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## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page.
<i>The League of Nations.—The Editor</i> . . . . .	49
<i>Doubt.—J. T. Lloyd</i> . . . . .	50
<i>The Canon's Roar.—Mimmermus</i> . . . . .	51
<i>Christianity and Spiritualism.—George Scott</i> . . . . .	52
<i>Rev. Joseph Symes —J. Latham</i> . . . . .	53
<i>Santa Claus and God.—J. Effel</i> . . . . .	54
<i>"Christianity Its Own Proof."—E. W. Stone</i> . . . . .	58
<i>Epicurus or Augustine?—E. Egerton Stafford</i> . . . . .	59
<i>Book Chat.—Philip Sidney</i> . . . . .	60
<i>Cranks.—Colin Edgeworth</i> . . . . .	62
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

## Views and Opinions.

### The League of Nations.

This is not the place in which to discuss the political aspects of the Treaty just signed between Germany and the Allies. It is a treaty that is full of anomalies, and, judging from the expressed opinions of many of the public men in this country and elsewhere, not the least anomalous feature is that no one expects its provisions will be carried out. Already human nature has so far overridden the treaty with Austria that instead of getting an indemnity from her we are actually arranging to lend her money or goods to undo some of the ravages of the War—and the Peace. Whether something similar will happen with Germany remains to be seen. But in whatever direction there are modifications, it is sincerely to be hoped, that one provision of the treaty will remain unchanged, except in the direction of expansion and development. I mean the portion of the treaty which provides for the creation of a League of Nations. And that is certainly a topic that comes well within the scope of the *Freethinker*, for peace is everybody's business. It is the one thing that makes social life possible; tolerable, and profitable. To break it is one of the greatest of social offences, and to decry peace—or what is about the same thing—to glorify war is hardly less of an attack on the foundations of civil society.

### Peace or War?

Everyone is agreed that a League of Nations which leaves outside the whole of Germany, Austria, and Russia, is a mere name and nothing more. Under such circumstances the League can never be more than a League, or a group of nations against other nations, and we have a perpetuation of the old state of affairs. A League to be effective must be inclusive. And it must include, not only on the ground that certain groups are admirable ones, but, still more, that they are not. When a man is suspect, the closer his proximity to the policeman the better for the rest of the community. If Germany can be trusted there is no reason for exclusion. If she cannot be trusted—if any nation in Europe is sufficiently without sin to cast the first stone—there is all the more reason to compel her to enter a League that will prevent her breaking the peace of the world. More than that, every member of the League ought not merely to

promise not to break the peace of the world, it should voluntarily place it out of its power to do so. If the League is to become a reality, it can only be by every one of the units foregoing the luxury of maintaining an army or a navy large enough to defy the League whenever its decisions displease it in connection with its international disputes. At present we have Britain determined on a larger Navy than ever, America declaring that it will have a large enough one to challenge the supremacy of Britain if needs be, France bent on having a larger Navy than it had before the War, and all of them increasing the size of their standing armies. What, in the face of all this, is the use of a League of Nations? The only effective military and naval force for use as between nations should be under the control of the League itself. If the nations cannot agree among themselves sufficiently for that, or cannot trust each other enough for that, then it is idle to talk of a League of Nations. You may have a series of shifting and changing alliances, but you can have nothing else. You have not removed an evil by establishing a League under such conditions; all you have done is to create an elaborate hypocrisy to camouflage its existence. And the world surely has sufficient hypocrisy in circulation to obviate the need for our creating more.

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### Why Not a League of Peoples?

In spite of the "What's in a name?" theory, we venture to think there is more in a name than Shakespeare saw. Every important word has its inevitable associations, and these associations act, for good or ill, as a determinant of thought. A rose by any other name might smell as sweet to some, but call it an onion, and there would be many who would find its perfume unbearable. And one feels inclined to regret that the word "Nations" was retained in the covenant. Why not a League of Peoples? That is certainly without the confusing and often evil associations that cluster around the word "Nation." "Nation" still carries with it the notions of separateness, of a defensive attitude of mind that is an invitation to attack, of the "My country right or wrong" attitude that was so powerful a factor in Germany in perpetuating the War. On the other hand, a League of Peoples suggests exactly what it should be the real aim of reformers to encourage—that is, co-operation between peoples, a sense of mutual dependence, the conviction that it is impossible for one nation to realize its fullest life without the co-operation of others. The War has demonstrated the stupidity of conceiving a nation as a self-contained unit. It is nothing of the kind. That is a legacy from the past, as the War itself was a legacy from the past. And it exerts a power to-day because our "statesmen"—save the mark!—are still thinking in terms of the past. They do not realize clearly that nationalism is at best an evolutionary phase of the journey to internationalism, just as tribalism was a stage on the journey to nationalism. The weakness of the small nations makes them more or less dependent upon the strong ones, and the strength

of the strong ones makes them equally dependent on each other. A League of Nations, if it is to be a vital and a healthy force in the world, must become a League of Peoples. And it would be a recognition of the fact, as well as a sign that the world was definitely breaking with the evil dynastic and separatist associations of the past, if we were to put that truth into so many words.

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How to Make a Real League of Peoples.

The world needs-peace. That is so obvious that even militarists admit it. Equally clear is it that the only way of securing peace—as distinguished from an armistice such as has existed as a result of European alliances—is by some such machinery as a League of Nations. But it would be folly to assume that a League of Nations can be solidly created by the mere drawing up of a treaty. The treaty must embody a conviction or it will break down, just as the Hague Convention was so often fruitless and helpless before the navalism of Britain and the militarism of Germany. The will for peace must be as determined as the will for war has been, the conviction that brute force is to be the ultimate arbiter of the world's destiny must be broken. In other words, the real obstacles to the creation of a genuine League are intellectual and moral, they are not fundamentally political or economic. It is, as we have so often pointed out, well within the power of the people to create a state of mind which will make war as abhorrent to men and women as is ordinary homicide. Article 175 of the Peace Treaty abolishes compulsory military service—in Germany. Is there any reason why that should not be adopted in every other country that has signed the treaty? Article 177 forbids “educational establishments, universities.....and.....associations of every description,” occupying themselves with military matters. That seems to us excellent. So excellent, that we would have it applied to all nations. To encourage people to occupy their minds with war, to allow the creation of huge interests for the manufacture of munitions of war, is to pave the way for war. Above all, we must keep our education free from the atmosphere of war and national animosities that lead to war. What Germany did systematically during the past half century, the rest of the world did in a less methodical way. Our schools, our universities, our papers, our historians, and our Churches have all combined to familiarize the mind of the children and of the people with the glory of war and of the greatness of the soldier. In our civic functions we have given the military the most prominent of positions. We cannot open an educational institute or a soup kitchen unless guards of military are provided, and the importance of the military thereby emphasized. Our education should follow an exactly opposite course. In all civic functions the soldier should be kept in the background, and the public mind habituated with the self-sufficiency of all civic life. If our education deals at all with war, let it inculcate its futility, its brutality, its foolish waste, its inability to settle effectively a single one of the questions that trouble mankind. We should aim at the creation of a peace atmosphere, as others have aimed at the creation of a war atmosphere. We have made war, and we have a chance of making peace. Thomas Paine called war one of the world's superstitions, and when we have killed the superstition of its greatness, its heroism, and even of its necessity, we shall have made possible the existence of a real League of Peoples—and of Peace.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Priests are eternally disputing against each other, and those mouths that want argument are filled with abuse.

—Goldsmith.

## Doubt.

MAX MULLER informs us that doubt, coming from the Latin *dubium*, “expresses literally the position between two points, just as the German *zweifel* points back to *zwei*, two.” Usually, doubt denotes a state of wavering between two contradictory opinions, or between belief and unbelief in supernaturalism. This is probably the sense in which Tennyson employs the term when he says:—

There lives more faith in honest doubt,  
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

At the time the poet was himself “perplexed in faith,” neither actually believing nor disbelieving, but desiring with all his heart to believe, and dreading unbelief like the pit of hell. In the present-day pulpit, however, doubt generally signifies denial of the Christian faith. The apostle Thomas is often described as a typical doubter; but it is well-known that in his mind, for a certain period, there was no wavering. He flatly refused to believe in the risen Christ on the testimony of his fellow-apostles. His one cry was for positive evidence, which was wholly lacking. To-day's doubters are of the same kind. The Dean of Rochester, preaching recently in St. Paul's Cathedral, said: “Thomas is not dead. There are thousands of Thomases to-day; there may be some in the Cathedral to-night—the reverent Agnostic.” They do not believe in a hereafter, or a hereabove; nor have they any faith in God, or any other supernatural being. There are thousands, nay, millions, of such people in the English-speaking world alone. Now, according to Dr. Horton, unbelief and wickedness are synonymous terms. In his last “Monthly Lecture,” published in the *Christian World Pulpit* of January 14, this reverend gentleman coolly says:—

Once grant that there is no God, once believe that men are not souls but mere bodies, once take the view that the object of life is merely the enjoyment of the material goods of the world for the brief, uncertain years we live, and then to the question: “Why should not I kill a man?” there is no sufficient answer. At the bottom the only reason why I may not kill a man is that God is, and that man is made in the image of God, and that God brings to account the murderer of the man that is made in his image. That is the only real answer, the only sufficient reason why we restrain ourselves and honour and spare the lives of those who are in our way.

If that is Dr. Horton's real view, he is a genuine object of pity. If he entertains such a horribly low opinion of himself and his fellow-beings he is guilty of blasphemy against human nature, and deserves severe punishment. But his view is utterly false. Early Buddhism was based on Atheism and a rejection of the soul-theory, and yet no other religion sets such a high value on life, not on human life only, but on all life. In one of the Rock Edicts we read that “formerly in the great refectory and temple of King Piyadasi, the friend of the Devas, many hundred thousand animals were daily sacrificed for the sake of food meat,” but that “now the joyful chorus resounds again and again that henceforward not a single animal shall be put to death.” Does not Dr. Horton realize that his conception of man reflects infinite discredit on the Creator? Man made in the image of God is a mean, contemptible thing if, in the absence of faith in his Maker, he will not hesitate to kill all who stand in his way. And, curiously enough, our soldiers at the Front during the War, who, according to him and the Bishop of London, were eminently Godly young men, butchered myriads of Germans, though these, too, were men made in the image of God.

Furthermore, Dr. Horton deliberately misrepresents Atheists when he asserts that their object in life is merely the enjoyment of the material goods of the world. Shelley was an Atheist; but would anyone dream of asserting that he took that unworthy view of life? Lucretius was an Atheist, but would any intelligent reader of his immortal poem imagine that he did not fully appreciate the higher beauties of Nature? The truth is that there is in Atheism no inducement whatever to adopt low standards of life. Besides, Dr. Horton has no evidence that men are souls, or even that they have souls. Neither physiologists nor psychologists find any indication whatever that man is a dual being. Even the latter know mind only as a function of the brain.

Returning to the Dean of Rochester's sermon, which also appeared in the same number of the *Christian World Pulpit*, we learn that he exhorts doubters not to turn their backs upon the public worship of God. "Are you prepared," he asks them, "to say that the creed of the ages is a lie?" Well, in the first place, there is no such creed in existence. Creeds are innumerable, and almost as conflicting and mutually destructive as they are numerous. So far as the great Christian creeds are concerned, we do call them lies, and Dr. Storrs cannot prove that they are true. Later on in the discourse he admits this himself:—

There are a thousand questions which no man in this Cathedral can answer. There is no intellectual proof which leaves no room for doubt of the truth of the Christian faith; otherwise it would not be faith at all.

The reverend gentleman is quite right. Supernatural knowledge is absolutely unobtainable. As Tennyson says, "we have but faith, we cannot know," and faith is simply the religious word for imagination. The spiritual world, God, Christ, the soul, all these are ideas of the imagination, creations of the fancy, perfectly real as such, but possessing no objective reality whatever. The Dean urges us to "make use of every fragment of truth which we possess," and assures us that "it will lead to something further"; but we contend that there is not even the least fragment of supernatural truth in existence, nor of any other truth. "We seek for Truth" has been adopted as a motto by many Secular Societies; but speaking scientifically, we are bound to admit that there is no such thing. Truth is a theological invention, and theologians are the only people who claim that they have found it. It is the facts of Nature that are the only possible objects of search.

Does Dr. Storrs expect unbelievers in the supernatural to pray in Newman's words,

Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom,  
Lead Thou me on!

Such a prayer on their lips would be sheer mockery. Then the Dean says:—

Remember that religion is not only a theory, it is not only a creed, it is the relation of a human soul to a Person. Our religion is the religion of a Person. The Bible is a gallery of portraits. Mohammedanism is the religion of a book, Christianity is the religion of a Person.

That is perfectly true, but what it proves is the utter absurdity of inviting us to approach a being in whose very existence we do not believe. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is," for to unbelievers he is non-existent. Henry Ward Beecher used to say that every man paints his own picture of God; but no one paints it from an original, with which it can be compared; which is only another way of saying that God is a wholly imagined person. You can come to him if you believe in him; but he cannot come to you; he never takes the initiative. He leaves all unbelievers severely alone. The clergy exist for the twofold purpose of

creating and preserving believers; and yet, in spite of all their assiduity in the discharge of their duty, we are told that about eighty per cent. of our population live in practical unbelief. The Dean sings the praises of faith with glowing enthusiasm:—

There is the faith, the beautiful faith of the little child, the faith that has been taught by father or mother, at the mother's knee, the faith of the child that lives in the sunshine of Almighty God—the faith of a beautiful trust. Blessed be that faith.

The drift of the world is away from that beautiful faith of the child, for such faith can flourish only in an atmosphere of ignorance and credulity. In proportion as knowledge extends its way, the sphere of faith gets narrower. Doubt is spreading in all directions. People are beginning to realize, at last, that supernaturalism is the vainest of all dreams, and they turn away from it with glad, grateful hearts, many of them seeking and finding perfect peace and joy in Secularism.

J. T. LLOYD.

### The Canon's Roar.

If I had been a bishop, with an income of five to fifteen thousand a year, I should have an inexhaustible source of rejoicing and merriment in the generosity, if not in the credulity, of my countrymen.—*John Bright.*

FOR months past lurid pictures have been drawn of the sufferings of the "starving" clergy. At the last Church Congress it was alleged that one anonymous and long-suffering clergyman was living in a cellar. Another clerical martyr was stated to have sold his furniture to pay his rates. A short time before the Congress the Bishop of London was harrowing folks' feelings by the awful story of the rural dean who fed himself, his wife, and family on sixpence a meal. A new champion of the "starving" clergy has now entered the arena. A book on *Clerical Incomes*, edited by Canon Masterman, and written by diocesan contributors, sets forth in print the awful straits to which so many clergymen are said to be reduced. Canon Masterman even says that a considerable number of the clergy "are drifting rapidly towards actual destitution."

If these statements are true, they are discreditable to a Christian organization. In the case of a Church holding a privileged position under the State they are extremely discreditable, not to the public, but to the ecclesiastics who control the purse-strings. The plain, blunt truth is that the Anglican Church is richer than any other Church in the world. The plaint of "starvation" is, after all, largely a matter of rhetoric. Those ecclesiastics who lament the loudest may be only practising the wiles of their artful profession. Perhaps they are merely seeking to excite the generosity of devoted Churchmen who have money in the bank. For, apart from a few anonymous examples, which obviously cannot be taken too seriously, the 25,000 clergy of the Anglican Church are not so near starvation as millions of their countrymen. It is absurd to pretend otherwise. In so many parishes the parson with his big and expensive vicarage is too often a miniature reproduction of the bishop in a palace too large for him and his times. I remember, also, that the practical issue at stake in the great railway strike was simply that of a minimum wage of £3 weekly.

Canon Masterman himself has no need to look beyond the narrow confines of the City of London to find what is wrong with the Anglican Church. In the City fifty-five rectors and vicars divide among them about £50,000 yearly, without reckoning their parsonages. These

clergy minister to a small resident population of caretakers, policemen, and Jews, few of whom trouble the pew-openers. The Anglican Church also possesses property in the City worth £2,000,000. Presumably, if the clergy were really starving, some of this property could be realized to endow poor parishes where needed.

There is terrible waste in the Anglican Church. There are 1,877 parishes with a population under 200; and 4,802 with a population under 500. The chief wastage, however, is in the direction of the higher clergy, who are not in any danger of starvation. The Bench of Bishops alone absorbs £180,700 yearly, with emoluments in the shape of palaces and palatial residences. There is also a whole army of suffragan bishops, deans, canons, and other clerics, who have every reason to be contented with their lot in life. Not for them are foul rookeries, in which a single bedroom holds a family. But such things are in the towns and villages, where these men arrogantly claim spiritual chieftainship.

In all these frenzied appeals concerning clerical poverty very little is said of the resources of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and of Queen Anne's Bounty. At the recent Church Congress, the Archbishop of York, scenting danger in too close a scrutiny of the Church's balance-sheets, condemned the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the alleged starvation of the clergy.

Another point on which the clergy are silent is that they have benefited by the agricultural revival of the past few years. But people do not expect candour from the clergy on such matters. Obviously, the whole crusade of cadging on behalf of the clergy who "are drifting rapidly towards actual destitution" is simply an astute move to excite the generosity of Church members. It should, however, be remembered that the Anglican clergy owe their exclusive position to Acts of Parliament. Equitably, their endowments belong to the whole nation, and the Anglican Church to-day only includes a minority of the population. Some day an enlightened democracy will question the right of a clerical caste to continue the enjoyment of such emoluments. The government of the Established Church is simply a priestly despotism, and the question of the future will be whether the State is to be a slave or a master of petticoated priests.

MIMNERMUS.

## Christianity and Spiritualism.

THE recent boom in Spiritualism has caused grave concern, and even alarm, amongst the adherents of the older forms of superstition. This, of course, is as might have been expected. The Churches scent a rival which bids fair to rope in a considerable number of erstwhile Christians. Regarding (as they do) the weak-minded section of the population as their natural prey, it is not to be supposed they could look with favour upon the strenuous activities of the spiritualistic mediums who are enjoying such a vogue just now. Basking in the countenance of such well-known, well-meaning, but deluded individuals as Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the professional and amateur mediums are having the time of their lives at present. But as the priests and priestesses of Spiritualism are plainly poaching on the preserves of the Christian priests, the resentment of the latter is of the usual professional keenness.

It is to be noted that, in their opposition to Spiritualism, some of the clergy are adopting the highly superior tone, and it is not easy to see why. Those of us who attempt to regulate our ideas on principles of rationalism, and whose final court of appeal in matters of belief is that

of reason and common sense, may, with some justification, entertain a feeling of contempt for the puerilities of Spiritualism, but for orthodox Christians to look down on the Spiritualists from an eminence of intellectual superiority savours of overweening vanity. Why, Christianity itself is a form of Spiritualism, and in some of its manifestations less rational than the claims put forward by the leading exponents of Spiritualism. For one thing, Christianity is frankly based on the supernatural; whereas Spiritualism, according to some of its principal advocates, makes no supernatural claims whatever. On the contrary, the Spiritualists assert that the phenomena of Spiritualism are entirely in harmony with natural laws, albeit many of these laws are as yet imperfectly understood. They therefore contend that the claims of Spiritualism not only merit, but demand, investigation from all those rationally minded. I am far from holding a brief for Spiritualism, but in this particular it should seem that it stands on a better footing than Christianity, which has always maintained that the supernatural truths it teaches must not be probed by human reason, as they are not to be comprehended by the human intellect.

I have just been reading a little book on Spiritualism written by Coulson Kernahan, and a very disappointing production it is. Perhaps one should have known what to expect from anything published under the auspices of the Religious Tract Society; but the author's name raised optimistic expectations, which, alas, were not justified by the result. Coulson Kernahan is still at the stage of citing the Garden of Eden story and the raising of Lazarus as if they were historical incidents, and it is difficult to perceive how anyone who has not evolved mentally beyond that standpoint can find any warrant for disparaging Spiritualism. He strongly deprecates any prying into the secrets beyond the grave, which he believes God has purposely withheld from us; and he instances the reserve displayed by both Christ and Lazarus in the matter of after-death experiences as forming an example on which all Christians should model themselves. He argues that if Lazarus or the risen Jesus had told what they beheld beyond the door of death, there would surely be some record of what they said. Of such record we have not a word. They were both silent on the subject, and their silence is a tacit condemnation of Spiritualism. For sheer childishness, this would be hard to beat. It apparently does not occur to Coulson Kernahan that the real reason why neither Christ nor Lazarus left any record of what lies beyond death is that they never came back to tell. Like the countless millions before and since, when they were dead they stayed dead. And the Gospel romancers of long ago were evidently as incapable of concocting a coherent and intelligible account of conditions in the other world as the Spiritualistic mediums are to-day. Still, it certainly might have occurred to Coulson Kernahan that, as we were left to find out—and *have* found out—for ourselves a vast number of things which Christ—being God—must have been able to tell us, it is just possible he left us to find out the secrets of the spirit world in the same way—if we can.

It is utter fatuity, in this connection, to talk of "things forbidden." This is the old embargo that religionists have always attempted to impose upon human speculation and investigation. There is really no means of telling what God wishes us to know or not to know except by trying to find out. If we succeed, then, seemingly, he wishes us to know it. If we do not immediately succeed—then we just keep on trying. It is too late in the day for anyone to adopt the *Thus saith the Lord* tone, with the object of scaring us from any special line of inquiry.

Coulson Kernahan tells us he has attended one Spiritualistic *seance*, and one only. Some wonderful things happened at it, though they did not suffice to make him a convert to Spiritualism. Yet, on his own showing he received at that meeting a good deal more substantial evidence in favour of Spiritualism than he can ever have obtained of the truth of Christianity. He informs us that the table conducted itself like a bucking horse, other pieces of furniture moved, strange and uncanny lights appeared, and "a concertina played by invisible hands circled about the room in the air." Nor was this all. A "voice" announced to the company that Coulson Kernahan had that afternoon finished writing a story, and the voice was able to give the exact title of the story and what it was about. Yet Coulson Kernahan assures us that he had not mentioned the story or its title to a single soul. Another marvel followed. Over the table round which they sat there appeared a strange luminosity, out of which looked a singularly beautiful and sensitive face. This face, he says, had an extraordinary resemblance to the poet Heine, in whom he was always intensely interested, and he describes it minutely.

On the whole, Coulson Kernahan seems to have had not a bad evening's entertainment. The wonder is that he was not tempted back for some more. He appears to have been exceptionally favoured on the occasion of his one and only excursion into the domain of the "discarnate." I, too, have taken part in a private *seance* with a reputed medium, but I had no luck. Nothing happened, and it was subsequently gently hinted that my presence at future sittings was not desired. Perhaps my scepticism acted as a wet blanket on the medium, or as an extinguisher on the disembodied spirits. The incident seems to me highly significant. They will tell you, of course, that it is impossible to convince one who does not wish to be convinced. That is the religious cry over again. But the fact remains that it is just the pronounced sceptics whom they must convince, otherwise the whole thing is in vain. People who believe in ghosts *may* see ghosts, but where is the non-believer who has ever seen one. Yet it is more important to convince one unbeliever than to confirm in their preconceived notions ten thousand believers.

I have also had one experience of a public Spiritualistic *seance*. The performance of the alleged clairvoyant at that particular gathering was a very transparent piece of trickery, such as could be carried through by any ordinary person who had had a little practice and possessed the necessary effrontery. The whole affair was beneath contempt, and to take further part in such functions would have been nothing less than a stultification of the intellect.

It is surprising to find Coulson Kernahan putting to Spiritualists the same silly question that has often been addressed to Secularists. He asks Sir Arthur Conan Doyle if he can "point to a single charitable institution run by Spiritualists, a hospital, a home for the old, the infirm, the poor, or the afflicted, such as the churches have built and organized by the thousand?" As, however, he has himself pointed out on the previous page (by way of disparaging the juvenility of Spiritualism when compared with Christianity) that Spiritualism dates back only sixty or seventy years, he seems to expect a great deal in the way of charitable foundations from such a young movement. How many public institutions was Christianity running in the year A.D. 70? Not that this test furnishes any criterion of the truth of either religious or non-religious opinions. It is really a question of having the control of money; and, in general, neither Spiritualists nor Secularists have, so far, acquired a superfluity of the world's goods. Further,

after all is said, it is not *Christian* money but money contributed by the public (which only by a species of hyperbole can be called Christian in this country) that maintains institutions such as are above enumerated. One expected something different from Coulson Kernahan; but the assumption that all benevolent institutions are the product of Christian belief and would be non-existent without it is a specimen of that Christian arrogance to which we have long grown accustomed.

GEORGE SCOTT.

### Rev. Joseph Symes.

YOUR excellent American contemporary, the New York *Truthseeker*, has, like the *Freethinker*, been compelled to raise its annual subscription from \$3.50 to \$5 per annum. There has been a printers' strike in New York, which has cost the operatives alone some 3½ million dollars, and has driven many of the employers permanently from New York. It has resulted in the workers drawing about \$40 per week, and put up the cost of producing the *Truthseeker*, whose office receipts had dropped one-half, 16⅔ per cent. in printers' wages alone. However, the paper, which missed five numbers during the strike, got out three, set up by the editor himself.

But this is nothing to do with the subject of this article, except that, in the issue of October 18, the editor gave, offhand, a list of clergymen who had taken to the Freethought platform; then, after scratching his head for two months and missing five numbers during the strike, he, on December 13, produced an article entitled "There are Others." This was a fresh list of ex-clerical lecturers, and the second of the fallen angels was rendered as "Joseph Symmes."

Now, it was in the office of Mr. Joseph Symes that I first got to know and welcome the *Truthseeker*. The papers were on each other's exchange list for, say, fifteen years; so I should have thought that a better shot might have been made at the editor's name.

Joseph Symes, when a young man, entered the Methodist ministry, and was appointed to a circuit somewhere in the North of England. He early began to realize that to make this life miserable, to forbid all kinds of amusement as snares of the Devil, was not the way to commend a religion, still less that of Jesus Christ, who came eating and drinking, and was a friend of—well, gay people.

So Joseph began letting himself go, and presently his brethren began to think that they had found a handy pit to trip him into.

So complaint was made to the authorities, and presently Symes was confronted with a few pew-fulls of solemn-looking seniors who had come down to hear his heresies. He had, fortunately, been warned, and, to prevent misrepresentation, read the sermon, instead of preaching extempore, as was his custom.

The sermon was a fair scorcher. As he continued to advocate dancing and other abominations the corners of their mouths went down and their hair rose. Joseph's enemies were delighted. He was hailed before the Assembly and asked what he could possibly say for himself.

He said he had nothing to retract or apologize for. He saw so many distinguished divines in church that he had been too bashful to inflict his own crude ideas on them; he had, therefore, taken the liberty to read a sermon out of this book, and he produced a book of sermons by John Wesley!

Never was a court so taken aback. They had to honourably acquit him and leave him at liberty to go

on spreading these hell-fire doctrines. What else could orthodox Wesleyans do? But Symes had taken their measure, and, after a short time, just long enough to leave no one in doubt as to his victory, he handed in his resignation and became, first a labour organizer and, soon, a Freethought lecturer.

Mr. Symes had some amusing stories to tell, for he was very quick to see the funny side of things. I remember one story of an incident when travelling in a crowded carriage in England. An old gentleman got in and started handing tracts round. It didn't take him long to get a glance at it out of the corner of his eye, and, when he was offered one, he said he would be pleased to take it if the old gentleman would explain it to him.

It had a picture of the holy family at the top. Symes began to read it—something about Jesus Christ, and he immediately broke off and asked:—

“Who is the gentleman?”

The old fellow gave a gasp at his ignorance and said:—

“Why, the Son of God.”

“Is that he up there?”

“Yes.”

“Who is that woman?”

“His mother.”

“Oh, Mrs. God!”

At this the horrified old pietist began to explain that Mary was the wife of Joseph. “Do you mean to tell me that young God's parents were not married?”

By this time everyone in the carriage was choking with laughter. The old fellow began to smell a rat, and gave up his conversation as hopeless, getting out of the carriage on the first opportunity.

The *Truthseeker* has omitted the Rev. J. T. Lloyd, Presbyterian, from its list of converted parsons. Leslie Stephen was, I believe, another.

J. LATHAM.

## Santa Claus and God.

I GIVE Santa Claus precedence without hesitation, because the modern German conception is far nobler than that of the ancient Jews. Made in the image and likeness of a well-fed, comfort-loving old gentleman of jolly, homely disposition, Santa Claus is the embodiment of good nature, of unselfishness, and of that contentment which alone comes to the *marchand de bonheur*. Santa is human, he is flesh and blood, he is near to us, he is not on a pedestal. Who is there who does not know his jolly old red face, his laughing eyes, snow-white hair, and well-preserved teeth for one of his age? Nothing shadowy, indefinite, ghostly, or elusive about Father Christmas; he brings with him, even from his snow-covered roof-tops, a warmth and a cordiality that can thaw even a frozen heart and keep us from forgetting that life is short, and that we may as well have a jolly time while we can. One thinks of God with awe and trembling, or is supposed to think of him in that way. Not even Gilbert Chesterton could call God jolly, and the idiot who wrote of him as “a friend for little children” should be condemned to eternal heaven for telling such a whopper. Who would tolerate a friend who had to be feared, conciliated, humoured, and placated; who became “huffy” if he didn't get all the attention he expected; who was always promising a devil of a lot, and giving nothing, yet taking credit for every good thing that came one's way from whatever source—a friend who would “do it on us” for some trifling misdeed of our parents, a narrow-minded friend who kept up spite about trifles and had an inflated sense of his own im-

portance? Even God the Son, who is reported to have said “Suffer little children to come unto me,” would be a wash-out at pleasing youngsters. True, walking on the waves might appeal to them, much the same as Peter Pan's flying prowess; but, miracles apart, “the man of sorrows” wouldn't cut much ice at juvenile's parties. What child would be bothered with a friend who never laughed or played a game? Kiddies like a grown-up friend who is something of a sport, one who can do conjuring tricks with pennies or a handkerchief, improvise a jazz band, imitate a lion, squint his eyes horribly, or submit to being a quadruped that the little beggars may ride. That's the kind of friend beloved by healthy, frisky young animals of boys and girls.

We were always told that if we did not do this, or if we did do that, that God would most surely punish us, and now, in our grown-up days, we warn the children that if they are bad Santa Claus will not bring them nice presents. But, bless your heart, Father Christmas forgives nearly everything. I did once know a boy who had been very, very horrid to his mother, in spite of his father's repeated warnings, and instead of presents in his stocking, like his brothers and sisters, he got a long letter from Santa Claus full of gentle reproach and good moral guidance. I am happy to say that this had the desired effect, for next year young Charlie had a lovely Teddy bear tied to his stocking. Regularly every December my wife and I quote this terrible warning to some member of our large and growing family when the noise has become intolerable. This past Christmas we feared that a check might be administered to Malcolm for excessive cheek to long-suffering parents, but as he himself said when they were gloating over their stockings on Christmas morning: “Well, Santa Claus is a good old spud after all.”

“God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform,” but that's far too vague; Santa Claus comes down the chimney and delivers the goods. True, no one has ever seen him doing it, and Marie wanted to know how Paddy's big horse came down such a small opening, but “blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe,” and then the presents *were* real, so Santa Claus must have managed it somehow.

God, we are told, only gives us what pleases him, or what is good for us, or what *he* thinks is good for us, which is not by any means the same thing. Santa Claus doesn't consider his own personal feelings at all, and, thank goodness, he doesn't study what is good for us. What matter a headache or a bilious attack after a real good blow-out at Christmas? It is a poor heart that never overeats. It will be a good time for humanity when the Fiend-God of the kill-joy Christians has been dumped on the scrap-heap—a sad day for the human heart when we lose faith in Santa Claus.

J. EFFEEL.

We promise heaven, methinks, too cheaply, and assign large revenues to minors, incompetent to manage them. Epitaphs run upon this topic of consolation, till the very frequency induces a cheapness. Tickets for admission into Paradise are sculptured out at a penny a letter, twopence a syllable.—*Charles Lamb*.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.—On Sunday next Miss K. Browning will give an address on “A Wisdom Religion,” and as this is Miss Browning's first visit to North London, we should like to give her a very cordial welcome to the camp of the opposition. We are looking forward to a pleasant and instructive evening, and should like to meet each member of the Branch accompanied by a friend and his annual subscription, which is now due. *Verb sap.*—F. AKROYD, Sec.

## Acid Drops.

That daredevil body, the Parks Committee of the London County Council, has recommended that permission be given for the playing of games on Sunday in Hainault Forest and on Hackney Marshes. The matter will come up for discussion on the Council on the 27th, and some people are much upset. The Sabbatarians are mustering their forces, the London churches are to join in a protest, and the Bishop of London is expected to take a leading part in the agitation. Now that he is finished with thanking God for the Zeppelins, and telling us fairy tales of the deep religion he saw manifested among our troops in France, he is ready for fresh worlds to conquer. And an agitation about Sunday will suit the clergy very well. It will give them an appearance of activity, also an excuse for not saying anything on more dangerous topics.

For ourselves, we are quite certain of one thing. Those who have the real interest of the younger generation at heart, and have no ulterior purpose to serve, will welcome any attempt to provide the people with healthy outdoor games on Sunday or any other day. And a people who will permit themselves to be bullied into closing their own public grounds against themselves on Sunday because of a religious taboo imposed by semi-savages have no clear justification in calling themselves either free or civilized. The *Daily News* says it is not known how the Labour members will vote. We hope they will vote in such a way as will inform these religious busybodies that the time has gone by when the affairs of the community are to be arranged so as to promote the petty interests of religious sects.

In an article on "The Church Militant," the *Daily Express* (London) says "it has been too difficult for the parson to be a man among men." Just so! But our contemporary should remember that so many parsons wear petticoats.

Miss Phæbe Newman, a well-known religious worker at Newport, Isle of Wight, hanged herself in a woodshed. The restraining influence of Christianity is not marked in this instance.

"Nowhere but in the Church," says the Rev. G. G. Fletcher, a Blackburn vicar, "is such an abuse tolerated as that of a man hanging on to his position and enjoying its emoluments long after he has ceased to be capable of the discharge of his duties." What a comment on the cry of the "starving" clergy!

Parish magazines are usually as exciting reading as undertaker's advertisements. An exception, however, must be made in the case of the *Barking Parish Magazine*, which contains a lament over the passing of the "pale young curate" of the Victorian era. "That hero," says the clerical editor, "of a thousand bun-fights, that juggler of tea-cups, he is going." Exactly! And the only persons who will lament the curate's passing will be the elderly virgins who used to work embroidered slippers for his sacred feet.

More news of the "starving" clergy. On retirement from Oakleigh Park Church, Barnet, the Rev. J. Oates was presented with a cheque for £873.

A Southend-on-Sea alderman declares that the town has the worst kept "Sabbath" in England. Yet the town possesses nearly fifty places of worship, and not even cinemas are allowed to be open on Sunday. We should like to know what the worthy alderman really expects. His ideal must be the Sahara desert.

The wills of deceased parsons, published in the press, do not bear out the statement that the clergy are "starving." The late Rev. W. T. Thorp, of Chathill, Northumberland, left £65,069.

Rev. Dr. Horton is very despairing about the times. Never, he says, was there such a record in this country

of degraded and ruined lives. "The reason was that religion was being put aside, and all thoughts of the future life were being left out of account." We do not think that the position is nearly so bad as Dr. Horton depicts, and the demoralization that exists is no more than the normal results of a long war, and the general lowering of the standards of truth and justice and honesty that accompanies all wars. And if our public men, including the clergy, had the moral courage to say that, instead of keeping up an attenuated version of "The boys are splendid," with its reflection of "The brotherhood of the trenches," and glorification of militarism, we should be so much nearer the better time.

But it is very curious to find Dr. Horton putting the demoralization down to a decline of religion. The people of this country have been reared on religion. They have been more under the control of religious organizations than of any other. And one may surely test the value of this religious training by the way in which it withstands stress. If the position of affairs is so bad as Dr. Horton says, it is certain that the responsibility must lie largely with religion. If this demoralization had occurred in a non-Christian country, Dr. Horton would have been the first to attribute it to the lack of Christian training. We have had Christian training, and the consequences are before the world. It may be said that we should not have been better without Christianity. It is certain that we could not have been any worse. And whatever be the way out of our present troubles, it is also certain that it will not be by way of a larger dose of Christianity.

At the Young Men's Christian Association's headquarters at Tottenham Court Road, London, *tableaux-vivants* of Hilaire Belloc's *Cautionary Tales* have been produced. A very pleasant variation on the "cautionary tales of the Bible!"

The American Evangelical Churches have decided to make an appeal for a fund of three hundred million pounds to be collected during the next five years. These are days of big figures, and we suppose we must take this as an attempt to keep in the fashion. The *Daily News* correspondent says it is expected the money will be raised, and will be an important economic element in the situation. We do not doubt it. With enough money, there will always be found a number who will discover that the case for religion is very convincing. And yet we would undertake to say that with one-thirtieth of the money we would render the other twenty-nine parts quite inoperative. When one looks at what a Movement such as ours does, and with what meagre resources, and against such heavily subsidized interests, it almost makes one believe in Providence.

The Rev. J. F. Matthews makes the sorrowful confession that "at present the world does not believe in our sincerity." He is quite right. Then he adds: "Once let the world believe in us and the rest is easy." True, again; but the fact is that the world no longer takes the Church and its claims seriously, because it has found out that the Church is a consummate hypocrite, pretending to be what it is not, what it never has been, and never can be.

The *Church Times* is not afraid of Labour governing provided it is Christianized. We suppose that sentiment will be endorsed by all anti-Labour people. But a Labour that is Christianized is certain to be a Labour that is docile and shortsighted, and that would serve as a very good method for spiking the guns of a Labour that was neither. The *C. T.* says it is only common sense to desire that those who rule over us shall be educated and Christianized. It is very difficult for a Christian to realize that in the modern State we have no right whatever to ask that our rulers shall be Christianized or Brahmanized. The demand is just one of those impertinences that seem inseparable from Christianity. We have only a right to demand that our rulers shall be as just and as intelligent and as honourable as we can get them. A strong religious conviction has never given us these things, and never will.

The *Daily News* quotes what it calls an "amazing comment" from a City mission magazine:—

He had been a Socialist with pronounced views, but happily this doctrine disappeared with his sins, leaving him a free and happy man.

Now, if instead of Socialist the word had been "Free-thinker," the good, pious *Daily News* would have seen nothing in the comment to arouse attention. And yet the one would have been quite as impertinent as the other. But, of course, Socialism is now of some political importance, and that makes a world of difference. The game of the pietists coquetting with Socialism, and Socialists playing to the religious gallery is very amusing to anyone who watches the situation with a certain degree of detachment.

There are some pious folk left in this country. Exhibiting a fine black eye, a woman at Willesden complained that her husband "had done the same thing religiously for years."

Profiteering in hymn and prayer-books was alleged in a complaint before the Portsmouth Committee. God and Mammon are very old partners.

A threepenny-piece will not purchase much nowadays, but it is evidently still to the fore in Church collections. At any rate, the Vicar of St. Peter's, Blackburn, reminds his parishioners that their threepenny-bits are now worth only three halfpence, and hopes that people will be more liberal with their offerings.

Despite the recent adverse vote in the House of Lords, the Anglican clergy who desire the right to sit in Parliament are pursuing their attempts. The Anglican clergy are already over-represented in the Second Chamber.

The Rev. R. Thornbler, of Kensal Green, declares that "the cinema must enter the church," and he proposes to screen religious films in order to attract the young folk. It will be interesting to note if the chaplain ousts Charlie Chaplin in the affection of the youngsters.

Roman Catholic ecclesiastics are a trifle afraid of world-politics just at present, and are waiting to see how the cat jumps before doing anything. In order to fill up the time of waiting, they are concentrating on a crusade against the alleged immodest dresses of modern women. Truly, a pleasant pastime for prelates!

The clergy are turning the peace to their own account. Four sanctuary lamps have been erected as a War-memorial at Hawarden Parish Church.

It is not often that we find ourselves in agreement with the clergy, but we cordially endorse a suggestion made by the Rev. Mr. Morris, Vicar of All Saints, Southport, and reported in the *Daily Express* for January 14. Mr. Morris says: "It might not be a bad thing for England if the churches were to close down for six months." That strikes us as a very sensible proposition. The only fault we have to find with it is on account of its moderation. Why limit the period to six months? Surely if the Vicar is generous enough to give up the Church for six months in a year, the people ought to meet him by closing the Church for the other six months. All the self-sacrifice ought not to be on the side of the clergy.

The Vicar, however, has a motive for his suggestion. He explains that "this country has been brought up in the lap of ecclesiastical luxury, and is Gospel burdened. There are few towns in this country that are not over-churched. Religion is so easily to be obtained that we do not value it. It is too cheap." So the Vicar thinks that if he can make a shortage in religion he may stimulate the demand. We are afraid the Bishop is too sanguine. There have been rows in this country when the Government threatened the supply of beer, but we have heard of no agitation for a supply of

religion. And the suggestion to close the Churches for six months involves certain risks. It might be that after doing without the Churches for half a year the people might wonder why on earth they ever put up with them at all. Doctors often find it troublesome to get patients who have become used to crutches or other artificial aids to give up using them after the need for them has gone. And it is much the same with the mental crutches supplied by the Churches. Many people are so used to relying upon them, they have no belief that they can walk without their aid. Something is needed to give them a little more faith in themselves, and the Vicar's suggestion, if acted upon, might be just the thing. But we are afraid it will not be. The rest of the clergy will see that nothing so risky is attempted. We shall continue to get religion whatever else we may go short of. The Churches will hang on as long as possible. And that will be until they are found out.

The *Glasgow Herald* reports that at a meeting of the Education Authority it was decided to delete from the Syllabus the teaching of sex hygiene. It was proposed by Mr. Maxton that the teaching of the Shorter Catechism should also be deleted. The proposal was rejected. So the position is—nonsense, as usual; sense curtailed. We wonder what the new Labour members are doing? Are they still afraid of offending the Churches?

The *Methodist Times* is distressed to find that in the industrial and usually pious districts of South Wales, particularly in "the teeming colliery area of Maesteg," "Secularist propaganda abound, with the result that Sunday-school scholars, on commencing work, frequently become non-churchgoers." To remedy this deplorable state of things, the Wesleyan Conference appointed the Rev. Ernest Smith to that important charge in the Bridgend Circuit. Mr. Smith's object is to show the reasonableness of Christian belief. He has just delivered a series of addresses, at the close of which questions were allowed. Of these there was a great abundance, and on several occasions they lasted forty-five minutes. Mr. Smith has already discovered that the Secularists of Maesteg are independent thinkers, and that in spite of persecution and boycott they are resolved to do their utmost to disseminate their principles and strengthen their cause, being persuaded that Reason and Faith have always been and must ever be sworn enemies.

A paragraph concerning the production of a miracle play at Rotherhithe Parish Church was headed "Church-Theatre." The play might have been called appropriately "The Divine Comedy."

The long-promised revival of religion is overdue, but a notable "Christening" took place at the Clyde when the light-criuser *Enterprise* was christened by Lady Maclay. The boat has twelve torpedo tubes.

The clergy are talking earnestly about winning back the worker, thereby admitting they have lost him, and that they cannot get on without him. They are eager to teach and educate him in order that he may once more prove useful and profitable to them. The truth is, however, that the average worker is now too wide-awake to allow himself to be exploited again by either Church or State.

Providence is said to notice the fall of sparrows, but is, apparently, indifferent to the fall of clergymen. Canon Hodgson, of Aston, Birmingham, fell whilst cycling, and died. Prebendary Scott-Webster, rector of All Souls', Marylebone, was killed in a motor-car accident.

Among the bequests of Lady Tate, widow of the well-known sugar refiner and the founder of the Tate Gallery, is a bequest of £12,000 to the Rev. Bernard Snell, together with a library, and her wines, spirits, and cigars. £8,000 is to be devoted to the purchase of an annuity for Mr. Snell. We have no doubt but that this preacher of the gospel of poverty will bear the burden with becoming fortitude.



### C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

January 25, South Place, London; February 1, Stratford Town Hall; February 15, Plymouth; February 22, South Shields; February 26, Glasgow (Debate on Spiritualism); February 29, Glasgow; March 7, Leicester; March 14, Birmingham; March 21, Manchester; April 18, Swansea.

### To Correspondents.

H. S. KEEBLE.—We are obliged for your activities on behalf of the paper. A copy of *Religion and Sex* has been sent.

H. M. BROOK.—We never denied the existence of good things in the Bible—it would be a miracle if there were not. But we do not see how their presence removes or weakens anything we said in our last week's "Views and Opinions."

D. ADAMSON.—You are right in regarding the wave of Spiritualism as symptomatic of the mass of superstition current in society. It is a kind of mental barometer, and should call attention to a danger on which we have frequently dwelt. You are probably correct that most of our readers would pay 6d. for a copy of the *Freethinker* rather than see it go under. But we have no intention of charging the one or permitting the other. After forty years of fighting the old paper can defy anything and anyone.

T. OAKELY.—We shall be glad to do anything we can to help in organizing Freethought work in Dover. Please let us know in what way you think we can be of assistance. We congratulate you in keeping your children "untainted by religion." And we wish all other parents were able to say the same.

K. MAXWELL.—We are sending the paper for three months to the address given. Pleased to hear that you are reading *Religion and Sex* with so much enjoyment.

E. P. (Birmingham).—Mr. Arthur Hopkinson, M.P., is only illustrating the compendious want of knowledge of many Members of Parliament. When one reads what such men write, one can understand why so many of the nation's troubles remain unremedied.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—Mrs. M. Blackman, 2s. 6d.; W. P. Rudd, £1 10s.; Miss A. Robertson, 7s. 6d.

"PIM."—Dr. Foote's *Plain Home Talk* would probably give you the information you desire. We do not know who is now the English publisher of the work.

S. SCOTT.—We are pleased to have your appreciation of Mr. Russell's article, and also your good opinion of the *Freethinker*. We are not at all blind to the evil effects of Roman Catholicism. It is still the greatest of the Christian Churches, and therefore the most dangerous. It is also the one with the most brains at its command. Our columns are, of course, open to Mr. Russell whenever he feels moved to write again.

V. J. THOMAS.—We cannot pass opinions upon alleged particular happenings at Spiritualistic meetings without very full details, and even then one might require the alleged happening repeated under test conditions. With the best of intentions, it is possible for a report to be inaccurate, and therefore misleading.

J. H. MATSON.—We presume the meaning is that mental activity began long before the appearance of man, and is to be found in connection with animal organization long before his appearance. We are pleased to learn that you place so high a value upon Mr. Cohen's *Religion and Sex*. Some of the reviews we have seen of it are rather instructive. They dare not damn it without making the writers ridiculous, and they are afraid to praise for fear of offending the religious readers. So they exhibit a queer mixture of ability and "funk" that is, perhaps, characteristic of our press, which one of our prominent writers wrote us the other day, was, in his opinion, "the most cowardly and anti-moral in civilization."

MR. J. BRODIE writes: "In reference to your correspondent, J. Kinnard's, letter in this week's *Freethinker*, I would like to point out that for a considerable period, during the joint editorship of the *N. R.* by Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant, the title page read thus: 'The National Reformer.' The policy of this paper is Republican, Malthusian, and Atheistic, the latter part being also in big bold type."

E. A. PHIPSON.—We appreciate your interest in the paper, but we cannot see our way to adopting your suggestion. We are always willing to publish letters from our readers, so long as they are relevant to the purposes of the *Freethinker* and are brief. Both considerations are important.

The Secular Society, Limited, offices is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

The National Secular Society's offices 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, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

### Sugar Plums.

To-day (January 25), at 3.30, Mr. Cohen lectures at the South Place Institute on "A Freethinker's View of the League of Nations." The League of Nations is easily the most important question before the nation at the moment, and on the question of whether it is to become a reality, or a mere formal thing that in practice shall be no more than a lip concession to ideals of justice and humanitarianism depends the welfare of humanity for a long time to come. As a Freethinker, Mr. Cohen has no party or political purpose to serve, and it is just possible that he may say things that others will not say—not because these others do not see them, but rather because certain considerations prevent their being said. At any rate, we hope that our friends will make the lecture as widely known as possible.

East London Freethinkers should note that next Sunday (February 1) Mr. Cohen lectures in the Town Hall, Stratford, on "Why Men Believe in God." The Stratford Town Hall may be reached by tram or 'bus from any part of London. Slips advertising the meetings may be obtained from either the N.S.S. or the *Freethinker* office, and we hope that friends will do their best to distribute them and to otherwise advertise the meetings. A fortnight later Mr. Lloyd will speak in the same hall.

We are asked by the Executive of the N.S.S. to say that in all cases where Branches see opportunities for arranging special lectures but are unable to do so for financial reasons, the Executive is quite willing to do all it can to assist in the matter. Such Branches should communicate at once with the Secretary, when every effort will be made to see that the needed assistance is given. But no opportunity of doing propagandist work should be lost for want of acquainting headquarters with the position of affairs. Lecturers will be sent from London where necessary.

Mr. W. H. Thresh lectures to-day (Jan. 25) in the Repertory Theatre, Birmingham, at 7 o'clock, on "From Savage to Shakespeare." This is not Mr. Thresh's first visit to Birmingham, and there will be no need to advise those who heard him before to again attend. But they should each try and bring at least one friend along.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti visits Manchester to-day (January 28), and lectures in the Co-operative Hall, Ardwick, at 3 o'clock, on "Primitive Brains in Modern Skulls." and, at 6.30, on "Christianity's Harmony with Science and Anthropology." We presume the latter title is sarcastic. We hope that all our readers in Manchester will do their best to advertise the meetings, and so give Mr. Rosetti the audience he deserves.

We have received a number of names for recipients of the *Freethinker* free for thirteen weeks, but we have room for several more. The paper is being sent to all the addresses sent. We shall be pleased to hear from others without delay.

### "Christianity Its Own Proof."

It is quite common in these days to hear it asserted that there is no need to attack the citadel of superstition inasmuch as there is no such structure left to attack. That this is emphatically not so is abundantly clear when one considers the flimsy groundwork of belief of many professing Christians—flimsy—yet how strong to the Professor! You may bring, if you will, your heavy artillery to bear on the question; you may cite the successive questions of science, of philosophy, of comparative mythology, of destructive criticism, of popular indifference—all to no end. In the mind of many earnest (and ill-instructed) believers, one is met by the triumphant query, that seems to admit (at least to the proposer) of no possible refutation: "Is not Christianity its own proof?"

The apologist invites the sceptic to note that despite all modern thought may have to say, nevertheless, every important modern State either has a Christian establishment or is permeated by Christian morality. We may pass over, for the time being, the highly debatable countries of France, China, Japan, India, etc., and will concentrate on the claim which further asserts that the Galilean is worshipped by upwards of 300,000,000 followers of every persuasion.

This is the argument roughly: Because a Galilean teacher has a following in the civilized world in this twentieth century, therefore the system named after him must be true.

This is merely the main part of the proposition. The informed believer points out triumphantly how universal is the cross; how it figures on our national flag, and on the international flag of Mercy named after it; how we cannot even date an ordinary business letter without reference to the birthday (putative) of the "Redeemer," and so on. He invites us to observe that the modern world dates itself "Anno Domini," for the most part, and not "Anno Hegiræ," or "Anno Mundi."

We are asked to observe the prevalence of Christian hospitals, Christian orphanages, and other forms of Christian philanthropy. After having patiently listened to, or read all this and more, usually put forward in that tone of triumphant hysteria which seems so strangely reminiscent of Teuton propaganda during the War, we are finally asked in a tone of crescent assurance: "Does not Christianity then prove itself? What need have we of proof?" To all this kind of argument the Freethinker must firmly reply: "Non sequitur."

What we will call the "numeral" argument is the embodiment of a most vicious principle.

Truth does *not* depend upon the number of supporters that can be mastered. A thing is either true or it is not. If it is, it does not need a solitary believer to proclaim his conviction. If it is not, all the affirmation to the contrary cannot make any difference.

One might remark in passing, how profound is the ignorance of the average Christian as to the relative numbers of the great religions.

It is a solid fact that every fourth man, woman, and child in the world is either a Buddhist or is born in a Buddhist community. This connotes, roughly, some 400,000,000 human beings. Then the swarming millions of India contain but an infinitesimal percentage of Christians. Africa, again, is becoming increasingly Mohammedan.

Does not the argument cut both ways? Cannot the Buddhist fairly say, "Do you not think, that in view of the fact that Buddha is adored by countless myriads, this is in itself sufficient proof of his Godhead?" And what of the Jew, the Confucian, the Shintoist, *et hoc omne genus*? Not only are they all numerous, but their tenets, teachings, ceremonies, origins, fears and hopes, all are alike. Clearly, on this ground alone, all religions must "prove themselves true."

Clearly (and here the Christian will agree) this will not do. We are approaching Theosophy, with its row of deities all amicably and complacently arrayed on the same platform! Decidedly we must not appeal to the beloved democratic method of counting noses.

Then as to the prevalence of the cross, which is claimed as an exclusively Christian sign. Well, it has been pointed out often enough now by learned critics that the cross was also the hammer of Thor, the phallic symbol of fertile productivity, the expression of the universe itself, with its four corners and so forth. The cross is no more exclusively Christian than the legend of the Cross pertains particularly to Jesus of Nazareth.

As to the third point, the prevalence of philanthropic institutions, these are due simply to humanitarian impulse and instinct. They are distinct from religious feeling entirely, despite the thin veneer of fiction universally found in hospitals, orphanages, etc. The records of the past yield shining proof that Paganism, too, cared for the destitute, the orphan, and the indigent. The fact that there is a *necessity* for such institutions in this enlightened *Christian* era is complacently passed over by the apologist.

In face of the foregoing, can the believer still proclaim loudly that "Christianity is its own proof"? Quite apart from the fallacy of the appeal to numbers and the appeal to philanthropy, what of the purely political causes which led equally to the displacement of Mithraism, and the enthronement of Christianity in its place?

Christianity did *not* emerge by virtue of its transcendent supernatural sanction, but simply because the Emperors, from the time of Constantine onwards, gave every State encouragement and privilege to a creed which so clearly bade the slave and the helot be content in their present misery because of an eternal reward to come.

The fact is that the majority of Christians who use this particular argument of self-proof do not know how many facts are all ready to hand for their refutation. We prefer to pass over the morality and mentality of those who do know the facts, and nevertheless still repeat the well worn argument, "As it was in the beginning," etc. The will to believe even in these days is not the least of the obstacles to mental progress. We still have the type among us who, when driven from point to point, is, at the last, still content to exclaim with St. Augustine, "Credo quia impossibile!"

E. W. STONE.

Nature and Mind—to Christians we don't speak so,  
Thence to burn Atheists we seek so,  
For such discourses very dangerous be.  
Nature is Sin, and Mind is Devil:  
Doubt they beget in sameless revel,  
Their hybrid in deformity.  
Not so with us!—Two only races  
Have in the Empire kept their places,  
And prop the throne with worthy weight.  
The Saints and Knights are they: together  
They breast each spell of thunder-weather,  
And take for pay the Church and State.

—Goethe's "Faust" (Part II.).

## Epicurus or Augustine?

PERHAPS the setback given to the progress of knowledge during the ascendancy of the Christian religion cannot be better realized by the average reader than by taking a glance at the leading thought of Paganism and early Christianity.

If we make an acquaintance with some of the chief ideas of such a Pagan thinker as Epicurus, and such a Christian teacher as Augustine, we should read a lesson that should make us beware of Christian doctrine.

Had the teaching of Epicurus succeeded in gripping the multitude and the teaching of Augustine failed, the progress of sound thinking would have been easier and more rapid than it has been.

Epicureanism contained in itself the germs of scientific progress. It was open to correction. It stimulated thought and efforts at improvement. The teaching of Augustine was of the essence of dogmatism, and all dogma is the negation of scientific progress.

Epicurus died about 270 before the Christian Era, leaving behind him a legacy of thought, although since partly lost, which the world has too much neglected. He deserves our thanks, if only for insisting that happiness is the chief object of man, and all true happiness is to be found in virtuous living.

To Epicurus the origin of knowledge, of action, and of morals, was to be found in sensation. Man, coming in contact with the outer world, is influenced by various objects. He becomes conscious of various sensations, and, ultimately, as the result of experience, is able to form a fund of general knowledge, from the particular sensations of which he has become conscious. Without sensations there can be no mental activity. The memory enables man to store up a great deal of knowledge which becomes useful for future guidance.

One of the most important results of sensation is action, the primary object of which is to avoid pain and obtain pleasure.

This teaching has too often been misrepresented, as if by pleasure Epicurus meant the indulgence of every debased and sensual appetite that man is capable of. There is no reason to believe that Epicurus meant anything of the kind; and the fact that some of his professed followers have lived lives of sensual enjoyment is no condemnation of his teaching.

For Epicurus true pleasure was happiness resulting from virtuous or right living, the reward of which is to be found in the satisfaction which comes from the knowledge that one has done the right thing—as far as possible—without fear of what censure may be passed by others. A moral attainment of which we frequently fail owing to our readiness to act in compliance with the opinions of others whether they are worth consideration or not.

Many of the opinions of Epicurus were, no doubt, in error from a modern scientific standpoint, but this is no great reflection on him.

He was on the right track, and science had not then made available a great deal of the data which now lies before us. He failed to a large extent to grasp the relationship between individual actions and social requirements, and, perhaps, tended to isolate the virtuous man too much from social life. But how many teachers have since failed in this respect, and how many fail even now?

According to Epicurus, there is no sensation, no thought, no memory, without living bodies. All forms of being are composed of the same fundamental material and different forms, whether living or not living, are produced by combinations in various ways of the same

elements. Facts which have not been disproved up to the present day.

Concerning the universe, Epicurus taught that it is the sum of everything. Within it we must not only live and move and have our being, but must also be content to seek the solutions of our problems or leave them unsolved. It may, of course, be objected that his conception of a "Void" was of something in addition to the universe. But there was nothing fantastic or supernatural about this "Void"; it was conceived in an attempt to find a medium in which bodies can move, and, no doubt, had Epicurus possessed the scientific knowledge of to-day he would have expressed himself consistently with his belief in the universe as the sum of everything. His "Void" is not an intelligent being outside of the universe any more than is the universe itself an intelligent being.

The physiology and psychology of Epicurus require correction from a modern standpoint, but it is to his credit that his main generalization has stood the test of science.

He conceived the soul to be made of a peculiar substance composed of fire and air and other subtle elements, diffused throughout the body; but he rejected the idea of a soul independent of the body.

Psychic activity, manifest in desires, thoughts, passions, has no existence apart from a body capable of sensation. With the death of the body, the so-called soul of Epicurus ceases to exist. Personal immortality is a myth. Without sense-organ there can be no sensation, and consequently no thought, or will, or memory—in a word, no conscious life.

In his treatment of the gods, Epicurus made some concessions to popular beliefs. He allowed them to exist, but treated them as useless; in its way, one of the finest criticisms ever passed on the gods of popular belief. In the natural order of things they could be nothing; but Epicurus allowed them verbally to live in bliss and freedom from all cares and desires, and all the while laughed up his sleeve at them as mythical.

The wise could see that he treated them as imaginary; the less wise had no cause to be offended at his generosity in permitting them to exist. They desired the gods to have existence, and Epicurus complied to some extent in order to escape popular wrath, and thereby gain opportunity to continue his more rational teaching and leave it to do its work.

This is not the method which many of us approve at the present time, but we must remember that the opportunities for outspoken expression of Freethought are better now than they have often been.

When we pass to the teaching of Augustine, who, being born a Christian in 354, experienced phases of doubt and indifference, but became finally converted to Christianity about 387, we realize that we are in a very different mental atmosphere from that of Epicurus. We are in the atmosphere of faith and intellectual stultification.

To Augustine nothing exists except by the power of God, and only by his grace are men "chosen in Christ" to be saved from damnation. But this mode of salvation operates only within the Catholic Church. Moral living is of no avail with regard to salvation unless a man has faith in the Church and all her teachings.

According to the teaching of Augustine, there can be no justice without religious motive; slavery is justified as a punishment for sin; property belongs only to the faithful; and, while marriage may be permitted, it would be better if marriage were abolished, continence established, and, ultimately, the heavenly kingdom realized by the downfall of this earthy state.

Into the details of the doctrine of this apostle of faith and darkness we need not enter. The reader may do so for himself, if he wish; but it is here only necessary to draw attention to the contrast between the fundamental teaching of Epicurus and that of Augustine. The teaching of the one was the result of the application of reason to experience, while that of the other was the outcome of basic assumptions made in the interest of faith, and set forth with a show of reasoning.

The sequel to the triumph of Augustine's method was the suppression of scientific thought in Europe for hundreds of years. Fortunately, the suppression did not culminate in extinction, and the method of Epicurus is well on the road to final supremacy.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

### Book Chat.

The main fault we have to find with *Race and Nationality*, by Dr. J. Oakesmith (Heinemann, 10s. 6d.), is the quality of the paper on which it is printed. Publishers might really refrain from printing first-class works on paper which, to anyone with a feeling of respect for a book, is a source of constant annoyance. And Dr. Oakesmith's work does really deserve a better setting. The theme of the book is twofold. It offers a correction of our notions of nationality, and removes the conception of race as an operative factor in the evolution of societies and in the determination of their destinies. The fallacy of "race" has been well hammered by Mr. J. M. Robertson, and with regard to the Jewish people Mr. Cohen has dealt briefly, but thoroughly, with them in his *Creed and Character*. We see, therefore, nothing to disagree with in the author's contention that "Purity of race is a metaphysical conception," and that the "objective influence of race in the evolution of nationality is a fiction." Unfortunately, it is still one of those fictions that do much harm so far as accurate thinking is concerned. We find journalists and writers speaking of the capacity of the Irish race for this, or the Germanic race for that, or the Latin race for something else, and having conjured up the bogey allowing it to rule them. All the time there is the fact staring us in the face that the Irish "race" is made up largely of English settlers, that if we go back far enough we find the Germanic race becoming French, or the French, German, that all the peoples of Europe are of a more or less "mongrel" breed, and none more so than the inhabitants of these islands.

So far as the conception of Nationality is rooted in that of race, that also must be dismissed as irrational. But there is another conception that we think will commend itself to most, and that is the one that is set forth in the volume before us. This is, that nationality is neither a racial nor a biological fact, but a psychological one. Substantially the view here adopted is the one set forth many years ago by John Stuart Mill:

A portion of mankind may be said to constitute a nation if they are united among themselves by common sympathies which do not exist between themselves and others. This feeling of nationality may have been generated by various causes. Sometimes it is the effect of identity of race and descent. Community of language and community of religion greatly contribute to it. Geographical limits are one of the causes. But the strongest of all is identity of political antecedents, the possession of a national history, and consequent community of recollections, collective pride, humiliation, pleasure, and regret, connected with the same incidents in the past.

To this it may, of course, be replied that in any one "nation" there is no common idea or emotion, but only a number of conflicting beliefs and feelings that tend to group themselves around certain specific interests. That may be admitted, but there nevertheless remains a certain way of viewing life that is more common as between

Englishmen than between, say, Englishmen and Italians. Nationality may not be a racial fact, nor a biological fact, but it is a psychological one, and as such must be reckoned with. In other words, nationality would seem to be to the group, much what the traditions and experiences of home are to the individual. Drop the word "National" and substitute the "expression," "group culture" or "group tradition," and the position becomes easier of comprehension. Given this conception of nationality, there is supplied the corrective to most of the evils that have become associated with the term. In place of an immovable, biological, and ultra-rational fact, it becomes an intellectual one based upon the existence of local culture and traditions. It is not antagonistic to other local culture groups, but supplementary and complementary. And so we agree with the conclusion of what is an interesting and informative work, that—

When once the peoples of Europe are educated into the knowledge that none of them is marked by racial superiority or inferiority to any of the others, that superiority of national character can only be achieved by national achievement, they will cease to entertain the notion that national character is unalterable and therefore unimprovable. . . . If nationality is based, not upon Race, but upon organic continuity of common interest, then nationality must necessarily become less selfish and exclusive as the nations find the sphere of their common interests broaden, and the sphere of their antagonistic interests diminish.

Mr. W. H. V. Reade, in *The Revolt of Labour against Civilisation* (Blackwell, 3s.), raises an antithesis that one may well be inclined to question, and it seems to us with justification. There is to-day, he says, a revolt against civilisation more deadly than any that Attila ever compassed. This is the determination of "Labour that the control of Society should be in the hands of those who do the most 'necessary' work." But what work is it that is most necessary? From the standpoint of labour, he declares it to be little other than what is generally understood by manual work. But from the standpoint of "Civilization" the real work of the world is covered by that which "labour is least disposed to accord first place." For man's superiority to the animal is evidenced by the fact that he labours more and more for those things that cannot be classified as "necessary," but which belong rather to the psychological realm of desires. Hence arises the conflict and the revolt. And the revolt is, so to speak, sanctioned by society itself because we have learned to think in terms of material production rather than in the higher things of life. We look at life from the standpoint of raw material and necessity, while all the time "the rich and various activities have a value not derived from necessity, and assuredly not created by the labour of the 'working man.'" Work, in short, becomes valuable in proportion as it is not "necessary," and the result of this is that the more you educate men the less inclined they are to lead dull and degraded lives, no matter how great a bribe. And so we are confronted with this problem. The necessary work of the world must be performed by someone, and on Mr. Reade's thesis the only way out would be the creation of a servile class, but the worker is in revolt against this, and this revolt threatens disaster to the world that has been so laboriously built up, by reversing the principle of civilization and making the satisfaction of the most primitive needs of man the work that is to secure the chief reward, if not the only reward.

We have done scant justice in this brief sketch to a suggestive piece of writing, but we think that Mr. Reade's fears would be somewhat allayed if he gave due weight to the fact that the revolt of labour is not so much against what he rightly calls civilization, as to the monopoly of this civilization by a class. Indeed, to the philosophic onlooker, who is not to be led astray by political and other claptraps, one of the most promising features of the labour revolt is that so much is expressed in terms of the higher things of life rather than in the lower. It is partly a demand for leisure as one of the conditions of refinement. Man has never lived for bread alone, æsthetic pleasures

are part and parcel of human life, from the cave man downward; and Mr. Reade rightly reminds us that our present industrial system is a thing of recent date; it is machine-made, and it may be that the machine may bring us one day the solution of many of the evils it has produced. Put it that the world is in revolt against conditions that detract much from a man's complete manhood, and Mr. Reade's picture of a revolt of labour against civilization disappears, and we have left a problem that the course of civilization has raised, but which it is quite capable of removing. And so far as Mr. Reade calls attention to this, he is doing the world a service.

We have received the first number of a new publication, *Britain and India* (1s. monthly), which aims at dealing with the many sides of Indian life at the points at which they touch and mingle with the life of Britain. Considering the dense ignorance that exists in this country with regard to India, and the rooted habit of the ordinary Briton in regarding all coloured men as niggers, and as being, therefore, uncivilized, too much light cannot be thrown in this direction. How far the magazine will effect its purpose remains to be seen.

The world is not all beer and skittles, but a little does no harm. And for the spending of a couple of hours in a cheerful way, we cordially commend *Billiards in Mufti*, by F. L. Billington Greig (The Billiard House, Glasgow, 2s.). The book is unequally divided between prose and verse, the former consisting of some very clever parodies of W. S. Gilbert, Oscar Wilde, and others. *Billiards* is the theme of the book throughout, and no one who was not a devotee of the game could write the amusing skits on it that Mr. Billington Greig does. We recommend the volume to those of our readers who are interested in this kind of writing. If they enjoy it as much as we did they will be content.

PHILIP SIDNEY.

### The Turning of the Tables.

OUR "pastors and our masters" taught  
(Inspired gramophones)

That we poor devils ever ought  
To toil for them, and sorrow not  
O'er Poverty's dry bones.

"Ho blessed be ye poor!" they cried,  
"Heaven shall be your reward."  
But times have changed, and now *they're* tried  
With Poverty's hard pinch, aside  
They whisper, "Where's the Lord?"

But loud they holler: "Give! Give! GIVE!!  
*We* mustn't starve, you know;  
In poverty let masses live;  
'Twould never do for priests to have  
Such pain to undergo.

"For Poverty is very fine  
To test the grit of others;  
But when it comes to testing mine—  
I thank the Lord—but would decline—  
And pass it to my brothers."

"Ye hypocrites!" the Lord once said  
To preachers of his day;  
If he were here, I'm much afraid  
With reason he would you upbraid,  
And your pretences slay.

Dated from the Bottom of Parnassus Hill, this first day  
of 1920.

A. GRITTY-CUSS.

Wisdom doth live with children round her knees;  
Books, leisure, perfect freedom, and the talk  
Man holds with week-day man in the hourly walk  
Of the mind's business.

—Wordsworth.

## Correspondence.

### THE IRISH QUESTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—As an Irishman, born and bred, I can endorse all you say about religious fanaticism in Ireland. My late father was the Master of an Orange Lodge in Dublin when I was a boy, and though he was by nature the most kindhearted of men, yet I have often heard him say that he would like to see a Catholic priest hanging from every lamp-post in Dublin. But this insensate religious hatred is focussed and intensified whenever the wretched system of government by majority vote is proposed.

Commercially and socially the adherents of the two creeds mingle in all the ordinary affairs of life without any friction, but when it comes to political action—when it is to be decided by count of votes whether this set of men or that shall have the power of ordering the lives and taxing the property of all the rest of the community—then the people are split in two, and the Protestants are solidly arrayed against the Roman Catholics.

It never can be otherwise so long as a few men are allowed to govern all the rest, on condition only that they succeed in securing a majority of the votes of a minority of the people. And until this iniquitous system is abolished we may be sure that the creed which has most to lose, by the triumph of the other at the polls, will not hesitate to use whatever force or fraud that may be necessary to win.

There is but one solution of the Irish Question. When men come to see the folly and wickedness of conferring on a handful of smart politicians the right to govern and tax them, the Irish, and a good many other questions, will need no solving, because they will have ceased to exist.

It may be that the logic of events will demonstrate the principles of freedom involved in Free Banking, Free Land, and Voluntary Corporation to my warm-hearted and versatile fellow-countrymen in advance of other communities. Men learn fast when their teaching is by object-lessons forced on them by their own self-interest.

G. O. WARREN.

### BOLSHEVISM AND FREETHOUGHT.

SIR,—It is evident from notes that have appeared in your paper that certain friends are perturbed at the supposed crimes of the Bolshevik leaders as reflecting on our propaganda. I am not particularly concerned with the reality of these crimes, but we should surely realize that the misdeeds of Freethinkers can no more affect the usefulness of our quest for knowledge than, say, a burglary committed by a Fellow of the Royal Society can reverse the benefit to mankind of scientific research. It is a pity, with many, that the Determinist's attitude and arguments are not more closely studied. It will then be seen that even the most favourable environment may sometimes be powerless to counteract an evil heredity. On the other hand, many naturally noble dispositions have been warped and narrowed by a religious environment. Mr. Perrycoste, in his *Religion and Moral Civilization*, has ably illustrated the effects of religious belief on inherently "good" people.

Secularism makes no pretence to be an "infallible cure." It claims to free human nature from the fetters of superstition and baneful authority; and, with reason as a guide, it believes that the bulk of our fellows are capable of giving worthy testimony to the best that is in them. It believes that British men and women, put upon their honour by society, will respond more willingly than when "ordered" by a celestial autocrat. Thus Giovanuetti:—

Think, think! while breaks in you the dawn,  
Crouched at your feet the world lies still;  
It has no power but your brawn;  
It has no wisdom but your will.

Beyond your flesh and mind and blood,  
Nothing there is to live and do;  
There is no man, there is no God,  
There is not anything but you.

G. A. McDONALD (Johannesburg)

### Cranks.

ALAS, I am a crank! Society uses three expressions to describe those who have the courage and the good sense to ignore the more archaic of its conventions. These outlaws are either "long-haired cranks," "Bolshevists," or "decadent *dilletantes*." To the Freethinker, I am told, all three of these pleasant epithets may be applied. He is a "long-haired crank" (irrespective of the actual length of his hair), because he is not afraid of airing unorthodox and progressive views, he is a "Bolshevist," because of his independent spirit (although Freethinking has no more to do with Communism and direct action than with Imperialism or any other political need—its only concern is the exercise of reason in all matters), and, finally, he is a "decadent *dilletante*," because he keenly appreciates the æsthetic side of things (even though being occupied with other things, his interest in art and poetry is but that of amateur), but, at the same time, his outlook on the world is essentially matter of fact.

I must admit that I have not yet been called a "decadent *dilletante*" by my acquaintances, because, perhaps, it would seem to imply that I had an original artistic and poetic temperament which they would be loth to ascribe to me, but I know that they call me a "long-haired crank" behind my back (for all practical purposes it matters not whether I wear my hair *a la* Rupert Brooke, or *en Crosse*, or whether I am bald, the adjective "long-haired" is used to add an extra sting to the word "crank"), and I am always called a "Bolshevist" to my face (novel minds doing this as to some temperaments there appears something humorous in a Bolshevist).

And so, though still in my infancy (in the eyes of the law), I have become branded for life as a "crank." And why? Simply because I have adopted as my creed in life a faith in reason. It never strikes the large unreasonable section of society that it is somewhat inappropriate to class Freethinkers and Spiritualists and Temperance reformers and Pacifists all in one category—namely, that of "cranks"; but so it is.

"The Faithful" are inordinately conceited, and whoever dares to announce his contempt for and complete disbelief in their most cherished theories is, indeed, fit but for fire and brimstone. The pious lay brethren, whose attitude towards the ministers of their religion is one of tolerant superiority, cannot conceive as other than most immoral that of the reasonable man who regards these priests as the apostles of superstition, the teachers of lies, and the enemies of progress.

Still, there is some consolation in being a "crank." The men who would have been considered "cranks" a hundred years ago are hailed as reformers to-day, and we now speak of those who in their day were talked of as "cranks" as men of almost prophetic insight.

COLIN EDGEWORTH.

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##### INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 8, Mr. Thakor, "Human Responsibility."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Miss K. Browning, "A Wisdom Religion."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W., three minutes from Kennington Oval Tube Station and Kennington Gate): 7, Miss Nina Boyle, "Our Press." Music from 6.30 to 7.

SOUTH PLACE CHAPEL (Finsbury Pavement, E.C.): 3.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "A Freethinker's View of the League of Nations."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, Robert Young, "Japan's Religion of Nationalism."

##### OUTDOOR.

HYDE PARK: 11.30, Mr. Samuels; 3.15, Messrs. Dales, Ratcliffe, and Baker.

#### COUNTRY.

##### INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Repertory Theatre, Station Street): 7, Mr. W. H. Thresh, "From Savage to Shakespeare."

LEEDS SECULAR SOCIETY (Youngman's Rooms, 19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds): Every Sunday at 6.30.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Gustav Spiller, "The Reality of Progress."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Co-operative Hall, Downing Street): Mr. R. H. Rosetti, 3, "Primitive Brains in Modern Skulls"; 6.30, "Christianity's Harmony with Science: Anthropology."

RHONDDA BRANCH N. S. S. (4 St. Catherine Street, Pontypridd): 3, Important Business.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (31 Thompson Street): 6.30, Mr. J. Fothergill, "Brussels, 1910."

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Secretary: Miss E. M. VANCE.

This Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularization of the State, etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

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The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, one-third of whom retire (by ballot), each year, but are eligible for re-election.

Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords in *re Bowman and Others v. the Secular Society, Limited*, in 1917, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

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