

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions.

### Religion and the Social Sense.

In judging the evils current in any state of society, there is always a tendency to consider the class that profits from their existence as deliberately and consciously perpetuating them. This view, however, involves a totally false estimate of the quality of the social forces and of human nature. Conscious villainy is not a powerful factor in human affairs. The number who can plainly say, "Evil, be thou my good," is never more than a very small minority. Paradoxical as it may sound, deliberate and conscious villainy implies a degree of moral courage possessed by few. Man's nature is so socialized that he must needs, in the vast majority of instances, find some moral or social justification for all he does. We have seen, in the case of the present War, that every nation engaged claims to have a moral or social justification for its conduct. Nor is this a piece of deliberate hypocrisy; it is rather an evidence of the truth that man's socialized human nature, while it may be misdirected, cannot be denied. And the same holds good of classes within the State. A social justification must be found—some outlet must be found, so to speak—for moral energy. And it is the peculiar function of religion, in all modern societies, that it provides an outlet for moral energies and aspirations, and thus perpetuates social evils that would otherwise stand self-condemned.

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### The Narcotic of Faith.

Last week, in dealing with Mr. and Mrs. Hammond's *The Town Labourer*, we pointed out the period covered by that work was characterized by (1) the development of the factory system, which evolved not alone the enslavement of a whole class, but the employment of young children and women under conditions to which the world offers no parallel; (2) an outburst of religious zeal, as shown by the lavish erection of churches and the creation of numerous organizations for the evangelizing of the world; and (3) a burst of anti-freethinking prosecution and persecution. The connection between

these phases is closer than appears at first sight. Indeed, our point is that number two was in a sense inevitable to number one, while number three was the necessary result of a movement of opinion that tended to bring men and women face to face with facts. In such a state of affairs, religion serves as an outlet for moral feeling that is checked in other directions. It gives a justification for existing institutions and conditions by an appeal to a supra-moral sanction. It provides a mental drug for those at the bottom, and a moral narcotic for those at the top. As Mr. and Mrs. Hammond say:—

The resignation of the upper-class world to the torture of children.....the fresh hope of a decent or civilized life on this side of the grave for the majority of people in the new towns, are not to be attributed solely to the atmosphere of capitalists and landlords. ....We must take into account the way in which men and women capable of self-devotion and sympathy were brought through the associations of religion and inspiration of the evangelical Revival to regard the world around them.

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### Freethought and Progress.

First of all, we have to note the influence of the French Revolution. Monarchical and oligarchic England was thoroughly afraid of that movement. It did what it could to crush it abroad. It did what it could to limit its influence at home. And that influence came to England with the added odium of involving an attack on the Church.

At the time when half Europe was intoxicated and the other half terrified by the new magic of the word citizen, the English nation was in the hands of men who regarded the idea of citizenship as a challenge to their religion and their civilization; who deliberately sought to make the inequalities of life the basis of the State, and to emphasize the position of the workpeople as a subject class.

The fear of this governing class was intensified by the fact that so much of the work of reform was actually associated with men of pronounced freethinking opinions. One notes the following among the names given by Mr. and Mrs. Hammond as men who agitated for reform: Paine, Robert Owen, Hardy, Thelwall, Place, Cobbett, Bamford, Prentice, Detrossier, Doherty, Hetherington, Carlile, Lovett, and Godwin. There are many others who are not mentioned by our authors, and who might be well named. But these names were enough to rouse the religious bias, and if one were to wipe out the work of these men from the social history of the century, English history would read very differently to-day.

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### How Religion Works.

To the governing class, Christianity came as the most useful of instruments for its purpose. In this sense evangelical religion was even more useful than the Established Church, since it exerted more influence over the working class. Wilberforce, keen to seek the freedom of the slave, supported with all his might the savage Combination Laws of 1799 and 1800,



which had so baleful an effect on the lives of the working classes. When, during the debates on the suspension of the Habeas Corpus, Burdett pointed to the number of persons thrown into prison without trial, kept in solitary confinement, and forbidden communication with the outside world, and asked Wilberforce what a Christian was to think of those who not only did not visit the prisoner themselves, but would not allow others to visit him? Wilberforce replied that "religion had taught him to value the blessings the country enjoyed and to hand them down to posterity unimpaired." It is well said that "For such minds Christianity was not a standard by which to judge the institutions of society, but a reason for accepting them." Philanthropy was, of course, not wanting. That was one of the teachings of current religion. The rich must be kind to the poor; the poor must be grateful and respectful to the rich. The evil was reciprocal. There is only one thing more demoralizing to the average character than that of having people dependent upon one for the necessaries of life, and that is the effect of such conditions on the dependents themselves. "The poor ye have always with you," said Jesus, and the poor, overworked, and under-fed, badly housed, and uneducated, were told to be content, to be grateful for the mercies shown them, and to look forward for reward to the world to come. \* \* \*

#### The Cant of Dissent.

Writing in 1824, Cobbett said of the Methodists:—

The bitterest foes in England have been, and are, the Methodists.....The friends of freedom have found fault, and justly found fault with the main body of the established clergy.....but, hostile to freedom as the established clergy have been, their hostility has been nothing in point of virulence compared with that of these ruffian sectaries.....Books upon books they write. Tracts upon tracts. Villainous sermons upon villainous sermons they preach. Rail they do like Cropper and Bott Smith, against the West Indian share-holders; but not a word do you ever hear from them against the share-holders in Lancashire or Ireland. On the contrary, they are continually telling the people here that they ought to thank the Lord for the blessings they enjoy; that they ought to thank the Lord, not for a bellyful and a warm back, but for that abundant grace of which they are the bearers, and for which they charge them only one penny per week.

With this sweeping condemnation of the most evangelical form of Christianity, and on behalf of which Methodists of to-day make such extravagant claims, Mr. and Mrs. Hammond do not substantially disagree. They point out that the general view of the leaders of the working-class concerning the Methodist revival does not differ from Cobbett's. In a careful analysis of the relation of the Methodist Church to working-class betterment, the authors say:—

If we look into the life and teaching of this new religion, we can see that the whole spirit of its mission was unfavourable to the Democratic Movement and the growth of the Trade Union spirit. The Methodist movement was a call not for citizens, but for saints; not for the vigorous, still less for the violent redress of injustice, but for the ecstatic vision.....In so far as this religion touched on the affairs of this world it tended to reflect the spirit of its first missionary. It taught patience where the Trade Unions taught impatience. The Trade Union movement taught that men and women should use their power to destroy the supremacy of wealth in a world made by man; the Methodist that they should learn resignation amid the painful chaos of a world so made, for good reasons of his own, by God.....It set up a rival to the ideal of civic freedom. It diverted energy from the class struggle at a time when wise energy was scarce, and

money when money was still scarcer. It would be extremely interesting to know what money was spent on religion by a class that was thereby diverting its resources from a war for independence.....The teaching of Methodism was unfavourable to working-class movements; its leaders were hostile, and its ideals, perhaps, increasingly hostile.

\* \* \*

#### The Social Function of Religion.

The moral pointed by Mr. and Mrs. Hammond's book is, to my mind, clear. It is not merely that the resources of the people, mental, moral, and financial were, as the authors point out, diverted in a wrong direction, not merely that religion acted as a drug so far as they were concerned, but also that it served to reconcile the governing classes to the injustice and misery around them. Human nature may not be as noble as many of us would wish to see it, but it is not so vile that whole classes of men and women can consciously put aside the tendencies of their moral nature sufficiently to embark on a course of deliberate wrong-doing. Some outlet for their moral and social energies must be found, and it has always been the function of religion to provide this ethical safety valve. And that gives us the historic reason why religion has in all ages been found in close alliance with all forms of social wrong—slavery, serfdom, the enslavement of a class, and the subjection of women. Religion blinds people to the vital social issues. It excuses social wrong by an appeal to a "Providential order," it soothes the social sense by schemes of religious philanthropy, and thus perpetuates evils worse than those it professes to remove. It is not because religion deliberately teaches wrong-doing that it stands as the historic enemy of genuine social progress, but because it stands in the way of that wide-eyed, open-minded acceptance of vital facts which can alone make progress certain and profitable.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## The Newest Apologetic.

### VI.

WE have learned from history that the achievements of Christianity are largely the creation of the theological imagination. Holding its record face to face with its claims no other conclusion is honestly possible than that it has been a gigantic failure. Not only it has not emancipated woman, but has rather put her in a position of undignified and humiliating subjection to man. Indeed, some divines, such as the Dean of Manchester, deliberately repudiate St. Paul's teaching on this subject. Christianity permitted slavery to exist for many centuries without uttering a single word in condemnation thereof, and when emancipation was effected it was in spite of the bitter opposition of the Church. It is a notorious fact that Christianity, not only has not abolished war, but has been directly responsible for many of the most devastating wars the world has ever seen. Neither can any one maintain that it has put an end to cruel, blood-thirsty sports, such as fox and deer hunting in our own country. These are counts against the popular religion of which it is impossible to acquit it. We have also seen that it has discouraged and set its face resolutely against the advance of secular learning, and was for many ages the sworn enemy of science. And yet, despite all these well-attested and generally-acknowledged facts, Christian apologists have the temerity to speak of the achievements of Christianity. Some of them go the length of alleging that it has redeemed the world, wildly glorying in what they call the mighty miracles of Divine Grace. The Rev. J. K. Mozley, B.D., whose ingenious little book, *The Achievements of Christianity*, we have



reviewed in these columns, does not hesitate to characterize as perverse those who deny "a real nexus of cause and effect" between the Christian Faith and social reforms, ignoring the undeniable fact of the Church's angry resistance to nearly every one of such reforms. The third chapter in his work, entitled "Christianity and the Arts," deserves special attention, not because of its merits, but on account of its specious but unconvincing argument. We are in full accord with the thesis that "great indeed is the happiness which comes through the æsthetic side of life," but cannot possibly approve of the further assertion that "incomparably poorer would humanity be apart from the contributions to this side of life made under the inspiration of the Gospel." However, Mr. Mozley makes wonderful, even fatal admissions, thereby hopelessly removing the ground from under his own feet:—

History does show very wide separations between art and Christianity at certain periods. The Fathers of the Church in the early centuries were more alive to the falseness and the frequent impurity of the religion represented in the great poetic works of the Greek and Roman writers than to the beauty of the poems and the grand ideals which often inspired the poets. The Puritan attitude to art was not all that we have been accustomed to suppose (Milton and Bunyan were at once great Puritans and great artists), but Puritanism was suspicious, and was also responsible for the destruction of a great deal of material beauty which, whatever might be thought of the religious uses to which it had been put, was very precious artistically. The attitude of Christians, Catholics as well as Puritans, towards the dramatic art and its exponents has, at times, been savagely hostile. And even to-day one could easily find Christian people who looked on the artistic temperament as something hardly compatible with true and deep religion (pp. 69, 70).

We hold that such has been the attitude of Christianity to art in all ages of its history, and that, from its very nature, no other attitude was possible to it. With much of what Mr. Mozley says about art, as such, we are in happy agreement; our only point of difference from him being the relation of the Christian Gospel to works of art. What does Christianity aim to accomplish in the world? If we take the New Testament as our guide, there is no escape from the conclusion that Christ came into the world to provide a way for guilty sinners to flee from the wrath to come. By nature we are all doomed to spend eternity in the lake of fire prepared for the Devil and his angels. Jesus was born that he might save his people from their sins and restore them to the favour of Heaven. Faith in his finished work secures eternal life, and eternal life consists in the knowledge of God. The redeemed of the Lord are treated as subjects of the kingdom of God, which is described as not of this world, either in origin or in nature, and its subjects are spoken of as citizens, not of earth, but of heaven. Now, it naturally follows that the world is a place, not to dwell in, but to escape from; not to love as a home, but to be despised as a prison. Christians are obliged to remain *in* the world for a little while, but are solemnly warned against being *of* it. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," is an apostolic injunction. Art, on the contrary, is at once of earthly origin and nature, and deals exclusively with earthly phenomena. Even so-called Christian art is subject to all the limitations which Nature imposes, and to other restrictions of a purely religious character. When Mr. Mozley says that "the kind of world, the outlook upon existence which art desires, and which is necessary for its finest inspiration and achievement, is bound up with the Christian interpretation," he gives expression to an untruth. It is well known that Greek art, which was not bound

up with the Christian interpretation, has never been excelled, and probably never will be. It would be absurd to expect our author to think and speak well of Materialism; but we are surprised to find so capable a man allowing himself to deliberately misrepresent it. Though he lacks the audacity to affirm that "a universally accepted mechanical or naturalistic explanation of the world would be the ruin of great art," yet he is convinced that "it would most severely restrict it, and confine it within far narrower limits than its genius demands." He grants that if such an interpretation were accepted as ultimate truth, art would have to bow before it, but the loss would be unspeakably great.

Materialism would explain all things, including the human spirit, in terms of matter and force; it would look on every sort of human activity as the necessary effect of causes purely physical; for any free action of the spirit it leaves no place at all. Idealism, mystery, and hope are all cut short in its presence. Not into mystery but into nothingness do all things vanish. Let us not think that the danger from Materialism has departed, because in recent years it has, as a philosophy, found it more and more difficult to hold its ground. Materialism, in some form or other, will always be the creed of the multitudes, when they have lost grip of the great beliefs in God, Freedom, and Immortality (pp. 71, 72).

That is a miserable caricature of Materialism. Mr. Mozley did not take the trouble to ascertain what the materialistic creed really is, nor does he mention his authority for his grossly inaccurate summary of it. Professor Tyndall was a scientific Materialist, and yet he had his idealisms, his dreams, his love of art, and his hope for the future of humanity. Shelley was an Atheist, and yet no poet of his age ever surpassed him as a devotee of the highest species of æstheticism. He was a passionate lover of beauty, and his poetry kindles the love of beauty in all who read it with appreciation. The same thing is true of Keats, Swinburne, and Meredith. Materialists do not believe that all things vanish into nothingness, their great, central conviction being that matter neither comes into existence nor goes out of existence, but is perpetually changing its forms. Mr. Mozley expresses the opinion that the beauty studied and admired by art is not "simply the beauty of line, colour, and sound, but the beauty which is through these made visible but not created," but will the reverend gentleman be good enough to tell us what this so-called higher beauty is, and where it is to be found apart from that of line, colour, and sound? It is admittedly invisible, but how does anybody know that it exists, or that it is other than the beauty of line, colour, and sound? It is true that we read in the Bible of the beauty of holiness, but everybody is aware that in such a connection beauty is merely a metaphor. Mr. Mozley says:—

Under the magic touch of the great artists, the painters, the architects, the poets, and the musicians, the beauty which runs through Christianity, though not on its surface, has been brought to the light, so that men have come to see that the great Christian doctrines of the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Resurrection are æsthetically as well as morally moving. And Christianity has provided the artist, not only with material of unparalleled richness upon which he may work, but with an inspiration capable of drawing out his finest powers. From the Gospel the artist has gained a vision in the light of which the world can be beautified as well as strengthened, and that redemption of which it tells leaves no faculty of man outside its quickening power (p. 73).

We ask how the great Christian doctrines of the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Resurrection can be rendered æsthetically as well as morally moving? They cannot even be shown to be true, much less æsthetically



and morally moving. They are cardinal articles in the Christian Creed, but their beauty is as difficult to discover as their truth. Whether true or false, neither the Incarnation nor the Resurrection possesses any moral qualities, while the theory of the Atonement brings us face to face with the quintessence of immorality; but not one of the three can be said to be æsthetically pleasing. As works of art, Raphael's famous picture of the Madonna and Child and Perugino's Crucifixion are truly beautiful; but their beauty is not marred in the least by the belief that the supernatural elements woven into and around them are wholly mythical. The Madonna is simply a beautiful woman, an affectionate mother, wrapping her child up in her radiant aura. The Crucifixion is, likewise, a wholly human incident, and the picture itself is an entirely human product, not even suggesting any supernatural connotation except to those who believe in it. The same thing is true of Handel's *Messiah*, whose music is nothing more than a scientific arrangement and combination of sounds, conveying no ideas whatever except those which the hearers succeed in appropriating. Thousands of people thoroughly enjoy and are powerfully moved by the *Messiah*, to whom the Christian religion is anything but true. It is the music alone that charms them.

It is perfectly true that many Christians are ardent lovers and enthusiastic patrons of the arts, but not because they are Christians, and it is equally true that not a few artists have been and are devout believers; but Christianity, as expounded in the New Testament and the Creeds, is by no means an æsthetic religion. In reality, between the Christian and the artist a great gulf is fixed, which cannot be annihilated except at the cost of reconstructing Christianity itself, which is a task upon which several eminent divines are now engaged. Art is much older than Christianity, and destined to survive it. Greek sculpture, music, and poetry have never been surpassed, and, as some aver, remain unequalled to this day; and it is an unquestioned fact that the gradual decay of Christian belief is unaccompanied by any corresponding decline of the arts. We are convinced, moreover, that the passing of supernaturalism will result in the emancipation and glorification of all high art.

J. T. LLOYD.

### "The Glorious Free Press."

*The Free Press*, by Hilaire Belloc. Allen & Unwin. 1918.

INDEFATIGABLE, if not profound, Mr. Hilaire Belloc has written a book on the free press, and the volume appears at a time when newspapers are less free than at any other recent period of their history. The first master of the art of advertisement in this country is Mr. George Bernard Shaw. The second is Mr. Belloc. This is not an expression of reproach, but one of admiration. He has survived four years as a cocksure military critic, and now he has turned his guns on the pressmen. The papers are full of him and his dexterous criticism and camouflage.

Mr. Belloc sets out to lash the English press, and his most telling criticism is that the power of the editors and the writers has been constantly diminishing of late years, and the power of the commercially-minded proprietors constantly increasing. He might have added that all have become the slaves of the advertisement manager.

Journalists can neither do justice to themselves, nor serve the public honestly, in a press dominated by advertisers and vested interests. In spite of their rivalry, the British newspapers are of one mind in suppressing advanced thought, which is understood to be fatal to fat

dividends. The conspiracy of silence against Free-thought is wonderful. The papers devote columns to the most brutal murder cases, and report verbatim all the salacious details of divorce and police-court cases. In the summer, when space is plentiful, there is always the sea-serpent or the big gooseberry. In the midst of a world-war room is found for circumstantial accounts of "angels" on the battle-fields, or of the miraculous happenings to stone statues of the Madonna. Let there be no mistake on this point. The writers of this trash do not all believe it. It is not entirely due to fanaticism or ignorance, but is simply done to promote huge circulations. It is, in the last analysis, largely a matter of business. Journalists know better than that Freethinkers are weak, foolish, and ill-conditioned persons, but they wish to curry favour with the many-headed orthodox. The imbecilities of the Bishop of London, and other clergymen, are reported weekly in the newspapers, but the leaders of Free-thought seldom have a line devoted to their work.

The result is, that readers of newspapers are kept in blissful ignorance of the intellectual ferment that goes on outside the very narrow limits of the "respectable" press; that is, the press which is only a money-making concern. Mr. Belloc sees this clearly enough with regard to Socialism, but he has little to say about Free-thought. There is plenty of room for a serious criticism of the English press, but it must be undertaken by someone with more independence than Mr. Belloc, who prefers the days when news was spread, not by the press, but by word of mouth. The latter he describes as "the natural system," which is an astonishing preference. With all their suppressions and exaggerations, newspapers are better methods of communication than reliance upon the garbled conversations of ignorant and illiterate people. As for the press, Mr. Belloc holds it in high-sniffing contempt. Journalists serve proprietors of newspapers, individuals, or syndicates. They may be ever so ignorant, ever so shallow, and ever so disreputable; it is enough if they can write in a taking way, and flatter the prejudices and passions of their readers. They are also irresponsible, and after they have fomented enmities, flattered vested interests, and written "puffs" for advertisers, no one can bring them to book. Personally unknown, merged in the identity of a journal, they are nothing to the world.

Newspapers are commercial speculations. The "glorious free press" is one of the greatest impositions of the age. It exists to pervert and corrupt the public mind, as far as possible, in favour of certain interests which are never openly stated. It is the obedient, humble servant of the advertisers. The only really free press in England consists of a few journals founded and maintained for the promotion and defence of principles. They have relatively small circulations, they derive only a very little of their revenue from advertisements, and that they continue to live at all is a tribute to the animating power of conviction, and the talents of their editors. Journals of this kind have many difficulties of publication. They are starved by the neglect of advertisers, and they are subjected to a boycott which prevents them finding their way to more than a fraction of their potential purchasers. They are perpetually between the proverbial devil and the deep sea, and their existence is a miracle more marvellous than any related in the Gospels.

As an example of the difficulties of conducting advanced periodicals, it is no secret that over nine thousand pounds was spent on *Justice* during twenty years, and it fell on evil days at last. The arresting personality of Mr. Hyndman could not make the paper a commercial success. The *Clarion* has had a much larger circulation



than *Justice*, but even Mr. Robert Blatchford's deserved popularity could not make his paper pay without subsidies from his readers. And if two such men cannot make such papers a commercial success, how is the thing to be done at all?

Freethought in this country is represented in the popular press by the *Freethinker*. And a wider circulation for this journal is the best antidote to the conspiracy of silence and misrepresentation of the commercial press. If our readers do a little missionary work, and do it regularly, the boycott will soon be a thing of the past. A thousand new readers have been obtained through the editor's appeal. The process can be continued indefinitely, and contribute towards the final triumph of, what George Meredith called, "the best of causes."

MIMNERMUS.

### Theosophy in Belfast.

JUDGING by advertisements of meetings and courses of lectures during the past year, Belfast Theosophists have been displaying considerable activity. It is about a quarter of a century since I dabbled in re-incarnation, soul transmigration, and kindred mysteries, and so, being caught in the rain one Sunday evening, I wandered into a hall where a lecture on Theosophy was being delivered.

The title was "Body, Soul, and Spirit," and the speaker was a Miss Isabelle Pagan from Edinburgh. There was a good audience, and as it was evident that the majority were believers in the Blavatsky doctrines, it may be worth while to review some of the ideas of the lecturer, and to put them to the test of common sense—I will not say reason.

As Theosophy can only make an appeal to those who have had some education, I was genuinely interested in the psychology of the movement. After hearing this one lecture by an earnest and cultured lady, and having noted the demeanour of the audience, I have solved the problem. These people are believers, they believe this, that, or the next thing for the simple reason that they were brought up to believe. What it is they believe, however fantastic or idiotic is of no account; the basic fact is that they believe, that they *possess faith*, which is equivalent to saying that they subordinate reason. Oh, yes, they may have had doubts, doubts as to some article of the creed in which they were reared, doubts about the Bible, about the teachings of Jesus, but they have always given *the will to believe* precedence over *the desire to know*.

I cannot labour this point too much (although it is nothing new to Freethinkers) for it explains completely why many educated men and women, gifted with fine intelligence in secular affairs, subscribe to speculative doctrines so ridiculous that a child of a Rationalist could confute them with logic. Positivism was described as Catholicism without Christ, and Theosophy is Christianity plus camouflage. In a final analysis all religions are the same, the first principle being that man can achieve greater knowledge and wisdom by faith than by the exercise of the reason.

Now, we know where we are with Catholicism. The faithful have to accept without question, and it is sinful even to entertain a doubt. But Theosophy affects to make an appeal to reason; when, however, we look into it, we find that nearly everything has to be taken on trust. In her lecture, Miss Pagan early showed that she had always been a believer, and the easy way she glided over man's survival of bodily death, his three-fold nature, his numerous bodies (likened to so many waistcoats)

re-incarnation, psychometry, astrology, ether, and the aura, and the way the audience accepted it all, fairly took my breath away. Her ideas about the physical body were platitudinous, and some of them silly. The opinions of unmarried persons about the care of children are invariably foolish. I see nothing funny in the story of the man who thought his children ought to be sponged before kissing him! Preference for Swedish gymnastics over German drill is, of course, to be commended—we are not at war with Sweden. Small talk about literature for children, with just a touch of the blood-curdling element recommended, shows clearly the taint of early religious "pithing," for who, in the name of goodness, would ever be curdled about ghosts or bogey men unless fear had been inculcated in them from infancy?

The lady's lack of logic, and her ignorance of the problems of free-will, heredity, and environment which are inextricably bound up with man's every action, was clearly manifested by such phrases as "doing a thing against his will," "self-sacrifice," "the force that compels a man to perform an unpleasant duty, when it would have been much easier to have refrained," etc.

When it came to mind training I sat up and took notice. It appears we do not spend enough time in contemplation and meditation. If we cultivate our "intuitive faculties" there is scarcely any limit to the possibilities of knowledge opened up to us by this means. We were told how some fortunate students of the occult could foretell that they were to receive letters, and even to be certain of the contents, and how certain children of California possessed marvellous intuition and could differentiate between sealed packets of salt, sugar, rice, etc. A wonderful instance of this intuitively acquired positive knowledge was given. An engineer had put up some elaborate machinery. A friend of his—a brother engineer—told the inventor that he would require to take his work to pieces as there was a flaw in a small but important wheel that would completely upset the working. Now, "as he could not possibly have seen the part" which he alleged was faulty, the inventor testily asked why his friend thought there was something wrong. "I do not *think*, I *know*," was the reply of the spiritualistic engineer. The machine was, at great cost, taken to pieces, and, lo, there was a mighty flaw, and intuition again triumphed!

At question time I asked for a clear definition of intuition, and requested further particulars respecting the talented juveniles of California. The reply to this latter query completely bears out what I maintained earlier, that, at all hazards, these people want to believe in hanky panky. California is a long way off, and yet Miss Pagan never questions the honesty of the proceedings, "Yes," she said, naively, "the child just concentrates, and holds the envelope to his brow, so."

"They could smell it," I interjected.

"They don't smell with their foreheads, and there is no difference in odour between sugar and salt," retorted the lecturer, and the audience tittered at my folly. Now, it is strange argument for Theosophists, who know that savage man retains many senses that civilization has dulled or robbed us of, that it would be impossible for an acute nose to discriminate between two substances held within an inch or two. Besides, an envelope is translucent, and, placed near the forehead, might be seen through. But as I indicated in the framing of my question, the children are in California, and doubtless, if there are Theosophists out there, they will tell wonderful tales of the occult exploits of Belfast nippers. Miss Pagan assured me that it would take her till midnight to give all the authenticated instances of knowledge gained by other than the ordinary channels known to



experience. It was common practice, she said, for men to use intuitively acquired knowledge in their business; there was a growing number possessing the faculty to a wonderful extent, and it could be cultivated by anyone.

It is profoundly pathetic in these terrible times to listen to such nonsense, and to reflect, that while there is so much to be done for poor suffering humanity, that thousands of earnest people take this "philosophy" as having a serious bearing on the affairs of life. Far from it being true that there are hundreds of instances where intuition has accurately foretold events, *there has never been a solitary instance* that would convince a committee of reasonable persons with powers to investigate, while the frauds, and quacks, and charlatans, from the founder of Theosophy down to the meanest medium, have been innumerable. It has been well said that the proper investigators of "psychic phenomena" are the detective, the conjurer, and the pathologist. I have some knowledge of showmen and of "fakes," and there is not a "black-art" worker in the kingdom who couldn't make an impromptu thought-reading show, assisted by a strange boy, that would equal the revealed exploits of the Californian prodigies. I challenge Miss Pagan or anyone else to demonstrate before me and a committee some similar manifestations by children, and I will wager any sum of money that I will give a reasonable explanation of the occurrences, and then show exactly the same tricks by my own children.

As to the story of the machinery, was not the second man also an engineer? Now, had he been a baker, it might have been considered wonderful; but the whole yarn is just as vague as tracts of the Atheist Shoemaker type. Names, dates, and details are wanting; and if it is common practice to use knowledge acquired by intuition, why are technical schools not superseded by contemplation colleges, and why does not telepathy render the telephone obsolete?

Now, if I were lecturing on Theosophy—which heaven forbid!—I could find more convincing illustrations of intuition than those employed at this lecture; but evidently any old thing will do with those disposed to religion. If I said to my wife, "I have an intuition that the Edinburgh tramcars will break down to-morrow," she would only laugh at me, for she belongs to Leith, and knows that the prehistoric tanks of Princes Street break down *every* day; there is nothing very wonderful in a business man having a "feeling" or an instinct or an intuition—or the complete trinity of the emotions—that he would receive letters by the morning; but then I am a sceptic, and would not be surprised if I were told that some of the letters would begin "Dear Sir" and end up "Yours truly," or maybe "Yours faithfully," have the previous day's date on them, and some to be typewritten.

It is so easy to prophesy things that are always happening, and yet so perverted is the religious mind that a natural explanation will be rejected for one that savours of the mysterious. Take Miss Pagan's story of the "intuitional warning" given to the young man, which compelled him to look into a shop window, and so save his life, for lower down the street a chimney fell, and would have killed him. "It was a thing utterly foreign to his nature to look at a window," we were told, and nobody laughed. I feel rather ashamed of noticing such imbecility. It is the old religious explanation that always satisfies the religious mind. The man who was saved received a "warning"; for him who was killed, "his hour had struck." God is a winner both ways, and is justified whatever happens. Had the youth felt that some force would suddenly lift him up to the chimney, and if that happened, it might be worth looking into,

Of course, our old trusting friend, Sir Oliver Lodge, was spoken of with deep reverence, and St. Paul was frequently quoted, to my surprise, for I do not think that deceased author approved of lady lecturers. Children should be taught to emulate "great men" (who are the judges?) regardless of the fact that, despite the foolish utterance of a poet, their lives have seldom anything sublime about them; and reverence for religion is, of course, imperative.

All this is the usual hocus-pocus of Christianity; but it is surprising that Theosophists can even go one better in idiocy than orthodox believers. Telling us that God will be pleased or he will be angry is presumptuous; but I simply cannot keep my face straight when I have to listen to a solemn rigmarole about "what the Angel Gabriel would do at half-past twelve," the spiritual exaltation of repeating rhythmically, "Alfred Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson," like his bally brook; and when a supposedly educated woman hailing from the noble city of Edinburgh asks me to see a deeper meaning, a longing or a yearning, in the absurd gyrations of a dancing Dervish, and to be respectful about the silly creature, I can only retire from the investigation, and make way for the pathologist.

J. EFFEL.

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## Correspondence.

### CLERGY AND RAID SHELTERS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In the *Freethinker* of March 3 there appears, under the heading "Acid Drops," certain remarks concerning something that took place recently at an air-raid shelter in West Ham which need some correction, as they are far from a truthful account of what happened. The clergyman concerned did not "impose himself upon the gathering," as is asserted; he had been asked by several who are in the habit of frequenting this shelter to come and help them with songs and hymns. On the evening in question, when he first arrived at the school, he asked the gentleman who at other times had used the piano to play for them, as he had done the previous evening (Sunday); this he did for part of the evening. While the people were assembling, songs were sung, and then, at the request of some of the children, the well-known children's hymn, "There's a friend for little children," was sung, during the singing of which some objection was raised, and five or six men and lads started the song, "What's the use of worrying?"

In order to show the spirit of charity towards the few who differed, the hymn was stopped, and the lady at the piano struck up the same popular air, in which many joined. After some more songs, the hymns were resumed without further interruption, and as a climax, towards the end, practically all present joined heartily in the hymn, "Crown Him Lord of all." No interference with anyone's rights took place, and we should like to ask if Christians who make use of Council property have not the same right as so-called Freethinkers?

BY ONE WHO WAS PRESENT.

[We based the paragraph on information supplied by a correspondent whose accuracy we had no reason to question. It does seem that an attempt at religious propaganda of a kind was made, and that was the central point in the paragraph questioned.—EDITOR.]

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### INTER ALIA.

SIR,—The actual occasion of this letter is concerning the reference of "Mimnermus" to G. L. Mackenzie, in the *Freethinker* for March 3. G. W. Foote, in his preface to Mackenzie's book, specially notes "Miracle" and "The Salvationist's Prayer." We were most entertained by the rather long poem, "Jurisprudent Jehovah," in which occurs:—

THE TEMPLE OF THE TRINITY.

'Tis thus: Believe that I and Christ and Ghost are one in three;  
That I, as Christ, was nailed to death, to bribe the Ghost and me;



That I, as Christ, began to be, yet always was, my son ;  
That each, yet none, is I, and I am each, and all are one !

These statements—strange to those who ne'er for godly knowledge  
thirst—

Are simple when you know them ; but you've got to know them  
first.

Alas, poor Yorick !

MENANDER.

## Acid Drops.

The Bishop of London is another sufferer by the War. In addition to Fulham Palace being used as a Red Cross Hospital, presently, he has given up half of London House, and has put all his spare cash into War Loans. This is very distressing, but he may, perhaps, find some consolation in the reflection that Fulham Palace and London House are given to him rent free, and money allowed for keeping them up, so that there may be a little gain in a curtailment of expenses without a diminution of income. And investing all one has at five per cent., gilt-edged security, has certain compensating features also. Nature is full of compensation, as Emerson pointed out. But, we suppose, Bishop Ingram doesn't bother much about Emerson.

The Bishop asked his audience to think of Russia. Well, some of his audience might think of the Russia the Bishop praised for its nobility and religion—the Russia of the Czar, with its pogroms, and police spies, and Siberia, and ignorance, and suppression of nearly all that made life worth living. And the better informed of his audience might know that the new Russia—in spite of its military collapse, and the disadvantage of that to the Allies—has created thousands of Peasant Councils, provided a large number of new schools and hospitals, established 40,000 new Co-operative Societies, and arranged for 5,000 new schools to be opened. However great may be the military disaster of the revolution, the intellectual ferment continues, and the seeds of a social regeneration are sown. But one cannot expect the Bishop of London to attach great value to these things.

The Bishop of Birmingham has been throwing bouquets at Cardinal Bourne, and says that "I would accept nine-tenths of the programme of the Cardinal in regard to social life in the future." If the dogmas of the Church are true, "the social life in the future" will be too hot to be pleasant for quite a number of people.

Reuter's agency states that the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem has arrived safely in that city. You can always trust that the Church Militant will mingle discretion with its valour.

The clergy maintain that the War was sent by a benevolent deity to punish a naughty world for its sins. A London magistrate declares that, since the War, immorality has increased one hundred per cent.

The Sheffield Catholic Association has passed a resolution pledging support to their bishops in their opposition to the New Education Bill, and also protesting against the proposed legislation for cheaper divorce. Evidently divorce is a luxury that should only be allowed to people with long purses. In our opinion where divorce is advisable there is very much more reason for it in the case of poor people than wealthy ones. The former has few opportunities of getting free from the inconvenience of an undesirable union.

No one need be alarmed at the talked-of invasion of Siberia by the Japanese. The *Daily Mail* publishes a letter from a correspondent pointing out that this is in fulfilment of prophecy, and is part of the "unfolding of a great purpose." So it is all part of God's plan in the War, the Russian revolution, and the advance of the Japanese Army. And we suppose Germany must be brought in somehow.

Dr. Fort Newton, despite his vaunted love of freedom, cannot be even just to those who do not share his faith. In a sermon preached in the Cathedral of Glasgow, and published in the *Christian Commonwealth* for March 6, he speaks of "the bitter tragedy of Atheism," and says "there is no keener pain than a loss of the sense of the reality of God." The reverend gentleman is either hopelessly prejudiced or profoundly ignorant, or both, when he so utterly misrepresents the nature and the effect of Atheism. Convinced Atheists are the happiest people in the world. The loss of the sense of the reality of God is to them an unspeakable relief. What they have lost is belief in a myth, but what they have gained is a new and heart-lifting conception of Nature, and their own relation thereto.

Dr. Fort Newton makes a quotation from Nietzsche, which, taken out of its context, conveys an entirely false impression. The preacher overlooks the fact that the great Pole is speaking sarcastically when he so pathetically describes the imaginary sorrows of the unbeliever. No one can honestly read *Thus Spake Zarathustra* without perceiving what a real advantage it is to be an Atheist. It was a saint, to whom the love of God was all in all, who tried to prevent the good man from carrying his glad tidings to the masses. After his interview with him Zarathustra pitied him, and excused him by saying: "He has not heard that God is dead." In reality the Atheist has lost nothing: he has simply been delivered from bondage to a superstition, and his heart overflows with joy. There are thousands of such people within a few miles of the City Temple, though the pastor pretends to be unaware of their existence.

Dr. Fort Newton tells us that Nietzsche had the courage "to face the raw horror that lies at the end of the logic of denial," which is the opposite of true. Nietzsche did not lament the loss of "his right to pray," for he did not believe in prayer; and in his *Human, All Too Human*, he almost goes out of his way to expatiate on the absurdity of praying. Since he was convinced of the non-existence of God, how could he regret his inability to pray? As it generally does come, Atheism came to him as a deliverance, and he often actually revelled in it.

Once more, Dr. Fort Newton does not understand what Atheism is. He takes it for granted that to an Atheist purity is a delusion, justice a fiction, and hope a dream, an error for which there is absolutely no excuse. Besides, the reverend gentleman does not *know* that "God is there," however firmly he may believe that he is. He often denounces dogmatism in the most scathing terms; and yet in this sermon he comes before us as one of the most bare-faced dogmatists in Christendom.

A correspondent of the *Star* (March 6) has unearthed the following advertisement from the "Personal Column" of the *London Times*:—

For sale, the advowson of Aveton Gifford Rectory, near Kingsbridge, Devon. Net yearly value £690 (about); population about 700. The parish is pleasantly situated near a river and a short distance from the railway and the sea. The church is in beautiful state of repair. The rectory, which is a handsome Elizabethan residence, standing high in nice grounds, is in perfect order; good outbuildings. Present incumbent aged 67; no curate is required.

And yet parsons are never tired of talking about the "spiritual" side of their calling.

Following the death of Lance-corporal Evans, which was noted in these columns, and whose exemption by the Tribunal was refused, chiefly on account of his freethinking opinions, a lively correspondence has been going on in the *Wood Green Sentinel*. The Freethought side is being well upheld, and we congratulate the editor in permitting both sides to express an opinion. A Mr. A. W. Elliott figures prominently in this correspondence, and his measure may be gauged by his statement that Bradlaugh could not stand the fire of his cross-examination, and that "Foote deliberately lied in my presence." The editor curtly remarks that Mr.



Elliott appears to be eaten up with self-conceit and to have a passion for self-advertisement.

The controversy seems to turn on the decision of the Tribunal that Lance-corporal Evans could not have had a conscientious objection to military service, since he was an Atheist. Hence the decision of the Tribunal to send a young man into the Army whose physique unfitted him for the life. We have noted many cases in which Tribunals have decided that to have a "conscience" one must be religious, and the decision of the mental calibre of many who have been entrusted by the Military Service Act with the ordering of men's lives. It is bad enough that such ignorant bigots should be in a position of authority, but to place them in *such* a position is a public outrage.

We wonder what the Minister for Education thinks of the following questions that were given to a class of children in the Sonning (Berks) Boys' School:—

- (1) Write out the answers in the Church Catechism to the following questions:—(a) Which be they? (b) What meanest thou by the word sacrament?
- (2) Who spoke the following words to whom, when, and where?
  - (a) "Do not lie unto thy handmaid."
  - (b) "What said those men and from whence come they unto thee?"
  - (c) "Lord, open to us."
  - (d) "Put up thy sword again into his place."
  - (e) "Trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him."
  - (f) "I will hear thee when thy accusers are also come."
- (3) What are the first words that Our Lord is recorded to have spoken after he rose from the dead?
- (4) Write shortly what you know of Abana, Rabshakeh, Darius, Shushan, Caiaphas, Arimathea, Demetrius, and Euroclydon.
- (5) On what days are proper prefaces appointed to be said? What is said or sung immediately after such prefaces?

To call this kind of thing education is ridiculous. To claim that it has any influence in forming character is downright knavery.

None too soon some of our judges are making a stand against the idea that a certain amount of licence must be given to a man who has served in the War. And, naturally, when the Bishop of London speaks of all soldiers as "saints," and any statement that soldiers are as other men, subject to the same influences, and animated by the same passions, is treated as an insult to the Army, it is not surprising if some think that a civil offence, if committed by a soldier should be winked. In justice to the soldiers themselves it should be said that they are the last to take this view. It belongs to empty-headed civilians. A soldier feels himself one with the rest of the people, and desires to be judged by the same standards. And, on the whole, we think more of the soldiers in this War than of the bulk of civilians.

All the same, we welcome Justice Darling's remark in a recent case that—

the judges of the King's Bench Division had noticed a growing practice in the courts of the country of allowing soldiers who had committed crimes to go practically unpunished, and it was well that it should be plainly stated that this practice of treating a soldier who had done service differently to civilians when charged with similar crimes had tended to place judges in a very difficult position when sentences came up for revision. Certain people held the view that good military service could be set off against civil crime, and that a man who was a good soldier could commit murder or any other crime and go practically free. If that view was to prevail it would mean that a mention in despatches for a Military Medal would be a licence to commit crime. It was the considered opinion of this Court that there must be an end to the view that soldiers could commit crime with impunity. The Court could not allow that good military service entitled a man to commit crime with anything approaching impunity, and each case must be judged on its merits.

Special circumstances may arise in the case of a soldier that do not obtain with civilians, but Justice Darling's ruling strikes us as sound and timely.

While we are on this topic we commend to those civilians who are so enamoured of militarism as to wish for some measure of Conscription, after the War, the following words of General Sir William Robertson, late Chief of Staff:—

People at home might be asked to submit to still further sacrifices before the War could be brought to such a conclusion as would prevent a recurrence of the horrors, the miseries, and the loss of valuable lives that we had witnessed during the last three and a half years—until we could remove the disgrace to civilization so-called which we saw existing before this War began—he meant the waste of labour and the waste of life in nations maintaining great armies for the purpose of destroying each other.

That, as we have often said, is an end worth fighting for. The state of preparing for war by maintaining large armies in times of "peace" is only one degree less hateful and injurious than actual warfare. And, again, it is a soldier who points to this truth. Countries that need armies to watch each other can no more be properly called civilized than a street can be said to be honest when each house demands the special attention of a policeman to prevent robbery.

Mr. Asquith, in his speech at the Holborn Restaurant, quoted the words of Voltaire: "The wise should have preferences, but no exclusions." It is pleasant to find the great French Freethinker a source of inspiration.

The time's out of joint; but so, apparently, are the seasons. The first cuckoo has appeared at Folkestone, and has been followed by the first butterfly at Leigh-on-Sea. It almost looks as if poor old Providence is getting old. At any rate, it shows great carelessness.

Bearing in mind the way in which the Government has scattered tons of printed paper about, it is cheering to know that a more economical spirit is prevailing. Asked by Lord Ribblesdale for a return showing the number of people appointed by the Government, the reply was that it could not be done, as paper was short. We are glad to see an economical use of paper, even only though it only involves the use of a few hundred sheets.

The Bishop of London, Rev. F. B. Meyer, and Father Bernard Vaughan were all speaking from the same platform the other day. It was a touching picture of Christian brotherhood, the only thing to make the cynic smile was that they were together to impress upon people the importance of attending Church on Sunday. Professional interest brought them together, as professional interest often drives them apart.

The *Sunday Chronicle* reports a secret wireless installation in Bethel House, the headquarters of the International Bible Students' Association. Bethel House was founded by the late Pastor Russell, and the outfit was presumably to be used for communicating with the enemy.

Lady Glenconner has been telling some amusing stories concerning children. One of the best is that of a child seeing a parson mounting the pulpit steps, and asking, "Is he Jesus?" "No." "Then is he Punch?"

Lord Rhondda says he is proud that his father was a grocer. Why should he not be? It is said that "god" was a carpenter.

The Archbishop of York is at the front—at Washington—where he has dined with President Wilson.

"Who was the first man to fly?" asks a contemporary. According to the Bible, Elijah ascended to heaven in a chariot of fire, and the hero of the Gospels went up "on his own."

A daily paper had a leading article, "Wide-Awake Rip Van Winkles." What an admirable description of the clergy!



## C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

March 17, Southampton; March 24, Manchester; March 31, Pontycymmer; April 7, Glasgow; April 14, Liverpool; April 21, Goldthorpe; May 5, Abertillery.

## To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—March 17, Abertillery; March 24, Leicester; April 28, Nuneaton.
- "FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND—G. F. Dixon, £1; S. Clowes, 2s. 6d.; Ernest, 10s.; C. B., 2s.
- C. DIGGORY.—Parcel of literature for distribution is being sent. Hope it will be found useful.
- A. ATHERTON.—The article is very striking, as you say, appearing in a Church magazine. We hope its readers will draw the correct conclusions as regard their own faith.
- E. RUSSELL.—Thanks. Papers are being sent.
- W. LAMB.—We are obliged for your congratulations. If our friends could only secure us paper with as much ease as they seem able to get readers, we should sleep easier. The problem ahead seems how to print without paper.
- H. AUSTIN.—We are continuing the subject in this week's "Views," as you will see. It is quite possible the articles would serve a useful purpose if republished; but the cost of printing now is very great, and that gives us pause.
- T. FOWLER.—It is a question of using what one can get. Paper is now costing at least thirty per cent. above last year's prices, and is still rising.
- G. THOMPSON.—Our objection to the practice in question is general—moral, physical, and social. We do not care to measure the importance of each. Much would depend on the circumstances in each case.
- F. SMITH.—The present plan of dating "A.D." was adopted in the latter half of the sixth century. Glad you found the parcel of literature so useful.
- S. CLOWES.—We quite appreciate your concern, and also suggestions, which we will bear in mind. As you say, the financial burden of conducting a paper under present conditions grows steadily greater; but we are cheered by the knowledge that we can rely upon the loyalty of our readers. No editor could ask for a better band of readers than we have.
- BENEVOLENT FUND N. S. S.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—Ilford, 2s. 6d.; Glasgow Branch, 15s.; Newcastle Branch, 10s.; "Ernest," 2s. 6d.
- GENERAL FUND N. S. S.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—Newcastle Branch, 10s.; H. V. Templeman, 12s. 6d.
- J. HUDSON.—We took the item from a newspaper cutting sent us, but sorry we did not keep it for reference.
- W. REPTON.—Sorry you were unable to call. Should have been pleased to see you before you leave England, and to have wished you a safe return in person. However, you have our good wishes under all circumstances.
- The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*
- The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street London, E.C. 4.*
- When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.*
- Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4 by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.*
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, and not to the Editor.*
- Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.*
- The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.*

## Sugar Plums.

To-day (March 17) Mr. Cohen pays his second visit to Southampton. He will lecture, morning at 11, evening at 7, in the Waverley Hall, St. Mary's Road. Judging from his last experience, the hall should be well filled on both occasions.

On March 31, Easter Sunday, Mr. Cohen has arranged for a lecturing visit to Pontycymmer, S. Wales (not Blaen-gawr as stated last week). Big meetings are expected, and it is hoped to form a new Branch of the N.S.S. there. Other meetings would have been arranged for Aberdare and Pontypridd, but halls were not available or suitable. Anyway, Freethought is going ahead in South Wales, and we are looking forward to much greater activity in the immediate future.

We continue to receive many letters from soldiers acknowledging the parcels of literature we have been sending, and "testifying" to the good its circulation is doing. In dug-out and hut the pamphlets and papers form the topic of keen discussions, and many have placed before them Freethought views which otherwise they might never have heard. The literature, in brief, is doing exactly what it was intended to do. It is making many converts, and they will come back from the War with their religious beliefs quite cleared away.

Ever since the War started we have been sending out from the *Freethinker* office in this way as part of a deliberate plan of campaign. The soldiers in our armies have come from everywhere, and when the War ends will return to everywhere. Those who have become acquainted with Freethought during the campaign will, in many cases, become so many active missionaries for our cause, and we expect to see the fruits of our policy in the very near future. It was for this reason that we would have liked to have sent out a hundred times as much as has been sent. But we have done all we could within the limit of our resources, and perhaps more than our financial means justified. Still we are quite satisfied with the result so far. And there is something that appeals to us in using this war of nations as a means for carrying on a war on behalf of human reason and intellectual freedom.

Mr. Lloyd lectures at the Tillery Institute, Abertillery to-day (March 17). The afternoon meeting is at 3, and the evening at 6.30. It is almost superfluous to hope for good meetings. Mr. Lloyd is too well appreciated in this district for them to be otherwise than good.

The Swansea Branch of the N.S.S. has arranged for the lectures to be delivered by the Rev. W. H. Walker, late of Manchester. The lectures will be at the Docker's Hall—afternoon at 3—on "Free Thought and Free Belief"; evening at 7 on "Evolution and Revolution." The questions and discussion should prove interesting.

Those who require a clear and unambiguous statement of the case for Birth Control would do well to read "Population and Birth Control," the Presidential address of Dr. C. K. Millard, Medical Officer of Health for Leicester. The case is clearly and temperately stated, and it is unencumbered by the many side issues and irrelevances so often present in such discussions. The publishers are Messrs. Thornley and Son, Leicester, and the price one shilling.

By the will of the late S. M. Peacock, of South Shields, the Secular Society, Limited, benefits by one tenth of the residue of his estate, which has a gross value of £7,668 18s. 6d.

The price of papers continue to go up, and their size to go down. The *Times* has advanced still another penny, the *Telegraph* has doubled its price, and *John Bull*, in addition to issuing fewer pages, is now two pence. Where it will end no man knoweth.



## The Queen of Night.

### II.

(Continued from p. 155.)

ALTHOUGH the moon is a very minute body in comparison with the sun, the lunar orb's proximity to our planet enables it to play a predominant part in generating the ocean tides. Solar tides there are, but the moon's tide-producing powers far exceed those of the sun. At times, the sun and moon act together, while on other occasions they pull in different directions. During the periods of full moon and new moon, the solar and lunar orbs pull together, because then they are either on opposite sides of the earth, or both on the same side. On such occasions as these, we experience the highest tides at all our sea ports. Conversely, when our satellite is in its first or last quarter, its position, as seen from our globe, is at a right angle with a line drawn to the solar orb. The sun then raises tides in one direction, while the moon raises them in another direction. As the outcome of this phenomenon, the earth's tides are then at their lowest.

Apart from all ordinary interest, a complete knowledge of these details is of supreme importance to mariners, for many invaluable harbours are rendered available for the navigation of large vessels at seasons of high tide only. The Nautical Almanac publishes the tables which accurately predict the times and heights of the tides for the principal seaports of the world. Not merely does the moon serve to adorn the heavens at night, but it also makes serviceable to man such waters insufficiently deep for the passage of ships, save at those times when the tides run high. Moreover, tidal activities are instrumental in scouring river courses, thus preventing the detrimental accumulation of mud and other materials swept down by the streams as they travel towards the sea.

Gravitational attraction varies with the distance of the attracting body. The distance from our earth's centre to that of our satellite is about 239,000 miles. But as our planet's diameter is nearly 8,000 miles, the surface of the ocean, when it presents its bosom to the moon, must be 4,000 miles nearer to that orb than the earth's centre. The force of the lunar attraction is therefore greater at our globe's surface than at its centre. Were the entire earth solid, no appreciable effect would arise from this difference in the moon's attractive powers. But as the earth's oceans are liquid, and therefore mobile, they succumb to the lunar attraction, and are drawn towards the moon. Thus are generated the tides on those areas of the earth's surface which face the moon.

We may now turn to the tide which rises simultaneously on that part of our globe's surface which is turned away from the moon. If the surface of our planet which is facing the moon is 4,000 miles nearer to it than the centre, then the opposite side of the earth is 4,000 miles further from the moon than our globe's centre. Consequently, the lunar attraction must be less. Thus the body of the earth is more powerfully attracted by the moon than is the water on the opposite side of the earth. Therefore, the earth tends to recede from the waters at that point, and another tidal protuberance arises. It is to be noted that while the water of the ocean possesses a certain amount of freedom in its responses to these attractive differences, the solid globe itself can only respond as a whole, and, mathematically considered, the land areas act as if their combined mass were concentrated at the earth's centre. The axial rotation of the earth being much more rapid than the motion of the moon, the tides are never directly beneath the

moon, or exactly opposite to it, but run in vast waves round our globe. The tides developed by the gravitational influences of the sun are about two-fifths as high as those evolved by the moon. As Serviss states: "They are sometimes superposed upon the lunar tides—at New and Full Moon—and sometimes they are situated at right angles to the lunar tides—at First and Last Quarters."

The earth's attendant becomes partially eclipsed when it passes partially within our planet's shadow, and totally eclipsed when it enters fully within the shadow cast by the opaque earth. The face of the moon at moments of obscuration is hidden as if by a veil. The orb of night is usually seen as a coppery circle when completely eclipsed. Only on very special occasions does our satellite become entirely invisible, and this invisibility is attributable to dense masses of cloud suspended in the terrestrial atmosphere. Now, if our planet were not encircled by a shell of air, the moon would always vanish from view when eclipsed. Our earth's atmosphere, however, so refracts or bends the sun's rays around the earth's edges that some of these rays are thrown into the centre of the shadow to the distance of the moon. These refracted rays are responsible for the coppery hue which our satellite usually assumes when eclipsed. But when, as happens on rare occasions, those parts of the earth's atmosphere which embrace the earth along the edge visible from our satellite are filled with clouds, the air is prevented from transmitting the bent light rays, with the result that a "dark eclipse" occurs.

A lunar eclipse is a very minor affair to the astronomer when compared with an eclipse of the sun. Still, it possesses numerous points of interest, and may be utilized as a test of the accuracy of astronomical calculations concerning the motions of other celestial orbs.

Were the moon an inhabited world, then, to the Lunarians endowed with visual organs such as ours, the earth would appear several times larger than the sun. To them, did these beings exist, the solar orb would undergo eclipse when the moon is eclipsed to us. To the moon-dweller the earth would occupy the same position which the lunar orb occupies to the earth just prior to its appearance in the western sky in the evening at the time of new moon. At the moment of total eclipse the sun to the Lunarian would be completely blotted from view. And our imaginary man on the moon would, owing to the absence of a lunar atmosphere, see the starry host shining in a jet black sky, even in the full blaze of day. The normal splendour of the stars would scarcely be intensified by an eclipse, although it is very probable that the solar corona would glow more brightly when viewed by the lunar watcher of the skies when it appeared projecting into space from the sides of the apparently giant earth.

The moon's monthly revolution round our globe is conveniently determined by the time that elapses between the lunar orb's successive conjugations with the same star. During this interval the moon has accomplished its journey right round the earth and returned to its point of departure. This constitutes the moon's sidereal revolution, and it occupies an average period of twenty-seven days, seven hours and a half. Another method of measuring the moon's orbital journey relates to its changes from new to full moon, and from full moon through the orb's gradual waning to the period of its reappearance as a faint sickle in the evening sky. The complete cycle of changes from one full moon to the next, or from one new moon to another, embraces an average period of about twenty nine and a half days. This is termed the lunar synodic revolution, and forms the ordinary lunar month. It is subject to variation, however, to the extent of thirteen hours. The synodic



revolution is more than a couple of days longer than the sidereal revolution. This disparity is due to the circumstance that the constant advance of the earth as it travels round the sun makes our luminary appear to travel eastward among the stars, and before the moon's monthly phases which "depend upon her position with regard to the sun, can recommence, she must overtake the sun."

The moon's increase and decline from the moment of new moon when its thin crescent with its convex curve faces the departing sun at eve; through its complete cycle of waxing and waning, its changes are due to the fact that the lunar hemisphere illuminated by the sun's beams is sometimes turned from us, directed slightly towards us, or presented to full view. The full moon rises in the oriental heavens as the sun sinks in the west, and, consequently, we see her full face lit up by the light of the lord of day. At last quarter the moon has waned to half a circle. Like the new moon, the waning moon is crescent shaped, but the convexity of its bow now faces the rising sun, and the silvery crescent swims in the morning sky and adds to the glory of the dawn.

The solar orb illuminates that surface only of the moon which is directed towards it. At new moon our satellite is situated between the earth and the sun, and its bright side is turned from us, but as the moon moves in her orbit then more and more of her illuminated hemisphere becomes visible. This steadily increases from a sickle to a half circle, and progressively to full moon. Her maximum thus reached the queen of night moves gradually back to new moon, and more and more of her bright surface is turned from us. The lunar orb rises later every night, until just prior to its rebirth, the moon is reduced to a delicate crescent which is then so faint that it is visible only at early dawn. T. F. PALMER.

(To be continued.)

## The Poet of Mortality.

### II.

(Concluded from p. 156.)

BUT banter was rare with Marston, and his questionings were invariably serious. The doctrine of Christianity oppressed him. That is the complaint of his "Estranged":—

.....Take me, dear,  
Outside of these sad faces; let me stand  
Once more within life's shallows, and there hear  
Light laughter of the surf upon the beach,  
For here the very sea is without speech,  
So still it is, and far away from land;  
I want life's little joys; this atmosphere  
Oppresses me; I cannot breathe in it.

Yet "life's shallows," no more than Christianity, could not assuage his wounded soul. Escapement from the misery which dogs the footsteps of every human being, he found only in philosophy, such as we hear in the sad, soft music of "Foredoomed":—

No star upon thy course sheds any ray;  
Though thy bark bear for years the wind and foam,  
To no sweet haven shall it ever come.  
The night shall see thee drifting, and the day  
Behold thee as the night; thou shalt not pray,  
Nor utter any cry, but, cold and dumb,  
Watch the waves pass, and glad ships sailing home  
Shall hail thee upon thy tractless way.  
The salt wave shall taste bitter to thy lip:  
Weary, yea, unto death, thy soul shall be  
Of winds, and the interminable sea,  
That does not bring thee nearer any goal,  
But sweeps through changeless gloom the fated ship  
To its remote, inevitable shoal.

"Thou shalt not pray!" says Marston. Like Omar Khayyam, he knew the folly of petitioning that "inverted bowl we call the sky."

I, even I,.....  
Who give thee bitter songs, as men give prayer  
To high and unknown gods, whom no prayers move.  
—*Love's Selfishness.*

That is a recurring theme with Marston:—

I spurned it with my foot as God spurns prayer.  
—*A Christmas Vigil.*

Then, as a man who, being near to die,  
Knowing men cannot save him, turns his face,  
And calls on God, in his extremity,  
To lengthen yet a little while his days,  
And, calling, feels withal he calls in vain. —*A Dream.*  
.....prayers are useless, and all tears are vain.  
—*Lifeless Life.*

Praying, perchance, oft times for strength from Heaven!  
But no strength came..... —*Estranged.*

The idea of a life after death was also repudiated by Marston. In poem after poem he questions what comes after the day when man goes down to,—

.....that realm unknowable and vast,  
Which hides the whole world's dead in its recesses,  
Where iron night on every sleeper presses.  
—*Man's Days.*

In that exquisite sonnet, "Dead," he says:—

Dead, my beloved,.....  
.. ..let me bring  
My soul to comprehend it. Gone away!  
Asleep, to wake no more on any day?  
Nay, not asleep, awake, and wandering  
Through lands of bloom in a continuous Spring!  
I seek for light, yet find no certain ray;  
But this I know, again we shall not meet.

Yet he realized that those "lands of bloom" were but "vain dreams":—

.....Oh, vain my soul!  
Put by these dreams, take up thy lead and go;  
Each lot, however bitter, hath its goal.  
Thy goal is death, not life, and when life ends  
The night that hides thy love, on thee descends.  
—*Vain Dreams.*

And why did he put by these "dreams":—

Because no man who lives can surely tell  
What thing comes after death.....  
—*Divine Possibility.*

But more convincing still is his pleading in a fine poem entitled "In Grief," where the whole gamut of the *pros* and *cons* for the argument of immortality is stated at length:—

And shall we meet with lips that yearn to kiss,  
Meet soul to soul as face to face on earth?  
And shall there be an end to death and dearth,  
Yea, shall there be a harvest time of bliss,  
And shall we stand together side by side,  
Never again to sorrow or divide?  
And shall at length our hearts be satisfied  
Full of wonder at the second birth?

Shall this life past be as a dream outdreamed,  
The ghastly fancy of a fevered brain?  
Shall we at all remember the old pain,  
So great it past all human bearing seemed?  
If angels tell us of that mournful time,  
Will it then sound but as an empty rhyme  
Made by a boy in some forgotten clime?  
Ah, shall we say we have not lived in vain?

Shall we stand up before the face of God,  
Stand up and sing a loud, glad song of praise,  
And bless him for the sorrow of our days,  
And kiss with pure cold lips the burning rod  
Wherewith he hath so stricken us that we  
Might come at length within his home to be,  
Laid in the light of his divinity,  
First blinded by the glory of his face?



Oh, strange and unseen land whereto we come,  
 Are thy shores shores of day or shores of night?  
 As near we draw shall we indeed see light,  
 And shall we hear, through lessening wind and foam,  
 The voice of her we love come from the land,  
 And, looking shorewards, shall we see her stand  
 Girt round with glory on a peaceful strand,  
 Smiling to see our dark skiff heave in sight?

I cannot know; there is no man who knows;  
 We are and we are not, and that is all  
 The knowledge which to any may befall:  
 We know not life's beginning nor its close,  
 'Twixt dawn and twilight shine the sunny hours  
 Wherein some hands plucked thorns and some hands  
 flowers,  
 'Twixt light and shade are shed the sudden showers;  
 Yet night shall cover earth as with a pall.

Alas, poor song, all singing is in vain,  
 What thing more sad is left for thee to say?  
 Oh, weary time of life and weary way,  
 Can dead souls rise or gone joys come again?  
 Now by the hand of sorrow we are led,  
 Though sweet things come, they come as joys born  
 dead;  
 Let us arise, go hence, for all is said,  
 And we must abide the breaking of the day.

Marston seems to have been absolutely dominated by this theme of mortality, and of the untenability of the idea of the persistence of consciousness after death:—

And so it comforts me, yea, not in vain,  
 To think of thy eternity of sleep.

—*Not Thou But I.*

.....when I am gone, gone far away  
 To that dim Land where shines no light of day.

—*Worth Remembrance.*

We part at Fate's inexorable command,  
 We part to meet no day.

—*At Parting.*

But by her very grave,  
 Whereon the earth we heap.  
 Knowing no thing can save—  
 That this is death, not sleep—  
 We stand, but do not rave,  
 Too numb at heart to weep.

—*At Hope's Grave.*

But long, long years to weep in,  
 And comprehend the whole,  
 Great grief that desolates the soul,  
 And eternity to sleep in.

—*After.*

When Marston says, we know not life's beginning nor life's close, it reminds me very much of Carlyle's words, "What went before and what will follow me, I regard as two impenetrable curtains." Death, Marston conceived in the most materialistic vein:—

.....when I am dead,  
 When all whereby men knew me turns to dust;  
 When deaf, and dumb, and sightless, I am thrust  
 Into dank darkness, where the worms are fed  
 By Death's gaunt hand, that breeds in my cold bed.

—*Wedded Memories.*

Go down, my songs, now to the land unknown,  
 The starless kingdom that hath Death for king.  
 About the silent porches close and cling.  
 Through breezeless air, where bird hath never flown,  
 Or waste, gray fields, wherein no flower hath blown,  
 Hills from whose barren bosom wells no spring,  
 Let your tones rise, and die in echoing.

—*Preludes.*

Indeed, it was to that "fell sergeant Death," as the Master said, that this "poet of mortality" looked for deliverance. Even his philosophy failed in the long run to satisfy him. Nothing, save complete annihilation, would bring him to the haven of rest. The poignant yearning for Nirvana haunts us on every page:—

.....I, through tortuous paths no light makes plain,  
 Having less even than the blind man's faith,  
 With outspread hands, grope my dark way to Death.

—*The Dark Way.*

No "life everlasting" did Marston desire after death. The very memory of "the old pain" would kill the joy

of that. He simply wanted, "before the end of all," to—

Lie down with thankfulness to know, ere long,  
 All things that ever were I shall forget.

—*A Wish.*

But remembrance,—

Nay, God—if any God there be—  
 Grant me in Death, release from Memory.

—*My Land.*

Yet with all his foreboding gloom, Marston was a Secularist in his final view of things:—

Cease not! nor strive to solve Death's mystery,  
 For she may hear you, though no voice replies.

—*Preludes.*

Dead feet have rest, but living feet must climb  
 The steep, round which the eternal darkness is.

—*Not Death, But Life.*

Readers of this journal, who are possibly among the greatest admirers of James Thomson ("B.V.") will recall that it was at the house of Marston the author of the *City of Dreadful Night* called two days before his death, after the terrible three or four weeks which his biographers have told us of. "Alone with the dying poet, and unable from his blindness to assist him, poor Marston passed through a period of terrible distress." It was not until the arrival of William Sharp that it was known that Thomson was dying, and he was removed to University Hospital. The circumstances of poor Thomson's death affected Marston deeply, and it would appear that the lines in his sonnet, *Haunted Rooms*, have a direct connection with the great poet of pessimism:—

Must this not be that one then dwelling here,  
 Where one man and his sorrows dwelt so long,  
 Shall feel the pressure of a ghostly throng,  
 And shall upon some desolate midnight hear  
 A sound more sad than is the pine-tree's song,  
 And thrill with great, inexplicable fear?

Both Marston and Thomson had been cursed by Fate with an affliction, the one blindness and the other melancholia. It was no wonder, therefore, that they should arraign the so-called divine scheme of things, and kick at the fetters which "all paid, paying preachers" say are sent to "try us." It is an infamous lie, and Marston was bold enough to say so. Yet the puritans of art and literature have waxed indignant at this "didacticism"! No one desires, of course, that art or poetry should become, as Ingersoll says, a *colporteur*; but at the same time, art and poetry should portray the "night side of nature," as Thomson would say, as well as the "day side." All in this world is not beautiful, and all in life is not good; and to choose the beautiful and good, and hold them up before us as "a mirror of life," is to lie by implication. Let us not forget, therefore, that one of the few poets who have told us the truth is Philip Bourke Marston.<sup>1</sup>

H. GEORGE FARMER.

## Charlatans.

VERY few men are so in love with the truth that they are willing to part from all their false ideals for it. The child clings to the pretty fable of Santa Claus; he does not wish to be undeceived. If a man gives utterance to some new truth loud enough for many to hear, they ostracize him and leave him to starve, if they do not even imprison or crucify him. But if a man preaches some antiquated falsehood they listen to him eagerly, and if he is very clever in playing on their ignorance they crown him, give him plenty of money, and follow him as if he were a god. Thus,

<sup>1</sup> The Walter Scott Co. publish a good selection of Marston's poems, under the title of *Song Tide*, in their "Canterbury Poets" Series, price 1s.



the *Freethinker* has been for many years setting forth the plain truth about religious superstition, yet has gained comparatively few adherents, and it is absolutely certain that no man has ever made a fortune by reform work.

But Billy Sunday, the American religious buffoon, draws the largest audiences in the United States, and has made over one million dollars by methods and language that would disgrace an East-end costermonger. Hence it is that the world to-day is ruled by Charlatans. Webster defines a Charlatan as one who makes unwarrantable pretensions; so that the Kaiser is, perhaps, the finest specimen of the numerous breed now extant, his war lords ably assisting him in his game of gulling the German workers. In order to play this game, euphemistically described as empire-building, armaments of all kinds are necessary, and these are very expensive. The Kaiser and his war lords cannot pay for them because they produce no wealth, so the workers must pay. But how can they be induced to do anything so much against their own interest; how can they be made to deprive themselves, their wives, and children, of clothing, food, education, and shelter, merely to enable their rulers to play this expensive game? Certainly not by force, for the rulers are a mere handful, among millions of workers. By deception, then, "We will have these workers give us all we want," say these rulers, "and give it willingly, with swelling emotion, with loud cheers. We will invent a fiction called 'Fatherland.'" We will say:—

It is not we who want your money—it is our common Fatherland. The honour of Fatherland calls for sacrifices. What are wives, children, limbs or life itself compared with Fatherland? It is your duty, *our* duty, to lay everything on the altar of Fatherland. Ask your clergy, those worthy men, servants of God, the God of Battles. They will truly tell you so. You believe in the living God, of course you do, you are not vile Atheists! Perish the thought! Very well, God commands you to love and obey your Kaiser and to fight, suffer and die for your Fatherland."

And by this fiction the workers are deceived, notwithstanding the plain fact that not one in ten thousand of them owns enough of his Fatherland to make a decent grave, and the further fact that he can enjoy more liberty and earn quite as good wages under the British or American flag as under his own. They pour their hard-earned wages into the coffers of the Kaiser and his war lords, and lay down their lives to assist them in their schemes of empire-building which cannot possibly be of any benefit to the workers. Their rulers have power, wealth and honour, while they have poverty, ignominy, a fiction, and a flag. What was the origin of royalty in every land? A thousand peasants bent their backs; on these were fifty priests in league with ten nobles; on these was the king. How was this preposterous pyramid reared? The king dazzled the peasants by his shining armour and flashing sword, for they loved to be thus dazzled. He made a bargain with the priests: "If you will teach the people that God wants me to rule over them I will tax them to support you."

He also bargained with the nobles and money-lenders: "If you will fight for me, and provide me with soldiers, and give me plenty of money, I will give you the exclusive ownership of all the land and banking facilities, whereby you will become the owners of slaves without the trouble and expense of looking after them."

He made no bargain with the peasants and shopkeepers; he merely dazzled them. On Coronation Day he appeared in all the panoply of war; the bishop poured some oil on him, and the priests bowed down to him as the Lord's anointed; the nobles surrounded him

with their banners and spears and swords, and shouted, "Long live the King!"

What could the poor peasants and shopkeepers do but add their voices to the triumphal chorus, and get ready to surrender their money and their lives whenever the King called on them? And, indeed, at this day, if you were to suggest to a German populace that their Kaiser is nothing but a clever charlatan, they would promptly arrest you as a spy and shoot you.

There is an old gentleman in Rome who says that he is the Vicar of God, and, in order to prove it, he wears a crown three times as high as an ordinary king, and robes more splendid than any revue actress, and lives in a palace large enough to shelter a thousand evicted workers and their families. If he were really God's Vicar, he would prove it by saying and doing something extraordinarily useful. Does any sensible man believe that God would have to dress up his Vicar like Punchinello in order to make people believe in him? Certainly not. But if some charlatan wished to play on the superstitious weakness of the people, he would do just what the Pope does—put on a crown, dress up like an actress, live in a huge palace, and graciously allow the children of God to kiss his largest toe. If he preached and practised the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount, he would not have power enough to save from jail a poor woman who stole a loaf of bread. But because he is a charlatan, he stands in with emperors and other charlatans, and millions of people would die in his defence.

And what the Pope does on a large scale, the lesser representatives of God do on a small scale. Consider the real meaning of the peculiar costumes of the clergy and choristers, the images and lights, the incense and solemn music, the stained glass windows and pointed spires of the churches: are not all these things appeals to the superstitious feelings of the people?

Why do the higher clergy wear aprons and gaiters, and little strings on their top hats, and the common or garden curate appear always in a vest that buttons at the back, with a look on his face which we poor sinners never seem to have? Every man should be free to wear any kind of clothes he likes; but why should the clergy assume their peculiar garb if not to produce a certain aspect of sanctity?

Thus we see that in politics, religion, and, indeed, in many another profession, the men who are at the top are charlatans because the great majority of people have an aversion for the plain truth. Most people will always believe what they want to believe, and I never knew anybody to believe in the existence of ghosts who did not long for a life after death, and was anxious to find any kind of evidence in support of it.

And it does not necessarily follow that charlatans are any worse than other people; for if there is any blame in the matter, it should rather be laid on the people who are silly enough to be easily taken in. For my part, I blame nobody, for the simple reason that things are as they are because with our present development they cannot possibly be otherwise, and many very distinguished charlatans believe in themselves quite as firmly as the rest of the public. Such men rule the world to-day because the world likes to be ruled, and they may well argue that if they do not rule it, somebody else will; and is not that argument as good as many another?

Anyway, we are not justified in condemning charlatans unless we are quite sure that we ourselves always act and speak the plain truth. Few of us, unfortunately, are now in a position to do so, because we are caught in the widespread net of industrial slavery. And we are thus caught because we are too ignorant to long for, and too cowardly to achieve, freedom. A. F. REEMAN,



### Society News.

Although the same difficulties in procuring halls obtain in Newcastle as in London, we have a cheery letter from Mr. J. G. Bartram, the local secretary, who reports that the judicious distribution of literature has resulted in several new members. Dormant Branches please note. Southampton Branch reports an increase of membership, and a buckling on of armour for Mr. Cohen's visit to-day (March 17). The sale of the *Freethinker* is increasing rapidly, which is the best of all signs. The new Branch at Goldthorpe, in spite of the local autocrats, is rapidly widening its circle of friends, and is also looking forward to the President's visit on April 21, when a further accession of members may be expected.—E. M. VANCE, Gen. Sec.

North London Branch, N. S. S.—Dr. Arthur Lynch, M.P., President of the New Republican League, had been booked for nearly three months, but without giving any reason, failed to keep his engagement last Sunday. Mr. Eagar generously threw himself into the breach, and the interest of the discussion was greatly enhanced by the points raised by Miss Nina Boyle. This Sunday the disputants are Mr. W. O. Baker and Mr. A. Eagar, the subject being "Is There a God?"—H. V. LANE, Hon. Sec.

Nuneaton Branch, N. S. S.—A successful meeting addressed by Mr. Willis of Birmingham is reported, and the future prospects of the Branch are very cheering. Please note the literature Secretary is a lady, Miss Lily Vernon, who is doing her little bit in the war against superstition.

### National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON MARCH 7.

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, occupied the chair. Also present: Messrs. Baker, Brandes, Braddock, Eagar, Gorniot, Leat, Palmer, Samuels, Spence, Thurlow, Wood; Miss Kough, Miss Stanley, Mrs. Rolf, and the Secretary.

Minutes of the previous meeting read and confirmed. Monthly cash statement presented and adopted.

New members were admitted for Birmingham, Goldthorpe, Newcastle, Nuneaton, South London, Southampton, South Shields, Swansea, and the Parent Society; nineteen in all.

The Secretary reported the conclusion of a successful course of lectures at the West Central Hall, which, unfortunately, would not be obtainable again.

Arrangements for outdoor meetings were discussed, and, in view of the absence of so many speakers commandeered by the Government, the matter was left in the hands of the Secretary for the present.

On the motion of the South London Branch, it was resolved to contribute a sum of five guineas to the fund now being raised for the presentation of a portrait of Charles Bradlaugh, founder of the National Secular Society, painted by the Hon. J. Collier, to the National Portrait Gallery.

Owing to the prevailing conditions, the meeting was adjourned till Easter Tuesday, April 2.

E. M. VANCE, General Secretary.

### Obituary.

On Wednesday, March 6, Freethought lost a staunch and estimable friend by the death of Mr. Charles Jortan, of Blackbourton, Clanfield, Oxon. Our friend, who was sixty years of age, though heavily handicapped from birth by a physical infirmity, and a great sufferer, devoted his life to the study and dissemination of Freethought principles, and was a constant reader of the *Freethinker*. The immediate cause of his death was sudden heart failure, brought about by grief at the return of his son to the Front. The unavoidably short notice, bad train service, and other untoward circumstances made it impossible to arrange for the Secular Burial Service Mr. Jortan had desired, and an earnest and devoted comrade was laid to rest, silently, on Saturday, March 9, in the presence of his sorrowing and devoted wife and family, to whom his fellow-members send their heartfelt sympathy.—E. M. VANCE, Gen. Sec.

### 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.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, "Is there a God? If so, He must have revealed Himself to a living infallible Authority." Negative, Mr. A. Eagar. Affirmative, Mr. W. O. Baker.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, near Kennington Oval Tube Station): 7, Mr. P. S. Wilde, Lantern Lecture.

##### OUTDOOR.

HYDE PARK. 11.30, Mr. Saphin; 3.30, Messrs. Swasey, Dales, and Shaller.

#### COUNTRY.

##### INDOOR.

ABERTILLERY (Tillery Institute): 3 and 6.30, Mr. J. T. Lloyd.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate) 6.30, Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner, "Religion and Liberty."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (56 Swan Street): 6.30, Mr. Farrington, "Nietzsche."

SHEFFIELD ETHICAL SOCIETY (Builders' Exchange, Cross Burgess Street): 6.30, Professor G. C. Moore Smith, "Learning to Talk." (A Study by a Danish Observer.)

SOUTHAMPTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Waverley Hall, St. Mary's Road): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 11, "Morality Without God" 7, "Why Men Believe in God."

### South Place Ethical Society, SOUTH PLACE, MOORGATE STREET, E.C.

#### Sunday Morning Services.

March 17, at 11 o'clock—

C. DELISLE BURNS, M.A.  
"The Democratic Ideal."

March 24, at 11 o'clock—

JOSEPH McCABE.  
"The Conscripton of Wealth."

**WANTED.**—*The New Moral World*, by Robert Owen, and other Works by the same author. Works by Richard Carlile and "Isis." Also *Freethinker's Text-Book*. Good prices given.—X., *Freethinker* Office.

**HARRY BOULTER**, Practical Tailor, has removed from Old Premises to 5 BRUNSWICK PLACE (Junction of East Road and City Road, N. 1; near Dawson's). All Freethinkers welcome. Moderate Prices.

#### Wanted—a Home.

**I**S there anybody, in or near London, with unfurnished rooms to let, who would like to have the daily company of two dogs, if their owners, two business women, took the unfurnished rooms? If so, please write to "ADVERTISER," 40 Cavendish Gardens, S.W. 4.

### To South African Residents, SETTLERS, AND TRAVELLERS.

**R**EADERS of the *Freethinker* and sympathisers with its cause will always be welcome to call on or correspond with the following;—

Names for the above list are requested, and will be published from time to time free of charge.

Contributions towards the expense of printing should be marked S. A. I. D.—i.e., South African Information Department.



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