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Views and Opinions.

God and the Ultimatum.

The other day God Almighty was given an ultimatum. The country had been wanting rain, and the safety of the crops and the milk supply were threatened. So, according to the *Evening News* of June 12, the "Congregational, Methodist, and Baptist Unions" gave notice that unless rain fell "in considerable measure" by Sunday, June 15, prayers would be offered for it. Now, that is what we call an ultimatum. God was given three days' notice. He was warned what to expect. And he was cautioned that a merely formal response would not do. The rain was not to be a sprinkle, but "in considerable measure." Nothing could be better—or clearer. It also shows there are limits beyond which it is unsafe to push even Christians. It is therefore a system of revolt. Christians, said Dod Grile, are like camels, they take their burdens kneeling. Evidently some are beginning to stand up—and to talk back. There will be consternation in heaven. Another autocracy is threatened with a revolution.

God's Chance.

The more one thinks of this ultimatum, the more one is impressed by it and its possibilities. To begin with, it is only what a reasonable Deity might expect: His position is one of grave and great responsibility. Right through the War his followers looked to him for some striking manifestation of his power, but none came. And with a devotion, the strength of which almost atoned for its stupidity, they explained that the War having been brought about by man, God would leave him to get through it as best he could. But while some people took from God the direction of the War, and others took from him the control of other things—comets, earthquakes, etc.—they left him the weather. He has really no excuse here. He cannot argue that his hands are full with other matters. He cannot plead to these three Unions that man is responsible for the weather. He has it all his own way, and must take the full responsibility. And look at the way he has managed things! We had a long and disagreeable winter. That was followed by a spring in which the rain fell out of all proportion to our requirements. Now we are being parched. There is no guarantee that when the rain does come—and we firmly believe it

will if Christians pray long enough—we may be half drowned, and the crops, instead of being killed with the heat, will be ruined with the wet. It is really scandalous. No wonder the Christian threatens to pray. Any fool would.

* * *

What Next?

The day that the Triple Alliance issued its ultimatum the glass was falling. That may, of course, have been no more than a coincidence. And a little rain did fall during the night. But it could hardly be described as having fallen "in considerable measure." None came between then and Sunday. If you don't send rain we'll pray, threatened the Triple Alliance. Pray and be hanged, was substantially the reply of Deity. Instead of it getting wetter it got drier. What will the Alliance do now? The other Triple Alliance, the one that has been threatening the country, would have gone on strike. Will this new Triple Alliance adopt the same policy? And if not, why not? Having issued their ultimatum something ought to follow. And if God takes no notice whatever how will they take this contemptuous treatment? Why not a strike? Why not close all the Churches, stop all the praise, and let the silence continue until such time as God Almighty shows a proper sense of his responsibility. These Christians clearly believe that it lies in God's power to send or to withhold the much-needed rain. Their threat says as much. It says that if the rain does not fall it is his fault. If it does fall it is his doing. The blame is allocated. What punishment is to follow if the harm is not rectified?

* * *

A Sign of Revolt.

We are greatly impressed with this plan of issuing a public warning to Deity. It is the nearest thing possible to getting him to publicly commit himself. The old plan was to assume that he knew what was required and would attend to it. The new plan of issuing a newspaper notice so many days in advance is a great improvement. The Deity cannot plead ignorance. He is publicly told what is wanted, and how much is wanted. The only possible loophole of escape is that he is not told *where* it is wanted. But that is easily remedied. A map could be published showing the exact places where the rain is needed, with—if necessary—the name of the owner of the field, and the church or chapel he attended. This would prevent the Atheist getting what was intended for the believer. Every precaution ought to be taken. For we are not here dealing with ignorant savages who believe that their ridiculous gods spoil the harvest or send the increase. We are dealing with civilized men and women, who know that among savages prayers are of no avail, who know that the incantations of the (savage) medicine-man have no influence whatever on the weather. It is the plain duty of the Triple Alliance to prove their superiority to "the heathen in his blindness," and to make clear the fact that they do not pray or threaten without reason. The issue of a public notice to Deity is a capital idea. And it has tremendous

possibilities. We are telling God what to do. The next step will be to ask him what he has done. The man is beginning to stand up to the God. And when that happens the world ought soon to begin to see things.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Personal Identity.

BISHOP BUTLER'S chief argument for immortality is derived from what he calls the law of probability. Since the destruction of bodily members, such as legs, arms, or ears, does not result in the destruction of the thinking or reasoning faculties, that astute philosopher came to the conclusion [that the dissolution of the whole body does not necessarily or probably involve the dissolution of the living being. "It is by no means certain," says Butler, "that anything which is dissolved by death, is any way necessary to the living Being in this its state of reflection, after ideas are gained." According to him, there is no demonstrative evidence of the truth of any religious doctrine whatsoever; and from a process of reasoning pursued, "it follows that our organized bodies are no more ourselves or part of ourselves than any other matter around us," and that therefore there is nothing to show that the death of our physical nature implies the decease of our conscious selves. Throughout our earthly life we carry with us a firm sense of personal identity. The Rev. Charles Harris, D.D., Vicar of Colwall, maintains that "the proof of identity persisting through change is complete." In a sermon published in the *Church Times* for June 6, Dr. Harris lays great stress upon the following statement:—

In spite of the enormous changes—physical, psychical, and intellectual—which have taken place in each one of us from birth, and still more from conception, memory assures us that, at least from earliest childhood, our personal identity has persisted unchanged. It was certainly I myself, and not someone else—it was I myself, and not some supposed psychic predecessor of mine whose spiritual possessions I have inherited—who played with my toys in my nursery, who believed in fairies, and who in the foolishness of youth was guilty of many extravagances.

In an interview with Sir W. Robertson Nicoll, not long before he died, George Meredith, a much more gnostic man than Dr. Harris, declared that he had never felt the unity of personality running through his life, and that therefore he could not conceive personal immortality. Locke, also, repudiated the doctrine of personal identity, holding, as Butler puts it, "that personality is not a permanent, but a transient thing; that it lives and dies, begins and ends continually; that no one can any more remain one and the same person two moments together, than two successive moments can be one and the same moment." Butler complains that Locke's observations appear hasty, and that "some of those hasty observations have been carried to a strange length by others." Butler's own statements on the subject are certainly not "hasty," however erroneous they may be; but Dr. Harris is undoubtedly guilty of great hastiness in the use he makes of Butler's opinion. The reverend gentleman admits that since the appearance of the *Origin of Species*, sixty years ago, enormous changes have passed over the whole domain of thought, including theological thought. As a matter of fact, many Christian doctrines which up to that time had been regarded as essential and vital have since been silently renounced as untrue. Dr. Harris, while treating the Christian faith as "a sacred deposit, to be preserved by believers without change, whole and undefiled, until the final consummation of all things," is fully aware that Evolution

apparently undermines the doctrine of the Deposit of Faith, and supplies the following fair statement of the Modernist argument:—

Evolution to many minds means that the whole Universe, with everything in it, is in a constant state of flux. There is no permanence anywhere, either in Nature or in man.....If historical theology, if comparative religion, prove anything, they prove that the principle of evolution or development is valid universally, and that it applies quite as much to men's religious as to their secular opinions. It is true that we repeat the same words in the Creeds as our forefathers, but we mean something quite different by them. Identity of language in this case only conceals fundamental differences of thought and belief. Identity of faith between one generation and another is impossible, and therefore the time-honoured doctrine of the Deposit of Faith is a dream and a delusion.

Dr. Harris challenges that assumption as false, and claims that there is a Deposit of Faith which evolution cannot touch. He totally disapproves of the Modernist conclusion that everything in human belief changes, and heartily supports the traditional one that only the more superficial beliefs change, the more important ever remaining constant. Let us now see how he defends the traditional view. He characterizes the belief in the existence of other people as perhaps the most important human belief in the secular sphere, and proceeds to assert that "extreme sceptics deny it, declaring that our waking life, like our sleeping life, is a baseless dream and illusion, and that the persons we seem to see in it do not really exist." Clearly the reverend gentleman is here confounding metaphysical Idealism with intellectual Scepticism. Sceptics, however extreme they may be, do not commit the stupendous blunder of denying the existence of their fellow-beings. But, surely, this belief does not occupy the same position in the secular domain that the belief in God does in the religious domain. The existence of other people is demonstrated by innumerable undeniable facts, while the existence of God is simply a figment of the religious imagination.

It is perfectly natural for Dr. Harris to do all within his power to safeguard the interests of his own profession. To him certain theological dogmas commend themselves as fundamental and incapable of any radical change, such as the first two articles in the Catholic Creed, namely, the belief in God and creation.

Dr. Harris has not the hardihood to ignore the discoveries of anthropology. He admits that the belief in God has passed through many very gradual stages, and that there was a time when to the chosen people Jehovah was but a tribal Deity. The significance of this concession is that the Supreme Being is merely a human creation, and his character varies in the exact proportion in which the character of those who believe in him varies. Of this Dr. Harris must be perfectly well aware, though his Holy Orders prevent him from giving expression to his knowledge. His picture of God as a perfect Being may be exceedingly beautiful, but it is nothing but a picture painted by the theological fancy. The clergy by no means agree as to what they mean by a perfect Being; but ignorance is eloquent, and multiplies words most recklessly:—

By God is meant a Perfect Being—or, rather, the Perfect Being, unique in kind, unlimited; in all perfections, eternal, immutable, absolute. As soon as the idea of a Perfect Being is reached, a limit is also reached which precludes further change in the idea. Perfection does not admit of degrees, and, from the very nature of things, there cannot be more than one Absolute.

Such an ideally perfect Being exists only in the pulpit, and has never had anything to do with the actual life of the world. History laughs the very idea of him to scorn.

Life goes on from day to day as if he were not. What we see on every hand is the struggle for existence unrelieved by any supernatural intervention. If Dr. Harris looks at the life of the world with open eyes will he have the temerity to assert that it is governed by a Perfect Being? Is even the Church a credit to such a God, or is such a Deity a credit to himself?

On the subject of creation Dr. Harris is hopelessly vague. The Creed speaks of the Perfect Being as "maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible"; but the Universe, as we know it, is not the work of a Perfect Being, reflects, in fact, infinite disgrace and dishonour on such a Being. As a matter of fact, however, the idea of creation is a theological illusion. Evolution knows nothing of a beginning. Herbert Spencer pronounces the Theistic hypothesis of creation inconceivable. Sir Oliver Lodge, who glories in being a theologian, says that "we may all fairly agree that whatever really and fundamentally exists must, so far as bare existence is concerned, be independent of time. It may go through many changes, and thus have a history; that is to say, must have definite time-relations, so far as its changes are concerned; but it can hardly be thought of as either going out of existence, or as coming into existence, at any given period, though it may completely change its form and accidents" (*Life and Matter*, p. 101).

Personal identity, God, and Creation are utterly unscientific notions, of a purely metaphysical or theological origin. They came into existence in a time of gross ignorance and superstition, and are now gradually disappearing before the spreading light of natural knowledge. As an inevitable result the power of the pulpit is fast becoming a thing of the past. J. T. LLOYD.

Christianity's Great Rival.

To bear all naked truths,
And to envisage circumstance, all calm;
That is the top of sovereignty. —Keats.

ORTHODOX folk did a smart thing when they dissuaded Professor Max Muller from adding the Christian Bible to his famous series of *Sacred Books of the East*. For ordinary people imagined that the Bible was different from the other Scriptures, and this was precisely the effect required. Moreover, ordinary men and women do not read expensive books on recondite subjects, and the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, the works of Confucius, and the Buddhistic writings, are not easy reading. Even the *Koran* is harder reading than the works of George Meredith.

It seems strange that the Scriptures of the Mohammedans should be one of the most widely read books in existence. Yet that is the plain truth, for the Moslems number some two hundred and thirty millions, who use the *Koran* for public worship and in schools more than Christians use the Bible. The Protestants of the world number only one hundred and fifty millions, and the Catholics do not encourage the use of the Bible among the laity. The pious Moslem regards the *Koran* as the actual Word of God, revealed to their prophet Mohammed. So profound is his reverence for the sacred volume that he may not touch it without ceremony.

Yet the *Koran*, the Moslem Bible, revered by over two hundred and thirty millions, of whom eighty millions are British subjects, is a little known book in Christian countries. It is a curious volume, and if the arguments by which the divine inspiration of the Christian Bible are worth a straw, this *Koran* must be inspired also. There is the same apparent incompatibility of the author with the writing; a morality as impressive; the same

beauty of language and wealth of Oriental imagery; the same claim to prophecy and the fulfilment of prophecy.

The outstanding divergence is that there is no claim on the part of the prophet to work miracles, although the *Koran* is based manifestly on Hebrew legends. The same legendary characters—Abraham, Lot, Noah, Moses, Solomon, and many others—appear again and again. Another divergence is that Mohammedanism is monotheistic. Its theology is simplicity itself, compared with the maze of the Christian creeds and the tangle of the Trinity. Take the first Sura from the *Koran*:—

Glory to God, Master of the Universe, the Merciful, the Compassionate, Lord of the Day of Judgment, we adore Thee and implore Thy aid; guide us in the right path.

Then, again, "There is no God, but God; God is most great," was a bold message for an Arabian shepherd to bring to a nation that had gods by the dozen, and sharp swords to defend them.

Take the faith as laid down in the second Sura:—

Piety does not consist in turning your faces to the East or the West. He is pious who believes in God, and in the prophets; who, for the love of God, gives of his own to his neighbour; to the orphans, to the poor, to the traveller, and to those who ask; who ransoms the captives, who observes prayer, who gives alms, fulfils the engagements he contracts, who is patient in adversity, in hard times, and times of violence. These are just and fear the Lord.

The Christian Church has always been envious of Mohammedanism. The history of the eight Crusades shows some of the extent of that envy. The Papacy pitted Christianity against Mohammedanism, and staked the authenticity of each on the result. Had not the defeat of Islam resulted, a predominant part of the world might have become Moslem; or, as Edward Gibbon declared tersely, Oxford University might to-day be expounding the *Koran*.

As compared with Christianity, Islam possesses great advantages. The text of the *Koran* was finally settled within a few years of Mohammed's death, and so far as his own life is concerned, friends and enemies are agreed as to the main facts of his career. Mohammed's career may be traced in the stately pages of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, the picturesque phrases of Carlyle, and in many other volumes. An ardent propagandist, the prophet made only thirteen converts in three years. Think of it! To-day a large proportion of the human race mention his name with reverence. Such propaganda as Mohammed's meant the risk of death or most severe punishment. He was forced to take the sword in hand, and it took him ten years' fighting before he prevailed.

Mohammedanism is still a powerful factor in life. Hundreds of cities shimmer with the fair architecture of mosques. From thousands of filagreed pulpits the glory of Allah and of Mohammed, his prophet, are daily proclaimed. Throughout the wide expanse of the Orient men still turn their faces to the East, and repeat the formula of the faithful. Unquestionably, the peoples who revere the *Koran* still possess a solidarity that is lacking in the nations of Christendom, and they may yet prove that they have a staying power as unconquerable as the sword of their prophet.

MIMNERMUS.

For want of general cultivation how greatly individual excellence is crippled. Of what avail, for example, is it for any one of us to have surmounted any social terror, or any superstition, while his neighbours lie sunk in it? His conduct in reference to them becomes a constant care and burden.—*Helps*.

The Kiss of Judas.

Judas is one of the darkest riddles in human history.—
Stalker, "Trial and Death of Jesus Christ."

WE have all read in fairy-tales of how the kiss of true love transforms beasts into beautiful princes, but in the most widely believed fairy-tale of all, we learn how a kiss of hate transmogrified a man into a God.

This betrayal of Christ has been magnified by Christian apologists into a most wonderful fulfilment of almost every prophecy that is given forth in the Old Testament.

The death which followed has been given out to be a voluntary sacrifice, an acceptance of torture which could have been escaped, and which was merely undertaken for the salvation of humanity.

Be that as it may, Judas, for eighteen centuries, was looked upon as the personification of wickedness, of all that is vile in man, of evil thought and more evil action.

Then came a change; there arose a band of apologists who endeavoured to show that Judas was not the Devil incarnate that he had been taken for. De Quincey, in his essay on Judas, has endeavoured to depict him as a man of action, who took the extreme step of putting his Master in the utmost danger, in the hope that he would lay aside his dreaming and take his place amongst men of deeds.

In the Synoptic Gospels there is absolutely no data to go on as regards the character of Judas. Until the anointing at Bethany, he is unspoken of. When he does come into the picture, he is loaded with epithets that are not so complimentary as they are forcible.

This is a trait which is common in thoroughgoing Christians, and is well illustrated in the language employed by the pure John Knox regarding his Queen.

Judas is called in succession a devil, a thief, a son of perdition; and both Luke and John assert that Satan entered into him.

Then we have the stories in Matthew and the Acts of his terrible end, and then—silence? No, no. It is not a habit of Christians to let the dead rest in peace. Amongst the Apocryphal books of the New Testament we find a life of Judas, in which he is depicted as a man born to murder his father and betray his God. Unfortunately, this bears really too obvious a resemblance to the story of *Œdipus Rex* to be given out as inspired, and so it remains but slightly in the background.

Yet we may be pardoned our wonder at there being so little about Judas in the Gospels. Is it that the writers knew nothing of him until he took the step which has given his name such an evil significance that it has become the classic name of perfidious friends, or is it that his character in the earlier days showed no trait which might naturally have been expected to develop into the arch-traitor he is later shown to be?

Ignorance can scarcely have been the cause. Judas was the holder of the Apostolic purse, and had at one time a kind of priority amongst the twelve. The reference to Judas in Mark xiv. 10, which the Authorized Version translates as "one of the twelve," would be more true to the original if translated "*The one of the twelve.*"

To reconstruct the drama, which would show the workings of the mind of Judas in the years of his discipleship to Christ, would be historically impossible; but it remains for some poet to convince the public that the man Judas was not a devil, but an ordinary human being "who loved his friends."

From even a superficial reading of the Gospel according to John, it is obvious that there was no love lost between Judas and he. The statement in John xvii. 6, "And, having the bag, took away what was put therein," shows his opinion of the treasurer.

After forty years, he had not forgotten this, but perhaps he had forgotten that the sons of Zebedee were unpopular with others of the disciples than Judas. But the betrayal was a nice tag to hang old hatreds on.

It is notorious that these "sons of love" were not completely bound each to each with a chain of filial affection. There was doubt, much doubt. There were deeply rooted hopes of preferment in the minds of some of the disciples, who had been caught with the glamour of the Messianic "stunt," the "King of the Jews" business.

To them, there was too much of the dreamer about this Master, this maker of great promises, who ever seemed to hesitate on the brink; who wished, but was afraid.

Yet John, the beloved disciple, would have us believe that "Jesus knew from the beginning.....who it was that should betray him" (John vi. 64).

Yet the fact that Jesus chose Judas to be one of the twelve implies that he saw in him the material out of which an apostle might have been made.

But years of weary waiting on a man who wanted to do something but was afraid to take the risk had its effect on some of the disciples. Judas had the thankless job of looking after the common purse. This was no sinecure with a man who was voluptuous in his habits, and the words imputed to Judas at Bethany, when the precious ointment was poured on the hair of Christ, is not the outburst of a lonely grumbler, but the audible expression of a feeling which was common to many of the disciples.

But if Jesus really chose Judas because he felt that he was the man who would fulfil the prophecies, does this depict a loveable side of Christ's character? That he should have made him one of the select inner circle, should have made him treasurer merely to make him avaricious, is this a favourable view of the God of a truth-loving people?

This done, whence comes the blame with which Judas has been covered? From this reading, Judas merely worked out what *Destiny* had set down that he should do. As Omar Khayyam says:—

O Thou who didst with Pitfall and with Gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestination round
Enmesh me and impute my fall to Sin.

Free-will, however, is a tenet of the Christian faith, and the above hypotheses will not hold water. We can only put this down as another of John's numerous mistakes.

We come to the original conclusion that Jesus made Judas one of the twelve because Judas was as likely a candidate as anyone else. How, then, came the fall?

There are various hypotheses: altruism, jealousy, avarice.

All the Gospels agree that the betrayal was the spontaneous act of Judas. Yet Renan, in *La Vie de Jesus*, states that he would rather ascribe it to some feeling of jealousy or to some dissension amongst the disciples.

As I have pointed out above, Judas was not alone amongst the disciples in his dissatisfaction with the way things were being carried on. It is probable that he was the ringleader.

It is permissible for us to conclude from this that Christ was unable to convince even his own disciples of the truth of his message. There were dissensions. Some thought this, some that. Judas was probably one of those who were after "the kingdom of this world."

It is apparent that the writer of the Gospel according to Matthew had been reading Zechariah ii., 12, 13, for he alone points out the fact that Judas sold his Master

for thirty pieces of silver (which was the price of a slave).

That he received payment for his action is probable. Certain it is that both Matthew and the Acts relate the use to which it was eventually put.

The betrayal at least reveals to reasonable persons that all was not well in the earliest body of Christians. If the cause was anger, there must have been something to be angry about, something not sufficiently in keeping with the doctrines of Christianity to be mentioned in the Gospels, or if, as the school of De Quincey thinks, it was because of lack of vigour on the part of Christ in fulfilling his promises, how can men of to-day look forward with hope for the fulfilment of promises he made almost two thousand years ago.

The fate of Judas by suicide is a possibility. This certainly does not mark him down as a hardened criminal. Yet I am afraid the story of his falling headlong and bursting asunder and his bowels gushing out, is, I am afraid, overdrawn. De Quincey's conjecture that it merely means that his heart was broken is at least a reasonable conjecture.

These stories of the end of Judas bear a remarkable resemblance to the stories of the fate of the traitorous nephew of Abikar, Sennacherib's grand vizier. The resemblances between current stories and alleged happenings to Christ and his disciples are really wonderful. They make me admire the astuteness of those early writers.

Pressense says truly that "No man can be more akin to a devil than a perverted apostle." Judas has had a very large place in the devil business. Dante puts him in the Guidecca, the last circle of the frozen deep of Hell, accounting him a sharer in the sin of Satan.

And, unsatisfied with this, others have seen in him the true *Wandering Jew*.

On the other hand, the Cainites, an important Gnostic sect, are said to have declared "that Judas the traitor knowing the truth as no others did, alone accomplished the mystery of the betrayal."

Such are the vicissitudes of fortune. And Judas and Jesus are now one common dust oblivious to it all.

H. C. MELLOR.

Secrets.

Economic fundamentals change, from slavery to serfdom, from serfdom to wage-payment, from wage-payment to.....I think I know, but here I will not tell!—*J. F. Gould*.

LOCKED in your mind, your secret safely kept

To tell us F. J. G., you're not inclined.

Is it some system gilded or refined

Or one that vanished whilst we slept?

Acrostic, cabal, or some mystic sign,

Rest for the workers, maybe food for all,

Now we have weathered four years duty squall.

Or is it yours shared with the Muses nine?

Honoured old man (this is a stripling's song),

I well remember thy grave tunely voice

When War bade every devil's heart rejoice,

Out with thy secret—what can be the wrong?

The morning sun is gracious when he gilds

The misty hills with beams of shining gold,

So will thy secret gild this fleeting fold

If it should rhyme with one word—let's say Builds!

WILLIAM REPTON.

Acid Drops.

Allowing for any provocation that may have been given by some negro to some white, the recent riots in Liverpool and South Wales are unpleasantly suggestive. We have been in the habit of looking upon these quarrels between Blacks and Whites as an American trouble only. It is quite evident that, given the occasion, that trouble may become as acute here as elsewhere. And we sincerely hope that those responsible will see that the movement will be adequately handled. Meanwhile, as one of the coloured speakers at a London meeting remarked, it is worth noting that not a word of protest has come from any of the Churches. They are full of love for our coloured brethren—in Africa. But in Britain, well, that is quite another matter.

For our own part, we regard the outburst as largely a consequence of the War. For their own purposes the Churches and the Government have combined to uphold the teaching that the War has developed an unexpected strain of idealism, comradeship, and self-sacrifice. And this is being kept going by the speeches of Generals and Admirals, etc., all over the country. And all the time the truth is that the consequence of the War has been demoralization in all directions. All war is built on fear and buttressed by lies, and whatever the justification for the War, the demoralization caused by it has been colossal. The robbery of the public has been on a gigantic scale. And everyone who could be, from street-boy to merchant has, apparently, been in it. The press has been gagged, and the Governments have lied until no one has felt certain of anything save the one thing that the truth was not being told. The gutter-press, helped by a certain type of politician, has encouraged a stupid hatred of everything not-British to such an extent that large numbers have come to look upon this as in itself a virtue. The moral sense has been further deadened by the War with its wholesale slaughter of men, women, and children. The country has thus been made ripe for much to which it would have been impervious a few years ago. The world is reaping as it has sown, and it is useless lamenting the harvest.

The clergy may point the thorny way to heaven, but they sometimes tread the paths of dalliance themselves. The Rev. J. Lieveritz, of Southall, was fined £1 and costs for defrauding the Great Western Railway Company. Another parson, the Rev. G. H. Housman, was fined at Feltham for pouring a kettle of boiling water over a dog. A third brother-in-the-Lord, the Rev. S. V. Allen, of Bassaleg and Cardiff, is under remand charged with shoplifting.

It was the British boast that the object of the World-War was to end war for ever, or, in other words, to destroy militarism. As a matter of fact, however, the British people love militarism, and the successful soldier is the most highly honoured man in the land. Even the Churches, ostensibly under the banner of the Prince of Peace, are the most war-like institutions amongst us. The clergymen who served as Army chaplains were immensely proud of their military titles, and when home on leave were always spoken of as "Major" this and "Colonel" that, the title "Rev." being completely dropped.

With very few exceptions the clergy believed in, advocated, and, in many instances, served as recruiting agents for, the War. In opposition to it they never lifted up their voices. Those who could not enthusiastically endorse it were either significantly silent or deprived of their posts for expressing disapproval of it. The bulk of them were exceptionally militant. It is an illuminating fact that throughout Christian history the men of God have either taken the wrong side or preserved cowardly silence. The Church has never led the vanguard of progress.

A newspaper paragraph, headed "Vicar's Bicycle Mystery," states that the Rev. L. P. Smith, of Herne Hill, who had his bicycle stolen, has received a telegram informing him that his "old bike will be replaced by a new one." The account

concludes: "He is awaiting developments." Why all this fuss? It is not suggested that the telegram is from the Lord.

An article headed "Moses" in the *Daily News* started: "This name recalls the patriarch with flowing beard and mild, resplendant eyes." The writer must have been thinking of Michelangelo's "Moses"; the Bible hero was somewhat different.

The following paragraph is not taken from a Western American periodical, but from an Essex newspaper: "Camp meetings in connection with Great Wakening Primitive Methodist Chapel were held on Sunday in Mr. Oliver's meadow. The day closed with a Love Feast."

Parish magazines are not things of beauty, but they are joys for ever for folk with a sense of humour. At South Acton the editor of the local parish magazine is as full of woe as the prophet Jeremiah. He writes: "If it is wet, people stay away from church; and if it is fine, they go for a walk." There appears to be a deal of human nature at South Acton, and a deal of weather, too.

Addressing a company of cadets, General Methuen said it was folly to think there would be no more wars, those who were listening to him would be the ones who would take part in it. A day or two later the chief of the Imperial General Staff addressing the Conference on Imperial Education, said that if the English people were wise they would continue to paint the seas red, and every stranger who bathed in it should be subject to a fine of 2s. 6d. for trespass. So much for the War that was to end war. So much also for the evil of militarism—in Germany. Militarism in Britain is, of course, quite another matter.

And on top of this we have Sir D. Haig declaring at the Guildhall that the one thing most certain is that "only by adequate preparation for war can peace in any way be maintained." And so we have the old militaristic stupidity revived with all the old assurance. Every one is to go on preparing for war in order to prevent war. Each nation will maintain peace by being stronger than any other nation. The stupidity of it is appalling! The mind of the people in every nation is to be kept busy with thoughts of war, and with preparations for war, so as to prevent war. One might as reasonably teach that if people are to love each other, they must be ready to hate each other at the slightest provocation. And the people who talk in this strain are invariably good Christians.

An American speaker has discovered a religious objection to prohibition. He points out that in the Bible there is only one instance of a man asking for a glass of water—and he was in hell.

The *Belfast Telegraph* reports the Moderator of the General Assembly as saying that the attendance of the ministers at morning prayers was a disgrace. He said: "He had listened to some impassioned impeachments of the people for not coming to their meetings, yet the members of the Assembly were conspicuous by their absence." What could he expect? The hocus-pocus of the medicine-man is not intended for his fellow medicine-man, but only for laymen. But perhaps the Moderator's protest was part of the same game.

Dr. Ethel Williams, of Newcastle, in the *Manchester Guardian* of June 9, draws a horrible picture of the state of things in Vienna owing to the starvation blockade. The old people, she says, are like "walking death's heads." In the streets there are no "toddlers." "The children did not run about, or shout, or quarrel, and it was days before I saw a child playing.....95 per cent. of the practically well children are painfully emaciated, with discoloured circles round their eyes, and the tendons of their necks showing like those of old people." There is much more of the same thing in Dr. Williams' narrative, and anything more horrible it is impossible to conceive. If history holds anything in its

archives more horrible than this starving of millions of women and children, we have yet to come across it. And the clergy, so vocal while War was on, remain silent in face of a horror greater than anything else the War has produced.

The brave clergy were exempted from military service, but they know how to turn the War to their own account. The old pre-Reformation chapel at Thames Ditton Church is to be restored as a War-memorial. It should serve more fittingly as a memorial of the wars of religion.

At a meeting of the British Drama League, the Rev. H. R. L. Sheppard made an attack on "bedroom scenes" in modern plays, and he added, "it insults my intelligence." Yet the reverend gentleman is not upset when the story of "Lot and his Daughters" is thrust into the hands of little children.

Holy Trinity Church *Magazine*, Richmond, gives a quotation by the Vicar from George Jacob Holyoake, in which the latter advises that Freethinkers should not irritate the clergy, because some of them are helping to break down Sunday, and so to destroy the Christian religion. We do not know where the passage comes from, but assuming its genuineness, the advice strikes us as peculiar. And we feel sure that the Freethinker who goes about his work trying not to irritate the clergy will not get very far. The clergy are never likely to be pleased with what we are aiming at. The only sound rule is to go about one's work, and not trouble whether certain people are pleased or displeased. That policy will attract robust minds, and in the fight with superstition it is only these that count. The other type will always come along with the crowd.

The *Glasgow Herald* is very hurt that some of the German clergy are not sufficiently friendly in their speeches towards the Allies, and are voicing the hope that Germany will, with the aid of God, assume a front place in the world's affairs. We wonder what on earth the *Herald* expected? The clergy there behave exactly as the clergy behave here. Here, there, and everywhere the clergy voice whatever view falls in with the feeling of the moment. Beside, the game of these clergy is pretty plain. In a period of reconstruction, they are attempting to stand out as representative of national feeling. They are exploiting their opportunities exactly as our clergy exploit theirs. And, after all, as the only test of the Christian character of clerical teaching here, the *Herald* appears to have is, whether it supports the Government or not. We are at a loss to see on what ground it condemns the German clergy for backing up their Government's claims.

"There has not been a baptism in Christ Church now for more than a year," says the Rev. G. E. Wigram, Vicar of Lea, Matlock, in his parish magazine. It is a good thing that the reverend gentleman is not paid by results.

The Bishop of Exeter advises his clergy to visit women when the men are at home. This practice is more honoured in the breach than the observance.

A chicken with four legs, four wings, and two necks has been hatched at Truro. This fact should be useful to Christian Evidence lecturers and other defenders of the old-fashioned Design argument.

According to an evening paper, so generous have been the contributions at St. John's Church, Southend-on-Sea, that the clergy are at a loss to know what to do with the money. They might have remembered that the dear Bishop of London was travelling towards the workhouse.

Newspaper men have been making "copy" over the circumstance that a Northamptonshire church has three patron saints. It is not so remarkable as that a Northampton town should have been represented in Parliament by a real Atheist for years.

To Correspondents.

W. FIELDING.—Thanks for offer, but we have a copy of the book already on our shelves. There is, as you say, a great deal of curious information to be gleaned from books of that date.

PT. J. SELBOURNE.—Pleased that your army experiences have decided you to make a more determined attack than ever on Christianity. You may rely on our help wherever possible. Would back numbers be of use for distribution?

H. E. HOLLIS.—We thought our meaning quite plain. The purpose of Church "charities" is fairly clear. And the purpose for which the N. S. S. exists is well known. We repeat, that not being jealous of the methods of the Churches, we have no desire to either adopt their methods or to enter into competition with them.

MR. T. WILLIAMS writes from Bridgend, in reply to Mr. Poynter's article in our issue of June 8, that it is a mistake to assume that Spiritualists hastily jump to a conclusion concerning the phenomena witnessed. He cites the names of well-known men to the contrary, and adds that, in his own case, the Spiritualist conclusion was held when clear evidence of spirit communication had been produced. Spiritualists admit the existence of fraud, and are always on their guard against it. We regret that limited space prevents our giving Mr. Williams' letter in full, but we have given a "faithful" summary of its contents.

T. B. H.—We believe that articles on Freemasonry have appeared in the *Freethinker*, not of recent date. The God formula is eliminated from the Continental orders.

ARTHUR POWELL.—Pleased to know that your wife and yourself read the *Freethinker* with so much appreciation. We have a very large number of lady readers, and we are pleased to be able to say that they are among our warmest supporters. You may rely upon our keeping the level of the paper as high as possible.

MR. R. SIMPSON writes:—"Hearty congratulations on the last two issues of the *Freethinker* at pre-War size and price. How the Devil you do it is more than I can see, but I am content to accept the miracle and hope for more. We all owe you a debt of gratitude for all you have done during the past five years. I am trying to pay mine by doing what I can to secure you some new subscribers."

M. KILLOP (Cape Town).—Thanks. We are sending you some posters. We have many readers in South Africa, but shall be glad of more.

FRANK WALTERS.—We don't quite see the point of the inquiry. We certainly had no intention of sneering at Vegetarianism.

ONE of our readers, Mr. W. H. Briden, would like to hear from a naval stoker named Palmer, with whom he was corresponding during the War. Perhaps this may reach his eye.

INTERESTED.—There is plenty of room on the Freethought platform for capable speakers. The qualifications for success are a fair education, good address, effective speech, and a good grasp of the principles of comparative mythology, general science, and a fair acquaintance with historical developments. We should be very pleased to arrange an interview with your friend if he has a desire to work for the best of causes.

W. S. LAWSON.—Mr. Mellor thanks you for your suggestion.

E. MORRIS.—We have not thought of having the booklets on *Woman and Slavery* bound in cloth, but it could be done if the demand was sufficiently large. Glad to know the sale of the *Freethinker* is increasing in your locality.

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.

All Cheques and Postal Orders should be crossed "London, City and Midland Bank, Clerkenwell Branch."

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.

This is the holiday season. Many of our readers—lucky dogs!—will be taking their holiday, and those who care to do so might make it the occasion for a little useful propaganda work. We must have another thousand subscribers, and we are quite sure they can be got. When we get them, we shall be in smooth water. And the best way to get new readers is to introduce the paper to friends and acquaintances. An extra copy might be taken for this purpose, or one's own copy could be handed on. So far as our back numbers will go, we shall be pleased to send on small parcels for distribution to readers who care to do a little work in this direction.

In a review of Mr. Cohen's *Woman and Christianity*, the *Manchester City News* says that "Mr. Cohen adduces some extraordinary facts in proof of his contentions, and in view of the controversy now waged as to whether or not women should be allowed to preach in the churches, the whole subject is thoroughly worth reviewing historically. The book is painful reading, and we should be glad to see an answer to it." So should we. But we dare wager that no answer will be forthcoming. It will be safer for the churches to take no notice in the hope that it will escape observation. Fortunately, those who are interested are circulating the book, and with excellent results. Both that and the companion volume, *Christianity and Slavery*, contain a plain record of facts, and these make a "whitewashing" of Christianity an impossibility.

Owing to the incursions of a body calling itself the "People's League," part of the business of which appears to be giving racing news, the North London Branch has found it advisable to transfer its meetings from the afternoon to the evening. This evening (June 22) the speaker is Mrs. Rosetti, and we hope that North London Freethinkers will be present in goodly numbers to give the lady their support.

East London Freethinkers will please note that Mr. E. Burke lectures in Victoria Park to-day (June 22) at 6.15. We trust there will be a good attendance—there ought to be if the fine weather continues.

The activities of the Young Men's Christian Association are very numerous. The latest is an effort to provide seaside accommodation and holiday camps. The charge mentioned is about thirty shillings a week. Thus is philanthropy mitigated by commercialism.

Survey.

THINK, as we live each day that dies
 Into the loveless void of time and space,
 How small, and pitiful, and mad is man,
 Who fills so earnestly this daily drive
 Of impotence, with sharp reiterated pain,
 ...Man's fetid soul and gory-tinted heart,
 Says to his God—"Well, this must be. It must."
 Then plod his stupid all too certain feet,
 Along that track which everlasting Time,
 Digs to the yawning, hungry-gutted grave...
 The goal man seeks!
 Man's destiny through all the Ages runs,
 A vicious circle of the muddy mind.
 Muddy with thoughts that cloy, and clog, and cling;
 Muddy with ill desires of phantom gain;
 Muddy with deathless mud!
 Man's graven God speaks not.
 But dreams of some wide wilderness of Hate;
 Of insect brains struck mad with futile lust;
 Of where the flames of persecuted Love,
 Are quenched with rushing, wild, torrential tears.

ARTHUR F. THORN.

"Masses" for the Dead.

AFTER a recent legal decision in the highest Court of the realm, the Roman Catholic Church in England must surely have heartily echoed the pious ejaculation, "Thank God for the House of Lords!" The sum of £900 (or whatever is left when the lawyers have had their share) has been rescued for the benefit of a poor suffering soul in purgatory. It would savour of impiety and irreligion to suggest that the money has been secured for the use of the priests, although it would be difficult for them to show that any soul in purgatory is likely to derive any benefit from its disbursement. On the face of it, the Church Militant has all the advantage over both the Church Suffering and the Church Triumphant when it is a case of spending a legacy. It is true the amount involved was not a princely sum, but the representatives of the Church were exceedingly reluctant to let it slip, and were doubtlessly also actuated by a desire to have it unassailably established that it is perfectly legal to leave money for the purchase of "masses" for the dead.

According to the press account, a deceased Irishman in London some time ago bequeathed £300 to the Bishop of Ardagh; £200 to the Jesuit Fathers, Farm Street; £200 to Westminster Cathedral; £100 to the Dominican Fathers, Kilkenny; and £100 to the Franciscan Fathers, Kilkenny—all for masses for the repose of his soul. It is reported that in his will the testator expresses the hope that his Lordship the Bishop of Ardagh would pray for him. No doubt his lordship will do so, now that it is settled he is to get some of the money, and it is tolerably certain his lordship is open to pray for any number of deceased Roman Catholics at £300 each. There are doubtless numerous bishops who would undertake similar contracts at this figure.

It appears that the reverend legatees have unfortunately had considerable difficulty in getting their hands on the cash. Presumably, the next-of-kin disputed the will, for before the final settlement of the case in the House of Lords, there was a good-going plea in the lower Courts. Both in the Court of First Instance and in the Appeal Court it was decided that gifts for "masses" were void; but, as indicated above, this decision was reversed when the case was carried to the House of Lords, and the various holy fathers will naturally be jubilant.

One wonders if the reverend legatees gave any thought to the soul of the pious testator while the destination of the cash was in suspense? Did they give the poor sufferer the benefit of a few masses on credit; or was it a case of no cash, no mass? Is it not an awful reflection that the soul of a devout Roman Catholic should languish in purgatory for weeks and months while clerical and other harpies were wrangling over the disposal of the money that had been specially left by the deceased to purchase relief from purgatorial fires and speedy admission to the abode of eternal bliss—wherever it is? Or if those who endeavoured to spin out the long process of the law had no sympathy for the anguish of an afflicted soul, did they not realize that they were baulking the divine yearning of Jesus and Mary, who waited with outstretched arms to welcome one of the redeemed; one of the redeemed whose final emancipation could not be consummated (despite Christ's supreme sacrifice) until the necessary sum was paid to the priests? But what a farce it all is! Are we in the twentieth century or the twelfth?

It is not here essential to impugn the right of any individual to leave part or all of his worldly substance to another individual who undertakes in return to pray

the souls of the deceased out of purgatory into heaven. The Freethought Cause itself has been sufficiently penalized by the law voiding bequests, and perhaps on that account there is a disposition on our part in most cases to allow the bequests of deceased parties to stand, however much we may disapprove of the objects to which they are destined. But what are we to think, at this stage of European civilization, of an institution which derives a large portion of its income from the perpetuation of such gross superstition? What are we to say of the clerical beneficiaries above-mentioned—men with some pretensions to education and culture—who depend for part of their livelihood on the craven fears of simple dupes as to what is to happen to their miserable souls after death?

Besides, apart from the financial needs of the Church of Rome (which, it must be admitted, are from the point of view of the Holy See, of primary importance), where is the necessity for the constant multiplication of masses for the dead? The Church tells us that the sacrifice of the Mass is an exact repetition of the sacrifice of Calvary, save only in so far as the latter was a "bloody" sacrifice, while the former is an "unbloody" sacrifice. It may be remarked in passing that this definition surely omits to note that there must be something "bloody" about the Mass if there is any truth in the statement that during its progress the wine contained in the chalice is turned into blood at the words of the priest. But the immediate point is this. If the sacrifice of the Mass is the same august sacrifice as the sacrifice on Calvary, a single Mass ought to suffice to empty purgatory, even as the immolation on Calvary sufficed to redeem the whole human race. Yet hundreds of Masses are said every week all over Christendom for the souls of the dead, and the priests are never able to give us the gratifying assurance that a clearance has been effected in purgatory. On the contrary, they are always willing to accept fresh "offerings" for the "poor souls."

It may be urged, of course, that as there is some one dying somewhere every minute in the day and night, there is a constant tendency for purgatory to be filled; but why should so many liberating Masses be needed? In view of the transcendent efficacy of the Mass, could the Church not arrange to have a single Mass offered daily for the souls in purgatory at the headquarters of the Papacy, and thus ensure a diurnal gaol-delivery so to speak. It should seem that the only real objection to such a reform is that it would entail a serious diminution of the ecclesiastical revenue.

The writer has been so long out of touch with the Church Catholic that he is not aware what may be the present-day minimum fee for a Mass, and, therefore, cannot calculate accurately how many masses could with decency be expected for £900. The minimum "offering," we remember, was half-a-crown. No self-respecting Catholic would then tender less. There was no limit in the other direction, only, of course, those who gifted a large sum usually expected a number of Masses. That, however, was in pre-War days. Flour and wine being nowadays somewhat scarcer and dearer (not to mention that the living expenses of the priesthood are higher) the body and blood of Christ is inevitably a more expensive luxury. Put it at half-a-sovereign a time and £900 should procure 1,800 Masses, amply sufficient to cover quite a multitude of minor sins.

It has already been implied that there is something to be said for the plea that a man is entitled to set aside a sum of money in his will with the object of delivering his soul from purgatorial punishment after death if he so thinks fit. On the other hand, where it is not feasible

to carry out the wishes of a testator, the courts frequently nullify a clause in a testamentary disposition. In the case commented upon the ends of justice and equity would have been better served if the House of Lords had suspended payment of the legacies until the Catholic Church adduced evidence that the particular object for which the legacies were left had been achieved. The case was clearly one for payment by results. No release from purgatory, no payment of legacies. The onus rested with the Church to prove that the soul of the deceased was actually in purgatory, and that the saying of masses could effect its liberation. But had the judges decided in this sense it is more than probable the legacies in question would ultimately have fallen to be disposed of under the proposed legislation for dealing with unclaimed balances.

G. SCOTT.

The N. S. S. Conference.

HELD IN THE CLARION CAFE, MARKET STREET,
MANCHESTER.

Whit-Monday, June 8, 1919.

MORNING SESSION.

THE following Branches were represented:—Barnsley, H. Irving; Belfast, A. B. Moss; Bethnal Green, O. Friedman; Birmingham, J. G. Dobson, F. E. Willis; Coventry, T. Fowler; Falkirk, Mr. Watson; Glasgow, F. Lonsdale; Goldthorpe, G. Wheeler; Liverpool, J. Hammond, J. B. Palphreyman; Manchester, Mrs. Bayfield, F. E. Monks, A. C. Rosetti; Newcastle-on-Tyne, C. H. Kelf; North London, Harry Jones; Regent's Park, E. T. Brewster; South London, F. A. Davies, Victor Roger; South Shields, J. Fothergill; Swansea and District, B. Jenkins; West Ham, R. H. Rosetti. Members and friends also attended from Bolton, Birmingham, London, Manchester, Glasgow, and Sheffield.

The President (Mr. Chapman Cohen) welcomed the members and congratulated the Society on its being in existence now that the War is over. He said the Society was stronger now than it had been for many years. Its financial strength is now 125 per cent. better than it was three years ago. From every point of view we can congratulate ourselves on progress, and this progress is the guarantee of greater advances in the near future. To-day the Conference met under a really democratic constitution—all power was vested in it. With such a constitution he heartily agreed, for if the members of the Society cannot be trusted with its whole affairs, the sooner it comes to an end the better.

The Secretary then called the Roll.

Mr. Black, the Secretary of the Manchester Branch, read a telegram from the Bethnal Green delegate, Mr. Greenhall, stating that owing to his father's illness he was unable to attend, and suggesting that Mr. Friedman act as their delegate under the instructions given as to voting. This was agreed to.

After some discussion as to whether the Minutes of the last Conference be read or taken as read, it was decided "That the new constitution and rules be taken as the Minutes of the Birmingham Conference." The Minutes were a record of an interim Conference, at which the new rules were passed.

The President then read the Executive's Annual Report, which appeared in our last week's issue.

Mr. Willis, Birmingham, in commenting on the Report, remarked that after the terrible War, which had eclipsed almost everything, it was gratifying to know that Freethought had considerably advanced. He was particularly pleased that Freethought seed had been sown in Ireland, "that priest-ridden country"; and although operations had only taken place so far as Belfast, he hoped the gospel would be spread in Dublin and the surrounding districts. Mr. Willis concluded by saying that he hoped the splendid traditions handed down to us would bear abundant fruit in the future.

Mr. Kelf, Newcastle, made a very interesting statement as to Ireland. He said that thirty years ago he attended a

Conference at Newcastle, and at that Conference there was an Irish member of a Dublin Branch. "I am sure," he remarked, "that Mr. Moss" (who was delegate for Belfast) "will regret he is not an Irishman to-day. He believed that at one time there was a very strong and active Branch in Dublin.

Mr. A. B. Moss said he was delighted to represent the Belfast Branch. He recalled that he once gave a lecture in Ireland, and the audience—to his astonishment—was mostly Scotch. Mr. Kelf had said that he (the speaker) ought to wish himself Irish. Amidst laughter, Mr. Moss remarked: "My father was Scotch, my mother was Welsh, and I am a cockney." His profound delight was that "Freethought is spreading far and wide."

With reference to the communication from the International Bureau, asking the opinion of the Executive on the holding of an International Conference, and suggesting the exclusion of any German representative, the President said he defended the Executive, which held that it could take no part in such a gathering from which the representatives of any country was excluded. The principles of Freethought, he contended, were above all nationality. A man like Bradlaugh would have repudiated the idea that Freethought was to be confined behind a national frontier. Mental independence was not to be dependent down to a battle to-day, or a diplomatic arrangement to-morrow, and the Executive would have been untrue to its principles had it agreed to the exclusion of German representatives. If the conditions on the Continent are such that the various nationalities cannot meet on terms of friendship for the interchange of opinions, it will be better to suspend the gathering until a better feeling prevails.

If such an international gathering is held, not a single man or woman in Germany should be excluded because of what their Government had done. Such was the view of the Executive when the matter was discussed.

That the Report be adopted was moved by Mr. Monks, Manchester, and seconded by Mr. Roger, South London.

This was carried, there being only four dissentients.

At this juncture Mrs. Bayfield spoke of the need of women speakers in the movement. "Among progressive women," she said, "Freethought is the idea that rules. A few really progressive women speakers will greatly enhance the success of the Branches."

The adoption of the balance-sheet was then carried.

The Secretary (Miss Vance) then formally took the chair during the election of the President. Mr. Rosetti, West Ham, proposed, and Mr. Willis seconded the motion that Mr. Cohen be re-elected President. The motion was carried.

Mr. Cohen, in resuming the chair, expressed his thanks for the honour conferred upon him, and promised to do what no man could exceed—his best for the great cause.

The President resumed his seat amidst a cheer that betokened the confidence of the Conference in his integrity, and its appreciation of his exceptional abilities.

The motion that Miss Vance be re-elected Secretary was proposed by Mrs. Bayfield, seconded by Mr. Kelf, and supported by Mr. Willis. Each speaker referred to the valuable services Miss Vance had rendered to Freethought, and to the help she received from her friend, Miss Kough. The motion was carried. Miss Vance, in thanking the Conference—this was the first time she had been elected by a conference—made an excellent speech, touching upon intimate matters in connection with her work. "I have done my best," she said—a remark that was vigorously cheered. The Secretary has been blind for ten years. It was very pathetic to hear her say, speaking of her friend and helper, Miss Kough: "She has supplied me with eyes and hands."

The following motions were proposed, seconded, and carried:—

Election of Treasurer—Motion by the Bethnal Green Branch: "That Mr. C. G. Quinton be elected Treasurer."

Nominations for Executive:—Scotland, Mr. James Neate, nominated by Glasgow Branch. Wales, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, nominated by Maesteg and Swansea Branches. N.E. Group, Mr. C. H. Kelf, nominated by Newcastle Branch; Mr. A. B.

Moss, nominated by South Shields Branch. *N.W. Group*, Miss Pitcher and Mr. R. H. Rosetti, nominated by Liverpool and Manchester Branches. *Midland Group*, Mr. F. E. Willis and Mr. T. G. Dobson, nominated by Birmingham Branch. *South London*, Mr. Victor Roger, nominated by South London Branch. *North London*, Mr. T. F. Palmer, nominated by North London and Regent's Park Branches. *East London*, Mr. H. Silverstein, nominated by Bethnal Green and West Ham Branches.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

The motion "that Ireland be constituted an electoral area, with power to nominate one representative for the Executive," was moved by Mr. Davies, seconded by Mr. Kelf, and carried.

Motions by South London Branch:—(a) "That no Branch containing a smaller membership than seven shall be entitled to representation at any Conference." (b) "That individual members of the Society are fully entitled to representation at all Conferences and that facilities be afforded such members to nominate their own delegate."

Motion *b* was withdrawn, as it was covered by the following motion of the North London Branch:—

Motion by North London Branch:—"That in order to give individual members an opportunity of recording their votes at all Conferences or special meetings of this Society, each member shall receive by post, four weeks prior to the Conferences, a printed ballot paper upon which such votes shall be recorded and returned to the General Secretary not later than one week prior to the Conference."

Amendment by Birmingham Branch:—"After the word 'Society' delete the words 'each member' and substitute the words 'members who reside five miles from a Branch.'"

Amendment by Coventry Branch:—"After the words 'four weeks prior to the Conferences' insert 'together with a Conference Agenda.'"

The amendments and resolution were lost by a large majority.

Motion by Newcastle Branch:—"That a verbatim report of the proceedings be taken at every Conference and be accessible to all members at the Society's Offices at convenient times, and that a draft of such reports be prepared for the Branches and issued within one month from the date of the Conferences."

Amendment by Birmingham Branch:—"Delete the word 'verbatim' and substitute the word 'summarized.'"

The amendment, proposed by Mr. Willis and seconded by Mr. Moss, was carried.

Motion by Mr. C. Cohen:—"That this Conference, with a view to emphasizing the far-reaching significance of the Bowman Case, and in order to hasten the complete abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, recommends the placing of the affairs of the N.S.S. on a legal basis by either Trust Deed or Registration, and instructs the Executive to take immediate steps towards putting this resolution into effect."

Mr. Willis occupied the chair while this motion was put to the meeting.

After much discussion, in which Messrs. Monks, Davies, Black, and Kelf took part, the resolution was carried, and Mr. Cohen resumed the chair.

Motions by North London Branch:—(a) "That the existing conditions as to the formation of new Branches shall be inserted in the New Rules under Section III., Branches." (b) "That standing orders for the guidance of all Executive meetings should be agreed upon and be made part of the Constitution of the National Secular Society." (c) "That with a view to developing the latent possibilities of Branch members this Conference recommends the formation of discussion classes in connection with every Branch of the N.S.S., such classes to form an integral portion of the work of the Branch."

On this motion Mr. Davies moved, and Mr. Sanders seconded, to delete the words "at this Conference." Carried.

The following Motions were also carried:—

Motion by Manchester Branch:—"That the Executive take the necessary steps to impress upon members the desirability of Cremation over Earth Burial and that whenever

possible, a member, or committee, be appointed in each district for the conduct of Secular Burial Services."

Motion by the Executive:—"That this Conference while viewing with the greatest satisfaction the growth of the idea of League of Nations, and recognizing in this enforced concession of Christian Nations of Europe to the teachings and ideals of Thomas Paine, yet regrets that advantage has not been taken of the close of the European War to inaugurate a policy of disarmament all round, and feels that by embarking on a new era of enlarged armies and armaments there is established a continued threat to the peace of the world; this Conference, therefore, urges upon Freethinkers everywhere to use their efforts in favour of disarmament, whilst removing the instrument of aggression will make for the more peaceful and more civilized conduct of the world's affairs."

Motion by Mr. Victor Roger:—"This Conference considers it desirable that civil marriage should be performed amid conditions that would invest the ceremony with a fitting dignity and impressiveness, and requests Freethinkers to urge upon the responsible authorities the necessity for the immediate alteration of the conditions now prevailing." Carried.

Motion by Mr. A. B. Moss:—"That this Conference strongly protests against the continuance of religious instruction in State supported Schools as a direct violation of the principal of equality which should dominate the modern State; it therefore demands the complete secularization of the Nation's Schools, and of all schools wholly or partly subsidized by the State, and urges upon Freethinkers and reformers everywhere the need for rigorous agitation, and the withdrawal of children from religious instruction as a practical expression of their disapproval of the present system." Carried.

The following motion was deferred for future consideration:—

Motion by Coventry Branch:—"That the Executive Committee run at least two candidates for the next General Election to support Secular Education and the Disestablishment of the Church and also to counteract the growing tendency of the Churches to manipulate Parliament in their own interests and that a special fund be raised by the Executive for that purpose."

Amendment by Swansea Branch:—"Delete the words 'at least two' and substitute the word 'a.'"

The following was remitted to the Executive:—

Motions by Mr. Joseph Edwards:—(a) "That a Publicity and Publication Committee, empowered to consider and publish suitable literature on the aims and work of the National Secular Society, such publications to be the property of the Society and under its direct control, be formed." (b) "That a popular Freethought Year Book with outspoken, interesting and useful contents be prepared, dated 1920, and from thence issued annually, and circulated as widely as possible."

The Conference closed with a suitable address from the President, who, in concluding, proposed a vote of thanks to those members of the Manchester Branch who had worked so hard and so well in making the necessary arrangements. Miss Vance seconded.

Obituary.

On Friday, June 6, a peculiarly sad and touching ceremony took place at Hillingdon Cemetery, when the infant son of Mr. and Mrs. Rantell was laid to rest. Baby Redge, aged two, had toddled away from a family pic-nic party, attracted by some large daisies at the side of a pond. Scarce three minutes had elapsed when they missed him, but in that short space of time the tiny mite had fallen into the water, and all efforts to restore consciousness were unavailing. Where was the tender, loving, Father in Heaven? Where was the Friend for little children? Answer, ye Christians! To the sorrowing father and mother we extend our deepest sympathy. A Secular Service was read at the graveside by Miss Kough.—E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice" if sent on postcard.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 11, Joseph McCabe, "The Russian Constitution."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Band Stand): 6.15, Mr. E. Burke, A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 6, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, A Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): Mr. E. Burke, 3.15, "Spirituality and Reality"; 6, "The Teachings of Herbert Spencer."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, A Lecture.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Messrs. Saphin and Shaller; 3.30, Messrs. Baker, Dales, Saphin, and Kells.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

LEEDS SECULAR SOCIETY (19 Lowerhead Row, Youngman's Rooms): Members meet every Sunday at 5.45 (afternoon). Lectures in Victoria Square at 7.15.

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NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Moor, entrance opposite Clayton Park Road): 7, Mr. J. W. Mee, A Lecture.

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