves, but in times of war you get them absolutely under a microscope. Anyone who says a sweet, pleasant, sensible thing at the present moment deserves a Victoria Cross. Nobody that I have come across has earned one yet.

Few felt bereavement more poignantly than he, but he did not go a-haunting after the moon; that was not the du Maurier way:—

He had no faith and no belief. He knew his loved ones were dust, and he would never see them again, and he put them from him and plunged into his own life that seemed so futile sometimes, so very un-worth-while, good only for the very work it entailed, giving him some sense of achievement, however paltry, however small.

Peculiarly noticeable is the communion of spirit between him and Charles Lamb:—

Sun and sky, and breeze, and solitary walks, and summer holidays, and the greenness of fields, and the delicious juices of meats and fishes, and society, and the cheerful glass, and candle-light, and fireside conversations, and innocent vanities, and jests, and *irony itself*—do these things go out with life?

Can a ghost laugh, or shake his gaunt sides, when you are pleasant with him?*

Can a ghost laugh, or shake his gaunt sides, when you are pleasant with him? One knows that Gerald du Maurier asked himself precisely the same question and could find no comforting answer.

Some wavering line of consistency is necessary to make a human being entirely satisfactory, and we miss this somehow in Gerald. He went through life, ambling along the paths of least resistance; but he walked gracefully, scrupulously observing the rules of the road, and he smiled whenever he could—even when his heart was heavy—for he knew it helped others a little. It was his kind of courage. His father, George du Maurier, had managed to steal into the hearts of Englishmen. He too, without an effort, endeared himself to them. His daughter, in this volume, has done well by him, and by not allowing her filial devotion to dull her perception of what constitutes the highest of all the loyalties, has done nothing but honour to a high tradition.

T.H.E.

Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SPIRITUAL WELFARE

SIR,—Mr. Cohen's article, page 178, in current issue of *Freethinker* reads: "In prison the spiritual needs of every prisoner is looked after with the utmost care . . . but the Government takes care that his religious development shall not suffer during his incarceration," etc.

Does not the same condition exist among the men of the Royal Navy?

Does not the Government look after their spiritual welfare, and pay for it, endorsing their Service Certificate with the holders religious belief, and sees that he attends

* *Essays of Elia. New Year's Eve.*

Divine Service for the worship of Almighty God?

If an endeavour is justified to get fair treatment for prisoners, is it not more so for the men of the Royal Navy?

The stumbling block is an Act of Parliament.

A short time ago the Welfare Committee R.N. approached the Lords of the Admiralty with a request that attendance at Divine Service be voluntary and not compulsory. The request was at once turned down, and the Committee were informed that such a request must never be submitted again. The Naval Discipline Act was on the Statute Book and the Admiralty had no option but to see that the Act was obeyed.

If fair treatment cannot be given to Freethinkers, owing to lack of numbers, would you advise as per Luke xviii. 5?

W. WEARING.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

OUTDOOR

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.30, Sunday, Mr. E. Gee. 3.30, Messrs. Wood, Bryant, Gee and Tuson. *Freethinker* on sale outside Park Gates, and literature to order.

INDOOR

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, Hall No. 5, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4): 7.30, F. P. Corrigan—"Superstitions of To-day."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, John A. Hobson, M.A.—"The Sense of Fair Play."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham, S.E.): 7.0, The Norwood Ladies' Choir—Conductor, Miss Walter.

STUDY CIRCLE (63 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, April 1, Mr. P. Goldman—"The Position of Freethought To-day." Last meeting this season.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. ("The Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, A. P. Leacy—"Secularism, its Purpose and Effects."

COUNTRY

INDOOR

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Cobden Hall, Cort Street, Blackburn): 7.0, Mr. J. Clayton—"An Hour with the 'Golden Bough.'"

BRADFORD SECULAR SOCIETY (Godwin Commercial Hotel, Godwin Street, Bradford): 7.0, Mrs. M. Ferguson—"Religion in Soviet Russia."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. Jack Clayton—"An Hour with the 'Golden Bough.'"

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Open Night. Leaders, Mr. W. H. McEwan. *Freethinker* and other literature on sale at all meetings.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Frau M. Sarau—"Hitler and Christianity."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Milton Hall, 12a Daulby Street, Liverpool, off London Road, by the Majestic Cinema): 7.0, J. V. Shortt (Liverpool)—"Militant Freethought."

MIDDLESBROUGH: 7.0, Tuesday, April 2, Mr. J. T. Brighton A Lecture.

NELSON BRANCH N.S.S. (Weavers' Lecture Room, Nelson): 7.45, Debate. *Affir.*: Mr. R. Bloomer. *Neg.*: Mr. J. Clayton. "Is the Bible a Reliable Guide for Life?"

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.0, A Lecture.

TEES-SIDE BRANCH N.S.S. (Jubilee Hall, Leeds Street, Stockton): 7.0, Mr. Chapman Cohen—"Do the Dead Live." Reserved Seats 6d. each.

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

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up.

All who join the Society participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest.

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Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords in *re Bowman and Others v. the Secular Society, Limited*, in 1917, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

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