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PRICE TWOPENCE.

He who sees without loving is only straining his eyes in the darkness.—MAETERLINCK.

Anointing the King.

MOST people will imagine that the ceremony of anointing monarchs took its origin amongst the Jewish people. This is a mistake. If there is any debt of gratitude for a ceremony, the only merit of which is an antiquity that hardly counterbalances its absurdity, we owe it, not to the Hebrews, but to the heathen.

It was a practice which had been followed for centuries—perhaps for millenniums—among the peoples with whom the Hebrews came in contact. It was undoubtedly an established custom in Egypt from very early times, and there is good reason to believe that it existed amongst the Babylonians and Assyrians. Egyptian monuments show that one of the chief features connected with the coronation of a king was his anointment by the priest, and his reception of the emblems of majesty from the gods.

It may add to the knowledge, if it diminishes the interest, of those who attend the coming Coronation to learn that the King and Queen are anointed because primitive people thought the fat of an animal—especially the fat which envelopes the kidneys, the liver, and the heart—is the seat of the animal's vital force. The Bishop of London has the opportunity, if he cares to utilise it, of bringing out this curious fact in his sermon at the Coronation service. It is scarcely likely, however, that he will do so, having regard to the necessity of avoiding points which might prove unpleasant to the ears of the noble and refined assemblage.

Dr. A. Smythe Palmer points out that in the books and tracts on the Coronation which have lately flooded the press it is generally assumed, if not openly asserted, that the custom of anointing with a view to kingly consecration was inherited by the Christian Church from the Jews. It is also said by some of these modern authors that the earliest recorded instance of the rite is that in which Saul was set apart to his kingly office by Samuel, as related in 1 Samuel ix. 16; x. 1. This view was held by the Christian Fathers, and by writers on divinity and ritual down to comparatively recent times. Maskell, in his *Monumenta Ritualia Ecclesie Anglicane* (vol. ii., p. 3, ed. 1882), says: "St. Augustine has declared that the anointing of kings was a rite always peculiar to the people of God, and not adopted at any time by the heathens." The passage referred to appears in *Enarratio in Psalm xlv.*, sec. 10, and is quite explicit: "Nowhere else used kings and priests to be anointed except in that kingdom where Christ was prophesied of and anointed, and whence the name Christ was to come; but nowhere else, in no people, in no kingdom."

We know better than St. Augustine. We know that the anointing of rulers by priests is a custom which existed outside the "chosen people of God" and long before the anointing of Saul. The practice has been inherited or adopted, as have been most of the Christian rites and ceremonies, and even moral maxims, from pagan or heathen sources. Dr. Smythe Palmer says: "The last twenty years has wonderfully extended the horizon of our knowledge, and brought into light whole regions of the past which previously had been only a shadowy tradition. In consequence, many institutions and customs, which are found existing as

apparently arbitrary and inexplicable conventions in historic times, are discovered to be survivals and continuations of primitive practices which were once replete with significance, and spoke intelligibly to the contemporary thought of those early ages. When Saul was anointed, everyone under the theocracy would, of course, understand that the same rite which had been already employed in the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priestly office (Exodus xxix.) was now being extended to the civil ruler in marking him out for his hardly less sacred office. But we now know that this was not by any means the beginning of a new custom."

Dr. Smythe Palmer is an orthodox, as well as a learned, writer on ritual, as may be gathered from his amusing endeavor to explain these facts, which he feels bound to recognise and set forth. He argues that the God of Israel frequently allowed his people to adopt religious usages, which were of "an edifying and elevating character," and even gave them formal sanction and Divine authority. "A good thing," he says, "is not less good, nor a truth less true, because it has come down from ethnic sources with a halo of immemorial prescription. The Eternal Wisdom never shares in the human weakness of aiming at mere originality. In incorporating into His plan any good and salutary ordinance, wherever found, who can say that He is not resuming for higher purposes what He had Himself suggested at first?"

This is very well as a piece of special pleading, but Dr. Smythe Palmer fails to show what he is bound to show if his argument has any value—that the ceremony of anointing is of "an edifying and elevating character," that it is a "good thing" and "true," and a "salutary ordinance." He himself admits that it is founded on a primitive notion as to the peculiar potency of animal fat, and we know that this idea in the practical exemplification it finds on these ceremonial occasions is an absurd error. He cites a number of authorities who agree that the early Semites, and other primitive folk, believed that the kidneys, the liver, and the heart were the centres of the intelligence, passions, and emotions. The fat of these organs, as being endued with peculiar virtues, was set apart as the portion for the Deity when an animal was sacrificed, and must not be eaten by the worshipper (Leviticus iii. 16, 17). When etherealised by the fire, it becomes food for the god. What the Deity feeds on and assimilates he, to a certain extent, becomes one with. By a theurgic process that same life which is shared by the god is transmitted to man through an external application of the fat as an unguent. Thus many savages imagine that they can acquire the strength of a wild beast that they have killed, or the courage of a slain enemy, by rubbing themselves with his fat. The fat of a sacrificial victim in particular was held to be potent in bestowing Divine gifts of a supernatural character.

This is the evolution from prehistoric times of the present practice of using oil or chrism as the appropriate medium for conferring the kingly office. What is there "edifying and elevating" and "salutary" about a rite having such a basis as this? And why should the Eternal Wisdom be so specially pleased with it as to "incorporate it in his plan"?

When the King and Queen are anointed, it will be worth while remembering that it is done because, in early times, semi-savages attached undue importance to kidney fat!

Dr. Palmer says the ceremonial use of unction was "certainly one of those practices adopted from without,"

and this can be shown by the "conclusive evidence of pre-Biblical monuments." He mentions that in the remarkable find at Tel-el-Amarna of letters despatched to the Egyptian sovereign by his Suzerans in Palestine and Syria is one addressed to Amenophis III. from Adar-nivari, a petty king whom he had set up as a ruler of Nukhashi. In this missive, written in the Babylonian cuneiform, the vassal king says: "To the Sun-god, the King, my lord the King of Egypt, thus Adar-nivari thy servant speaks—to the feet of the King, my lord, I bow myself—when Manakhbiya [Thothmes III.], King of Egypt, my father—in the land of Nukhashi—to royalty proclaimed him and poured oil upon his head—to that royalty he proclaimed and appointed him" (Boscawen, *Babylonian and Oriental Record*, v. 174-177; C. Niebuhr, *The Tel-el-Arnarna Period*, p. 50; Evetts, *New Light on the Bible*, p. 210). "Here," says Dr. Smythe Palmer, "there is unmistakable evidence that a Canaanitish king was inaugurated by putting oil upon his head in the early part of the fifteenth century B.C., before the Israelites had set foot in Palestine." According to Jastrow (*Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, 374, 665; and Sayce, *Babylonians and Assyrians*, 250), there is no evidence that the rulers of Babylonia and Assyria were installed with the same rite; but the probability is that they were, as they had an order of priests called *pasisu* or "anointers," whose duty it was to anoint the images of the gods and the sacred vessels of the temple with oil.

The sacrificial fat became in time an unguent employed to communicate the vigor and vital energy with which it was believed to be charged. The unction of a priest, a king, or a prophet was designed to "spiritually invigorate or confirm him for his office by making him partaker of the Divine influence." Thus, when Saul was anointed, the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he was turned into another man (1 Samuel x. 6). Similarly, Dr. Palmer notices the sequence of cause and effect in the reference to David's unction in Psalm lxxxix. 20, 21:—

"I have found David my servant; With my holy oil have I anointed him: Mine arm also shall strengthen him."

In Christian realms, he says, unction has been held of like sacramental efficacy in conveying powers of spiritual jurisdiction to the king-designate. "He who is outwardly anointed," says Gregory the Great, "is strengthened inwardly by virtue of the Sacrament." Pope John XXII., in the fifteenth century, writing to Robert Bruce, thus expounds the virtue of holy unction when bestowed on kings in words of quite primitive significance: "They receive a gift of more powerful grace, so that they are endued with an increase of strength for maintaining their just rule." And the result of it is "fulness of virtues and complete authority in temporal government."

Thus it will be seen that the anointing, which forms the principal feature in the consecration of the King, and is otherwise used in the Christian Church, cannot be claimed as of Jewish origin; that its institution is to be traced primarily to the savage notion that the fat of an animal may transfer the strength of the animal to the man who has killed it; and that the notion of the fat, in the later form of holy oil or chrism, imparting spiritual or kingly strength, is merely the development and refinement of the primitive superstition. Pious sentiment in this connection—of which we have already had an abundance, and of which there is much more to come—has, therefore, no other or more poetic foundation than the application by savages of grease.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Providence in the West Indies.

THE volcanic outburst in the West Indies is one of the most sickening catastrophes of modern times. A death roll of upwards of 40,000 people, immense destruction of property, an entire district blasted of all signs of life in a few hours, is a picture that words cannot paint or the imagination adequately realise. Nor can anyone fully conceive the terror and suffering of the people seeking vainly to escape a lava stream travelling at the rate of over one hundred miles an hour, or of those that sank exhausted, poisoned by noxious fumes or overwhelmed by scorching ashes. The only redeeming features in

the picture are the bravery of a few human beings under the most trying circumstances, and the generous aid offered by individuals and Governments, with the exception of our own Christian Parliament, which, while spending colossal sums on the tinselled trumpery of a pantomimic coronation, declined to vote money on behalf of the distressed West Indies.

The disaster is complete, colossal, stupefying. And, so far as the disaster itself is concerned, when one has said that they have said all. But the actual occurrences of life, about which there can be no dispute, are the facts upon which we base our conclusions, concerning which there is much dispute, and by which we test our opinions and theories of life. It is from this point of view that we wish to say a few words concerning the West Indian horror, for no better circumstance could be related to test the belief in God by the touchstone of hard stubborn fact. The Lisbon earthquake seriously disturbed the optimistic Deism of Voltaire, and it is extremely probable that the present one, which has not yet finished its work of devastation, may disturb to a much greater extent the Theism of the present generation—provided, of course, that they think of the bearings of the fact upon the belief. People do not always do this, but it is the object of this article to bring this desirable consummation about.

I quite admit, at the outset, that this occurrence cannot decide the question of whether there is a God or no. The question of the existence of God and the question of his character are quite distinct. A volcanic outbreak does not prove the non-existence of Deity, but it does seriously affect his character, or our estimate of his character if we assume his existence. And as the only guide we have to the character of Deity is the actual occurrences of life, and as the nature of these occurrences will determine the worthiness or unworthiness of the object of worship, the Martinique disaster may fitly be studied to help decide this point.

Let us summarise the facts. The group of islands were known to be of a volcanic nature. Some of the volcanoes were known to be more or less active; others, of which the principal cause of this disaster was one, were believed to be quiescent. People had settled there in the confidence that, while there was a possibility of danger, the probability was not great or immediate, or at least not of a kind such as has occurred. Population had increased, commerce had grown up. The people were no worse than people were in other parts of the world. They had the character of being very religious; they certainly resorted to processions and prayers to ward off disaster, trusting to the promise of Jesus that "Whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, shall be granted unto you." Yet in a few hours—some say a few minutes—the whole of these people were swept out of existence. Old and young, healthy and sick, the old greybeard sinking into senility, and the prattling infant, all killed—nay, murdered, if there really be an intelligent force directing natural forces and processes. And, to add additional irony to the situation, the only survivor of the St. Pierre disaster was a criminal.

Now, how does the Theist harmonise this disaster with his belief in the benevolence of Deity? People, he says, ought to have known better than to have settled in such localities. Granted that they ought; by which, I suppose, it is meant that it is a pity they did not know better. The fact is, that they did not; they were, so far, ignorant, and surely ignorance is not such a deadly crime that it should be deliberately and arbitrarily punished by death. If this were so, the population would undergo a rapid and enormous diminution. They did not know better, so that the case stands thus: God created both volcano and people. To the former he gave certain signs indicative of its activity and dangerous propensities; to the people he gave brains that were inadequate to the task of reading those signs, or incapable of adequately guiding their actions by the signs they read. The dilemma is plain. If God intended the people to be warned by the signs he created, he should either have created minds that could appreciate them; or, what would be the same thing in substance, have made the signs of a more threatening and impressive character. If he did not intend this, then the responsibility for the deaths rests with him.

Moreover, the volcano at St. Pierre had been quiescent for years. And this circumstance gives the affair the nature of a lure or an ambush. People had been lured into settling by the apparent absence of danger, only to find, when too late, that their confidence had been misplaced. And there is this difference between an ambush planned by man and one planned by God. Man plans an ambush, surprises an enemy, and, unless he is an actual savage, is content with disarming him and destroying his ability to inflict injury for the time being. God's ambushes are on a different scale. He does not capture, he kills—and kills with no apparent object save that of a sheer thirst for taking life. Man does what he can to feed and sustain his enemies when the fighting is over; God does what he can to destroy the means of subsistence and of assistance to those who have escaped destruction. A pious writer in one of the daily papers thanks God that *some* people have escaped. Thank God, indeed! For what? For the fact that a mere handful of people have been rescued, by men, from St. Pierre homeless, penniless, and destitute. And who are we to thank for the thousands destroyed? Is it not plain, common sense to say that if we are to praise God for the few saved we ought to curse him for the thousands destroyed? And is it not selfishness, or stupidity or egotism, for the survivors of such a catastrophe as this to kneel and thank God for their own safety almost within sight of the dead bodies of their fellow-creatures?

And if it is said that God did not intend that people should live under such dangerous conditions, the answer is that in this matter "Providence" is again responsible. Pressure of population is the fundamental cause of man's spreading over all parts of the globe, and not the desire of man for adventure. The taste for adventure is largely the expression of the fundamental fact of the pressure of population, since those who had developed this spirit survived, while those who lacked it perished. The colonising races of the earth prevail; and, if there be a God, he has designed that it should be so. So that here, once more, man is only working out a career traced for him by "the Providence that ruleth all things." God first of all develops in man a spirit of daring and foolhardiness that tempts him to settle in places that are veritable death-traps, and then annihilates him, with every circumstance of cruelty and suffering, for so doing.

One writer, with a comical consciousness of the weakness of the ordinary Theistic argument, while deploring the existence of volcanoes on the globe, suggests that, after all, they serve a useful purpose, and play the part of safety-valves to the earth. If certain forces did not find a vent in this manner, he argues, they would in some other; and the other way might be more disastrous than the present one. We may grant this readily. Things might always be conceivably worse than they are, and it is quite possible that human life might have developed under conditions that would have made it much less pleasurable than it is. So, on the other hand, might life have been much more pleasant than it is; and this last "might be" is much more deadly to Theism than the former one is advantageous. For it means that, out of two possible alternatives, God rejected the better one. Almighty wisdom, animated by almighty love, and supported by almighty power, might easily have made human life such that disasters and disease should be comparatively or absolutely unknown. And, as this is not the case, we are driven to conclude that the present plan was deliberately adopted. All that the above apology amounts to is the bald statement that, given existing conditions, the world is arranged on the only feasible and workable plan. But, then, God himself *made the conditions*; and, having made the conditions, it is positive imbecility to argue that we must not blame him because he is doing the best he can under conditions—of his own creating.

Yet one more pious apology—the familiar one that, in spite of all apparent evil, all things work together for good, and it is the trials and disasters of life that test men and develop the noblest characteristics—courage and benevolence. Once more granted—with qualifications. Granted that danger calls forth courage, that suffering calls forth sympathy, does this justify the existence of suffering and needless dangers? Surely

not. Surely we should all be willing to sacrifice sympathy if we could abolish suffering, and we could dispense with courage if human life were no longer exposed to danger. If there is any strength in this argument, it involves the belief that all who cause suffering are our benefactors, since they are developing our sympathies. The sweater, the tyrant, the unscrupulous landgrabber, the man who stirs up a needless and preventable war, the man who sets light to a house full of people, are all friends of humanity in disguise—they are developing our sympathetic feelings, and, so far, we owe them our gratitude. And if we ought not to thank the man who sets fire to a house full of people, and so excites our courage and our compassion, why should we continue to praise a God who blasts the lives of thousands of people by storms and fire and volcanic outburst and pestilence and famine, in order to develop the courage and sympathies of those that survive? What distinction is there between the two cases? Perhaps some Theist will explain.

All the usual apologies of Theism break down in the face of a disaster such as that of St. Pierre. No Theist can logically escape the simple issue that, if there is a God, the eruption and earthquake there are as much his handiwork as the most beneficent aspect of nature's handiwork. Dr. Horton remarked, in his address as Chairman of the Congregational Union, that we must measure God by the same moral standard that we measure man, and with this I quite agree. And if we apply to the Theist's God this test, he stands it but badly. No man with the slightest shred of feeling could or would deliberately create forces that work out their results in the catastrophes that periodically appals and stagger human nature. There is little doubt of the general truth of Schopenhauer's remark that if a man had it within his power to create a world such as ours, and could foresee all the pain and misery that would result from the act, he would shrink back appalled from the task. As it is, man, by his strength and his sympathy, corrects and modifies some of the evils inflicted upon us by the Providence that rules the world.

I have written the above on the assumption that a God exists, and that all that is is the expression of his power and of his character. Of course, the assumption is groundless, without a single fact to support it, with nothing in the shape of valid reasoning to bolster it up. Nature is not conscious and is not intelligent, and, therefore, praise and blame, rare as figures of speech, are quite out of place in dealing with it. Nature cares no more, as a matter of sober fact, for the life of a man than it does for the life of a worm; both are developed and both are crushed with perfect unconcern and indifference. It is the Theist who asserts the contrary, and, having made the assertion and established the belief, he is bound to abide by its logical implications. I have merely tried to indicate what these implications are, and I insist that, if the wanton infliction of suffering by man indicates an unadmirable character, the wanton infliction of suffering by God must point to a like conclusion. If the indifference of man to suffering argues want of sympathy or of benevolence, the fact that God sits silent while men, women, and children are blasted by disease, starved by famine, or overwhelmed by the earthquake, must point to want of benevolence likewise. If a man who sets a machine at work, knowing beforehand that from its working the death of numbers of people must result, then the people who lie buried beneath the lava flood at St. Pierre were deliberately murdered by the God whom the Theist adores.

God's ways, says the Theist, are not men's ways; his power is greater than ours. The first part of the statement should be received with regret, if it is meant that man ought to imitate God; with pleasure, if it is meant that God ought to imitate man. If God exists, we may grant that he is greater—in power. But in kindness, in sympathy, in all that makes up the really admirable moral qualities, man is greater than God. Man makes habitable the places of the earth left uninhabitable by God. He discovers antidotes to the diseases God sends; remedies for the famine and distress created by God. The enduring and valuable fact is not God's love to man, but man's helpfulness and love for his fellow man. Man owes nothing to the gods that he has first created and then feared. These have always existed like a spasm in the heart and a cramp in the

intellect, checking his noblest aspirations and damning his best efforts. It has been part of the work of civilisation to free man from the rule of the gods, and only as this has been successful has civilisation been secure or human well-being guaranteed.

C. COHEN.

"A World Full of Sorrow."

THE above words formed part of a text from which the Rev. Dr. Horton recently preached a sermon with the idea of reconciling "the perpetual and the crushing warp of sorrows, which seems to run through all the texture of life," with the belief in the existence of a good and beneficent God. The Doctor admits that in contemplating "the malignant evils, the cruelty, the uncleanness, the turpitude which darken and sadden the world, the mind becomes bewildered, and, it argues, surely there can be no God; or, if a God, he cannot be good; or, if good, at least his power must be limited." Dr. Horton frankly confesses that "these things" present a difficulty which he will not attempt to solve, and he adds: "I feel these things as keenly as anyone, and often have I stood perplexed, bewildered, in face of the sufferings of my fellow-creatures, which I could not mitigate except by sympathy and prayer." Here we have an instance of the struggle which is constantly going on between the promptings of the humane feelings of man and his belief in "the order of God's providence," as manifested in nature. Acts which the creature, man, would shudder to perform, the alleged Creator, God, is supposed to be constantly perpetrating. Surely, if there be a God, he *does* "move in a mysterious way his wonders to perform!"

The Doctor says:—

"There is some reason for believing that the whole mingled confusion of pain and trouble is ordered by the wisdom and love of God to greater and better ends.....It is goodness at work in the world—goodness and wisdom and mercy."

This is theological mysticism with a vengeance. What is the "some reason" that will justify any god in inflicting upon his helpless subjects such pains and penalties as they have frequently to endure? No human being would escape the most severe condemnation if he were guilty of a quarter of the enormities ascribed to the God of nature. Is it to be supposed that any deity is less just and merciful than frail man? Does it show divine "wisdom and love" to allow the iron hand of despotism, the pangs of starvation, and the brutal passions of ignorance and jealousy to embitter the lives of thousands who are victims to the wrongs of a God-governed world? Was "goodness at work" recently in the West Indies when the volcanic eruptions brought sudden death to thousands of men, women, and children? Were those terrible catastrophes proofs of the "wisdom and love of God"? A deity who could have prevented such heart-rending scenes as those at St. Pierre and St. Vincent, and did not, must be a demon deserving only of execration. To talk of the existence of an Omnipotent and Intelligent Being who rules the destinies of nations, when we have a record of those appalling disasters before us, is an insult to common sense. Did this God arrange such a wholesale destruction of human lives? If yes, where is the evidence of his goodness? If no, he is not the Supreme Power which controls all things. When I think of the cruelty and injustice by which we are surrounded—the success of crime, the triumph of tyranny, the struggles of many to get the means of mere existence, the fearful deformity of children who are born into the world so diseased, so decrepit, that the sunshine of happiness seldom gladdens their lives, I cannot believe that a good God dwells "on high" who could, and yet would not, remedy this most lamentable state of things. It would be quite as logical to say that vice and misery are advantageous as to urge that earthquakes and volcanoes are "blessings in disguise," showing God's "goodness and wisdom and mercy." Theology may teach such nonsense, but nature and reason are above theology.

Dr. Horton's mitigation of prayer has been but of little service to the unfortunate victims of "God's providence," for such supplications have failed to avert calamities. We are told that, on the evening before

the disaster at St. Pierre, the people had held "a solemn religious service, being convinced that the sudden volcanic fury of Pelee indicated that the hand of Providence was being laid upon them for their sins, and on that awful day when the holocaust occurred they had meditated a continuance of these appeals for Divine help. It was, so to speak, in the middle of their prayer that the catastrophe came." Besides, prayers are as illogical as they are useless. They really imply two things. First, that either God does not know what is best to do, or, knowing, that he is not inclined to do it. This would be a reflection upon his knowledge or goodness. In the second place, it implies that God's government is imperfect, inasmuch as, if it were perfect, prayer could not improve it; and, therefore, any number of prayers of supplication would be a waste of time. The truth is, the time is past when any reliance should be placed upon the Bible promise that God "shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." As Dr. Maudsley observes:—

"When man is thoroughly convinced, by reasoned experience, that he never receives an answer to supplications, which are as vainly spent as if they were addressed to the shifting cloud or to the passing wind, he naturally ceases to offer them; and, first doubting, he finally disbelieves in, the superintendence, and even the existence, of such a being. So, through the ages, it has come to pass that faiths have been slowly extinguished, and gods have died; for faiths do not, like bubbles, burst, but stealthily, like clouds dislimned, lose their lineaments and gradually disperse."

Of course, professed Christians are told in their Bible to pray, and they are assured that whatever they ask for shall be given them; but, like other Scriptural assurances, no confidence can be placed in what is promised. And, so far as prayer is concerned, Christians need not expect that their supplications will be heeded, for they are told in "God's word" that he "knoweth the secrets of the heart," that "he doeth according to his will," and that he changeth not. If this be so, to ask him to alter his course is the height of folly. To be consistent they should submit, and exclaim to their God: "Thy will be done." Even Luther was perplexed as to the efficacy of prayer, for on one occasion we are informed that he petitioned Jehovah thus: "We pray so much for rain, and we have prayed so often; and if thou dost not grant our prayer, the godless will say that thy dear Son has lied; for he has said: 'What you ask of the Father in my name, he will grant unto you.' And they would accuse thee and thy dear Son of lying. I know that we cry unto thee from the depth of our hearts. Why dost thou not listen to us?" On one occasion it is said that Charles Kingsley refused to obey his bishop's injunction to pray for rain. According to the *Times*, "There was great commotion in ecclesiastical dove-cotes, most of all in ecclesiastical palaces. All sorts of punishments were threatened, but Kingsley remained throughout perfectly quiet, yet most determined. He would not degrade his sacred office to that of a rain-maker or medicine-man, and he carried his point. 'In America we manage these things better!' said an American friend of Kingsley. 'A clergyman in a village on the frontier between two of our States prayed for rain. The rain came, and it soaked the ground to such an extent that the young lambs in the neighboring State caught cold and died. An action was brought against the clergyman for the mischief he had done, and he and his parishioners were condemned to pay damages to the sheep farmers. They never prayed for rain again after that.'"

Dr. Horton says:—

"When science begins to understand that God is good, as Christianity has understood it and taught it for eighteen centuries and more, and when in consequence science becomes Christian and Christianity becomes scientific, when in consequence of this a great majority of intelligent beings will firmly believe in the eternal goodness and consistently act upon it, there opens up before the imagination a future for the world—society built upon such a truth that may fill the dreamer with gratitude and the religious man with adoration."

If the imaginative "future for the world" is not opened up until the events happen which are mentioned by the Doctor, there is reason to believe that no one now living will witness the changes referred to. Upon the sup-

position that God, who is all-wise and all-powerful, exists, how can science believe that he is good? Science recognises the law of cause and effect; therefore, if God be all-good and, at the same time, unlimited in wisdom and power, he cannot be the cause of the horrors of nature which so frequently startle humanity. Consequently, there must be some force in the universe over which this God has no control, in spite of the fact that Christianity "for eighteen centuries and more" has taught that God is omnipotent and all good. Does the Doctor seriously believe that the time will ever arrive when science will, as he states, become Christian and Christianity become scientific? The age of miracles is past, and to bring about the conditions which he foreshadows would require the greatest of all miracles. Nothing can be more opposite from their very nature than Christianity and science. The foundation of the Christian faith is contrary to all the facts known to science. Where are the scientific features in the Bible account of the origin, fall, and redemption of man? Surely it will not be contended that the record of the birth and death of Jesus, or of the wonders he is said to have performed, is in harmony with scientific facts. No; what is called Christianity must remain, so long as it has any existence at all, an emotional system based upon legend and doubtful credentials, while many of its teachings are vague, indefinite, contradictory, and thoroughly incompatible with the requirements of modern life.

It is too true, as Dr. Horton observes, that the world is full of sorrow, and it is equally true that no God has made it possible for it to be otherwise. The "Divine government" has proved itself impotent to arrange the order of things in such a manner that sorrow, starvation, injustice, and physical suffering should be unknown. Moreover, it is a lamentable fact that Jesus has utterly failed to carry out his alleged mission to take away the "sins of the world." It now remains for man to study the defects by which he is surrounded, and to strive to do what theology has been incapable of accomplishing.

CHARLES WATTS.

The Modern Pompeii.

No one, after the recent awful catastrophe in Martinique, can rationally affirm any supernatural, providential care over this planet. Of course, no Rationalist, no Materialist, would think of making such an assertion. But some who are still under the thralldom of supernatural religion will say that their Deity "moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform."

Very mysterious, very cruel, very murderous, if true. But it is *not* true. The earth is not under the rule of any sanguinary being who can, at any moment, overwhelm it in physical destruction by volcano, or earthquake, or glacial period. These are entirely due to the imperfect structure of the earth itself—for it is not a perfect world yet, by any means—and the forces within it and upon it are those of nature, wholly, and not of any arbitrary, despotic, revengeful power external to it.

All these dreadful seismic, volcanic, and other similar catastrophes can only be rationally explained by the facts and deductions of physical science. Religion and revelation cannot explain them. They but tend to confirm one's unbelief and utter detestation of the supernatural, providential, vindictive theory. The imperfect earth has its misfortunes and afflictions, entirely due to its own constitution and environment. It is not "visited" by any supreme intelligent force outside it—a theory too dreadful to entertain, too cruel, too criminal to conceive. Its troubles are indigenous to itself. And so in human misfortunes, they also are wholly owing to personal, self-induced causes, or to surrounding circumstances. No supernatural power or being has anything to do with them, does not send them, and cannot avert them. When they come they have to be endured. All the prayers in the universe cannot overcome them. Science and knowledge can alone alleviate their terrors and their torments.

GERALD GREY.

National Secular Society.

CONFERENCE IN LONDON.

THE Annual Conference of the National Secular Society was held on Sunday, the 18th inst., at the Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, London. Mr. G. W. Foote, the President, was in the chair, and the following Vice-Presidents were present: Messrs. C. Watts, C. Cohen, A. B. Moss, W. Heaford, Victor Roger, J. Neate, W. Pegg, E. Bater, G. J. Warren, F. Schaller, T. J. Thurlow, E. W. Quay, and Miss E. M. Vance (Secretary). The following Branches were represented: Battersea, Mr. W. P. Kernot; Bethnal Green, Messrs. J. How and H. Silverstein; Birmingham, Messrs. Francis Neale and W. H. Thomas; Camberwell, Mr. F. A. Davies; East London, Messrs. W. H. West and J. Cooper; Finsbury, Messrs. W. Caisey and E. W. Quay; Glasgow, Mr. C. Cohen; West London, Messrs. A. Bowers and W. Hunt; Manchester, Mrs. Pegg and Mr. C. Pegg; South Shields, Mr. Chapman. Amongst other members present were Mr. J. Dobson (Stockton), Thwaites (Stockton), J. W. Gott (Bradford), R. Green (Kings Lynn), Greevz Fisher (Leeds), M. Christopher (Wolverhampton), W. T. Pitt (Birmingham), Dr. Nichols, W. Manley, A. J. Fincken, J. Roberts, T. Sullivan (Birmingham), C. H. Cattell, A. G. Lye (Coventry), R. G. Fathers.

The minutes of last Conference were approved on the motion of Mr. Chapman, seconded by Mr. Quay.

ANNUAL REPORT.

The PRESIDENT read the Annual Report, which was as follows:—

The past year has not been one of much excitement. In common with all advanced movements the National Secular Society has continued to suffer from the prolongation of the miserable war in South Africa, which has diverted attention from the calmer propaganda of progressive principles, and even aroused a general spirit of reaction. Fortunately, there are signs that peace may be effected in the near future, and the more normal state of the public mind, which is bound to follow, will be more favorable to a hearing for causes that appeal only to reason, and never seek profit by inflaming sectional and sinister passions.

Marking time is not as exhilarating as making progress, and it is not surprising that a good many persons, who are blind to the temporary character of the present disadvantages, should be afflicted with depression, and in some cases with despair. But those of a more equable temperament, and those who recollect how inevitable is the fluctuation of human affairs, will not be downcast, but keep their hope alive for the advent of happier days.

It may be said, on the whole, that Secular work has been fairly well maintained in London. Sunday evening lectures, under the President's auspices, have been carried on uninterrupted—except for the summer vacation—at the Athenæum Hall in the West. In the South the Camberwell Branch has persevered gallantly in spite of difficulties that were often distressing. Its Hall has been regularly open for Sunday evening lectures during the winter, and it has conducted very large and successful open-air meetings at three different stations during the summer. Outdoor meetings have also been held with great success by the Bethnal Green Branch in Victoria Park. Other London Branches have also carried on an active open-air propaganda. Last summer this particular work was centralised by the Executive. The result was a much improved effectiveness. But the cost was very considerable, and the Executive has been unable to undertake a renewal of the responsibility. It may be mentioned that the £199 spent by the Executive on this work was spread over no less than 282 lectures. Eleven stations were kept going each Sunday, with an average of thirteen lectures. This was in addition to the lectures organised by the Camberwell Branch on the south side of the Thames. Special meetings, called Free-thought Demonstrations, were also held in many Parks and other open spaces. A wagonette and a pair of horses were provided on each occasion gratuitously by Mr. E. Wilson; the wagonette serving as a good platform, from which Messrs. Foote, Watts, and Cohen addressed vast crowds of interested and sympathetic listeners.

The usual Annual Excursion, organised by the Executive, was by special train to Dorking; and the usual Annual Dinner took place at the Holborn Restaurant.

In the provinces, while most Branches have found the wave of reaction too strong for them, a few have flourished in spite of it. The Glasgow Branch, in particular, has more than held its own; its members' list and its balance-sheet are highly satisfactory, and the attendance at its Sunday meetings has sometimes taxed the hall's capacity of accommodation. At Liverpool the Branch has had a most successful winter campaign under new conditions, the Alexandra Hall having been purchased by a company favorable to the Society's operations. At Manchester the Branch has held on bravely in spite of many difficulties. At Birmingham the Branch, having been barred by bigotry from the use of the Board

schools, has carried on its work vigorously elsewhere, and has also had special meetings addressed by your President in the Town Hall.

The Secular Society at Leicester and the Secular Sunday School at Failsworth are both doing excellent work. They are not connected with the N. S. S., but there is no reason why they should not be mentioned fraternally in this report.

Several public debates, in which well-known members of the Society took part, have been held in various parts of the country. Mr. Watts has debated on Spiritualism with one of its leading representatives, Mr. Cohen has championed Secularism against a Christian opponent, Mr. Percy Ward has been engaged in more than one discussion, and the President has also had an opportunity of participating in this uncommon but most effective method of propaganda.

During the year the Executive has had occasion to assist in maintaining the right of free speech outside the Society's borders; at Chatham, in connection with the Independent Labor Party, and at West Ham, in connection with the National Democratic League. In the first case the Executive gave a subscription, and in the second case paid a part of the legal expenses.

The last Conference instructed the Executive to report "upon the whole question of Branches, subscriptions, and membership, with a view to securing an increased revenue, and a more satisfactory list of adherents." The Executive remitted the task to a special sub-committee, whose recommendations are printed on the Agenda of the present Conference for serious consideration. That something needs to be done is only too obvious. So many Branches fall into arrear with their subscriptions, and there is so much friction and difficulty in proportion to the revenue directly accruing from the Branches, that a change of some sort seems not merely advisable, but almost inevitable. It remains for the Conference to say precisely what that change shall be.

The sale of the Society's *Almanack* has slightly decreased, and the Secretary was not able to secure any considerable quantity of advertisements for the current number. It hardly seems possible to continue this publication on the old lines. Probably a wider circulation could be obtained by increasing its size and diversifying its contents. But this would involve a much larger cost of production. Altogether the problem is one for careful consideration between this and August, when the next year's *Almanack* should begin to be in preparation.

One item on the new Agenda is of very grave importance. The Government Education Bill, by arousing the hostility of the Nonconformists, has created a new and great opportunity for urging upon the public mind the claims of "Secular Education." The Executive asks the Conference to sanction the issue of a special manifesto by the N. S. S. in the present crisis. Something more may be possible. Another meeting might be convened, in London at least, of the general friends of the policy of excluding religious teaching from the public schools. The first meeting of this kind, convened by the Executive some two years ago, was attended by many representatives of Radical, Ethical, and Socialist organisations. Another effort might be made to get these organisations into line for common action against the clericalising of our national system of education which is really contemplated by the Government Bill. At the same time the Nonconformists should have it pressed home upon them that their thirty years' recreancy to their own fundamental principle is the real cause of all the present trouble and danger. In this respect, indeed, it is a pity that a strong voice, like that of the late Charles Bradlaugh, cannot be raised in the House of Commons in favor of the only wise and just policy of national education—the policy which is more and more recommending itself to all civilised countries; the policy, namely, of excluding religion from the curriculum of the schools, and leaving it to the care of the special organisations existing for its promotion. Not in the public schools, but in the churches and chapels of the sects, should religion be taught; for there is no such thing as undenominational religion, and the pretence of it by the Free Churches is a most ridiculous hypocrisy.

During the past year the Society has lost an old member by the death of Mr. Robert Forder, who was for many years its paid secretary, and for several years afterwards its honorary secretary. At the request of the family your President delivered a brief address over the coffin; speaking, as it was thought the Society would wish him to speak, of the former days, especially during the historic Bradlaugh struggle, when Robert Forder rendered valuable services to the Freethought movement.

It is impossible, unfortunately, to pass over in silence the action of Mr. George Anderson against your President. There is no need to burden this report with the details. It suffices to say that when Mr. Anderson, for no apparent reason except vindictiveness, brought his action to a climax in the Bankruptcy Court, the Executive (with all the facts before it) passed an unanimous vote of sympathy with and confidence in your President, and of disgust at his pursuer's conduct. Several months later, when Mr. Anderson sought to justify himself in a pamphlet, the Executive had to call upon him to apologise for the false and foolish statement that the N. S. S. did not publish a balance-sheet. Mr. Anderson

quibbled instead of apologising, the Executive dropped him as hopeless, and has not proposed his name for re-election as a Vice-President. It should be mentioned that the Executive knows absolutely nothing of the subscriptions, amounting to more than a thousand pounds, which Mr. Anderson alleges he has given during the past ten or twelve years to various persons supposed to have been in some way connected with the N. S. S. Mr. Anderson was asked for the names of the recipients, which he refused to supply; whereupon the Executive could only emphasise its repudiation of any sort of responsibility for these alleged subscriptions in aid of the movement.

It is usual to devote a paragraph of the report to the progress of Freethought in other countries. In America it would appear that the death of Colonel Ingersoll was a terrible blow to the platform propaganda of Freethought. He has not apparently left a successor. And the only general organisation of Freethought in the United States has recently split in two. Still, there is a wide press propaganda carried on by many journals and magazines. Canadian Freethought is represented by one weekly organ at Toronto. Far away, at Melbourne, one of your vice-presidents, Mr. Joseph Symes, still lectures and edits the *Liberator*. His difficulties have been great, but he has never dropped the flag. Another vice-president, Mr. W. W. Collins, is a member of the New Zealand parliament, and does not hide his convictions, although circumstances have made him something less of an apostle. No news has come to hand lately of Mr. Wallace Nelson, another English Freethinker at the antipodes, who appears to be deeply engaged in the Labor movement. Turning a glance at the continent of Europe, it should be noted that anti-clericalism is making rapid strides in Spain, the classic land of Catholic bigotry; that legal repression does not prevent Freethought from spreading amongst the working-classes in North Germany; and that the recent general elections in France, in spite of all the hostile efforts of the clergy, have resulted in the signal triumph of M. Waldeck-Rousseau's government, which, after putting an end to the Dreyfus scandal, and bridling the party of Clericalism and Reaction, has carried and enforced those stringent laws against the rich and insolent Religious Orders that were always plotting the ruin of the Republic.

In concluding this report some reference should be made to two considerable drawbacks this Society has suffered during the past year. One is the President's prolonged illness, from which he is now almost entirely recovered. The other is the illness of the Secretary. Miss Vance was laid low with diphtheria in the fall of 1901; when she returned to her duties, after an absence of nearly three months, she was still suffering from one of the after-effects of that terrible malady; and the unfortunate legacy has lately been active enough to confine her to her room for a fortnight. While expressing sympathy with her, and hoping that she will soon be herself again, it is opportune to recognise the tried ability and zealous devotion which have marked her tenure of the secretaryship.

The Society's affairs, as far as the Agenda goes, are now remitted to the care of this Conference. May all who take part in to-day's business be animated by one spirit—the spirit of love for the Freethought cause, and of respect for all who seek to serve it according to their lights and opportunities. A brighter day will presently dawn for all advanced movements, and the Freethought cause will then need the best support, and the most ardent efforts, of all its adherents.

Mr. PEGG (Manchester) moved the adoption of the report, which was seconded by Mr. CHATHAM (South Shields), and carried.

(Continued on page 330.)

Questionable Philanthropy.

Andrew Carnegie gave a library to Newport, Kentucky, and this month it is to be dedicated. The exercises will begin with an invocation and close with a benediction, in the regular orthodox style. Mr. Carnegie, it is well known to his friends and the public, is an Agnostic, and in his younger days used to express himself strongly as to the demerits of Christianity. He has now a strong conviction that reading—he is a great reader himself—will help the people; and to help them to books he has given millions of dollars to public libraries. He has, however, kept no control over the books to be placed on their shelves, and the result will be that they will be filled with trash, and conducted as Christian institutions. He would have done the people a service if he had insisted that in all these libraries should be placed works on evolution; good histories like Macaulay's, Motley's, Buckle's, Lecky's; Spencer's and Draper's writings, and Freethought works. He ought to have insisted on a set of Ingersoll's works, and Paine's and Voltaire's, going into every library. The books in the average public library are a delusion and a snare, and the people who read them are in no way benefited, while those we have mentioned would inform them and broaden their minds, making them more capable of judging philosophies and religions, and helping them to know the truth.

—Truthseeker (New York).

Acid Drops.

THE Oath business at the Coronation having been finally settled, the clergy are now squabbling about the order of service prescribed for parish churches. The *Church Times* urges that, though the idea of the proposed service was admirable, in the execution there has been "a grievous blunder." The *C. T.* does not undertake to say what the clergy will do. But it says "there are many, we are sure, who will refuse to read the order of service now put forth." This will be very sad, though, to be sure, it will not affect that inconsiderable section of the people who are Nonconformists or Indifferentists, and who are not likely to enter the churches, whatever the order of service may be. Therefore, in spite of the dreadful forebodings of the *C. T.*, these people remain sublimely unconcerned as to "the mischief that is threatened."

According to the *Church Times*, Friday in Coronation week will be "a trial to a good many honest church folks." For the relief of such who live in the diocese of Bath and Wells, their Bishop has intimated to the clergy in response to applications which have reached him: "That inasmuch as these festivities are likely to be held in many places, not only upon Thursday, June 26, the day of the Coronation, but also upon Friday, the 27th, which in the Prayer Book is ordered to be observed as a day of fasting, or abstinence, and also in some places upon Saturday, the 28th, which is the Even or Vigil before St. Peter's Day, that so far as any power of the kind is vested in me, in virtue of my office as Bishop of the diocese, I hereby relieve the members of the Church in this diocese from any obligation which such order imposes upon them, so that they may share in the festivities appointed for those days without considering that they are thereby infringing the rule of the Church."

What a fine thing it is to be a Bishop when, in the exercise of vested power, and by virtue of office, it is possible to graciously permit people to eat and drink on an occasion of national festivity! How nice to be able to thus lord it over common mortals, and regulate their meals and their propensity to jubilate! It is especially kind, if a little inconsistent, of a Christian bishop to undertake this paternal control, when the real founder of Christianity, Paul, said: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath day" (2 Col. ii. 16).

One of the missionaries at a May meeting in connection with the S. P. G. lamented that "the Japanese were not a religious people, but were intensely Materialistic. The educated classes and young students had shaken off their old religion, and were in great danger of becoming Agnostics." As a matter of fact, they are not only in danger, but they are already—many of them—absolute Agnostics beyond and above any missionary appeals.

Some funny stories have been told at the May meetings. We say "funny"; less charitable people might describe them by another term. Here is one told by Mr. Frank Cockrem, of the Open Air Mission, working at the Epsom Spring Races. He explains that the purpose of the mission is not to run down racing, but to preach Christ and exalt Him. Then he says, At one meeting on the racecourse he had a huge stone hurled at him from one side, and a piece of broken glass just missed him on the other, "while a 'bookie,' in his rage, raised a hammer to throw at me, but his hand was stayed; and, in his awful temper, instead of smashing me, he turned around and smashed up his whole stand and show."

Who "stayed" the "bookie's" hand? Was it a Divine intervention? And, in any case, what did the "bookie" want to smash up his whole show and stand for? Did he do it accidentally, or was it an evidence of sudden conversion? Was his "awful temper" occasioned by hearing about Christ, or by finding that his *clientele* had backed the winner?

Dean Farrar, in his article, "If I were a millionaire?" noticed last week, says he would spend money in the promotion of social progress and in ameliorating the lot of the masses. He dilates upon that at length, but it is mere padding. We looked with confidence for something else, and soon spotted it. The "undeserved misery of many hundreds of the struggling clergy," the sorrows of "numbers of distressed clergy who, by the diminution of their incomes, find it almost impossible to maintain their positions"—this is the thing that strikes Dean Farrar as specially requiring the attention of millionaires. He says the present impecunious condition of many of the clergy is a "real disgrace to the English nation, and it is a most discreditable fact that their sufferings excite so little sympathy in the heart of the English people." Poor clergy! If it is so distressing to them to remain in the state of holy poverty which their Master voluntarily chose, why don't the over-paid

archbishops, bishops, and—yes, Dr. Farrar—the over-paid deans come to their assistance by handing over out of their abundance not the trifling sums they occasionally subscribe, but something really substantial? Why don't they initiate a re-arrangement of clerical incomes from that of the Primate downwards? The millionaires might then be induced to listen to these appeals—if there remained any need for making them.

A touch of grim humor was heard in a suburban road the other night. An itinerant band of street singers were waiting for pennies. Their appearance suggested abject poverty and equally abject humility. From the "Honeysuckle and the Bee" they passed on to sentimental songs, and from sentimental songs to hymns. They wound up with the line, "And pour contempt on all my pride." The invocation seemed painfully unnecessary.

At a Midland church things had not run smoothly for some time. Somehow or other the people could not agree. In the end the pastor decided to convene a prayer meeting, the expressed intention being to pray that the stumbling block—whoever it was—should be removed. Fervent prayers were offered up by a number of the officials, including the pastor. A few days later the rev. gentleman announced that he had accepted a new church. The question is being asked: Was this an answer to prayer?

M. Bertoglio, a Court chaplain, dropped dead while saying Mass at Milan. There is no moral. The moral would have arisen had such an event occurred in a Secular hall.

Christian zealots at Therapia, a suburb of Constantinople, had a good time of it on the 25th ult., which, according to the Greek Calendar, was Good Friday. They observed then the traditional custom of "burning the Jews at the stake." The Jews whom the Christian folk of Therapia sacrifice are not of flesh and bones—perhaps they wish that that was possible—but are made of their own cast-off clothing, filled in with straw and rags.

Reviewing Mr. Clodd's *Life of Huxley*, the *Literary World* observes that Huxley's "destructive work was cleanly done, and even the people who denounced him, and who regarded him as Mephistopheles in professor's clothing, now admit that religion has gained by the shooting of a vast amount of non-essential traditional rubbish." The world, of course, would be well rid of the "traditional rubbish," but it is absolute nonsense to represent it as "non-essential" to the creeds.

Mr. F. B. Barwell, of Sheringham, in a letter to the *Daily Chronicle*, goes straight to a practical point in regard to the education problem. He wants to know if the advocates for the teaching of Anglican or other Christian dogma in primary schools have lost sight of the fact that, as the schools are all closed on Saturdays, the pastors of the various denominations have the whole of those days and all Sundays in the year for the imparting of their theological doctrines to the children belonging to their several communities. "Their churches and chapels," he says, "are the fitting places for such instruction, and not buildings constructed for the teaching of reading, writing, cyphering, and a limited number of kindred subjects, and the money for which has been raised from the public of all denominations."

Sunday cycling has for some time past provided a counter-attraction to the claims of Christ, according to the complaints of the sky-pilots. Now ping-pong is bidding fair to achieve an impious distinction. We learn that in an Essex village recently a young lady, who has been a regular attendant at special Wednesday afternoon church services, went to church at the usual hour, and was surprised to find the doors closed. She asked the caretaker why this was so, and the old dame replied: "Oh, we ain't got no prayers this afternoon, miss. Why, don't you know this is the opening day of the ping-pong club?" Sure enough, the rector, his wife, and the usual Wednesday worshippers had forsaken their orisons to play the game.

The Rev. the Hon. J. Adderley, vicar of St. Mark's, Marylebone-road, declared the other day that, although St. Mark's had now been in full work for thirty years, there was only one male adult communicant.

Poor Devil! They are now trying to make him out to be a diorama showman. Somebody writes to the *Sunday Companion* asking where was the "exceeding high mountain" whence the Tempter could show Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them" (Matthew iv. 8). The sapient editor replies: "Do you not think it possible that the Evil One presented scenic pictures to the Savior's mind? Surely he is quite as clever as any human artist; and at popular dioramas you may often witness some marvellous illusions." This does not say much for the intelligence of either the Tempter or the Tempted. The Devil, at any rate, must have had a poor opinion of the perceptive ability of Christ, and he could hardly have been very far out in his

estimate if he is as astute as he is represented to be, though the result was against him.

Another example of the horrible effects of some religious delusions is afforded by the case of a man named Pougatz, who has just received fifteen years' hard labor for manslaughter at Munich. His explanation of his motive for the crime is unique. He had been disappointed in love, and wished to die; but, believing that suicides do not go to heaven, he decided to do some terrible deed for which he would be hanged. After due deliberation he decided to murder a neighbor's little child; his reason for selecting a child being that, as a child was innocent, it would not require to confess before dying. On his arrest, Pougatz was placed under medical observation; but the doctors found that his brain and reasoning powers were quite normal. This decision is very significant.

Rev. John Jedidiah Hunt, vicar of St. Barnabas, Birmingham, has discovered a serious cause of complaint. He saw it recorded the other day in the local press that a number of Birmingham Volunteers were engaged in some military manoeuvres in the rural neighborhood of Chadwick and Knowle on the Lord's Day. He at once despatched a letter to the War Office protesting against this desecration of the Sabbath. After waiting ten days, he received an intimation that the matter would be inquired into. This shows that the War Office, if it cannot find time to see that discharged soldiers from South Africa duly receive their pay, can bestir its ponderous machinery when a parson is troubled in conscience about the Sunday doings of local Volunteers. It is well that the War Office can do something.

Rev. Jedidiah, being interviewed, was only partially influenced by the fact that attendance on the field-day in question was quite voluntary, and that any man who had religious scruples might stay away. He still maintained that Sunday drills—except Church parades—should be stopped. Note the exception of "Church parades," which, as we know, add so much to the military efficiency of officers and men. Perhaps the Rev. Jedidiah would say that active service—engagements with the enemy—should be stopped on the Lord's Day, oblivious of the fact that a number of decisive battles have been fought on that day, because they could hardly have been postponed. He says that what struck him was the matter-of-fact way in which the affair was reported—as if it were an everyday occurrence. He was very much exercised in his mind about it. His feeling was that there was already "so much secularising of the Lord's Day going on, and this seemed a decidedly fresh departure, that he wondered how it came about, and whose doing it was."

The War Office, we can depend upon it, will now bestir itself and probe the matter to the bottom. It is just the sort of thing to suit the alert and energetic officials. Meanwhile the Rev. Jedidiah may go on his way rejoicing that he has done something to stem the tide of Sunday secularisation—and create disgust at silly sanctimonious interference.

Apparently under the impression that he was Judas, a Birmingham man named Thomas Jones committed suicide the other day by hanging himself. For some time past he had suffered from religious mania, stating that he had crucified Christ, and that he would have to be punished.

The Hon. W. G. Ewing, one of the chief officials of the Mother Church of Christian Science in Boston, states that the spread of Christian Science in Manchester has been greater than in any other city in the world. This is largely due to the fact that two daughters of the Earl of Dunmore have been conducting an active Christian Science Mission in Manchester during the last eighteen months. Aristocratic advocacy seems to have glossed over the absurdity of Mrs. Eddy's mixture of science and faith.

Dr. Agar Beet, who appears to be in danger of being deposed from his position at the Richmond Wesleyan College because of heretical views, lectured the other Sunday on "The Old Testament and Modern Thought." He said the authorship of most of the books is unknown. He instanced the book of Daniel, and said that he did not believe that Daniel wrote it. Dr. John Clifford, writing on the opposition to Dr. Beet, says he has lost all interest in heresy hunts. "They are so stupid. To be sure, like the hunting of the stag, the fox, and the otter, they are not a little cruel; but it is the ineffable stupidity of the exercise that astonishes me." He thinks there is no swifter way of propagating what men call "heresy" than to penalise it. The Bishop of Derry deprecates this treatment of Dr. Beet's views, "when real and serious heresies are in the air."

Apropos of the recent official resurrection of the Apocrypha, the *Literary World* relates the following amusing incident: "A search for the Apocrypha among the bookshops was recently made by a well-known writer. He tried one shop after another. 'Have you the Apocrypha?' he asked a lady

behind a pile of books. The lady was puzzled; then, with a bewitching smile, she asked: 'Is it a weekly or a monthly?'"

As an incitement to missionary effort in India, the *Christian* says it must be borne in mind that there is a counter-influence exercised by "the torrents of infidel literature from the West with which the Eastern soil is saturated and flooded." Worse still: "The earnest student of Christianity who keeps aloof from Atheistic assertions is beset by another formidable danger." The heathen, it seems, now proclaim, with erect heads, that "their religion is just as good as the Christians'." This terrible state of things is attributed by the *Christian* to "the deteriorating effect of the Higher Criticism. Why should Hindus believe where the Christians doubt themselves?" Why, indeed?

The subject of recreation was discussed at a recent archidiaconal conference at Wolverhampton. The majority of the clergy, as might be expected, were of opinion that there was far too much recreation indulged in, especially on Sundays. One clergyman, however, hinted that the clergy might with profit patronise the leading football grounds on Saturday afternoon. This moves a local paper to suggest that a cup final might supply a worthy inspiration for a Sunday morning sermon. It would be "daring enough," but "none the less welcome."

An Autolytus, with a taste for Scripture that would do credit to a city missionary, has been sentenced to three months' imprisonment by the Birmingham magistrates for stealing a pair of boots. He seems to have perambulated the city with a bag which bore in ink on the outside the inscription, "Luke xix., verse 10." This text, on being turned up, was found to be: "The Son of Man is come to seek and save that which is lost." Why didn't he try the effect of the Sermon on the Mount on a Christian tailor—ask for the gift of a coat, and see if the tradesman would bestow it and throw an overcoat into the bargain?

The Bishop of London is able to preach a long sermon. But he will have to cut it short at the Coronation. The time allowed him on that occasion is five minutes. It would be a mercy if common folk, as well as royalty, had to suffer as little homily at divine service. More music from the choir, and less prose from the pulpit, is generally a welcome change.

The Bishop of Durham and the Bishop of Bath and Wells determined to have a place in the Coronation show if possible. Accordingly they made a formal claim "to support their Majesties at their Coronation," and this has been allowed by the special Court of Claims. At this rate their Majesties will have plenty of support. We should not have thought so much was necessary. Still, if anything *should* go wrong, the Bishops will, indeed, be "handy men," for their prayers (of course) would soon set everything right again.

Rev. J. Nicholson Smith died suddenly whilst preaching the other Sunday night in a Salford chapel. Rev. James McTurk had a fatal stroke of apoplexy whilst presiding in Queen-street Church, Morley. A deacon named Alfred Stanley, of Walsall, has died from the effects of slipping down the steps of Queen-street Church, Burslem, when attending the Staffordshire Congregational Union meetings. What would have been said if, in one week, three Free-thought advocates had met with similar deaths at Free-thought meetings?

During a recent thunderstorm Queen-street Church, Middlewick, was struck by lightning, and the roof damaged. The church at Pine-grove, Ontario, has been destroyed by fire. As these edifices had nothing to do with Freethought, there is no need to look for the finger of God, who is quite at liberty to do what he pleases with his own temples.

"That great old tom-cat from Worcester" is the way in which Canon Scott-Holland referred to the Bishop of Worcester at a recent meeting at which the Bishop himself presided. This startling description of the grave Dr. Gore requires some explanation. It was a meeting of the Christian Social Union, and Canon Scott-Holland reminded his hearers that they had come there to raise a prolonged howl through the night like cats on a roof. Then he said they had with them their "great old tom cat from Worcester." The audience "howled" with laughter, but it is doubtful whether Dr. Gore quite relished the disrespectful though playful description. Canon Scott-Holland is credited with some humor, but it is mostly of an elephantine order.

Common sense is born pure in the healthy human being, is self-developed, and reveals itself by a resolute perception and recognition of what is necessary and useful. Practical men and women avail themselves thereof with confidence. When it is absent, both sexes consider anything that they may desire a necessity, and anything that gives them pleasure an object of utility.—*Goethe*.

Important Notice.

The business of the Freethought Publishing Company, including the publication of the **FREE-THINKER**, is now carried on at No. 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, London, E.C.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, May 25, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, W.: 7.30, "Wesleyans and Hell; or, the New Heresy Hunt."

To Correspondents.

CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—June 1, Masonic Hall, Camberwell.—Address, 24 Carminia-road, Balham, London, S.W.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—May 25, afternoon, Victoria Park.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

ESS JAY BEE writes: "I am sorry to find that my verses have annoyed Mr. Dan Leno. As you say in your article, no insult was intended. On the contrary, I intended to be complimentary."

W. P. BALL.—Your cuttings are always very welcome.

D. H. L.—(1) Glad to have your second letter. Your suggestions are worth consideration, but we cannot take the matter up at the present moment. It is of no use to attack such a big enterprise in a haphazard way. Still, we do not think you will have to wait long. (2) We have not heard anything of Mr. Touzeau Parris for several years.

H. HARVEY.—The Christian Evidence blackguard you refer to is difficult to deal with because of his very insignificance. He is really a lunatic, and by disposition a criminal lunatic. This disgusting brute belongs to a type that was commoner in the old days when "infidels" were the open sport of Christian barbarity.

E. T. HOLLAND.—Much obliged for your trouble in the matter, which we will deal with as soon as possible, probably next week. Your pleasant letter is an encouragement.

JAMES NEATE.—See "Sugar Plums." Pleased to hear that Mr. Cohen did so well in the debate, but it is a pity he had not a foeman worthier of his steel.

HAROLD ELLIOT.—Will find room for it. Mr. Foote will doubtless be able to take the platform as usual in the provinces when the summer is over—if it ever begins. We appreciate the spirit of your remarks on the other matter.

W. C. MIDDLETON.—(1) Glad to hear you were so amused at our reply to Dan Leno, and note your opinion that "he will think now it was a pity he spoke." Comic singers evidently are sensitive; the characteristic is common to the theatrical and music-hall professions. (2) The subscription edition of Ingersoll we are advertising is very much better got-up than our *Bible Romances*, as it ought to be in view of the price. Of course, you can pay outright instead of monthly if you choose.

The National Secular Society's office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

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

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

Now the Conference is over the Athenæum Hall will be re-opened for Sunday evening meetings. Mr. Foote occupies the platform this evening (May 25), taking for his subject "Wesleyans and Hell; or, the New Heresy Hunt."

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference was well attended by delegates and visitors from the provinces, considering the general state of things in the intellectual world while the war is occupying public attention, and the wretched state of the weather for the time of the year. London supplied a goodly number of representative Freethinkers. There was also a fair assembly round the luncheon tables at the Bedford Head Hotel between the morning and afternoon sessions. Mr. Heaford performed the feat of going home all the way to Croydon for his meal. Mr. Watts, too,

was absent from the luncheon as well as the afternoon meeting. One or two country delegates left the Athenæum Hall, unfortunately, before the luncheon tickets could be passed round to them. We hope they will understand that no sort of slight was intended. It was a sheer accident.

Miss Vance attended the Conference as the N. S. S. secretary. She was looking rather better, but her lameness was painful to witness. It is to be hoped the fine weather will come along soon and give her a chance.

The debate between Mr. Cohen and the Rev. A. J. Waldron was successful from one point of view. The hall was crowded, and Mr. Cohen acquitted himself to the admiration of the Secular part of the audience, and also to that of a good number of the Christians who were present. Mr. Waldron bore himself as usual. His stock-in-trade consists chiefly of personalities and misrepresentations. We should be sorry to see Mr. Cohen debating with him again. To borrow a phrase from Gibbon, it is a sufficient humiliation to defeat such opponents.

We call attention once more to the special advertisement of our Ingersoll announcement in this week's *Freethinker*. Several replies have been received, but more will be necessary if we are to go on with the enterprise. As the advertisement will have to be withdrawn shortly, we beg the "saints" to look at it at once. They will never have another such opportunity of acquiring, on easy terms of purchase, the complete works of the noblest of modern Freethought orators.

Mr. Watts's Apologia.

MR. WATTS'S letter could not be inserted in last week's *Freethinker*. There was not room for it and my reply together. Unfortunately, in one way, there is a still greater lack of room in the present issue, owing to the space occupied by the report of the National Secular Society's Conference. In another way this may not be unfortunate. It will give Mr. Watts one more opportunity of explaining and justifying, or withdrawing, the vague charges he threw out against unspecified persons who were presumably his colleagues. What were the "studied slights" and the "supersession," and who inflicted them? What was the "mischievous campaign" directed against him, and who carried it on? This will be his last opportunity. I will print his present letter next week—although, if I imitated his example, I should refuse it insertion, and decline to justify my statements. It will be accompanied by my reply, and that will end the matter, as far as I and the *Freethinker* are concerned.

G. W. FOOTE.

Answers to Prayer.

SOME strange things happen while people are praying for rain. At a little church in the near Sydney orchard country the rain service was concluded in unseemly fashion. A small dog strolled up the aisle and committed an outrage on the hat which belonged to the leading farmer and churchwarden of the district, the hat being just alongside the pew, but in the aisle. Whereupon the farmer scuffed the dog, took him outside and knocked his brains out on the fence, and then came back to pray. The organist, a daughter of said farmer, saw her father's murderous act through the window, and fainted. And what with the dead dog, the insensible girl, the unseemly farmer, and the outrage to the hat, the congregation departed humiliated, but without rain.

In answer to prayer. Time, N.S.W. day of humiliation; place, a railway town near Sydney; occasion, the combined service of the Church of England, Presbyterian, and Methodist congregations, asking that the Divine wrath be turned aside, in order that the earth might be replenished, and give forth fruits for the use of men. Answer: Rev. Joseph—returned to the parsonage to find that his second wife had in the interval presented him with twin daughters.

Re prayers for rain. A score of years ago, in a township near Bathurst, a large congregation held prayers for rain, and scarcely had they started for home when the drought broke. Some of the worshippers were so delighted that they inserted an advertisement in the local paper after this fashion:—

TO ALMIGHTY GOD.

We, the undersigned, beg to return our thanks to God for so quickly answering our prayers for rain, last Sunday.

I. BLANK.
B. DASH.

This settled the question as to whose prayers brought the rain, though all the other beastly sects had been supplicating also. Blank and Dash knew that "our" prayers did it.

—*Sydney Bulletin*.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

(Concluded from page 326.)

The balance-sheet being submitted,

Mr. THOMAS said the Birmingham Branch had not been supplied with copies, to which Miss VANCE replied that there might have been some delay, but the sheets were posted, and probably arrived after the delegate had left. The PRESIDENT said that, as a matter of fact, he had only received the balance-sheet himself two or three days ago. The Secretary's illness—she having been, he regretted to say, confined to her room, which she only left for the first time on Saturday—accounted for the delay. That was a sufficient reason, but the matter had nothing whatever to do with him, except in so far as it had to do with the members generally.

Mr. VICTOR ROGER moved the adoption of the balance-sheet.

Mr. PEGG drew attention to the amount of the donations contributed by the Branches to the General Fund. Manchester had made a very fair contribution, but he was afraid that some of the other Branches had been rather neglectful of their duty in this respect.

The PRESIDENT did not think that they ought to be this year too severe upon anybody in the matter of contributions. Manchester generally took their collections when he (the President) happened to be lecturing there. Many Branches had no special lectures.

Mr. PEGG: Other Branches have the opportunity of selecting that time.

The PRESIDENT: There is no doubt that Manchester does its duty.

Mr. PEGG drew attention to the amount set down for the expenses of last year's Conference.—The PRESIDENT explained that it included the costs incurred in connection with the evening meeting—advertising, printing, posting, hire of hall, etc. The Society had always paid the expenses of the evening meeting.

Mr. PEGG said there appeared to have been a slight loss on the demonstrations.

The PRESIDENT replied that the demonstrations were worked very economically. Mr. Wilson furnished a brake gratuitously, and he (the President) gave his services at all these demonstrations gratuitously. If they had had to pay Mr. Wilson and himself, the account would have had a different complexion.

Mr. PEGG said the provincial Branches, as a rule, gave their own outdoor lectures; but it seemed to him that the Society generally had undertaken this work for the London Branches. He should imagine that it would be possible for some of the numerous London Branches to work the outdoor propaganda themselves. Manchester, and, he thought, all the provincial Branches, had done that. It seemed to him to be a part of the work of the Branches, and not of the Executive; and, as it meant a heavy expense on the Executive, it left them nothing for the general work of the Society.

Mr. SILVERSTEIN (Bethnal Green) asked for information as to the item in regard to the N. S. S. *Almanack*, and Miss VANCE replied, pointing out that there were still a number of copies in stock.

In reply to Mr. F. A. DAVIES (Camberwell), Miss VANCE explained that the expenses of some of the speakers could not be fairly charged to the demonstration account, because these speakers were then fulfilling ordinary lecturing engagements.

Mr. DAVIES said there had been a loss on the outdoor lectures, and, however good the scheme might have seemed when it was initiated, it was not of the kind to be pursued in the future. The scheme he suggested was the old system that obtained in the time of Mr. Bradlaugh. If they were going to give help, the best thing was to give a little help, and leave the branches to do the rest themselves. If the people who were conducting branches knew that their expenses were ensured, they were not likely to make the same efforts to procure money as they might otherwise do.

The PRESIDENT pointed out that some of the stations covered by the Executive expenditure were stations which were not so fortunately situated as those of Camberwell. In some no collections could be made. That was so at Hyde Park and Regent's Park. The maintenance of the Finsbury Park station had fallen upon the Executive.

Mr. PEGG said it seemed that some of the lecturers at the outdoor demonstrations were paid, and some were not.

Miss VANCE replied that all the lecturers were paid except the President, who was not.

Mr. PEGG did not think it fair that one should be paid and another should not.

The PRESIDENT said that if he took payment for a meeting of that sort, he would have to run counter to his plan. He was quite satisfied to give his services at those meetings when he could, and he did not think that anybody had the right to find fault with him. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. PEGG: I am finding fault with others for not following a good example. (Laughter.)

The PRESIDENT: Perhaps they cannot.

Mr. THURLOW thought that all the work of the outdoor propaganda should be under the guidance of the Executive itself. There seemed to a tendency in some directions to the riding of one's own little gee-gee. (A laugh.) He trusted, however, that they would concentrate themselves on the special work of the movement, and leave outside things alone. He was talking to a gentleman who said he would be willing to subscribe if he were assured that his financial support would be really and entirely devoted to anti-Christian work.

The PRESIDENT thought they could hardly bring a discussion of the whole work of the N. S. S. under the head of the balance-sheet.

Mr. MOSS said that, with respect to outdoor work, he thought it was in the highest degree absurd to measure its value by merely financial results. (Hear, hear.) The proper measure of the value of this work was the number of converts they made—(applause)—and the way in which they spread their ideas. (Applause.) In his judgment, speaking with twenty-five years' experience of out-door advocacy, he thought that last year was a splendid success. (Renewed applause.) They addressed a large number of people, and there was more enthusiasm displayed than had been the case for many previous years. The fact that they had not collected as much as the lecturers' fees was an insignificant matter. Besides, as the President had pointed out, in a large number of cases there could be no collection at all, and in some places where lectures were delivered the people were extremely poor. Instead of pronouncing the scheme a failure, looked at in the proper light, it should be welcomed as a great success. (Applause.)

Mr. THURLOW: I said it was a financial failure.

Mr. MOSS: I am prepared to admit that it was not a financial success, and in that connection I think we might fairly look to our well-to-do friends for support, considering the results we achieve.

Mr. COHEN said he wanted to put a purely abstract point—were they running the N. S. S. simply to make a profit? (Hear, hear.) If they were, then they would turn up every station that did not give them a balance, and they would be justified in doing so. But if they were running it for propagandist purposes, they must be prepared to face a financial loss, which was simply an outlay. He never knew a liberal propaganda that was run at a profit. There were some stations at which it would be good policy to lose £5 in a season. The N. S. S. had always been in debt as long as he had known it, and he supposed it ever would be. It existed to lose money, and the only question was whether they were losing it wisely or not.

The balance-sheet was then approved.

ELECTION OF PRESIDENT.

Mr. FOOTE, as the retiring President, vacated the chair, which was taken by Mr. VICTOR ROGER.

Mr. QUAY, on behalf of the Finsbury Branch, moved the re-election of Mr. Foote.

Mr. PEGG said that, as one of the representatives from the provinces, he had the greatest pleasure in seconding the resolution. He did not need to say one word as to the fitness of Mr. Foote for the position, but he hoped he would continue to occupy it as long as ever he possessed health to do so. (Loud applause.)

Mr. V. ROGER said he had intended a short time ago, when Mr. Foote was so ill, to move that he should have a rest for twelve months from the Presidency. He did not, however, feel inclined to move anything of the kind now that he had the pleasure of seeing that Mr. Foote was getting so well. (Applause.)

The resolution was carried unanimously and with acclamation.

The PRESIDENT, who was warmly applauded, said: Friends—for that old-fashioned method of address is suitable for once during the Conference—I have, of course, to thank you for the unanimous way in which you have desired me to occupy the President's chair, for another twelve months at any rate. Seriously, three months ago I wondered whether it would be possible for me to face the duties and responsibilities of the post, which, of course, is not exactly that of Prime Minister of the country, but nevertheless has its obligations and its preoccupations of mind, and its occasional worries. (Hear, hear.) But, fortunately, I have got my sleep back during the last ten or twelve days, and I am feeling in most respects a new man. (Loud applause.) I trust I shall be able to continue my work during the next twelve months, at least, without any break resulting from physical indisposition. And now may I add just another word? I am bound to say, when I look back over the propaganda of this Society, and of the contingencies connected with it, that it is very doubtful if the decision which was arrived at in 1897 was a particularly wise one—I mean with regard to the organised propaganda of Free-thought up and down the country. I am bound to say—and I think this is the opportunity for saying it—that, as far as I know, there never has, in spite of the money which has been spent, been any really effective extra propaganda up and down the country since that old Lecture Scheme of mine was dropped. Now, I do not for a moment mean to say that I intend to resuscitate it. I have no such intention or desire. I have already got enough to do, and, in running a scheme

like that, so many people get dissatisfied, and so many people express wild opinions of the persons running it, that I think, for my own peace of mind, I am well out of it. I mention it for this reason—that we shall never have any effective extra propoganda unless we centralise the effort. (Hear, hear.) Of course, a Branch can do its own particular work in Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, or elsewhere; but, when you come to extra work outside the ordinary operations of the Branches, what do you find? Manchester holds its own, but the Manchester Branch will bear me out when I say that it has still to make an effective impression upon that vast South Lancashire district, with its five or six millions of people. Down at Glasgow the plan of lectures at Paisley, Greenock, Motherwell, and other places within easy reach of Glasgow, was commenced under that Lecture Scheme, and carried on successfully. It was afterwards taken up by the Glasgow Branch and lately dropped, so that now there is next to no practically organised propoganda outside the city of Glasgow itself. I give these instances to illustrate the situation. Unfortunately, that millionaire who is wanted does not come along. We have fantastic offers on impossible conditions that never bring us money or anything worth having, but I should rejoice if that millionaire came along who would give us an opportunity of centralising our propoganda so that we might build up a strong national Society in the country, and enable all the Branches—numerous, solid, and self-reliant—to carry on a propoganda organised for them at first on central lines. The millionaire does not come along, and money does not roll in extravagantly. But this I ask the Society to bear in mind. The President is not merely the Chairman of the Executive. He is supposed to be President of an executive body, and is supposed to have certain, not clearly defined, but, nevertheless, tacitly understood, duties. The Conference, in electing officers, first of all elects the President, and if the President between Conferences exercises what influences he may have for the good of the Society, taking the monthly responsibility of conferring with the Executive and the annual responsibility of conferring with all the representatives of the Society at a Conference, I think that, at least, judgment of his proceedings should be tolerant—(hear, hear)—that he should not be credited with arbitrariness and despotism because, without putting pressure upon others, he does the utmost he can to promote the work of the Society himself. (Hear, hear.) If I am treated with that spirit of toleration, it will be a great pleasure for me to carry forward what I regard as the highest kind of work. Political, and a great deal of what is called social, work is often superficial, but in our cause we go to the roots of things. If you make people Freethinkers, it will be all over with the political and social impostures of the world. It is our primary task to make Freethinkers, and if you will engage heartily in that fight I promise you wherever the battle wages I will try to be near the front. (Prolonged applause.)

ELECTION OF VICE-PRESIDENTS.

Mr. CHAPMAN (South Shields) moved the re-election of the following vice-presidents nominated by the Executive:—E. Bator, Donald Black, Victor Charbonnel, C. Cohen, W. W. Collins, J. F. Dewar, Léon Furnémont, T. Gorniot, John Grange, W. Heaford, Arthur B. Moss, J. Neate, J. Partridge, S. M. Peacock, C. Pegg, William Pratt, E. W. Quay, J. H. Ridgway, Thomas Robertson, Victor Roger, F. Schaller, W. H. Spivey, H. J. Stace, Charles Steptoe, Joseph Symes, W. B. Thompson, S. R. Thomson, T. J. Thurlow, John F. Turnbull, J. Umpleby, Miss E. M. Vance, G. J. Warren, Charles Watts, Frederick Wood, W. H. Wood.

Mr. SILVERSTEIN moved, on behalf of the Bethnal Green Branch, "That Mr. C. G. Quinton be elected a vice-president."

Mr. THURLOW seconded the resolution, which was supported by the PRESIDENT, who said that no doubt Mr. Quinton's name would have been mentioned by the Executive before but that hints had been thrown out that the Executive were packing the vice-presidencies.

Mr. THOMAS stated that the Birmingham Branch desired to nominate Mr. Francis Neale as a vice-president.

As notice of this nomination had not been given in time, the Standing Orders were suspended.

Mr. THOMAS then formally proposed, and Mr. COHEN seconded, the nomination of Mr. Neale, which was carried unanimously.

On the motion of Mr. BATER, seconded by Mr. PEGG, Messrs. Warren and Thompson were elected auditors for the ensuing year.

THE N. S. S. AND THE EDUCATION QUESTION.

The PRESIDENT formally moved, on behalf of the Executive, the following resolution adopted by them:—"That the N. S. S. issue and circulate as widely as possible a manifesto on the subject of religious education in public elementary schools, with special reference to the new Education Bill, and particularly showing how the present difficulty has been chiefly caused by the recreancy of Nonconformists to their professed principle of the complete separation of the State from religion."

Mr. PEGG, in seconding the resolution, said it was eminently the work of the Executive to take this action. There could scarcely be an individual at this Conference who would not agree with the proposal.

Mr. MOSS thought they had delayed the issue of such a manifesto rather too long in view of the fact that the second reading of the Bill had been passed. At all events, he was in favor of its issue even at this late hour, and he hoped the manifesto would be industriously circulated.

The PRESIDENT: As this proposal may involve the expenditure of a good deal of money, I think we did well to take the view of the Conference. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. COHEN said he hoped the Bill would be run through rapidly, and would give the clergy more power, for the weaker and more liberal it was the worse for those who represented the Secular cause. This circular was not against the Bill; it was upon the general question of secular education, and was a method of utilising the agitation to draw attention to that question, and, above all, to protest against the colossal hypocrisy that the Nonconformists were, as religious people, any more in favor of education than the Church people were, and to emphasise the fact that Nonconformists, equally with Church people, are only utilising the public schools for their own sectarian purposes.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

Mr. COHEN then moved the following resolution, of which he had given notice:—"That this Conference is of opinion that the only wise and practical solution of the Education problem is to be found in the following four principles: namely, (1) Universal School Boards, (2) Free Education, (3) Secular Education, and (4) Payment of cost exclusively from the national exchequer." Mr. Cohen said he moved this resolution because he felt that the Secular party at the present time had not any particular practical working policy to put before the electorate, and he thought they should have one. No greater absurdity could exist than to support, on the one hand, a number of State schools, and on the other hand a number of so-called Voluntary schools—which were not Voluntary as a matter of fact, because they were supported by the State—to support these two sets of schools in open competition with each other. What they did was to check education as a whole. The great aim of the managers of Voluntary schools was to keep down the general standard of education, in order to make the support of their own schools easier. One way of smashing up the Voluntary schools, and preparing the road for secular education, would be by universal School Boards. When once the whole of the schools were placed under direct State control, the situation was simplified, and they had brought the issue in a much better form before the people, while they would be carrying on the education of the country in a more efficient manner. The next principle was that of free education, which seemed to follow on compulsory education. Free education served to break down certain distinctions in schools between children who paid and children who did not pay. As to secular education they were all agreed, and the only other point was the payment of the cost of education exclusively from the national exchequer. He submitted that the education of children in any given area was not a question of local importance only. It was a question of national importance and national concern. You could more effectively control the education of a chapel-ridden district when it was financially directed from the national exchequer. With all the forces of a general Parliament you would not get a petty parochial spirit as you did in a local Borough Council or the like. So that the payment from the national exchequer would very materially influence the whole question of secular education. These were the four points to which educationists were bound to come in the long run, and he was anxious to see the N. S. S. take the lead. (Applause.)

Mr. G. J. WARREN seconded the resolution, which he regarded as indicating the best method of dealing with the question. Speaking from experience of a group of school-managers, he found that not only did the church parsons and the chapel parsons secure nomination, and therefore control of the schools, but they introduced others of their own way of thinking. In the group in which he was interested there were no fewer than four church parsons, who had also two church members with them, and no fewer than four Nonconformist parsons, who had two of their friends with them, and against them there were only Mr. Herbert Burrows and himself, so that the Conference could guess what a happy family they were at times. (Laughter.) He found that these persons, holding the views they did, devoted themselves mainly to thwarting the Board schools. Having the time to go into the schools, they gradually worked into them teachers who had been educated in their views. When they were got in in that way, it was hard for any other manager to upset their family arrangements.

Mr. GREVZ FISHER (Leeds) moved that the resolution commence with the words: "That this Conference is of opinion that, on the assumption that it is the duty of the Government to provide for general education, the only wise," etc.

Mr. COHEN said it seemed to him that the Government was here and had control of education, and he was merely suggesting what was to be done in the present situation. He did not

feel inclined to burden a practical resolution with an abstract assumption.

Mr. HEAFORD thought there was an undue loading of the resolution by the inclusion of the fourth item. He agreed that, in a general way, education was not merely a parochial affair, it was a national affair; and so were sanitation and factory inspection, and a number of other items, the expenses of which were borne locally by the local unit.

At this point the Conference adjourned, many of the delegates, visitors, and other members, attending a luncheon provided at the Bedford Head Hotel, 234 Tottenham Court-road.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

At the afternoon session the discussion on the education resolution, moved by Mr. Cohen, was resumed.

Mr. Moss, in supporting the resolution, said that, as education was so important a matter, its cost ought to come out of the national exchequer. As the whole of the community was affected, the community should collectively defray the taxation. While Freethinkers were in favor of free and secular education as a matter of principle, he thought that the education now given in the Board schools served their purpose as Freethinkers. The Bible was read in the Board schools, and as the classes were conducted by persons holding divergent views, it was likely to cause the children to think. It was a good thing for a child, who might become a Secularist, to be made acquainted with the Bible. If he (Mr. Moss) had not had a thorough drilling in the Bible, he might have grown up in absolute indifference. In propagating Freethought views advocates had a better chance of converting a person who knew something about the Bible and religion than those who had been brought up in indifference.

The PRESIDENT said this was a matter of so much importance that he might just offer a word or two himself, especially on clause 4, which he should say was the only proper plan for Secularists, Radicals, Socialists, and others of the party of progress, to pursue. What was the fact at present? The Voluntary schools were supported by a State grant to the extent of from seventy to ninety per cent. out of the consolidated fund. The present system was a subvention of Voluntary schools and a handicapping of Board schools in the present competition. (Hear, hear.) Anyone supporting the existing state of things was a friend of the worst form of reaction. Free education was hardly worth discussing. Many years ago he went on a deputation from the Metropolitan Radical Federation to the London School Board. One of the members asked: Do you think that the pauperising of the people, by paying the cost of their school education, is a right and proper thing? He (Mr. Foote) replied immediately that if the education of a child cost, say, 1s. 6d. per week, and 1s. was already paid by the country, he failed to see how the pauperisation came in if the whole 1s. 6d. was paid by the country. The country *did* pay out of the rates for the education of all the children in the Board schools, and out of the consolidated fund for the education of nearly all the children in Voluntary schools. We must have universal School Boards. All the sinister interests in the country were helping the Voluntary schools in unfair competition with the Board schools. Room must be allowed for individuality, and the experiments that individuals made in education were some of the most valuable experiments—(hear, hear)—but let them make it at their own cost. If anyone wanted to send his child to a special school he had a right to do so, and no one had a right to prevent him; but surely he was bound to provide that luxury of education at his own expense. As long as freedom was allowed to persons to set up a school at their own expense the principle of liberty was not violated. In France and Germany they had universal State schools. For his part, he was in favor of universal School Boards. Secular education was the proper principle, with payment out of the national exchequer. By no other means could they break down the subvention of Voluntary schools. (Applause.)

Mr. PEGG said he could strongly confirm the contention in regard to the use the clericals made out of the rates in connection with the schools.

Mr. COHEN, replying on the discussion, said he was considerably surprised at some of Mr. Moss's remarks. Having the Bible in the schools did give the clergy the initial advantage, and he did not think children were so apt to notice a divergence of dogmas as adults might do. He was surprised to find Mr. Moss supporting the present position as making for Secularism. What Secularists wanted taught in the schools were the ordinary facts on which all were agreed, without any speculations as to supernaturalism tacked on to them. (Applause.) Mr. Foote had pointed out the disadvantage of the present position. As a matter of fact, we all paid through the national exchequer or the rates. It was simply a question whether one method of payment was not better than another. These four principles seemed to him to be the only ground on which they could unite all liberal-minded educationists in the country.

The resolution was carried with two dissentients.

N. S. S. MEMBERSHIP AND SUBSCRIPTIONS.

The Conference then proceeded to discuss the report of the Executive Sub-Committee, in pursuance of the resolution passed

at the last Conference—"upon the whole question of Branches, subscriptions, and membership, with a view to securing an increased revenue and a more satisfactory list of adherents."

(1) That personal or individual membership of the National Secular Society should be through the Central Executive.

(2) That the minimum subscription for such members should be 2s. 6d. per year, payable direct to the General Secretary in London.

(3) That Branches, or local Secular Societies, should be affiliated to the N. S. S. on the following conditions:—

(a) There should be no specific payment per Branch or member for affiliation—but

(b) Each branch, or other affiliated body, should make two collections—as fair and even generous as possible—annually; one for the N. S. S. Fund, and the other for the Benevolent Fund: each collection to be forwarded to the General Secretary in London within one week of its being taken up.

(c) Each Branch, or other affiliated body, should furnish the General Secretary with a complete list of its members, with full names and addresses.

(4) Every personal or individual member of the N. S. S. should be free to attend the Annual Conference and cast one vote.

(5) Branches, or other affiliated bodies, should be free to send one delegate each to the Annual Conference, with power to cast one vote.

(6) The Central Executive should consist of the President, Vice-Presidents, and one representative from each Branch or affiliated body.

(7) Every representative of a Branch or other affiliated body on the Executive should be a *bona fide* member of the Branch or affiliated body he represents.

The PRESIDENT formally moved the propositions on behalf of the Executive.

Mr. BATER seconded.

Mr. PEGG inquired as to the meaning of the first section. At the present moment every member of the Manchester Branch was at the same time by the act of joining the branch also a member of the N. S. S. If this first resolution were carried, would the members of the branch cease to be members of the General Society?

The PRESIDENT: The word "individual" member is the word that occurs in the existing constitution. At present we have individual members and branch members. The major part of the income of the Society comes from individual members. There is nothing new added by the word "individual."

Mr. PEGG: Then the membership would remain the same.

The PRESIDENT: A branch member is a branch member.

Mr. PEGG: Would each branch member have an individual vote?

The PRESIDENT: He does now. You ask me whether individual members remain individual members, and branch members remain branch members. Whether branch representation should continue on its present basis, or should be altered, is another question that stands on its own legs. There is nothing here, except that the language covers the whole ground, that makes any alteration in individual or branch membership. The present financial nexus of a branch is the payment per member which we find it unable to obtain. In failing to obtain it we fail to get the list of members. The proposed alteration is to substitute for payment per branch member to the Executive a twofold collection—one for the General Fund and one for the Benevolent Fund. That is all that is proposed in the way of alteration of the existing connection between the branches and the Executive.

Mr. COHEN said he had to move on behalf of Glasgow an amendment to section 5, which would make it read as follows: "Branches or other affiliated bodies should be free to send one delegate each to the Annual Conference, with power to cast one vote for each Branch member of the N. S. S., or for each qualified member."

A delegate expressed the opinion that there was nothing to prevent members coming to the Conference and voting as individual members against their own delegate.

The PRESIDENT said that would not be so in the case of a poll. In the case of a poll, the Branch delegate duly appointed would cast the vote for the whole of the Branch, and any single member of that Branch who should happen to be present would have no vote at all. His vote would be included.

Mr. HEAFORD inquired whether these proposed rules were in substitution or supplementary.

The PRESIDENT: They are like every resolution passed in Parliament—they alter all laws that they contradict.

Mr. THURLOW, as one of the sub-committee, confessed that originally he had been opposed to some of the recommendations, but had since been convinced. He did not see anything in the rules of such a startling character as to make it appear that any great revolution was to be wrought. The individual members were those who substantially supported the Society. It was really time that country friends should disabuse their minds of the idea that the Executive was rolling in wealth. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) He thought

the new rules would conduce to the more successful carrying on of local work.

Mr. CHAPMAN (South Shields) said there was something in the contention of the Manchester representative. In clause 2 there was an instruction that the subscription should be sent direct to the General Secretary in London. That was a limitation of the membership of the Society.

Mr. LYE (Coventry) said there was some reason for Mr. Pegg's inquiry whether branch membership coincided with general membership. According to clause 4, an individual member might outvote a delegate unless the clause were added which had been moved by Mr. Cohen on behalf of Glasgow.

Mr. VICTOR ROGER pointed out to the delegates that this report by the Executive sub-committee had never been adopted by the Executive yet. There had not been sufficient time to discuss it. What discussion there had been was distinctly antagonistic to it. It was brought here crudely for the Conference to discuss.

The PRESIDENT: It is stated on the Agenda that this is the report of the sub-committee.

Mr. ROGER: I shall propose that the whole matter be referred back to the Executive for further consideration. It has not been considered and discussed and adopted by the Executive. It is impossible for us to adopt, under such circumstances, a scheme which is an entire revolution in the Society. We are asked by this sub-committee to jump overboard, on the chance of finding life-buoys. There is a great deal that can be said for and against the proposals. If the scheme is carried I shall feel that I have been at the funeral Conference of the N. S. S. It would drop into the hands of a few individuals. If you leave it to a man to send 2s. 6d. to the Secretary he will be constantly deferring it, and perhaps never do it. You would have a number of isolated Freethought Societies all over England. This has been proposed, I know, with the best intentions; but I think it would be wiser to wait another twelve months.

The PRESIDENT: I claim the right to speak on this subject, and to stand loyally by the sub-committee. If this discussion is to be terminated by prophecy, it is simply counting the prophets. Mr. Roger has prophesied in very dark language the fate of the N. S. S. in the immediate future if these proposals are carried. I think it might occur to Mr. Roger that there is a very simple way of answering a prophet, and that is to prophesy the exact opposite. It might also occur to him that there must be something odd in the idea that this sub-committee is so energetically zealous in preparing for the funeral of the N. S. S. But it is not zealous for anything of the kind. This committee did meet and discuss the matter, having the figures which it had requested from the Secretary before it, and the end of the discussion was the communication to you of these recommendations. I am not aware that there has been any serious consideration of the matter outside. There seems to have been an extraordinary ingenuity manifested in misunderstanding these proposals. Cavil has been raised in regard to the "individual" member, but all this recommendation amounts to is that the individual member's minimum subscription shall be raised from 2s. to 2s. 6d. Is that a revolutionary proposal that is going to lead to the burial of the N. S. S. in the immediate future? At present the Branches are supposed to pay to the Executive a subscription of 1s. per member per year. But the greatest trouble has been encountered in obtaining 1s. per year from the members of the branches. In addition to that, branches fall into arrears year after year until sometimes they are not qualified branches at all. We have thought that whatever we have gained in that way we might make a present of to the branches for their local work. Reference has been made to a change which took place some years ago in the minimum subscription to this Society. My own view is that if you make a minimum it is an invitation to people to keep near it. As to the voting, it is an extravagant impossibility that members should come and outvote their delegate. All that you have to do is to point it out and demand a poll. As to individual members coming to the Conference and giving an equal vote with each of the delegates, do not look at it theoretically as if it were a paper discussion, but look at the existing state of things. Our individual members are free to come and vote at any Conference they please. To-day you have been voting as Branch delegates, and you have been voting as individual members. So far, I have stood loyally by the sub-committee. I know you will always have, even inside a Freethought Society, some of the old conservative instinct, which not only shrinks from changes, but dreads changes. I am not anxious that a decision should be arrived at now. It is probably better that the matter should stand over for another year, because of the misunderstanding which has arisen. But I am satisfied that something will have to be done. It is said that the direction will fall into the hands of a few. The direction is now forced upon the President every time something has to be done. If it is at all of a difficult nature, the resolution generally ends by saying, "We leave it to the President." I am quite willing to take my proper part in the work.

Mr. VICTOR ROGER moved that the matter be referred back for further consideration.

Mr. COHEN withdrew the Glasgow amendment to clause 5. Mr. HEAFORD seconded Mr. Roger's amendment.

Mr. WARREN said that next time probably they would have the printed constitution circulated side by side with the changes proposed. He thought it safer that a decision should be postponed.

The PRESIDENT: I have not the slightest objection to its going back.

The amendment referring the proposals back to the Executive was then carried.

Mr. COHEN moved, on behalf of Glasgow, the following resolution:—"That, in order to encourage small and struggling Freethought societies to affiliate with the N. S. S., and also to relieve, to some extent, those who have a difficulty in maintaining themselves, the annual contribution from Branches be reduced to sixpence per member."

Mr. PEGG seconded.

Mr. GREVZ FISHER thought it should be referred to the next Conference; but the motion was put as it stood, and was lost.

GENEVA FREETHOUGHT CONGRESS.

Mr. KERNOT, on behalf of the Battersea Branch, moved that a delegate be appointed to represent the Freethinkers of Great Britain at the Geneva Freethought Congress.

Mr. ROGER stated that he and Mr. Wood would be attending the Congress, and would do so at their own expense.

Mr. HEAFORD stated that he too was going.

A resolution was moved by Mr. Heaford instructing the Executive to prepare reports for presentation to the Geneva Conference.

Mr. ROGER, who seconded the resolution, said he did not think English Freethinkers should keep themselves so isolated from Freethought movements abroad. He mentioned incidentally that he had been informed by M. Victor Charbonnel that over 500 Freethinkers—i.e., constant subscribers to *La Raison*—had lost their lives in the terrible catastrophe at Martinique.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

The PRESIDENT, in closing the Conference, commented on its amicable character throughout, and expressed a hope that when they met next year they would have to record progress eclipsing anything upon which they had had to congratulate themselves in previous years.

EVENING MEETING.

The evening public meeting took place in the beautiful minor Queen's Hall, which was crowded with a most intelligent, attentive, and sympathetic audience, including a considerable proportion of ladies. Mr. G. W. Foote took the chair as President. The other speakers were Messrs. Watts, Cohen, Moss, and Davies. They were all in particularly good form, and the meeting seemed to be having a remarkably "good time" from beginning to end. It was one of the most successful gatherings ever held in London. Even the collection (to be *very* practical) was an exceptionally good one.

Correspondence.

RE "THE NATURE OF CONSCIENCE."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Lewin's child is getting younger. It was six or seven years old a fortnight ago; now it is only two or three. As already indicated, a three-year-old child simply reflects the opinions of its friends and relatives. If, however, Mr. Lewin thinks that the child has an *intuitive* knowledge of right and wrong, which may be corrupted by environment or education, then, logically, he ought to refer all questions of ethics to a child taken as young as possible, and so freed from the evil influences of environment. The savage, as the untutored child of nature, should also be our guide if we are to rely on moral *intuition*, for he should be free from corrupting influences.

Mr. Lewin does not appear to have paid any attention to the context of my remark that "Every child is born into some community with certain moral ideas," or he would have seen that it was the community—not the child—that had the ideas.

As to the association of moral sense with instinct, as this is admittedly "indefinable," it is obviously impossible to discuss it.

CHILPERIC.

Between two worlds life hovers like a star,
Twixt night and morn, upon the horizon's verge:
How little do we know that which we are!
How less what we may be! The eternal surge
Of time and tide rolls on, and bears afar
Our bubbles: as the old burst, new emerge,
Lash'd from the foam of ages; while the graves
Of empires heave but like some passing waves.

—Byron.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

LONDON.

(Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post card.)

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Wesleyans and Hell; or, the New Heresy-Hunt."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, ante-room, first floor): 11.15, Stanton Coit, Ph.D., "Time and Eternity."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall): 7, Stanton Coit, Ph.D., "Is the Soul Immortal?"

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, A lecture.

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7, Mr. White.

CLERKENWELL GREEN (Finsbury Branch N. S. S.): 11.30, A lecture.

HYDE PARK, near Marble Arch (West London Branch N. S. S.). Freethought literature on sale at all meetings. 11.30, A lecture.

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road); 11.30, A. B. Moss, "What do Christians Believe?"

VICTORIA PARK (Bethnal Green Branch N. S. S.): 3.15, C. Cohen.

SUNDAY SHAKSPEARE SOCIETY (34 Red Lion-square): 6.30, *The Taming of the Shrew*; with a paper by Mr. Blagg.

COUNTRY.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school.

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): June 1, Annual Excursion.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. Ross, "A Materialist's Conception of History."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, G. Berrisford, "Evolution and its Teaching."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Capt. Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, Conference Delegate's report and election of officers.

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