

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions.

### Sabbatarianism on the L.C.C.

The bigots have won another victory on the London County Council. The recommendation of the Parks Committee that certain public places should be open for football, cricket, quoits, lawn tennis, and boating on Sundays was rejected by seventy-eight votes to forty-two. It is a lesson that Londoners and others should take well to heart. For the matter is more important than it looks at first sight, and contains morals that are far deeper than many imagine. It is certainly a rebuke to those who imagine that Christian bigotry is now so far innocuous that it can safely be let alone. When the opportunity is presented it is as bad as ever, and as virulent as ever. The Churches never alter their aims; they only change their tactics. Whether they praise or blame, bless or curse, is a question of convenience. For behind the action of the Council is the activity of the Churches. They were up in arms the moment the intention of the Committee was made public, and they began to organize an agitation as though the welfare of the country depended upon their success. Members were inundated with resolutions, and behind these was the threat of opposition when election time came round. So it happened that a number of men and women elected to care for the health of the people of London deliberately refused permission for healthy exercise during one-seventh of each person's life, and on the one day in the week that is free to them all.

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### An Indiscreet Advocate.

The opposition to the recommendation, says the *Daily News*, was led by Captain G. A. Hardy, and in one respect he proved himself to be a very incautious advocate. Sunday games in the parks would be an interference with family life, he said, "and a serious competition to the Church, Chapel, and Sunday-school." Now, that was letting the cat out of the bag with a vengeance. It showed whose game Captain Hardy was playing, and who had coached him in the getting up of his case. A wiser tactician would have left out all mention of the Churches. Captain Hardy has all the courage of an indiscreet nature. We are glad to see it; but it will hardly please his friends. And his critics may well ask what business has the L.C.C. to draw up its rules and

to exercise the powers it possesses with an eye on the convenience of Church and Chapel? If boys and youths playing cricket or boating, or indulging in some other form of healthy exercise is a good thing, that is all the L.C.C. is rightly concerned with. If opportunities for play could not be given without a serious interference with the public, that would be a quite legitimate objection to granting the parks for the purpose. But no one pretends that this is the case. The parks are there, spaces are set on one side for the purpose of games, and to say that these games shall not be played on Sunday because they interfere with the business of the Churches is simply monstrous. A people who can submit to that kind of thing have little right to call themselves free; they have no right whatever to call themselves civilized. For when a community illustrates the fact that it is regulating its life in accordance with savage taboos, it is demonstrated that, while we have filched the word "civilized," we have no real appreciation of its meaning. We are on the level of those that talk of civilized warfare because we kill with explosive shell, poison gas, or aeroplane bomb, instead of with club or bow and arrow.

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### Labour and Sabbatarianism.

If there is any question before the country that may be fairly called a labour question, this is one. For it concerns those who make up the world of labour more than it does others. The "classes" have their own private tennis and golf clubs, and Sunday up the river is a recognized social function. If the youth of the "masses" are to indulge in these things, it must be in the public parks and spaces. To exclude them from there is to exclude them from everywhere. It concerns not only their physical growth, it concerns no less their moral and mental growth. For the choice, in fact, is not even that between games and Church. Those who would play the games will not go to Church if they are excluded from the parks and open spaces. They will hang about the streets, lounge at street corners, develop bad manners and bad habits, but they will not go to Church. It is, therefore, a choice between healthy games and unhealthy lounging and loafing. It was thus the more curious to observe that one of the champions of the Sabbatarians was a labour member of the Council—Mr. C. G. Ammon, and we hope that the rank and file of the people will remember the name. Mr. Ammon, if he is correctly reported, said that he opposed Sunday games because it was "a priceless thing" to have one day in the week when all stopped for rest. Moreover, he opposed the games because he objected to the monopoly of the open spaces by one section of the people. The mover of the resolution had the courage of indiscretion; the seconder had the daring of downright stupidity. To be logical, Mr. Ammon should oppose the holding of Sunday meetings, in and out of the labour world. He should oppose the opening of all museums and art galleries, the running of all Sunday excursions, and also the opening of all the Churches on Sundays. Then only would Sunday be

a day on which, to use his own words, "all stopped." Mr. Ammon must know that the talk of the players monopolizing the open spaces is downright nonsense. The spaces on which games are played are marked off for the purpose. A tennis court cannot be wandering all over the place, the public cannot go walking on the lakes if boating is not allowed, and even the flight of a cricket ball has not the range of a big Bertha. We wonder whether a letter has, by accident, been dropped from the front of Mr. Ammon's name. Should it, by chance, have commenced with a capital G? His speech is certainly suggestive of something of the kind, for it is hard to realize that anyone could seriously convince himself that there was any force in reasoning of this nature.

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#### The Policy of the Churches.

Mr. Harry Snell, who, of course, supported the proposal, reminded the Council that when recently the Council was considering the question of the employment of children on Sunday not a single Church in London made any protest against Sunday labour. Of course not. No one who knows the history of the Churches would have expected them to. When have the Churches ever made any protest of even a comparatively united action against any form of social wrong? For years London has been suffering from the evil of overcrowding—an evil which brings in its train all manner of ills. Did the Churches send in any united protest against that? Against the evils of sweated labour, of child labour, of monopolies, of continuing insanitary and condemned schools, the Churches make no protests. In all these things their professional interests were best served by silence and acquiescence. But games on Sunday! That is an entirely different matter. In the words of Captain Hardy, it is a serious competition. And the Church only knows one way of meeting competition, and that is by suppression. They know that the all-conquering Gospel is powerless against a game of football, that a round of tennis may shatter the enthralling hold of the Gospel of the resurrection, and that given proper opportunities the healthy youthful mind will let the whole collection of savage superstitions and archaeological curiosities that make up Christianity go to the deuce. The first objection that the early Christians raised to the Sunday games of the old Pagans was that they kept the Christians away from Church. It is the real objection that is raised to-day. Christianity never changes, it only alters its tactics. The superstitious Christian of the earlier century and the Sabbatarians of the L.C.C. join hands across the centuries. The thing never changes. You cannot teach it, you cannot civilize it. The one thing is to kill it.

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#### Ghosts versus Men.

The issue is far wider than the London County Council. If it were not it might not have been worth while spending so much space on it. Behind the Council are the Churches, but behind the Churches are those many generations of savagery and superstition out of which all religion has grown. Spiritualists tell us of the dead men who come to visit them in the darkened rooms of their own houses. Why that would be nothing if it were true. For we have dead men controlling us all the time. They were busy on the London County Council on February 17 controlling the seventy-eight who declared that the ancient taboo should not be broken. A dead medicine-man stands behind every honest clergyman in the world dominating his mind and regulating his actions. It is a dead Assyrian priest who stands outside the doors of our public buildings and declares that we shall not enter on the day of his taboo. It is

these dead men who now stand at the entrance to London's playing-grounds and say to the young men that their taboo must not be broken. The rule of religion means always and everywhere the rule of the dead. It is founded on the dead, on their ideas, their hopes, and their fears. That is why religion loves the past, fears the present, and dreads the future. The rule of religion is the rule of the dead hand, the savage past lording it over the more civilized present. That is why Sabbatarianism cannot be killed by a debate on the London County Council. It will be killed only when the ideas on which it lives are killed, and the type of mind eliminated that responds to its appeals. It is veritably a fight of ghosts *versus* men. In the long run the men will win—and we fancy the ghosts know it.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### "Organized Christianity."

To many clergymen this is an exceedingly attractive subject. Some of them, like Canon Green, of Manchester, candidly admit that organized religion is already practically a thing of the past, and that the leaders of the Church seem to have no conception of the extent to which people are hostile to all forms of it. The Rev. E. M. Blackie, Vicar of Windsor, is of opinion that it is in grave peril. In a sermon, published in the *Church Times* for February 13, he says that people are speaking of the failure, not only of the Church, but even of organized Christianity. In reality, the Church and organized Christianity are identical. Christianity, as expressed by the Church, is the only Christianity in existence, and so the failure of the one is equally the failure of the other. Mr. Blackie neither resents nor repudiates what people are saying, but contends that "as soon as Christianity began to crystallize into a system, and later on, when it won the patronage of the powers of the world, at once perils began to show themselves," and that these perils "are more or less the same in every age." He describes them as narrowness and worldliness. What Mr. Blackie calls narrowness is really an essential feature of the Christian religion, which came into existence for the one purpose of saving the souls of men and bringing them into communion with God. This is repeatedly stated in the New Testament, and it has always been the belief of the Church. Hence the following complaint against congregations is somewhat unjust:—

They do not want to be told about those evils and blots in society around them, which ought to make them feel very uncomfortable indeed. They do not want to hear about the burdens, the unfair burdens, that some people have to bear; they do not want to hear about the kind of houses that some people have to live in. If you talk to them about these things, then they say that you are not spiritual.

Are we not told in the New Testament that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life?" Are we not also assured that the only sin that damns a man is unbelief, not wickedness? "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John iii. 36). Sinners flee to Jesus to escape the wrath that is to come, or to be reconciled to God. The finished work of Christ is represented as the objective ground of justification and forgiveness. Naturally, therefore, people go to Church in the expectation of hearing about God's love in Christ, and the plan of salvation through faith in the blood. Preachers have often declared that they are not moral reformers, but proclaimers of the glorious Gospel of the

blessed God. Mr. Blackie is evidently a firm believer in the Gospel, but he wants to supplement it by the introduction of Secularism or Sociology. He is perfectly justified in expressing the conviction that the salvation of the soul is by no means all that a man needs; but what he holds as Vicar of Windsor is a cure of souls, not bodies. His business is to bring sinners to Christ that their souls may be saved and fitted for the spiritual mansions above, not to talk about the kind of houses they ought to live in down here. The Gospel is purely spiritual, and he is a spiritual adviser.

Our conviction, of course, is that Christianity is a religion which deals with unrealities, or wholly imaginary matters. God, Christ, the soul, the spiritual world and man's destiny therein, belong to the region of the unknown and unknowable, concerning which the pulpit offers baseless assumptions, ignorant fancies, and metaphysical subtleties, all of which it treats as facts that must be reckoned with. Even Confucius, who lived twenty-five centuries ago, was a much wiser and safer teacher than Mr. Blackie, because towards religion he maintained an attitude of wholesome Agnosticism. Though believing in the existence of the spiritual world and its inhabitants, his advice to his followers was, "Respect the spirits, but keep them at a distance."

The second peril which lurks very close to organized Christianity, we are informed, is worldliness. By worldliness Mr. Blackie understands "the danger of caring too much for external success." Surely, this is a rather mild form of worldliness, which all of us are prepared to condemn. A parson who seeks the patronage of those whom the world regards as great and influential, too often at the expense of principle, or who is over-anxious to fill his church, is a man given to worldliness. What the world needs above all else, according to the reverend gentleman, is spirituality, "though it does not know it." Take the following passage:—

The world needs to understand that it only can live as it is guided by the Spirit of God, and that the things which count in reconstruction, in social and national and imperial reconstruction are, first of all, qualities that are Christlike. Now that need will never be supplied by systems, however splendid and right they may be; nor by services in church, however inspiring and uplifting we may know them to be. The world's need to-day will only be supplied by men and women who, under God and depending upon him, go forth into life to uphold Christ's standard of values in a generation which finds it very easy to forget them. Men and women who, in the midst of the strife and the enmity of which the world is pretty full, are making manifest the glory of love and understanding, and wide-mindedness, and wide-heartedness, inspired by Christ. Men and women who, in the midst of the cares and the anxieties of which a good many of us know a good deal more than we like, are able to show by their very faces that they have got within them the peace of God which nothing can take from them. *These are the people who will transform human life.*

That last sentence, which I have put in italics, is as misleading as it is untrue. Such men and women as the reverend gentleman describes find the Christian life, no doubt, brimful of pleasure, rapture, and often ecstasy; but they are not the people calculated to transform the world. Dean Inge, in his interesting paper on the Future Life, read at the last Church Congress, made practically the same claim, saying: "It is otherworldliness that can alone transform the world." Had that statement been true, the world would have been transformed long ago. In the Dark Ages saints were very numerous; but they did almost nothing that tended to redeem the world. Most of them retired from society altogether, and lived in utter loneliness or in com-

munities of their own order. St. Simeon Stylites lived on a tall pillar for thirty years, calling himself

the basest of mankind,  
From scalp to sole one slough and crust of sin,  
Unfit for earth, unfit for heaven, scarce meet  
For troops of devils, mad with blasphemy.

It is an indisputable fact that saintliness did not always imply nobility of character, and when it did it carried with it aloofness from the world. Saintliness and dirt often went together; but saintliness and usefulness seldom met in the same person. Whenever St. Bernard returned into the world it was usually for the purpose of hunting down heretics and insisting on heavenly-mindedness in the Church. Yes, there has been a great abundance of otherworldliness on earth, but it never transfigured human life. Even to-day, on Mr. Blackie's own showing, what religion there is in the Churches does not embrace, nor is much interested in, the social welfare of mankind here and now.

The only reasonable conclusion to which we can come is that organized Christianity is a failure simply because it is not true. Mr. Blackie and others may honestly believe that they do not follow and serve "a dead Christ, but a living Saviour, present in his Church, the world's true Sovereign and Master"; but the Church's impotence, social, political, and moral, entirely discredits such a belief, and amounts almost to a positive proof that neither God, Christ, nor the spiritual world is an objective reality. Had the Christ portrayed in the creeds been a living being the history of the world would have been totally different from what it has been. Had a God of Omnipotent justice and love sat on the throne of the world, the Great War, in which ten million lives were lost, would have been an absolute impossibility. How does Mr. Blackie reconcile his belief with the facts of history, or how can he conscientiously entertain such a belief in a world teeming with all sorts of wrongs and evils? Do not the facts bear incontestable witness to the infinite absurdity of the belief?

The hope of the world lies within itself, in social forces already at work, but sadly hindered in their operation hitherto by the false trust reposed in supernaturalism. Lurid pictures are often drawn by fanatics of the inconceivably evil conditions that would immediately arise on the disappearance of the Christian religion; but they ignore the incontrovertible fact that the evil conditions have all along co-existed with Christianity. The divines condemn Secularism before it has had a chance of showing what it can do. We can easily account for their eagerness to safeguard the interests of the religion on which they live; but it is the height of injustice to denounce an untried system, as they all do.

J. T. LLOYD.

#### FALSE EDUCATION.

Kings, priests, and statesmen blast the human flower,  
Even in its tender bud; their influence darts  
Like subtle poison through the bloodless veins  
Of desolate society. The child,  
Ere he can lisp his mother's sacred name,  
Swells with the unnatural pride of crime, and lifts  
His baby-sword even in a hero's mood.  
This infant arm becomes the bloodiest scourge  
Of devastated earth; whilst specious names  
Learnt in soft childhood's unsuspecting hour,  
Serve as the sophisms with which manhood dims  
Bright reason's ray, and sanctifies the sword  
Upraised to shed a brother's innocent blood,  
Let priest-led slaves cease to proclaim that man  
Inherits vice and misery, when force  
And falsehood hang even o'er the cradled babe  
Stifling with rudest grasp all natural good.

—Shelley, "Queen Mab."

## Death: Christian and Pagan.

We are such stuff

As dreams are made of, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep. —Shakespeare.

PRIESTS, in all ages and in all countries, have ever sought advantage from the fact that man is mortal. They have taught men that death was the most dreadful evil. All the terrors that theology could gather from savage nations were added to increase the horrors of their varying superstitions. They invariably tried to paralyze reason with the clutch of fear. The advent of Christianity deepened this terror. Never has death been the cause of such craven timidity as in the Christian world. To visionaries, like Catherine of Siena or Emanuel Swedenborg, it may have been different, but to the uncultured masses death has been, and still is, the king of terrors, from whose approach they cower in an agony which Marcus Aurelius and Socrates would have scorned. These great Pagans invested death with dignity, but Christians fear death as children fear the dark. In Bacon's famous essay on death it is remarkable that all the instances he gives of its being borne with equanimity are taken from Pagans. For Christianity added fresh terrors to death in the thought of being cut off in sin "unhouselled, unaleled." The Church of England has a prayer against sudden death, which Pagans regarded as best. This idea is strikingly illustrated in *Hamlet* where the Prince refrains from killing the King whilst at prayer, because

When he is fit seasoned for his passage  
To take him in the purging of his soul

is, he thinks, to send his father's murderer to heaven.

Religion has found it advantageous to invest death with horrors. "Prepare for death, flee from the wrath to come," have been its cries. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," shout the evangelists. By such appeals to fear and imagination, it has made a terror of what should be accepted with serenity. The clergy knew their business. Old Dr. Samuel Johnson was not a fool, but he was tormented by the fear of death. The gentle poet Cowper was driven mad by the horrors of religion. The most popular preacher of the last century, Spurgeon, preached and wrote that the majority of the human race was destined to everlasting torture in full view of their deity. To-day the Roman Catholic Church, the most powerful Church in Christendom, has not abated a spark of its fiery damnation, and the Salvation Army actually works the same threat into its trade-mark—"Blood and Fire."

Yet, to the Freethinker, dissolution has no terrors, beyond the sundering of friendship, or of love. This has been finely expressed by William Cory:—

They told me, Heraclitus, they told me you were dead;  
They brought me bitter news to hear, and bitter tears to shed;  
I wept as I remembered how often you and I  
Had tired the sun with talking and sent him down the sky.

Christians might ponder the wise words of Marcus Aurelius:—

What is it to die? If we view it by itself, and stripped of those imaginary terrors in which our fears have dressed it, we shall find it to be nothing more than the mere work of Nature; but it is childish folly to be afraid of what is natural. Nay! It is not only the work of Nature, but is conducive to the good of the universe, which subsists by change.

It was long, long ago pointed out by Lucretius, the stateliest of the Roman poets, that death is dreamless rest. Mark his beautiful words:—

Thou not again shall see thy dear home's door,  
Nor thy sweet wife and children come to throw  
Their arms round thee, and ask for kisses more,  
And through thy heart make quiet comfort go.

Out of thy hands hath slipped the precious store  
Thou hoarded for thine own, men say, and lo!  
All thou desired is gone. But never say  
All the desire as well hath passed away.

Freethought everywhere destroys the terrors of death. Shelley, in the opening lines of *Queen Mab*, hails death and sleep as brethren. Walt Whitman chants many a hymn of welcome to death. Our own Swinburne sings beautifully:—

Content thee, howso'er, whose days are done;  
There lies not any troublous thing before  
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,  
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,  
All waters as the shore.

And George Meredith asks with a fine touch of stoicism:—

Into the breast that gives the rose  
Shall I with shuddering fall?

For thousands of years priests have chanted the old, sad, disheartening refrain of death as the enemy, but the Freethinker listens to far other and better strains. The contemplation of death as a deliverer, dis severed from imaginative terrors, comforts him. Living without hypocrisy, he dies without fear.

Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch  
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

MIMNERMUS.

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## Spiritualism.

### IV.

#### MY REPLY TO SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

IN the *Freethinker* of February 8 and 15, Sir A. C. Doyle contributed a couple of letters in which he attempted to meet my objections to certain evidence upon which he has relied in his support of the practice and doctrine of Spiritualism. In the first letter he notices my remarks upon the Zollner *seances*, and in the second he accuses me of making "imperfect and garbled statements" in reference to the sitting at which he avers he heard his son's voice speaking to him. As both these letters are now before readers of this journal, and as they supply an invaluable example of the methods used by Spiritualists in argument, I propose devoting my fourth article to a detailed consideration of them.

Firstly, then, my readers will remember, that in an examination of the Zollner *seances*, I pointed out that the investigators were hardly suitable for the task allotted to them. Sir A. C. Doyle says that I asserted that Zollner was ill, Fechner was blind, and that Weber and Scheibner were imbeciles. I never asserted anything of the sort. What I did say, and say again, is that at the time the *seances* took place Zollner was considered by his friends to be "somewhat abnormal," and it is known that he became mentally unsound shortly afterwards. With regard to Fechner, I merely stated that he had cataract (not that he was blind), and as to Weber and Scheibner, I am quite unable to discover from whence Sir Arthur has got his information as to my statement that they were imbeciles. It is certainly not in my article, and I can only assume that Sir A. C. Doyle has invented it to suit his own purpose.

The next point touched on by my critic is much more interesting. He makes the startling announcement that the opponents of Spiritualism "invariably affix some bodily affliction upon everyone who believes the evidence in favour of psychic force," evidently hinting at the possibility that I am doing so in the case before us. But surely this is very dangerous ground on which to tread. If a man has cataract or is shortsighted, it

can very easily be shown whether this is so or not, quite apart from any opinion that he may hold. I, therefore, ask Sir Conan Doyle the direct question: *Does he or does he not deny that Zollner was abnormal during the seances; that Fechner was suffering from cataract, and that Scheibner was extremely shortsighted?* If he does, I am perfectly willing to retract my statements if sufficient evidence is produced to justify it; and if not, *does he think that such persons were suitable for investigating the phenomena of a man, who, on his own showing, "wanted very careful watching"?*

In his next point Sir Arthur emphasizes a belief widely held by Spiritualists, and one almost entirely fallacious. He regards Slade, he says, as one of those mediums who were morally weak if they were psychically strong, "as they might be tempted where psychic power fails, and it is notoriously intermittent, to substitute fraud." Now, this is very often said of mediums, and, in some cases, especially that of Eusapia, there may be some justification for it. But, unfortunately, the case of Slade is the worst possible one that could have been chosen. Slade was an expert at feats which represent the very cream of magical achievement. When I was performing somewhat similar experiments a few years ago, I found that owing to their extreme difficulty and the amount of practice necessary, I was unable to continue giving my sittings, my time being fully occupied with other work. Does Sir A. C. Doyle really imagine that a genuine medium if "tempted" could perform these tricks without endless practice and a detailed knowledge of misdirection? Supposing that suddenly I became possessed of psychic power, and began to give tests at the present time, it would be absolutely impossible for me to do the things that Slade was *seen* doing, however much I was "tempted." In order to produce tests similar to Slade's, I should want six months' hard practice. But that is not all. Many of Slade's experiments were produced, as witnessed by the Seybert Commission, by special apparatus and prepared slates; so evidently Slade often expected to be tempted, and when he succumbed, he managed to do so exceedingly adroitly and skilfully! Yet in the face of the most conclusive evidence that Slade was a trickster, and a most accomplished one at that, Sir Arthur insists "that he had psychic power in a very high degree," and that this "is evident to anyone who reads the evidence." I now ask for that evidence, and also whether Sir A. C. Doyle includes Zollner's testimony within its scope?

We now come to the case of Bellachini, the German court conjurer. So far as I know, Bellachini was not suffering from cataract, or congenital idiocy, and I cannot conceive why Sir A. C. Doyle speaks of these unfortunate complaints unless he has a suspicion lurking at the back of his mind that Profs. Zollner, Fechner, and Scheibner were really excellent observers, and that the two last were possessed of splendid eyesight. But let that pass. There is some evidence which goes to show that at the time Bellachini's oath was taken he was quite ignorant of the methods employed by fraudulent mediums. It must be remembered that at that time conjuring was on a very different plane from what it is now. Some of the most beautiful subtleties now employed by magicians were scarcely known, and it is also highly improbable that Bellachini would have gone against learned opinion of the time, which, in Germany at least, was inclined to the opinion that the phenomena were genuine. Unfortunately, little appears to be known of Bellachini, but if Sir Arthur has special information, I hope he will bring it forward, as, personally, I should much like to know more of him and his work, although amongst conjurers generally I am not aware that he is held in any great esteem at the present day.

As a matter of sober fact, the case against Slade is almost unanswerable. Hyslop has at last recognized it, and in his latest book he says "no one can defend any of his claims or those of his supporters. He is almost totally forgotten. Even Zollner's experiments with him have become discredited....." (*Contact With the Other World*; New York, 1919; p. 424). Would it not be far better for Sir Arthur to confess frankly that the evidence is not satisfactory, and allow Slade to go the way of the many others who have fooled scientists in the past?

Now as to the second letter. Sir Arthur starts off by accusing me of making "imperfect and garbled statements," saying that if I had seen the *Two Worlds* of December 19, I should have realized how incomplete was my account. As a matter of fact, the passage I quoted is taken direct from the verbatim account as published in the *Two Worlds*. But Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has utterly misunderstood my motive in quoting this extract. The facts which I omitted have *absolutely nothing to do with the case*. I did not even deal with the *seance* as if I thought that it was fraudulent, my argument being quite untouched even if the whole thing was perfectly genuine and above-board. It is true that I might have informed my readers that Sir Arthur had bound the medium with stout twine, but then I should have been also forced to remind them, in the words of D. D. Home, that "such tyings are simply useless." But I preferred to treat the subject as a serious case of what Sir Arthur believes to be a genuine example of spirit manifestation, and, indeed, could hardly do otherwise, since I have no evidence beyond Sir Arthur's words either one way or the other. The position I adopt, however, rests on very different grounds. Surely it is almost inconceivable that a dozen whispered words in the dark could bring conviction as to the identity of the speaker. Even if all the conditions were perfect, and fraud was quite out of the question, it seems to me to be the height of imprudence to be satisfied with such an experience. The point that I insisted on, and still emphasize, was not the lack of opportunity for fraud which the *seance* exhibited, but the absolute lack of any satisfactory evidence for survival, even if there was actually no fraud at all. As to Sir Arthur's question as to who spoke to him, that is one which must be left unanswered. All I can hope to show is that the evidence is not sufficient to justify us in assuming that it was his son.

We must now rapidly pass on to the case of the Codex Alexandrinus. Here, again, Sir Arthur has misunderstood me, fixing on a point which he considers "paltry," and ignoring altogether my main contention. Firstly, as to the source. In my article I said that the letter occurred in the *Daily Express*, the date being, I believe, somewhere about December 27, 1919. I chose this account rather than that contained in the *Vital Message* because I wished to demonstrate to the readers of the *Freethinker* exactly how miracles grow. I also selected the newspaper account for the simple reason that it reaches many more people than Sir Arthur's book, and therefore strict accuracy was all the more essential. Let us compare the two accounts.

#### THE "VITAL MESSAGE."

Upon this plate being developed there was found in it a copy of a passage from the Codex Alexandrinus in the British Museum.

#### THE "DAILY EXPRESS."

In the same way Professor Henslow has shown that he obtained a reproduction of a page of the Codex Alexandrinus, a document which never left the British Museum.

*See how it grows!* I am sorry that the criticism is paltry, but I cannot help noticing that the *passage* did not become a *line*, but a *page*. A mere slip, I have no doubt, but what a significant one. Then there is the

document "*which never left the British Museum.*" How well it sounds! Fraud quite out of the question, as all the time the document was safe under its glass shade, and no one could tamper with it in any way. All this and more does this sentence imply, and yet it is utterly and hopelessly misleading. But it is of the greatest importance to the psychologist, for here we see the mechanism of miracle-making in full operation. Yet Sir Arthur has not so much as attempted to meet my objections to that fatal sentence—"a document which never left the British Museum." I now ask him to explain it away, if he can.

Finally, the case of Mrs. Spencer. With regard to this, there is little to say. I cannot tell Sir Arthur why he was asked to see the picture. Presumably because Lady Churchill thought that he would appreciate a good piece of work. And from what we know, it seems that she was not far wrong. With more than that I have no concern.

E. J. D.

## The Fourth Age.<sup>1</sup>

### II.

#### THE APPROACH.

To kill a man because he differs from you appears to be the last word in stupidity. Before the War, and after, it was easy to write like this. A query: Do all ideas, in their ultimate manifestation, resolve themselves into physical conflict?

Our brigade was on the road to Amiens. With me, on the march, there was a Scotch shepherd, a Welsh miner, and a schoolmaster from South Africa. We talked of nothing in particular. We were all wet and very miserable, and at that particular moment were unable to see the funny side of anything.

As we drew nearer to Amiens the roads began to get congested; many of the natives were leaving the place, taking with them a few goods and chattels. Old men and women passed us with handcarts; two young women were sitting by the wayside, crying; and terror seemed to possess them all. To myself I said: It is no good to indulge in talk; talk will not keep the enemy away. Here and now, for myself, history repeating itself: was the effect of war on these poor creatures. It was the only moment of the War that I ever felt any desire to allow myself to become inflamed. One of our gunners, sitting on a limber, had seen something. As quick as lightning, he jumped down, ran after a French cart, and, as the vehicle was moving, helped himself to some eggs. This broke the strain; we had to laugh. Truly, "life is a comedy to him who thinks; a tragedy to him who feels."

That night about five of us slept in a fowl-shed.

<sup>1</sup> As there may be a few of your readers in doubt as to the purpose of the series with the above title, this note may be an explanation. They are intended to demonstrate a Freethinker's or perfect Atheist's point of view through a dangerous period of his life—dangerous, that is, in relation to the only life we know of. Many, no doubt, could have written them better in the absence of any other willing to undertake the task, and, as the absence of the name Atheist was always conspicuous during the recent bloody orgy, with your permission, and your readers' indulgence, this personal point-of view shall find expression in your columns. Forgiveness is asked for the use of the personal pronoun, the use of this note could not be avoided, but it is a term with no special appeal to me except that of egotism. All the incidents related are true—this—so that they shall not be confounded with journalism. The blood-waders of the printing press, along with other forces, have, apparently, made this world such a beautiful place that they would now distract people's attention from it by Spiritualism and communication with Mars. To die for the perpetuation of this is unthinkable, by the folly, the stupidity, the ignorance of some of our living leading lights, they prove themselves not worth a pair of dead soldier's bootlaces, and this hollow mockery of Christianity is not the least offender. In the words of the late G. W. Foote: "the best service to the dead is service to the living." Let wool speculators, shrine builders, food fakers, and social plunderers take this to heart or beware the consequences of their short sight.—W. R.

A few days later we went into action—this no small relief after being constantly on the move. We "took over" from another brigade—and as a change we slept in a hole in the ground. It was raining—it rained all through the night—and the water trickled through the earth and fell on us as we slept. The next morning we moved to a better hole, and it was in this place that loneliness and the living death of war ate into my very bones. A few days afterwards a shell dropped on the place we had left, blowing the place to pieces. Instead of thanking God, we began to dig deeper in the hole we occupied. Through the rich red soil we cut into chalk; a ton of chalk on the top of our dugout was worth more than a prayer. During off duty times, I slept, wrote letters, had bad dreams, cried in my sleep, and read a little book of poems that I now prize beyond any dukedom. It was given to me by a friend; it has been a solace to me in lonely night hours, and I had my philosophy put to the test, and along with it the value of a book. Can we exist without literature? To me, in mud and filth, in a verminous state, sleeping and waking next door to death, good reading was necessary. I desired it. "Banker" and other card games interested me but little. When tired of reading, I passed the time away by observing ants; they had certain roads; the dark-coloured ones always gave way to the light-coloured ones. A big bee came one morning to the doorway "prospecting"; every morning afterwards it used to come regularly about half-past seven. Prophetic, I thought; I read "Farewell to Arms," by George Peele, and was in love with the line:—

His helmet now shall make an hive for bees.

Every night we took inside with us a pick and a shovel in case of accidents, and out of bitterness, which afterwards passed into stoicism, I wrote an article, entitled "The Pleasure of Dying in Bed," which, I am glad to say, never saw the light of print. Later, with pleasure, I turned and returned to my book of poems, *The Flower of the Mind*, Alice Meynell's choice among the best poems. Whether this, on my part, was in harmony with my surroundings I know not; our gunners cleaned their guns with women's nightdresses and other garments I will not mention; we made porridge in a petrol tin, laughed, sang, swore, and rattled back to barbarism. Well do I appreciate now that fine saying of Nietzsche. The intellectual haughtiness and loathing of every man who has suffered deeply—it almost determines the order of rank *how* deeply men can suffer.

The first object I saw when coming to this new position was a caged magpie. It had been forgotten by the battery that had just gone. Wet, bedraggled, tailless, it looked the picture of misery and utter wretchedness. Prophetic symbol to be near a gun throwing a thirty-five pound shell—a concrete message of Christian love. A mad world, my masters.

WILLIAM REPTON.

## The Moral of Jonah.

OLD JONAH went a-whaling

A long, long time ago;  
Free board he had, unailing,  
As he went gaily sailing  
So cosy, "down below."

It may have been his preaching—  
I'm sure I do not know—  
But his host soon fell a-retching,  
And though Jonah took some "fetching,"  
Yet at last he had to go.

The old man's fate's instructive  
To preachers whom we know;  
Their stories so seductive  
Now make our gorge eruptive  
We belch them forth with "Go!"

The parsons now all tell us:  
"This tale's not fact—Oh, no!—  
It's meant to teach you fellows....."  
When such a "pup" they'd sell us  
It's time to say: "Just go!"

A. GRITTY-CUSSE.

## Acid Drops.

We have been pointing out for years the use made of religion by vested interests everywhere, and our view receives endorsement from a speech by a Newcastle shipowner at the opening of a Salvation Army House. He said that something ought to be done to save the country, and religion was cheap. Well, it all depends on the point of view. If from that of the possessing class, then we quite admit that nothing cheaper and more effective could be found. If from the standpoint of the welfare of the whole community, then nothing could be dearer or more ineffective. But the admission is illuminating, and we wonder how long it will be before Labour leaders and such like have the courage to speak out on this matter. For it is inconceivable that they are so blind as not to see it.

Before the war the Army cost was about 30 millions. Next year's estimates fixes it at 125 millions. Not so bad for a war that was to lay the "demon of militarism." Or was it the demon of Prussian militarism that was to be laid? We think very little of the House of Commons, but every now and again one wished that we had Bradlaugh there, in order to expose this military mania as it deserves. The Churches, who can mobilize their forces to prevent games in the parks on Sunday, remain quite calm in the face of the swollen Army estimates. Still, we won the war. But in what our winnings consist of it is not quite so easy to say.

In the Divorce Court on February 18 Mr. Justice McCardie said that in the North of England he had had given to him in bigamy cases, letters showing that the husband and wife had agreed to separate, and that they considered this a dissolution of their marriage. One of the Counsel present capped this by saying that in parts of Wales the bargain and sale of a wife was quite common. Of course, both Judge and Counsel were quite surprised at this sort of thing—they always are. And yet they should know that both customs have behind them the sanction of the Bible. Wives are bought and sold there, although one would imagine that when a man buys a wife, it is the man who is most often sold. And the practice of giving a wife a "bill of divorcement" is also Biblical—up to a point. In the Bible it is the husband only who is given that power. It is distinctly unchristian to give the wife the same power as the husband. "The sanctity of the marriage tie" is a fine, solemn piece of cant in Christian England, when one considers all the facts.

We are sorry to have to accuse the *Daily Herald* of the grave offence of suppressing news which it is in the interest of the public to have. Thus, in a communication from Mr. George Lansbury on "Sunday in Scandinavia," Mr. Lansbury says that he found in the towns he visited that, instead of the usual reading of the Fourth Commandment, it was made to read, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it merry and bright." "Ordinary work is at a standstill, but cafes, restaurants, theatres, and music-halls are in full swing." Something that follows ought to have appeared, and either the acting editor has suppressed it or Mr. Lansbury is deliberately concealing the truth. For, instead of telling the public how, as a consequence of this secularizing of the Sunday, he saw family life broken up, drunkenness everywhere, and all forms of immorality rife, he merely tells us of the contented and happy crowds he saw waiting for the Sunday boats. It will not do. Mr. Lansbury must have seen the horrible things we have mentioned, which result from games, etc., being played on Sunday. We know it must be so. And the County Council has just declared by an overwhelming vote that to allow games in the parks on Sunday is to strike a blow at British family life and our unapproachable morality. We have lost faith in anything that Mr. Lansbury may tell us.

Worst of all is it to find such a paper as the *Church Times* opposing the L.C.C. for its manly stand for the protection of British morality and religion. In the current issue it

rebukes the Council for not permitting games, and says that the "real question at issue is whether it is better to allow healthy recreation under strict control in the public parks, or to encourage loafing in the streets in enforced idleness, with all the temptations to which idle hands are inevitably exposed. It is in these hours when boys and girls, needing an outlet for their high spirits and the means of getting wholesome exercise, are manufactured into vicious men and women, and often drift into the criminal class." We are astonished. It must be part of a Romanist plot to ruin England, and bring our morality down to the level of the Continental people, a people who only become tolerably moral while they are on our side in making war.

Miss E. B. Simpson, who has just died at Edinburgh (says *Truth*), wrote several interesting books which were very successful. She was a daughter of Sir James Simpson, who has been described as "the discoverer of chloroform." The fact is that chloroform was really "discovered" in the United States, but Simpson and some of his professional friends at Edinburgh developed and greatly improved the original drug. After it became known that Simpson used chloroform in obstetric practice, and that patients were flocking to him in consequence, a clamour was raised in Scotland by pious fanatics on the ground that he was defying the Divine decree, and that the more pain women suffered in child-birth the better it was for their best interests. Simpson was consequently denounced and preached against. The windows of his house in Queen Street were broken several times, and he was insulted in the streets of Edinburgh.

We live in strenuous times, when the minds of the people are agitated by great ideas. So it is good to get evidence of it in a goodly sized paragraph in the *Daily News*, accompanied with the inevitable portrait, telling us that the King has decided to wear his trousers with a crease down the sides instead of down the middle. A clothing expert thinks that some will follow the King, but men are beginning to think for themselves nowadays. They must surely be Bolsheviks. For one cannot think of the true Briton ignoring the creasing of the King's trousers in that way. But we wonder what would happen if the King gave up trousers altogether? Probably good and loyal subjects would feel compelled to follow suit.

*Apropos* of the present "Pussyfoot" agitation, we remember many years ago that the Rev. Mr. Aked, then of Liverpool, once said what was, for a clergyman, a very bold and a very wise thing. Commenting on the drinking of Scotland he said that with the religion that Scotland had it was whisky that helped to keep Scotsmen human. We are not sure of the exact words, but we are giving the exact sense of the statement. And we believe it to be the cold truth. With a religion that looked upon happiness as an offence to God, and laughter as an indication of a light and loose disposition, it was only under the relaxing influence of John Barleycorn that the overlaid human nature of the Scotsman, and there was plenty of it there, found expression. We are all familiar with the truth that bad conditions of life lead to drink, and among these bad conditions must certainly be counted the gloomy and mind-depressing creed that for so long dominated the Scottish people.

The *Manchester Evening News* publishes an account of the practice of Voodooism at Hayti. The writer marvels at a religion which requires its votaries to drink human blood and teaches the superstition that men can be made stronger, or killed, or cured of disease by a mere breath from the gods. We agree that these things are stupid and cruel, but they are really part of the religion by which the people of this country swear. All of them will be found in the Bible and in the Christian religion. And everyone who knows is quite well aware that we have in the eating of the Eucharist, and in the drinking of the Communion wine, the modern survival of the eating of the flesh and drinking the blood of the god. The people who believe in Voodooism would quite understand the Communion Service of the Church; all they would wonder at would be the absence of the genuine articles.

"Oh, Lord, save me," prayed a little girl who was on her way to the hospital after being set on fire through lighting a piece of paper. She died soon after, in spite of her prayer. We should like some sensible religionist to explain God's inattention to a prayer of this kind. There is not a decent man or woman in the world who would not have saved that poor little child could they have done so. But decent men and women are invariably better than the gods they worship. It is a pity their example has not a more elevating influence.

A clergyman stated in the Manchester Assize Court the other day that he offered up prayers in Church for the success of the defendant in a certain case, but the plaintiff won and was awarded damages. Quite a comment on answers to prayers. Perhaps the parson prayed to the wrong party. But if he had prayed to the Judge, he would have got into trouble. It is a hard world for a man of faith.

A friend writes:—

I have lately taken a position in an asylum, and in this place there is perpetrated thrice daily a hideous farce. After every meal the patients stand while the attendant, parrot-like, repeats the formula: "For what we have received, the Lord make us truly thankful." Their portion is insanity, dumbness, loss of memory, etc. The body who ordered this formula to be repeated was either composed of blockheads or fiends.

So we should think. But perhaps those responsible never think about it.

A memorial service for Admiral Koltchak was held at the Russian Church, Welbeck Street, London. You can always trust any Church of Christ to know on which side its bread is buttered.

What George Washington's pressmen are! Whilst the War was on, they told us that the Germans were all "Atheists." Now that the War is over, they forget their previous propaganda, and flatly contradict what they formerly asserted. In the yellowest of the yellow press, recently, a writer says of present-day Germany: "Every town and village possesses its religious shrine—usually very gaudy, neglected and dirty."

In Convocation, recently, the Bishop of London dragged up the Criminal Law Amendment Act (to raise the age of consent to eighteen), and said they had all brought before them the appalling statistics concerning venereal disease. He was convinced, he said, that the Bill, if passed, would do more to stop disease than anything that had been done yet. In plain English, an Act of Parliament would be more effective than even prayer. What a confession of spiritual impotence!

Dr. Jowett, the famous Congregationalist minister, who has returned to this country from the United States, told a congregation recently that "the Church must agonise instead of organise." It's too late for Christians to get themselves crucified—besides the police wouldn't let them.

Sir James Cantlie, speaking at St. Martin's Church, Charing Cross, said: "We have never been able to upset Moses' laws of hygiene and medicine." Sir James must admit, however, that Doctor Moses' prescriptions are more honoured in the breach than the observance—in this country. And Britishers have forgotten more than Moses ever knew concerning hygiene and medicine.

Reading Town Council has decided to allow Sunday concerts in the Town Hall under municipal management. Councillor Wooldridge said that "People want something different from the dry-as-dust Sundays with which they have been tortured for years." Not such bad reading for Reading—and other places.

At an inquest at Ramsgate, it was stated that the deceased had suffered from religious mania, had poured petrol over his clothing and set light to himself. Presumably, the poor, unhappy believer had tried to make a little hell of his own.

Considering that they are "starving," the clergy manage to leave quite nice little sums behind when they "shuffle off this mortal coil." The Rev. F. C. Hill, of Eastbourne, left £39,482; Canon H. Martin left £14,932; the Rev. W. Stone, of Deptford, left £6,591; Archdeacon Everingham, £6,530; and the Rev. C. Leach, £14,128.

In a leading article, the *Daily Mail* compared Lenin's mentality with that of the men who burnt Galileo. As Galileo was never burnt at all, it takes the gilt off this piece of literary gingerbread.

The West Country parson is continuing his "spirit messages" in a Sunday newspaper. The latest stunt is a story of soldier-comrades beyond the veil. Presumably, privates in the Horse Marines.

A life of William Booth, first General of the Salvation Army, has been published at the price of two guineas. According to the Gospels, the Founder of the first Salvation Army was sold for thirty pieces of silver.

Providence was too busy counting the hairs of peoples' heads to notice such a trifle as the death at Wembley of a three-year-old child who was scalded to death by the upsetting of a pail of boiling water.

According to his latest biographer, General Booth the First had a very bad digestion. We are glad to hear it! He upset a lot of simple folk's digestion with his nonsense about "Blood and Fire."

The Archbishop of Tuam, in his pastoral, advises Catholic women not to wear immodest dresses. The Archbishop should be an authority on dress. He wears petticoats himself.

## MAN AND HIS HELL.

His commanding posture, his opposable thumb, his spacious convoluted brain, and his voice of terror and command have enabled man to invent, elaborate, and apply to man all the tortures of his imagined Hell. The cat plays with the mouse, but that is the feline culinary art; and the mouse is shortly killed. Nor is the mouse fastened; it has to the last a chance of escape; and often the mouse gets away after a rousing game in which the stake was its life. The spider weaves a web, and the insect is caught; here the prey is fastened, but it is for food, and often a stout fly will break the net, and at the worst he is soon despatched. It was man who conceived the exquisite idea of fastening people in order to hurt them at his will and pleasure. Not a mammoth cat, insane and hunger-clung, ties up men and flogs them underground to cook them quickly instead of employing the longer, less brutal, and customary method with the mouse; it is man who does this to man, and not for food, but upon principle. Not a Titanic spider, but man, rove the strappado and stretched the rack in order to hurt men in body, mind, and soul, in every organ, nerve and sinew, joint and muscle, repeatedly and for long periods without killing them: it was man who did this, and not because he was starving and this the only way to secure and prepare food, but in many cases only because there was between him and his victims a difference of opinion upon an entirely immaterial point. It was not a pack of wolves, having captured more game than they could dispose of, and being quite sated with flesh and wanton with blood, who chained up men and women and burned them alive: it was men who did this to men as a religious duty.—*John Davidson.*

"You inquire if the doctrine we have essayed to establish be not dangerous. I reply, not if it is true. Nothing is so dangerous as error, nothing so safe as truth. A dangerous truth would be a contradiction of terms and an anomaly in things."—*Frances Wright.*



**C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.**

February 29, Glasgow; March 7, Leicester; March 14, Birmingham; March 21, Manchester; April 18, Swansea.

**To Correspondents.**

**J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.**—February 29, Porth, Glam.; March 7, Birmingham; March 21, Abertillery.

**"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.**—A. Heath, 1s. 9d.; J. de B. and Wife, 12s.

**H. COLLINS, JUN.**—Pleased you find so much pleasure in reading *The Parson and the Atheist*. The discussion is, we are convinced, doing much good. On the whole, it may be said to summarize the main principles of the case for Freethought. We note that you have offered a copy to your local library. Others of our readers have taken the same course.

**H. IRVING.**—Your letter came to hand after we had "made up" the paper. By the postmark it should have been delivered in time, but the post takes its time nowadays. We are glad to learn of the success of your meetings. We can readily believe that the discussions are deeply interesting.

**H. S. WISHART.**—Pleased to hear from you, and to hear that you are still sowing the seed. The "enclosed" cutting was left out of your letter.

**H. SPENCE.**—Sorry to hear you have been unwell. Thanks for article.

**T. DUNBAR.**—We should say the cutting sent is in the nature of an advertisement. Pleased to have your warm appreciation of the *Freethinker*. We agree that it is no easy task to fill the place of our giants who are gone, we can only do our best to make the loss as small as possible. We do not think we are overtaxing our strength, even though we occasionally feel we should like a little more leisure.

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*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 (February 29) Mr. Cohen follows up his debate in Glasgow with two lectures in the Partick Burgh Halls. The meetings are at 12 o'clock and 6.30. The subjects are specially selected to cover the larger part of the Freethought position, and are: morning, "The Challenge of Unbelief"; evening, "Christianity and the Logic of Life." It will be an excellent time for Freethinkers to bring along an inquiring friend.

Mr. Lloyd lectures on Sunday evening at Porth, in the Rhondda Valley. The meeting will be held in the Empire Hall, which now belongs to the workmen of the Lewis Merthyr Collieries, and seats about 900; and it is hoped the local Freethinkers will make the lecture as widely known as possible, and so secure a crowded hall. The lecture begins at 7.30, and the subject, "Dreams," is a highly interesting and popular one. Mr. Lloyd is also to give a lecture at Tonyrefail on Sunday afternoon at 2.30.

Mr. Cohen had two fine meetings at South Shields on Sunday last. There was a good attendance in the afternoon, and the hall was filled in the evening. Every point in the lecture was followed with the closest attention and marked appreciation. Many friends were present from Stanley, Newcastle, Cramlington, New Herrington, and elsewhere. The local propaganda, which is using Shields as a centre, is evidently proving itself to be effective.

On Sunday, Mr. A. B. Moss lectured at the Repertory Theatre on "Is the Bible a Safe Guide?" He was in fine form, and met with hearty appreciation from a large audience.

Mr. Thresh lectured for the Swansea Branch last Sunday, and we rejoice but are not surprised to learn that he gave great satisfaction. There were large and most appreciative audiences, his observations on education being specially enjoyed.

We referred last week to the result of the long fight with the L. C. C., and to the victory of the Committee formed to fight the matter. Since the Committee has met, and, in the course of winding up its operations for the present, duly thanked all who had given it any help during the struggle. Among those thanked was the *Star*, which was the only paper that had noticed the matter, and had, besides inserting several paragraphs, spoken out against the Council's attempt to suppress freedom of propaganda. But we were a little surprised to find the *Star* heading its report of the affair with "Success of a *Star* Campaign," and we were left wondering what circumstances made it a *Star* campaign. It was not initiated by the *Star*, nor carried on by the *Star*, nor paid for by the *Star*. But that it was a campaign to which the *Star* gave an occasional paragraph of news, with two or three comments on the injustice of the Council's action, and we have the facts. We have no desire to belittle anything that the *Star* did; on the contrary, its conduct stands out well when contrasted with the other papers, which remained silent in the face of an attempt to filch from the people of London one of their oldest rights. And we suppose it would never have done for the *Star* to have mentioned the part played by the *Freethinker* and the N. S. S. in the fight. The solemn humbug that the press is unaware of their existence must be kept up at all cost. The Englishman loves this kind of a pretence as a duck loves water.

So, in the interests of accurate history, we venture to give a brief account of the matter. Somewhere about twenty years ago the Council made an attempt to stop the sale of literature at Mr. Cohen's meeting in Victoria Park. Mr. Cohen replied by selling literature himself—the only occasion on which he has done so—and left the L. C. C. to do as it pleased in the matter. The Council did nothing. Nine or ten years ago the Council made another attempt to interfere with meetings by prohibiting the taking up of collections. This did not specially affect the N. S. S., but the Society fought it, a number of its members were summoned, Miss Vance had three or four summonses against her for taking up collections, and only in the face of the threat of the High Court did the Council climb down. The next attempt was that made in 1916 to stop the sale of all literature. That proposal would have gone through and have become an accomplished and uncontested fact but for the article published in the *Freethinker* for June 11, 1916. The Council was told quite plainly that the matter would be fought, that literature would be sold, and a copy of that issue of the paper was sent to every member of the Council so that they might know what to expect. It was on the initiative of the Executive that a number of societies were invited to send delegates to form a Committee, and the N. S. S. provided a goodly portion of the necessary expenses. Of that Committee Miss Vance was Secretary throughout, and Mr. Cohen represented the N. S. S. The facts are well known to all concerned in the agitation, they are quite well known to the L. C. C. itself—as was shown by its making a "set" at the *Freethinker*. It is all the more remarkable that a paper like the *Star* should be unaware of the facts. Really, we suppose

the pretence that the *Freethinker* and the N. S. S. do not exist must be kept up. We have broken down this pretence with some of the provincial papers; presently the London ones may catch up with them. At present they are all behind. And they unconsciously pay us a compliment. The N. S. S. is the party, and the *Freethinker* is the paper the Churches fear most. They cannot be answered, they refuse to be silenced, the only thing left is to say nothing about them. They may keep some people in ignorance, and ignorance is the mother of devotion now as always.

The Pioneer Press has purchased several very readable "remainders" to which we call the special attention of our readers. They will be found advertised on the back page of this issue, and there are only a very limited number of copies obtainable. Those who wish to secure copies should write at once, otherwise the chance will be gone.

The West Ham Branch is arranging for a Social Evening for Saturday evening, March 13, at 7 o'clock prompt. There will be songs, dances, games, etc., and a cordial invitation is extended to all Freethinkers and their friends. The Social will be held in No. 7 Room, Earlham Hall, Earlham Grove, Forest Gate, E. Nearest stations are Wanstead (M.R.) or Forest Gate (G.E.R.). 'Buses and trams to the "Princess Alice," Romford Road.

The *Western Daily Mercury* gives a brief report of Mr. Cohen's recent lectures at Plymouth.

The Annual Dinner of the Birmingham Branch took place on Saturday, the 21st inst., at the Crown Hotel, and was a success in every respect. Sixty sat down to dinner. Mr. A. B. Moss was the guest of the evening. The toast, "The National Secular Society," coupled with the names of its President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, and Mr. Moss, was given by the Chairman, Mr. R. G. Fathers, and supported by Mr. F. E. Willis and Mr. E. C. Williams. Mr. Moss responded in most suitable terms. The toast was drunk with enthusiasm. A programme full of interesting items, arranged by Mr. W. Simpson, jun., including a dramatic recital by Mr. Moss, was gone through, and a most enjoyable time passed all too quickly.

The Weston-super-Mare authorities have decided to permit Sunday concerts during the season. That is, perhaps, one result of the steady propaganda of Freethought that has been going on in the town for some time. Councillor Rendall, in the course of the discussion on the Council, said that there was a class in the town known as Freethinkers who were entitled to their point of view. That, again, shows an advance and the influence of the propaganda named. The recognition of Freethinkers as a class with distinct claims is something in a place like Weston-super-Mare.

The Sensual and the Dark rebel in vain,  
Slaves by their own compulsion! In mad game  
They burst their manacles and wear the name  
Of Freedom, graven on a heavier chain!  
O Liberty! with profitless endeavour  
Have I pursued thee, many a weary hour;  
But thou nor swell'st the victor's strain, nor ever  
Didst breathe thy soul in forms of human power.  
Alike from all, howe'er they praise thee  
(Nor prayer, nor boastful name, delays thee).

Thou speedest on thy subtle pinions,  
The guide of homeless winds, and playmate of the waves!  
And there I felt thee!—on that sea-cliff's verge,  
Whose pines, scarce travelled by the breeze above,  
Had made one murmur with the distant surge!  
Yes, while I stood and gazed, my temples bare,  
And shot my being through earth, sea, and air,  
Possessing all things with intensest love,  
O Liberty! my spirit felt thee there. —Coleridge.

## Man's Ancestry.

THE illustrious Huxley spent the evening of his arduous life at Eastbourne, close to the termination of the South Downs on Beachy Head. Musing on days gone by, when he roused the fury of the bigots by the publication of his lively lectures on *Man's Place in Nature*, no doubt he passed through Piltdown on his way to Lewes. Little did he dream that in the strata, over which he trod, were the remains of a man which had lain there possibly half a million years. This being certainly possessed the oldest typically human brain-case known up to the present day. These remains are now carefully preserved in the Natural History Museum at South Kensington; and he, who runs, may read for the modest sum of sixpence, a beautifully illustrated account of *Piltdown Man*, written by Dr. Woodward, one of Huxley's eminent disciples. The chief point of interest, one which Huxley himself would scarcely have credited, is that this man had a skull with a cranial capacity approaching his own.

If Darwin's *Bull-dog* were still alive, the post might have brought to his door *The Outlines of History*, sent by the author, H. G. Wells, a former demonstrator of his at the Royal School of Mines. The old warrior could therein read a brilliant account of Neanderthal men, who lived an immense time ago, and yet possessed brains larger than those of modern Europeans. He would see illustrations of carvings, paintings, and other artistic work, much beyond the scope of the ordinary man of to-day.

More than fifty years have passed since *Man's Place in Nature*, and almost a quarter of a century since Haeckel's *The Evolution of Man* saw the light of day, so it is no wonder if the views set forth by these two great thinkers are now largely out of date.

Biologists have discovered, when engaged in constructing ancestral genealogical pedigrees of plants or animals, that new species do not arise from the most specialized members of the previous race, but invariably spring from the least specialized and most generalized members of the previous species. The consequence is that at the present day no competent zoologist regards Haeckel's arrangement (Lemurs—American monkeys—Old World monkeys—anthropoid apes—man) as at all representing the true state of affairs. In fact, such a very conservative professor as Dr. Duckworth, in his text-book on *Morphology and Anthropology*, used by his students in the anthropological laboratory at Cambridge University, states definitely that "man is not directly related to any lemur, monkey, or anthropoid ape living at the present day."

Whether man may be directly related to any extinct lemur, monkey, or ape is a much more difficult point to settle; nevertheless, some of the greatest authorities now believe that there is no direct genetic connection between man and the other primates. They have been led to this conclusion from the discoveries of the past few years. The record of the rocks appears to indicate that man, monkeys, and apes arose from a common ancestor, which lived perhaps in Oligocene times.

Dr. G. E. Pilgrim, in a paper in the Records of the Geological Survey of India for 1915, gives an account of his discovery of the remains of anthropoid apes, together with "*Sivapithecus indicus*," which he believes to be "a member of the human family," found in Miocene strata in the Siwalik Hills, at the foot of the Himalayas. These animals must have lived and died in the forests of Northern India something like a million years ago.

A rather ingenious theory concerning these animals has been propounded by Professor Joseph Barrell, who

spent a great part of his life studying this region of the earth. Geologists are agreed that about the end of the Miocene, and continuing into the Pliocene period, an immense ridge arose, stretching from west to east across the surface of the Old World. Parts of this ridge are the Alps, Carpathians, and Himalayas. Professor Barrell thinks that while this was going on some of the arboreal denizens of the forests were shut off towards the north, and were compelled to come down from the trees and walk upon the ground. So man arose; and, finding himself in less congenial surroundings, had to sharpen his wits, and thus developed a larger brain. Dr. Woodward, in commenting on this hypothesis, remarks, "so far no human fossils have been found north of the Himalayan region to test this theory."

Another interesting account of early man is to be found in a recent publication of the Royal Society. Dr. Stevenson tells the story of a man, his wife, and dogs, who arrived in Queensland when the ancestors of the kangaroos and other marsupials were flourishing. The immense time that must have gone by since then is made manifest when we recollect that these ancestors of the modern Australian animals have been extinct a hundred thousand years or more.

H. G. Wells, in the second part of his *Outlines of History*, on page 59, in writing of early men, says, "They had no dogs." On the other hand, Dr. Elliot Smith, in a lecture given about two years ago at one of our most famous Universities, stated his belief that the dog was the earliest animal to be tamed by man, and has been his faithful companion for tens of thousands of years. The account of Dr. Stevenson strongly supports the view of Dr. Smith.

After this digression let us return and see if, at the present day, it is possible to find a living animal which possesses primitive and generalized characters, and may possibly be in the direct line of man's descent. Many competent anatomists think they have discovered such an animal living in our days. There lives in the dense forests of the East Indies an animal smaller than our English squirrel, which sleeps during the day-time, but jumps from tree to tree catching insects and lizards at night. The natives of Borneo call it the Malmag, but it is known to science as "Tarsius spectrum," or the Tarsier. The generic name "Tarsius" is due to the animal possessing an astonishingly long tarsus or ankle, while the specific name "Spectrum" refers to its huge goggle-like eyes, resembling those of a motor-cyclist; which gives the animal such a weird-like appearance that it is held in superstitious awe by the natives. A still more primitive and generalized form of this animal, called Anaptomorphus, dates right back to the base of the Eocene; that is to say, it was living on our earth some three million years ago. So much importance is attached to this animal by modern zoologists that last November a special meeting of the Zoological Society of London was held, at which all our specialists were present to consider "the position of Tarsius." The printed record of the discussion will soon be issued, and is eagerly expected by the young zoologists of the present day.

It is certainly remarkable in how many primitive and generalized features man agrees with tarsius whilst differing from the lemurs, monkeys, and apes. In the latter animals, the architecture of the skull is less primitive and further developed than in man and tarsius; this can be shown on the sides, bases, and faces of the crania. For example, in our skulls, the nasal bones are comparatively large and separate, whilst in apes the same bones are usually small and reduced, often fusing into a single splint-shaped bone.

Dental authorities have been surprised at finding

many primitive characters in our dentition. No other mammal has a complete semi-circle of teeth without a gap like ours. Certainly no other primate can lay claim to this specially archaic arrangement.

It is also a curious fact that if we wish to find blood-vessels arising from the aortic arch in an exactly similar manner as ours, we have to look for it in such a lowly animal as the egg-laying duck-billed platypus of Australia. On the other hand, the lemurs, monkeys, and apes have a different and less primitive arrangement, whilst the aortic branching of tarsius is exactly the same as ours.

Another striking fact is that man and tarsius agree in possessing the simplest male copulatory organ among mammals. There is no *os penis* and no trace of cartilage in any phase of the development of this organ. As Dr. Duckworth, in his *Morphology and Anthropology*, says: "These characters separate man and tarsius from all other primates."

HENRY SPENCE.

## Early Christian Frauds.

V.

(Continued from p. 123.)

AFTER concocting a number of fabulous histories of Christ, and publishing them as works composed by apostles, some of the Christian forgers conceived the idea of drawing up a report of the trial of Jesus, such as they believed *might* have been written by Pilate to the reigning emperor. From the conception of the idea to the actual composition of the document was, as Lipsius says, "a mere step." In this report the pious forgers represent Pilate as transmitting it to the emperor *Claudius*. Pilate was governor of Judæa for ten years (A.D. 26-36) in the reign of *Tiberius*; *Claudius* reigned from A.D. 41 to 54.

In one of the forms of the *Acts of Pilate*, which, as we have seen, was in the hands both of Justin and the author of the First Epistle of Peter, we find incorporated a copy of this forged "Epistle of Pontius Pilate to the Emperor *Claudius*." This report commences:—

Pontius Pilate to *Claudius* his king, greeting. It has lately happened, as I myself have also proved, that the Jews, through envy, have punished themselves and their posterity by a cruel condemnation. In short, when their fathers had a promise that their God would send them from heaven his Holy One, who should deservedly be called their king, and promised that he would send him by a virgin on earth; when, therefore, while I was procurator, he had come into Judæa, and when they saw him giving sight to the blind, cleansing the lepers, curing the paralytics, making demons flee from men, and even raising the dead, etc., etc.

This precious epistle, in which Pilate is represented as a believer in Christ, bears the evidence of its Christian origin in every line.

In another Christian forgery—the *Acts of Peter and Paul*—Peter is represented as saying to the emperor Nero:—

But if thou wishest to know, O good Emperor, the things that have been done in Judæa concerning Christ, take the writings of Pontius Pilate sent to *Claudius*, and thus thou wilt know all.

The emperor, we are informed, followed this excellent advice.

And Nero ordered them to be brought, and to be read in his presence, and they were to the following effect: "Pontius Pilate to *Claudius*, greeting." [Then follows the forged Report—"It has lately happened, as I myself have proved, that the Jews, through envy," etc.]

As might be expected, this early Christian forgery is quoted and referred to by later Christian writers as a genuine document. Eusebius, for instance, says in his *Ecclesiastical History* (ii. 2):—

Pontius Pilate transmitted to Tiberius an account of the circumstances concerning the resurrection of our Lord from the dead, the report of which had already been spread throughout all Palestine, etc.

Eusebius also refers to the work of an earlier writer, Tertullian, who says (Apol. v.):—

Tiberius, accordingly, in whose days the Christian name made its entry into the world, having himself received intelligence from Palestine of events which had clearly shown the truth of Christ's divinity, brought the matter before the senate, etc.

Referring to the darkness which was said to have appeared at the Crucifixion, Tertullian says (Apol. xxi.): "Those who were not aware that this had been predicted of Christ, no doubt thought it an eclipse. *You yourselves have the account of the world-portent still in your archives.*"

In one of the versions of the forged Report of Pilate this "world-portent" is thus described:—

And at the time that he was crucified there was darkness all over the world, the sun being darkened at mid-day, and the stars appearing; but in them there appeared no lustre; and the moon, as if turned into blood, failed in her light.....and they saw below them a chasm of the earth, with the roar of the thunders that fall upon it, And in that terror dead men were seen that had risen..... And there were very many *whom I also saw* appearing in the body.....majestic men appeared in glorious robes, an innumerable multitude, whose voice was heard as that of a very great thunder, crying out, Jesus that was crucified is risen.....And many of the Jews died, swallowed up in the chasm, so that on the following day most of those who had been against Jesus could not be found.

This is "the account" which Tertullian says was written by Pilate to the emperor, and was still preserved in the Roman archives. Its statements prove that there was no limit to the credulity of the early Christians.

The next Christian fraud deserving of notice is a letter and a reply; but one of the forged documents is represented as written by Jesus.

Eusebius tells us (*Ecc. Hist.* i. 13) that the report of Christ's "wonder-working power" having been "proclaimed abroad among all men," a certain king, named Abgarus, "who reigned over the nations beyond the Euphrates," and who was "wasting away with a disease," sent one of his servants, named Ananias, with a letter to Jesus, asking that great thaumaturgus to come and heal him. The letter commences: "Abgarus, Prince of Edessa, sends greeting to Jesus, the excellent Saviour." The writer then goes on to say that, from the reports which had reached him of the wonders wrought by Christ, he had arrived at the conclusion that that personage was "either God himself come down from heaven, or the Son of God," etc. To this letter Jesus wrote the following reply, which he despatched by the bearer:—

Blessed art thou, O Abgarus, who, without seeing, hast believed in me. For it is written concerning me, that they who have seen me will not believe, and that they who have not seen me shall believe and live. But, in regard to what thou hast written, that I should come to thee, it is necessary that I should fulfil all things here, for which I have been sent. And after this fulfilment, thus to be received again by Him that sent me. And, after I have been received up, I will send to thee one of my disciples that he may heal thy affliction, and give life to thee and to those that are with thee.

These two letters, Eusebius tells us, were "taken from the public records of the city of Edessa," where they had been preserved from the time of Abgarus to

his day. "There is nothing," says this historian, "like hearing the epistles themselves, *taken by us from the archives*, and their style, as they have been literally translated by us from the Syriac."

These epistles, if we could believe Eusebius, are genuine historical documents. They are, at any rate, supported by stronger and more direct evidence than any of the Gospel narratives.

As regards the letter of Jesus to Abgarus, one matter is beyond question: it enunciates the true Christian doctrine of blind, unreasoning faith. Belief without evidence is commended—"Blessed are they who, without seeing, have believed." Such credulity was considered by the early Christians meritorious.

(To be concluded.) ABRACADABRA.

### "A Blast o' Januar' Win'."

THIS writing and this article were, like the weather itself, quite unpremeditated, but quite psychological and inevitable—quite an array of big words, but familiar and even dear to the Freethinker for the expressing of his freed and finer thought. Ingersoll—in the finest, or at least, the most intimate and actual tribute ever paid to the Scottish bard—in his easy, simple, splendid way of saying just the right word—asks: "How does a country become great? By producing great poets. Why is it that Scotland, when the roll of nations is called, can stand up and proudly answer: Here? Because Robert Burns has lived."

I thought of the poet and the poet-orator as I crossed the close-cropped daisied lea, and the thought enriched the scene, exalted the lowly gowan, and made myself, in my direct natural and simple happiness, feel a king among men—not over them of course. The sun shone faintly in the dim and misty skies, lighting the hemisphere with subdued but sufficient illumination, lighting the silvered amber of the splashing stream, the pebbled bottom of its breaks and shallows and dimpling deeps, dwelling lovingly on its sweetly-sculptured tufted banks in all their pleasing unevenness and beauty, eddies with little mounds of slow-revolving snowy foam, creeks and inlets, green plant-life in fairy grotts, and miniature shingles of striated sand, cascading in shining silver in resounding scooped-out pools, while last year's varied vegetation, flattened and still, in brown, and bleached, and green, seemed to smile above it among the dark and naked stems of the dwarf plantations. I reached at length the green plot under the reservoir, and under the aged ash trees that had shed in the storm their dried fantastic grey-brown twigs on the emerald lawn. Here were water, fuel, shelter, and beauty in plenty; what a place for a family or friendly picnic; that will be seen to by and by.

From here the solemn and lonely hill called me upward and further on. The fierce blast that merely breathed and whispered in the glen, or was heard howling and hissing without and afar, caught and propelled me upward, and with excess of zeal almost pushed me over the mountain top. I found the Cairn demolished, and in the ruins a lidless tin box containing three little rain-soaked note-books with many entries of names and exclamations. One righteously indignant and seemingly versed in "First Principles" had written in round, bold hand:—

Would the ignorant swine who stole the large book from here kindly leave it back; and *Reform* with *Principle* as a starting point.—S. P. M.

While grammar and meaning may be a little obscure, one thanks S. P. M. for the *spirit* of these words.

Another pretty penman writes:—

All men are grass  
All grass is hay:  
We're here to-morrow  
And away to-day,

which is somehow reminiscent of Melchizedek, who had neither beginning nor end of days, and of whom it was said: "He came before he arrived, and left before he went away."

One other—in prose or verse, I cannot quite make out which—complains:—

This book is done,  
Bring up a bigger one.

And, indeed, if so many nature-worshippers attend this altar of the hills, he must provide another book and casket for those Pagan rites.

On a dry tuft of heather I sat in the lee a little to write some lines to a very dear friend, as a note from high Olympus; and longer might have sat, but

Januar' win's crept round the hill  
With stealthy marrow-searching chill.

I did not wish to be another Wordsworth, and fall a victim, on its altar steps, to Nature's wintry mood. So, staff in hand, made a joyous descent, with all the youthful elasticity of fifty years; re-inspired, revitalized, I leapt and ran upon the grey and springy turf. At the hillfoot, and behind a high thorn hedge, the hill waters collected themselves into a pretty rivulet, rippling in fissures of dark rock and mossy stones, combing and stirring as it flowed the long green "water kelpie's" hair; anon broadening in a pool under the thorn. Civilization began here in pretty clefts where the primrose would come. The miniature glen below is the prettiest one could desire; with whin tossing in the wind, blossomed here and there; with budding hazel, pallid grasses, brown fern, bracken, dogrose sprays, and clustering ivy on the brow of the little cliff overhanging the stream; while mimic Alpine slope and ridge diversified the idyllic scene. The waters of the moorland reservoir were roughening in the blast, their little billows beating musically and multitudinously upon the stony marge—an almost intoxicating refreshment for the senses, yet breathing tranquillity and sober, chaste delight.

I had comforted my conscience, concerned about so much selfish happiness, with the promise of picnic outing for the family. In like manner I mingled a little utility with the idle pleasures of the solitudes by cutting some privet slips from the lower glen, to make me a hedge-border round my little garden; the which I could note with sympathy, in growth or decay, as the spring advanced, as I smoked and aired myself on the "stoep" on Sunday mornings. Regaining the lower regions of the lost souls, I began, as usual, to take stock of the people I met. There were lads and lassies; man, wife, and weans; solitary walkers and friendly twos and threes of both sexes. Bright-eyed, winsome, wistful little wives and sweethearts, and stodgy cavaliers; handsome, intelligent, animated couples. Here and there the truculent, respectable Philistine; the thin-skinned and pompous people; but surviving, outshining, leavening, redeeming all kindness, sweetness, love's and beauty's soul and form.

I was sorry I had to pass the cemetery, with its silent populace, putting a too definite period to my pilgrimage—or, rather, I was glad I could still pass it, and for a quite indefinite while enjoy the breath and beauty of this ever-varying, ever more interesting here and now! All of which may seem trifling generalizations; but I had been very happy in a very common but no trifling way, and hope was high that on many such occasions I would, if possible, be happier still—actually so, and in an actual world.

ANDREW MILLAR.

## Correspondence.

### AGNOSTIC OR ATHEIST?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Having developed the habit of leaving my copies of the *Freethinker* in train, tram, or 'bus, or giving them to Christian and other friends, I am unable to refer to the letters which have already appeared on this subject. I do not remember clearly the passage which urged me to write my previous letter; but if my memory serves me rightly, the purport of Mr. Lennard's letter was, first, to complain that certain Freethought writers, calling themselves Atheists, had not acted so kindly as he would like when referring to Agnostics; and, secondly, to claim that the term "Agnostic" is *more* consistent with Freethought principles than "Atheist." That, at least, is the impression left on my mind.

Let me say that I would be very sorry to write or say anything likely to cause a rift in the Freethought lute. My object in writing was to point out what I contend is the correct interpretation of the word "Atheist," and to show that for all practical purposes there is no real difference between the two parties; and if I am to accept the compliment paid me by so prominent a writer and authority as Major Warren, my effort was fairly successful.

It is not for me to hold any brief for Mr. H. C. Mellor, believing him quite capable to defend his own case; but surely Mr. Lennard can see that the very quotation he has given is the "qualifying addition" I suggested. It was obviously the God of Addison and Bacon which he was *dogmatically* asserting did not exist. Your correspondent objects to my putting the blame for the "distastefulness" of the word "Atheist" on the theologians, and says: "Truth can be told in such vulgar language that many, while ignoring it as truth, may condemn it as vulgarity." I feel myself, however, still compelled to defend the pioneer propagandists.

If it were true that a doctrine becomes "distasteful" through its advocates using language that is impolite and vulgar, then, for sure, Christianity would, to-day, be the most distasteful of all creeds, and "Christian" the most nauseous of all labels. There have been a thousand vulgar (in every sense of the word) Christian preachers to every one vulgar (in any sense) Atheist propagandist; and yet how many people actually resent being called Christian?

It is quite true that Ingersoll called himself Agnostic, but the "whimsical definition" I quoted supports my contention, and shows that to him the two terms were practically synonymous.

FRED. COLLINS.

## National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON FEBRUARY 19.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen occupied the chair. Also present: Messrs. Kelf, Lloyd, Moss, Neate, Quinton Silverstein, Miss Kough, and the Secretary.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

The Monthly Balance Sheet was presented and adopted.

New members were admitted for Barnsley, Belfast, South London, South Shields, and the Parent Society, twenty-one in all.

Mr. S. Samuels was elected as the South London representative on the Executive in the place of Mr. Victor Roger, deceased.

Miss Pitcher, representative of the N.W. Counties Group (Manchester), was elected to the Organization Committee.

Correspondence from the Belfast, Pontypridd, South London, and South Shields Branches, *re* future propaganda, was reported and discussed. Invitations for the Whit-Sunday Conference were received from Birmingham and Swansea Branches, and instructions given for the issuing of a circular inviting the Branches to decide upon the matter by their vote according to rule.

Highly successful meetings were reported at South Place and Stratford Town Hall, and further courses of lectures decided upon.

The President reported the success of the Joint Committee of Protest against the prohibition of sale of literature in the L.C.C. Parks, as shown by the decision of the L.C.C. on February 10, particulars of which have been given already in these columns. The Secretary was instructed to enquire as to the possibilities of a Social Evening, and Miss Pitcher volunteered assistance in the matter.

The question of the registration of the National Secular Society was discussed and the matter adjourned to be dealt with at an interim meeting on March 11.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

### NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

*President :*

**CHAPMAN COHEN.**

*Secretary :*

MISS E. M. VANCE, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

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Secularism teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

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Name.....

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This declaration should be transmitted to the Secretary with a subscription.

P.S.—Beyond a minimum of Two Shillings per year, every member is left to fix his own subscription according to his means and interest in the cause.

### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7, Social Gathering—Music and Dancing.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, T. F. Palmer, "Freethought and Family Life."

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, Mr. E. Burke, "Agnosticism and Atheism." Music from 6.30 to 7.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11. S. K. Ratcliffe, "America: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Partick Burgh Halls, Hamilton Crescent): Mr. C. Cohen, 12 noon, "The Challenge of Unbelief"; 6.30, "Christianity and the Logic of Life." (Silver Collection.)

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. W. H. Thresh, "From Savage to Shakespeare."

RHONDDA BRANCH N. S. S. (Workmen's Institute, Tonyrefail): Mr. J. T. Lloyd, 2.30, "Christianity in the Melting-Pot"; 7.30 (Empire Hall, Porth), "Dream Life and Real Life."

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