

# AN APOLOGY FOR PARSONS.

The

# FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN · EDITOR 1881-1915 · G. W. FOOTE

VOL. L.—No. 5

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1930

PRICE THREEPENCE

## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>An Apology for Parsons.—The Editor</i> - - -	65
<i>The Priest in Politics.—Mimnermus</i> - - -	66
<i>The Progress of Atheism.—W. Mann</i> - - -	68
<i>Neutral Monism and the New Materialism.—</i> <i>G. H. Taylor</i> - - -	69
<i>Drama.—C. de B.</i> - - -	70
<i>Churches and Creeds.—W. H. W.</i> - - -	71
<i>Dare We Face the Facts.—H. Culner</i> - - -	74
<i>Revelations from the Spiritual Realm.—T. F. Palmer</i> -	76

*Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,  
Letters to the Editor, etc.*

## Views and Opinions.

### An Apology for Parsons.

I AM moved to write in defence of parsons; and my reason is this. In recent war books the parson has not come out very well. Neither for that matter has anyone else. From 1914 to about 1920 writings about the war were standardized. Every dispatch, every book had to depict every British soldier as a gentleman, a hero, or as the Bishop of London said, a saint. Now standardization appears to have set in the opposite direction. Many soldiers, we are told, were actually cowardly, some were drunkards, some went seeking women, all indulged in swearing, and between officers and men there does not appear to have been a very great difference, allowance being made for difference in circumstances. With a less dishonest press than our own, this would have been fairly clear from the outset. The army on service was not worse than other armies on service, in fact, subjected to the strain that existed, I should say that it was rather better, largely because it was so largely civilian, and not mainly composed of the professional soldier. So it was bound to display the qualities that civilians display, with the inevitable deterioration that results from military life, and to masses of men removed from the inhibitions and inspirations that come from settled social life. I am also inclined to think that the new standardization rather overdoes it. Swearing and fornication, drunkenness and cowardice are not the only features of an army at war. A fashion never presents the unbiassed truth.

\* \* \*

### Parsons in War-Time.

In one of his *Evening Standard* articles Dean Inge has a notice of a recent war book *Retreat*, which gives a sketch of an army chaplain that is interesting but flattering to the parson, particularly as it is intended to picture a type. So the Dean is impelled to ask "Has Religion a Place in War?" To that ques-

tion one may well ask, Why not? Historically religion has always played a part in war. In all religions the gods have been petitioned to give victory to one side and to crush and mangle the other side. Historically the Christian Church has never been opposed to war, as such. At the most it has only taught that Christians should not go to war with Christians, and by restricting "Christian" to one group of believers it has made it easy for "true" Christians to wage war against "false" ones. A brotherhood of believers was all the Church aimed at, and for the members of a brotherhood, secular or religious, to live at peace with each other is a principle as old as human association. It is a vocalization of the law of the herd.

Along with the picture of the parson in *Retreat*, we may take another drawn by Mr. Robert Graves in his *Goodbye to All That*:—

The troops while ready to believe in the Kaiser as a comic personal devil, were aware that the German soldier was, on the whole, more devout than himself in the worship of God . . . For the regimental chaplains as a body we had no respect. If the regimental chaplains had shown one tenth the courage, endurance, and other human qualities that the regimental doctors showed, we all agreed the British Expeditionary Force might well have shown a religious revival. But they had not. The fact is that they were under orders not to get mixed up with the fighting, to stay behind with the transport and not to risk their lives. No soldier could have any respect for a chaplain who obeyed these orders, and yet there was not in our experience one chaplain in fifty who was not glad to obey them. Occasionally on a quiet day and in a quiet sector the chaplain would make a daring afternoon visit to the support line and distribute a few cigarettes, and that was all. Sometimes the Colonel would summon him to come up with the rations and bury the day's dead, and he would arrive, speak his lines and hastily retire. The position was made more difficult by the respect that most of the commanding officers had for the cloth, but it was a respect that they soon outwore.

It is only fair to point out that Mr. Graves formed a higher opinion of the Roman Catholic Chaplains. The explanation of this is that the Roman Church is more selective in its policy and in its personnel. But I have no space to discuss that point now.

\* \* \*

### A Primitive Superstition.

The point I wish to emphasize is that Mr. Benstead, the author of *Retreat*, and Mr. Graves, do not appear to have liberated their minds from the primitive superstitions concerning the medicine-man. They all expect the parson to act differently from other men. That is because they believe in the parson in the abstract. But I do not expect parsons to act differently from other men, because I do not believe

in the parson, as such, and therefore I do not expect them to behave otherwise than as he does, allowing for his education, his general environment, and the peculiar standard of right and wrong in which he is taught to believe. I say this because I really do believe that the parson is as other men, and that other men subjected to the same influences that have moulded the parson would behave as he behaves. I am a determinist in relation to my enemies as well as in relation to my friends.

\* \* \*

#### Parsons Past and Present.

Now the parson is a parson because he was originally thought to be different from other men. He was in communication with those tribal spirits upon which the whole welfare of the group depended. He brought rain and sunshine, health and disease, victory or defeat. The parson still, in a way, claims to do these things, because he is a direct descendant of the medicine-man. Time has passed, but the primitive significance has persisted. Other men select their profession, and there is nothing mysterious about it. The parson is "called" to his, and his initiation is surrounded with mystery. In the Roman Church he is given the power of cursing and blessing, of performing marriage, of giving a man a through ticket to heaven or hell, or a tourist one via purgatory. The English Church gives him the power to cast out demons. All parsons wear a distinctive dress, and certainly talk a distinctive language. The peculiar parsonic drone in the voice, and the horrible distortion of the English Language, with the use of a special terminology when holding alleged conversations with the tribal Joss, all mark the parson off as something distinct from the ordinary you and me.

When, therefore, men express their surprise that parsons do not behave differently from other people, they are merely carrying into modern life a conception of the medicine-man that belongs to the very earliest social times. We have the same thing illustrated in the sheer surprise of some men when they find a king doing the most ordinary of human actions—talking easily to a chance acquaintance, shaking hands with an ordinary mortal, or lifting up a child that has fallen down. This frame of mind has a clear reference to the time when the king was the king-priest, in close connexion with the gods, and charged with their supernatural influence. It is a curious thing that one like myself who does not believe in an hereditary monarchy may give a king full credit for all the ordinary human virtues and vices, while those who believe in it express unbounded astonishment and admiration to find him showing the most ordinary of decent human qualities. The savage lies very deeply imbedded in the most civilized of societies.

\* \* \*

#### Pity the poor Parson.

So when I take a thousand or so parsons I expect to find—allowing for differences of education—much what I should find in a thousand or so other men. I know that in every such group there will be found a certain number of liars, of cowards, and of fools, some will be greedy, some will indulge in sly vices, and other will show quite opposite characteristics. I do not think that because forty-nine of every fifty parsons preferred a safe place in France to the trenches, that it was remarkable, because I believe that most of those in the war would have taken the same course if they could have done so with equal safety. I do not believe that parsons are divinely selected—much as I have said about deity I would not like to slander his judgment to that extent—

neither do I believe they have any powers denied to other men; therefore, I am not at all surprised when they behave as other men. Moreover, I regard all expressions of surprise at parsons not behaving like other men as a very clear indication that many have not outgrown the primitive mentality which believes that parsons are actually different from ordinary men. They are not. Some are as good as other men; others are just as bad.

I said above that I expect a parson to act as do other men, allowing for differences of education and environment. Consider how the environment to-day works against him, instead of with him, as in primitive time. In primitive society he may actually stand for the most acute mind in the tribe, and in any case his social surroundings emphasize the importance of his position. To-day his office actually represents a selection in favour of the least mentally endowed. The more fortunate are drawn away in a dozen other directions. His education tends to narrow his outlook, to distort his sense of values, to resent criticism from others, and to keep his own critical faculties on as low a level as possible. He is taught to receive, but never to examine. Without the real prestige of magic he is nevertheless trained to act as though he possessed it unchanged. Accuracy of statement and toleration of differences form no part of his training. The specific faults of the parson are largely those of a training, acting on a mentality that to-day cannot be that of the best. How many of us would be any better if we started from the same point and were subjected to the same training? Those who are surprised when they find the parson doesn't exhibit so high a standard of behaviour as the doctor, the merchant, the lawyer, or the writer are still under the influence of the superstition I have noted. They are reaping the fruits of their own delusion. Those who know the parson to be what he is, a mere human being exemplifying in his office a phase of society that found, and still finds, its complete expression in savage society, will view him with greater wisdom and larger charity. It is one of the ironies of life that I, an Atheist, should thus be driven to offer an apology for parsons. I hope they will be duly grateful.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### The Priest in Politics.

"The religious Johnnies are saving their money to put on a horse that'll never run after all."

J. Galsworthy.

"Though all men abase them before you in spirit, and all knees bend,

I know not neither adore you, but standing, look to the end."—*Swinburne*.

It often happens that important news is placed in the back pages of newspapers, and simple paragraphs often convey more meaning than the more elaborate display of leaded type. Such an instance occurred recently where two sentences informed the reader that a Papal Nuncio had been appointed to the Irish Free State, and had been received by Irish Government officials. This is far more important news than the latest society scandal, or the last murder, although newspaper editors appear to think differently. For the appointment of a Papal Ambassador shows that the Pope is taking his position as a temporal sovereign very seriously, and that things are happening in consequence.

The activities of the Roman Catholic Church must always be a matter of interest to Freethinkers because the Romish body is the most important church

in Christendom. The Pope of Rome is the ecclesiastic who addresses the largest congregation in the world. Compared with the Papal dignity, the patriarchs of the Greek Orthodox Church are nobodies, and the Archbishop of Canterbury a mere pretender. Using the language of his office, a pope utters words which are heard from Bolivia to Bermondsey, from Stockholm to the South Seas. The language used may be a dead one and the platitudes exhausted, but the Papal patriarch possesses the attributes of the Bourbons. He learns nothing and forgets nothing. This unique position in religious affairs is striking and merits more than the passing attention of a paltry paragraph.

This ambassador of the Pope appointed to the Irish Free State is the first sent to the British Isles since the Protestant Reformation, and the action is significant. For the duties of a Nuncio have altered since the Middle Ages, when they were entrusted usually with the collection of money for the Pope. The nuncio of more recent times is a resident ambassador, and as such he dates from the Counter-Reformation. The Popes of the sixteenth century, alarmed by the spread of Freethought and Protestantism developed the habit of sending to the court of each Roman Catholic monarch a representative who, in addition to ordinary diplomatic duties, was supposed to do his utmost to further the interests of the Romish Church.

Ireland should form a happy hunting ground for Romish machinations, for it is the most ignorant part of the British Isles. It is likely to remain so, for Roman Catholic ecclesiastics have the quaintest ideas on the subject of education. These have again been emphasized by a Papal Encyclical occupying nearly three pages of the *Osservatore Romano*, the official Vatican organ. In this precious document the Pope once more affirms that the education of youth belongs primarily to the Christian Church, and then to the family, with the State graciously being permitted supplementary duties. This has always been the Romish attitude towards the question of education, and the present condition of priest-ridden Ireland, Italy, Spain and Portugal, places the matter beyond all cavil and dispute. Wherever the Romish Church holds undisputed sway education is at its lowest ebb, and the proportion of illiterates increases in direct ratio with the superstition of the natives. The education of the people in Roman Catholic countries more often than not begins in the gutter and ends there as well. So long as the unfortunate people attend church and contribute money the priests are content. It is only in Catholic countries that the village Romeo has to pay a professional letter-writer to indite an affectionate epistle to his Juliet, and Juliet, in her turn, has to pay to have the letter read to her.

The Romish Church is the church of the ignorant. The majority of the Catholic priests are really ill-educated men. They know the patter of their profession, but they know little or nothing of art, literature, music, politics and economics. They are the blind seeking to lead the blind. Their airs may be pontifical, but their lack of knowledge is abyssmal.

How can it be otherwise? This greatest Church in Christendom bases all its teaching on Romish tradition, which, in its turn, is founded on the teaching of the Fathers of the Church. The writings of these so-called "Fathers" form a reliable mirror by which we moderns may view medieval Christianity. There is an air of grief and sound of lamentation over all this lurid and unlovely conception of human life. Except in the writings of religious fanatics, few have had such ideas of filth and corruption. They are not the meditations of men, but of madmen. The tender human emotions, shared by the whole normal human race, are strangled by a hideous theology. One

effect of such teaching in Europe has been the perpetuation of a celibate priesthood, which has littered a continent with monasteries and nunneries, and caused millions of young men and women to live stunted lives in the service of superstition. If the Romish Church had done no other evil than this one thing, it should have earned it an immortality of infamy.

This Romish Church perpetuates superstition, and reaps a handsome income in the process. Not only does it affirm the veracity of such stories as those of "Jonah and the Whale," and "Noah's Ark," but it provides "miracles" of its own. Romish priests tell their deluded flocks that their Church's own "miracles" are a continuation of those alleged to be wrought by Christ, his disciples, and the saints. They tell them that the so-called "cures" at Lourdes, and elsewhere, and the pretended liquefaction of the blood of Saint Januarius at Naples are precisely such as those mentioned in Holy Writ. They assert that the alleged apparition of the Virgin to Children at La Salette is as genuine as the miracles said to have occurred in old Judæa. They contend that all these things form the latest link in a great chain that extends back to the creation of the world. Quite a modest proposal, is it not? And then they solicit the pence of the faithful, which, if not as modest, is businesslike.

O most impotent conclusion! If the cadging of money for the furtherance of superstition can be traced to this greatest of all Christian Churches, it deserves to fail, and to fail utterly. So long as men's theological conceptions remain radically unchanged, so long as no new Humanism flames into being with a passionate sense of brotherhood, and a new scale of human values, so long will men seek progress in vain. The Christian Religion is a great superstition, and in perpetuating the ideas of the Middle Ages the clergy fail invariably to get to grips with vital affairs. Christians are so immersed in their own dogmas that they cannot see that Ignorance has usurped the seat of Reason.

Roman Catholics, saying their prayers to wax dolls, hold the Christian Superstition in the most absolute and literal manner. Their abasement is, in its way, but an impeachment of orthodoxy. In spite of their child-like attitude, their action explains nothing, and adds nothing to human knowledge, but leaves the world in the meshes of Priestcraft. And priests are not so child-like. They are quite capable of facing-both-ways. For two decades the Romish Church flirted with Republicanism in France, with the idea of placating anti-clerical opposition. Priests are as capable of trying to noble the Socialist movement, if the Socialists allow it. To be forewarned, however, is to be forearmed. "How do you like my cooking," asked a three-months' old wife. "I like your tinned salmon best, sweetheart," was the unexpected reply. So the priests may meet their match, and the forces of Democracy be unhampered by enemies masquerading as friends.

MIMNERMUS.

---

#### MIRACLES.

---

Miracles come when they are needed. They come not of fraud, but they come of an impassioned credulity which creates what it is determined to find. Given an enthusiastic desire that God should manifest himself miraculously, the religious imagination is never at a loss for facts to prove that he has done so; and in proportion to the magnitude of the interests at stake is the scale of the miraculous interposition.—*J. A. Froude*,

## The Progress of Atheism.

To judge of the progress made by Freethought and Atheism, compare the estimation in which the Bible, and God, are held to-day, with that of less than a century ago.

Take, for instance, many books on Archaeology, or dealing with ancient history, written before the middle of the last century, and compare it with any similar work of to-day.

In the first-named work, the Bible was the first and greatest authority for events in the ancient world, and all events were judged by their accordance with that book. As, according to the Bible calculations, the world was created 4,000 years before Christ, ancient history was limited to that period and nothing was permitted to appear to contradict it.

To-day the Bible plays a very different role. In modern archaeological works, there is no mention at all of the Bible at the commencement, and when we arrive at the time when the events recorded in the Bible are said to have taken place, we find, perhaps, a paragraph, or a page devoted to the subject, and the statement that no record has yet been discovered on the monuments of the events recorded in the Bible, and sometimes hinting that further excavations may provide the required proofs; meanwhile, excavating is very expensive work, etc., etc.

As to the chronology of the Bible, archaeologists are agreed that in Egypt, Babylonia, and Crete, there existed a high state of civilization ten thousand years ago, and the history of prehistoric man extends backwards for hundreds of thousands of years.

The same process has been at work in regard to the belief in God. Compare the literature of a hundred years ago with that of to-day. Where is there anything to compare with the famous Bridgewater Treatises, written by eight of the most distinguished scientists of the time, between the years 1823 and 1840; the subject being "On the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of God." These expensive and voluminous works had a large circulation and were regarded as a permanent and unanswerable answer to all atheistic arguments, for ever.

Where are the Bridgewater Treatises now? Mouldering away on the top shelves, under the dust that no one thinks of disturbing. To-day, the defence of the literal truth of the Bible, and belief in a man-like God is almost confined to the Fundamentalists, Bible Christians, the Salvation Army, and the less advanced Nonconformist sects.

But, it may be objected, "Isn't it true that many scientists refuse to class themselves under the title of Atheist." Yes, it is true, and will remain so, all the while children are trained up in religious beliefs, but the beliefs held by modern educated men are as different from the beliefs of the men of a century ago, as chalk is from cheese. They bear the same name and that is all. Moreover, the name of Atheist has been so maligned and slandered by the charitable pious, that many people who are of that way of thinking, hesitate to adopt it, and resort to more ambiguous terms, such as Agnostic, or Rationalist.

Again, a century ago, our opponents were in more agreement among themselves than they are to-day, whereas, their only point of agreement to-day is in their hostility to Materialism. Directly they come down to details, or turn their attention to one another's beliefs, we find them fighting all over the place. Many of them concede that Materialism is quite right and proper when it confines itself to non-living, or inorganic matter. Others, like Sir Oliver Lodge, will even admit that living matter evolved from non-living matter in quite a natural manner,

without any addition of "Vital" or "Spiritual" Force. Others take their stand on Consciousness, and Mind.

To show how much has been conceded to the Materialist, and how thin is the line now dividing him from many of those who refuse the label of Materialist, we quote the following from the Gifford Lectures, delivered at Glasgow (1927-28) by Prof. J. S. Haldane, the physiologist, under the title of *The Sciences and Philosophy*. Although he refuses the title of Materialist, yet he observes: "Vitalism is thus a quite unsatisfactory hypothesis, both ultimately and from the standpoint of scientific advance . . . The mechanistic conception of life is still reckoned orthodox among physiologists and biologists generally." (p. 75.) And further:—

The supposed independent soul has turned out to be something which is dependent in every respect on the supposed physical body and environment. We cannot possibly separate their influences. If we start with the provisional assumption that there is a physical or biological living body, with an independent soul to guide it, the facts lead us inevitably to a correction of this assumption . . . Meanwhile I wish to leave no doubt or ambiguity about the conclusion reached in this lecture. The conclusion is that we can no longer uphold the animistic conception of a physical body guided—in other words, interfered with—by an independently existing soul. . . . the observed phenomena are not consistent with the conception of a soul independent of bodily existence. I am perfectly at one with the most thorough-going Materialists on this point, though not at all at one with them as to further points. (pp. 123-124.)

Prof. Haldane will have nothing to do with the parrot-cry of the pulpit and the press, that Materialism is dead. On the contrary, he observes:—

This is why so many earnestly-minded persons have become, and are becoming, Materialists. No amount of mere personal authority, whether theological, ecclesiastical, scientific, or State authority, will in the end avail against this trend. It is a trend among persons who are honestly and sincerely striving after the truth, and to whom that striving is part of their religion—part, as I shall endeavour to point out later, of the most powerful, influence which determines human behaviour. It may be that, on the whole, Materialism makes for personal unhappiness and social disorder; but this also, if it be a fact, will not avail. The only thing that could avail is the result of a perfectly free and open discussion of all the evidence bearing on the subject. (p. 125.)

Brave words to be sounded in godly Scotland! For our part, we have never seen any evidence of unhappiness among the Materialists we have known; but we have had experience of unhappiness of a puritan Christian household, to our sorrow; and as to Materialism as a cause of social disorder, we might point out that among our prison population, a man without a religion, is an exceedingly rare bird.

Prof. Haldane does not believe that there is the slightest hope of men returning to religion, quite the contrary. He observes: "I think there can be no doubt that scientific men as a body will continue to oppose religious beliefs in so far as these beliefs are associated with any element of what is known as the supernatural; and it may be long before the supernatural element is eliminated from religion as represented by the Churches." (p. 318.) But if the rate of progress we have made during the last century is maintained, the elimination of the supernatural will be achieved much sooner than many anticipate.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

## Neutral Monism and the New Materialism.

(Continued from page 11.)

### II.

We have seen that the re-stated Materialism and the Neutral Monism of Bertrand Russell run parallel in that they both reject extra-natural interference either by a conscious God or a conscious vital force.

At this stage some Materialists would consider the parallel complete. We refer to those who would change the name to Universal Determinism, or some variation of that expression. But Materialism is really a little more than a mere assertion of Determinism, though not very much more in its re-stated form. Spinoza, for instance, was a Universal Determinist, but he was no Materialist. John Toland built a Teleology on his Determinism. Auguste Comte, the Determinist, hated Materialism. And there have been many other non-Materialist Deterministic philosophers, those of to-day including Julian Huxley, Prof. Alexander, etc., the most important being, in our opinion, Bertrand Russell himself.

Where, then, does Russell deviate from the New Materialism?

We have seen that he regards mind and matter as convenient logical fictions, which in the science of the future will be replaced by causal laws governing his neutral particulars.

Before discussing the nature of these weird things, we should like to examine his views of mind and matter, the descendants of his fundamental neutral stuff. We do this by way of inviting readers to observe Russell's close kinship with Materialism.

#### WHAT IS MIND?

(a) The Materialist answer: "Mind" is a collective name for the mental facts which are the emerged product of non-mental conditions.

(b) Russell's answer: Some years ago Wm. James wrote an essay on "Does Consciousness Exist?" in which he concluded that "consciousness" is not an entity in itself, but only a function. Russell profoundly agrees with him. [N.B. this theory, of course, was not original.] Consciousness, maintains Russell, is not a fundamental fact of mental life; nor is it a universal feature. "There is," he says, "so far as I can see, no class of mental or other occurrences of which we are always conscious whenever they happen." (*Analysis of Mind*.) Consciousness must be of something, and, given the content, the active, subjective element is quite superfluous. This, then, is quite in keeping with Materialism, and with the chapter on personality in *Materialism Re-stated*.

Nor is instinct a fundamental. Instinct, he holds, has no prevision of the biological end which it serves, is modifiable in its nascent stages, and can be bettered by experience.

What, then, is for Russell the fundamental fact out of which our mental life is made up?—this, of course, is dealing with mind in its actual state, not as an un-emerged potential.

It is Sensation, which "is the intersection of mind and matter," and that which accounts for their interaction. Mental life is built up out of sensations. The subjective "ego" is abandoned. "It is introduced, not because observation reveals it, but because it is linguistically convenient and apparently demanded by grammar." (*Ibid.*)

Given sensation, all mental life follows. Russell has much here in common with the old Empirical school, from which the Materialist school descended via Condillac. Out of sensation he builds up pleasure

and pain, desire, emotion and thought. This structure, of course, is facilitated by images, but they in their turn are not intrinsically different, he contends, from sensations. When a mental occurrence has not sufficient connexion with objects external to the brain to be regarded as an appearance of those objects, then we must look for its physical causation inside the brain itself; "otherwise," says Russell, "no satisfactory theory of perception, sensation, or imagination is possible." (*Ibid.*)

With regard to Memory, Russell again sides with the Materialists. Two theories are in vogue. Either mnemonic causation may be ultimate, or it may be reducible to ordinary physical causation in nervous tissue, "but the bulk of the evidence points to the materialistic answer as the more probable." (*Ibid.*)

In these views of mind, then, Russell and Materialism have no dispute. But forecast the solution of psychological problems on the same lines. Both deem it a workable hypothesis to assume that Images, "copies" of sensations are therefore rooted in them. The highly complex processes inside the inherited brain will ultimately be a compounding of sensations which have left their mark. This reduces mental life to a structure on sensations alone, a welcome economy of fundamentals, and one well in keeping with a neutral monism.

### III.

#### WHAT IS MATTER?

(a) The Materialist answer: "Matter" is a working hypothesis of Science—a convenient way of thinking about the substratum of existence, the most satisfactory conception of matter being left for Science to decide. Mr. Chapman Cohen has even said that the name "matter" may be replaced if a better hypothesis is found. Indeed, one champion of Materialism, Mr. Joseph McCabe, regards ether as the ultimate reality. But it will make no difference to Materialism as a method of inquiry whether ether is ultimate and matter a "curdling" of it, or whether matter is ultimate and ether its "jellification."

(b) Russell's answer: In order to appreciate Russell's view of matter, which in turn brings us at last to his "neutral stuff," we must first briefly state the recent changes which "matter" has undergone. The Newtonian system gave us Space with its points and Time with its instants. But as a result of Einsteinian theory we have no longer Space and Time but "Space-Time," and its ingredients are not points and instants but "point-instant." In these point-instants Russell finds his fundamental reality—Events. "Everything in the world is composed of events; that is the thesis I wish to maintain," he says in his *Outline of Philosophy*. An event occupies a small finite amount of Space-Time. In *Logical Atomism*, he refers to them as "event-particles." So that what was originally matter becomes cut up into events. Instead of a permanent piece of matter, we have now the conception of a world-line which is a series of connected events. "Strings of events are connected with each other," says Russell, "according to the laws of motion; one such string is called a piece of matter, and the motion from one event in the string to another is called a motion." (*Analysis of Matter*). (He is thus led, by the way, to regard motion as discontinuous). A unit of matter he defines approximately as "a causal line," a logical structure composed of events.

And so we arrive at his Neutral Monism. But these fundamental "events" are not merely confined to "matter." They extend throughout Space-Time. "To the philosopher, the difference between matter and empty space is, I believe, merely a difference as to the causal laws governing events, not a difference expressible as that between the presence or absence of a

substance, or as that between one kind of substance and another." (*Ibid.*) All Russell's latest work is emphatic on this point. "Matter is only a mathematical characteristic of events in empty space" (*Outline of Philosophy*), and in *Logical Atomism* the proposition is stated thus, "Certain regions in Space-Time have quite peculiar properties; these are the regions which are said to be occupied by matter. Such regions can be collected by means of the laws of physics into tubes or tracks . . . Such a tube constitutes the history of a piece of matter."

Not only do these "events" condition matter and empty space, but they condition mind also, and so the monism is complete. He even suggests the possibility of mind and matter as "emergent" from events. Events in one context give pieces (or strings) of matter; in another context they give mental phenomena. There can, it seems, be mental axes as well as material axes, and so mental events are in Space-Time too. "The fact that their relations to each other can be viewed as only temporal is a fact which they share with any set of events forming the biography of one piece of matter." (*Analysis of Matter.*) At great length Russell contends that percepts are physical events in the brain, that is, in Space-Time. "Percepts," he says, "fit into the same causal scheme as physical events, and are not known to have any intrinsic character which physical events cannot have," and so "there is no ground for the view that percepts cannot be physical events." (*Ibid.*) And in *Logical Atomism*, "We cannot say that matter is the cause of our sensations; we can say that the events which cause our sensations usually belong to the sort of group that physicists regard as material."

G. H. TAYLOR.

(To be concluded.)

### Drama.

MR. PETER GODFREY, at the "Gate Theatre Studio," displays an infinite capacity for touching the right button at a time when the world is wandering between one decade dead, the other waiting to be born. His courage and judgment for producing new plays from the four quarters of the earth make him a pioneer in ideas, and his patrons should be grateful for the coloured illustrations that he gives them on the stage. One of the best methods of studying Shakespeare instead of surrounding oneself with a cart load of books, is to see his plays performed. In the same way, if you are desirous of knowing what the human heart enjoys, instead of taking it from the newspapers, like a good Athenian, go to the drama. The stage to-day is like those coloured pictures in books; you can look at the characters and admire their dresses, or you can interest yourself in the play and interplay of love, hate, ambition, intrigue and all the other attributes in the box of tricks called mankind.

"Ten Nights in a Bar Room—or Ruined by Drink," muttered "sursum corda" to us. It invoked the shades of "Maria Marten: or the Murder," and the "Dumb Man of Manchester," and sent thoughts careering back to those days, when, in the words of Tom Costello the famous music-hall artiste, "skirts were longer and beer was better."

Mr. Romaine is a philanthropist with a generous reserve of uplift. He walks into the lion's den, "The Sickle and Sheaf," lectures the landlord in the language of the temperance reformer, yet, strange to say, agrees to stay the night. The innkeeper, Simon Slade (how could a man be any good with a name like that?) was lately a miller, but he is now on the downward path. "Hah! hah! who comes here?" is the cue for any entrance, and goodnight for exit; this getting the characters on and off was quite simple for the melodramist of days ago. Enter Joe Morgan, who calls for rum, gets provocative and finally fights the landlord, thus carrying out one of the chief ideas of drama—action. Enter the

drunkard's daughter Mary Morgan, who demurely places her hands behind her back and sings "Father, dear Father come home." Scene 2 a year later; enter Mr. Romaine, same suit, same words, but notices that rum has begun its deadly work on Simon Slade (see above). The innkeeper, in more action (fight with son) aims a glass at his son's head and hits Mary Morgan, who displays enough marks to have been hit with a greenhouse (but they were thorough old days, weren't they?) Joe Morgan renounces the drink after seeing snakes; this piece of acting almost makes the audience feel them—but Joe collapses behind an iron bedstead (circa 1860) and a gentle feeling of the pleasure of a good resolution steals over the final scene of Act II.

Having now given two acts, the reader with a little imagination can almost guess the course of the remaining three. Mary Morgan dies and is hoisted to heaven with a crane (creaks, ropes and all). Simon Slade (see above) is killed by his own son with a rum bottle; it is not clear whether it is full or empty. Mr. Morgan (prefix now) is seen in his prosperous home. Mr. Romaine's triumph is complete, and a one time country tippler (now reformed) Sample Swichel says his piece, and invites the audience to sign the pledge. Tableau, with Mary Morgan in the background as an angel.

Such, in brief, is the story that held us spell-bound forty years ago. Tears and laughter are near neighbours, and the production and acting of "Ten Nights in a Bar Room" was a gentle poking in the ribs of that hoary old scoundrel propaganda. Then, drink was the greatest curse of the age; of course, it was overdone with the colours laid on thick. Again, bicycles for women were the curse. Now, it is lipstick. Later on, it may be—whatever fanatics decide. But humanity survives. It is dangerous to meddle with a man's beer, so they say, but the puritans did it openly in Cromwell's time; to-day through the avenue of price it is done covertly, and with many other attractions the statistics about drunkenness show a decline—with no thanks to the temperance reformer, who, in his zeal was as intemperate as the sot he denounced. In short, the essence of his job was to shut public-houses and bring more trade to chapels, which is about as good reasoning as any when suppression is the goal. Even the mug of cocoa was not forgotten in the onward and upward journey of Joe Morgan, who saw the light after he had seen snakes.

There is one agreeable feature in the acting of the members of the company at the Gate Theatre Studio; they all act as though they meant it, and the painful words of this crude melodrama exercised a mesmerism, which allowed them to get past the gates of criticism. The play is interspersed with songs, and that classic "Daddy's at the Engine" can be revisited. Also, Miss Elsa Lanchester will sing for you, "After the Ball is Over," in such a manner as to almost defy analysis. Is it charm? Is it the quality of her voice? Her deportment, gesture, grace? I give it up, but hearing her sing this very real sentimental song will crowd the memory with pleasure to be taken later on in the small sips of recollection. She would win a million hearts in the provinces with this song. Mr. Arthur Goulet, as Joe Morgan the drunkard, would convert anybody to china-tea in three minutes. Miss Viola Lyel, as the wife of Simon Slade (who, etc.) was splendid, and her song, "There's a serpent in the cup—dash it down!" was given with all the artistic perfection possible. The other members of the caste were equally good according to their opportunities.

Mr. Godfrey has been wise to include songs; the newspaper placards tell you that the world is not worth living in, the weather must be the remains of bad stock, there is a general reckoning after Christmas the morning after the night before as it were, and Mr. Godfrey has been wise to include songs. The play is withdrawn on January 31, and Freethinkers will thank the man with the big nose for telling them to see "Ten Nights in a Bar Room"; they will see that the world does move from the dominance of fear to the certainty of knowledge—for this story is the abstract and brief chronicle of a time that has gone never to return.

C-DE-B.

## Churches and Creeds.

It is frequently alleged by Christians that Christ founded a church. As a matter of fact he did nothing of the kind.

Jesus was a Jew, and remained a practising Jew till he died. He could not have imagined his mission was to found a church, since the Jews believed they had received their religion direct from Jehovah himself, and were his chosen, favourite people. Jesus believed that and merely criticized the priests of his day for doing what priests have always done, that is, for being far more careful of ceremonial than conduct.

How is it then that the Christians pay no attention to the particular worship which God is said in the Bible to have told the Jews was the form of worship that he desired?

The reason is priests have a mania for creeds and ceremonies. The Christian Church was an affair of slow growth, and Christians have never been able to agree upon the dogmas which are said to be necessary for salvation.

After Christ's death his followers were Jews with no idea of any religion apart from Judaism. They thought Jesus would come back again in some sort of glory because people in those days held quaint beliefs of that kind. The early Christians were simply Jews waiting for the Messiah to return, and if these early Christians could come to earth to-day they would not recognize any "church."

In the days of the early Christians, all the strange doctrines, which priests to-day say are essential to salvation, were unknown. Those followers of Jesus knew nothing whatever about the "Trinity," the "Virgin Birth," "Transubstantiation," the making of Mary into a goddess, the trampling on the commandment about the Sabbath (for Christians have ceased to regard the seventh day as the Sabbath: Sunday is the first day of the week).

How did these strange doctrines come to be the essentials of a creed, which Jesus himself would not have recognized?

Men must speculate and argue. The early Christians borrowed ideas and customs from other religions, argued about them, altered them, and generally evolved a set of beliefs that Mary the mother of Jesus could not have understood and Jesus would have scorned. Creeds have grown like constitutions. As we develop politically so we develop religiously. But as politics concern our life on earth we learn from experience: religion however deals with what is supposed to happen to us after death, and as experience knows nothing about that there has been great scope for argument and the smashing of heads.

We can follow the stages of the development of dogma as we can read the history of a nation's struggle for freedom. The creed has grown. Roman Catholics pretend to know all about Purgatory and Hell. It is all a matter of belief. Protestants don't believe in Purgatory: few of them believe in Hell.

Even the fervent Christians who say that belief is necessary to Salvation did not know what to believe till over three hundred years after Christ. It was in the year 325 A.D., that at Nicœa a meeting was held to settle the creed. It settled nothing of the sort, for persecution, torture and bloodshed have followed the drawing up of that creed. No other issue in the world's history has caused so much misery and unhappiness as a religious creed, which shows how wretchedly human it is.

W.H.W.

---

### "QUID RIDES."

Old Universe—when lovers of this tiny world  
With flowers have their love unfurled,  
And sworn with sighs to love e'er after—  
Claps both his thighs, and rocks with laughter.

E. HUGH COOPER.

## Acid Drops.

The *Sunday Chronicle* intends publishing a series of articles dealing with the Pope "as a human personality." We wonder as to how else it could deal with him? But we note the *Chronicle* is doing this on the principle that its readers are entitled to be informed on all subjects. We have come across other papers that have said the same thing, but we wonder when this informing zeal will take Freethought within its sweep? The *Sunday Chronicle* simply dare not publish a series of articles written from a Freethinking point of view and dealing with current religion. Its professions of liberality are sheer cant.

There is a good deal of the Christian spirit in a letter published in the *Manchester Evening News*, from "George Kirkham." He writes, "My ideal woman is religious . . . I may not say many prayers myself, yet I like to know that the children pray at their mother's knee." It seems that Mr. Kirkham regards woman as a useful and desirable kind of an animal, but one that must on no account be permitted the same freedom as man in either action or in mind. That is a real Christian attitude. We dare wager that George Kirkham had good Christian parents. They would naturally be proud of such a Christian son.

A young man was charged at Ashton, Lancs., with an aggravated assault on a woman. The young man's father said he was a keen student of the Bible, and when one copy was taken from him he secured another. We commend the case to the South London Coroner, Mr. Cowburn.

A weekly paper asks: "Are we becoming vulgar?" No thanks! Such a question might more fitly be addressed to the Salvation Army—whose motto is: "The way of vulgarity is the sure path to heaven."

The League of Nations is prepared to call an International Conference on Calendar Simplification as soon as public opinion in the principal countries warrants such a conference. We should say that intelligent public opinion in most countries favours simplification already. But, of course, the Churches may be concerned about whether Christian festival days are affected; in which case the reform had better be shelved for another fifty years.

The First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. A. W. Alexander, has been for many years a Baptist lay preacher. So a religious weekly tells the world. Mr. Alexander would seem to be just the man to explain to a congregation the exact meaning and implication of Christ's pacifist doctrine. He could point the moral with a few facts and figures regarding dreadnoughts, cruisers, and submarines, which the Christian nation of Britain builds for the purpose of breaking the Sixth Commandment.

Sir Esme Howard, an ambassador, exclaims: "What an extraordinary futile and stupid thing war is!" Also, what a curious thing it is that diplomats, public men, and parsons seem incapable of saying so when war is brewing or has started. In this reticence the hand of God can perhaps be discerned. When God decides to chastise, by means of war, a nation for its indifference and sinfulness, quite naturally he would inflict upon public speakers or writers a distaste for airing anti-war thoughts. We commend this notion to the *Christian Herald* kind of Christian.

The *Sunday Chronicle* publishes a not over intelligible article, explaining on the grounds of mass hypnotism the faithful vision of the Angels of Mons, which some of our readers may remember as one of the legends of the war. But its explanation simply does not fit the facts. The soldiers were not the first to mention the story of the angels saving the British Army by driving back the Germans. The story first appeared in a London evening paper, from the pen of Arthur Machen. He explained that he wrote the story as a mere phantasy, and had no intention that it should be taken as a statement of fact. But it was taken up by the Bishop of London, the Rev. Dr. Horton, and others, and they produced soldiers who said they saw it—some of whom had never been in France. What the *Sunday Chronicle* scientists—whom we suspect of being hack journalists disguised—have to explain, is the good healthy religious liars in London who would not accept Mr. Machen's statement that he invented the story, and why they stuck to the lie just so long as they could. The *Chronicle* just adds one more falsehood to the pile when it states that the army saw the vision. It is when we read things such as this, and the shameless way in which they are supported, that one realizes how very easy it was for so incredible a superstition as Christianity to establish itself.

Of a book, *Sex Teaching*, published by the National Sunday School Union, a Methodist reviewer says that it can be recommended to parents and teachers because it is "healthy, sane, and deeply religious." The book must be something of a curio—things deeply religious are rarely, if ever, healthy and sane.

The Rev. Tom Sykes, a Primitive Methodist, is to go to Australia to conduct a fifteen months' mission. Some few years ago, men were sent there "for their country's good." The custom has, it appears, not yet gone out of favour. We don't wish Australia any harm, and there are a hundred or so evangelists she can have as a gift, carriage paid, wrong side up, with care.

Southwark Cathedral is shabby. It needs a larger income to pay for repairs and to provide a dean. Maybe the congregation have been centering their thoughts too much on things spiritual, and not enough on things material, such as builders' contracts and the stipend of deans. Perhaps, just for a while, the Bishop had better leave off reminding the faithful that Jesus Christ "had nowhere to lay his head." It excites the wrong association of ideas for the Bishop's present needs.

The other Sunday was an occasion for a national day of prayer and intercession in regard to Disarmament. And the recording angels have been working overtime ever since, crediting each individual prayist with a nice kind thought.

The mole, we learn, lives on worms, mice, small reptiles, and frogs. If the mole has a religious instinct, he no doubt gives thanks to God for providing "daily bread." If the "daily bread" fails to appreciate the thoughtful arrangement, that is because its finite intelligence is unable to understand the far-seeing wisdom of a Creator. Again, priests and parsons live on the Christian community. But we Freethinkers, at least, can see the reason for that. It is to prevent Christians from hoarding up treasure on earth.

A Nonconformist writer says:—

The new attitude of science is surely also not to be undervalued. Religion and science are seen to be two ways of looking at the world, and that reconciliation which is so much needed seems near at hand.

It cannot be denied that religion and science are two ways of looking at the world. But religion gets its unique view by standing on its head. No science worthy of the name is ever likely to, or would want to, get reconciled to that. Our friend says reconciliation seems near at hand. There's much virtue in a "seems." And "near at hand" is an elastic term, which a Modernist Christian can stretch to cover fifty years or even a few centuries.

A reader of a weekly periodical has a bright idea for ending profiteering in food stuffs:—

Seek the aid of the Churches. Ministers of all denomination should be asked to preach sermons denouncing those who "devour widows' houses." Such a united condemnation would call people's attention to the scandal of high prices, and would put the fear of God into the hearts of those who benefit from them.

The churches are hardly likely to adopt this proposal. It would not do for them to needlessly give offence to many of their worthy well-to-do supporters.

A correspondent in the *New Leader* is concerned about the Papal Encyclical on education. He is disturbed to think that, if the Papal writ obtained in this country we should have to take our instructions from the Holy Office, and our children would be subject to compulsory Vaticanization. It is a matter of common knowledge that the Roman Catholic Church never does things by halves; an interesting study could be made of the greed and avarice of the collected forces entrenched at Rome, masquerading as the light of the world. Not all the atonement of a hundred masses will cancel its infamy in dominating the mind of man after the discovery that he could think.

As evidence of the backward state of intelligence of our clergy, we invite readers to contemplate the spectacle of the Rev. G. E. Milnes, of Haggerston taking part in the burning of the 1928 Prayer-Book. If a savage was hurt by a stone he used to kick it.

The Rev. Hugh Chapman, was "up" in the Saturday Pulpit of the *Daily News* for January 18. With the facility of a master he discourses in the usual theological style, but slithers, perhaps by accident into the following:—

Religion for the most part is hardly more than a side line to the objectively inclined, or a comfort at the last through the medium of a priest, often enough running to superstition.

He is in the position of the famous sportsman who shot at a pigeon and killed a crow. And that, we presume, all comes with trying not to say anything.

#### THE "MORAL UPLIFT" OF WAR.

In bayonet practice the men were ordered to make horrible grimaces and utter blood-curdling yells as they charged. The bayonet-fighting instructors' faces were permanently set in a ghastly grin. "Hurt him now. In at his belly! Tear his gut out," they would scream as the men charged the dummies "Now that upper swing at his privates with the butt. Ruin his chances for life. No more little Fritzes! Anyone would think that you loved the bloody swine, patting and stroking 'em like that! Bite him, I say! Stick your teeth in him and worry him! Eat his heart out!"

Form "Good-bye to All That," by Robert Graves, p. 295.

## The Abolition of The Blasphemy Laws.

### House of Commons Majority for the Second Reading.

THE Motion for the Second Reading of the Blasphemy Laws (Amendment) Bill came before the House of Commons on January 24, and after a lengthy discussion was carried by a vote of 131 to 77. The Bill was introduced by Mr. Thurtle in an able and temperate speech, and Mr. George Lansbury followed with a hearty support, while Mr. Clynes adopted what he evidently considered to be a judicial attitude, but which showed some confusion of mind on the whole subject, and ended with the expression of an opinion, which amounted to saying that he would agree with the abolition of the Common Law of Blasphemy provided it remained as it is. We see the promise of danger in the attitude taken up by Mr. Clynes, and any effort to wreck the Bill in the passing must be closely watched.

I will deal with the debate and the general question next week. Absence from London over the week-end prevents my doing so in this issue. Moreover, it is a subject that one does not want to discuss in a hurry, and it will not hurt for a week's delay.

When the article is written, and it will have to be a fairly lengthy one, I propose sending a copy of the paper to every member of the House of Commons. It will involve expense, but it will place in the hands of every member what may be called an official statement of the case.

It is the first time that a Bill for the abolition of the Statute and Common Law of Blasphemy has ever reached the stage of a Second Reading, and that marks a considerable change in the state of public opinion on the subject. To have accomplished this is a tribute to the persistent Freethinking propaganda that has been going on. How far the Bill goes, and whether it ever becomes law will largely depend upon the accidents of parliamentary life and on the amount of educational work Freethinkers are prepared to do in the constituencies. There is considerable confusion as to the nature and scope of the Blasphemy Laws amongst ordinary folk, and also among members of parliament, who sometimes deserve to be described as extraordinary folk. My own pamphlet *Blasphemy* will give all who desire it an outline of the whole position and the case for repeal; and the pamphlets containing a report of the deputations to Mr. Arthur Henderson, the previous Labour Home Secretary, and to Mr. Clynes, the present one, will provide plenty of ammunition. But now that the subject is before the public, there is an opportunity to do some very useful work. The partial victory gained should inspire Freethinkers to renewed efforts.

So far the Bill has had what is called a "good Press." We have not seen a single paper that has supported the laws, and most have been very outspoken in their dislike for them. The education carried on for years has had its effect on the journalistic world, and that education is not nearly finished. The *Telegraph*, *Daily Express*, *Manchester Guardian*, *Observer*, *Daily News*, *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, and many other papers have all spoken well of the Bill. Some are probably waiting to see which way the cat jumps. We shall be obliged if readers will send us copies of local papers that comment, or have commented, on the subject.

We will publish the Division List next week, so that readers may see how their members voted or abstained from voting. There is plenty of room for work among those whose votes were not recorded. A number of members whose names do not appear in the voting list took the precaution of pairing.

C.C.

## BLASPHEMY

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

The History and Nature of the Blasphemy Laws with a Statement of the Case for their Abolition.

Price Threepence, post free.

### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

TESTIMONIAL TO MR. CHAPMAN COHEN.—Received since close of Fund and to January 20, 1930, £7 15s.; T. M. Cameron, 10s. 6d.; Balance in hand, January 27, 1930, £8 5s. 6d.

F. HOBDAV.—We note the name of your member was among the "Noes."

C. FORBES.—Why not press for an opinion on the matter.

C. S. FRASER.—Please keep the papers when done with.

(Mrs.) K. WILLIAMS.—Pleased to welcome you and your husband as members of the N.S.S., but there should be no difficulty in getting the *Freethinker* through the ordinary channels. Only bigotry can be responsible for it.

J. MEERLOO.—Glad to see your protest in the local paper against the scandalous behaviour of the South London Coroner. It may prevent his behaving in so brutal a fashion in the future.

R. LEXLAND.—We do not think the omission of the name of one particular person from an article can reasonably be attributed to deliberate ill-will.

MAX COORLEIGH.—Thanks. Received.

E. H. COOPER.—Received and shall appear.

J. FINLAY & S. READY.—The article is certainly plainly spoken to appear in such a paper. We have not broken the boycott, but it is weakening. Freethinkers should act on the advice we have always given, fight the boycott, and it must weaken. As Ingersoll said of persecution, boycotting will cease when Freethinkers show they simply will not submit to it. While the fight is left to a few the work of the bigots is made comparatively easy.

"BLUE STOCKING."—We do not think the omission of the name of Weiss from the article by Mr. Palmer was anything more than an omission. That is a thing likely to occur in any ordinary article. Glad to welcome a new reader of the *Freethinker*, and one who is so pleased with it. Your having only recently become aware of the paper's existence should serve as a spur to our friends to make the paper better known.

F. HALL.—Sorry, but we cannot trace the article to which you refer. Could you give us an approximate date?

L. BAYLISS.—We hope to publish the list next week.

D.P.S.—Very pleased to know that you so greatly enjoyed your first visit to the Annual Dinner. We shall hope to see you there on future occasions. Everyone seemed agreed that for enthusiasm and general goodwill the 1930 Dinner easily took first place.

C. E. MAJOR (N.Z.).—Thanks for explanatory note. Such mistakes will occur to the most careful. They are the bane of an editor's life. So far as we are concerned there are three things that would go a long way towards making life comfortable—these are, an umbrella that would not get lost, a typewriter that would spell properly, and an article that could not help remaining true to copy.

H. T. WILKINS.—We are sorry, we are unable to trace the letters. We shall certainly return them so soon as we can place hands on them.

E. WATSON.—We would like to see every Freethinker and every lover of fair play protest against the bigotry of Sir John Reith and the religious policy of the B.B.C.

We have to thank all those who have sent us copies of letters from their representatives in Parliament concerning the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws.

E. BOTT.—It is a pity that prayers did prevent the occurrence of the St. Pancras slums. Prayers *plus* dynamite makes a rather powerful combination.

H. WHITE.—Letter will appear next week.

A. RADLEY.—Thanks for letter.

"NEW MEMBER."—We do not think that any discussion is needed in these columns to determine the meaning of the "Practical Objects." "To realize the self-government," and "The promotion of the right and duty of labour to organize itself for its moral and economic advancement; and its claim to legal protection in such combination." Their meaning is self-evident. They do not, as you appear to fear, involve adherence to any particular social or economic theory. That in a Freethought organization would be fatal.

A. B. Moss.—We should be quite ready if asked to supply any of the papers with a reasoned statement concerning the Blasphemy Laws, but we are not likely to receive such an invitation. Most of them would prefer a hack journalist to the Editor of the *Freethinker*.

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

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

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Mr R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

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.

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 made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."

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

The "*Freethinker*" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

## Sugar Plums.

To-day (February 2) Mr. Cohen will speak at the Stockport Labour Fellowship, Central Hall, Hillgate, on "The Savage in our Midst." The lecture will commence at 6.45. On Monday evening (February 3) he will speak in the King's Hall, Morley Street, Bradford, at 7.30, on "Things Christians Ought to Know." It is many years since Mr. Cohen lectured in Bradford, and the present is the first public meeting held by the new Bradford Branch of the National Secular Society. The following week-end (February 9) he pays a visit to Plymouth.

The Chester-le-Street Branch had two meetings on Sunday last with Mr. Cohen. Both were held in the new Miner's Welfare Hall, and were a great improvement on the other halls hitherto used, better lit and altogether more cheerful. Mr. Cohen had the pleasure of meeting a good many of his old Tyneside friends, and the lectures were listened to with evident interest. Mr. Brown took the chair in the afternoon, and Mr. Keast in the evening.

What an earlier generation would have called a good "forthright" letter pleading for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws appeared in the *Leamington Morning News* for January 24, from the pen of Mr. Malcolm McBean. It is a capital letter, strong, yet expressed with calm judgment, and we should say would do much good among those who read it.

The House of Commons debate on the second reading of the Bill covers forty pages. Those who would like to have a copy may get one for sixpence, or by post sevenpence. But we expect that the supply will be only of a limited nature, so orders should be sent along at once.

It may be taken as a case of "coming events cast their shadows before," that a few days before the Blasphemy Bill came before the House of Commons a similar Bill

was carried by an "overwhelming majority" in the local parliament at Brighton.

Will Freethinkers in the Finsbury Park district willing to co-operate in forming a local Branch of the N.S.S. communicate with Mr. C. B. Bush, 18 Mount View Road, Crouch Hill, London, N.4.

The Bradford Branch will hold a members meeting on Sunday evening, February 2, at 7 o'clock, in the Bradford Moor Council Schools, will all members please make a point of being present.

Will members of the West Ham Branch please note that in future Branch meetings will be held in the Labour Exchange, High Street, Stratford, near the Town Hall. On the first and third Friday evenings in each month, at 8 o'clock.

Mr. Rosetti informs us that members subscriptions to the N.S.S. are coming along very well, but that there are still a number to be renewed. Will these please note that all Annual Subscriptions are due on January 1, and that the financial accounts for the year close on March 31. Another thing to be noted is that the official subscription is a purely nominal one, and that the income of the Society, and consequently its work, is dependent upon members increasing their annual contribution to the extent of their resources and their interest.

## Dare We Face the Facts?

I HAVE lately come across two pamphlets on the Bible and Modern Thought, in which the author tries to deal with some (he probably thinks all) of the modern objections to God's Holy Word. I have been rather interested because he is a Christadelphian, and it was with one of the members of this sect I held my first debate. It was a memorable occasion for me, as I was rather a raw and ignorant young man, but certain that I held the truth. My opponent rather staggered me when he declared that not only did Adam and God speak pure Hebrew, but the conversation between Eve and the Serpent was also held in that delightful language. He was, however, unable to tell me how the Serpent ever learned the necessary grammar to converse with such grammatical purity, except by saying it must have been through the Grace of God—and I heartily agreed with him. In fact, I agree with him even to this day. It is obvious that anything can happen through the Grace of God. I am perfectly willing to believe in Divine Inspiration through the Grace of God. I can even go further. Not only will I believe that a Purpose (with a capital P) runs through the Bible—through God's own Grace, but I can see no reason to disbelieve in the martyred Servant of God called Joseph Smith and his Book of Mormon, or Mrs. Eddy or even Judge Rutherford. They all claim to be or were Christians through the Grace of God, and their proofs are just as heavenly as any of the proofs which makes the Bible His Revelation. The Jew proudly brings forward a collection of works called the Old Testament—they constitute his proofs. The Christian, if he is a Protestant, adds a few more as his proof, and if he is a Catholic, still some more as his. The disciples of Mrs. Eddy have another kind of work, to which they add (to date) 89,513,602 miraculous cures of all sorts of diseases and accidents as most clinching proof. Mrs. Blavatsky's followers point with pride to a work called *The Secret Doctrine*, which they tell us could never have been written by the great lady unaided; she had 33,566 genuine Mahatmas to help her, and as proof they produce also 836,598 letters, some of which, I understand, converted Mrs. Besant from crass Materialism to Holy Theosophy. I could go on, of course, but the reader will see how, granting God's Grace, any-

thing can happen, and I, even I, am ready to go the whole hog with the Christadelphian—if he shows me God's Grace. But that is where the snag comes in.

This sect rejects the Trinity, and even the natural immortality of the soul, except in the case of the righteous, and they also believe Jesus is coming again pretty soon. Altogether quite an interesting body of genuine believers, who seem to be as much in evidence now as in the palmiest days of the late Robert Roberts. Anyway, here are the two pamphlets, both by Mr. W. Islip Collyer, and he claims we dare not face the facts. Let us see.

First of all I am willing to admit that Mr. Collyer writes very plausibly at the commencement, and that he (like all his sect) knows the Bible, but alas, he simply can't keep it up. Before you know where you are, he is ramming Prophecy down your throat, and he is right back in the '40's of last century, floundering with Dr. Thomas and those dreadful works which I must confess I have not had the courage to tackle, *Elpis Israel*, *Eureka* and other tortuous expositions of the ravings of the Prophets. Personally I have often thought it would not be difficult to see God's Divine Purpose in *Pickwick* if one used the same lynx-eye for prophecy that Dr. Thomas, Mr. Roberts or Mr. Collyer shows when reading the Bible.

The famous Chapter 53 from Isaiah is constantly quoted as are other prophets, to show that God meant Jesus to come in the future, and I read with amusement, and no longer with amazement, that there are people still living who can't see that the picture of Jesus in the Gospels was written up from the aspirations and hopes of the coming Jewish Messiah, so graphically described by the Jewish writers in the Old Testament. Not that the Gospel writers could make the "prophecies" always fit in. In fact, very often there are ridiculous "contradictions" between the prophecy and the prophesied, which have almost broken the hearts of Christian apologists, and have occasioned no fewer than 98,343 works purporting to prove there are no contradictions in the Holy Book. Mr. Collyer dismisses them with contempt. How can you get over the "Messiah the Prince" prophecy, he asks laboriously covering many pages to show you what a genuine prophet Daniel was. After reading them, I have come to the conclusion that he thinks Daniel is just as much a stumbling block for the blatant unbeliever as ever Jesus was to the Jews. And here I must interject a remark. When I was young I was always told the Jews rejected Jesus because he came lowly and despised and poor. They were expecting a royal Prince and so sorely disappointed them. But Mr. Collyer takes immense pains to show that Jesus was not merely the Messiah but a live Prince, and drags in Dr. Pusey to show us that this was "a distinctive title indicating an anointed prince of outstanding importance." I should think so. The Jews simply could not bear a carpenter—a worker (or non-worker) as a Messiah. He had to be a Royal Prince; hence you get two contradictory genealogies beautifully manufactured to boost up his right Royal pedigree, both of which, it need hardly be repeated contradict a somewhat similar genealogy in God's older divine work. "The word Prince," says Mr. Collyer, "is also distinctive." Ah, how true!

Now "Messiah the Prince" comes from our A.V., for with that perversity which so upsets genuine believers like Mr. Collyer, the R.V. gives, "the anointed one, the prince" (not even capitals!) and in the margin, "an anointed one, a prince" as well. Funny how a paltry little article makes a difference, doesn't it? Mr. Collyer also insists that a prophetic "week" means a "year," and as Daniel ix.

25 tells us "Messiah the Prince" will come after "seven weeks and three score and two weeks," after the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, and Jesus did come, how is a poor benighted heathen like myself going to get over it? At least Mr. Collyer says that "The period leads to the time when Jesus came on the scene." Now I have an insatiable curiosity in these matters, so I thought I would look it up and see what the dates do say. The decree by Cyrus for rebuilding the temple and the restoration of the Jews to their own country, was given in the year 536 B.C., according to that terribly orthodox person, Dr. Joseph Angus, and confirmed both by Dr. S. Green and the Religious Tract Society. Take 483 from 536 and you get 53, and if Jesus was born 4 B.C., the reckoning given in prophecy by God's own Grace is actually 49 years out! And we are told we dare not face the facts! Exit Daniel!

Another fact we shrink from is how can we account for the dispersion of the Jews, which was prophesied in Deuteronomy? This text (or texts, for there are two) is a favourite one among converted Jews. The Rev. Isaac Rosenstienbloom, having found Jesus, invariably hurls them at his unlucky but unconvertable brethren's heads whenever he gets the opportunity. So once again I hid me to my well-thumbed Bible, to see what the texts were exactly. Here they are (R.V.) "And the Lord shall scatter you among the peoples and ye shall be left few in number among the nations, whither the Lord shall lead you away, and there ye shall serve gods, the work of man's hands, wood and stone . . ."

"And the Lord shall scatter thee among all peoples, from one end of the earth, even to the other end of the earth; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which thou has not known, thou nor thy fathers, even wood and stone."

Now, would you believe it? Mr. Collyer and in fact all Christians who hand over these texts to show the Divine Purpose running through God's Ownest Word, invariably miss out the second half—the dear little bit about the other gods. The Jews are now dispersed, of course, but they ought to be worshipping wooden or stone gods and they don't. Why? Why, simply because these texts have long ago been given up by sensible people. They were written after the Jewish race (whoever they were) had been taken into captivity, after the destruction of the first temple when they probably did worship Babylonian gods, and were not brought back to Monotheism till after the time of Ezra. To apply them now is not merely nonsense; it shows to what desperate straits believers are driven when they have to defend silly and stupid arguments from "prophecy." Mr. Collyer obviously believes Deuteronomy was written by Moses in pure Hebrew, square characters and the Massoretic vowels—his capacity for belief is really extraordinary.

Another fact we dare not face is the fact of "miracles." Supposing, he says, that wireless, the aeroplane, the gramophone, and other modern wonders were described in the Bible, in Biblical language, could one not almost hear "the derisive laughter of such men as Voltaire"? Would they not be looked upon as absurd? Why, of course—and what then? The very essence of the Biblical miracle is—not something wonderful—but something supernatural, and if Mr. Collyer's analogy holds good, then God's own special miracles were just ordinary events in human progress, which obviously they were not. But there is one more consideration. Wireless, the gramophone and other marvels did not just spring up in a moment. Behind them lie a long series of discoveries, marvellous inventions due to man's deliberate searching into the forces of the Universe. These inventions were not possible without iron and coal, without long and

arduous reasearches into gases, without training in science, without, in short, a high and complex civilization as understood in these days. What training did Joshua have to be able to stop the sun? or Jonah and his adventure with the whale? or Jesus stopping a storm, voyaging with the devil or cursing a fig tree? What did these Bible heroes have behind them in invention or discovery? Ah, they had God's Grace!

If I had time or space, I could give a hundred unfulfilled prophecies to show how God's Word utterly failed, but there is no need these days. The Bible—as God's Revelation to Man—is given up even by the most orthodox. Its value simply lies in its literary qualities, and in nothing else.

Finally, may I point out to Mr. Collyer how much more important, how much more holy, how much more wonderful is this life here and now on this old earth of ours? It lies with us to help to make it a joy, a time of happiness, and we can only do this by attending to our duties to one another and to ourselves. We call this Secularism, and we turn our backs on the nightmare of prophecies, of miracles and of God's one purpose, yea, even His Grace. And as for myself, I insist upon one world at a time. This is the only world I know anything about, and the only world that interests me. I am a Secularist.

H. CUTNER.

## Revelations from the Spiritual Realm.

THE revelations of the departed to the living have played an outstanding part in the religions of all races of lowly culture. Nor are these phenomena restricted to peoples poorly advanced in civilization. In fact, the fancies that animate the brain during sleep are commonly ascribed in all stages of evolution to supernatural agency.

Among cultured races in the past, the wise men were pre-eminently the diviners of dreams, and their successful or plausible interpretations proved a royal road to court favour. The legends of Joseph and Daniel in the Hebrew Scriptures amply illustrate this truth. In the palmy days of ancient Egyptian sovereignty, it was customary to slumber in the fanes of oracular deities to enable the inquirer to divine by visions his own, or his nation's fate. The average dweller on the banks of the Nile favoured his personal interpretation, but the professional diviners, mostly of the priestly caste, were in wide request, and their calling became exalted in the eyes of the people.

In contemporary Egypt, the reigning Moslem creed is pervaded with an unfaltering faith in human intercourse with the shadow-land in sleep. In his *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, Lane notes that a leading Moslem scholar at Cairo attached much more importance to messages from the unseen world communicated in a dream to one of his own students, than to the results of his historical investigations; and he excused this irrational attitude by citing the popular tradition that the Prophet of Islam had said, "Whoso seeth me in his sleep, seeth me truly; for Satan cannot assume the similitude of my form."

The idea underlying this curious delusion seems to be that during slumber the soul leaves the body, and while on its travels communes with the dead, either in their earthly haunts, or in the permanent habitation of the spirits. Kindred beliefs have been, and for that matter are still prevalent in China, Italy, Greece, North-Western Europe, and elsewhere. In savage Africa this primitive spiritualism is practically ubiquitous. And the ancient Bantu custom of fasting till set of sun, and then gorging a solid meal, is doubt-

less conducive to vivid and disturbing dreams. As many Europeans are only too well aware, a heavy and ill-digested supper is apt to induce the terrors of nightmare. But while we may trace our bad dreams to indigestion, the untutored savage and barbarian attribute vivid and painful visionary experiences to the agency of ghostly powers. And the confusion of thought thus generated becomes more confounded when the natives narrating their dreams to their companions over the hearth-fire speculate in savage fashion concerning the inward and spiritual significance of their visions. Wilson, who laboured as a missionary for eighteen years in Africa, when speaking of the West Coast tribes, tells us in his *Western Africa* that: "All their dreams are construed into visits from the spirits of their deceased friends. The cautions, hints, and warnings are received with the most serious and deferential attention, and are always acted upon in their waking hours. The habit of relating their dreams, which is universal, greatly promotes the habit of dreaming itself, and hence their sleeping hours are characterized by almost as much intercourse with the dead as their waking are with the living. This is, no doubt, one of the reasons of their excessive superstitiousness. Their imaginations become so lively that they can scarcely distinguish between their dreams and their waking thoughts, between the real and the ideal."

The Book of Job, a work in many respects philosophical in tone, provides evidence of the belief in dream communication with the spirit world. In his homily to Job, Elihu insists that God appears, "In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed.

"Then he opens the ears of men, and scaleth their instruction." (Job xxxiii. 15, 16.)

Again, after the deception of Abimelech by Abraham and Sarah, Jahveh enlightened him in a dream as to the true state of affairs. For we read in Genesis xx. 2 and 3: "And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, she is my sister: and Abimelech, King of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman thou hast taken, for she is a man's wife."

Moreover, the mean and unscrupulous Jacob was the recipient of the Lord's will in the visions of the night. In the dream at Bethel, Jahveh's promise of world dominion to the Israelites was given: "And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis xxviii. 14.) And it was as directed by the angel of the Lord in a dream, that Jacob stole away in the silence of the night, taking with him the cattle, while Rachel, his wife, seized the occasion to steal her father's household gods. When Laban overtook the fugitives he reproached Jacob for his treachery, but sought for his gods in vain. For Rachel subjected the graven images to the indignity of sitting on them. After searching through the tent in his hopeless quest, his dutiful daughter said to Laban: "Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up before thee; for the custom of women is upon me. And he searched but found not the images." (Genesis xxxi. 35.)

In the career of Joseph of the coat of many colours, visions play a leading part. The favouritism shown by his father towards Joseph, and the latter's proud parade of his visionary accomplishments, aroused envy and hatred in his brothers' breasts. After meditating murder, they ultimately sold him to wandering Midianite merchants for twenty pieces of silver. His subsequent enslavement in Potiphar's house, leads in the legend to his successful interpretation of Pharaoh's

servants' dreams, and later to those of the monarch himself.

In the story of Gideon and the Midianites, Gideon was encouraged to give battle by the favourable interpretation of a dream. The Midianites and their allies "lay along the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seaside for multitude." Yet a man's dream emboldened Gideon to urge his company of three hundred men upon this mighty host of enemies. And according to this truthful story, "all the host ran, and cried, and fled." (Judges vii. 12, 21.)

Divination by dreams is also recorded in the New Testament, where a vision induces Joseph to espouse a pregnant woman. For, according to Matthew, Mary, the mother of Jesus, was discovered by Joseph to be already with child. "Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not being willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily."

"But while he thought on these things behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." (Matthew i. 19, 20.)

"And Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

"And knew her not until she had brought forth her first-born son; and he called his name Jesus." (Matthew i. 24, 25.)

Star-conjuration and dreams, both figure in the story of the miraculous birth and subsequent flight into Egypt. The Wise Men of the East commissioned by Herod to seek out the birth-place of the new-born king were warned in a dream not to return to Herod's court. So, after making their obeisance to the infant Saviour, they departed to their far-off country. Thus was Herod mocked, and the angel of God now appeared in a dream to Joseph and commanded him to "Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word; for King Herod will seek the young child to destroy him." (Matthew ii. 13.)

Pilate's wife, again, was inspired by a vision to implore her lord to pardon the persecuted Jesus. For when the Governor of Judea was seated in the judgment hall at the trial of Jesus, "his wife sent unto him saying, 'Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.'" (Matthew xxvii. 19.)

For untold ages the dream-cult appears to have been almost universal. One of the earliest of the moderns who propounded rational explanations of dream phenomena was the alchemist Paracelsus (1493-1551). His views represented a compromise between the present and the past, inasmuch that he traced dreams to physical causes, mental influences, and astral and spiritual agencies.

It was not until the opening years of the nineteenth century that truly scientific conceptions were advanced. In his *Theory of Dreams*, Gray, in 1808, first defined the dream as "the work of the mind, sketches of the fancy, deriving its materials from experience." The more recent researches of Freud and Jung in the realm of psycho-analysis have already yielded fruitful results; but, whatever the final outcome, scientific Materialism alone seems likely to solve the various obscure problems presented in the activities of the brain and nervous system.

T. F. PALMER.

## Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

### CORNWALL AND ITS PRE-HISTORIC MONUMENTS.

SIR,—I have perused Mr. A. R. Thornevell's paper on "Pre-History in Cornwall" with much interest. The two points queried are the identification of the Duchy with the Cassiterides of antiquity, and the Perry theory of the origin of the megalithic monuments.

Cassiterides is first mentioned by Herodotus, and is shown in Ptolemy's map in the neighbourhood of North-Western Spain. It was afterwards identified with Cornwall, although Rhys and Reinach regard Cassiterides as the British Isles themselves.

In the new edition of the *Britannica*, the statement occurs, that "The tin of Cornwall has been known and worked since the Bronze Age." Now, as copper and tin form the alloy bronze, it is presumable that all the then known tin-mines were called into requisition. As Dr. G. G. MacCurdy cogently remarks in his important work *Human Origins*, Vol ii. p. 208, 1924: "Tin, without which there could have been no Bronze Age occurs in nature in only a comparatively few localities. Yet its dissemination in foundry sites all over Europe not long after the discovery of its value is a well established fact. There is ample evidence of a considerable traffic in copper ingots in countries bordering on the Mediterranean. Other highly localized products, such as amber and turquoise found their way into various parts of Europe even during the Neolithic Period, so that by the beginning of the Bronze Age Europe was already a unity, industrially speaking." I still think that, "The rich mineral mines of Cornwall have been worked from pre-historic times onwards. Probably the county is synonymous with the ancient Cassiterides of the Greeks and Phœnicians" are statements not entirely unwarranted.

If Mr. Thornevell will re-peruse my references to the origin of the stone monuments he will discover that each suggestion is carefully qualified. Moreover, I am not only aware, but clearly state that various settlers contributed to their erection. But not one word will be found supporting the hypothesis of an Egyptian genesis of civilization. On the other hand, the distribution of megalithic monuments strongly suggests the presence of voyagers from distant lands.

There is much to be said in support of the views advanced by Prof. Elliot Smith, Dr. W. J. Perry, and the late Dr. Rivers, and I venture to think they are entitled to an unprejudiced hearing. Many of their subsidiary hypotheses are to me, purely provisional. Still, their several writings are well worth study, and Perry's interesting volume *The Growth of Civilisation* is to be recommended as an excellent introduction to all who are curious concerning novel theories relating to the progress of the race.

It is deeply gratifying to note that Mr. Thornevell kindly credits me with some slight acquaintance with the theme under discussion. And I greatly sympathize with his attitude towards the vagaries of the publishers of the Victoria County Histories. Fortunately for me, all the numerous works he mentions, and many others, are easily accessible in the British Museum, Dr. Williams' Library, and other famous repositories of learning.

T. F. PALMER.

### AUTHORITY AND OPINION.

SIR,—Mr. Kerr holds that teaching hell-fire to children ought to be suppressed. You, in turn, have pointed out the futility of all intolerance in matters of opinion.

I can now imagine Mr. Kerr agreeing with all you have said, yet feeling that he must still advocate the suppression of a foul doctrine; for what other way is there, he will ask, of protecting children from acute mental misery?

The better way will perhaps become clear to Mr. Kerr when he realizes that he began his argument by mistaking the nature of the crime committed against the child, and also by wrongly identifying the criminal in

the case! It is not a crime merely to teach children about hell, and the parent who does so cannot be called a criminal. *The crime consists solely in the suppression of the sceptical view of the matter, and the criminals are all who connive at such suppression.*

Serious mental cruelty to the child only arises when no alternative is presented to its mind. Then, I agree with Mr. Kerr, the position is damnable. But give a child a generally sound secular education, and no more than a mild mental discomfort can result from priestly and parental hell-fire lessons.

The Churches who use their power to suppress freedom in the schools; the teachers who toady to them; and the politicians who put one brand of religion into State schools and give grants for teaching other brands in Church schools: these are the criminals. Here is a clear case for suppression in which you and Mr. Kerr will doubtless express cordial agreement; namely the suppression, not of any opinion or teaching, but of the intolerable misuse of power and privilege that is preventing the nation's children from getting the best out of their educational opportunities.

P. VICTOR MORRIS.

### Obituary.

MR. JOHN LAIDLER.

It is my painful duty to record the loss of a personal friend and valued comrade in Mr. John Laidler, who died at Heaton, Newcastle, on January 15, aged sixty-nine years, after a seizure of paralysis. In early manhood the deceased became an ardent adherent and advocate of social and political reforms. Joining the Newcastle Branch of the National Secular Society in 1881, he remained an active worker until 1889. After which he threw the whole of his spare time energies into the Social Democratic Federation, the Trade Union Movement, and later the Labour Party. Rejoining the Newcastle Branch of the N.S.S. in 1927, his regular attendance at meetings and keen interest in the movement younger members might well emulate. His early advocacy of Socialism often brought him more gibes than smiles, and on one occasion at least he and some of his friends had to appear at the police court over their defensive action at an outdoor meeting, where sticks were used instead of arguments. Sympathy with land reform brought him in contact with Thos. Ainge Devyer, an Irish land reformer, and author of *The Odd Book*, or *Chivalry in Modern Days*. Devyer having come to Tyneside posing as a Chartist, was regarded by the police as a Fenian organizer and was kept under close observation. Occasional attendances at Devyer's meetings brought police suspicion on Laidler, and he too was watched for some time by detectives from leaving home in the morning until his return again at night. In November, 1889, an interesting incident occurred which brought John Laidler, bricklayer, into wide prominence, as one of a deputation of members of the Newcastle Labour Electoral Organization, who waited upon Mr. John Morley, M.P., who was at that time Member for Newcastle. It was desired to ascertain his opinions on certain political and social topics. Laidler being intrusted with the question of the nationalization of the land, quoted a statement from the ninth chapter of *Social Statics*, by Mr. Herbert Spencer, in support of the ideas that land had been made private property by force and fraud, and should be appropriated by the community for the benefit of all. The *Times* of November 5 contained a report of this interview. This report caused Mr. Spencer to repudiate the statement, which caused a lengthy discussion, in which Professor Huxley and several prominent writers took part. The discussion and Mr. Spencer's attitude, together with Mr. Laidler's reply, is dealt with at great length by Henry George, the American Land Nationalizer in his book, *The Perplexed Philosopher*, in which he vindicates Mr. Laidler, and holds Mr. Spencer up to scorn, and proves that Mr. Spencer never, as stated, withdrew the book containing the statement from circulation. The whole story is most interesting, when we remember that

an uneducated bricklayer who went to work at nine years of age, should be the cause of a philosopher like Herbert Spencer to repudiate his own statements. Mr. Laidler and other two workmen were elected to the Newcastle School Board in 1892, where they served until the schools were taken over by the City Council. Being keenly interested in gardening and an omnivorous reader, he lived a studious and strenuous life, and died as he lived an ardent Secularist, leaving a widow to mourn his loss. To her we extend our deep sympathy.

J. J. BARTRAM.

### Society News.

DESPITE the unfavourable condition of the weather, there was a full attendance at the Conway Hall to hear Mr. Robert Arch on "The Creed of a Sceptic."

The Lecturer outlined the position of the average materialist and the materialism as defined by Mr. Chapman Cohen, with whom the speaker is more or less in agreement, and does not see things from the same view point as Mr. Joseph McCabe.

Many questions were asked and answered, and there was also a great deal of discussion, at times, heated. But on the whole, very interesting—both the speaker, as well as the audience, were perfectly pleased.

A unanimous vote of thanks was accorded to the lecturer. There was also a good sale of literature, and a number of new members enrolled.—B.A.L.E.M.

### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.5, by the FIRST POST ON TUESDAY, or they will not be inserted.

#### LONDON.

##### INDOOR.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (The Orange Tree, Euston Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Debate—"Should the Secular Society be Political?" *Affir.*: Mr. C. Keeling; *Neg.*: Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (361 Brixton Road, near Gresham Road): 7.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin—"The B.V.M." (lantern lecture).

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (The Orange Tree, Euston Road, N.W.1): Thursday, February 13, at 101 Tottenham Court Road, W.1, Social and Dance, 7.30 to 11.30. Admission 1s.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, John A. Hobson, M.A.—"How Much Should I Love My Neighbour?"

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7.0, Mr. Howell-Smith—"The Human Soul."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square entrance Theobald's Road): 7.30, Mr. A. H. Hyatt—"The Pickwick Trial and Other Recitations."

##### OUTDOOR.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.30, Messrs. Charles Tuson and James Hart; 3.15, Messrs. E. Betts and C. E. Wood. Freethought meetings every Wednesday, at 7.30, Messrs. C. Tuson and J. Hart; every Friday, at 7.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. The *Freethinker* may be obtained during our meetings outside the Park Gates, Bayswater Road.

#### COUNTRY.

##### INDOOR.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street): 7.30, Mr. J. A. Brewin (Manchester)—"The Nature and Evolution of Thought."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Amy Capenerhurst—"An Evening With Mendelssohn."

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, A Door, City Hall, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. J. P. White will speak on "The Community and the Banks."

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Socialist Club, Arcade, Pilgrim Street): Members Annual Meeting, at 3.0.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Schools): 7.0, Miss Stella Browne—"The New Code of Ethics."

Miscellaneous Advertisements.

UNWANTED CHILDREN

In a Civilized Community there should be no UNWANTED Children.

For an Illustrated Descriptive List (68 pages) of Birth Control Requisites and Books, send a 1½d. stamp to:—

J. R. HOLMES, East Hanney, Wantage, Berks. (Established nearly Forty Years.)

CHEST DISEASES

“Umckaloabo acts as regards Tuberculosis as a real specific.”

Dr. Sechehaye in the “Swiss Medical Review.” “It appears to me to have a specific destructive influence on the Tubercle Bacilli in the same way that Quinine has upon Malaria.”

(Dr. Grun in the King’s Bench Division.)

If you are suffering from any disease of the chest or lungs—spasmodic or cardiac asthma excluded—ask your doctor about Umckaloabo, or send a post card for particulars of it to Chas. H. Stevens, 204-206, Worple Road, Wimbledon, London, S.W.20, who post same to you Free of Charge.

Readers, especially T.Bs., will see in the above few lines more wonderful news than is to be found in many volumes on the same subject.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY. WEST LONDON BRANCH.

Every SUNDAY EVENING at 7.30 in the CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, entrance Theobald’s Road.

On Sunday Evening Mr. A. H. HYATT will Lecture on

“The Pickwick Trial, and other Recitations.”

ADMISSION FREE

A few Reserved Seats at 1/-. Doors Open at 7 QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION.

The Bible and Prohibition.

BIBLE AND BEER

By G. W. FOOTE.

A careful examination of the Relations of the Bible and Christian leaders to the Drink Question.

Price - Twopence. Postage ½d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

A Book every Freethinker should have—

BUDDHA The Atheist

By “UPASAKA”

(Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.)

Price ONE SHILLING. Postage 1d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

National Secular Society.

President:

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Secretary:

MR. R. H. ROSETTI, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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.

The Funds of the National Secular Society are legally secured by Trust Deed. The trustees are the President, Treasurer and Secretary of the Society, with two others appointed by the Executive. There is thus the fullest possible guarantee for the proper expenditure of whatever funds the Society has at its disposal.

The following is a quite sufficient form for anyone who desires to benefit the Society by legacy:—

I hereby give and bequeath (Here insert particulars of legacy), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society.

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.

The Case for Secular Education

(Issued by the Secular Education League)

PRICE SEVENPENCE

Postage 1d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

JUST PUBLISHED.

**SHAKESPEARE**

... and other ...

**Literary Essays**

BY

**G. W. FOOTE***(Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.)*Portrait  
of the  
Author.Preface  
by  
Chapman  
Cohen.

## CONTENTS—

Shakespeare the Man—The Humanism of Shakespeare in the "Merchant of Venice"—Shakespeare and His Will—Bacon and Shakespeare—Shakespeare and the Bible—Shakespeare and Jesus Christ—The Emerson Centenary—Kate Greenaway—Two Graves at Rome—Shelley and Rome—Tolstoi and Christian Marriage—The Real Robert Burns—George Meredith: Freethinker, etc.

*THIS volume contains some of G. W. Foote's finest writings, and shows the famous Freethought fighter from an angle that will appeal to many who did not follow him in his criticisms of current religious belief. — G. W. Foote had his thousands of admirers in all parts of the world, and this work will be welcomed by all as a memorial of one of the finest writers that ever gave himself to the Freethought Cause.*

**PRICE - 3s. 6d.****Postage 3d.**

THE PIONEER PRESS (G. W. FOOTE &amp; Co., LTD.) 61 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

**DETERMINISM OR  
FREE-WILL?**

An Exposition of the Subject in the Light of the  
Doctrines of Evolution.

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

Half-Cloth, 2/6.      3      3      3      Postage 2½d.

SECOND EDITION.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.

**FOUR LECTURES on  
FREETHOUGHT and LIFE**

By Chapman Cohen.

*(Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.)*

Four Lectures delivered in the Secular Hall, Leicester,  
on November 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th, 1928.

Contains lectures on: The Meaning and Value of  
Freethought; Freethought and God Freethought  
and Death; Freethought and Morals.

**Price - One Shilling. Postage 1½d.**

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.

**Christianity & Civilization**

A Chapter from "The History of the Intellectual  
Development of Europe."

By Prof. J. W. DRAPER.

Price - TWOPENCE. Postage ½d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.

Special Reduction.**PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY**

POET AND PIONEER

By HENRY S. SALT.

Published at 3s. 6d. Price 1s. 9d.  
Postage 3d.

**The Other Side of Death**

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

Paper Covers - - - TWO SHILLINGS  
Postage 1½d.

Cloth Bound THREE SHILLINGS & SIXPENCE  
Postage 2d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.