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## Views and Opinions.

### The Writing of Books.

In the days when life was less hurried and thought more leisurely than now, writing a book was an important matter. It was, usually, undertaken only after careful preparation and mature reflection. The writer might just as easily have been wrong then as now, but his opinions, whatever they were, were clear—to him. Nowadays, when books are born in a week and die in a month things proceed differently. Writers with a public turn out three or four books a year, and their readers admire the output, much as they would admire a new machine manufacturing sausages or printing copies of a daily paper. In these circumstances many books appear to be written not so much to express their author's ideas as to help him to find out what his ideas are. They seem to be written on the principle of "I fancy I have several good ideas on this subject and will write a book and see how they work out." And there is always the chance that some discerning critic will explain to the author what his ideas really are.

\* \* \*

### God and Mr. Wells.

What has been said above represents our first impression on reading Mr. H. G. Wells' *God the Invisible King*. In that work Mr. Wells has, in truth, seized a useful and, within limits, a true idea. It is not at all a new one, it constitutes the essence of Positivism, and it has been both implicit and explicit in all Freethought propaganda for a century or more. What Comte called the "Religion of Humanity," or, Cotter, Morrison the "Service of Man," or others "Social Service" is what Mr. Wells really has in view when he talks about the worship of God. He personifies the life of the race and calls it God. Certainly this collective life is real enough. It requires little reflection to show that the life of the tribe, the nation, the race, is more comprehensive and more enduring than the life of the individual. It antedates and postdates

individual life. It takes hold of the individual at birth and continues to fashion his life until it ushers him into the grave. It provides the texture of his thinking as well as the fashion of his clothes. It furnishes him with ideals, beliefs, purposes. It is more than an aggregate, it is, as Mr. Wells says of his God, a synthesis. It may be as impalpable as gravity, but it is, none-the-less, real. Only—it is not God, and it is no use calling it God. That word has a fairly definite historic connotation, and it is quite beyond the power of Mr. Wells to successfully give it an entirely new one.

\* \* \*

### Sociology and Religion.

Now, if Mr. Wells had tried to show—what he might easily have done—that all the good with which religion has been, at any rate, associated, really sprang from this collective racial life, that the source of the best ideals of the more humanistic of religionists was social, that improvements in religion had been consequent on a developing social sense, in short, that religion owed its strength to an exploitation of man's social nature, he would have been doing a much needed and a valuable work. He might have gone further and shown clearly that social life, as it is the root of what are called religious virtues, provides the only theatre for their profitable exercise, and their only intelligible end. But to call this "God," and to break into peans of exultation about this worship of God, is to leave his readers as confused as he finds them. The service of man we can all understand, even though we may not be always certain that we are so acting as to benefit humanity. The worship of God we can also understand, even though people quarrel over forms of worship. We may even say that one involves the other, and some do say so, just as others say and believe that the service of man will one day replace the worship of God. But you cannot identify the two. In other words, you may have God *or* humanity, or God *and* humanity, but you cannot have God *as* humanity. Mr. Wells' excursion will leave the really religious untouched; it will only cause a smile with informed Freethinkers.

\* \* \*

### An Evil Word.

Granted that the world needs some formulæ which will organize and synthesize its energies and aspirations, it is certain that the word God will never perform that function. The word has too old and too bad a history for that. The belief in God does not unite, it divides. The widest religion rests on a basis of exclusion, it binds some together only to shut others out. Throw the word God into any community and it has the disruptive consequences of a high explosive shell. On the other hand, the word humanity everywhere unites in proportion as the appeal is made intelligible. It was not the belief in a God—whether of the new or of the old kind—that brought about the revolution in Russia. It was the appeal to the common instincts and feelings of a common humanity. And it will be neither God nor religion,



when this War is at an end, will help to smooth over the ill feeling and level the mountain of hatred they have evoked. Wherever and whenever that is done it will be by an appeal to a humanity in which all share, and to which all are in some degree able to respond.

\* \* \*

#### A Shock for the Faithful.

We have treated Mr. Wells' new religion as being the equivalent of the old "Service of Man." And it seems to us it is either that or nothing. For Mr. Wells distinctly disowns anything and everything that is properly understood as religion, and explicitly repudiates Christianity. His belief, he says, "is not Christianity at all." Christian beliefs, in fact, "merit only disrespectful attention"; the orthodox Christian Deity is described as "that stuffed scarecrow of divinity"; and in a letter to the *Times* he distinctly rejects all belief in personal immortality. There is, of course, nothing new in all this. It is only what Freethinkers have said over and over again. But it is good to see how these very advanced writers have to follow in our steps sooner or later, almost whether they will or no. Christians will not be pleased with Mr. Wells' statement of religion. Many of them may have been expecting something different—something more in line with their own creed. Let us hope that the discovery of another public man openly disavowing Christianity will put some courage into their own timid souls.

\* \* \*

#### God or Humanity?

Mr. Wells' weakness as a writer is a want of psychological insight and a lack of historical perspective. These shortcomings are evident in most of his writings, and we venture to say they are responsible for what we consider the cardinal fault of his latest work. For you simply cannot take old words like "God" and "religion" and divest them of their historic and legitimate connotations. To the overwhelming majority of people they will mean what they have always meant. And, fundamentally, God, as we have said, is a symbol of division, not of union; and it is union that Mr. Wells requires. On the other hand, humanity never has had, and never can have, this divisive connotation. The realization of all that the word means may be presented by the narrower and separatist ideals of religion or nationality, but it remains as an indestructible ideal. It is the only power against which any or all of the Churches are ultimately powerless. It is an ideal that over a hundred years ago sent the manhood of France over Europe as the evangelists of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, as it is now firing the minds of the masses of the Russian people. It is true the ideals of the revolutionaries of 1789 suffered an eclipse, as may those of the Russian people of to-day, if the reactionaries of Europe have their way. But it is only an eclipse. The idea, the ideal, remains. It is nascent in the nature of each; it is implicit in the common life of all. And one great step toward its realization is to clear from the mind of man those verbal shibboleths which prevent their consciously realizing the real tendency of social evolution.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

#### THE NEW GODLING.

Said H. G. Wells, I think you'll find  
My God has fresh and charming features.  
At any rate He knows *my* mind,  
And doesn't talk about "His Creatures."  
Better He'll stand harsh Reason's strain  
Than Jaweh, Zeus, and other swells,  
Though not, of course, quite on the plane  
Of one and only H. G. Wells.

—Eden Phillpotts, "Cambridge Magazine."

## The Eternal Christ.

ONE of the chief characteristics of present-day theology is its vagueness: Terms are used the meanings of which constantly vary and often contradict one another. The two words which seem to have suffered most in this respect are "Jesus" and "Christ." Time was when both were but two names by which the hero of the Four Gospels was generally known. In the Fourth Gospel and the Epistles he is usually called Jesus Christ, or Christ Jesus, and all these documents treat him as a super-human being. Latterly, however, the tendency has been to regard the Gospel Jesus as an entirely different being from the Christ of the Orthodox Churches, the former being an historical character, and the latter a creation of the theological imagination. As a matter of fact, the distinction between the two is more fanciful than real. The Gospel Jesus is not an historical personage. The Virgin Birth and the Resurrection, if there were nothing more, exclude him from the list of human beings, and his life is replete with unnatural, impossible, events. Even those who believe that he was only a man, admit that the Gospel narrative is largely legendary, and their critical work consists almost wholly in endeavouring to rescue the purely historical elements from the mass of baseless fables. To us, therefore, the Gospel Jesus is fully as unhistorical as the theological Christ. Principal Griffith Jones discerns no line of demarcation between Jesus and Christ; Jesus himself being the Christ: "the Desire of all Nations, the Crown and Essence of Humanity, the Saviour of the World, who by the loftiness of his teaching, the beauty of his character, the sufficiency of his atoning sacrifice, is able to save to the uttermost all who will come to him and trust in him." No being has ever lived who answered to that extravagant description, and no one is more fully aware of the fact than the Principal himself. The new minister of the City Temple assures his congregation that his creed, his only confession of faith, and the keynote of his ministry, as summing up the Christian Gospel, are to be found in Paul's famous declaration: "Christ is all, and in all."

Dr. Newton is a born orator, an emotional rhetorician, and there lies before him, as a preacher, no doubt, an exceedingly prosperous and happy career. We do not know where he stands theologically, although there are indications in his inaugural discourse that he is in no narrow sense orthodox. In his estimation Jesus is Christ, but what Christ is he tells us only in painfully loose, indefinite, hazy terms. To call him "the image of the invisible God, by whom all things were created, and in whom all things hold together," is not to convey any definite and intelligible information concerning him, for God is unknown as well as invisible. No one possesses a single grain of knowledge of anything beyond and above Nature. The supernatural is a visionary realm touching which knowledge is absolutely unobtainable. Multitudes of people believe in its existence, and describe it with the utmost cocksureness. The Gospel Jesus claims it as his own peculiar sphere, from which he has descended to earth, and to which he will soon return. He prides himself upon being God's only begotten Son, and takes full credit for having made the Father known to mankind. Dr. Newton asserts that "the spirit of God, his purpose, his pity, and most of all his character, are unveiled in the life of Jesus Christ," and that this "is all that we really know of God, as he is all that we need to know for nobility of life and hope in death." Hence Christ is "the crown, the climax, the consummation of all things, the whole finding focus in a Single Luminous Life."



Such, then, is Christ in himself, and such is what he may become for humanity. Now, in Dr. Newton's first sermon, as reported in the *Christian Commonwealth* for May 30, occurs the following eye-opening passage:—

What kind of a nation would the American Republic be if every man in it were such a man as Lincoln, to whom the Prime Minister has referred so often and with such complete understanding—Lincoln, so true of heart, so clear of mind, who lived with malice toward none and charity for all, seeking the safety and sanctity of his nation? First of all, social slavery and industrial brutality would cease to exist. No woman would be made desolate, no little child forlorn, by grasping greed or grinding cruelty. Laws would be wise and just and merciful, in fact as well as in ideal, leaving every one free to stretch his arms and his soul and look up at the stars. It would be the nation it was meant to be, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the service of humanity. Because this mighty and tender spirit took form in Lincoln, his life was a revelation of the genius and purpose of the Republic, its reason for being, and its prophecy of times to come.

We agree with every word in that extract, but are utterly unable to perceive what object Dr. Newton intended it to serve, for the one thing it does not illustrate is that "Christ is all and in all." The passage might have been written by the great Atheist, Colonel Ingersoll. Undoubtedly Lincoln was one of the greatest philanthropists that ever lived, whose one purpose in life was to secure the welfare of his fellow-beings, especially those who were down-trodden and oppressed. *But Abraham Lincoln was not a Christian.* It is well known that the French philosopher, Volney, published a famous book, entitled *Les Ruines*, in which he manifested strong antipathy to religion in general, and to Christianity in particular. Everybody knows Paine's *Age of Reason*, which is a vigorous attack on the Bible and the Christian religion. Lincoln read those books with the greatest care, and then composed a long and critical essay, in which he expressed identical convictions. It should be borne in mind that Lincoln never disavowed those sceptical conclusions; and we have the assurance of Mrs. Lincoln that "Mr. Lincoln had no hope and no faith in the usual acceptance of those words." It is admitted by all that he never identified himself with any denomination. And yet, as John Nicolay puts it:—

Benevolence and forgiveness were the very basis of his character; his world-wide humanity is aptly embodied in a phrase of his second inaugural: "With malice towards none, with charity for all." History must accord him a rare sagacity in guiding a great people through the perils of a mighty revolution, an admirable singleness of aim, a skilful discernment and courageous seizure of the golden moment to free his nation from the incubus of slavery, faithful adherence to law, and conscientious moderation in the use of power, a shining personal example of honesty and purity, and finally the possession of that subtle and indefinable magnetism by which he subordinated and directed dangerously disturbed and perverted moral and political forces to the restoration of peace and constitutional authority to his country, and the gift of liberty to four millions of human beings.

Dr. Newton's eloquent eulogy of Christ as the supreme revelation of God and the only hope of humanity, his passionate outbursts of emotional loyalty to God made manifest in the flesh, his expressions of confidence in "a democracy founded upon the spiritual unity and essential divinity of humanity as revealed in Christ," and his fervid declaration that "the profoundest fact about humanity is not that it is Jew or Gentile, English or American, bond or free, male or female"—all such pronouncements become practically value-

less beside the cordial asseveration that if every man in the United States were such a man as Lincoln the mighty Republic of the West would be ideally perfect in every respect. And yet Lincoln made no religious profession, had neither hope nor faith in the popular acceptance of those words, but was a Humanist, pure and simple, whose social sense proved his guiding-star.

Does Dr. Newton verily believe that Christ is a revelation of a God of justice and love? Does he really think that the world is hopelessly dead in trespasses and sins, doomed to suffer for ever in hell, unless it accepts and puts its trust in Heaven's mercy as disclosed in the Cross? If he does, how does he account for several facts which cannot be gainsaid? Does he regard the conditions of life in Christendom as a compliment to the Eternal Christ? If he honestly compare Christian America with Heathen China, can he truthfully affirm that the former is socially and morally superior to the latter? If not, why should we move heaven and earth in an endeavour to convert China to Christianity? If it be argued that Christendom is in such a corrupt state because Christianity has not been tried, the question forces itself upon us, Why has not Christianity been put to the test of experiment? The truth is that the religion of the Cross has totally failed to transform the moral character of the nations which profess it, and that this world-war is a practical result and demonstration of that failure. The Eternal Christ is absolutely impotent simply because he has never existed except in the imagination of ardent believers. The belief in him yields unspeakable joy to those in whom it has acquired a high degree of development, and this sense of enjoyment is not always accompanied by moral elevation and social service. What the world needs is, not Christ, but man, not saints, but reformers, not sentimental evangelists, but men like Lincoln, inspired by love for their fellow-beings, and a passionate desire to serve them.

J. T. LLOYD.

## A Captious Colporteur.

The kind wise words that fall from years that fall—  
Hope thou not much, and fear thou not at all.

—Swinburne.

I claim no place in the world of letters; I am, and will be,  
alone, as long as I live and after.

—Landor.

IT was one of fate's little ironies which imposed on the Pagan, George Borrow, the function of colporteur of the British and Foreign Bible Society. The story of Borrow's introduction to the suave officials of the Society is very characteristic of this remarkable man. Hearing of the possibility of work for the Society, the young man tramped from Norwich to London, walking one hundred and twelve miles in twenty-seven hours, and spending less than sixpence on the journey. On arrival he told the surprised secretary that he could translate Manchu, and this was his first work for the Society.

Borrow went to Russia, and facing great difficulties, translated the New Testament into the Manchu-Tartar dialect. Ever a man of resource, there was nothing he was not ready to do, even to setting up type, teaching wooden-headed compositors, buying paper, and hustling leisurely Muscovite officials. Later he went to Spain on behalf of the Society, and the adventurous career he led in the Peninsula while hawking Bibles in this most bigoted of Roman Catholic countries forms the groundwork of *The Bible in Spain*, one of the most vivacious travel-books ever written. "*Gil Bias*, with a touch of John Bunyan," the volume has been called, wittily. For the author pays small attention to the purely evangelical



business of the organization that dispatched him, and he writes of thieves, murderers, gipsies, bandits, prisons, wars, and other wordly subjects, with all the gusto of a Le Sage, or Burton. Addressed to the straight-laced and narrow-minded Victorian religious public, it was a wonderfully stimulating drink to unaccustomed palates. It was the time when strict evangelical parents forbade secular books on Sundays, and Mr. Augustine Birrell has told us how, as an eager boy, he rejoiced in the old Pagan's writings, the innocent title of which had passed the unsuspecting critics on the hearth.

As may be imagined, readily, the correspondence between the Bible Society authorities and George Borrow is delicious reading. For the colporteur worshipped at many shrines from that of the pacifist Jesus Christ to that of the pugilist Tom Sayers. We see the old Adam peeping out in the evangelist, as Dr. Jekyll changed into Mr. Hyde, and the growing impatience and distrust of the pious officials who saw their employee boxing the compass, and forgetting the exceedingly narrow channel they wished him to pursue. At times, indeed, Borrow quite forgot the theological jargon and business patter of Earl Street, and it all ended in his being recalled and being given no further employment.

This strange agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society commenced his literary career in London by writing the *Newgate Calendar*, which bears so marked a resemblance to the earlier part of the Holy Scriptures sold by the Society. Borrow was ever a fighter, even when his Flaming Tinman days were over, and his animosities extended from Popes to parsons. When a highly respected canon of St. Paul's Cathedral ventured to criticize adversely *The Bible in Spain*, Borrow sent a saucy note to his publishers, calmly stating that the ecclesiastic was a jackass, and that he would be doing better by minding his own petty business in his ugly cathedral.

Borrow had a real passion for adventure, and a sincere love of language. Whilst an articled clerk to an obscure solicitor at Norwich, he translated a volume of ballads from the Danish. Later, at Petrograd, he published his *Targum: Translations from Thirty Languages and Dialects*. Nor was this all, for in the course of his travels in France, Germany, Russia, and Eastern Europe, he learned languages and dialects as he went. With the exceptions of Sir Richard Burton and Prince Lucien Bonaparte, he was, probably, the most enthusiastic linguist who ever lived. During a few years of travelling activity he made translations in a score of languages, and he produced a Turkish version of *Bluebeard*, and rendered a number of Danish, Russian, and Welsh tales into English.

For the last fifty years of his life he lived on "emotions remembered in tranquillity," passing his existence between Oulton Broad, Norfolk, and London. His famous books, *Lavengro*, *The Romany Rye*, and *Wild Wales*, were all written amid the peaceful surroundings of the Broads, and his tranquillity was only broken by fierce paper warfare with publishers, critics, and other folk who aroused the old lion's wrath. Borrow was always furious at the want of public appreciation; but his fame has grown since he died at Oulton, and the town of Norwich did well in purchasing Borrow's house as a memento of a remarkable man and notable citizen.

Nature mixed George Borrow in a moment of magnificence. Only those who have realized for themselves the inadequacy of a pen when brought in contact with the rich and tumultuous glow of life can appreciate to the full the wonder of his achievement; the potent imagination, the keen insight, which are required to bring before us those unforgettable incidents of human

life. Besides these great gifts, he possessed in an extraordinary degree the sense of the significance of life apart from any personal liking or disliking, of the beauty and continuity of the great stream of human existence. A little aloof, a little inscrutable, he will ever remain, but magnificent because of his greatness as a literary artist. Borrow's life was an example of the square peg in the round hole. A son of Nature, he was impatient of the petty and narrow standards of civilization and society, and loved the men and women of the wayside. He recognized in these vagrants the true sons and daughters of "the great mother who mixes all our bloods." Listen to his exquisitely phrased Pagan glorification of existence: "Life is sweet, brother. There's night and day, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon, stars, brother, all sweet things; there's likewise the wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother, who would wish to die?"

MIMNERMUS.

## Science and Spiritualism.

### XIII.

(Continued from p. 342.)

"Excuse me," I said more than once to Helena Petrovna (Madame Blavatsky), "you are thoroughly compromising your master. This mighty sage, having drunk his cup of milk—his daily portion of nutriment—lies down in the depth of Thibet, so to speak on the very threshold of Nirvana. His marvellous intellect is directing the fate of the world. Suddenly you call to him from here, 'Ting-ting.' He immediately effects an 'expenditure of vital force,' slips out of his coarsely material body, leaves that body in Thibet to digest its cup of milk, dons his astral form, and in the twinkling of an eye he is suddenly before you. 'Ting-ting.' 'What are your commands, *upagika* (mother)?' 'Oh, look here, my good man, write a letter to Miss A; and drop it on her head in an hour.' 'All right.' 'And look here, my good man, write, 'Certainly I was there; but who can open the eyes of those who will not see?' And slip this note into Olcott's pocket.' 'All right.' 'And look here, my good man, appear to Mary F.' 'All right.' Is all this possible? Why, it turns out that he is not your 'master' after all, but a footman who used to run your errands." Oh, how angry she used to get with me for such speeches! How she used to glare, her great eyes the colour of pale turquoise! And all the time not one, positively not one, even the apparently most sensible Theosophists, was disturbed by this pitiful part played by the great mysterious teacher, the "master" who availed to snatch Helena Petrovna from death.—V. S. Solovyoff, "*A Modern Priestess of Isis*" (1895), pp. 217-218.

It should be stated that while Madame Blavatsky was being lionized in Europe in 1884, a quarrel broke out at Adyah, and M. and Madame Coulomb were dismissed, partly for having hinted to outsiders secrets connected with the shrine. An agitated telegram from Madame Blavatsky at Paris failed to heal the rupture, and in revenge Madame Coulomb gave to the press "a long series of letters in Madame's hand teeming with veiled instructions to the Coulombs, which fitted in at every point with their accounts of jugglery at Adyah."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Hodgson also inquired into the precipitated Mahatma letters. Says Mr. Edmund Garrett:—

These precious documents, which had been rained among the faithful with a copiousness almost amounting to garrulity, had been discredited already. The prosy and sometimes illiterate verbiage of the Tibetan sages was a severe trial to the enthusiasm of the more critical Theosophists even where it was apparently original. But it was too much of a good thing when a long doctrinal treatise, which Koot Hoomi had addressed to Mr. Sinnett, was found to be a gross plagiarism from a lecture by an American gentleman which had been reported in a Spiritualist paper a few months before. Nor did it mend matters when, after considerable delay, the illustrious Koot condescended to the newspaper arena, and

<sup>1</sup> Garrett, *Isis Very Much Unveiled*, p. 18.



wrote—we mean precipitated—an explanation which for evasiveness and general “thinness,” is probably unique even in the records of convicted plagiarists.<sup>1</sup>

And worse was to follow, for the same criticism which identified Madame Blavatsky as the writer of the unblushing letters to Madame Coulomb, found exactly the same characteristics in the compositions of the Mahatmas. “In a word,” says Mr. Edmund Garrett, “it was declared that Koot Hoomi Lal Sing and Mahatma Morya were the same person, and that person Madame Blavatsky. When a missive from the Himalayas floated down into the neophyte’s lap, it was Madame’s own hand which had prepared it, though it was the no less useful if humbler function of M. Coulomb to jerk it from the ceiling at the critical moment with a string, or deftly pass it through the sliding panel into the closed Shrine.”<sup>2</sup>

It only needs to be added that in the opinion of the two experts on handwriting, Messrs. Netherclift and Sims, both the Coulomb and Mahatma letters were “indisputably the authentic production of Madame Blavatsky.”<sup>3</sup>

As Madame Blavatsky, when she was a Spiritualist, had protested that the Katie King exposure was “neither more nor less than a plot (now almost proved) of the Protestant Jesuitical Society called the Young Men’s Christian Association,” so now she declared the publication of the incriminating Coulomb letters “was due to a conspiracy on the part of certain Christian missionaries, who had (as again was “almost proved”) paid 40,000 rupees to suborn false witnesses.”<sup>4</sup>

Madame Blavatsky certainly must have had but little acquaintance with either the Y.M.C.A. or Christian missionaries; for the Y.M.C.A. never plotted anything more serious than how to provide amusements to divert its members from thinking, and keeping them in the fold. And as for missionaries parting with 40,000 rupees for any purpose whatever, the idea is too wildly improbable to be entertained.

“Whatever Theosophists may say now,” says Mr. Edmund Garrett, “the Society for Psychical Research was certainly not a hostile tribunal.” Dr. Hodgson, who conducted the inquiry, “declared that whatever prepossessions he may have had ‘were distinctly in favour of occultism and Madame Blavatsky.’”<sup>5</sup> Mr. Podmore, who was also a member of the Society, in explaining the Society’s attitude towards the Theosophic miracles, says: “When we found that some of these occurrences were vouched for by witnesses of good repute and good intelligence in other matters, we held that we should not be justified in summarily dismissing their evidence.....It seemed also not impossible that the accounts which had reached us of the *astral* journeys might prove to be slightly distorted versions of actual occurrences, analogous to those cases of thought transference with which we were already familiar. Moreover, to reject the evidences for these occurrences was, as it then seemed to us, to impute fraud to Colonel Olcott as well as to Mr. Damodar. Colonel Olcott we believed to be an honourable man, and Mr. Damodar was credibly alleged to be a Hindu of high caste, who had voluntarily sacrificed his patrimony on account of his connection with the Theosophical Society.”<sup>6</sup> In the event, it was found that there was collusion in the fraud on the part of Damodar, and that: “If Colonel Olcott’s honesty has not been impugned, the limits of his credulity have proved elastic beyond our anticipation. In fact, many

of the leading members of the Theosophic cult present, in the light of this inquiry, have a pleasantly ambiguous blend of charlatantry and simplicity.”<sup>1</sup>

Since the publication of Dr. Hodgson’s report, M. Solovyoff, a Russian of good social position and an author of some repute, has published, under the title of *A Modern Priestess of Isis*, an account of his connection with Madame Blavatsky, which emphatically confirms Dr. Hodgson’s exposure.

While in Paris, engaged in a study of the occult, in which he was inclined to believe, he came across a book by Madame Blavatsky, and, seeing a notice in the *Matin* of the arrival in Paris of Madame herself, he obtained an introduction to her from a friend, and called a few days later. He received a frank and kindly greeting. “At the end of a quarter of an hour,” says M. Solovyoff, “I was talking to Helena Petrovna as though she were an old friend, and all her homely, coarse appearance actually began to please me. And her eyes gazed at me so graciously, and at the same time pierced me so attentively.”<sup>2</sup>

“She looked me straight in the eyes, and caressed me with her glance and her kindly smile.” Says M. Solovyoff: “I involuntarily liked her more and more. I was attracted to her by a feeling of instantaneous sympathy.” That, as in the case of Home, was the secret of her success. Further on, the same writer records: “In her quiet and good moments she was eminently sympathetic. There was within her a certain fascination, a kind of magnetism, which attracted to her with an irresistible force. Sympathy! it is a quality which you cannot translate into words; yet all men and women, old and young, on whom those great strange eyes had looked graciously, experienced the same thing.”<sup>3</sup>

During his first visit, M. Solovyoff was favoured with the sound of the “astral bells.” This was upon the return of Madame Blavatsky to the room after a few minutes’ absence upon domestic duties, as she explained. During a later visit, Madame dropped the little silver instrument responsible for these sounds. M. Solovyoff picked it up, but Madame snatched it out of his hand.

Finally, in the autumn of the following year (1885), at her invitation, he visited her at Wurzburg. He found her in ill-health, and depressed by the publication of the Hodgson report. She was alone, and seemed in need of sympathy. An accident precipitated the crisis. Going to a drawer, by Madame’s direction, to get a photograph, M. Solovyoff discovered a packet of Chinese envelopes, already familiar to him as those in which the “astral” messages were conveyed from Thibet! Then Madame Blavatsky broke down and confessed all. “What is one to do,” she said, “when in order to rule men it is necessary to deceive them?” We have quoted the rest of this confession previously, so will not repeat it. Finally, she produced the “astral bell,” and invited M. Solovyoff to co-operate with her in the manufacture of “astral” messages. “When she had found a man whom she wished to win over and turn into her obedient tool, she worked on him by cordiality and sincerity. She tried to convince him of her devotion, her warm affection and friendliness; and then by virtue of these feelings, she got him to do this or that for her. Everything was founded on personal relations and on feelings. With women these tactics worked wonders” (p. 73).

Her moral ideas were most primitive. Says the same writer:—

I am convinced that she honestly did not understand why I had parted with her and appeared among the number of her accusers. Her moral notions were so

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>3</sup> Podmore, *Studies in Psychical Research*, p. 172.

<sup>4</sup> Podmore, *Studies in Psychical Research*, pp. 188-9.

<sup>5</sup> *Isis Very Much Unveiled*, pp. 17-9.

<sup>6</sup> *Studies in Psychical Research*, pp. 186-7.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> V. S. Solovyoff, *A Modern Priestess of Isis* (1895), p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 220.



radically perverted that she had lost all grasp of certain ideas. She imagined that everything in the world was founded on personal relations, and that to this there was no exception. "What have I done to you—you?" "Others," that is to say, "I may cheat and ruin; I may abandon myself to every sacrilege, and huckster the greatest truths, but if I like you personally, and cannot take you in because you have seen through me, if it may yet be in my power to serve you in one way or another, then why do you betray me, and that to foreigners?" That is what she insinuated.<sup>1</sup>

Even her writings were a fraud. Her *Isis Unveiled* appears to be a work of amazing erudition and research. It is crammed with quotations from the ancient classics of Greece and Rome, from the early Church Fathers, from the old mystics and Cabbalistic writings. But a competent scholar, Mr. Emmette Coleman, in an analysis of the work, says:—

In *Isis Unveiled*, published in 1877, I discovered some 2,000 passages copied from other books without proper credit. By careful analysis I found that in compiling *Isis* about 100 books were used. About 1,400 books are quoted from and referred to in this work; but from the 100 books which its author possessed, she copied everything in *Isis* taken from and relating to the other 1,300. There are in *Isis* about 2,100 quotations from and references to books that were copied, at second-hand, from books other than the originals; and of this number only about 140 are credited to the books from which Madame Blavatsky copied them at second-hand,—the truth being that these originals had evidently never been read by Madame Blavatsky. By this means many readers of *Isis*, and subsequently those of her *Secret Doctrine* and *Theosophical Glossary*, have been misled into thinking Madame Blavatsky an enormous reader, possessed of vast erudition; while the fact is her reading was very limited, and her ignorance was profound in all branches of knowledge. The books utilized in compiling *Isis* were nearly all current nineteenth-century literature.....Our author made great pretensions to Cabbalistic learning; but every quotation from and every allusion to the Cabbala, in *Isis* and all her later works, were copied at second-hand from certain books containing scattered quotations from Cabbalistic writings.

The *Secret Doctrine* is ostensibly based upon certain stanzas, claimed to have been translated by Madame Blavatsky from the *Book of Dzyan*,—the oldest book in the world, written in a language unknown to philology. The *Book of Dzyan* was the work of Madame Blavatsky,—a compilation, in her own language, from a variety of sources, embracing the general principles of the doctrines and dogmas taught in the *Secret Doctrine*. I find in this "oldest book in the world" statements copied from nineteenth-century books, and in the usual blundering manner of Madame Blavatsky.<sup>2</sup>

So Madame Blavatsky first had the audacity to forge a whole book and claim it to be the most ancient book in the world, and then found another book upon the teaching contained in this literary forgery! I do not know of any more impudent imposture in the whole of literature.

(To be continued.)

W. MANN.

#### "COMMON TATERS."

A clergyman was much surprised one day at receiving a basket of potatoes from an old woman in his parish, with a message saying that as he had remarked in his sermon on the previous Sunday that some "common taters" (commentators) did not agree with him, she had sent him some real good ones.

<sup>1</sup> Solovyoff, *A Modern Priestess of Isis*, pp. 135-6.

<sup>2</sup> The Society for Psychical Research translated and published Solovyoff's *Modern Priestess of Isis*, and included Mr. Emmette Coleman's analysis of Madame Blavatsky's work in an appendix at the end, from which I have quoted.

## Ruth.

SEATED at the fireside one very stormy night recently, a conundrum was launched at my unsuspecting head by my little daughter. Daughters have a tendency to regard their fathers as being general storehouses of knowledge, a kind of walking encyclopædia, a very present help in time of trouble. And no self-respecting parent cares to dispel the illusion if it can be kept up with any show of decency. He may try to fob them off with some kind of an evasion, but it is not usual to adopt the downright Agnostic position so long as a metaphysical dug-out is available. The poser for me that stormy night was: "Who was the father of Ruth?"

Now, although I had read my Holy Bible with some care in my callous youth, yet I was scarcely prepared to give the gentleman's name offhand to an inquisitive minx, so I parried the question by asking her to reach the Bible and I would soon enlighten her. Alas! the trouble was to find the short history of the lady, for her record is only a little one, and she is sandwiched with Judges and Samuel. I became interested in her story, and was entranced with her four chapters. The snowflakes were whirling fast outside, but I was helping her to glean in the open fields of Boaz, way back in the long ago. I searched carefully for her father's name, but had to admit ruefully that I couldn't find it, though if the patriarchal title of her father-in-law would do the same, I could furnish it at once. That was the best I could do to save my reputation, and I am not sure that I succeeded.

But I want to speak a good word for Ruth in these bloodthirsty times. Perhaps it would do no harm if Christians were persuaded to read their Bibles with more diligence. We scarcely ever hear Ruth mentioned. Moses and David, Solomon and Isaiah, are continually to the fore. Even Ezekiel, with his peculiar rations, is occasionally mentioned, while Paul, with his lugubrious letters, holds far too high a position in the religious world. I never could stand Paul with his interminable epistles. He wrote more notes than President Wilson. But Ruth, with her romantic love-affair, is lost sight of. We can see her busy in the sun-lit fields gathering the corn that was purposely left for her, and returning at night with a good armful, "while the Syrian stars looked down." Says Shakespeare:—

Oh, who can hold a fire in his hand  
By thinking on the frosty Caucasus?  
Or wallow naked in December snow  
By thinking on fastastic summer's heat?

But the picture of Ruth at the time of barley-harvest can do something to mitigate the severity of an Arctic winter. I am glad I looked for the name of Ruth's pater.

We must admit that her mother-in-law, Naomi, knew most of the points in the game of matchmaking. She was a practised hand at the business. And, of course, the touching fidelity of the young widow to the older one deserved the fullest recognition. Boaz was evidently the catch of the season. Most of the young ladies around Bethlehem had given him the "glad eye" to no purpose. He had withstood all the wiles and the snares that Eve's daughters had planted for him, until the young Moabitish widow appeared, backed by her mother-in-law. Then he fell, like many a good man since, to womanish strategy. It was a case of love at first sight. Whether it was the colour of her hair, or the tilt of her nose, or the archness of her eyebrows, history does not say, but she must have been a winsome lass for to "find favour in his sight" so readily. I do not defend



all the machinations of the mother-in-law. We know this much abused class have a grievous lot of inuendoes to answer for, but when a rich young farmer was in the net, it was only right that he should be hooked. He had to be secured either by hook or by crook. In the matter of landing a shy Lothario, I think Naomi could give points to George Bernard Shaw. Naomi was, undoubtedly, a super-woman.

Ruth was somewhat in the position of the young woman of the story who brought a slightly "elevated" young man to be married. The parson declined to go with the ceremony owing to the state of the bride—"Take him away," said he, "and bring him back when he's sober." But the reply of the bridegroom elect threw a search-light on the many devious devices which the feminine mind can resort to in tracking the marked man. Her reply was: "But he won't come when he's sober." I do not say that Ruth was quite so determined as that, but in any case she managed him. The joy-bells rang, and they had a happy wedding. The other girls might call her a Moabitish minx, and question her bona-fides, but there is every reason to think they lived happily after. For unto them a son was born, and old Naomi became the nurse and dandled the rising hope on her knee. They christened the boy Obed, and he, in later years, became the proud father of Jesse, who, as everyone knows, followed in his dad's footsteps, and who was the means, under grace, of starting on his great career the gentle David, whose heart was fashioned on the pattern of his Maker's, who could throw a pebble with the best of them, and who upheld with such strict impartiality the rights and the liberties of small nations.

ALAN TYNDAL.

## Acid Drops.

It is astonishing how easily and how glibly the clergy arrive at the true moral of the European War! Thus Canon Scott Holland, preaching at the meeting of the Universities Missions to Central Africa, pointed out that we had trusted to education, commerce, and science to provide the means for better relations between peoples; and the best educated, the most scientific, and the most commercial nation in the world had disturbed its peace. Everything had failed—except religion—and we must get back to that. But Dr. Scott Holland forgets that over and above all being scientific, educated, and commercial, these nations were religious. They had almost as many parsons as commercial travellers, there were far more churches than schools, and certainly parsons are better paid than scientists, and monopolize a larger share of public attention. And religion has claimed to direct the moral energies of men in a supreme degree. Dr. Scott Holland's plea strikes one as lacking in "reality," to use a cant phrase.

The cant of Dr. Scott Holland's pronouncement is the more marked because of its silence with regard to religion. In not a single country engaged in the War has the clergy acted as a restraining or moralizing force. Whatever incentive was needed to go to war, whatever justification was required to go to war, whatever incentive was required to continue the War, was supplied by the clergy in Germany, in Britain, and elsewhere. Of course, they were championing a righteous War; but was there ever in the world's history a war that was not righteous to those engaged in it, and while they were engaged in it? If the clergy were ever in earnest about their preaching, it was their duty to stand aloof from the War, and to hold those ideals of justice and humanity which are always endangered during a war. It is neither science, nor education, nor commerce that are condemned by the War. Its real moral is the utter and complete breakdown of religion. Thousands have realized this already,

and many more thousands will realize it before we reach the end of the conflict.

The Rev. A. M. Snadden, a Presbyterian minister, of Johannesburg, South Africa, has been telling his flock some plain truths. He pointed out that the emptiness of some places of worship in that city showed that rot had set in in the Church. The "rot" in the Churches is nothing to the "rot" uttered in the pulpits.

Christians are not all satisfied that the War is helping their faith. The *Church Times* is not altogether pleased that so many men in the Army are "nominally Church folk," and says bluntly that "only a small percentage of this vast multitude has anything but a faint glimmer of what the Church stands for." If the soldiers did know what the Church really stands for, there would be fewer Christians than ever.

A belated poster in the City announced that the 263rd festival of the sons of the clergy would be held at St. Paul's Cathedral. A waggish onlooker pointed out that the "sons of the clergy" seem to be as long-lived as the Old Testament patriarchs.

General Smuts says, in dealing with the coloured races there must be the maintenance of the Christian moral code. Coloured Christians, who have been insulted for generations by their white brethren, will best appreciate the unconscious irony of this remark.

We are indebted to a *Church Times* review of McFarlane's *Reminiscences of a Literary Life* for the information that Shelley would have "ended by becoming a Christian if his life had been prolonged," and that Godwin, after all his "changes in matters of faith or unbelief, must at last have died a Christian." We see no reason why Mr. McFarlane should have stopped with Shelley and Godwin. Such a charmingly simple method is applicable to every Freethinker that ever lived. It is none the less applicable to every Christian who might also die a Freethinker—if he lives long enough. Christians may not be always humorous in themselves, but the most solemn of them are often the cause of humour in others.

Lord Bryce estimates that 69,000,000 soldiers and civilians have been killed and wounded in the present world-war. What a commentary on the civilizing effects of two thousand years of Christianity.

The Rev. W. T. Fullerton, the new President of the Baptist Union, suggests that parish churches should be used for all creeds. This would mean continuous performances, with day and night shifts.

A chapel dedicated to Our Lady and St. Dunstan has been opened at St. Dunstan's Hostel for blind soldiers. We could understand this better if those exalted personages had restored sight to any of the unhappy patients.

"All mankind is seeking God," says Mr. H. G. Wells. There is a mistake here, for the Bishop of London and his friends have found three deities already.

The Vicar of Ramsgate told his flock that reliance on God is better than reliance on the "season." The clergy generally find trust in God a very good thing, for they are almost the only professional men whose incomes do not depend on the "season."

Schoolboy humour is often refreshing. A very handy, if unorthodox, explanation of the three Christian Creeds was given by a young student. "First of all there was the Apostles' Creed. But some people didn't believe it. So then they made the Nicene Creed, but still men wouldn't believe that. So at last they made the Athanasian Creed, which was so complicated that nobody could understand it."

In the issue of the *Truthseeker*, from which the above is taken, we see that Billy Sunday is credited with having taken,



during the past seven years, the following sums of money from the towns and cities named :—

|                               |              |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Boston, Mass. ... ..          | \$55,000.00  |
| Philadelphia, Pa. ... ..      | 51,136.85    |
| Paterson, N. J. ... ..        | 25,000.00    |
| Omaha, Neb. ... ..            | 20,000.00    |
| Syracuse, N. Y. ... ..        | 25,000.00    |
| Trenton, N. J. ... ..         | 35,000.00    |
| Baltimore, Md. ... ..         | 40,000.00    |
| Kansas City, Mo. ... ..       | 32,000.00    |
| Pittsburgh, Pa. ... ..        | 46,000.00    |
| Scranton, Pa. ... ..          | 22,398.00    |
| Wilkes-Barre, Pa. ... ..      | 22,288.90    |
| Columbus, O. ... ..           | 20,939.58    |
| Wheeling, W. Va. ... ..       | 17,450.00    |
| Toledo, O. ... ..             | 15,423.00    |
| Johnstown, Pa. ... ..         | 14,000.00    |
| McKeesport, Pa. ... ..        | 13,438.00    |
| Des Moines, Ia. ... ..        | 13,000.00    |
| Canton, O. ... ..             | 12,500.00    |
| Springfield, O. ... ..        | 12,000.00    |
| Erie, Pa. ... ..              | 11,565.00    |
| South Bend, Ind. ... ..       | 11,200.00    |
| Wichita, Kan. ... ..          | 10,111.00    |
| Denver, Colo. ... ..          | 10,000.00    |
| Beaver Falls, Pa. ... ..      | 10,000.00    |
| Lima, O. ... ..               | 8,050.00     |
| Portsmouth, O. ... ..         | 7,100.00     |
| Colorado Springs, Col. ... .. | 5,611.58     |
| Total ... ..                  | \$566,114.91 |

The above sums represent what are called "Free Will Offerings," given for the personal benefit of the evangelist. And America is also a civilized country. With this kind of thing, and the War, one is inclined to look with a certain sympathy on the flood story.

That the Christian superstition has little to do with civilization is shown by the Annual Report of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, which during last year dealt with 129,089 cases of neglect and starvation. British Christians ought to send missionaries abroad, with such things taking place at home.

A witness in a recent law case swore a novel oath on "her mother's grave." In another case a Chinaman took an oath by breaking a saucer. There are tribes in India that swear by the head of a tiger, while others chop a dog in two as emblematic of the fate of the perjurer. The countrymen of the Bishop of London swear on a greasy Testament. And the simplest method is that of the Freethinker, who swears not at all, but just tells what he knows.

A curious religious manifestation is reported from Los Angeles, where a saint and prophetess (coloured) named Ella is sued for the return of property conveyed to her by followers. Saint Ella, posing as a virgin, announces that she is to bear a son to be called "the White King Emanuel." In the trial the plaintiff's attorney offered to prove that the prophetess had been to Nevada and consorted with or married a white man. Saint Ella has had a large following, organized as the Church of the Invisible God, and is said to exercise a remarkable influence over members. Such scepticism as is now shown about her divine motherhood would have robbed the world of some "saviours" in the past.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The Bishop of Chichester says that "in every sense of the word we are slackers in religion." The Bishop had better make the best of the situation. We can assure him there are much worse times ahead.

At Stratford Police Court, on May 30, James Orpen, clerk in holy orders, was charged with attempting to procure two boys to commit an act of gross indecency. When arrested, the accused asked if the matter could be settled if he paid for it.

It is characteristic of our Government's interest in education that, so soon as offices are needed for other purposes, a descent is made on the Ministry for Education. Perhaps

the bitterest satire of all is the banishment of Mr. Fisher and his staff to a museum!

In crowded Fleet Street all sorts of newspaper offices get jumbled up together. On one window the announcements run: "The Independent Methodist" and "Our Cats."

The Salvation Army announces a flag-day in order to raise money. Certainly it is a more efficacious manner of "raising the wind" than the Christian method of relying on prayer.

Mr. H. G. Wells's "conversion" is extending. He has written an introduction to a translation of M. Loyson's reactionary book, *The Gods in Battle*, which is chiefly remarkable for its denunciation of present-day Socialists. Mr. Wells has "found God" with a vengeance.

Some of the newspaper comments on Mr. Wells' theology are ironic. The *Daily Mirror* remarks that the author of *God the Invisible King* "politely introduces mankind to a new deity." Just so! And popular prejudice runs in favour of three Gods.

Dr. Newton, the new minister of the City Temple, told his congregation that America must do the work that Emerson assigned to her. He forgot to mention that Emerson was a Freethinker.

The Bishop of Oxford thinks "there is no department of educational history which is more lamentable than the almost complete collapse of religious education in the secondary schools." It may never have occurred to his lordship that one reason for this collapse is that secondary school teachers generally regard the subject as of little or no importance, and for that reason reduce it to a minimum. This is the case even where the teachers are themselves formally religious. Naturally, the Bishop of Oxford would like to see this altered, and one way of effecting an alteration would be to more carefully train the teachers themselves in religious subjects. We are afraid that to carefully train means here carefully select, with a boycott of those who show disinclination to being made a catspaw of the parsons.

The war on German trade after peace is concluded is to have its counterpart in the war on German missionaries. The Rev. Dr. Ogilvie told the Church of Scotland Assembly that "no German missionary would be allowed for a long, long period of years to work in any British possession." One may always trust the parsons to look after their own trade interests. Competition is always keen between missionary societies, and one could hardly expect this favourable opportunity to be overlooked. But what a lesson in Christian charity and brotherhood!

Our sympathy is extended to the ghost of the late V. F. Wilson, Organizing Secretary of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, who died leaving behind him £229,880. We do not assume that Mr. Wilson intended leaving so much behind him. He would probably have preferred taking it with him.

We see that the death is reported of Chief Constable Mackay, one of the officials concerned in the Clydebank case, where a witness was refused affirmation, and threatened with contempt of court for refusing to take the oath. It appears that Chief Constable Mackay was really unaware of the terms of the Oaths Act, which is evidence of the careless preparation of officials for the discharge of functions attaching to their office.

The Vicar of Ramsgate says that for two years that town has been "miraculously protected" from air raids. What a pity God did not extend his protection to Folkestone? And we wonder what the relatives of the people recently killed at Folkestone think of God's partiality?

"General Booth," of the Salvation Army, is making a modest appeal for a paltry £200,000 for the central funds alone. Some other generals are not so easily satisfied.



## To Correspondents.

- W. REPTON.—It appeared in these columns some time ago. Your desire to get back to a more civilized life is, we think, shared by all. The sooner we see you again, the better.
- J. S. CAPEWELL.—We cannot tell you where a copy of Howard Evan's *Price of Priestcraft* may be obtained. Perhaps one of our readers may oblige with the information.
- A. M. NEILSON.—Thanks for the information, which we have already received from other quarters. Your inference is doubtless the correct one.
- R. OGILVIE.—Perhaps one effect of the War may be to compel friends of the Labour Movement to see the folly of pandering to religious leaders. Labour will never capture the Churches; it is more likely to be the other way about. We intend republishing Mr. Mann's articles, also other pamphlets. But at present the paper question is in the way.
- QUERIST (Moston).—The only legal way in which the name of a Freethinker's child can be given is when it is registered. The ceremony of publicly naming it is often performed at a Freethought meetings. The Secular ceremony over a grave may be performed by anyone, and consists of a suitable reading or speech. Any help that is possible and is required may be obtained by writing to the N. S. S. Secretary. We do not think the matter can be made plainer.
- T. C.—Your second guess is, we think, the correct one. We cannot say more publicly.
- H. LEESON.—You may rely absolutely on what we have said on the subject.
- Y. O. C.—We have no doubt that money could be raised in the way you suggest to make good the loss on the *Freethinker* during the War, but it is a method we do not care to adopt.
- MAJOR GEO. WARREN.—We cordially endorse your opinion of the *Cambridge Magazine*. Thanks for cutting.
- W. G. PUGH.—It is not *too* political, but we are so badly pressed for space, and shall be for some weeks to come.
- W. GREEN.—We do not think that the late Mr. J. Chamberlain or Mr. A. J. Balfour ever called themselves Agnostics, although it is a fair assumption from the writings of the latter that he has no genuine claim to the name of "Christian."
- N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—E. T. Brewster, 5s.  
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## Sugar Plums.

We are glad to find that our readers are so interested in the report of the Bowman Judgment. Its far-reaching importance is generally recognized, and, even as articles, the judgments are well worth reading. We hope to complete publication in another two issues, and that will give us space for articles that we have been compelled to hold over meanwhile. Mr. Palmer's pen, for one, has been absent from these columns solely from this cause.

To-day (June 10) Mr. J. T. Lloyd lectures at the Fife Hall, Fife Road, Kingston-on-Thames, at 7 o'clock. The lecture is to be delivered before the Kingston Humanitarian Society,

and we trust to hear that Freethinkers in the western suburbs will take full advantage of the opportunity offered.

We are asked to announce that a meeting will be held to-day (June 10) at the Emerson Club, 19 Buckingham Street, Strand, at 4 o'clock, to consider the formation of a Society for a discussion of the Principles of Morality as set forth in M. Deshumbert's *Morale Fondée sur les Lois de la Nature*. We understand that this is part of an international movement, and M. Deshumbert, who is resident in London, will be present. Mr. Heaford will also be among the speakers. We wish the attempt all success.

## Presidential Notes.

ON Whit-Sunday the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society did me the honour of again unanimously electing me as President for the ensuing twelve months. Pressure of work and want of space combined to prevent my writing anything on the subject last week, and to say that, little as I care for honours of any kind, how much I appreciate the confidence shown in the vote itself, and in the letters received from Branches and individual members before the Conference took place. I forbore printing these *before* the Conference, lest it should appear that I was seeking to influence votes, and I only mention them now as an acknowledgment to the writers. Twelve months ago, when I was first elected, I made but one promise and expressed but one hope. I promised to do my best, and hoped that no one would regret voting for my election. I am quite certain that the promise has been kept, and have no reason for assuming that the hope has not been realized.

Years ago, when supporting the re-election of Mr. Foote, I said that the Presidency of the N. S. S. was a post that no one who loved an easy life and possessed judgment would strive after, but it was one that no man with courage and a sense of duty would refuse. It is an unpaid post and, I think, should remain so. It is well that the leadership of the Militant Freethought Party should be free from fiduciary considerations. In this respect I cordially agree with the policy of my predecessors in giving their services free, and in making no claim upon the Society even to the extent of certain inevitable out-of-pocket expenses. The one advantage of the post is the opportunity for work, and although I am no lover of work for work's sake, I hope that I shall never be found wanting in effort where the interests of Freethought are concerned. To labour for a cause one loves is something, to feel that one has behind him the confidence and respect of thousands of earnest men and women turns that labour into a pleasant occupation and provides a payment that no monetary consideration could equal.

The National Secular Society has now been in existence for over fifty years, and there was never greater need for a strong and efficient organization than now. In many respects I think the time is ripe for a complete overhauling of the machinery of the Society, and a readjustment suitable to altered conditions. To that aspect of the Society's work I may return on some future occasion. At present I desire to say that whatever line this readjustment takes—and I have several plans more or less definitely in mind—it will be the easier for a larger membership and a greater number of Branches than the Society possesses at present. Two new Branches were formed last year and, I believe, the ground prepared for others, besides a large increase in membership; but this



only whets one's appetite for more. The North of England has been deplorably quiescent of late years, and I am quite sure that if Freethinkers will bestir themselves the general public will respond. It is no use waiting for the public to make the first move, that must be made by those interested in the work. Any half-dozen people in one of the large towns in the country who will arrange a meeting can hardly fail to secure enough of an audience to encourage them to go on with the work. I earnestly beg Freethinkers everywhere to at least make the experiment.

I have said it often before, but at the risk of wearying will say it again, *the present is a golden opportunity for the Freethought Movement*. The War has everywhere lowered the clergy and the Churches and the creeds in the estimation of the general public. The public mind is breaking away from its old moorings, the shock of the European upheaval has shattered the formal assent which people gave to conventional religious shibboleths. Everywhere audiences have been more sympathetic, more responsive to the Freethought message. As editor of the *Freethinker* I have the best of reasons for knowing into how many fresh hands the paper has found its way, and how appreciatively it has been received. If we are wise we shall take full advantage of this season of unsettlement and create a new orientation of the public mind. If we are unwise, or slothful, we shall allow the present opportunity to pass, to find when the War is over that the Churches have to a considerable degree re-established themselves in virtue of a few new shibboleths which only thinly disguise the old evils.

I told the Conference on Whit-Sunday, and was pleased to find the remark generally endorsed, that in my opinion the N.S.S. had not and never had possessed an office organization suited to a propagandist Society. The office itself ought to be an active centre and source of propaganda, with a properly equipped secretariat. Effective organization along these lines would take time; but I made one suggestion which I hope to see the Executive deal with as early as circumstances will allow. Very little use is made by the N.S.S., as an organization, of the press. There are scores of papers in the country continually publishing articles or letters bearing upon our propaganda, which would insert brief communications either by way of comment or reply. The cases continually cropping up about the Oath is one instance; the widely reported Bowman judgment is another. Yet, so far as the N.S.S. is officially concerned, not a line appeared in the press by way of correction or supplementation. The office is dumb, and the public unaware of our existence or of our interest in these matters. I am quite certain that were someone appointed whose business it should be to look after this side of the work—call him Corresponding Secretary, or Press Secretary—the result would be very beneficial to the Society. The only difficulty is to hit on a suitable person for the work; but if one can be found, I am convinced that the appointment will soon justify itself.

There are other suggestions I have in mind as opportunities offer for their realization. But it is useless offering them without prospect of materialization. Before I close these notes, however, this seems a fitting occasion to mention another matter. It will be remembered that in April, 1916, a Special Propaganda Fund was raised, to be spent as my judgment directed. At my own initiative I asked Mr. Lloyd and two members of the Executive to act as a committee to watch the expenditure of the money, and at my own initiative I am offering a general statement of the expenditure so far. Up to

date about £175 has been expended. Of this sum, about £80 has been given, in the shape of grants, to the N.S.S. Executive and to Branches of the N.S.S. The balance of the £175 has been spent in organizing lectures in London and the provinces. Perhaps I ought to say that of this expenditure a little over £30 has been credited to myself in connection with my own lecture work. As this £30 includes railway expenses—with a fifty per cent. increase—and hotel bills, I do not think it can be said that I have used that Fund to add materially to my own income. It is possible that I have received some seven or eight pounds above my out-of-pocket expenses during the past fourteen months. It is not, perhaps, necessary that I should make this statement, but there is no reason that I can see why I should not. And seeing that the Fund has kept the propaganda active during a time when it would otherwise have languished, I think it will be admitted that it has quite justified its existence.

CHAPMAN COHEN,

*President National Secular Society.*

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Bowman and Others  
v.  
Secular Society, Limited.

(LORD PARKER OF WADDINGTON—continued from p. 350.)

THE Roman Catholic Relief Act, 1832, and the Jewish Relief Act, 1846, expressly validate trusts for the purposes of the Roman Catholic and Jewish religions. No inference can, therefore, be drawn from any decision since they were placed on the Statute Book. But the case of *De Costa v. De Paz*, to which I have already referred, is important in this connection. It was decided before the Jewish Relief Act, and Lord Hardwicke held that a trust for the purpose of the Jewish religion was bad on the ground that it was against Christianity, and Christianity was the law of the land. It would have been enough to say it could not be enforced on the ground that the practice of the Jewish religion was subject to statutory penalties. On further consideration, however, Lord Hardwicke upheld the gift on the ground that it was for a charitable purpose, and that the testator's general charitable intention ought not to be defeated because the fund could not be applied in the way the testator desired. He left it to the Crown to direct a *cy pres* application. As I have already said, the Crown applied it for the purposes of the Christian religion. This case seems to show that the Jewish religion is within the equitable rule and that, apart from the statutory penalties, there was never anything inconsistent with public policy in enforcing a trust for the benefit of the Jewish religion. *De Costa v. De Paz* was followed in *Isaac v. Gompertz* (7 Ves., 61). Lord Thurlow there held that a trust for the maintenance of a Jewish synagogue was charitable, and directed an application to the Crown with a view to its *cy pres* application.

My Lords, apart from the question of religious trusts, there is one authority directly in point. In *Parc v. Clegg* (29 B. 589) the plaintiff sued the trustees of a friendly society known as the Rational Society for moneys lent to the Society. The trustees objected that the Society had illegal objects, and that the money could not be recovered on that account. The object of the Society included the promotion of the following propositions: "(1) That all facts yet known to man indicate that there is an external or internal cause of all existences by the fact of their existence; that this all-pervading cause of motion or change in the universe is the power which the nations of the world have called God, Jehovah, Lord, etc., but that the facts are yet unknown to man which define what that power is; (2) That all ceremonial worship by man of this cause whose qualities are yet so little known proceeds from ignorance of his own nature, and can be of no real utility in practice; and that it is impossible to train men to become rational in their feelings, thoughts, or actions, until all such forms shall cease." These propositions are clearly anti-Christian. If they point to religion



at all, it is a kind of negative Deism, if I may use that expression, and not a theistic religion. Nevertheless, it was held by the Master of the Rolls, Lord Romilly, that they contained nothing "irreligious or immoral," and that, therefore, the defence failed. It follows that he cannot have thought that there was anything against public policy in advocating Deism or (*a fortiori*) any form of Monotheism.

My Lords, in my opinion, the authorities I have mentioned are sufficient to establish that the first object of the Society's Memorandum is not open to objection as contrary to the policy of the law. It is not illegal, for it does not involve blasphemy. It is not irreligious, for it is, any rate, consistent with that negative Deism which was held not to be irreligious in *Pare v. Clegg*. It is not immoral or seditious. It is, no doubt, anti-Christian; but, to adopt the words of Mr. Justice Coleridge in *Shore v. Wilson* (9 C. and F. at p. 536): "There is nothing unlawful at common law in reverently doubting or denying doctrines parcel of Christianity, however fundamental. It would be difficult to draw a line in such matters according to perfect orthodoxy, or to define how far one might depart from it in believing or teaching without offending the law. The only safe and, as it seems to me, practical rule is that which I have pointed out, and which depends on the sobriety, and reverence, and seriousness, with which the teaching or believing, however erroneous are maintained."

My Lords, I am glad to be able to come to this conclusion. It would be a serious matter for your Lordships' House, unless clearly compelled by authority to lay down a principle which would not only lead to the anomalies pointed out by Lord Buckmaster, but would preclude the courts of this country from giving effect to trusts for the purposes of religions which, however sacred they may be to millions of His Majesty's subjects, either deny the truth of Christianity or, at any rate, do not accept some of its fundamental doctrines.

On all these grounds I think the Appeal fails.

#### LORD SUMNER.

(READ BY LORD DUNEDIN.)

My Lords, the question is whether an anti-Christian Society is incapable of claiming a legacy duly bequeathed to it merely because it is anti-Christian?

If the Respondents are an anti-Christian Society is the maxim that Christianity is part of the law of England true, and, if so, in what sense? If Christianity is of the substance of our law, and if a court of law must, nevertheless, adjudge possession of its property to a company whose every action seeks to subvert Christianity and bring that law to naught, then by such judgment it stultifies the law. So it was argued, and if the premise is right, I think the conclusion follows. It is not enough to say with Lord Chief Justice Lord Coleridge in *Ramsay's case* (48 *Law Times*, 735) that this maxim has long been abolished, or with my noble and learned friend, the Master of the Rolls, in the court below that "the older view" based on this maxim "must now be regarded as obsolete." If that maxim expresses a positive rule of law once established, though long ago, time cannot abolish it nor disavow make it obsolete. The decisions which refer to such a maxim are numerous and old, and although none of them is a decision of this House, if they are in agreement, and if such is their effect, I apprehend they would not now be over-ruled, however little reason might incline your Lordships to concur in them. In what sense, then, was it ever a rule of law that Christianity is part of the law? The legal material is four-fold: (1) statute law; (2) the criminal law of blasphemy; (3) general civil cases; (4) cases relating to charitable trusts. From statute law little is to be gleaned. During the sixteenth century many Acts were passed to repress objectionable doctrines, but plainly statutes were not needed if the common law possessed an armoury for the defence of Christianity as part and parcel of itself. Indeed, who but the King in Parliament could then say whether the Christianity, which, for the time being, formed part of the common law, was the Christianity of Rome, or of Geneva, or of Wittenberg? Certainly the courts could not.

After the Revolution of 1688 there were passed the Toleration Act "to give some ease to scrupulous consciences in

exercise of religion," which, upon conditions, relieved certain Dissenters (Papists and those who denied the Trinity excepted) from the operation of various existing statutes, and the Blasphemy Act, which recites that "many persons have avowed Blasphemous doctrines contrary to the doctrines and principles of the Christian religion, and may prove destructive to the peace and welfare of this kingdom." That the Blasphemy Act simply added new penalties for the common law offence of blasphemy, when committed under certain conditions, was held by Lord Hardwicke in *Da Costa v. De Paz* (2 Swanston, 487 n), and by the Court of King's Bench in *Richard Carlile's case* (3 B. and Ald., 161), and Lord Eldon in *A.-G. v. Pearson* (3 Merevale, 393) said that the Toleration Act left the common law as it was, and only exempted certain persons from the operation of certain statutes. Such, indeed, is the clear language of the statutes, nor can the fact that persons are singled out for special punishments, who deny the Godhead of the Three Persons of the Trinity, the truth of the Christian religion, and the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, or who maintain that there be more gods than one, be accepted as showing that the common law offence of blasphemy consists in such denials and assertions and in nothing else. Later Acts have relieved various religious confessions from the burden of the Blasphemy Act and other statutes; but, except in so far as they deal with charitable trusts for the purposes of such confessions, on which I do not now dwell, they seem to carry the present matter no further. The common law as to blasphemous libels was first laid down after the Restoration, and here the statement that Christianity is part of the law is first found as one of the grounds of judgment. Earlier opinions of the same kind are curiously general in character.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century a considerable change of procedure took place in reference to religion. Legate was burnt at Smithfield in 1612 upon a writ *de haeretico comburendo*, and another heretic named Wightman, at Lichfield, about the same time; but they were the last persons to go to the stake in this country *pro salute animae*. No doubt this process was moribund. Before the Restoration the Court of Star Chamber and the Court of High Commission had been suppressed, and at length, by the Statute 29 Charles II., c. 9, the writ *de haeretico comburendo* itself was abolished, with all process and proceedings thereupon and all punishment of death in pursuance of any ecclesiastical censures. It is to be noted that the Act, in saving the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical Courts over "atheism, blasphemy, heresy, and schism," distinguishes blasphemy from the profession of false doctrines, whether atheistical or heretical. The time of Charles II. was one of notorious laxity both in faith and morals, and for a time it seemed as if the old safeguards were in abeyance or had been swept away. Immorality and irreligion were cognizable in the the ecclesiastical Courts, but spiritual censures had lost their sting, and the civil Courts were extinct, which had specially dealt with such matters viewed as offences against civil order.

The Court of King's Bench stepped in to fill the gap. In 1664 Sir Charles Sedley was indicted for indecency and blasphemy (1 Siderfin, 168; 17 Howell's State Trials, 155). The indecency was so gross that little stress was laid on the blasphemy, which was probably both tipsy and incoherent. The Court told the prisoner that they would have him know that, although there was no longer any Star Chamber, they acted as *custos morum* for all the King's subjects, and it was high time to punish such profane actions, contrary alike to modesty and to Christianity. Then follows Taylor's case in 1676, when the indictment was for words only, though ribald and profane enough. This is the earliest trial for blasphemy. Attwood's case in 1617 is not an instance (Rolle's Abr., 78).

Now, Taylor's case is the foundation-stone of this branch of the law, and for a century or so there is no sign of carrying the law beyond it. The case repays scrutiny. The objection that the offence was an ecclesiastical one lay on the very face of the words charged, and in directing the Jury, Lord Chief Justice Hale found it necessary to show why it was also a civil offence. He said that such kind of wicked blasphemous words, though of ecclesiastical cognizance, were not only an offence to God and religion, but a crime against



the laws, State, and Government, and "therefore punishable in this Court, for to say religion is a cheat is to dissolve all those obligations whereby the civil societies are preserved" (1 Ventris, 293; 3 Keble, 607, 621). It is true he added that Christianity was parcel of the laws of England, "and therefore to reproach the Christian religion is to speak in subversion of the law," but this does not really enlarge the previous statement. Speaking in subversion of the law, without more, in the sense of saying that particular laws are bad and should be mended, has never been a criminal offence, and agitating against them has often led on to fortune. Woolston's case, in 1728, supplies the completion of the doctrine. Upon a motion in arrest of judgment (2 Str., 834; Fitz., 64), the Court followed Taylor's case as settled law. The argument was that Woolston's crime, if any, was of ecclesiastical cognizance (he was a clergyman who joked about the miracles), and that "mere difference of opinion is tolerated by law." Lord Raymond's answer was, "I would have it taken notice of that we do not meddle with any difference in opinion, and that we interpose only where the very root of Christianity is spoken of.....To say that an attempt to subvert the established religion is not punishable by those laws upon which it is established is an absurdity." True it is that the last words somewhat invert Lord Hale's reasoning, for they seem to treat an attempt to subvert the established form of Christianity (not any other) as an offence, because it attacks the creature of the law, not because that form is the basis of the law itself and the bond of civilized society. At any rate, the case leaves untouched mere difference of opinion, not tending to subvert the laws and organization of the realm.

Curl's case, heard about the same time (2 Str., 788; 1 Barnardiston, 29), was a case for publishing an obscene libel, but it is of some incidental importance. The Courts were chary of enlarging their jurisdiction in this regard, and in Queen Anne's time judgment had been arrested in such a case for supposed want of precedent, and the offence was treated as one for ecclesiastical cognizance only. On a motion for arrest of the judgment on Curl it was argued that the libel being only *contra bonos mores*, was for the spiritual Courts. The motion was refused, the Chief Justice saying: "If it reflects on religion, virtue or morality, if it tends to disturb the civil order of society, I think it is a temporal offence." He said, too, "religion is part of the common law"; but Mr. Justice Probyn clears this up, adding, "It is punishable at common law as an offence against the peace in tending to weaken the bonds of civil society."

At the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries various publishers of Paine's *Age of Reason* were prosecuted. The words indicted were chosen for their scoffing character, and indeed are often really blasphemous, but the idea throughout is that the book was the badge of revolution and tended to jeopardize the State. Thus during the trial of Williams (26 State Trials, 654), Mr. Justice Ashurst said of it that "it was an offence against law and government from its direct tendency to dissolve all bonds and obligations of civil society," and again in passing sentence on him in the Court of King's Bench, he states the ground of this offence thus: "All offences of this kind are not only offences to God, but crimes against the law of the land, and are punishable as such, inasmuch as they tend to destroy those obligations whereby civil society is bound together, and it is upon this ground that the Christian religion constitutes part of the law of England."

(To be continued.)

## N. S. S. Annual Conference.

### Report of Business Meeting.

THE Annual Conference was held at South Place on Whit-Sunday.

Delegates present were as follows: T. H. How (Bethnal Green), F. G. Willis (Birmingham), J. T. Lloyd (Glasgow), E. Neary (Kingsland), J. T. Lloyd (Liverpool), Mrs. Rosetti (Manchester), R. Chapman (Newcastle), T. F. Palmer and W. J. Downing (North London), L. Brandes and

P. S. Wilde (South London), R. Chapman (South Shields), H. Spence and T. Thurlow (West Ham).

Vice-Presidents attending as such were: Messrs. Baker, Bowman, Dobson, Gorniot, Heaford, Leat, Moss, Neate, Nichols, Pitt, Quinton, Roger, Samuels, Shore, Silverstein, and Wood, and Mesdames Kough, Stanley, and Rolfe.

Amongst other familiar figures were noticed Messrs. Brewster, Bury, Clifton, Harrison, Hollanby, Henley, Judge, Lazarnick, Miller, Hammer Owen, Howell Smith, Schindel, Shaller, Storey, and Mesdames Lane, Owen, and Brandes.

The President (Mr. C. Cohen) in opening the proceedings said he hoped the discussion would be carried on with good temper and with profit to the Cause. Many provincial delegates had been prevented attending by the difficulties of travelling, and by the fact that very many members were engaged on War work; but it was satisfactory in the circumstances to see so many present.

The Minutes of the previous Conference, as reported in the *Freethinker* last year, were passed on the motion of Mr. Willis (Birmingham), seconded by Mr. Thurlow (West Ham).

The President then read the Annual Report.

The Report was adopted on the motion of Mr. Roger seconded by Mr. Miller.

Mr. Willis (Birmingham) in supporting it said it was a record of good work for the Freethought Party. He was pleased that mention was made of the debt of gratitude they owed to G. W. Foote in connection with the Secular Society; at the same time it was a matter of deep regret that he did not live to witness the successful fruition of his efforts. The Executive were to be congratulated on their action against the London County Council who had attempted to rob the citizens of their rights. Had the Council succeeded in stopping the sale of literature, it would only have been the first step to further action.

Mr. Heaford said he missed from the Report some reference to the progress of Freethought throughout the world. He thought the revolution in Russia opened out a wide field for the activities of Freethought—it inaugurated a new era of civil and religious liberty. He would like to suggest that a resolution be passed congratulating the Russian Government and the Russian people on the great step which they had taken for themselves and for us along the path of liberty and progress. (Agreed.)

Mr. Brandes said he did not notice any item in the financial report for the lectures run by the N. S. S. at South Place and Queen's Hall.

The President said that these expenses were met in another direction.

The financial report was then taken as read, and passed.

The next item on the Agenda being the election of President, Mr. Cohen vacated the chair, and Mr. Spence was elected to occupy it. He said there was a motion on behalf of the West Ham, Bethnal Green, and Birmingham Branches for the re-election of Mr. Chapman Cohen as President. Mr. Cohen's apprenticeship under Mr. Foote for so many years especially fitted him for the position of President in these trying times.

Mr. Neary (Bethnal Green) formally moved the election of Mr. Chapman Cohen as President.

Mr. Thurlow, in seconding the motion, said he was heartily glad that the Society possessed such a successor to the two distinguished men who had preceded him. He (the speaker) had watched Mr. Cohen's career from the start, and he did not know anyone in the movement who would make a better standard-bearer.

Mr. Willis (Birmingham), in seconding the motion, said Mr. Cohen showed marked ability, intellectuality, courage, and tact, and was a worthy successor of the great men who had preceded him in the presidential chair. They required such a man in these troublous times of reaction, and they would also need him at the outbreak of peace.

The motion was then put to the meeting and carried with acclamation.

Mr. Cohen thanked the meeting for the honour they had conferred upon him, and said he only valued the position of the Presidency of the N. S. S. for one reason, namely, the opportunity it gave for doing work for the cause. If the holding of that position meant merely an honour, he assured



them he would not take the trouble to stand as candidate. He reminded the Conference that he had said last year he hoped when twelve months had elapsed no one who voted for him would feel sorry that they had cast their vote. He had not given cause for regret by any slackening of energy. In all the years of Freethought advocacy he thought there had never been a more trying and troublesome period.

On the motion of Mr. Cohen, seconded by Mr. Willis, the Vice-Presidents were re-elected. Mr. H. B. Savill and Mr. Harry Jones were re-elected Auditors.

After some discussion the revised Rules of the Society were adopted on the motion of Mr. Roger seconded by Mr. Shore.

With respect to motion No. 9 standing in the name of Mr. Cowell re the abolition of the Presidency, Mr. Cowell wrote regretting that severe illness kept him away from the Conference, and asked leave to withdraw his motion. This was done, and the Conference passed by a unanimous vote to "next business."

Mr. Willis, in proposing resolution No. 10 on the Agenda, said the Birmingham Branch had instructed him to bring forward at the Conference the question of the disposal of any monies bequeathed to the Secular Society, Limited. They thought that some of these funds should be given to the Provincial Branches.

Mr. Shore pointed out that this was no part of the business of the N. S. S.

After considerable discussion the Resolution No. 10: "That in the opinion of this Conference the earliest opportunity should be taken of publishing the judgment of the House of Lords in respect to the Bowman case," seconded by Mrs. Rosetti, on behalf of the Manchester Branch, was put to the meeting and carried unanimously.

Mr. Howell Smith in proposing Resolution No. 11: "That, having in view the elaborate preparations being made by all sections of the Christian Church to meet post-War conditions, and the possibility of reaction resulting from such activities, this Conference urges Freethinkers throughout the country to counteract the tactics of the Churches by effective organization on their part, and suggests the formation of Branches of the N. S. S. wherever possible," said that in view of the strenuous efforts being put forward by all the Churches, both in this country and on the Continent, he would like to see as many centres of ferment as possible (to use a phrase from chemistry) set up in the movement. The problems for Freethinkers to tackle were greater than in the past. Their path became harder, and demanded greater intellectualism and greater self-discipline. They had now to deal with all sorts of mysticisms, and it was very necessary that Freethinkers should not only understand all the theological issues, but also the great moral issues which cropped up in our national and international relations, and he wished to see these questions taken up by N. S. S. Branches throughout the country.

Mr. Heaford thought Mr. Smith's resolution an epoch-marking one. The post-War conditions would, in his opinion, be the most remarkable that the world had ever seen. New forces would be brought into play, and it would be the duty of Freethinkers to meet those forces, adapt itself to them, and endeavour to control them for the progress and well-being of mankind.

Mr. Palmer (North London Branch) also strongly supported Mr. Smith's resolution. He thought Freethinkers should make a greater study of science, so as to combat the arguments put forward by the ever-increasing sects.

Resolution No. 12, proposing (a) that an extra Conference should be held during the autumn, and (b) requesting the Editor of the *Freethinker* to insert brief weekly reports of meetings in that journal, was then put with a slight amendment, and carried.

Mr. Lloyd, on Motion No. 13, said that the interest in religion was lessening materially, and the Churches, knowing this, were drawing together to secure certain things after the War; and one of their aims was to enforce religious education in the State schools. Freethinkers must do their utmost to resist these attempts, and to abolish religion from the nation's schools.

On Motion No. 14, that the same person shall not hold the office of President for more than two consecutive years, Mr.

Brandes said he only proposed to read it, and would reserve his speech until the end of the discussion.

Mr. Wyld seconded the motion, and said that in his opinion it was of a democratic nature. It was necessary to keep the Society in a state of flux, and the constant changing of President was best calculated to produce a healthy and vigorous condition.

The President said that if Mr. Brandes would not state his reasons for bringing the motion forward he, as President, should rule that he could not be heard at the end, when no reply to his reasons for bringing forward the motion could be made.

Mr. Willis said he did not think the mover of a resolution was bound to give his reasons for bringing it forward; but if he did not do so, he had no right later on to bring in new matter.

The President (adhering to his ruling) put the resolution to the meeting, and on a show of hands declared it lost. Only two voted in its favour.

The remaining resolutions on the Agenda being of a non-controversial character, and the time for the closing of the Conference having arrived, were moved and carried with only brief comments.

In bringing the Conference to a close, the President said that he was quite in accord with those who desired to build up a strong organization upon a thoroughly representative and democratic basis. The stronger, the more democratic, the better, and nothing would please him more than to find next year three or four suitable candidates for the presidency. He was doing his best to attract young and capable men to the Movement; he had already secured the support of many, and he hoped to get more.

The proceedings then terminated.

## Correspondence.

### "THE VOLTAIRE OF AMERICA."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—When travelling in the West Indies in 1887 I met a Colonel Smith of the United States Army. As I was a great admirer of Colonel Ingersoll, then in his prime, I asked Colonel Smith if he knew of him. "Know of him?" he replied, "Why there is not a man or woman in the U.S. who does not know of Robert Ingersoll. I not only know of him, but have the honour of being a close personal friend of his. Let me tell you something that will give you a better knowledge of him than most people have. Of course you know that Ingersoll is a most successful barrister, and therefore a very busy man. One day a young lady called at his office to see him, and, on being admitted, he asked her to say what she wanted as shortly as possible. She told him that she was the daughter of a doctor who had recently died unexpectedly and left her mother and sister and herself very badly off. They had been regular attendants at one of New York's most fashionable churches, but on her father's death were obliged to move to a much more poorer neighbourhood and go to a more modest place of worship. Now they were trying hard to make a living by needlework and painting Christmas cards, but the mother had broken down, and they were almost starving. She had applied for help to the rector of the fashionable church they attended and helped to support in the days of their prosperity, but he said that as they had ceased to be members of his church he could do nothing for them as he had so many other calls on his purse. She had heard of Colonel Ingersoll, and in her dire need she had reluctantly come to ask for his help." Ingersoll at once said: "I knew something of your father, and I believe what you have told me. There is \$50 to help you over this difficulty, and should you want more do not hesitate to ask me.

G. O. WARREN (Major).

### A QUESTION OF STYLE: HEBERT AND THE FREETHINKER.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I was unable to get into the breach a fortnight ago to defend Hebert against Messrs. Arch and Underwood, and



their "authorities"—"the police" and "inebriated racing touts"—for the simple reason that I have been too busy defending myself against the *Military Service Act* of 1917. But—*revenons a nos moutons!* I do not pretend to have an infallible memory, and it appears to have been between 1909 and 1911 when I last saw the *Pere Duchene*. I make this statement, however, as the "law" says, "without prejudice." However, as I am many miles from London, I cannot do as Mr. Underwood suggests, and make a "faithful English version" of No. 102 of the *Pere Duchene*, which, I take it, is the very worst of Hebert's "wanton obscenities." But I ask if Mr. Underwood will transcribe in the *Freethinker* the worst of this number for us, in the original French, and then I will do what he requires of me. I am sure the readers of the *Freethinker* will survive the shock! As to the susceptibilities of Mr. Arch's "police," or the blushes of Mr. Underwood's "inebriated racing touts," we need not trouble. Will you oblige us, Mr. Underwood? The *Pere Duchene* is history! and we ought to know it fully.

H. GEORGE FARMER.

### A Thirsty Soldier's Lament.

WHEN you come to the end of a putrid day,  
 Handling your last—last "brown"!  
 You take a stroll in the Y.M.C.A.,  
 And you feel like a ship—going down!  
 No drink can be had elsewhere for a "D,"  
 So you crush to the counter and wait,  
 A penny well spent is spent on hot tea;  
 Yet you know that its only a bait;  
 Yes, you know it is only a bait!  
 For while you are drinking your penny in tea,  
 A puffy-face comes to your side, [prayer,  
 And whispers: "Dear comrade, a moment for  
 A moment with Jesus to hide!"  
 And your tea turns to tannin—  
 It burns in your throat;  
 You gulp, and can't finish it quite,  
 For you realize now—to the harmonium's burst—  
 How the puffy-faced parson will gloat  
 On the fact that the men, forced in by their thirst,  
 The wreck of "Religion" will float.

ARTHUR F. THORN.

### Death of Lorenzo Portet.

WE regret to learn from a correspondent of the death of Lorenzo Portet, an old revolutionary and Freethought fighter. Portet, who will be remembered by Liverpool Freethinkers, in which city he lived for some time, was a rebel from his youth upward. Intended for the Church, he entered commerce, and spent some time in South America. Returning to Spain, he joined Francisco Ferrer in his work of emancipation, and was compelled to flee to France. Expelled in turn from France, he came to England, where all his children were born, and where he gained a livelihood by the teaching of Spanish, continuing meanwhile his work as propagandist.

After Ferrer's death, Portet continued the former's work in the publication of numerous educational and freethinking works. He was arrested in Barcelona, and finally returned to Paris, where he died, and was buried in the Pavtin Parisien Cemetery. Addresses were delivered at the graveside by his old friend Malato, by Dr. Clauzel, and others.

Like many ardent reformers, Portet died penniless, leaving behind him a widow and four children, who for some time will be dependent upon the good will of those who sympathized with Portet's work.

### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

#### LONDON.

##### INDOOR.

EMERSON CLUB (19 Buckingham Street, Strand): 4. Meeting to consider the formation of a London Society for the Promotion of the Principles of Morality founded on the Laws of Nature. Various speakers.

KINGSTON HUMANITARIAN SOCIETY (Fife Hall, Fife Road, Kingston-on-Thames): 7. J. T. Lloyd, a Lecture.

MR. A. D. HOWELL SMITH'S DISCUSSION CLASS (N. S. S. Office 62 Farringdon Street): Thursday, June 14, at 7.30.

##### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 6.15, H. J. Stenning, a Lecture.

FINSBURY PARK N. S. S.: 11.15, Percy S. Wilde, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (corner of Ridley Road): 7. Mr. Thurlow, "About the Bible."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill): 3.15, "Our Conversion to Freethought," R. Miller, H. V. Storey, A. H. Wortman, and others.

REGENT'S PARK N. S. S.: 3.15, Miss Kougli, a Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, F. Shaller, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station): 7. Mr. Burke, a Lecture.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Messrs. Saphin and Shaller; 3.15, Messrs. Dales and Kells; 6.30, Messrs. Beale, Hyatt, and Yates.

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