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Views and Opinions.

Our Uncivilized Religion.

It is not at all an easy task to one who has grown up accustomed to civilized forms of thinking to take Christian beliefs with all expected solemnity. And when one who has been used to thinking in civilized terms comes upon those who seriously believe in the group of legends that go to make up what is known as Christianity, one feels towards such folk much as one who found a man of thirty solemnly hanging up his stocking on Christmas eve in the full expectation that Santa Klaus would visit him, via the chimney, before morning. One would have to admit the reality of the belief, but would marvel at its perpetuation in an adult who might otherwise present no marked indications of senile decay or insanity. And, after all, there must have been a time when Santa Klaus, or his forerunner, was accepted as a matter of course by adults. It was only gradually that he became relegated to the region of fairyland, holding a vanishing dominion over children only. The gods of one religion usually become the demons or devils of the religion that displaces them, and the bogeys that frighten, or the fairies that amuse the young are the seriously held conceptions of earlier generations of adults. And to the genuinely civilized mind there is no difference between them, or to the minds that accept the one and reject the other. To expect an answer to prayer is to believe in miracle, whether they who expect are savages in a primeval forest or "civilized" men and women in a modern cathedral. There is nothing substantially different between the belief of a savage that some spirit exactly similar to himself is responsible for the physical changes that go on around him, and for the alterations in bodily and mental states that go on within him, and the man who in grandiloquent language speaks of a "Power" regulating the universe, offers it reverence, and endows it with a capacity for feeling an interest in and co-operating with the progress of human welfare. The form differs, the substance remains unchanged. There is only one religion, but there are many forms, and it is the persistence of the savage in a civilized dress that fronts us in the survivals that meet us to-day.

* * *

Cheap Bravery.

One may take it that the perception of this truth is responsible for the disavowal of many well established

Christian doctrines by highly placed clergymen. Although the circumstances of the disavowal are hardly less dishonouring than is the acceptance of these primitive beliefs. A dean startles the world by saying that he does not believe in the fall of man. A bishop creates consternation by the confession that he doubts whether Jesus Christ was more than a man. Another eminent cleric says we ought not to believe in miracles—at least, in the old sense. And so the tale of repudiations grows, and they who repudiate get the reputation of very daring thinkers, as being very "advanced," and really appear to regard themselves as such. So must every youngster when it first disowns Santa Klaus and damns the consequences. Really, the position is dishonouring to both these clerical dare-devils and to the society in which they are living. There should be no credit in disowning these beliefs, there should only be a feeling of humiliation in accepting them, or a feeling that one has been insulted in having them attributed to one. Their attribution is an insult to one's intellect, and that a man does not believe in the story of the Garden of Eden, or in the virgin birth, or in the miracles of the Bible, should no more need the saying than a man finds it necessary to proclaim to the world that he does not believe in the historical accuracy of Jack and the Bean-stalk. There are things of the intellect that should be taken for granted among civilized people, just as there are matters of behaviour taken for granted among properly brought up men and women. In this respect religion may serve the useful purpose of hinting that we are neither properly brought up nor thoroughly civilized.

* * *

Death and the Church.

The other day what the champions of savage mentality will regard as a "bombshell" was cast by Bishop Welldon. Speaking at Nottingham he suggested that the time had come for a revision of certain parts of the Prayer Book. He took the prayer given after the interment of the dead, "We give Thee hearty thanks that it hath pleased Thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world," and suggested its omission. Now we do not question the common sense that would eliminate this prayer, although, when the bishop suggests substituting prayers for the souls of the dead, his own mental advance appears to be of a strictly limited quantity. Apart from that, it is certain that while the prayer which Bishop Welldon wishes to eliminate is quite Christian in spirit, it does not represent what professing Christians feel. Orthodox Christianity has always taught that this world was a sinful and a wicked place, and that Christians were here as pilgrims on their way to a brighter and happier sphere. And they still proclaim that the next world is a bright and happy place—for Christians. For others it is *bright* without being happy. And yet if a man went into a house and said "Thank God!" when told that someone there was dead, he would stand a good chance of getting thrown out. And no Christian does feel happy when he is informed by his medical attendant that he

is booked for the next world. He may thank God most heartily when he learns that some other Christian is booked through, but that is another question. The point is that Christians do not really feel thankful to God when he takes from them those whom they love, they do not want to get out of this wicked world, and the whole prayer is a sample of that general mental insincerity which all religions breed sooner or later. The essence of the situation is that Christianity inherited the savage born conception of an after life, and then proceeded to decorate it with all the refined absurdities of a theologically diseased imagination. And Bishop Welldon happens to be one of those daring thinkers who will no longer preach an absurdity when it does not pay to do so. There are many such as that in this Christianized world of ours.

* * *

Christianity and Marriage.

Another thing discovered by Bishop Welldon is that the form of the Church of England marriage service is repugnant to modern minds. It is distressing, he says, for bride and bridegroom to be told in the hour of their marriage that matrimony must not be undertaken "to satisfy men's carnal lusts and appetites," and that marriage is "ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication; that such persons who have not the gift of continency might marry and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ's body." Quite disgusting, we agree, but it is quite Christian. For Christianity is shot through and through with the teaching that celibacy is the higher and "purer" state, and marriage no more than a necessary concession to the weakness of the flesh. The Jesus of the gospels is a celibate, one who announces that in the next world there is no marrying nor giving in marriage. St. Paul advises that the only reason, at least the principal one, is exactly that given by the prayer book. The greatest Church in Christendom has always held to celibacy as the ideal state for men and women, and the English Church still has a "purificatory" service for women after childbirth. No religion has ever taken a lower view of marriage or of the relation of the sexes than has Christianity, and none has more consistently and more authoritatively belittled or ignored the benefits and the virtues of family life. The marriage service of the Church of England is an insult to every decent minded man and woman who permits a priest to mumble it over them. And if they do not recognize it as such, it is only because they pay no attention to what is being said. It is many, many years since Freethinkers first pointed out the disgusting character of the Church of England marriage service, and the bishop's daring advance is, like all the advances of these men, a weak echo of our ancient teaching, and put forward in the hope of staying still more drastic measures. The clergy have known these things for long enough; they have only just found it advisable to say them. Bishop Welldon says that in his opinion all clergymen ought to be taught elocution. It would be more profitable to the country if they were taught to tell the truth. But that might prevent their becoming clergymen, or, at all events, staying long at the job.

* * *

Religion and Life.

There is a long story behind this Christian attitude towards women, marriage, and child-birth, a story which would take us back to the superstitions that have their origin in the ignorant mind of the primitive savage. Into that story I have here no need to enter, and, in any case, those who are curious will find it told in detail in my *Woman and Christianity* and *Religion and Sex*. What now strikes one with these daring speeches of advanced clergymen is the fact that there is no other educated profession in the country—

unless it be politics—in which an unmistakably mediocre intelligence may assume a position of prominence, and not even in politics may one rank as a daring thinker on no better basis than the repudiation of things which a genuinely educated intelligence would be ashamed to entertain. It is a proof, on the one hand, that the Christian Church can no longer command the best intelligence of the country, and, on the other, that people have almost ceased to look to the clergy for guidance on matters which require either a sane education or a healthy intelligence. The clergy are left the guardians of beliefs which the educated mind has ceased to hold, and which even the mass of educated minds do not feel themselves bound by. The clergy are to-day between the devil and the deep sea. If they hold tenaciously to their orthodox beliefs they see their congregations slipping steadily from them. If they make concessions they only serve to open the eyes of many to the character of what remains. They lack strength either to live with honour or to die with courage. The fighters of a forlorn hope one can always respect, whatever one may think of the cause for which they give their lives. But the man who is ready to set his intellectual sails to any breeze that blows, that can preach for years the unquestionable truth of a doctrine, and denounce it when its real nature can be no longer concealed from those who have listened, inevitably forfeits the support of his one-time dupes and the respect of all intelligent on-lookers. The Christian Church has been compelled to surrender much. We should like one of these very courageous clergymen to enlighten us as to what essential difference there is between what they have given up and what they still hold.

CILAPMAN COHEN.

The Theological Trend.

MODERNISM is a thorn in the flesh of orthodox divines. In the Catholic Church the movement was condemned in a memorable papal Encyclical. Pius X was an ignorant peasant whose profound piety endeared him to multitudes, but his bigotry made him more notorious than his piety. His one achievement was to discourage by putting an end to independent thinking on the part of the clergy. According to him their only duty was to accept without question the official deliverance of the Church on every question. As Cardinal Sarto, Patriarch of Venice, he was known to be utterly unqualified to express an opinion as to the competence of biblical and historical scholars, yet as Pope Pius X he did not hesitate to sit in judgment upon them, and as "the representative of God on earth" he drove scholarship out of the Church. So Catholic Modernism became an impossibility. If any Modernists remain in that communion they are doomed to endless silence. But in the Anglican Church the movement is still in existence and growing. Recently there was held at Cambridge a Conference of Modernist Churchmen, at which several well-known Anglican scholars took part, among them being Dr. Rashdall, Dean of Carlisle. The Dean of St. Paul's approved of most of the opinions expressed, and contributed a brilliant article on the subject to the *Evening Standard*, while Bishop Gore eloquently denounced them in the *Church Times*. Dr. Inge wrote:—

The name "Modernism" was given by the late Pope to the Liberal Party in his own Church; it seems likely to be applied to Liberal theologians generally. I have not much sympathy with the Catholic Modernists, and I am not concerned to defend the theories of any particular modernizers. But I am strongly convinced that the cause of religion has little to fear and much to hope from a thoroughly courageous treatment of these questions. The present

state of affairs is intolerable. A clergyman is expected to believe, or at least to profess, a variety of opinions, relating to strictly scientific facts, which all educated men know to be absurd, and it is supposed by many that we cannot be Christians unless we believe them. This is to put a stumbling block in the way of faith. Faith is not, as a schoolboy is reported to have said, "believing what you know to be untrue." It is rather the resolution to stand by the noblest hypothesis.

Dr. Gore, on the other hand, is a strong opponent of the Modernist movement, being a vehement supporter of the orthodox creed. He charges Dr. Rashdall, for example, with tacitly denying the Incarnation, because he holds that all men, or all good men, are more or less incarnations of God, and that there is nothing to prevent another Incarnation of God like, or even superior to, that in Jesus. Such, according to the bishop, is the Modernist interpretation of the doctrine of the Incarnation, while the doctrine of the Trinity disappears altogether. Dr. Gore says that "no doctrine of Trinity in God is involved, only the Old Testament doctrine of God and his breath or spirit."

The curious thing about the Dean of Carlisle is that he professes to teach nothing that is not compatible with a full acceptance of the Thirty-Nine Articles. Respecting that claim the Bishop declares:—

This can only be maintained, I think, by a confusing of the real issue which the terminology of the Church was expressly, and admirably, forged to elucidate. I cannot think that Dr. Rashdall holds that the person who appeared as Jesus Christ was really an Eternal Person in the Blessed Trinity, who at a certain date took flesh and became man, remaining always the same person. I feel sure that for Dr. Rashdall the Person of Jesus Christ began to exist when he was born of human parentage. And yet the former of these two is the theory which the Catholic terminology is quite deliberately fashioned to express, and so to express as to exclude the second.

On this point our sympathy is wholly with the Bishop. Whilst regarding the orthodox conception of Christ as fundamentally and absolutely false, we can find no escape from the conclusion that Dr. Rashdall is officially bound to hold and teach it. His subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles morally necessitates the utmost loyalty to them in private and in public. Of course, one cannot help admiring the motive by which the Modernists are actuated. It is their firm conviction that the traditional orthodoxy is driving the masses away from Christianity. It is perfectly true that the Christology of the Creed is no longer acceptable or believable, and that in consequence the people are ceasing to care for Christianity; and the Modernists believe that the adoption of Liberal theology by the Churches would result in a general revival of interest in religion. We think that they are radically mistaken. It is not mere orthodoxy that is losing ground in the world, but supernaturalism as such. What the crowds are abandoning is not this or that theory of the deity of Christ, but Christ himself. It is not the Trinity that is being practically denied, but the God-idea in all its forms. It is not at all likely that the people will flock to the Carlisle cathedral simply because Liberal theology is being preached in it. A good end never justifies unworthy means. To us it is a good sign that churches and chapels are being deserted; but even if attendance at the House of God were the highest and most profitable virtue, there would be no merit in securing it at the cost of tampering with the creeds.

The real revelation made at the Cambridge Conference was that the trend of the age is distinctly away from supernatural religion. Liberalism is but a half-way house between belief and unbelief. More than

one Anglican clergyman, after a stay of a few months or years at that interesting mansion, has completed the journey to Freethought and become a zealous advocate of Secularism. We fully endorse Bishop Gore's declaration that the Liberal theologians who remain in the Anglican Church and continue to recite its creeds and confessions are guilty of a highly immoral conduct, and cannot be quite honest until they relinquish their orders. Extremely ingenious is Dean Inge's defence of their behaviour, but it fails to convince us of its adequacy. As a matter of fact, however, there is very little to choose between orthodoxy and Liberalism, and no evidence whatever of the truth of either. Divinity, in both orthodox and heterodox senses, has been completely discredited by its history in the world. Neither directly nor indirectly has Christ triumphed and fulfilled the claims made for him. His kingship has never been established as a verified fact of history. His own promise that as the result of his crucifixion he would draw all men unto himself is still unfulfilled after two thousand years, and this is the main reason for his growing unpopularity. The trend is from faith to reason, from superstition to truth, from dream-life to real-life.

Bishop Gore is one of the ablest leaders in the Anglican Catholic party, the most active and prosperous party in the English Church, while Dr. Rashdall is a shining light in the Liberal party, which is both small and weak; and though the two leaders differ widely in their views, they are alike in their belief in each other's honesty and love of truth. To us, however, they are both slaves of a dying superstition. The popularity of the Catholic party, so far from proving the truth of its views, is due almost exclusively to its self-denying devotion to social service among the poor. We are convinced, on the contrary, that supernaturalism does not conduce to the efficiency of social service. Not a few of the most successful reformers have been thoroughgoing Atheists, such as Robert Owen, George Jacob Holyoake, and Olive Schreiner, and their number is increasing. J. T. LLOYD.

A Catholic View of Bradlaugh.

He who fights with priests may make up his mind to have his poor, good name torn and befouled by the most infamous lies and the most cutting slanders.

—Heinrich Heine.

People swallow falsehood as a cat laps milk.

—G. W. Foote.

The younger soldiers of the Army of Human Liberation can have little conception of the intense hatred and antagonism which the Old Guard of Freethought roused in the Christian camp. To-day, if there be not a greater tolerance, there is, at least, less bitterness, due as much to increasing religious indifference as to more civilized manners. Christian apologists, who never tire of boasting of the tolerance of their intolerant creed, need to be reminded of these things. In the battle for Liberty, for instance, Richard Carlile and his wife and friends endured fifty years' imprisonment. Daniel Eaton was prosecuted seven times, and had £2,500 worth of property destroyed by order of the Courts. The poet Shelley was ordered to be deprived of the custody of his children, and a similar dishonour was inflicted on Annie Besant many years later. Charles Bradlaugh had to wait five years before he could take his seat in the House of Commons as member for Northampton, and only the loyalty and courage of George Foote prevented Bradlaugh's imprisonment for blasphemy. Foote's own share of Christian charity was a year in prison. The late Marquis of Queensberry was denied a seat in the House of Lords on account of his sceptical opinions. Last, but not least, thousands of pounds bequeathed

for Freethought purposes were diverted to other channels. It was not Christian justice that stopped this highway robbery, but the strong arm of George Foote and his colleagues.

Few men, even among these heroic personalities, fought a more arduous battle against the buffetings of bigotry than Charles Bradlaugh. For eleven years he fought for a seat for Northampton, followed by five years of struggle before he was allowed to occupy it. Seven years after his death a Mrs. W. Pitt Byrne published in her *Social Hours with Celebrities* an extraordinary account of the great Freethinker, which is worth preserving as a choice example of Christian charity. The lady relates, with delightful innocence, the share she had in the preparation of some lectures by Cardinal Wiseman on "Modern Unbelief," which were intended as a counterblast to one of Bradlaugh's lectures. It is of interest, not only as showing the venom with which Freethought was opposed by the classes, but as indicating the widespread attention Secularist propaganda then claimed amongst the most exalted dignitaries of the religious world. Mrs. Byrne opens her story as follows.—

One day during the spring of 1858 His Eminence (Cardinal Wiseman) called upon me for the purpose of referring to a conversation of the previous day, in which he had remarked that the open advocacy of Atheism by propagandists among the lower orders was becoming a matter for serious concern. He told me that, during the drive from his house to mine, he had observed in Portman Square large, flaring, posting bills, publicly announcing a lecture of apparently blasphemous character to be delivered that evening at a low hall in the slums. His Eminence expressed the interest he felt in knowing the substance of this lecture and the mode in which the subject would be presented, and, as it would, necessarily, not be within his competency to appear at this place, he wished me to attend, and to furnish him with a report of the proceedings.

The lady sent for a bill of the lecture, which took place under the auspices of the West End Secular Society at the Hope Temperance Hall, Bell Street. Bradlaugh was here lecturing under the name of "Iconoclast," and his subject was announced boldly, "The Bible not a Revelation; not Reliable, neither True nor Useful." Mrs. Byrne continues her account with exquisite courtesy:—

I was punctual to the hour. The audience was composed of counter-skippers and boys from inferior shops, women and children. The hall would hold about 300, the benches were rough, dingy, and had no backs, and the floor was dirty. The chair was occupied by a coarse-looking man, with a florid face, encased by bushy, black hair and whiskers, and on either side of the chairman sat several common fellows, with women tawdrily dressed.

This is Mrs. Byrne's alluring pen-portrait of Charles Bradlaugh:—

He wore a black morning suit and threw himself into a commanding attitude as he surveyed the rough and ill-clad audience before him. His countenance was very marked, and the form of face and features unquestionably peculiar, decidedly the reverse of handsome, though indicative of intelligence and shrewdness; but I observed during the lecture that they occasionally became distorted with a revengeful and fiendish expression, which made his face altogether repulsive. A curiously long upper lip and prominent teeth beneath the upturned nostrils and small eyes suggested the caricature of a human countenance. His age might be eight-and-twenty. As soon as the man began to speak he showed, together with a wonderful degree of fluency and command of language, unmistakable evidences of insufficient education, an illiterate mind, and a vulgar intonation; besides clipping the Queen's English after a most unorthodox fashion, he employed words

which, although correctly applied, he had never learned to pronounce, while that significant *pons asinorum*—the letter "h"—was everywhere and nowhere at the same time. Of general, or indeed of any kind of reading there was no manifestation, and I thought it not impossible that he might have committed to memory a translation of selected passages from Diderot and Voltaire, put together for him by the association to which he belonged, with a little additional matter.

This courteous Christian lady then adds that Bradlaugh's lecture "was richly interlarded with those clap-trap phrases which delight the mob." As an example of Bradlaugh's style, she gives what she pretends is a fair sample of his eloquence. There are five pages of outrageous burlesque, from which it is sufficient to quote the alleged peroration as it is printed:—

Let us then, my friends, be up and doin'—doin' 'as more to show for it than bleevin'. Hours is the day for haction not for bleef. What do I say? Bleef! Rather let me call it by its right name—credoolity! the credoolity of old women and hinfants. This is not the mood of men, my friends, of men like you and me. Leave bleef to cripples, hunfit for haction, etc.

Is it not delightful? The Cardinal's lady friend obediently presented to His Eminence her imaginative account of her visit to the Bell Street Hall. Wiseman's rejoinder to Bradlaugh took the form of four lectures delivered at St. Mary's Church, Moorfields, London, on "Modern Unbelief," which were afterwards published in book form. The volume represents the last fruit of a very old Upas tree, which is slowly dying. It once bore scaffolds, stakes, prisons, and torture-chambers; latterly it has borne hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. Time, in this instance, has adjusted the balance, for, after the lapse of the years, Charles Bradlaugh's memory is loved and venerated, whilst Wiseman is but a name of little meaning.

MIMNERMUS.

A Mixed Lot.

II.

(Concluded from page 651.)

When we love our brother for the sake of our brother, we help all men to grow in the right; but when we love our brother for the sake of somebody else, who is very likely to damn our brother, it very soon comes to burning him alive for his soul's health. When men respect human life for the sake of man, tranquillity, order, and progress go hand in hand; but those who only respected human life because God had forbidden murder have set their mark upon Europe in fifteen centuries of blood and fire.—Professor W. K. Clifford, "Lectures and Essays," p. 384.

THE last two members of our "Mixed Lot," unlike the preceding couple, are not religious apologists. They are, in fact, Atheists, although they would, no doubt, repudiate the title owing to the ban placed by society upon the use of that label.

They are Mr. G. E. M. Joad, who hails from Balliol College, Oxford, and is the author of a book entitled *Common-Sense Ethics*, published this year, and Mr. Edward Carpenter the well-known author and social reformer, whose last work, *Pagan and Christian Creeds*, we are now concerned with.

Before dealing with these two works we wish to make it clear that, apart from the passages we are dealing with, the books themselves are well worth reading and deserve a place upon every Freethinker's bookshelves. We have suffered too much from the critics who pitch upon one passage with which they do not agree and confine their attention entirely to that, ignoring the value and usefulness of the bulk of the

volume, to perpetrate this misguided criticism upon our readers.

Although both these authors are Rationalists and have discarded every rag of supernaturalism, yet they are alike in their criticism of the Secularist. Mr. Joad, indeed, is quite disdainful, as becomes a gentleman connected with Balliol College, Oxford. Mr. Carpenter, who is a democrat, adopts the attitude of the "candid friend"; both attitudes are quite unjustifiable, as we shall prove.

Of Mr. Joad's thoroughgoing scepticism there can be no doubt. He examines the arguments by which the belief in God is defended; dealing with the "Problem of Pain and Evil," he observes, "Nature herself is cruel, selfish, and terribly wasteful," and asks, as so many others have done, "If God is omnipotent as well as benevolent, why does He not stop it?" If in the beginning nothing existed but God, and God is infinitely wise and benevolent, the question arises, says Mr. Joad, "How out of perfect oneness and goodness can diversity and evil be generated?" And further:—

What can be the motive of a process involving pain, error and evil by the way, of which the appointed end will be identical with the beginning? Why should what is evil ever be allowed to emerge from what is good, even if it were possible for it to do so, for the sole purpose of again being merged into it? It is impossible to conceive why such a process should ever have been begun. Questions like these are not answered by upholders of this view; they are indeed unanswerable.....It is, indeed, very difficult outside the Church to find any man of intelligence who really entertains this particular belief.—J. E. M. Joad, *Common-Sense Ethics*, p. 195.

At this point Mr. Joad seems to have anticipated the approving clap of Secularistic hands, a thing not to be tolerated by the spirit of Balliol, and to show that he has neither part nor lot with these undesirable supporters—"impossible people," I suppose, is the Oxford term—should they have the temerity to applaud, he pens the following sentence:—

Thus the Secularists preach only to the elect few in little back rooms in big cities, pursuing with a sort of intensive culture a barren faith in being rational, which is divested alike of beauty and inspiration—a Rationalist hymn-book is one of the most unæsthetic things I know—whereas the religious revivalist makes converts and gets them to do good by the thousand, with the aid of an æsthetic and emotional appeal and a supernatural machinery which will not stand two minutes' rational examination. If, then, the ethics of impulse is not to remain as barren as the creed of the Rationalists, it must be brought into relation with our general notion of the purpose and business of the Universe (p. 178).

It would be impossible to cram more inaccuracy into a sentence than Mr. Joad has contrived to cram into the above quotation. To begin with, Secularists do not preach "in little back rooms in big cities." As a Secularist of nearly forty years' standing I have never attended a lecture in a little back room, or front room either, for that matter. Our lecturers do not "preach," they lecture, and every lecture is open for criticism and discussion after it is delivered, a thing no preacher invites or allows. Neither do Secularists "preach only to the elect few"; all are invited; we are only too pleased to receive Christians and believers of all denominations; to convert them is the object of our existence as a society. During the summer our lecturers gather audiences in the open air, in the parks, and other public places. Does Mr. Joad regard these audiences as composed of the "elect"? Otherwise, our lectures are delivered in any halls that are available. In the current number of the *Freethinker* before me the lecture list contains eight halls, but no

back rooms. But suppose it was true that we taught in back rooms, what of it? Why sneer at the Secularist for conduct you would praise in a Christian? Moreover, the use of back rooms is not a sign of original sin; people do not live in back rooms because they prefer back rooms, it is because they cannot afford better. They would much prefer places like Balliol College, Oxford, for instance.

Mr. Joad accuses us of teaching "a barren faith in being rational." But this is the very thing that Mr. Joad himself is teaching; his book is wholly and solely concerned with placing Ethics upon a rational basis. Will Mr. Joad admit that his faith is barren too? And if not, why not? We believe that Rationalism, the proper exercise of the reasoning powers, is a first condition of all progress, and that irrationalism and supernaturalism are the deadly sins.

Then our superfine critic goes on to speak of the unæsthetic character of the Rationalists' hymn-book. The Secular Society publish no such book, nor is any such book used at our meetings and lectures; we do not sing hymns or songs at our meetings. Mr. Joad speaks out of a very comprehensive ignorance of Secularism.

As to the thousands converted by religious revivalists, the Churches would be only too glad if it were true; it is notorious that the last great attempt at Revivalism, the Torrey-Alexander mission, in spite of the money expended and the intense effort put forth, was an unmitigated failure. This was held many years ago and there has not been one held since.

Professor Bury has remarked that: "The idea has not altogether disappeared that Freethought is peculiarly indecent in the poor." Mr. Joad is apparently a survival of this old-fashioned prejudice. What Mr. Joad is really suffering from is Oxford Culture. During the war these college bred officers by their attitude to the French officers put not a little strain upon the Entente Cordiale. "It was an attitude of polite but haughty condescension," says a writer who was an eye-witness.

They had the manners of a caste, the touch of arrogance which belongs to a caste, in power. Every idea they had was a caste idea, contemptuous in a civil way of poor devils who had other ideas and who were therefore guilty—not by their own fault of course—of shocking bad form. To be a Socialist in such company would be worse than being drunk. To express a belief in democratic liberty would cause a silence to fall upon a group of them as though some obscenity beyond the limits allowed in an officers' mess-room had been uttered by a man without manners.¹

These miniature gods are being turned out by our colleges by hundreds every year, and if we mistake not, they are in for a very thin time of it in the future.

The last of our mixed lot is Mr. Edward Carpenter who, in his recently published book, *Pagan and Christian Creeds*, states that few people in this country, even nowadays, realize that Christianity—

has sprung from just the same root as Paganism, and that it shares by far the most part of its doctrines and rites with the latter. Till quite lately it was thought (in Britain) that only Secularists and unfashionable people took any interest in sun gods.

He proceeds:—

The Secularists, too, rather spoil their case by assuming, in their wrath against the Church, that all priests since the beginning of the world have been frauds and charlatans, and that all the rites of religion were merely devils' devices invented by them for the purpose of preying upon the superstitions of the ignorant, to their own enrichment. They (the Secularists) over-leaped themselves by grossly exaggerating a thing that is no doubt partially true (p. 12).

¹ Philip Gibbs, *The Soul of the War*, pp. 332-333.

That, no doubt, voices the popular idea of Secular propaganda, but there is not the slightest foundation for it. An examination of the columns of the *Free-thinker* for the last forty years would reveal the fact that the work of the Secularist has been to make clear to "the man in the street" the results of the labours of the men of science, contained in expensive and voluminous books which the ordinary man has neither the means to purchase, nor the leisure to study, combined with a criticism of clerical and pulpit utterances of the leading sects of the day. It would be unfair to charge Mr. Carpenter with class snobbishness, as he is a good democrat who has devoted his life to social reform and is a man we all admire. But the fact is he is dealing with a subject he has never studied and does not understand.

W. MANN.

Buddhism and the God-Idea.

BUDDHISM is the only religion in the world in which the fallacies of Theism are refuted, and in such terms as to be quite unanswerable. Corruptions and accretions have attached themselves to the essential doctrine of the Buddha in the course of ages, but when these are cleared away its fundamental anti-Theism becomes quite unmistakable.

In the two commentaries of Ashvaghosha, one of the principal founders (if, indeed, he was not the actual founder) of the so-called "Mahayana" school, namely, the *Buddhacharita*, and the *Buddhacharvavata*, the questions of god as creator, and as impersonal first cause, or "Absolute" are thus argued.

"Ishvara," that is to say, god considered in the aspect of a personal creator, is disposed of in this way:

If the world had been made by Ishvara, there should be no change or destruction, there should be no such thing as sorrow or calamity, as right or wrong, since all things, pure and impure, come from him. If sorrow and joy, love and hate, which spring up in all conscious beings, be the work of Ishvara, he must be capable of sorrow and joy, love and hatred, and if he has these, how can he be said to be perfect? If Ishvara be the maker, and if all things have to submit silently to their maker's power, what would be the utility of practising virtue? The doing of right or wrong would be the same, as all deeds are his making and must be the same with their maker. But if sorrow and suffering are attributed to another cause, then there would be something of which Ishvara is not the cause. Why, then, should not all that exists be uncaused too? Again, if Ishvara be the maker, he acts with or without a purpose. If he acts with a purpose he cannot be said to be all perfect, for a purpose necessarily implies the satisfaction of a want. If he acts without a purpose he must be like a lunatic or a sucking babe. Besides, if Ishvara be the maker, why should not people reverently submit to him, why should they offer supplications to him when sorely pressed by necessity? And why should people adore more gods than one? Thus the idea of Ishvara is proved false by rational argument, and all such contradictory assertions should be exposed.

If, as Theists say, God is too great for man to be able to comprehend him, then it follows that his qualities also surpass our range of thought, and we can neither know him nor attribute to him the quality of a creator.

Is not the world in which we live an orderly world where everything is governed by law? All the order which exists in the world arises from the simple fact that, when there are no disturbing causes, things remain the same. The observed grouping of things and sequence of events we speak of as the order of the world, and this is the same as saying that the world is as it is, and no more. No natural law is the cause of

the observed sequence in nature. Every natural law merely describes the conditions on which a particular change is dependent. A law of nature does not command that something shall take place, but it merely states how something happens.

It may be asked, if the world has not been created by a personal god, may not all existence be a manifestation of the "Absolute"—an unconditioned first principle which is eternal, unchangeable, and immanent in all things? This question is answered as follows:—

If by the Absolute is meant something out of relation to all known things its existence cannot be established by any reasoning. How can we know that anything unrelated to other things exists at all? The whole universe, as we know it, is a system of relations; we know nothing that is or can be unrelated. How can that which depends on nothing and is related to nothing produce things which are related to one another? Again, the Absolute is one or many. If it be only one, how can it be the cause of the different things which originate, as we know, from different causes? If there be as many different Absolutes as there are things, how can the latter be related to one another? If the Absolute pervades all things and fills all space, then it cannot also make them, for there is nothing to make. Further, if the Absolute is devoid of all qualities, all things arising from it ought likewise to be devoid of qualities. But in reality all things in the world are circumscribed throughout by qualities. Hence, the Absolute cannot be their cause. If the Absolute be considered to be different from the qualities, how does it continually create the things possessing such qualities and manifest itself in them? Again, if the Absolute be unchangeable, all things should be unchangeable too, for the effects cannot differ in nature from the causes. But all things in the world undergo change and decay. How, then, can the Absolute be unchangeable?

Buddhism denies the existence of all god-creators and "Absolutes," but it does not deny the existence of the external or the internal world. From the Buddhist point of view the world is an aggregate of conditions or relations, which are themselves not self-existent but interdependent. Only when considered in its totality has the world any meaning.

J. E. ELLAM.

Acid Drops.

Murder will out, and in spite of all the tall talk about the purity and the sublimity of Christianity the real nature of that creed will assert itself. Thus, Principal Garvie, speaking at the Bristol Congregational Union Assembly, urged an increase in the birth rate. That may be a wise or an unwise policy; on that point there may well be differences of opinion, and we do not wish to divert attention by discussing it. The important sentence uttered by Principal Garvie was, in our opinion, the one in which he declared that "Parenthood was the dominating reason for marriage." Again, we must not be misunderstood. No one thinks more of the ethical and social value of parenthood than we do. But to say that with developed human beings parenthood should be the dominating reason for marriage is to reduce the relations of men and women to the level of the stock-yard, and we should like to see Principal Garvie facing some enlightened women on that issue. We do not deny that the view is quite Christian, we assert it; for Christianity could never see more in the relations of the sexes than a mere animal grouping, and was always blind to the finer and the refining influences of married and family life. Do what they will, the essentially low character will express itself to the shrewd and informed observer.

Someone has sent us a copy of the *Glasgow Forward* containing a picture of Jesus Christ with letterpress offering a reward for his apprehension on the grounds of

"sedition, criminal anarchy, vagrancy, and conspiring to overthrow the established government." It is neatly done, but it is as far as possible from the facts, and helps to conserve the wholly mischievous idea that the Jesus Christ of the Gospels was in some way or other a social reformer. And for that there is not the slightest evidence—unless one could admit vagrancy. And religious vagrancy was a too well established custom in the East to call for special mention or condemnation. So far as we treat the Jesus of the Gospels as a real historical character his aim was not the overthrow of a government or the achieving of a social reform, but the saving of men's souls from damnation in the next world. Towards governments his attitude was one of passive obedience, and towards social reforms, that they were of no consequence. And there is the highly significant fact that for the past fifteen or sixteen centuries the figure of Jesus has been held before the people by all sorts of sinister interests as the character upon which they were to model themselves. And the logical consequence of following Jesus was the monasticism of the early and middle ages of the Christian era, the preaching of passive obedience to the established powers, and the cultivation of a spirit of other-worldism which became the chief condition of human enslavement in this world.

The late Sir Ernest Cassel, the millionaire, was born a Jew and died a Roman Catholic. A memorial service was held at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Farm Street. This reminds us of the story of the Jewish candidate at an election, who was asked by an irate churchwoman if he believed in the Immaculate Conception. The canny candidate advanced to the edge of the platform, and said sweetly, "My dear madam, I believe in all conceptions which are immaculate."

Some of the clergy bear their privations very well. The Archbishop of Canterbury and his wife have returned to Lambeth Palace from Scotland where they have been the guests of Lord Blythswood. The Archbishop and Mrs. Davidson were also guests at Dunrobin Castle, the residence of the Duke of Sutherland.

Mr. J. M. Creed, the Dean of St. John's College, Cambridge, says (*Times*, September 21) that some influential Church leaders "deliberately discourage" candidates for holy orders from studying theology at the university. Is this due to fear of the Higher Criticism? Mr. B. M. Pickering, referring to the Dean's letter, declares that the teaching at theological colleges is necessarily denominational and tends to accentuate disunion in the forces of organized Christianity. It is the old dilemma of authority or freedom, with which Protestantism has always been faced, and which will effectually prevent any reunion of the scattered sects in the English-speaking world. Dogma, we are sometimes told by modern Churchmen, is a divisive force in religion. It is nothing of the kind. It is a unifying force for those that believe it.

So far from reunion appearing in sight, the number of sects is increasing. The Christadelphians are carrying on a rigorous propaganda, the Reformed Episcopal Church of England has just consecrated a bishop, and the Faithist Scientists' Church of Kosmon represents another competitor for the suffrages of a people thirsting for new moral values. The last-mentioned movement hails from Balham, which sounds perilously like the name of the owner of the animal that asked, "Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day?" And as long as the ass wants to be ridden, riders will be forthcoming in abundance.

The Rev. Charles Gore has an article in the *Challenge* of a recent date on the subject of the League of Nations. In the course of it he says that he speaks with "a profound sense of humiliation" when he recalls the part played by his Church in the early days of the war. He believes that it was the duty of this country to go to war,

and on that point we are the last to question the right of anyone to have an opinion and to act on it. And as he himself preached war sermons he does not regret the fact that others preached them. But he does regret and resent their "unconstrainedness of enthusiasm." And that, we may remind our readers, is what we said ourselves over and again from the very commencement of the war. Our complaint was not that some of the clergy, or all of them for that matter, believed the war to be a righteous one, and in their capacity as citizens supported it. Believing that they would be doing no more than their duty. But that can neither excuse nor justify their turning their churches into recruiting stations, and doing all they could to fan the war fever, and to keep alive the volume of hate which was bound to bring its consequences when the war was over. In doing that the churches were doing their best to intensify the brutalization and demoralization, of which we now see the consequences all over the world.

There was not a lie nor a fallacy preached by the official propaganda agencies and supported by the Press, and those journalists whose pens are always for sale, that the Churches did not back up. They backed the falsity that it was a war to end war, that when the war was over we should have a new and a better country, they backed up the stories of enemy atrocities whether they were true or false, and, greatest sin of all, they backed up the criminal lie that the war elevated the young men of the country and lifted them to a higher level of life than they would otherwise reach. Had they told the truth, had they preached, as the Buddhist priests preached during the Burmese war, that however necessary it was to fight, no one and no nation could escape the inevitable demoralization which warfare brings in its train; had they made it their duty to uphold ideals of truth, honour, and brotherhood, irrespective of creed or nationality, we should have done none the worse during the war, and would have been better prepared from what was bound to come after. But the Churches chose otherwise, and the impartial historian of the future will be bound to write it down that no greater instrument of national demoralization existed during the war years than the Christian Church. There is little wonder that at present the Church stinks in the nostrils of the thoughtful men and women of all classes. It should be the duty of Freethinkers to see that the Churches reap the full reward of their conduct.

One of the staff of the *Daily Herald* remarks, "One would imagine that the true follower of the meek and lowly Jesus would feel it his duty to stir up the people and denounce the wickedness of those in high places." It depends on who is the "one." One who understands the Christian scheme and who is not fond of the cant of Christian phraseology, would expect the true followers of Jesus to be looking to their father in heaven to clothe the people and advise them it was their duty to submit to the established powers, while teaching that their whole concern was the salvation of their souls in the world to come. This stupid cant about the meek and lowly Jesus may attract a parson here and there, but the certain thing is that it helps to rob the labour movement of a deal of its effectiveness. It is exactly this kind of stupid talk about Jesus that has been used throughout the ages to keep the people in subjection. And we should dearly like to know why, if this idle chatter having had one effect from the pulpit, it is expected to have another and an opposite result when it comes from the columns of a Labour paper, whose editor is now in prison because he did not do as Jesus and the New Testament commanded him to do. Jesus would never have got into trouble with the authorities for disobeying any of their secular commands. He taught that it was our first duty to obey them.

We are indebted to the good *Daily News* for the information that the prisoners at Camp Hill (I. O. W.) recently gave a "sacred" concert. The paper states that the hymn "How Lovely are Thy Dwellings" was heartily encored. If the audience was made up of the prisoners, we can only congratulate them on their sense of humour.

The extent to which Christianity is "the great leveller" was clearly seen in an incident at the recent Methodist Ecumenical Conference, which was wound up with an exposition, by Mr. Arthur Henderson, M.P., of the Gospel of the Church and Labour. The Rev. C. W. Andrews, one of the secretaries of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, asked a delegate from the Southern States, U.S.A., to lunch with him to meet a coloured bishop. "No, I must decline" was the answer. Yet this same delegate and the coloured bishop had already been fellow-guests at "the Lord's table." This is indeed the "refined gold" of Christianity, and it would be a thousand pities to gild it. This, remember, is the religion which claims to be universal, and is to break down all barriers of race and colour.

The *New York Call* (August 26) contains an interesting and well written article on "The New Spain" by Mr. E. Dudley Parsons, who has recently been studying Spain's political and social conditions on the spot. From one end of the country to the other a new spirit is striving to manifest itself in the Spanish people, and the forces that are working against it all rally round the Church and the monarchy, both supported, of course, by a powerful section of the Press, which "plays up the royal family, the Moroccan war and other subjects designed to keep the crowd from forming opinions." Besides monarchy and the Church the three chief instruments through which the anti-progressive forces work are the army, the lottery, and the bull fight. Mr. Parsons' estimate of the Spanish priest is not a high one. "A Spanish professor told us that there are altogether too many priests in Spain, and our guide through Toledo expressed the same idea. These priests took anything but spiritual as they waddle along the streets holding some yards of cassock over their shoulders. In fact, as Frauck says in his *Three Months Afoot in Spain*, they are often distinctly voluptuous in appearance. Very few people attend their services except on festive days. We saw repeatedly considerable choirs and numbers of priests conducting service for as few as fifty, or even fewer, worshippers in great echoing cathedrals that we yearned to turn into popular institutions."

R. D. Richardson (*Church Times*, September 23), says that modernists seek to gather up all that is best in modern thought, and baptize it into the cause of Christianity. The leading article in the same issue of the *Times* deals with "the bankruptcy of modernism." "The Pope is the residuary legatee of the Oxford Movement." This warning will only strike terror into the heart of a natural coward. The Newmans and Fabers found what they were really looking for—the institution that claims authority over men's religious beliefs, and is "peculiarly constituted" for humbling intellectual pride. But it is an institution that is not over happy to-day in the countries where it has longest enjoyed almost supreme power.

Another religious crank has arrived from America. This is a Mr. F. T. A. Davies, who has written a new Bible. He declares that Noah's Ark was really four fleets of thirty-four ships each, and each of these fleets contained 2,000 people. Each fleet was blown to a different part of the world, and so provided the nucleus for a new population. That is quite as good a theory as many that are held, and we fancy quite as near the truth. He has also had years of "Mystic training." We commend him to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Seriously, we are often struck with the low level of a large part of the religious belief in America. It appears to be as crude as anything on the face of the earth. From the American papers that are sent us it appears that incarnations of the deity, erotico-religious saviours, male and female, new Bibles and new revelations are as common as leaves in autumn. It would appear as though there is a great gap between the educated intelligence of the States and large masses of the population. Perhaps some of our informed American readers could supply us with an answer to the question of why this is so.

God, says the Rev. B. West Taylor, preaching at Cricklewood, is the friend of little children, and every day in Russia "helpless, tortured little ones are passing over in their thousands to Him." That doesn't sound very complimentary to God, anyway. Mr. Taylor was preaching on behalf of the "Save the Children Fund," and every decent minded person will wish him every success. But it would have been more complimentary to the preacher's intelligence had he left God out of the business altogether. If God had been attending to his business there would have been no need for the Fund, and the "helpless, tortured little ones would not have been passing over in their thousands" to the God who had failed to prevent their torture and untimely death.

Sacred and profane matters seldom get more mixed than happened at Folkestone at the unveiling of a Wesleyan war-memorial. Inside the building a congregation was present, including Mr. Charles Chaplin, whilst outside some two thousand persons were shouting "Good old Charlie." It is all very dreadful. Junior members of that congregation might have imagined that the Almighty's name was Charles.

At the Central Criminal Court three ex-service men were bound over on a charge of breaking windows at a Church Army home where they applied for help and were told that no funds were available. One man said sleeping in the open-air would not improve soldiers, and another said he had a wife and four children. This case is a curious commentary on the boastful advertisements of this Army of the Lord.

We are pleased to find the usually well-informed late Berlin correspondent to the *Christian World* saying that "If the German people have learned one lesson more than another, it is that Kaiserism and militarism have been the immediate cause of their ruin, and that their revival would bring about their complete destruction." If that is true, it is altogether good news. What is required now is for all the others who fought the war to realize the same lesson with regard to militarism. That this lesson has not been learned by the other nations of Europe may be guessed from a sentence in one of our daily papers the other day to the effect that unless we took care to keep up the strength of our fighting forces we were acting disloyally to all those brave men who laid down their lives in France and elsewhere. As though they went to fight in order to get those at home readier than ever to fight more wars. What a pity it is that some of our journalistic exploiters of popular ignorance do not throw open their columns to the opinions of those soldiers who actually went through the war. These soldiers have a voice, but it is not heard.

The Bible compares the faithful to sheep and wicked outsiders to goats. How silly sheep can be is shown by the fact that seventeen, belonging to a Norfolk farmer, followed each other to death. Pastured in a field with an old disused well in it, one of the sheep fell into the well and the remaining sixteen followed it and all were killed.

We don't know anything of Dr. Montague Lomax, beyond the fact that he gave an address, with the Bishop of Kensington in the chair, on the subject of "Spiritual Healing." He quite believes in demoniacal possession, as taught by Jesus, although he is surprised to find that "some clergymen no longer believe in it." We wonder where Dr. Lomax has been living that such information should cause surprise. And we do hope that his medical knowledge is a little more up-to-date than his views on theology.

A newspaper paragraph states that the Church of England now has a well-organized Press Bureau. The Church of Rome has had a similar organization for generations, which accounts for the sympathetic tone of the press towards Catholicism.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

October 16, Glasgow; October 17, Saltcoats; October 23, South Place, London; October 30, Birmingham; November 6, Swansea; November 13, Leicester; November 20, Liverpool; November 27, Ton Pentre; December 4, Friars Hall, London; December 11, Birmingham; December 18, Golder's Green.

To Correspondents.

Those subscribers who receive their copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN WRAPPER will please take it that the renewal of their subscription is due. They will also oblige, if they do not want us to continue sending the paper, by notifying us to that effect.

A. I. MORETON.—It would be impossible to answer all your questions in this column in such a way as to be of any help. But (1) the story of the lost Island of Atlantis is a legend that has been afloat for centuries and has served as a jumping off ground for all sorts of quacks—religious and journalistic. The best book championing its reality is the *Lost Atlantis*, by Ignatius Donnelly. (2) We do not see in what way a theory of the electric generation of life is necessarily in opposition to Darwinism. (3) The Noah's fleet story is very obviously nonsense. (4) We note your suggestion that Peckham Rye would be a good place for Freethought propaganda.

T. HART.—A capital suggestion, if only it could be carried out. If, as you say, fifty per cent. of our readers would for the next month take an extra copy and give it to a likely subscriber we do not doubt but that it would mean a very material increase in our circulation. Anyway, you are doing your part in acting on your own suggestion by taking two extra copies weekly for distribution.

ATHEOS.—Mr. Cohen never in his life held a debate with a Mr. Yardley. Perhaps he means that he asked a question or offered some opposition at the end of a lecture. Many hundreds have done this, but we have no means of identifying them, nor do we wish to.

A. STROUD.—Pleased to learn that you have derived so much pleasure. The tract you enclose seems modelled on the plan of the old Bridgewater lectures, where the method was to provide the reader with descriptions of the wonders of the organic and inorganic world, and then run in God as a kind of epilogue. Of course, it was nothing more than an appeal to ignorance, since its success depended upon the absence of knowledge as to the machinery. To most people that plan ceased to be effective with the enunciation of the conception of evolution.

A. W. COLEMAN.—These accounts of appearing angels are depressing evidence of what a small amount of genuine culture exists among our so-called educated classes. They are also proof that no acquisition of mere knowledge is a sure guard against superstition. It is so easy to pick up what is ordinarily called scientific knowledge, that is, data about the age of the earth or the antiquity of man, or the succession of animal life, and so fancy oneself scientific. The important thing is always the method of thinking employed, and unscientific thinking is quite common with many workers in the field of science.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—G. Smith, 13s.; R. Richards (Burton), 1s. 9d.

J. STEVENSON.—Next week. We are obliged for what you are doing to gain new readers in Aberdeen, and from what you say Aberdeen needs a good strong dose of Freethought just at present. The posters are being sent.

A. E. MADDOCK.—Received, and shall appear shortly. Thanks.

D. JOHNSTON (Portland).—Paper is being sent regularly. Wish you better luck in the future.

The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to the office.

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

The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.

Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, and not to the Editor.

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

Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—

The United Kingdom.—One year, 17s. 6d.; half year, 8s. 9d.; three months, 4s. 6d.

Foreign and Colonial.—One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

To-day (October 16) Mr. Cohen will lecture twice at Glasgow. Owing to the City Hall Saloon being engaged in the evening the noon lecture only will take place there. This meeting will commence at 12 o'clock, subject, "Why the World Needs Freethought." The evening meeting, at 6.30, will be held in the Tobago Street Hall, subject, "The Eclipse of Christianity." There will be a silver collection at both meetings.

On Monday evening Mr. Cohen is paying a visit to Saltcoats. His lecture there is "Christianity, Freethought, and the Social Question," and it will be delivered in the Town Hall—we think that is the name of the building. This will be the first meeting held there, and we believe it is exciting some amount of interest. There promises to be a lively discussion. At a very short notice a debate has been arranged between Mr. Cohen and a prominent minister at Milngavie in the Burgh Hall, which will take place on Thursday evening. The subject will be on Christianity and Freethought.

The National Secular Society's Executive issues this week a very useful little pamphlet entitled *Information for Freethinkers*. The pamphlet contains information as to Freethinkers affirming, withdrawing their children from religious instruction in State schools, secular funerals, etc., etc. It is published by the Pioneer Press, and will be sent post free for twopence.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd's lecture, "Secularism Caricatured," at South Place last Sunday, was full of excellent matter for inquiring Christians, and the questions and opposition at the conclusion showed the keen interest with which it was followed. Lectures and discussions of this kind are an important part of our propaganda, and we hope Freethinkers will help to make these meetings a success. Christian opponents are also invited to come and hear the other side. The speaker this afternoon (October 16) will be Mr. A. B. Moss, and his subject is "A New Age of Reason." We should like to hear of more helpers turning up at these meetings. Those willing to take a hand at doing the work in connection with them should write Miss Vance.

The Manchester Branch started its lecture season with two capital meetings, which were addressed by Mr. Cohen on Sunday last. The meetings were the more striking as the day was brilliantly fine, and the hall a good distance from the centre of the city. Mr. Monks, the president of the Branch, presided at both meetings and made a strong appeal for continued support to be given the Branch in its work. The meetings were enlivened by the excellent playing of Miss Tilley at the piano, and the much appreciated singing of Miss Horne. At both meetings there was opposition. In the afternoon a clergyman and a young man who spoke like a bible-class leader offered some remarks, and at the evening meeting the opposition was represented by the Vicar of Fallowfield. The meeting was unusually lengthy owing to the interruptions of a number of rather raw youths, but in the end they were reduced to silence, and the meeting ended

on a quite enthusiastic note. The Branch is evidently stirring up renewed interest in the movement, and we wish it all success, and the hearty support of Freethinkers.

The Stockport Branch of the N. S. S. is very active and evidently intends to make its existence felt. It has managed to excite the ire of the local Christadelphians, who, judging from a correspondence appearing in the local press, are specially indignant with the *Bible Handbook*. We are not surprised. It is calculated to open the eyes of believers as to the nature of the "Holy Book," and that is the last thing that any Christian desires. Anyway, we hope the Stockport saints will keep the ball rolling. Stockport is a place where there should exist a large and influential Branch of the Society, and before the winter is out we hope to hear of a regular course of lectures being organized.

Mr. Cohen's new work, *A Grammar of Freethought*, will be published on October 17, and intending purchasers may send in their orders at once. The book is issued by the Secular Society, Limited, and we think we may say that it will be found to be one of the most interesting of Mr. Cohen's works. It is a comprehensive survey of the fundamentals of a scientific Freethought, and should prove useful to all sorts of readers and controversialists. The volume covers nearly 250 pages, it is well printed on good paper, and has a tasteful cloth cover design by Mr. H. Cutner. The price of the work is 5s., by post 4d. extra, and in these days of expensive printing we do not know any other publishers who would have produced it at the price.

Will all Freethinkers in Worcester and neighbourhood who are interested in Freethought and who would like to see a Branch of the N. S. S. established in the city be good enough to communicate with Mr. V. J. Hands at Compton House, Newton Road, Malvern. We hope there will be a ready and good response.

From Chester also there comes the expression of a desire for a Branch of the N. S. S. in that city. Will all Freethinkers who care to combine for that purpose call on, or write to, Mr. G. Gerrard, of 44 Egerton Street, Chester. Mr. Gerrard has kindly offered to provide a room for the purpose of meetings.

The Birmingham Branch has succeeded in getting a hall for its meetings, and a start will be made in "The Picture House," Station Street, near the Repertory Theatre, on October 23. The lecturer is Mr. Clifford Williams, who will speak on "Love the Redeemer." He will be followed on the 30th by Mr. Cohen.

Blasphemy.

The God that is not *above* blasphemy is *beneath* it!
 ORT I have checked myself in blasphemy
 Or thoughtless impious thought, arguing thus:
 O God—if God there be beyond the sky,
 And if His thought-waves reach as far as us—
 O God, can Man's poor foolish words subvert
 Your high serenity or cause a frown
 On that omniscient brow? Words do not hurt
 The dauntless sheen of earthly monarch's crown,
 Nor thankless thoughts perturb his regal state.
 Would You be less than he, and lowly stoop
 To vent on helpless slaves Your awful hate,
 See in eternal fires Your censors droop,
 Hell's brasiers with graceless millions crammed?
 If so, so be it! Damn then—and be damned!

J. E. S.

'Tis no uncommon thing for one half of the world to use the other half of it like brutes, and then endeavour to make them so.—*Sterne*.

An Unhistorical Saviour-God.

CHRIST'S WEEK-END IN HELL.

LOTS of people, if the weather is fine, spend the Easter week-end at the seaside or in the country. Anywhere will do as long as it affords sweet air, and is remote from the dust and bustle of cities. Some of them, perhaps, out of mere habit, if for no other reason, attend church on Easter Sunday, and hear the preacher dress up again that old fable of the Resurrection. How few of them, though, will think out the question of how Jesus Christ spent *his* Easter week-end some eighteen hundred and seventy years ago. What we call his week-end was the time between his crucifixion and his resurrection. Of course it was a *short* week-end, but the circumstances were rather painful, and the period between Friday afternoon and early on Sunday morning was mercifully counted as three days; perhaps on modern Trade Union principles, reckoning the nights as over-time. In other circumstances the trip would have lasted till Tuesday morning, thus allowing three full days for the return ticket.

Very few Christians, we believe, can tell off-hand where Jesus Christ spent that first Easter week-end. The Gospel truth is that he spent it in hell. At least that is what we are told in the so-called Apostles' Creed, which is supposed to be religiously founded on Scripture. We read therein that he "was crucified, dead, and buried," and then that he "descended into hell." The next article is that "the third day he rose again from the dead." Clearly, therefore, the interval between the crucifixion and the resurrection was spent in hell—minus, of course, whatever time was taken up in going there and in returning.

Now we should like to know how the gentlemen who drew up the Apostles' Creed—a document which is accepted by the Churches—found out that Jesus Christ descended into hell. This article was not in the Nicene Creed which was formulated in 325, nor in the revised Creed which was formulated fifty years later at the Council of Constantinople. It crept in a long time afterwards. But when it got a start it soon made progress. It was helped along by the Psalmist's saying "thou wilt not leave my soul in hell." It was also helped along by the curious words of Peter (1, iii., 18, 19) about Jesus being "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison." But the *origin* of the article seems to have been a sheer accident. Somewhere about A.D. 400 the district Church of Aquileia adopted it, and it was afterwards incorporated into the creeds of the Roman and Eastern Churches. The Church of Aquileia used the words "suffered under Pontius Pilate," and "was crucified," but omitted the words "dead and buried." It went straight on after "crucified" with the words *descendit in inferna*. No doubt this was merely a special way of saying "he was buried," for the word *inferna* did not necessarily mean "hell," any more than the Hebrew *sheol* or the Greek *hades*. All these terms meant at first merely the *grave*, though subsequently they meant the underworld, the ghostland, the general home of the dead; for heaven and hell as separate places of reward and punishment were later inventions.

This accident of phraseology on the part of the Church of Aquileia was the foundation on which the universal Christian Church erected the tremendous article of its Creed that Jesus Christ "descended into hell." Such great effects from little causes spring.

It is very easy to say "he descended into hell," but very difficult to say what it means. Christian divines are (of course) at loggerheads about it. Some contend that its meaning is that the efficacy of Christ's atoning

blood extended even to hell, and did some good even to the denizens of that lurid establishment. Others hold that Christ descended into hell metaphorically, by suffering the torments of the damned in making expiation for the sins of the world. But this is objected to by others on the ground that the worst torments of hell are remorse of conscience and eternal separation from God, neither of which could be suffered by Christ. Another theory is that he went to the Limbo in which the Jewish "fathers" were waiting to emigrate to heaven, and that he served them as a sort of Cook's excursion agent. Still another theory is that he simply went to the place of the dead—down amongst the dead-men—wherever that is. And, after all, what does it matter? It is enough to believe that he "descended into hell" in the sense that he went *somewhere*. So said Bishop Pearson. Archbishop Usher went one better. What we have to do, he said, is to accept the article in a *general* sense; and then we can believe that Jesus Christ went to hell, or heaven, or anywhere else we please.

One of the apocryphal Gospels gives a lively account of how Jesus Christ visited hell and harried the realm of Old Harry, sailing away with a long procession of Old Testament worthies, and leaving the Boss of Hades biting his thumb with vexation in the midst of his depleted and desolate establishment. How nice it must have been for Adam, Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Solomon, and Co., when they followed their new-found Saviour from the nowhere of hell, through the everywhere of the universe, to the nowhere of heaven! But how sad for all the poor wretches who fell in at the tail of the procession, expecting to get out and cool off with their betters! Alas, the gate was slammed in their faces, and—they are cooking still!

It was asserted by some that Jesus Christ emptied hell entirely. But the Church branded these sanguine persons as heretics. What, an empty hell! Perish the thought! Why, the place might then have been closed for ever; and what could the Church do without a hell for its enemies, and especially for unbelievers?

Supposing that Jesus Christ did descend into hell, what a pity it was that he did not make the best use of such an opportunity. He had to stop there for three days, according to Christian chronology. Why then did he not exert his Omnipotence, guided by his Omniscience, and destroy the place altogether; finding another residence, if necessary, for its displaced inhabitants, as is done by the authorities when they have to pull down for city improvements. He might also have terminated the emigration from earth to hell by converting the Devil. Surely he might have done that. Why, he actually converted a considerable number of Jews before his crucifixion—which is more than the Missionary Societies are able to do now, even with the assistance of colossal sums of money. Had he converted the Devil—as Man Friday suggested to Robinson Crusoe—he would have achieved the salvation of the human race with a single stroke. With no Devil to tempt him, no man would sin; and, with no sin, there would be no damnation. Why then did not Jesus Christ convert the Devil? Because it would have been too bad business for the clergy. The Devil and hell are really the be-all and end-all of their profession.

(The late) G. W. FOOTE.

There are thousands of men who believe that superstition is good for women and children—who regard falsehood as the fortress of virtue, and feel indebted to ignorance for the purity of daughters and the fidelity of wives. These men think of priests as detectives in disguise, and regard God as a policeman who prevents elopements. Their opinions about religion are as correct as their estimate of woman.—*Ingersoll*.

The Habit of Fear.

FEAR is the most potent emotion experienced by mankind. Fear rules the world. Civilization is founded on fear, and every action by every individual, every corporate body, every institution and every state, bears out this statement. Commerce and politics alike, portray this fact. Commercial men when engaged upon a deal are constantly pre-occupied with precautions lest those with whom they are doing business should over-reach them. In his every-day life the average man goes about the world, consciously or unconsciously, actuated by fear; his whole existence is a series of precautions. The organization of the state in which he lives is a series of precautions, and the relations of that state with the other states of the world are also dominated by the necessity for guarding against some untoward circumstance which may be forced upon it by one of the other states.

The various religions are an attempt of man to reassure himself about death; an attempt to supply those deficiencies of knowledge which make him afraid of his environment. So far as regards the individual, this dominating idea is the result of the conventional order of civilization. The vast majority of units of a civilized community tediously perform identical tasks, and almost identical movements throughout each successive twenty-four hours. A certain routine presents itself to them as an inevitable corollary of their occupation. At a certain specified hour in the morning they rise from their bed, go through a mechanical process of ablution and feeding, proceed to another building to perform the same business as they did yesterday, and will do to-morrow, return home and engage in the same recreation, or lack of recreation, before once more proceeding to bed.

Very few years of this sort of thing suffice to make them afraid of anything which promises to disturb their usual routine. Opportunity for personal advancement knocks at their door, but grave considerations arise in their minds; they think about the thing, and in the majority of cases they are afraid to break away from the routine they have so long been practising in order to take a chance of some misfortune in accepting the invitation of opportunity.

The industrial system is organized by habit in precisely the same way as the individual's life. Because the routine has gone on in the same way for several generations and was disturbed by the war men fear to change the system, they wish to revert to pre-war conditions, to adopt a mode of life and organization to which they and their forefathers were accustomed. It is exactly the same emotion as that of the individual who fears to take hold of his opportunity. The habit has become second nature, and it is believed that by reverting to habit the world can be reconstructed. In the same way relations between the states are habitual, although it has been convincingly said, and is accepted as true, that the increased production of bulk armaments inevitably leads to war, the masters of the states of the world are afraid to disarm.

In the primeval ages when man lived as a carnivorous animal in the midst of other carnivorous animals, life was insecure, and it is improbable that it could have been dominated by habit in the same way as it is in a vast civilized community. Primitive man, and, indeed, those moderns whose lives are lived on the outskirts of civilization, are accustomed to change of circumstance and to meeting that change of circumstance adequately. Their environment demands that they should be able to adapt themselves immediately to its necessities, or succumb. That man was able to rise from his primitive state shows that even though he might have been dominated by fear at times, he

was, at any rate, generally not dominated by that emotion. His life was not a habit, and the necessities did not demand the infinite precautions that a soft-bodied civilized individual must take.

In addition to the routine character of civilization, the habit of obedience which is inculcated as a moral necessity from earliest childhood assists to develop fear. Children are convinced by superior muscular force that they must be obedient to their parents and to their schoolmasters; they are intimidated with stories of the policeman and what the policeman will do to them. They grow up in an atmosphere of customary law, whose strength is that it can make the individual fear the consequence of his action. The spectacle of the human race which has mastered its environment to the extent which modern society has done, dominated by the necessity for precautions dictated by fear is an amazing one; it does not argue for the considerable advancement of the race. Some other more noble emotion must become the guiding star before man can make adequate use of the resources which he has discovered. G. E. FUSSELL.

A Youth's Reflections.

I beseech you, let his lack of years be no impediment to let him lack a reverend estimation; for I never knew so young a body with so old a head. —*Shakespeare.*

Most of our readers are, I expect, familiar with the old doggerel which runs:—

Every little boy and gal, born into this world alive,
Is either a little Liberal or a little Conservative.

I am aware that this is by no means a poetic gem, whilst the ever increasing complexity—to say nothing of perplexity—of modern life renders its philosophy inadequate, to say the least of it.

But even to-day, when the political and religious systems claiming our allegiance are so numerous, it is still true that a man is known by the labels he wears no less than by the company he keeps. Moreover, if we would maintain that close correspondence with our environment that scientists tell us is essential to survival, it behoves us to choose a label which the world considers "proper." In this respect I am unfortunate! At the comparatively early age of twenty-four I find myself a Freethinker, a Humanist, a Determinist and a Socialist, each of which is sufficient to "condemn me for a villain."

Such a bold confession, in one so young, would make the average Christian hold up his hands in pious horror. Even our genial friend, Dr. Lyttelton, would consider me lacking in "the two mental affections, Wonder and Humour." To him I must doubtless appear an unnatural monster born out of my due time, scorning the pleasurable pursuits of healthy youth, and, with a brow "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought" go my dismal way—like the melancholy Jaques—a pitiable misanthrope, railing at life's incongruities and moralizing each spectacle "into a thousand similes."

Nothing could be further from the truth! Indeed, I pride myself on being a perfectly normal and average young man, possessed of a goodly portion of original sin and with a wholesome hatred of all "superior" persons. Yet with all my heresies I am as happy and (pardon the egotism) as virtuous as my even Christian. Deeply conscious of the misery around me, of "man's inhumanity to man," of the callous cruelty of our industrial system, the vindictive nature of our penal laws and all the smug hypocrisy and vain pretensions of Christianity, yet do I find life enjoyable and feel glad that I came. Even my Christian friends in their better moments think me not unkindly for so wanton a pagan.

I differ from my fellows inasmuch as I take an active interest in social and religious problems; I *think* on these things and am not content to accept orthodoxy at its face value. I wish sometimes that I could persuade my Christian chums to cast aside the mind-warping traditions of the past and study their religion in the light of history and comparative religions. If only I could get them to study Christian origins and the evolution of the Bible. But No! They remain impervious to my suggestions, they are content to go on in the old rut, and for aught they know to the contrary, the Bible was dropped from Heaven in its present form, already divided into chapter and verse and neatly bound in vellum!

Then there are the apathetic ones, that great majority who prefer the football field to the battlefield of progress, personal advancement to human problems, and the seductive ways of "a young man's fancy" to the thorny path of the social reformer. They are at once the hope and the despair of humanity; they are a living disproof of the "Universality of religious belief." Parsons may preach and clerics condemn, they sweep on unheeding; and the "superior person" wrapped in his cloak of solemn affectations calls to them in vain.

The clergy are continually bewailing the paganism of modern youth. They do not realize that to this great palpitating throng the religions they offer are but "dreams out of the ivory gate, and visions before midnight." What, after all, have their dreamy, self-centred, emotional and impossible religions in common with the aspirations of lusty youth? I think of my army days and the chaplains whose popularity depended not on their spiritual ministrations, but on their activities in distributing "woodbines"—and I smile! Yes! Say what you will, football was ever a more potent lure than "mansions in the skies"; youth cares more for the pleasures of the hour than for the welfare of its immortal soul.

And I? I love my football, too, and take not my pleasures sadly; life on this whirling planet is a gay and happy affair—when one is young. Besides, this maddening apathy of my "comrades of the dusty day" is but a transient phase. I am full of hope for these pagan brethren of mine; Freethought will gain many converts from them yet, for they, too, share my hatred of the "unco guid," the Pecksniffs and Chadbands of a hypocritical superstition, and, like me, they stand in no great awe of their ancestors,—

The ghosts of words and dusty dreams,
Old memories, faiths infirm and dead.

Alas! We are a blood-guilty mob of heathen, and our priests are wondrous moral!

VINCENT J. HANDS.

The Skeleton at the Feast.

IN THE WOLF PARLOUR.

To G. U.

Our homely board is spread,
We take our drink at ease,
Some friendly chat of this and that,
Some little folly as it passes
Like bubbles that burst in our glasses.
Grandfather's clock ticks off the golden hours
And at my elbow magic flowers,
That braved the dusty Strand,
Are trembling in a female's hand.
A female cry, a female moan,
Tell me of many things unknown,
Take me out on perilous seas
Where pity, want, and miseries
Dwell in the words
"Not this side please."

W. R.

Pages From Voltaire.

THE A. B. C.: OR CONVERSATIONS
BETWEEN A. B. AND C.

Of the Law of Nature, and of Curiosity.

B.—We are quite convinced, then, that mankind is not wholly detestable; but let us get, if we can, to the real matter. What do you call just and unjust?

A.—What seems such to the whole world.

C.—The whole world is made up of many heads. In Lacedæmon robbers were encouraged, while at Athens they were condemned to the mines.

A.—An abuse of words. Theft was impossible in Sparta, where all things were held in common. What we call *theft* was there merely the punishment of avarice.

B.—At Rome marriage with a sister was prohibited. Among the Egyptians, Athenians, and even among the Hebrews it was permissible to marry a sister on the father's side, for notwithstanding *Leviticus*, the virgin Tamar said to her brother Amnon: "Nay, my brother, do not this folly.....I pray thee speak unto the king, for he will not withhold me from thee."¹

A.—These are mere conventional enactments, arbitrary usages, customs that are doomed to pass away. Show me a country where it is virtuous to take away the fruit of a man's labour, to violate a promise, to lie in order to injure others, to murder, and poison, to be ungrateful for benefits, to beat a parent who provides food for you!

B.—This is what I read sometime ago in a declamatory piece of writing which was well known in its time: "The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, thought proper to exclaim, *This is mine*, and found people simple enough to agree with him, was the real founder of civil society. How many crimes, wars, murders and horrors, and what misery would not have been spared the human race if someone had torn up the stakes, filled in the ditches, and then shouted to his fellowmen: 'Heed not the impostor; you are lost if you forget that the fruits of earth belong to all, and the earth itself to no one.'"²

C.—It must have been a jesting highwayman that wrote this pointless tirade.

A.—I suspect it was some idle vagabond; for instead of damaging the land of a wise and industrious neighbour, he had only to imitate him, and every father of a family having followed this example, a handsome village would soon have grown up. The writer of this passage seems to me a very unsociable animal.

B.—You believe, then, that in committing an outrage and theft on the good man, his neighbour, who had hedged in his garden and poultry farm, he disregarded the primary obligations of the law of nature?

A.—Most emphatically, yes: there is a natural law, and it consists in neither doing mischief to one's neighbour, nor rejoicing in it.

C.—There are people, however, who say that nothing is more natural than to do evil. Many children amuse themselves by plucking sparrows, and there are few men who do not run with a secret pleasure to the seashore to enjoy the sight of a vessel beaten about by the winds, and foundering by degrees in tempestuous waters, while the passengers raise hands to heaven, and then sink into the stormy waters with their wives and children. Lucretius gives the reason for this malign pleasure³:—

.....quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave est.

¹ Samuel xiii., 12, 13.

² Rousseau, *Discours sur l'inégalité* (1754).

³ *De rerum natura* II., 4. "It is sweet to see from what evils you are yourself exempt." Compare La Rochefoucauld: "In the adversity of our best friends we always find something

A.—Lucretius did not know what he was saying; and in spite of his wonderful descriptive powers he often talks nonsense. It is curiosity that makes us eager to witness such sights. Curiosity is a feeling natural to man; but there is not one of those spectators who would not use his utmost efforts to save the drowning people if he could.

When children pluck their sparrows it is purely in a spirit of curiosity, just as they pull to pieces their doll's clothes. It is this passion alone that leads so many people to public executions. It is what the author of a tragedy has called *a strange eagerness to behold the miserable*.⁴

I remember that, being in Paris when Damiens⁵ was made to suffer a death the most cruel and shocking that can be imagined, all the windows that overlooked the place of execution were hired at great prices by the ladies. No one of them surely made the comforting reflection that she would not have her breasts torn with red hot pincers, that molten lead and boiling pitch would not be poured into her wounds, that four horses would not tear asunder her broken and bloody limbs. One of the executioners judged better than Lucretius, for when one of the members of the Paris Academy of Sciences⁶ wished to enter the enclosure in order to view the business at close quarters, and was pushed back by the archers: "Let the gentleman come in," said he, "he is an amateur," that is to say, curious; it is not by malice that he comes here, or by reflection to enjoy the pleasure of not being torn in pieces, but purely by curiosity, as we go to see experiments in natural philosophy.

B.—Be it so; I conceive that man neither loves nor commits evil except for his own advantage; but so many men are induced to procure their advantage to the misfortune of others; revenge is a passion so violent and its effects so terrible; ambition, still more fatal, has deluged the earth in so much blood, that when I recall the horrid picture I am tempted to unsay what I have said and to admit that man is a child of the devil. It is in vain that I have within me the idea of just and unjust; an Attila whom St. Leo courted; a Phocias whom St. Gregory flattered with the extreme of baseness; an Alexander VI defiled with so many incests, so many murders, so many poisonings, with whom the weak Louis XII, called the Good, made the most unworthy and strict alliance; a Cromwell whose protection was sought by Mazarin, and for whom he drove from France the heirs of Charles I. A hundred similar examples upset my ideas, and I no longer know where I am.

A.—That may be the case, but do thunderstorms prevent you from enjoying unclouded weather? Does the earthquake which destroyed the best part of Lisbon stand in your way of making a pleasant journey overland from Madrid to Rome? If Attila was a robber and Cardinal Mazarin a rascal, are not some princes and some statesmen honest men, and is not the idea of justice always with us? Their idea was the foundation of laws which the Greeks called *the daughters of heaven*, an implication that they were the daughters of nature.

C.—No matter, I am also ready to retract, for I see that laws were made only because men are wicked. If horses were always tractable, the bridle had never been used. But without losing our time probing into the nature of man, and comparing so-called savages with so-called civilized men, let us find out which is the curb best suited to our mouths.

not altogether displeasing to us." The same idea is expressed by Ovid, *Ar. Am.* I, 749, and by Montaigne, *Essays* (Book III., chap. 1) "Of Profit and Honesty."

⁴ Voltaire, *Tancredè*, III., 3.

⁵ Damiens was executed March 28, 1757, for attempting to assassinate the French king, Louis XV.

⁶ La Condamine, Charles Marie de (1701-1774).

A.—I forewarn you that I shall not allow myself to be bridled without being first consulted; that I prefer to bridle myself, and to have a voice in the election of him who is to mount my back.

C.—We are nearly all of the same stable.

Englished by GEORGE UNDERWOOD.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON
OCTOBER 6, 1921.

THE President, Mr. C. Cohen in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Corrigan, Moss, Neate, Quinton, and Rosetti; Miss Pankhurst, Miss Pitcher, Miss Kough and the Secretary.

Minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

New members were received for Birmingham, Leeds and the Parent Society, and various items of correspondence read.

The President reported the success of his Tyneside tour, and the report of the conclusion of Mr. Whitehead's second tour, together with a financial statement, was presented and adopted.

Resolutions were passed arranging for the closing of the present banking account standing in the name of the National Secular Society, and calling upon the Trustees to open a new account in accordance with the terms of the Trust Deed.

An innovation was suggested as to the arrangement of the Afternoon Agenda of the Annual Conference, and after a short discussion the matter was adjourned till the next meeting.

A question arose as to the attitude of the Birmingham Recorder towards a Freethinking jurymen, and it was finally resolved that the President be instructed to obtain legal advice on the subject.

A grant of £5 was made to the North London Branch in recognition of their season's work.

It was reported that the pamphlet on *General Information for Freethinkers* was now ready and on sale, and that a fresh supply of the Society's badges was now on order; also that the course of lectures arranged for South Place was now proceeding.

The meeting then closed.

E. M. VANCE,
General Secretary.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President:

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Secretary:

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

Principles and Objects.

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.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

Membership.

Any person is eligible as a member on signing the following declaration:—

I desire to join the National Secular Society, and I pledge myself, if admitted as a member, to co-operate in promoting its objects.

Name.....

Address.....

Occupation

Dated this.....day of.....19.....

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 post card.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, near Edgware Road): 7.30, Mr. Maurice Maubrey, "Curing the World's Blindness."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Mr. Percy Friedberg, "Labour and the Churches."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W. 9, three minutes from Kennington Oval Tube Station and Kennington Gate): 7, Mr. Marbarak Ali, B.A., "The Christian and the Moslem Plan of Salvation."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "The Paradox of Unemployment."

SOUTH PLACE INSTITUTE (Finsbury Pavement, E.C.) : 3.30, Mr. A. B. Moss, "A New Age of Reason."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (City Hall, North Saloon, Candle-riggs): 11.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "The World's Need for Freethought"; (Corporation Hall, Lobago Street): 6.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "The Eclipse of Christianity."

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (19 Lowerhead Row, Leeds): 7, Mr. G. W. Wright, "Co-operation in Industry."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. and Mrs. F. Hobday, "Music and Religion." (Musical Illustrations.)

SALTCOATS (Lesser Town Hall): Monday, October 17, at 7 p.m., Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Christianity, Freethought, and the Social Question." (Silver Collection.)

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (31 Thompson Street, Tyne Dock): 6.30, Business Meeting; Future Propaganda.

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