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

Views and Opinions

Common Sense and the Supernatural

If anyone wishes to read an account of the tracking down of an almost typical ghost-story, circumstantially told, and by those who offer no reason for thinking they were guilty of deliberate deception, we heartily commend *The Mystery of Versailles*, by J. R. Sturge-Whiting, with a foreword by Mr. Harry Price, the well-known expert on "Psychic" tomfooleries. (Rider & Co., 10s. 6d.). Here is a story of the "psychic" (it would not be nearly so attractive to use the word "mental," or "ghostly") experiences of two ladies whom one can credit with complete honesty. Yet when their story is traced down as Mr. Sturge-Whiting has done it, there can be no doubt in the mind of the unprejudiced reader that the "experience" rests on no better foundation than the play of the untrained imagination of two ladies, and an unconscious exaggeration and distortion of a very ordinary experience. This last sentence, by the way, suggests our calling attention to a very common omission to these ghost stories, whether told by believers or rejected by unbelievers. This is the lack of any attempt to provide what a doctor would call a "case history" of the people who are the principal agents in these adventures. And yet, whether one believes in the narrated experiences of the ghost-world or not, a knowledge of the physical and mental history of the persons involved is essential. Why do some people have these alleged experiences and not others? The answer that it is all fraud will certainly not do in these days when so much is known of the psychological side of human nature. To say that the people engaged are often honest, carries no weight whatever. The most absurd beliefs are honestly held by myriads. The human race has been in existence for hundreds of thousands of years. Thousands of millions of men and women have died, and, if the spirit-world exists, have all gone there. All these dead persons might

have communicated with those living, and looking at the probabilities of the case—assuming there is a ghost-world—the fact of its existence should by now be a universally accepted truth. Instead of this being the case, if we set on one side the formal belief in a future life, the number of those who believe in communication with the dead is a comparative handful. The evidence for telling fortunes by tea-leaves, or by the stars, is almost as impressive.

* * *

Ghost-Hunting

To get down to Mr. Sturge-Whiting's spiritual detective work. In 1901 two ladies, one English the other French, together visited the Palace of Versailles. While there they went, as most visitors do, to the Trianons. The story of the supernatural vision with which the book before us deals, is concerned with the Petit Trianon, with which the name of Marie Antoinette is closely associated. The lack of knowledge of the personal character and tastes of the two ladies which is, as we have said, a very important consideration to a wholly scientific analysis, is wanting, but it is to be noted that they are said to have had historic interests, and that is worth remembering. The account of the experience of the two ladies was not published until 1911, ten years after the vision, and none of the events named was even mentioned to each other until a week had passed. Their story runs thus.

As they approached the Petit Trianon a feeling of depression seemed to come over them, the trees and scenery took on an unreal artificial aspect, there was a condition of sullen stillness. As they went along they were overtaken by a young man, breathless through running after them, who directed them to turn left and "Cherchez la maison." Following instructions the ladies entered a narrow grotto, and passing a stone kiosk they observed a repulsive-looking man whose face was heavily marked by small-pox. He was afterwards identified as the Comte de Vaudrenil, known to have been attached to the court in 1789. They also saw a lady sitting on the terrace sketching. It afterwards struck these ladies that this lady might have been identified with Marie Antoinette. The men seen afterwards similarly became officials of the court. The ladies do not appear to have at once commented on what they had seen but, suspecting a mystery, both of them wrote down their experiences. Other details do not matter very much, but about a year later they visited Versailles again, when to their amazement they found that the grotto and the kiosk had disappeared, as had other features of the landscape. They had been demolished for many years. Then the two ladies set to work checking their experiences, and the whole story was published in 1911, under the title of *An Adventure*.

Mr. Harry Price, the well-known investigator of "psychic" mysteries (these things would lose a deal

of glamour if they were approached as examinations of stories of the supernatural) writes a preface to Mr. Sturge-Whiting's book, and pronounces *An Adventure* as "one of the classics of psychic literature"—the language is worth noting. And he adds that the story has persisted because no one has had the time to go carefully over the ground. He also says that Mr. Sturge-Whiting has proved the whole story to be based on nothing better than "faulty perception, lapses of memory, and an irresistible subconscious urge to accept a supernatural explanation of an occurrence when a normal one was available, plus a certain credulity." These factors, he says are responsible for the *Adventure* ever being heard of.

It would be unfair to the author to state his complete exposure of this "psychic" marvel. It is quite an interesting piece of detective work, and the disentanglement of the blunder makes an instructive study. All that was required for the creation of this "classic of psychic literature," were two rather imaginative ladies with a not too exact understanding of history, clothing the Petit Trianon, and its association with kings and queens with an atmosphere of romance, and filling the gaps in their alleged experience with details that were probably never dreamed about until sometime after they are alleged to have occurred. And when all is done Mr. Price is, I believe, correct in his conclusion when he says that "many people prefer the bunk to the de-bunk," while the shout of "Iconoclast" will be raised.

* * *

Who is Responsible?

Of course very many people will prefer the crude superstition of the ghosts of a queen and her gardeners and the magical reconstruction of landscape that disappeared long ago. Credulity loves these things and knaves fatten on credulity. But are these "psychic" investigators—Mr. Price, Mr. Sturge-Whiting, and others, altogether free from responsibility in the matter? Where is the justification of these elaborate "scientific" examinations of ghost stories that are continually thrust upon us? Does it ever do anything other than produce the impression on those who believe in this kind of thing that there is, after all, something in it? A man who is in search of gold may dig in a score of places without coming across the slightest trace of "colour." But we know that gold does exist and that digging is a form of acquiring it. We may therefore enquire into the probability of a story that we come across, without implying that we have some kind of doubt about its probable truth. On the other hand, if a man comes to us with a tale that his favourite cow has ceased to give milk, and that is due to her having been bewitched by some old woman, we do not feel called upon to hold an inquest as to what power the said old woman has exerted over the lacteal efficiency of the said cow. We need not believe the man to be a liar, but we know he is mistaken without enquiring where a particular old woman was on a certain date, and what she was doing, and measuring the quality and quantity of the milk given before and after the incantation. Everyone would think, and rightly, that such procedure was merely wasting time and encouraging silly superstition. No psychologist would be surprised to learn that some habitual investigators come in the end to have a sneaking belief in the marvels they are dealing with.

So when Mr. Price says that he and Mr. Joad went carefully over the ground to test the story told by the two ladies, but owing to their being pressed for time, had to suspend judgment, one hardly knows who is most worthy of a smile—the poor ladies who permitted their fancies to run away with them, or Messrs. Joad

and Price, who go ghost-hunting whenever a new case is brought before them. How many cases do these spook detectives require before they cease to look for objective evidence that has no existence, and settle down to discuss the psychological conditions (get rid of that bastard and foolish term "psychic") that enable certain people to find the supernatural in all sorts of directions? As things go the Prices and the Joads and others will be looking out for ghosts at the opening of the twenty-first century—assuming they were to live as long, and still will refrain from saying, as we now say of the agency of the devil, and witches flying through the air on broomsticks, that we know that these "spiritual" occurrences do not happen, and that the only object of enquiry which arises when these cases are brought before us is to determine the conditions, social and psychological, that make such beliefs possible.

I think that for an explanation of the situation three things may be noted. First, one may observe the difference of attitude which most people adopt when the supernatural is in question. Tell an ordinary man that you saw the spirit of your dead mother walking down the stairs at midnight, and, in five cases out of six he will wonder whether it is true or not, and will repeat the story as though it might have been true. Tell the same individual that you saw a man crawling on his stomach from Ludgate Circus to St. Paul's Cathedral, and he will probably tell the first mutual friend he meets that you are a good deal of a liar. The probable is doubted, the improbable or impossible is accepted as being very likely true. There is an impulsive response of most people to the primitive.

Next, on the lower scale, the fact that one "investigates" (whether one has or has not the qualities or the knowledge necessary to investigate never seems to strike most people) gives one a public advertisement that many jump at, and enables them to pose as impartial where impartiality and understanding are quite incompatible. And on the higher level—at least the less dishonourable one—there is the element of superstition that exists with the vast majority of people. One need only take note of one's friends and acquaintances in any walk of life, to note the interest taken in stories of the supernatural, the hardly concealed interest in lucky days or colours, the evidently not mathematical attraction of chance happenings, of warnings and premonitions, the attachment to mascots from sacred relics to little images that are hawked all over the country, to note how deeply-rooted in most people is the legacy we have received from the jungle. In its most favourable aspect this running round "investigating" stories of ghosts and messages from the dead, is at least an admission of the probability of some of them being true. "Investigation" is a quite inapplicable term here, since the investigator hardly ever has the qualifications that would make his investigations of any great value—except in the detection of obvious fraud. Writing books about this or that investigation has never, so far as we have been able to discover, had the effect of correcting anyone's belief in the supernatural—under its fashionable disguise of the "super-normal." Generally the interpretation given by the investigators is rejected by the believers, and when the investigation is inconclusive, the probability of what has been asserted is taken as evidence of its genuineness. Mr. Price rightly says that most people prefer the "bunk" to the debunk, and when the "debunkers" assume the probable truth of the class of beliefs that are to be officially "debunked," the outlook is not very cheerful. It is about time we left off treating the absurd as even being probably true.

The Fulcrum of Fear

"Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts, unutterably vain;
Worthless as withered weeds,
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main."

Emily Brontë.

A CAMEL'S hair tent in the desert was the precursor of the Christian cathedral, and a few howling Dervishes the forerunners of the popes, patriarchs, and cardinals who bestrode Europe for so many centuries. From such humble beginnings emerged that gigantic system of Priestcraft which is associated with the Christian Religion. In our own day this system has become a vested interest of such importance that in comparison other financial businesses seem merely amateurish.

What was it that caused this evolution from primitive Eastern beginnings to the acquisition of almost unquestioned sovereignty over men's minds and bodies so long enjoyed by priests? The priests themselves wish people to think that it was due to divine guidance. The real reason is that priests seized temporal power, and the lever which they used was simply that of fear. Looked at critically, the powerful Christian Churches are nothing more or less than gigantic fire insurance societies. Priests threatened men with all the horrors of fiery hell, and men were so terrified that they paid almost anything to avoid so terrible a calamity. In the early desert days hell was unimagined, but the original priests, like the Bedouins, were neither very truthful nor very honest. Man fashioned his gods according to his intelligence, and the boasted monotheism of the Semitic people was due, not to their vaunted superior spiritual insight, but simply to the plain fact that they were nomads, and could not be cumbered with many idols. It was many centuries later, under vastly different conditions, that later priests added the tangle of the Trinity and the horrors of hell to the simple theology of the earlier form of religion. To the primitive Hebrew, man was mortal. He lived a few, brief days and went down into the silence. But Jahveh, the tutelary god of Oriental nomads, became, in due time, the three-headed deity of Christendom and the silence of the grave was now filled with an imaginary heaven, hell, and purgatory, and the coffers of the priests with real gold.

Priestcraft could never have exercised such authority, such tyranny, such blackmail, unless the masses of men had been exceedingly ignorant and very superstitious. Indeed, they stampeded like frightened sheep. The priestly idea of hell scared them, and they believed that salvation was only to be found in the Christian Church. Heresy was regarded as the foulest of all crimes, and the punishment was death by fire. Priests defended their religion by torture and murder. The pages of history would have been cleaner, finer, and more humane, without the machinations and brutalities of Priestcraft.

All this time Priests were amassing wealth "beyond the dreams of avarice." The imposition of tithes, the "sacred tenth" on agriculture, alone must have realized thousands of millions of money. There was also an immense traffic in bogus relics with alleged miraculous virtues. Shrines, too, must have brought a large revenue to the priests. Then, as now, priests were the very princes of beggars, and the truest symbol of religion has ever been the clutching hand and the alms-dish. In our own day, as has been pointed out, the difference between a theatre and a church is that you pay to go in the one, and you pay to get out of the other.

The exploitation of fear by the Christian clergy is an unpardonable crime against humanity. Ever

since the dawn of the Christian Superstition the fear of death and of pain has increased among the dwellers in the great cities. Fear of death scarcely exists among Asiatics because, living in the open, their experiences tell them that death and life are ever entwined in a struggle for mastery; that the victorious soldier of to-day is the corpse of to-morrow. Under Asiatic skies death is regarded as being as natural and as benign as birth. Dwellers in towns necessarily acquire their knowledge of nature from books or from superficial and fleeting observation. For five months in every year Nature is represented by fog, rain, and snow, and the necessity for fires and artificial lighting. Dwellers in mean streets have no chance of meditating on the rigid processes of natural law.

The clergy exploit this ignorance to the uttermost. Death is, according to these oracles, the "King of terrors." They heighten the effect by appealing to the fears of their hearers, and use an imaginary "Devil" and a horrible hell as a lever. The terror such stories inspire is largely owing to the grossest ignorance which surrounds the subject of death. Men fear it, like children do the dark, through not knowing what it is. The fear of the night can be dissipated by a little light. Death would be no bugbear if it were known better. And nobody is there to tell people, except a small number of devoted Freethinkers, who are anathema to all the Churches of Christendom. The sermons from the clergy, prehistoric in thought and inflated with utter nonsense, deal in gross exaggerations and sheer misrepresentations. "The wages of sin is death" is one of their precious ideas of wisdom. The clergy is hopelessly out of touch with modern men and common sense. Hence their churches and chapels are emptying of men. The "cure of souls" is passing from these charlatans into the hands of the physician. For psychology tells us that a healthy body and a healthy mind go together.

For nearly two thousand years Christian priests have shouted that death is a dreadful thing, and warned their flocks of the awful perils of the hereafter. But the Freethinker knows that this is one of the many tricks of their sorry trade. Death is as natural as birth. It is the universal law of Nature, which befalls all living beings, though the vast majority encounter it much sooner than man. Thanks to the growth of popular Freethought, the priests are beginning to be found out. The hope that an ignorant and superstitious minority can always bend the Intellectuals to its will is sheer illusion. The fires of hell are fading, the terror of death is passing, because the Christian Superstition is decaying.

To visionaries like Catherine of Siena, or Emanuel Swedenborg, it may have been different, but to the uncultured masses in Christian countries death has been, and still is, the King of Terrors, from whose approach they cower in an agony which Confucius, Epictetus, Plato, and Socrates, would have scorned with lifted eyebrows. Recall how the grand old Pagans look death in the face without flinching. Epictetus says with proud dignity:—

Why should we fear death? For where death is, there are we not; and where we are, death is not.

No less emphatic is Marcus Aurelius, who gave us "the gospel of those who do not believe in the supernatural." He bids us regard death as a friend:—

What is it to die? If we view it by itself, and stripped of those imaginary terrors in which our fears have dressed it, we shall find it to be nothing more than the mere work of Nature; but it is childish folly to be afraid of what is natural. Nay, it is not only the work of Nature, but is conducive to the good of the universe, which subsists by change.

For scores of generations priests have chanted the old, sad, disheartening refrain of death as an enemy, but the Freethinker listens to far other and wiser voices. Paying no heed to "the lie at the lips of the priest," he dies without fear:—

"Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

MIMNERMUS.

The Development of Democracy in Ancient Athens

THE early achievements of far-famed Athens were comparatively humble. Yet, this classical city community ultimately excelled all rival Grecian communities in science, art, letters and philosophy. Her leading contemporary and antagonist—Sparta—remained agricultural, military and despotic, while Athens systematically developed her natural resources, her superior geographical position, and evolved a distinctly democratic form of government.

The soil of Attica, especially in the valley of Eleusis, was fairly fertile, and the vine and olive flourished. The hills were well wooded, and furnished timber for ship-building. There were lead and silver mines, but Attica had neither iron nor copper. Fine clay was available to the potter, while the quarries of Pentelicus and other regions supplied the stone, marble and lime essential for the erection of temples, monuments and dwellings.

Attica, like Sparta, enjoyed the advantage of a relatively wide territory in which to expand. Access to the sea was made easy by her two harbours, Phalerum and the Piræus. The military and social reforms of Sparta were attributed to Lycurgus, the chief foundations of Attica's prosperity were ascribed traditionally to Theseus, who was said to have welded into one composite State, the previously semi-independent communities of that territory. Athens then became the centre of political and industrial life. The ancient kingship had been gradually superseded by the development of a powerful aristocracy in the various communities, and consolidation became inevitable when the rising State was menaced by domestic and foreign foes. Tradition tells that these changes were peacefully conducted and were entirely unlike the violent upheavals occurring in neighbouring lands.

About 650 B.C. the priestly king was deposed by the aristocracy from temporal rulership, but retained his spiritual functions. Civic control became the prerogative of the polemarch and archon who were originally permanent officials. Then their tenure was gradually lessened, until it became the Athenian custom to limit the term of office of these magistrates to a single year. These functionaries were now subjected to election by the *ecclesia*, the popular assembly composed of all free citizens. A council of elders co-operated with the archons and administered both religious and secular affairs. This body formed the famous Areopagus, named after the hill on which its conclaves were conducted. Yet, thus far, this assembly was overwhelmingly aristocratic in composition.

With these modifications in the system of government, there slowly emerged a transformed social structure. In the words of the Russian historian, Professor Rostovtzeff, in his *History of the Ancient World* (Oxford University Press): "The ancient division into four tribes, phratries, and families was retained; but a further redistribution was made into three social and economic groups. The first of these contained the large landowners, the second the

traders and artisans who lived in the city, and the third the smallholders. At the same time the political rights and military duties of each citizen began to be reckoned not by his birth but by his property and income. The aristocracy became a timocracy. . . . The landowning aristocracy who had originally borne the whole burden of defending the country, was inclined to shift a part of this burden to the shoulders of other well-to-do citizens, and to concede to them in return a part of their own political rights."

Other changes were taking place. Athenians who cultivated their own vineyards and olive groves now appeared, while the industrial and commercial orders became conspicuous. A form of capitalism had been established, but the prosperity of the petty cultivator was jeopardized through his inability to provide money to enable him to replenish his livestock and embark on other agricultural improvements. The interest on loans was highly excessive, while the harsh laws relating to debt were administered by unsympathetic landowners and rapacious usurers. Ruin not only stared the small cultivator in the face, but insolvency deprived him of his property and his free citizenship alike. Fortunate were the impoverished farmers who were permitted to cultivate their former estates as tenants who toiled for the very men who had been further enriched by their ruin. Also, the leasehold system was utterly iniquitous. The working tenant had a legal right to no more than one-sixth of his produce.

Small wonder that the poverty-stricken classes grew more and more impatient with their lot. A cry arose demanding the redistribution of the soil, and the repeal of the laws governing debt. Armed insurrection resulted, and popular leaders strove to secure despotic control of civil and military administration. These commotions had the customary sequel, and throughout the Greek States as a whole, the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. may be regarded as periods of revolution and anarchy which were successively suppressed by the establishment of despotism.

But in Attica political and social changes of a far-reaching character were accomplished more smoothly than elsewhere. Even then Athena's city was distinguished by men of sterling merit and outstanding ability. Draco was one of these, and dim and shadowy as he appears in the Greek traditions, there was plainly some powerful personality who at least contributed to the earliest written Athenian Constitution.

With the later legislator, Solon, we emerge into the full light of history. Indeed, men of his calibre arose in several Greek States in the sixth century B.C. It is justly said that these were men "who had assimilated the results of Ionian culture, were thinkers and rationalists, who believe in the omnipotence of a government and statesmen to change social and economic relations, and who realize the effect of eloquence and literary propaganda." Some endeavoured to apply their grandiose schemes by forcible means. Solon, however, chose the legislative method, and important improvements stand to his credit, even if we reject all the legendary stories which gathered round his name.

Solon became archon in 594 B.C., when he proceeded to pass measures which formed the foundation of Athens' future progress. Agricultural lands surrendered by debtors to the mortgagee were to be restored to their original owners, whose financial liabilities were cancelled. Those reduced to slavery for debt were to recover their freedom. Also, it became a penal offence to advance loans on landed or personal security. The amount of land that any one person might possess was strictly limited, while serfdom or slavery for non-payment of debt was no longer permitted. The export of corn was prohibited so as to dis-

courage cereal cultivation on an extensive scale, render it unremunerative, and facilitate the increase of the smallholders of land. But important as these measures were, they pleased neither those who benefited by them nor those whose interests were assailed. The landed proprietors moaned over their losses, while the penurious cultivators were disappointed because the whole of the soil was not repartitioned and all debts cancelled. In the long run, however, the opulent classes prospered through the stimulus given to the production and export of wines and olive oil, while commerce and trading transactions in manufactures increased. Moreover, Athens established her own mints and adopted a standard system of weights and measures which greatly simplified business transactions.

Solon's innovations included the enfranchisement of the *hektes*, the lowest order of citizens, and a popular law court was established. At least in theory, the magistracy and legislation became the province of the citizens as a whole. Still, the interests of the upper classes were safeguarded, and the magistrates were chosen exclusively from the privileged order. The prerogatives of the Council of Elders—the Areopagus—remained intact, but a new body was attached to it. This assembly consisted of 400 members, one fourth of whom were selected from each of the four tribes which composed the Athenian State. This body prepared public measures for the consideration and ratification of the popular assembly.

These reforms, however, by no means suspended the social conflict, and the ensuing years witnessed constant strife. Yet Athens for the first time adopted a spirited foreign policy, the pursuit of which was destined in a later age to provoke the disastrous Peloponnesian War. But Athens now found a gifted military commander in Pisistratus, who conducted a successful campaign against Megara, and also added Salamis to the Athenian State. Acclaimed as a public benefactor, Pisistratus made himself leader of the minor cultivators of the soil, whose support enabled him in 561-560 B.C. to rise to supreme power. His government was unavoidably autocratic, but he was soon deposed and deported by the aristocratic and plutocratic magnates who combined against him. Still, a few years afterwards, Pisistratus returned and was welcomed by a powerful section of the community, only too anxious to secure the restoration of order in the distracted State. Pisistratus now ruled in Athens until his death in 528 B.C., when his sons Hippias and Hipparchus succeeded to his dignities and honours.

Resolute as was the rulership of Pisistratus, he did nothing to impair the democratic structures of his predecessor, Solon. For the aristocracy was seriously weakened by banishment, and much of their landed estate was transferred to poor citizens. Again, the aristocratic domination of the Areopagus was considerably diminished. With the decline of the old oligarchy, a reconstruction of civic life was made possible on wider democratic principles. Families and clans were replaced by a system under which the citizens were distinguished by their districts.

Under Pisistratus, Athens had risen in authority, and his sons carried on their father's policy. But they naturally lacked the capacity of their parent. Hipparchus became the victim of the conspiracy in which Harmodius and Aristogiton were the protagonists. Hippias then instituted repressive measures and assumed autocratic powers. In consequence, he became unpopular, so, with the aid of the ever envious Spartans and the exiled aristocrats at Delphi, the Athenians discarded Hippias and drove him abroad.

This alliance between aristocracy and democracy was soon shattered by civil disturbances. Cleisthenes sought to compose matters by introducing democratic

measures. But this so infuriated the patricians that they solicited the assistance of Sparta, the intrusion of whose troops only served to strengthen the standing of Cleisthenes. So the Spartans were driven away and the reformer given a free hand.

The most conspicuous feature of Cleisthenes' experiment was the introduction of the representative system. Demes or parishes adjoining towns and villages now became the leading electoral unit. These were now arranged in three groups. But the powers of the demes were very restricted, for: "All important matters, even of local interest, were discussed and decided at Athens by the central assemblies."

Still, in contradistinction to Sparta, Athens encouraged every free citizen to participate in political life. The slaves and the alien element resident in Attica were alone excluded from the franchise.

Cleisthenes' constitution began to operate in 502 B.C. Those who were sanguine enough to regard it as a panacea for all social and economic evils were soon disillusioned. The pronounced inequalities in the distribution of wealth remained, and the contending political parties were ever at variance. Yet, the bitterness of class envy and hatred was lessened, and largely eliminated, and a more philosophic outlook generated through Cleisthenes' remedial measures.

The administrative mechanism was no longer regarded by the masses as an unscrupulous and relentless enemy, but rather as something for which the Athenian citizen was directly or indirectly responsible. In fact, he himself was persuaded that the average elector formed part of the government machinery. It is not unfairly claimed that: "No Greek took such pride as the Athenian in his city and country; and nowhere else in Greece was the consciousness of citizenship or the feeling of true patriotism so strongly developed."

T. F. PALMER.

Nature Notes of a Freethinker

"The wild air bloweth in our lungs,
The keen stars twinkle in our eyes,
The birds gave us our wily tongues,
The panther in our dances flies."

From the "Romany Girl," by Ralph Waldo Emerson.

THERE must be a journey to the nearest market-town; it had become necessary to see the barber. And as he was very busy, what odds? The function would suit me this week or next week, as there was a second-hand book-shop over the way. From there I took away *The Unrisen Dawn*, by Anatole France, and *Views and Opinions*, by Ouida—dated 1896, for the price of a shilling. Having time in hand—gained by procrastination, we mounted a hill and made for a broad walk into the wood. A perambulator, minus wheels, very much battered, was lying in a ditch, and, continuing our walk by flowering crab and may trees, we reached a clearing where there were two tired looking horses. Then a scrubby-headed boy appeared. Then a tall dark man called out to know the time, and then from nowhere appeared a real daughter of Romany. Would I give her something to buy a drop of brandy for her sick baby? What odds again if it was gospel truth, or gypsy truth? I had saved money in postponing my hair-cut—and true or false there was the wherewithal for a drop of brandy. After one or two words in Romany, which were returned copiously, I offered to tell her fortune. She was handsome, with dark flashing eyes, hair parted in the middle, silky, and black as a raven. Her features were well-formed, and I think Augustus John could be the only one to do her justice on canvas. In the same artless way as their

clients she proffered her hand. I took it, and very elaborately scrutinized it. "There is not much luck on it," I said, pretending to be serious. "You have a lot of trouble—I can see four children." "Eight," she interrupted. It was a well-balanced hand, and according to all that is written, the owner of it had a good sense of the practical. Among pots and pans, clothes pegs, baskets, and eight children, how could it be any other? Yes, she used to play the fiddle. And then, at that moment, the husband came galloping up to us with a cheap coloured picture of Millet's *Angelus* for sale. And that concluded the fortune-telling. We bade them goodbye—and the picture did not change hands, but I can understand why that kind of picture should be the preference of a gypsy. Outcasts from India, and subsequently from all countries, they had no desire to exchange their way of living for what we call the civilized way; and their mode of life keeps them close to the earth. Not to the voluptuous heights of Rubens did Millet aspire; his apotheosis was made of the hoe and the mattock, the field and the hedge, and the struggle man had with the soil. And at the end of the day, I had a quiet laugh. Starting off with all intentions of being made respectable by the barber, I had divigated. But on that day, April 16, I heard the black-cap, I heard and saw the chaff-chaff, and also, to my way of thinking, that bird of some fabled paradise, the happy willow-wren. Borrow, who will give you mental health by reading him, states somewhere: "'Tis no use to go seeking after Gypsies. When you want to see them 'tis impossible to find one of them; but when you are thinking of other matters you see plenty, plenty of them.'"

The evening sun, through the window, fell on a big jug of bluebells. "Where did they come from?" "The gypsy woman brought them. She called this afternoon, dressed in a wonderfully good coat. She started to pitch a tale of grief over her lost baby, which apparently was one she had lost last year. Could I help her on her way by giving her any old clothes and a shilling? I would give her some old clothes, but, I said, my husband gave you half a crown a week last Saturday in the woods. Just at that moment the tame robin hopped on to the mat and she exclaimed, 'Oh, the little dear! Oh, the sweet pet! Fancy not being afraid! My word, this must be a godly house!' And I gave her an old bowler hat, an old blanket, and an old nightdress. She would insist on giving me three bunches of bluebells, and left reciting her usual piece of 'may you have good health, long life, and be very happy, me lady.'" In this matter of barter, we were all pleased; there is nothing romantic about a bowler hat. But, looked at squarely, a race of outcasts must have its wits sharpened by adversity; it must, of necessity, know all the weaknesses of those who are its patrons. And again, suppose one by sign or word to the gypsy conveys to him an understanding of his position? This, in my opinion, was the strength of Borrow and Leland. By sympathy, they both told the gypsy that he was in the life-stream. Caste and outcast! the mind trembles at the history of both. But I remember boxing with a gypsy at a fair, and he could have knocked my head off, but he didn't. And I still remember his smile as he was sparring; and that was many years ago—before I had learned that the first rule of life was injustice.

Whim seems to be the mover in the association of ideas. The tame robin was locked in the house accidentally for three hours. During that time he had made a grand tour of all the rooms and a chrysalis I had been carefully keeping was devoured by him; I shall

never know whether it was a red admiral or a tiger moth. Hunger of a bird cut short all speculations. But for some curious reason, when told of this, my mind reverted to a novel of Lyeskov, *On the Edge of the World*. A peasant accompanies a bishop on a journey and they are both caught in a snowstorm. The simple peasant without knowledge of abstract truth, but knowing the earth, saves himself and the bishop, but not before the son of the soil had eaten the Holy Elements—even including the sponge. Cowslips also recall the figure of Shakespeare's Imogen: The deep orange mark inside the floweret always reminds me of a woman who asked, "What is it to be false?" No spring comes when I can look into the water of clear running stream and see the movement of grasses unless I remember Swinburne's lines:—

"The full streams feed on flower of rushes,
Ripe grasses trammel a travelling foot." . . .

and it was a pleasure to come across a passage in Leland's *The Gypsies* on memory and association of ideas. I give it in full; it may be useful to students or readers, who will never regret making a closer acquaintance of an individual who was a man first and then a writer:—

On a summer day, when waking dreams softly wave before the fancy, it is pleasant to walk in the noon-stillness along the Thames, for then we pass a series of pictures forming a gallery which I would not exchange for that of the Louvre, could I impress them as indelibly upon the eye-memory as its works are fixed on canvas. There exists in all of us a spiritual photographic apparatus, by means of which we might retain accurately all we have ever seen, and bring out, at will, the pictures from the pigeon-holes of the memory, or make new ones as vivid as aught we see in dreams, but the faculty must be developed in childhood. So surely as I am now writing this will become, at some future day, a branch of education, to be developed into results of which the wildest imagination can form no conception, and I put the prediction on record. As it is, I am sorry that I was never trained to this half-thinking, half-painting art, since, if I had been, I should have left for distant days to come some charming views of Surrey as it appears in this decade.

Leland's memory picture of "The White Lion," at Cobham, where he met Samuel Petulengro, is more of a work of art than the place itself at present. He would have been surprised to-day, July 3, 1938, if he could have been present and heard the wireless "advertising stuff" from Normandy in an age where everyone has everything except a glimpse of the art of living. He would also have been interested to know the wiry, middle-aged man who was in the haunts of the gypsy, and had been doing trick horse-back riding at Aldershot. This would have cheered the heart of a Romany Rye like that possessed by Leland.

NICHOLAS MERE.

WESLEY'S TRIBUTE TO GLASGOW

It was Wesley's fortune to meet with an obstacle in Scotland more fatal than the fiercest opposition would have been. Had his followers been more generally opposed they would have multiplied faster; opposition would have inflamed their zeal; it was neglected and died away. "At Glasgow," he observes "I preached on the Old Green to a people the greatest part of whom HEAR MUCH, KNOW EVERYTHING, AND FEEL NOTHING." . . . "They were as unmoved by Wesley AS BY ONE OF THEIR OWN SCOTCH MISTS."—*Southey's "Life of Wesley,"* p. 99.

Novelists and Freethought

RECENT articles in secularist and half-secularist publications suggest that this subject is an interesting one. Of course we welcome all the support we can get from writers of fiction, though it is probable that on the whole there is still in such books as much that is as favourable as inimical to religion. And we remember the recent issue by an eminent living novelist of *The Fool hath Said*, as well as numerous other pronouncements in support of current theological beliefs—notably a clever article which has very lately appeared in a newspaper by one of the most famous writers of detective stories. But we cannot attach much value to the views of novelists, unless they show that they have at least a nodding acquaintance with the scientific, historical and other considerations which are necessary to intelligent judgment on the points involved.

Some passages from novels may be worth quoting merely for their bright humour. Such is the following from Crosbie Garstin's *High Noon*, spoken by a pirate captain when he was in hiding after shipwreck, concerning his narrow escapes from capture: "Providence will show a light; Providence. Seems to me you young fellows nowadays aint got enough faith. Now I was raised strictly religious and have put my trust in Providence all my life, and believe me, Säid, the number of times it has scooped me out of the jaws of the gallows are past counting, past counting. . . . There was that time off Teneriffe. I got becalmed in the midst of the East Indies fleet. . . . What did Providence do? Why sent a fog and I put forth sweeps and slipped away, leaving the India-men banging at their own shadows. . . . Then there was that *President* privateer. . . . She tore me up cruel. Swept me fore and aft with swivels loaded with old nails and musket balls. . . . Then what happened? A nine-pounder on her quarter-deck blew up, killing her captain, first mate, steersman and three gunners. Providence once more."

We can appreciate, in *Precious Bane*, by Mary Webb, the description of ridiculous occult practices, such as "sin-eating," and also references to superstitions which are not distinctively religious; as, for example, the pathetic outcry of the unfortunate girl who was afflicted with hare-lip: "How could I help it if a hare ran in front of my mother before I was born?" (The quotation is from memory and may not be word-perfect.)

But in general the more effective matter is, I take it, that which duly emphasizes facts and principles making for the rejection of theology and other mysticism. In an Indian novel a fine passage describes a group of lesser rock masses which stand out conspicuously from the general surface of the ground. These are fancifully likened to ghosts. But, it is added, "They are older than all spirit"—thus usefully suggesting the prehuman (geological) era.

Much better, however, are those found in H. G. Wells' later novels. And these are more highly to be valued because the author has abundantly displayed in *The Anatomy of Frustration* and elsewhere his comprehensive grasp of the course of development of theological ideas, and also the significance and effect of the fall before them—his own (a lapse into Deism, referred to in his autobiography), as well as that of other people. In *Star Begotten* we read: "Otherworldliness, the idea of a ghost world, a spirit world side by side with actuality. . . . Beside every man his spirit—which is not really there—beside the universe a Great Spirit. Whenever the mental going is a bit hard . . . we lose focus and slither off into Ghostland . . . half way to dreamland, where all rational checks are lost. In Ghostland, that world of spirit, you can find unlimited justifications for your impulses; unlimited evasions of rational obligation. . . . this persistent confusing dualism . . . we are full of fears, fears of primal curses and mystical sin, masochistic impulses to sacrifice and propitiate and kneel and crawl. . . . It has taken me half a lifetime to free even myself . . . from religious falsehood and from historical lies and from tradition."

A collection of such passages might form a useful anthology.

J. REEVES.

Acid Drops

The following passage which is taken from the Reminiscences of the Versailles Peace Conference by Lloyd George, now appearing in the *Daily Telegraph* is of more than passing interest. President Wilson, says Mr. Lloyd George, gave way to an "extraordinary outburst," in the course of which he said:—

Why has Jesus Christ so far not succeeded in inducing the world to follow his teachings in these matters? It is because he taught the ideal without devising any practical scheme of carrying out his aims. That is the reason why I am proposing a practical scheme to carry out his aims.

On this Mr. Lloyd George comments:—

Clemenceau slowly opened his dark eyes to their widest dimensions and swept them round the Assembly to see how the Christians gathered round the table enjoyed this exposure of the futility of their Master.

One can easily imagine the twinkle in the eyes of the Old Freethinker, listening, from a professed Christian, to what Freethinkers had so often been persecuted for saying. He was listening again to the religious fustian which was being hawked as real broadcloth. It is the cheap chatter of those who either lack the intellectual clarity to see what poor, unreal stuff it is, or who are wanting in the courage to break away from the old creed. And the cream of the joke is that the "futility" of Jesus was not used by Clemenceau, but by Lloyd George. We wonder what the parsonry will think of it?

Colonel R. E. Martin is Chairman of the Education Committee of the Leicestershire County Council, and has as much right in his private capacity to advertise his religion and to talk about it as anyone has. But he is certainly not justified in using his position as Chairman of the Education Committee to advertise his religion and to offer an implied insult to other people. It is a great pity that zeal for Christianity does not develop a conscientious discharge of one's public duties, and also an understanding of social life, in the absence of which no man is justified in holding any public office whatever.

For example, the other day, Colonel Martin spoke to the pupils of the Grammar School at Market Harborough, and he is reported in the *Leicester Mercury* as saying that the fault of many schools is that they have not enough religion. That alone was an expression that in such circumstances might have been better unsaid. But worse follows. The report goes on:—

Addressing the pupils, he said that without religion it is impossible for the human creature to reach, in this life, the level his creator intended him to reach, neither was it possible without religion for the people of this country to bear the responsibility this life inexorably put upon them. Never before was there a time when it was so necessary for people to keep their minds fixed wholly on what was right with strength and determination sustained by adherence to the Christian religion.

We do not imagine that Colonel Martin realizes it, but to many, what will strike them in these expressions is their downright impertinence. If Colonel Martin is not aware of people who have worked hard for all kinds of social reforms in Leicestershire, and who have played an honoured part in the history of the County, then he is totally unfit to be where he is. And the opinion that one cannot meet one's private or public duties without being buoyed up by a number of quite unprovable doctrines indicates a state of mind that certainly ought not to be occupying a position of importance in educational matters. Ignorance or impertinence is the only explanation.

The Bishop of Derby, for once, was responsible for a little plain speaking, the other day, when he demurred at what people called the "poverty of the clergy." He claimed that "the position of an incumbent, with security of tenure, a freehold house, and a regular income, was not a negligible one when contrasted with that of many laymen." We expect that these words will not be enjoyed

by the clergy in general—but they are true, all the same. For the kind of work the clergy give to the community—and apart from a little social help, it consists of bolstering up an utterly outworn superstition—they are exceptionally well paid and far better paid than most of them would be in other walks in life.

The *Daily Express* asked ten people, chosen at random, how they spent Sunday, and it is interesting to note that only one admitted going to church. Most of the others admitted a preference for "entertainments" of some kind; otherwise Sunday seems to be a "dead" day for most people, many of whom find cinemas, when open, a great boon. Whether this confession upset one of the religious sub-editors or not is not known; but a sort of postscript was hastily tacked on to the article to say that 3,000 people attended the City Temple to hear the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead. A good preacher will, of course, have followers irrespective of his matter. No one preached more futile rubbish than Spurgeon, but he could always attract huge audiences. But the little symposium mentioned above indicates the truth about average church-going far better than the numbers some favourite preacher can gather to hear him. And it is not pleasant for the Church.

At the Kingswood Methodist School Speech Day, Dr. Leslie Burgin, M.P., delivered a witty speech. It was nothing to the *Methodist Recorder* reporter's humour. The latter remarked on the excellent Cinema Film produced entirely by Methodist students, adding:—

And it one wondered whether John Wesley would have approved of present-day Kingswood's remarkable achievements in athletics, it was a comforting thought that his shade has had nearly two hundred years in which to reconsider those rather stern rules of his.

"A comforting thought," to know that their Founder had been in his grave two hundred years! Well, well.

The recent—very recent—display of Christian opposition to anti-Semitism betrays an uneasy conscience rather than a sense of justice. There is some excellent and salutary evidence of the former in the *Methodist Recorder* article by the Rev. Henry Carter:—

A Christian who knows, even in outline, the story of the relations of the Christian Church and the Jews must look back with sorrow and penitence on the cruelties which church-leaders have heaped upon Jewish communities in bygone centuries. In almost every country which has borne the name "Christian" fierce and bloody persecutions have been directed against Jewish communities, humiliating alike to oppressors and oppressed. The hateful word "pogrom" comes from Russia, recalling the fury with which Jews were hounded to death, in period after period and place after place, under the Czarist regime. The "ghetto," or Jewish quarter, where in earlier ages the crowded Hebrew population of a city was compelled to live, in separation from other citizens, still survives in some eastern European countries. Violence and injustice blot the long record of the dealings of organized Christianity with the Hebrew race. The pitiful fact, which should challenge every Christian mind at this time, is that in Germany, and in countries where German influence is strong, the worst chapters in Jewish history are now being rewritten.

There is no question of the debt that Christians owe the Jews. Some day perhaps mankind will realize that what Mr. Carter calls: "Freedom to profess and practise religion at the bidding of conscience" is not liberty nor even toleration in itself. Freedom demands the abolition of privilege. Blasphemy laws on the one hand, and State-aided religious education on the other, stand as enemies to liberty of thought.

We like the tone of the Rev. Charles E. Cook, in the *Methodist Recorder*, who deplors the "Anti-God Congress," and is "not disposed to challenge or defend" the Home Secretary's decision to "allow" the Congress to be held. Mr. Cook at least does not think that "our duty" (as Christians) is to interfere with Atheists by violent ways. His idea is that all the Churches should meet—and pray for our conversion. Why not? But we fear that Mr. Cook's religious optimism is founded on false history—or mythology. He says:—

What results could follow? When Samuel Chadwick began his open-air work in Leeds, I have been told he and his colleagues were systematically opposed by a band of Atheists. Eventually these enemies of the Gospel were not only vanquished in argument, but won for Christ; and opponents were turned into advocates. I suggest a similar victory awaits the forces of the Kingdom of God in this country as they face this extraordinary challenge. Delegates will be coming to the Congress from many foreign countries. What missionaries they might become on their return if "the Lord's Remembrancers" had prevailed in the meantime! Why not? "Our God is able!"

We should like the name and address of one—just one—of the Sheffield Band of Atheists who were converted en masse by Mr. Chadwick. Surely one at least is still alive; Chadwick himself died only a year or two ago. Then again, why not put Mr. Cook's suggestion to the test? If all our Freethought Congress Delegates get converted within a week after the Congress, we could guarantee that there would never be another International Freethought Congress in England. Will the Churches agree to abstain from further prayer if their prayers on this occasion fail?

"He's worn out Three Prayer Books," is a headline in the *Sunday Dispatch*. It appears that a Rutlandshire couple have used these prayer-books at "family prayer" every day for fifty years. Mark Twain used to say he wore out the seats of a dozen pair of trousers every Summer on his famous "walking" tours. We presume the *Dispatch* story aims at telling us that the Prayer Books were USEFUL for some purpose or other—lamp-stands or the like. If the happy couple had been in the habit of THROWING the Prayer-Books at each other, they would never have lasted a third of a year. Had they merely been READING the books, one book would have lasted for years. We have a well-thumbed Shakespeare, which we bought forty years ago, and we have seen volumes much older, decently read and excellently preserved.

If we were to eliminate all the "dream revelations" from the history of religion, there would be little left of the world's "Saviours" and "Saints." A new book about the legendary St. Patrick (by Oliver Gogarty) reminds us that the Irish missionary's "Mission" was "determined by a dream." He dreamt that he had received a number of letters and heard a voice—or voices—calling him "Holy Boy." The best of legends is that no two narrators agree as to the "facts." Already, Dr. Gogarty has been accused of misrepresentation. Professor Macalister claims that the "Holy Boy" business is a new one on him, and that instead of the dream taking place in Oulde Oireland, it took place in Macedonia—but what are a few thousand miles where Saints and dreams are concerned?

Tex McLeod, known on the Music-halls as a rope- and yarn-spinner, contributes the following to the *Sunday Referee*:—

I heard tell of a Scotsman who went to heaven, and asked Peter if he thought it was an interesting place to live.

"Where do you come from?" asked Peter.

"From Glasgow, the finest city in the world."

"Well, you can try heaven," said Peter, "but I don't suppose you'll like it after Glasgow."

[Fifty Years Ago

PROPHET BAXTER says the world is coming to an end in 1901, yet, we are informed, he is now trying to turn the *Christian Herald* property into a limited company. Baxter is reported to be describing it as a good investment, though the shareholders would have to get their capital back in thirteen years. Baxter might reply that if they get interest for thirteen years they won't require their capital afterwards, but why doesn't he set the example of belief in his own nostrum? If he believes his prophecy he is taking advantage of other people's ignorance by selling a short lease as a freehold.

The Freethinker, July 22, 1888.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. CLAYTON.—We note your pleasure in reading *The Tyranny of Words*. Ogden and Richard's *Meaning of Meaning* was published in 1927 at 12s. 6d. It should be possible to get a second-hand copy. Both are capital works, and when we read much that is written or talked about, we feel we should like to make it a condition of writing, that one should pass an examination in a couple of books of the quality of these two. For the subject matter, they are both simply and clearly written. It is perhaps worthy of note that one great influence in Ogden's mental life was that great Freethinker, Jeremy Bentham.

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

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.

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.

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

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 "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.

The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.

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

Sugar Plums

A large number of requests have already been received for tickets for the business meeting of the International Congress, the Public Demonstration on the Sunday evening (for which a limited number of reserved seat tickets (free) are issued) and tickets for the Dinner (10s. 6d.). Those who have written will receive replies as early as possible. We would remind everyone that if they wish to avoid disappointment, applications for tickets for any or all of the above functions must be made early.

There is an enormous quantity of propagandist literature being sent into this country from Italy, Germany and Japan. We raise no complaint at this, although the small notice taken of it by those in high quarters is significant. But we are glad to see others taking a hand, and we cordially commend the *Pax Peace Review*, published in Prague, and written in the interests of one of the healthiest countries in Europe. *Pax* is a well printed newspaper of twelve pages, and is full of useful articles. The distributing office in England is 18 Grosvenor Crescent, Mews, S.W.1. As there is no price on the paper, we presume it is distributed free. We advise sending for a copy.

The following passages taken from a letter sent by one of our lady readers, Mrs. E. Trask, will be of interest. They are taken from *Punch's History of Modern England* (Vol. 2 1857-'74). To those of our readers who are not acquainted with the name of Dr. Cumming, it should be said that this gentleman was one of those religious

fakirs who fattened upon the credulity of the more credulous section of the Christian world with the "End of the World" fraud. But the approaching end of the world, did not prevent the Rev. Dr. buying and leasing property regardless of the fact that the end of the world was at hand, and he renewed the lease of his own house for fifty years—which would have carried far beyond the date when Christ was coming in all his glory to take Dr. Cumming and his followers straight to heaven. So *Punch* comments:—

Mr. Punch finds in a Liverpool journal the following part of a lecture which Dr. Cumming has been delivering on "Property—"He has been," he said "taunted in columns of *Punch* with having, notwithstanding his belief that the world was to come to an end in 1867, recently renewed the lease of his house for 50 years. The accusation, although not literally, was generally true, but his answer was that a belief in property should not override commonsense."

Punch comments:—

And by no person should he have been applauded more loudly than by Mr. Punch, if that gentleman had had the good fortune to be in the schoolroom at Cloughton, where the lecture is reported to have been delivered. The last quoted sentence is so admirably frank that Mr. Punch cannot withhold his tribute of admiration. In other words, although it is all very well in the way of business to work the old Hebrew scrolls, which boil down into capital stock for the thin but rather spiey soup vended by the Doctor, he has no notion of eating his own cookery, and we wish we were as certain of our friend's orthography as we are of his commonsense, and we would give a trifle, say the next three hundred Tipperarian sonnets, to know whether he does not, in his our private ledger, spell Prophets as worldly people spell the opposite of losses.

One certain thing is that Dr. Cumming, who was a very prominent preacher in his day, did not fool himself where money was concerned. On one occasion Mrs. Harriet Law, a well-known lecturer on the Freethought platform, offered to buy some property that Dr. Cumming had just purchased, at something below the price paid, the money to be paid at once, the purchase to take effect a few years after the date he had given for the end of the world. The offer was not accepted. There was no doubt as to the way Dr. Cumming thought about "prophets" in his own private communion.

When we were a youth there was another exploitation of religious fools which took a very solid form at Chatham. The immediate second coming of Christ was preached by a sect—Jezreelites, we think they were called—and Chatham was fixed upon as the place at which Jesus would land. Perhaps Chatham was selected because it would mean a cheap railway ride from London, or because some of the leaders of the sect lived there, or because they owned land there and looked for an increased value per square foot. At any rate a large sum of money was collected, and a very large and solid tower on which Jesus might land or live was built. The date came, the fools came, but no Jesus. The tower was standing some few years back, but we are not sure if it is still there. But while it stood, it was a fine and solid example of the way in which fools and rogues get on together within the bounds of the Church.

Everyone will, or ought to, welcome the two latest additions to the Thinker's Library (Watts and Co., 1s. each). One is *The Fair Haven*, by Samuel Butler, an ironical defence of orthodox Christianity, which greatly puzzled the reviewers on its issue. It is a book that every Freethinker should read, and even though one has already read it so cheap an edition will provide a new excuse for reading it again. The second volume is a very handy (and so far as we have been able to judge by glancing through it) a comprehensive *Dictionary of Scientific Terms*, by Dr. C. M. Beadnell. The Dictionary extends to over 200 pages. A most useful work.

This last work reminds us of a book that we have had in view for a considerable time, but have never found leisure enough to do more than make a few notes towards it. This is an encyclopedia for Freethinkers which gives a brief description of scientific, theological, and philosophical terms in common use. Each description to take the form of a thumb-nail essay on the subject named, leaving out controversial interpretations as far as is possible. Many might contribute to the book, but to give it unity it is essential that the final form be given by one man to every description. Our work grows at such a rate, that we are never likely to be able to do the book alone. Above all the book must be done in a leisurely manner. Such a work simply cannot be satisfactorily done by one of those jolbing writers who are ready to turn out any book to order. Dr. Beadnell strikes us as a suitable editor.

Mr. G. Whitehead will be in the Newcastle area for a week commencing to-day (July 24), and it is hoped that local Freethinkers will help by being in attendance. Pioneer Press publications may be purchased and details of membership obtained. The support of unattached Freethinkers will be welcomed.

The *Spectator* which is not a paper that is likely to give much aid to real Freethinking, remarks that on the question of the ridiculous Blasphemy Bill, and the 165 who voted in its favour, "the lobby had been well organized," which means that those who had not been led to vote as they did by sheer stupidity and bigotry, had been coerced by threats of what might happen when election time came round again. The *Spectator* also quotes "an elderly and venerable Member, known universally for his deep Christian sincerity," as saying, "This is the worst thing this Parliament has done." Well, we can hardly imagine a Christian of the stamp of Gladstone, helping either a character such as Captain Ramsay or supporting his Bill.

Economic and Social Patterns in Early Christianity

(Continued from page 452)

We find that a series of central passages in the Gospels supports this analysis. First, the parable of Lazarus and Dives. The beggar and the rich man. Suddenly comes the "transfiguration" of death. The beggar is in a heaven of plenty; the rich man in a hell of torment and privation. Why? Not because the beggar was "good" and the rich man "bad," but simply because the beggar was beggar and the rich man rich.

Remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things: but here he is comforted, and thou art in anguish. (Luke xvi. 19-26.)

There is no further explanation; no other explanation is needed. In Judaic writings, as in Greek, one can see a general sense of evil-eye fear over the possession of wealth in a world where so many starve; and this fear suggests that the fortunate man may be liable to come to a bad end unless he is careful to propitiate the deities. But nowhere is it suggested that riches as riches damn a man for eternity, and that poverty means eternal blessedness hereafter—that is, after the Transformation.

Here is the one point of originality in Christianity; and a very profound point it is. The reversal demanded is that of which mankind had been aware as a possibility of hope or fear ever since classes originated. For instance, as far back as about 2500 B.C. there had been a revolution of the dispossessed in

Egypt, and in *The Admonitions of a Prophet* we find the reversal-theme stated in its simple fullness:—

Behold he that had nothing now possesses wealth. The great man praises him.

Behold, he that had no shade now hath shade. They that had shade are in the full blast of the storm.

Behold, he that had no knowledge of harp-playing now possess a harp. He too whom man never sang, now praises the goddess of music.

Behold, they that possessed beds now lie on the ground. He that slept with dirt, now stuffs for himself a cushion, etc., etc.²²

But now for the first time the dispossessed confidently claim back their lost world. Their challenge is but thinly veiled by the transformation-fantasy (death conceived as the Judgment which refuses to come as a fact upon earth).

The most important passages, however, which show this challenge in the Gospels are the Beatitudes. We must take the words of *Luke* in full (vi. 20-26).

Blessed be ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now; for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye when men shall hate you and when they shall separate you from their company and shall reproach you and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day and leap for joy; for behold, your reward is great in heaven—for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger. Woe unto ye that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you when all men speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

The matter could not be more explicitly stated. And in this mood of absolute trust in the fulfilment of the Reversal, what need is there to resist? what need is there to struggle against the evil of the world? One can bless and love it all, for one knows that the Reversal is fated.

If one has any money or possessions, then, of course, the only thing to do is to get rid of them at once. Sell all thou hast and give it to the poor. Both Matthew and Luke leave no reservations. Nothing must be kept back. To keep back a fraction would be to express doubt in the reality of the imminent and imminent Transfiguration. The Transfiguration which at any rate will come after levelling death has done his work. The whole point of the Christian message lies in the emphasis on *all*. As we have seen, the mere command to expend much in charity and alms was common to the Judaic tradition; it was common in less emphatic form to Egyptian or Greek. "Give *all*" was the specific Christian command.

He hath put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich he hath sent empty away.²³

Not because they were wicked, but because they were rich. The mere giving of alms is specifically denounced as no solution. The rich man is damned without question. Unless he gives up everything, he is utterly damned.

Verily I say unto you, It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again, I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.²⁴

²² *The Lit. of the Ancient Egyptians*, Erman, pp. 92-108.

²³ Luke i. 52f. Compare also viii. 2f.; xii. 16-21; xiv. 12-14. Also xvi., where riches are put into basic contrast with Truth.

²⁴ Luke xi. a great outburst of hatred against the men who keep the system of commercialism going, the business-men and the lawyers.

VI.—DILUTION

This emotion of entire surrender could persist only while the pressure of crisis was felt irresistible. As soon as that pressure passed, only a very few individuals could keep up at such an intense standard of renunciation. The Transformation did not come off. Nothing happened; men weren't rapt up in the air like angels before the storm of shining Judgment. If Christianity was to continue as a Church, as a coherent and expanding group, it could not maintain the pure Gospel to the Poor.

We find various dilutions of the pure Faith in the Gospels. The command to give all things fades into a strong recommendation of charity.

He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food, let him do likewise. (Luke iii. 10-14).²⁵

Give to every one that asketh thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. (Luke vi. 30.)

These are still drastic orders. Though they no longer show the pure Faith in the certainty of the Transformation, they yet show an intensity of surrender far above anything in preceding ethics except perhaps among a few ascetic groups. But once the pure injunction is diluted, the rest is easy. Since there is no means of measuring how much charity is mere subjective inclination. The simple and unpervertible order "Whosoever he be of you that renounceth not *all that he hath*, he cannot be my disciple," is already forgotten. We are on the way to mere homiletics against covetousness and avarice. "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth . . ." and so on. Excellent morality, but in no way different from all the commonplaces of the Judaic and pagan sages.²⁶

It is but a short step to the introduction of subjective equivocations which destroy the whole original force of the Gospels. We see the intrusion of these distortions in their full strength when the clear statement of *Luke*, "Blessed are ye poor," becomes in *Matthew*, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." And when *Luke's* "Blessed are ye that hunger now," becomes *Matthew's* "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness." What Pharisee ever admitted that he didn't hunger for righteousness?

The meanings attached to the phrase "poor in spirit" by commentators—from Nietzsche's incorrect "poor-spirited" to the Christian-democrat's equally incorrect "spirited poor"—have been many. But if we bear in mind the tendencies which we are analysing the intent is plain. "Poor in spirit" merely means: You needn't give up your wealth to be saved, all you need to do is to be *spiritually* a poor man, to have the same *emotions* of submission and trust that a poor man has in the Transformation.

The way was now opened to all dilutions; the Gospels were made safe for the rich. There was no longer the need to take the statements literally; whenever they became inconvenient, the clergy would find a symbolic interpretation which would make things easy for you.

The hope for the great Reversal still persisted.

But God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised. . . .

²⁵ Cf. Mat. xviii. 8; Mark ix. 45, where the need for absolute choice is emphasized in the strongest language possible.

²⁶ Luke xiv. 26; xii. 15.

As unknown and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed, as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things.²⁷

The last two phrases are of especial interest. The first declares that the dispossessed masses are the producers of the wealth which they do not share; the second declares that though robbed of their fruit these masses are the inheritors of the Bond, the sense of evolving human unity, the socialized method which makes man capable of mastering nature, creating plenty, and so "possessing all things."

Or take the splendid denunciation of the rich in James v. beginning, "Go to now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you." And ending with the accusation that it is the rich who have crucified the redeemer (made the Transformation impossible as an earthly fact). "Ye have lived delicately and taken your pleasure; ye have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned, ye have killed the righteous one."²⁸

JACK LINDSAY.

(To be continued)

This World or the Next

JUST as the Church never loses, if it can help it, an opportunity of boosting the Bible as "the source of England's greatness," or as "the Book of the English people," so it never loses an occasion to boost up those Christians who have left some mark on history. The recent celebrations in connexion with the "re-conversion" of Wesley are a case in point; and if Wesley's "great" mission is referred to, one can be nearly certain that George Whitefield, Wesley's contemporary, will be almost equally honoured. Mr. Lloyd George, in a recent number of the *Listener*, devoted a long article to Whitefield as "England's Greatest Orator"—which, after all, is a matter of opinion, as it is not easy to prove such a positive assertion. Whitefield undoubtedly was a great preacher, and could hold vast audiences; but his particular brand of religion was of the sternest Calvinistic type, and it certainly made little appeal to the cultured classes of his day.

These glowing eulogies of both Wesley and Whitefield are more remarkable for their fervour than their accuracy. The old trick of identifying a religious revival with social reform has again been carefully worked; but it cannot be too strongly emphasized that while these evangelists and their followers made thousands of religious people more expressively religious, they made practically no impression on Deists and other "heretics." As for their influence on real social reform, it was almost nil. Our modern eulogists are simply dishonest when they claim that a manifestation of religion is the equivalent of better social conditions.

England in the eighteenth century was a land of great contrasts. There were two nations here then as there were later, when Disraeli wrote his *Sybil*. Side by side with great literary activity, among the comparatively few, there was tremendous illiteracy among

²⁷ 1 Cor. i. 26-29; 2 Cor. vi. 9-10.

²⁸ There is definitely an anti-imperialist flavour in such outbursts. Cf. with the rejoicings in the *Apocalypse* over the imagined fall of Rome. The writer cries to those whom Rome has broken, "God hath judged your judgment upon her." Cf. too the curses in the forged Sibylline verses, "O how shalt thou weep then, despoiled of thy glittering garments and clad in mourning! . . . The glory of thy legions, with their proud eagles will disappear."

the many. The question of religion and Freethought (or rather Deism) was looked upon by the mass of people with more or less indifference—though it must be admitted that Woolston's pamphlets against the miracles of Jesus had a large circulation. The clergy as a whole, however, were as Green records, "the most remiss of their labours in private, and the least severe in their lives." They were often dirty, and drunken, as well as illiterate.

But the masses of the people were in a deplorable state. They were, says Green, "ignorant and brutal to a degree which is hard to conceive, for the vast increase of population which followed on the growth of towns and the development of manufactures had been met by no effort for their religious and educational improvement. Not a new parish had been created. Hardly a single new church had been built. Schools were none save the grammar schools of Edward and Elizabeth . . . within the towns things were worse. There was no effective police; and in great outbreaks, the mob of London or Birmingham burnt houses, flung open prisons, and sacked and pillaged at their will. The criminal class gathered boldness and numbers in the face of ruthless laws which only testified to the terror of society, laws which made it a capital crime to cut down a cherry tree, and which strung up twenty young thieves of a morning in front of Newgate; while the introduction of gin gave a new impetus to drunkenness."

Green really understates the condition of great sections of society in England during the eighteenth century; but readers of the contemporary literature will have some knowledge of the depravation and vice in their worst forms into which the country had sunk. What people looked like in those days can be seen in the pictures of Hogarth, which bring even nearer to home the condition of things, than the work of Smollett, or Fielding, or lesser known writers.

The eulogies which we are constantly reading of Whitefield and Wesley, make us feel it was to change the whole moral outlook of England that they directed their energies. It was preaching the so-called pure and inspiring Gospel of Christ, his love and pity (most of us know how the words "love" and "pity" are enlarged and worked upon by pious enthusiasts) for the oppressed, and his "Saving Grace" that made the two revivalists famous. They came before the masses with the Word; and they completely regenerated the face of England.

That is the claim; and it is interesting to see how that claim has been pushed to its very limits. To read what eminent churchmen and statesmen like Mr. Lloyd George say of Wesley and Whitefield, one would imagine that after all their labours, England was regenerated, and that a new and happy land rose from the smoking pyres of the old, and for ever vanished blot on civilization. The truth is, that it is doubtful whether England was one whit better for all their preaching.

Of course, more people professed Christianity. There were thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of people, who went about with doleful faces shrieking that they were saved. We have seen similar converts in our own day, and it would be difficult to find more unhappy folk. Green points out that the preaching of Whitefield made women fall down in convulsions; strong men were smitten suddenly to earth; hysteric laughter or sobbing interrupted the preacher. The violent Calvinism of Whitefield must have caused the utmost terror in the illiterate mobs who were moved by his passionate appeals to be saved from the wrath of Christ. Even Wesley, who was far more sane in his outlook than Whitefield, had to

break with his fellow preacher. Even he could not stand the religious rubbish which poured with unceasing fervour from "our greatest orator."

I do not doubt for a moment that both men were influenced by the highest ideals, and that they really believed that they were regenerating England by awakening them from what Mr. Lloyd George calls "spiritual torpor and moral degradation." But the fact remains that the social conditions in which the people of England lived were not one whit improved. They died like flies from small-pox and other diseases; they lived under insanitary conditions which can hardly be imagined these days. The amusements of the poorer classes were often of revolting cruelty. Bad as are the cases of cruelty to children and animals even in our own "enlightened" days, the way in which little children were made to work after the days of the wonderful preaching of Wesley and Whitefield, at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, forms one of the blackest pages in the history of industry. Men and women were hanged in public for crimes which, in these days, would have meant a paltry fine; indeed, I read the other day that small boys were executed for stealing apples, and were taken to the gallows crying. That this is no exaggeration, let me quote from the preface to *Barnaby Rudge* :—

When the husband of Mary Jones (aged eighteen) was pressed, their goods were seized and she, with two small children, were turned into the streets begging. She went to a linendraper's shop, took some coarse linen from the counter, and slipped it under her cloak; the shopman saw her and she laid it down; for this she was hanged. Her defence was that she had lived in credit, and wanted for nothing till a press gang came and stole her husband; but since then she had no bed; nothing to give her children to eat; and they were almost naked; and perhaps she might have done something wrong, for she hardly knew what she did. The parish officers testified to the truth of her story. When brought to receive sentence she behaved in such a frantic manner as proved her mind to be in a distracted and desponding state; and the child was suckling at her breast when she set out for Tyburn.

Did the rousing call (or recall) to religion, made by Wesley and Whitefield, do away with such horrors? Did shrieking for Jesus to come and save them and their kind have any effect in preventing such ghastly exhibitions of revolting cruelty? Did penal reform in any shape come from revivalists as such? Is it not a fact that it was the work of the great humanists—who were in most cases Freethinkers—which gave the really first impetus to *secular*, as distinguished from *religious*, reforms? Men like Romilly, Paine, and Bentham, with almost the whole of organized religion against them, did more to do away with cruelty in any shape in a comparatively few years, than centuries of religious effort.

That people still believe in religion is beside the point. Though the Methodists are losing in numbers, I admit that they are still a power for the maintenance of Christianity. They can boast, however, as much as they like about the greatness of Wesley or Whitefield; their leaders know, if they know anything at all, that the religion and theology for which the two revivalists stood, is almost as dead as the Hell which Whitefield so fervently preached. The real cry, nowadays, is not so much to be saved from sin through the blood of Jesus, as to improve the living conditions of men and women in this world now. People do not want the Methodist heaven; they want better food, and work, and houses, and leisure, and amusements, with no anxiety for their old age. In

plain language, it is Secularism which is the modern gospel; it is not the Christian conception of Paradise for which modern people care two hoots. Now is the time, and here is the place where we want happiness; and that, of course, is Secularism.

H. CUTNER.

What The Jews Have Taught Me

I AM a *goy* of the *goyim*, a Gentile American of Puritan stock. All my closest friends and most of my many acquaintances are non-Jewish. And how non-Jewish most of them are! I hear much more spoken against the Jew than for him, for my Jew-hating friends are articulate, while the Jews I know have something, perhaps a form of pride, which makes them reticent.

For some 20 years my activities have brought me into close contact with Jews of every social level. I know the wealthy Jew, the intellectual Jew, the rabbi, the Jew who is a humble worker or small trader. I have been swindled by Jews, have lent money to and borrowed from Jews, have employed Jews. Altogether I am as well qualified as anyone I know to philosophize about them.

What is it which sets these people apart from others? I think there are two absolutely universal characteristics which mark every single Jew of my acquaintance as different from Gentiles as a group. But these qualities are not the ones which are popularly supposed to be characteristically Jewish.

For example, I am unable to attribute sharp commercial practice to the Jews as a race. Experience has convinced me that while sharpers exist, they form but a small minority of all Jews. Among the Jews I know, certainly fewer than one in five would take unfair advantage of me for their own gain—and I have tested this many times. Jews have refused to take interest on loans they have made me. Jews have promoted my interests at the expense of their own. When a Jew is a swindler, he gets himself talked about. When he is not, that aspect of his make-up receives little publicity.

The first characteristic which specially distinguishes the Jew is this: he, alone among races, worships intelligence. The soul of every Jew I know—millionaires, paupers, swindlers, children, everyone—abases itself before the altar of the Mind. Normally common people distrust intelligence. But not the Jew. No other trust is good enough for him.

It is this worship of intelligence, turned wrong end to, which fosters many of the qualities—the suspiciousness, the arrogance. When you put your trust in pure thought, nothing is too small to be important.

The Jew often worships intelligence without those restraints commonly imposed upon themselves by people of culture. He is arrogant because his idea thrills him; and he expects you to stand up for your idea with the same conviction, all the more if that means an argument, a battle of wits. He is hair-splitting because every detail is vital to full knowledge.

My second generalization about Jews as a race is: Jews vary from the norm more widely than do individuals of other races. The Jew is, for good or bad, extreme. When I meet one I know that I am going to find him more, or less, interesting than the average person. The ranks of the Jews hold Jesus and Judas, Einsteins and idiots, Rothschilds and paupers. Jews run to extremes, and because there is an extreme of obnoxiousness, it is this shifty, noisy, pushing extreme which too often stands for the race as a whole. Jews

themselves know the other Jewish types. Most Gentiles do not.

I know the sensitive, shrinking Jew, poetic, torn by rebuffs and hatreds, his face a living tragedy on which the sad fate of his race is being written. I know the gentle old Jew, music-loving, family-loving. I know the plump Jewish housewife, witty, practical, hospitable, bustling over her pots and pans like a florist among his flowers. I know the jolly Jewish maiden, energetic, inquisitive, gobbling knowledge, dances, concerts, art exhibits, in a series of full-hearted gulps. How can I lump all these into one and turn up my nose at them collectively? Perhaps a little against my will, I have come to love them.

Among the Jews I have found more genuine loyalty, more understanding, more compassion and more generosity, than my Jew-hating friends would ever believe could exist. Where the Gentile gives five dollars to a charity, the Jew gives a hundred. A secret, whatever its nature, is inviolate with a Jew. There is almost nothing a friend can ask which a Jew will not grant, no matter what the personal inconvenience.

One of my friends, opposed to the Jews, is President of a chess club. These are his words to me: "Our club is about two-fifths Jews in numbers, but on tournament night you'd think there wasn't a Gentile in it. They take an interest. You give a set of chessmen to a Gentile boy, and he likes it, plays a little, even joins a club. But the Jewish boy first thing you know is trying out openings, buys or borrows a book on chess, gives it his spare time, works, studies, learns—and another chess master is born!" An unwilling tribute to the energy and intelligence of the Jew.

When a man does what you would like to do, whether it is money-making, play-writing or swindling, and does it better than you could, you either admire him—or you hate him. Just because the Jew worships intelligence, just because he is often endowed with a restless nervous energy which has to spend itself, he frequently does his job with more zest, more interest and hence more skill than does the Gentile. And since he is not given to blushing at fame (however silently he may go about charitable giving), the result is that for every Gentile who admires him, two Gentiles hate him.

The Jew rejoices in his knowledge—and gets called conceited and insufferable. He wins a scholarship—and finds the university doors slammed in his face. He wants a summer home—and the real estate men tell him they have no suitable listings. Wherever he goes he gets stepped on.

The Jew must often be twice as good as the Gentile to get half as good an opportunity. Realizing that, he slaves, works, aspires, succeeds—and gets hated.

I have learned a great deal from my Jewish friends: generosity, loyalty, intellectual honesty and inspiration. I have learned gratitude, affection, forbearance. I have learned courage in the face of uncertainty, difficulty and danger. I have learned to appreciate a family spirit which is beautiful and enduring.

As experiences multiply in which I am able to test the good will, wisdom and loyalty of my Jewish friends, what can I do but like and respect them? If I knew how to convert my Jew-hating friends to my way of thinking, I would do it. It is impossible to prove by words that the Jewish race is not what they take it to be.

So I have written this article instead. It is a small penny's worth of the debt I owe the Jews.

FAITH G. WINTHROP.

Professor of English Literature.
(Reprinted from the *Reader's Digest*.)

Correspondence

PSYCHO-ANALYSIS AND RELIGION TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—I would like to make the following observations on the correspondence under the heading of "Psycho-Analysis and Religion":—

(a) I agree with Dr. Ernest Jones that much misunderstanding on my part would have been avoided had I known the articles in question were the substance of a lecture delivered by request to the R.P.A.

(b) I appreciate Dr. Jones' reticence in agreeing to "measure the value of scientific information by its propaganda value for *particular purposes*" (my italics). But Freethought is not in this category. It is the basis of all scientific progress. In the words of Dr. Jones (*Freethinker*, p. 307, May 15, 1938) "Freedom of thought is a necessary pre-requisite of psycho-analytic work, as indeed of all scientific work." Christianity is a contradiction to Freethought. ("Freethought may be defined as the rejection of authority in matters of opinion"—Chapman Cohen). But I do not judge the value of scientific information by its applicability to the religious question, though I naturally consider this aspect when writing in the *Freethinker*.

(c) One can often judge the timidity of scientists by their attitude to religion. And it is noticeable that whilst psycho-analysts leave no doubt in our minds about the human origin of the Devil, Witches, etc.—see Dr. Ernest Jones' book on *The Nightmare*—we are told of a god: "even if there were no Divine Being in reality . . ." Yet there is no more reason for psychologists to adopt this attitude towards a god than towards a devil.

(d) Pensadora must realize that I said I failed to see any value in the "projection" theory "from the point of view of convincing religious people of the error of the god idea." Thus, much of what he says I may agree with, whilst pointing out the irrelevancy of his opposition.

(e) I do not agree that Psycho-Analysis has ever shown conclusively that the ideas of supernatural beings were the products of father—or mother—projections, and at the moment it appears to me that the Father idea was projected on to an already invented god.

(f) I would go further than Pensadora, and would say that psycho-analysis has a much greater value than merely the curing of neurotics. In my opinion it is the greatest contribution ever made to the explanation of human emotions and actions. It is unfortunate that my article should have given the impression that I was an opponent of Psycho-Analysis.

PAUL GOLDMAN.

A NEW TAX

SIR,—I like the suggestion in "Acid Drops" of a tax on "sorrow," and would suggest, as a beginning, a tax on funerals and "mourning," to commence at the point where actual hygienic necessity ends.

But there is, even here, a difficulty. One does not need to read *The Tyranny of Words* to realize that what is often called sorrow and mourning is a form of pleasure, viz., exhibitionism.

Says the wise La Rochefoucauld, "La pompe des enterrements intéresse plus la vanité des vivants que la mémoire des morts."

A. H. MILLWARD.

While morality is custom, immorality is customary.
Ambrose Bierce.

THOUGHT OF TO-DAY

A God worthy of worship would not desire it:
A God who desires worship should not inspire it.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 11.0, John Langdon-Davies—"Mental Aspects of A.R.P."

OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand) : 6.30, Mrs. E. Grout—A Lecture.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place) : 7.30, Mr. Evans—A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Highbury Corner) 8.0, Friday, T. J. Darby. White Stone Pond, Hampstead, 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park) : 7.0, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Rushcroft Road, Brixton, 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Friday, Mr. F. A. Ridley.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : 3.30, Sunday, Miss F. Millard, M.A., Messrs. E. Bryant and G. Barnes. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes and Tuson. Wednesday, 7.30, Mr. W. B. Collins. Thursday, 7.30, Mrs. N. Buxton. Friday, 7.30, Mr. G. Barnes.

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR

ACCRINGTON MARKET : 7.45, Wednesday, Mr. J. Clayton.

BLACKBURN MARKET : 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton.

BLYTH (The Fountain) : 7.0, Monday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

CHESTER-LE-STREET (Bridge End) : 8.0, Friday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

CHORLEY (Market) : 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. J. V. Shortt.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Albert Road) : 8.0, Tuesday, Minard Road, 8.0, Thursday. Albion Street, 8.0, Friday. Mound, Edinburgh, 7.30, Sunday. M. I. Whitefield will speak at each meeting.

GREENOCK BRANCH N.S.S. (Grey Place) : 8.0, Wednesday, M. I. Whitefield. Literature on sale.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (High Park Street and Park Road) : 8.0, Thursday, Messrs. Thompson and Parry, Junior, Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths, 8.0, Sunday, Messrs. Thompson and Robinson. Speke Road, Garston Terminus, 8.0, Wednesday, Messrs. Robinson and Ashby.

LUMB-IN-ROSSENDALE : 7.30, Friday, Mr. J. Clayton.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Eccles Market) : 8.0, Friday, Stevenson Square, 7.30, Sunday. Blackburn, 8.0, Monday. W. A. Atkinson will speak at each meeting.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Bigg Market) : 7.0, Sunday, and rest of the week, Mr. G. Whitehead.

NORTH ORMESEY (Market) : 7.0, Wednesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NORTH SHIELDS (Harbour View) : 7.0, Tuesday, Debate—"Can Christianity Save the World." *Affir.*: Mr. Rayne. *Neg.*: Mr. J. T. Brighton.

PRESTON (Market) : 8.0, Wednesday, Mr. J. V. Shortt.

READ : 7.30, Monday, Mr. J. Clayton.

SEATON DELAVAL (The Avenue) : 7.0, Thursday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

STOCKTON (The Cross) : 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

WIGAN (Market) : 8.0, Monday, Mr. J. V. Shortt.

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