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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>More About Russia.—The Editor</i> - - - -	193
<i>History and Hysteria.—Mimmermus</i> - - - -	195
<i>Cults of the Woodlands and the Groves.—T. F. Palmer</i>	196
<i>“Androcles and the Lion.—Arthur B. Moss</i> - - - -	197
<i>Blasphemy.—P.V.M.</i> - - - - -	198
<i>Our Glorious Press and the Newsagents.—C. Cohen</i> - - - -	202
<i>A Forgotten Chapter in Biography.—H. Cutner</i> - - - -	203
<i>Book Chat</i> - - - - -	204
<i>Antiquarianism.—Andrew Millar</i> - - - - -	205

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

Views and Opinions.

(Continued from page 179.)

More About Russia.

ONE thing has to be borne constantly in mind if one wishes to understand the position in Russia, either in connexion with the question of religion or anything else. Russia is seeking to establish a system of Communism. That is its avowed end, but it is not yet in being. Russia is governed by a dictatorship which is engaged in the intensive development of a generation of Communists, who shall be such because they can think of no other system save in terms of repulsion. Any examinations to be of use, must be governed by this consideration. This dictatorship is strong and searching. Whatever stands in its way suffers. In this it makes no distinction, whether priest or layman, friend or stranger, it appears to take into no consideration whatever. It has a greater sense of justice here than has Mussolini—who is trying to do in Italy what Bolshevism is trying to do in Russia, that is, accomplish the almost impossible feat of developing a generation that shall be dominated by one idea. But it must be said that as dictatorships go, it is the least self-seeking the world has seen. The iron rule it imposes on others it submits to itself. The stories of the leaders living lives of unbridled luxury, and their wives weighed down with festoons of Crown jewels, have gone the way of the lie about the government decreeing all women to be common property. Dreisser found the leaders living in simple hotel rooms, or in simply furnished rooms in the Kremlin. Stalin and the other leaders draw a salary of about five or six pounds per week. The rooms—two—in which Lenin lived are kept exactly as he left them. When Trotsky left Russia, he left it without a penny. Mr. Ashmead Bartlett also bore the same testimony in the *Daily Telegraph*. How many of our own Parliamentarians would act in a similar way? I do not agree with the Bolshevik

ideal, and I think it is certain to fail, but that need not prevent our being just—unless one is a very orthodox Christian, or is interested in the *Morning Post*.

\* \* \*

The Ground of Offence.

But it is not the repressive nature of the Russian Government which has caused the loud agitation in this country, or has inspired the demand of an Essex Vicar, cited by the *Manchester Guardian*, that Russia should be invaded, because “once the armies of the Lord had got inside the country the whole population would hail them as saviours,” or Mr. Shaw Desmond’s foolish *Sunday Express* prophecy that the Pope would raise his “soft white hand” and lead a holy crusade against Russia. The great offence, the unforgivable crime is that for the first time here is a country which has deliberately set itself to create a generation of Atheists. Hitherto every country, no matter how brutal the government, no matter how tyrannical the rule has always preached religion to its subjects, and the worse the Government the more regard it paid to religion. It is the religious motive that is appealed to right through. “Public opinion,” said the *Morning Post*, “must be marshalled against godlessness.” It called upon the clergy to support a “national protest against godlessness,” and the protest movement was avowedly organized to raise “a national protest against relations with the enemies of the Christian faith.” “Cruelties and massacres,” said “Jix” the impossible, are “incidental” to the larger issue—“They are trying to stamp out the name of God from Russia.” “Soviet Russia is the avowed and implacable enemy of the Christian faith.” The writer of a special article in the *Times*, for March 15, complains that “The Russian authorities are not trying to destroy one faith in the interests of another, but to root out religion altogether.” It is this which is unprecedented and unforgivable. This was the feature stressed by the Archbishop of Canterbury as an explanation of his own attitude. The *Morning Post* carefully explains in a leading article, that, “It is not the political, but the religious side of this question we have raised.” (December 7, 1929.) The Chaplain of the Savoy, H. B. Chapman, suggested (*Morning Post*, December 9), that when the Soviet Ambassador reaches England “he should be received by an immense body of the Salvation Army singing hymns, so as to show on which side England stands.” Rev. W. E. Woodhams-Denham says, “God will visit with stern and swift judgment those who dare make friends with those who are endeavouring to destroy all religion.” (December 9.) The Archbishop of Armagh writes to the *Morning Post* (December 12), “I am most heartily with you in the protest against official relations with a bitterly anti-Christian Government.” Lady Houston sends a cheque for £1,000 to the Protest Movement, hoping

that "all those with the love of God in their hearts, like the Crusaders of old, will . . . vow and declare that these vile and blasphemous Russians who represent the Soviet Government shall never be permitted to pollute the air of England breathed by the Faithful in the Lord." The *Morning Post* for March 9 published a special article, which describes the "terrible manner" of the Soviet's "anti-religious campaign." The story comes from an "eye-witness"; but it contains nothing about persecution, and the "terrible" proceedings turn out to be a travelling railway carriage fitted out with literature and anti-religious pictures, accompanied by young lecturers, one of whom lectured the youthful audience.

The "Origin of Species" was the theme, and Darwin's name, together with a number of strange sounding foreign words, used in a most weird and unexpected way, were thrown at the audience.

The audience, young and old, are represented as listening quietly, but instead of persecution some of the older ones are reported as arguing with the propagandists, some cursing them. Now if this had been a travelling van loaded with Bibles, with preachers lecturing the people, there would have been nothing wrong about it—even though the local police had ordered everybody to attend. As a final proof of the "persecution" to which Christians are subjected the *Morning Post* of March 18 points out that in view of the Christian Easter and the Jewish Passover occurring about the same time, the Union of the Godless (the unofficial Atheistic Society of Russia) has sent out instructions to its Branches to start an anti-Easter campaign, including demonstrations and processions. A similar movement in the interest of religion would have been hailed as something deserving the highest praise.

One could fill pages with similar evidence, but when one weighs up the samples collected, and caps them with the proof that the fact of Atheistical Societies indulging in lectures to the young, and active demonstrations against religion, are counted as part of the persecution to which the Church is subjected, and offer good ground for the world starting a crusade against the once "Holy Russia," we need not look much farther for the motive underlying the "crusade." If one cares to do so I would suggest a careful scrutiny of those who lead the campaign.

Finally, in its issue for March 25, the *Morning Post* points out that the growth of the Russian Atheist Societies, from 87,000 in 1926, to 2,000,000 in 1930, is "ample justification" for the *Morning Post* opening its campaign "against religious persecution in Russia."

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#### A New Martyrology.

It would, of course, have been impossible to have run a "Crusade" on the plain ground of resisting an attack on religion. It is hard enough for the Churches to do this with relation to an attack on religion in this country, it would certainly have been useless connected with a country so far away as Russia. So another plan had to be adopted. Persecution is a good word. It may mean anything from massacre to the abolition of almost criminal privileges. But here the "atrociteers" were helped by the fact that Russia is passing through a revolutionary period, and for several years it was fighting against the armies of the deposed Czarist regime, subsidized by outside powers, and much blood was shed on both sides. A further favourable circumstance is that the Government is a Dictatorship with a rule as hard, and as severe with opposition as that of the existing Government of Italy. In these circumstances, a Church deprived of its enormous revenues, its

power to enforce its decrees on the people, and to suppress attacks on its teachings would not be hard-pressed for material to serve in its crusade. The Christian Church is historically an adept at the art of manufacturing "Martyrs"—and making them.

But the absence of direct evidence of governmental persecution of Christians or others because of their religious beliefs is strangely wanting. When the Archbishop of Canterbury raised the question in the House of Lords on February 13, he confessed "it was not easy to get reliable information" in the matter (when the *Morning Post* had been publishing for a couple of months the most detailed accounts of the persecution), but he had taken steps "to have a careful inquiry into the present facts made." Meanwhile he denounced the Persecutions, for the reality of which he was trying to get evidence, and upon the truth of which he depended, although "it was not easy to get accurate information." It never dawned upon the Archbishop that he might have got the evidence first and made the charges afterwards. But over six weeks have elapsed since then, and no result of the careful inquiry has yet been given to the world. But the Archbishop did appoint a Day of Intercession, when the attention of God was solemnly called to the State of Russia, and he was asked to stop the persecutions of which there was no "accurate evidence." It was as elusive as the handless Belgian babies about whom everyone heard in the early days of the war, but whom no one ever encountered.

\* \* \*

#### Christian Evidence.

After all, evidence for the persecutions, if it existed, should not be difficult to get or hard to verify. Hundreds of English and American business men and journalists have been to Russia during the past five years. None of them mentions in their reports any obstacles to people going to church when they pleased, numbers of them actually visited Churches, and found them carrying on as usual. "Jix" described the case of a priest who had been stripped naked and had water poured over him till he became a block of ice, but he is the only evidence for this, and he has never been in Russia. Surely, if thousands of priests have been killed (in some instances the people massacred on account of their religion is placed at two million) if the streets of Russia have run red with the blood of angelically inoffensive priests, murdered by men who are as brutal as the Christians of the seventeenth century, the evidence should have been patent to all. I have read a large number of books, published during the past five years, dealing with Russia, but they make no mention of these religious massacres. The only people who see these things occurring and who are prolific in detail are our English Crusaders, who have not been in Russia, and their informants, the emigrant Russian bishops, resident in France, or England.

I have space this week for but two instances of the value of this information. At the service in Westminster Abbey, on March 16, one of those present was the Russian Metropolitan Evlogi. He made himself responsible for a list of atrocities which gave the *Morning Post* Campaign its starting point. These cases were presented as of recent occurrence. Interviewed by a representative of the *Manchester Guardian*, Mgr. Evlogi said that cases of persecution had been common in the early days of the Revolution, but had now become scarce. He had apparently depended upon a Bishop Nicolai, and the only case Evlogi knew of was an Archbishop of Perm. But as this Archbishop was killed during a revolutionary riot in 1918, it is rather odd to find it served up as an example of the savagery of the existing Government in 1930.

The second case is this. On March 15 the *Morning Post* published a communication from "Our own Correspondent" in Rome, citing the Russian Bishop Serafini as giving the "latest list of atrocities." Among these is that of the Metropolitan of Leningrad, Benjamin, who was "tied to the paddle of a river boat and died after atrocious suffering." In the same paper for March 17 appears a letter from the well known writer, and anti-Bolshevist—F. A. Mackenzie. He says that this is no recent case, it occurred in 1922, and the Archbishop was not killed as stated. He was charged with opposing the Government, tried at the Old Nobles Club in Petrograd, sentenced to be shot—and was shot. Mr. Mackenzie says that he was in Petrograd at the time, and had unusual opportunities of knowing what was going on.

It should be added in explanation, that 1922 was the time when the Government was fighting the "Whites," and had to deal with a famine in the country. Large numbers of the clergy were backing up the "Whites," and the Government had demanded from the Church a certain portion of its wealth for the purpose of fighting the famine by the purchase of food. After agreeing, the Archbishop Tikhon encouraged all the Churches to resist having any portion of Church possessions sold. It was for resisting the Government in these two directions that a number of priests were placed on trial—including Tikhon himself. Always unscrupulous where Freethinking is concerned, nothing is easier than to concoct a heavy martyr-roll from the years 1917-23, and by refraining from giving names, dates and places, palm them off as the occurrences of yesterday.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be concluded.)

## History and Hysteria.

"Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon."  
Shakespeare.

"Talk about it as we like, a man's breeding shows itself nowhere more than in his religion."

O. W. Holmes.

"Liberty, the one word beside which all others are vain."—Ingersoll.

MR. GILBERT K. CHESTERTON is a popular entertainer. He supplies paradoxical fireworks to an illustrated weekly newspaper, and enlivens the dull and decorous pages of many other publications. He takes cultured views of everything, but nothing ever tempts him to disappoint the modest expectations of the Jesuit Fathers and other Romish priests who buy these intellectual organs as the best answer they are able to find to their prayer for grace, wisdom, and understanding.

In pursuit of his mission as an apostle of culture and Romanism, Mr. Chesterton has turned historian, and his excursion into ancient records, entitled: *A Short History of England*, possesses a modest title, which does not do full justice to the unique qualities of a truly remarkable book. For Mr. Chesterton has as great a liking for burlesque as for history, and he has approached his subject with a very definite idea that previous works have been written by men with no more regard for truth than the light-hearted Baron Munchausen, or the light-headed authors of *The Lives of Saints*. To that end Mr. Chesterton dips his pen in red ink, and endeavours to rewrite the history of our island in the light of the spiritual force of the Romish religion. Our history, it now appears, is to be traced less through monarchs, statesmen, and documents than through such picturesque person-

alities as Edward the Confessor, Thomas à Becket, and other faithful sons of the Roman Catholic Church. His extraordinary imaginative point of view is expressed in the phrase: "The thorn of Glastonbury, from which has grown the whole story of Britain," which is as questionable as associating our rough island story with the legend of Jack and the Beanstalk, or Jonah and the Whale.

This propagandist method of Mr. Chesterton has its drawbacks, for it drives his readers to the mood of Simon of Athens, which is unsuitable for a private citizen who wishes for a quiet life. Indeed, educated readers must realize that Mr. Chesterton's observations, like Rodolphe's in Gautier's story, lack common sense, though, like Rodolphe, they make up for the slight deficiency by the most brilliant qualities. As an example, Mr. Chesterton says that the English sailors who destroyed the great Armada and stopped Spanish aggression were "as dingy, as undeveloped, as petty and provincial as Boers." Does Mr. Chesterton for one moment imagine that the Spanish sailors were all as magnificently dressed as Velasquez' portrait of King Philip, or that they had all taken degrees at the universities of their own country? It is ungallant nonsense, to say the least of it. Throughout Mr. Chesterton's alleged history Roman Catholics, naturally, receive all the bouquets, and he says pontifically: "Though the Stuarts failed in England they fought for things that succeeded in Europe"—an assertion that should make all the European despots smile from Madrid to Moscow.

Mr. Chesterton, as may be expected, has not a good word for the Reformation, or for the Protestants, and he sighs for the return of the Ages of Faith. We prefer the comparative freedom of our own day. There is no Star Chamber to fine, pillory, lop the hands, slit the noses, and cut the ears of a Stubbes, a Prynne, or a Leighton, men misguided enough to publish liberal opinions. Tramps are no longer treated with that exquisite courtesy familiar to Roman Catholic England. In those good, old days, when the Government did not like the opinions of an author it imprisoned, fined, starved, whipped, pilloried, and mutilated him. Such were the freedom and civilization which Mr. Chesterton bids us dream of. "The man died in our hands," says an official document reporting the treatment of an offender in those days. We need not be specially educated citizens to understand that Mr. Chesterton's stained-glass, Churchy, view of English history is far too highly coloured, and that sobriety of judgment is not precisely the quality in which his genius shines.

Critically speaking, much of Mr. Chesterton's excursions into history is so much verbiage. They remind us of the story of a counsel who, in addressing a jury, characterized the defendant in the case as a "naufregious ruffian." His junior asked him afterwards what the expression meant. The counsel retorted: "I haven't the least idea, but it sounded well, didn't it?" Mr. Chesterton's sentences read well, but his ideas are based on the crudest of Popish propaganda. So biased is he that it is difficult to believe that he has ever studied life outside a Romish Church, for where else could he stumble upon the lying legends and petty propaganda of that faith? But is it not playing a little low down on the Roman Catholic believer thus to take advantage of his innocence of history and his lack of education? Mr. Chesterton's book is not a contribution to historical knowledge, but it is an indictment of the literary methods of a most mischievous superstition, which remains the chief and most relentless opponent of Democracy and Liberty.

MIMNERMUS.

## Cults of the Woodlands and the Groves.

THE primeval forest everywhere awakened a sense of mystery in the mind of emergent man. As humanity evolved from its apelike state and wandered from its arboreal birth-place, the proximity of the dark and shadowy woodlands proved the constant occasion of wonder and fear. Innumerable are the myths and legends concerning the forests in every part of the uncultured world. In ancient and modern India, in the remote forest-clad period of prehistoric Europe, and above all, in sylvan Greece and Italy, the traditions of their various peoples abound in references relating to the sombre and awe-inspiring woodland wilds.

The Old Testament enshrines numerous evidences of the existence of sacred groves. The high places against which the prophets of Israel so frequently fulminated were eminences upon which sacred trees were abundant. The patriarch Abraham was visited by Jahveh himself at the holy grove of Mamre. Again, Abraham erected an altar to the Jewish god near a terebinth or oak grove in the Hebron Valley. With the groves were associated the sacred images that were placed among the trees. These idols were probably connected with the worship of the dead. In any case, the Israelites are constantly pictured as departing from the worship of the true divinity and setting up images in sacred groves.

King Hezekiah destroyed the idols adored by a stiff-necked generation that went whoring after false gods, but these images were restored by his son and successor, Manasseh. In several instances the word rendered *grove* in the Bible really means *idol*. For example: "And they set them up images and groves in every high hill and under every green tree." (2 Kings xvii. 10.) Also, the progressive Josiah is stated to have "brought out the grove from the house of the Lord, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people." Yet the prophets of the grove who celebrated the idolatrous rites, long continued to sway the minds of the populace.

Herbert Spencer's contention that Gothic art owes much of its inspiration to the majestic tree trunks, boughs, and interlacing branches of the ancient European forests receives support from an able contemporary. In his recently published volume, *Forest Folklore, Mythology and Romance* (Allen & Unwin), Alexander Porteous remarks that, "The solemn seclusion of a forest grove seemed to primitive man to be a place of worship set apart by Nature, and these groves appear to have been the only and the earliest temples. In fact it has been remarked that the architect, when he designed his vistas of slender columns spreading out into and supporting roofs of tracery, might well be supposed to have had in his mind's eye some beautiful recollection of the arcades of Nature's palaces in the sombre forests, where the twisted trunks of the trees, the fretwork of their branches, and the leafy covering afforded by their leaves supply all the requisites of a grand and lofty temple."

In all ages plant life has played a signal part in religion. Botanical influence ranges from the fabled Tree of Life to the Maypole. The Christmas tree, sacred ashes, oaks, figs, and other plants share a part in religion. The guardian spirit of the tree, the spring and the rock is encountered in every cult. The divine tree is ever the sanctuary of spiritual creatures. It is planted in consecrated soil. As

priest-king at Mamre, Abraham sets forth to battle from the hallowed oak and plants a sacred grove, a tamarisk at Beersheba.

In Greece the victor in the Olympic games was originally regarded as the human embodiment of the tree-soul or spirit. The old May-Day celebration of Jack-in-the-Green, the Kentish Holly-Boy and Ivy-Girl of Shrove-Tide fame are all survivals of an antique cult.

The oracles of the great god Zeus were sought at Dodona from the spirits of the sacred trees. In the Book of Samuel we read how David consulted the oracle of the divine mulberry trees before giving battle to his enemies. Wisdom and knowledge resided in the holy acorns of Zeus. Jahveh is represented as appearing in a burning bush. Robertson Smith states in his *Religion of the Semites*, that: "Tree worship pure and simple, where the tree is in all respects treated as a god is attested in Arabia . . . in the case of the sacred date-palm at Nejran. It was adored at an annual feast, when it was hung with fine clothes and women's ornaments."

Some of the savage tribes in Nigeria venerate a giant forest tree as the residence of the dead. In times of adversity, sacrifices are offered to this tree, and the native's entreaties are granted unless the sky-god desires the company of the afflicted in the spirit realm.

The tree cult in native Africa is intimately associated with ancestor worship. Plants growing near the graves of the dead are sacred. "The great tree on the verandah of a dead man's home becomes the shrine of his spirit. And it is held that the highly developed cult of the Hereras is a direct offshoot of ancestor worship. One tree is hailed with the words, 'Holy art thou, our ancestor.'"

Sylvan temples not made with hands prevailed in prehistoric ages throughout Northern and Central Europe. Gloomy groves, where ancient trees threw their profound shadows were the sanctuaries of the spirits. These mysterious beings displayed their powers in storms that swept the forest, or in the golden sunshine that illumined the sylvan glades.

The cult of the Druids was for long centuries supreme in Northern and North Western Europe. Their divinities dwelt in Nature's plantations, and there only were they adored. Among all the monarchs of the forest the sacred oak was the favourite of the gods, and where the trees grew thickest they received prayer and praise. Rivulets usually ran near the solemn enclosure, which was sheltered from intrusion by a ditch or mound, while in the centre of the holy grove, large upright stones provided a temple within which an altar was reared for the sacrifices to the divinities.

Down to modern times traditions have lingered in Britain of the sombre enclosures where the deities were once worshipped. In Germany, again, hoary woodlands are regarded as the earlier sites of supplication, prophecy and oblation. Odinswald—the wood of Odin—still treasures the name of the old heathen divinity. Tacitus in Roman, and Grimm in later days, have noted the savage customs of the early Germanic tribes. The spirit of romance, combined with religious superstition, tenanted the ancient Teutonic forests with beings both beneficent and malign. And dire disaster usually visited those who profaned the mysterious abodes of the spirits.

In Italy and Greece similar customs and beliefs are recorded. A sense of wonder pervaded the untrodden woods and wilds. The sage Seneca shared the emotions, if not always the uncouth superstitions of his time. Porteous quotes the succeeding passage from the Roman philosopher: "If you come upon a grove of old trees that have shot up above the

common height, and shut out the sight of the sky by the gloom of their matted boughs, you feel there is a spirit in the place, so lofty is the wood, so lone the spot, so wondrous the thick unbroken shade."

The peasantry of Pagan Rome were solicitous to avoid any act of desecration where the groves were accounted sacred. When the rites for ensuring the fertility of their flocks were celebrated, every precaution was taken to secure the solitude of the forest, and they never allowed the sheep to graze on the leaves of a holy tree.

The Ostiaks of Siberia refrained from all affairs of mundane life within their sylvan sanctuaries. To drink water on holy ground, or to hunt or fish was strictly taboo. All who trespassed placed an arrow or hung furs upon the trees.

It is alleged that far-famed Vienna arose from habitations encircling a holy grove. An antique oak, which stands in the centre of the Austrian capital is reputed to be the sole survivor of this ancient grove. To break a branch from sacred trees was in Lithuania regarded as a mortal sin, and the resentful spirits punished with sudden death or crippled for life all those that infringed their rights.

Among the Barotse the religious rites of the forests were linked with the worship of the dead. These savages buried their departed chiefs in an avenue of magnificent trees. Such groves were sacred ground never to be entered lest the ghosts of the dead should be awakened. These ancestral shades were treated as deities, and were invariably consulted in times of calamity.

Greek literature abounds in poetry inspired by wooded landscape made melodious by the songs of birds. Indeed, in all lettered ages the poets have been indebted to the floral realm with its attendant stream and sky for their loftiest emotional masterpieces. In addition to the feathered choir the groves of Greece and Italy were haunted by rustic spirits. The god of the woods, great Pan himself, with his picturesque retainers the nymphs and fauns provide the subject matter of several master productions of poets, both modern and ancient.

The greater divinities of Olympus also possessed their sylvan shrines. In the Hesperian grove flourished the trees, whose boughs hung with golden apples that Hercules aspired to discover. The legendary founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus were suckled by a wolf in a gloomy retreat shrouded by a spreading grove of trees.

Again, that monument of patient scholarship, *The Golden Bough*, owes its inception largely to the legend of the ghastly priest and his slayer in the wood. To Diana's temple and grove at Aricia on the shore of Lake Nemi, near Rome, was attached a high priest known as *Rex Nemorensis*, the King of the Grove, who was originally a fugitive slave that obtained his priestly position by slaying his predecessor. This remnant of a prehistoric cult survived at least to the times of the Antonines. One feature of this savage cult is noteworthy. In the words of Sir James Frazer: "Within the sanctuary at Nemi grew a certain tree of which no branch might be broken. Only a runaway slave was allowed to break off, if he could, one of its boughs. Success in the attempt entitled him to fight the priest in single combat, and if he succeeded he reigned in his stead with the title of 'King of the Wood.'"

T. F. PALMER.

Of moral purpose I see no trace in nature. That is an article of exclusively human manufacture, and very much to our credit.—Huxley.

## "Androcles and the Lion."

THIS witty and clever play by George Bernard Shaw had a glorious revival at "The Old Vic," on Monday, February 24 last, when it was given in connexion with another play by the same author, entitled "The Dark Lady of the Sonnets," both of which were rapturously received by a large and enthusiastic audience.

When the first of these plays was produced at the St. James' Theatre, a good many years ago, I was present, and could not help admiring its wonderfully skilful construction, its witty, and in many passages, blasphemous dialogue, and was glad to find that the audience on the whole accepted it as a tragio-farcical comedy, and laughed and applauded accordingly. But no doubt it went against the grain of many narrow-minded Christians whose feelings were obviously hurt, and they probably warned their friends not to patronize the show, and consequently it did not have as long a run as usual with Shaw's plays. But as produced and played at "The Old Vic," it is a brilliant success.

It treats of the martyrdom of the early Christians in Rome, when many of them were thrown to the lions to please the ignorant and brutal mob; but the treatment is mainly farcical, although there is a good deal of serious argument between the Christian prisoners and the Roman soldiers. The play opens with a prologue in which Androcles and his wife are seen in a forest in which lions can be heard roaring in the distance. After a short wrangle with his wife, in which his better half says some very unkind things about him, in the usual stage fashion, she complains that "they are driven out of house and home for being dirty disreputable Atheists," to which Androcles retorts that he "is not an Atheist, but a Christian." To this his wife replies, "Well, isn't that the same thing, only ten times worse. Everybody knows that the Christians are the very lowest of the low." After further cutting remarks his wife resolves to continue her journey through the forest and in a few moments runs up against a young lion that comes limping on to the stage, but when the calm and philosophic Androcles sees that the poor creature cannot put one foot to the ground, he realizes what is the matter and after two or three efforts extracts the thorn from the foot of the poor beast, for which the lion shows his thanks by embracing his benefactor and the two waltz rapturously off through the forest.

Act I takes us to three roads on the way to Rome, with triumphal arches and a square at the gate of the city. Here all the Christian prisoners are brought and are given instructions as to what they are to do, first by a Centurion and then by a Captain of the Guard; who informs them in a long speech, that once they are inside the gates of Rome they will be in the presence of the Emperor. Also that the Centurion must tell them to observe strict discipline—"that there must be an end to the profanity and blasphemy of singing Christian hymns on the march."

When, however, the Centurion observes that the men march better when singing, the captain observes: "That an exception may be made in the case of 'Onward Christian Soldiers,' but the words must be altered to 'Throw them to the Lions.'" In this scene there is a long argument between the handsome Captain of the Guard and Lavinia, one of the prisoners, on Religion, and the Captain informs her that if she wants to avoid being thrown to the lions she has only to give up her belief in false gods and worship the true God. "We," says the Captain, "call him Jupiter, the Greeks call him Zeus. But

you call him what you will as you drop the incense on the altar flame; he will understand." The same, of course, applies to all the other prisoners. One of the most amusing incidents in this scene is when one of the Roman soldiers says to Ferrovius, a very earnest but primitive sort of Christian, "You turn the other cheek when struck, I am told."

"Yes, by the grace of God I do now," says Ferrovius. But he confessed he has not always done so. He once struck a man, "but he never had a happy moment after that until he had knelt and asked his forgiveness by his bedside in the hospital." In fact, Ferrovius was a sort of ancient Carnera, a strong muscular Christian, and when he struck it was a knock-out blow. When the Roman soldier heard this he offered the Christian a bribe which was refused with contempt and flung to the beggars. Consequently the Roman soldier went down on his knees and begged forgiveness. After a lot of further argument with the prisoners we move on to Act II, which takes place at the entrance of the Coliseum. On one side of the stage stand the Gladiators; on the other, the Christian prisoners waiting for their turn to go into the arena. There is also a call boy and an editor on the scene—one to call out the number of the prisoner, who is to go into the arena, and the other to answer any questions as to what the prisoners have got to do when required. This is an extremely exciting scene relieved by burst of laughter by the audience at the dialogue—especially that between the Emperor Cæsar and some of the prisoners.

Spintho, a cowardly Christian, is the first to enter the arena, and he gets eaten by the lions. But when it becomes the turn of the brave "Ferrovius," he elects to go into the arena and fight the Gladiators. He is advised to wear armour, which is ready to hand, but he declines to do so and is prepared to fight with bare breast and a trusty sword. He returns victorious having killed six Gladiators single-handed. And the Emperor is so pleased with his achievement that he proposes to make him a Captain of the Guard.

Androcles is the last to enter the arena to face the lions. He goes with a clear conscience and bids the Emperor "go to his box" and see how a poor Christian tailor can die. But while Cæsar and the crowded audience are watching they behold an extraordinary spectacle. The lion approaches Androcles, and as soon as he recognises him he dances round him, holds up his paw and finally embraces him. The Emperor and the crowded audience are amazed; and the Emperor addressing the crowd, after what he has witnessed, says, "that he can no longer doubt the truth of Christianity," and the play winds up with Androcles and the lion walking off side by side together.

This brief outline of the plot, can give readers but a very faint idea of the brilliance of the dialogue, its wit and humour or the eloquence and argumentative skill of the various discussions on Religion. Enough to say that the audience thoroughly enjoyed every point, and at the end gave all the actors a most enthusiastic reception.

"The Dark Lady of the Sonnets," also by G. B. Shaw, showed Shakespeare as a "snapper-up of unconsidered trifles," or rather of tit bits of dialogue to be used in his plays; the most choice passages coming from the mouth of Queen Elizabeth—and as "The Old Vic" audience know their Shakespeare very well, these passages were received with unfeigned delight.

In both these plays "The Old Vic" players were seen at their best.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

## Blasphemy.

UPHELD by policeman's baton,  
Long may Religion flourish,  
And parsons still grow fat on  
The Ignorance they nourish!

Loud brays the Politician,  
Who seemingly is rather  
Concerned at the condition  
Befallen God the Father.

"This House must see the Church safe,  
Whence congregations flock out;  
For who dare call his perch safe,  
If God receives the knock-out?"

"The Government must stand for  
No Commonsense competing,  
But spare this pleasant land for  
Prayers, sermons, hymns, God-eating."

So Parliament endorses  
The miracles of Jesus;  
And, if we scoff, the Force is  
Empowered forthwith to seize us.

Fair England's proudest boast is  
(All praise to her elected!)  
That still the Holy Ghost is  
By means like these protected,—

And that the Virgin Mary  
Retains the Law as baffle,—  
The Cabinet being wary  
Lest reputations suffer.

With righteous jubilation  
Are Christian faces beaming,  
For now, by legislation,  
They've ended all blaspheming.

Upheld by policeman's baton,  
Long may Religion flourish,  
And parsons still grow fat on  
The Ignorance they nourish!

P.V.M.

## Acid Drops.

The most horrible feature of the present Russian Government, according to the *Morning Post*, "Jix," the Bishop of London, Lovat-Fraser, and similar mental "all-goners" is that it prohibits the teaching of religion to children—in any educational establishment—under the age of eighteen. It is worth while noting, perhaps, that in the British House of Commons on March 22, the Seditious and Blasphemous Teaching to Children Bill came up for second reading. This Bill practically embodies the Russian plan turned the other way round. But it is to prevent children growing up Atheists, and that, of course, make a tremendous difference. As the Bill only came up within five minutes of the time the House rose, the Bill was talked out.

The Catholic press reports that the "Holy Father" has received hundreds of telegrams reporting the number of enthusiastic deputations to God Almighty on the question of Russia. That is very interesting, although deputations in which the party who receives them is not present, strikes one as being rather curious. What we should really like to know is what kind of answer God Almighty made to all these people who interviewed him. But that we are not told. Still, it all helps to keep the game alive, and that is the chief thing we suppose in the international ghost game run by the "Holy Father."

The nation must organize from top to bottom, declares Mr. F. W. Goodenough, or be beaten by those that do. This horrible materialism is enough to make a parson shudder. Just as if using one's brains and organizing things could possibly bring prosperity to a nation. Prosperity depends entirely on the people attending Church and begging God to be good to his faithful children.

This must be true, for thousands of parsons are likely to be unprosperous if it isn't done.

President Hindenburg, of Germany, has decided not to hold the usual parliamentary receptions, so that the money which would be spent on them may be devoted to war orphans. This is good in its way. But the time to consider the welfare of war orphans is when uncivilized persons are preparing for war or scheming certain political moves that may lead to war.

A lecturer contends that this is not an intelligent age. Still, the peoples of the nations have, in the mass, finished with the Christian religion and the Churches. That, surely, is an indication of intelligence.

A business man in Finland has given £500,000 for medical research, one quarter of it is in foreign bonds. Luckily he is living in the twentieth century. A few centuries ago the Church would have adroitly played on his benevolent sympathies so that the money dropped in the Church's till.

In a Methodist weekly a reader complains about the extreme difficulty met with in trying to obtain "an authoritative, reasoned, and candid statement of the Methodist viewpoint as regards Sunday games." The difficulty is understandable. In these days of dwindling congregations, Methodist leaders are not anxious to risk offending their broader-minded adherents by affirming the original uncompromising Methodist view—hell-fire—for the Sabbath-breaker. This all comes about through allowing the younger generation of Methodists to mix freely with people possessing wider minds than Methodists. For the sake of Sunday observance it really ought not to be allowed.

Love in the Christian sense, says Canon Pat McCormick, is not primarily an emotion but a decision. This can hardly be right. For, the way in which the average Christian writer or preacher talks about Christian "love" usually makes decent people feel inclined to vomit. Perhaps this is because he appears to have made a decision to be sloppy.

Central Australia has had a great drought lasting six years, which has now broken. This great affliction of Our Heavenly Father could easily have been cured. All that was needed was a few hundred parsons equipped with Church of England Prayer-books. These could have sent up a barrage of prayers for rain until God did the needful.

The following is a portion of an "open letter" addressed by *John Bull* to the Bishop of Stepney:—

I suppose you have made it possible for business men to take orders because the class from which Church of England clergymen are recruited must nowadays so much more often go to work. And your stock of curates was slumping.

Truth has a habit of leaking out at the wrong moment! Many readers of *John Bull* will doubtless perceive it in the above quotation. Namely, the Bishop has withdrawn men from productive labour to a profession in which they will not have to "go to work." We presume it would be in order to congratulate the Bishop on his inspired contribution to the solution of the unemployed problem among the "upper class." For the positions held by the business men withdrawn from productive labour will now have to be filled by unemployed who desire to "go to work."

The Archdeacon of Ashton deplors the fact that Christians have been raising so much theological dust that they have almost lost sight of Jesus. Still, it is useless blaming the pious for that. Theological disputes arise because the inspired Word of God is so curious a medley of imbecilities, irrationalities, and inconsistencies, and because the pious are anxious to know

how these should be interpreted and practised. If anyone is to be blamed for the theological dust-raising, it should be God—for making the Book what it is. Of course, it is up to an apologist for God to explain that the Bible is all right, but God unfortunately created many people so unintelligent as not to understand it, or so intelligent as not to believe it.

From the *British Weekly*:—

No one can deprive us of the satisfaction of knowing that any charm which Sunday has for those who are on a strict view "break the Sabbath" is due to the fact that there are still tens of thousands who keep it. We might have some friendly acknowledgment of this great service.

Our self-satisfied friend rather stupidly fancies that the Sabbath gloom and boredom ordained by the "good" have charm for the Sabbath breaker. In any case, the "charm" is not improved by the hullabaloo made by pious hawkers of salvation at street-corners in nearly every town and village in the land. We might have some candid acknowledgment of the truth of this unpleasant fact.

The editor of a pious weekly says:—

There is only one thing that can save Russia from complete Atheism. And that is a change of heart on the part of those responsible for her leadership. It would be perhaps the greatest triumph the Christian Church has known if this change of heart could be accomplished without a change of personnel.

But surely it is not Christ-like to wish evil to befall fellow human beings of another nation? If it is, our brother had better leave the matter to God.

A bookseller of Sydney has been fined £10 for selling an "obscene" war book which is being freely sold and circulated in England. For those who like reasons for things, we suggest the explanation lies in the fact that the distemper of Nonconformist piety infects a considerable number of Australians. Grand moral—to the impure everything is impure.

A child's education, declares Mr. Baldwin, begins 250 years before it is born. A better statement would be that the Christian education of a child always begins before it can think and reason intelligently. And the aim of the process is to prevent that stage of mental development from being out-grown in adulthood. Bearing this in mind, one may then affirm that a Christian child's education begins 2,000 years before it is born, and never progresses any further.

Many great movements fail, declares Canon Peter Green, because there are not enough Christians, and those there are are not good enough. After this, we presume, it wouldn't be just to mention anything about the failure of the Churches. But this aside. The Canon is merely ringing the changes on an ancient priestly lamentation. When the people neglect God and the priests, woe be unto the nation! All is evil; let us put on sackcloth and ashes! But to be serious. It may be affirmed that many great movements—not movements which the pious would call great—have succeeded during the past forty years of religious indifference; and many of them would have failed if the nation had been as pious as it was in the Age of Faith or during the Evangelical Revival. The judgment of impartial historians a hundred years hence will not coincide with that of to-day's wailing priests.

For religious education in schools and for reading in the home, the Oxford Press has published *Little Bible Selections*. Possibly these snippets of God's Truth may be better for the palate. After all, a manure heap is less offensive if you see a spadeful at a time.

A short while ago the Rev. Basil Bourchier was explaining, for the benefit of pious ignoramuses, that

Continental cities are really not "sinks of iniquity." The explanation must have been effective. For we see that a Nonconformist journal is arranging a specially conducted tour to Paris, for a week during Easter. It goes without saying that the godly tourists will return full of tales concerning French "wickedness," and the horrors of a Continental Sunday.

The Rev. Dr. H. E. Woolever, of Washington, U.S.A., says that "the Church modifies and mellows the attitudes of men." This must be a new departure of the Church. There's no evidence of the truth of the statement to be found in the past history of the Church or Churches. There's plenty of evidence concerning, bloodshed, bitter persecution and intolerance among the followers of the various Churches.

Prayer is either a Force or a Farce, says the Wesleyan Missionary Society. We notice that when the Society urgently wants money, it puts its trust in the resources of modern advertising. That would appear to indicate how little the Society regards Prayer as a Force. This fact hasn't yet dawned on the dull units of the pious supporters. And in the circumstances it seems waste of breath to pray for their enlightenment.

Women, it is said, are the practical sex. Perhaps this explains Miss Agnes Macphail's proposal to the Canadian House of Commons. She suggested that for every 100 dollars spent by the Canadian Government for war preparation, there should be set aside one dollar to promote Peace. With this money she would have set up a "chain" of international relations, and would grant international scholarships at each Canadian university. Her argument is that if money is available for improving the weapons of war, it should also be available for studying how war can be prevented. The argument is irrefutable and the proposal eminently practicable. Therefore, they should be suspect to all good men and true who believe that God helps nations to win wars. Nothing ought to be done that may result in giving "God our help in ages past" nothing to do. That would be the limit of ingratitude.

In a Sunday-school journal, a reader enquires as to what extent imaginary stories about the life of Jesus may legitimately be employed by the teacher. It appears that this particular teacher was running short of new material from the Gospels, and so she "began to imagine various incidents that *might* have happened," and told them to the Sunday-school children. This dear lady need have no qualms of conscience in this connexion. The same thing was done almost eighteen centuries ago. That was how the New Testament "facts" about Jesus came into being.

"Religion is the opium of the people." Evidence of the truth of that pregnant phrase is supplied by the Rev. T. Gordon Bennett, a missionary. Speaking about the outcasts of India, he says that these unhappy people, whether working in town or country, are frequently badly housed and fed. Therefore, they "form inflammable material ready to the hand of any revolutionary." Mr. Bennett's remedy for this state of affairs is a truly Christian prescription, thus:—

The building up in the outcasts of the Christian character and morality is the best possible way towards helping India.

Undoubtedly! The best way to prevent the exploited from getting discontented is to inoculate them with Christian dope. Get the outcasts to accept the Christly virtues of meekness, long-suffering, and returning good for evil, etc., then there will be no more trouble.

In the world of advertisement, by many and varied means, the Churches have entered, to bang the drum as loudly as any other business concern. The subtle methods are not overlooked either. We presume that

the Rev. J. Sankey, of St. Andrew's-by-the-Wardrobe, Queen Victoria Street, is as anxious as any of his fellow clergymen to fill his church. He has promoted a singing competition, to which men and women working in the city are invited. This is all to the good, but we trust that we shall not hear of the "innate religious feeling" that moves people to go to church.

A religious weekly gave recently a set of rules for the forming of a cycling club among Sunday school scholars, with the object of holding the interest of the scholars. A reader writes suggesting that the rules need the addition of a condition regarding attendance at Sunday school or Bible class. Otherwise, we gather, the cycling club may be a success in the direction of supplying wholesome recreation for scholars, but a failure from the Church's point of view. It appears that members of such clubs tend to ride all day on Sunday and never patronize their church at all—not even when a special service is organized on their behalf! This, of course, is deeply regrettable. But the same thing is happening everywhere. The pious form these clubs for the purpose of holding the young to the Church. But sooner or later many members continue their pastime on Sunday, but discontinue their church attendance. We regret to say this sort of thing can't be helped. Cycling tends to foster wholesome love of the great out-of-doors, and dislike for the inside of churches.

A Nonconformist parson deplors the "neglect of Lent." His argument is that Lenten abstinence is still advantageous, for health reasons; and that therefore the Christian loses something by neglecting Lenten discipline. This may sound all right to the pious. But there is another way of looking at the matter. He who needs to fast in Lent tells the world, by implication, what a "hog" he is during the rest of the year. To indulge and then to repent and inflict penances may be the essence of Christian wisdom. But intelligent men think the better way is so to order their appetites and habits as not to need repentance and self-flagellation.

The B.B.C. has had two children's religious services on Sunday afternoons. There have been broadcasts of actual services. A religious journal has been listening to them very critically. The first fault is that the conductor of the service merely asks for questions, but omits to specify exactly what questions he expects. The result has been that he received a selection of posers, to which too frequently he was forced to answer, "I don't know." Our contemporary therefore suggests that such services ought to be specially prepared for broadcasting. In other words, we presume, the questions ought to be rehearsed beforehand, so that neatly convincing replies could follow with all speed.

Another grievance in connexion with these children's services is that they ought not to be at a time that makes children stay away from Sunday school to listen to them. The B.B.C., even with God's inspiration, hath badly blundered. May its post-bag bulge with reproachful letters from good people who have the true welfare of the dear children at heart!

Parts of West Africa have been suffering from a drought, and after a consultation of the various Christian Churches, it was announced to the Lord that a deputation would see him on the matter on Sunday March 2. The deputation was to ask the Lord to

send such moderate rain and showers as will replenish the earth, etc.

We like that "moderate rain." The deputation evidently has in mind the fact that when the Lord does let go he becomes as the character in *Alf's Button* says, "too bloomin' wholesale." Hence the petition "Send rain but don't forget yourself and drown the lot. It is rain we want, not a deluge." We have not yet heard what result has followed the prayer, but we are willing to wager that some rain will come after the prayer has been said, and if that is not an answer, we don't know what is.



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THE Funds of the National Secular Society are now legally controlled by Trust Deed, and those who wish to benefit the Society by gift or bequest may do so with complete confidence that any money so received will be properly administered and expended.

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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, and I direct that a receipt signed by two of the trustees of the said Society shall be a good discharge to my executors for the said legacy.

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### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—J. A. Davies, £2.

A. WILCOX.—The cutting will prove useful.

H. L. SEARLE.—We intend writing on the book shortly.

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

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*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.*

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*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.

Mr. Cohen has a great amount of work on hand at present, much of which makes no public show, and he had intended closing his lecturing this year with the meeting at Birmingham. But he has promised to pay the new Bradford Branch a special visit on Sunday, April 6, and will lecture in the Mechanics' Institute, at 6.30, "by request," on "Do the Dead Live?"

The largest audience for some years gathered in Birmingham Town Hall on Sunday last. Mr. Cohen was listened to with evident interest, liberally punctuated with laughter and applause. Mr. Allom occupied the chair, and Mr. Melton made a very earnest appeal for greater local support for the Branch.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti had two very interesting meetings at Newcastle, the lectures were closely followed and the questions at both sessions testified to the interest

aroused. Mr. Brighton occupied the chair in the afternoon, and Mr. Keast in the evening.

In a recent issue of the *New Age*, a letter appeared from Mr. M. B. Reckitt, charging Freethinkers with "treachery," for not demanding for Christians in Russia the same freedom they demand for themselves here. The charge is absurd. We have written over and over again in favour of free expression of opinion all over the world, and whether the opinion attacked was Christian or non-Christian. We were pleased to see, in reply to Mr. Reckitt, a letter from Mr. A. W. Coleman referring those who wished to know the Freethought attitude to our leading article of December 22. But perhaps Mr. Reckitt does not see the *Freethinker*. That may be the most charitable explanation of why he is so hopelessly at sea on the subject.

What we have declined to do is to be frightened at the usual contemptible policy of the Christian Churches and join in a howl of reprobation over stories that are mainly false, all misstated, and which are being used to discredit Freethought in this country. We have written what we have written in consequence of the letters received, and these took two forms. One was that of a genuine enquiry as to what we thought about it. The other was advice to be cautious and repudiate Russia and all its works, so that we should not injure the movement by being identified in the eyes of the public with the ruling party in Russia. The latter piece of advice made us smile. It was exactly the same advice that was tendered us at the beginning of the war, when we were solemnly warned that unless we joined in the general war-mania we would ruin the paper. We declined to be stampeded into such a cowardly policy, and did what we said the clergy ought to have done, that is in times of war to be more insistent on the claims of justice, truth and general humanity than in times of peace, and we declined to join in the general howl that seventy millions of German men and women were all filthy brutes and blackguards. I think it will be admitted that if that example had been followed the world would now be in a better state than it is. The *Freethinker* is not published for half wits or cowards.

The reply to the first-class of letter is the articles now appearing. We know too well the capacity of the Christian advocate for distorting the truth when the interests of his creed are at stake, to take the tales published as being true without the most serious evidence, and we care too little for the frowns of "respectability" to be frightened into either active or passive support of a movement, the chief aim of which was to discredit Atheism in this country by saddling it with crimes that are alleged to have been committed in its name elsewhere. Some amount of courage is necessary if one stands in the forefront of the fighting army of Freethought, and when we permit ourselves to be stampeded by the cries of wild bishops and lying journalists, it will be about time we retired into obscurity. Our concern is to preach Freethought, not to gain the good opinion of Christians, or to pacify the timid. We shall get the good opinion of the first when we have knocked the Christianity out of them; and the latter will be quite secure when we have made it safe for them to say what they believe.

We owe an apology to our contributor, Mr. C. S. Fraser. The fine article on "Non Knowledge" in last week's issue should have borne his signature, and not that of "Ajax."

Mr. J. A. Davies writes:—

Herewith another £2 for the Endowment Trust as a mark of my appreciation of your excellent paper. I notice that after a lapse some small sums have begun to come in, and I only hope they will continue with some large sums as well.

We can always do with all the help possible. At present we are spending money in trying to get the paper a larger circulation, some of the recent testimonials to Mr. Cohen is going in this direction. This is the only

plan by which we can secure the necessary extra help, which we shall be bound to have one of these days. We are after that paying circulation, and one day we hope to get it, if only in time for our successor.

Under the auspices of the Executive of the N.S.S., Mr. J. T. Brighton, the popular and enthusiastic Secretary of the Chester-le-Street Branch, is arranging a course of lectures in that district. To-day (Sunday, 30th) he will speak in the Miner's Hall, New Herrington, at 7 p.m., on "Christianity and Persecution." The following Sunday Mr. Brighton will lecture at Chopwell, and on April 13 at Thornley.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti has accepted an invitation to address the Workers' Circle Friendly Society, and will speak in Circle House, Great Alie Street, London, E.1, on Saturday evening, April 5, at 8 o'clock, on "Nature, Man and God."

The Bethnal Green Branch of the N.S.S. has been re-organized, and its members, are looking forward with enthusiasm to an active future. Mr. J. Neate is the President, and Mr. L. Selmer, 56 Christian Street, London, E.1, will carry out the duties of Secretary.

### Our Glorious Press and the Newsagents.

WE have many times written on the blessings of a syndicalized press. It is such a convenient method of telling the public just what one wishes to tell them, and in a way that hides from them the very capable manner in which they are being misled. The man who reads in a dozen different papers the same views, expressed in slightly different words, imagines that he is getting a consensus of opinion when in reality he is getting merely a repetition of the same one. Even at that the situation might not be so bad if one felt that the opinion expressed had no ulterior purpose to serve. But this megaphonic reproduction of mere sound may be exerted on behalf of interests that are very often far from praiseworthy.

One recalls the very active campaign carried on by one largely circulated paper against the use of Russian petrol. At that time the R.O.P. was outside the great oil combines, with the result that the British public was getting a better grade petrol at twopence per gallon cheaper than it was supplied by the Combines. So the British public had it shrieked at it that this was stolen oil, that no real patriot would touch it at any price, and cards were printed for dealers to exhibit showing that no Russian oil was sold by them. Then the Combines made terms with R.O.P. It was induced to come into the ring, and the price of R.O.P. petrol to the public went up twopence per gallon. Every car-owner then acquired the privilege of contributing an extra twopence per gallon to the Combines already swollen profits. And the agitation against using Russian oil came to an end—and the British public forgot all about the way in which it had been fooled.

Now a section of this syndicalized press, has made another move—to be followed, one assumes by the rest if the move is successful, which seems likely to lead to trouble. Full of high resolutions, patriotic devotion to the well being of British citizens, and fervent champions of Christianity as the bulk of the newspaper proprietors of the kingdom are, they have met with their reward in the shape of an unusual degree of worldly prosperity. The group of papers to which the *London Evening News*, the *Standard*, and the *Star* belong, have made a profit in recent years of 40 per cent of their ordinary capital. But it is not enough; so early in February a peremptory

notice was served on all retail newsagents and street vendors that they they would be cut down by one copy per quire. To talk of reducing the number of copies per quire by one does not sound very much, but that only makes more contemptible the nature of the move. Consider the situation. Newsagents are not usually wealthy men, the bulk of them are men in a small way of business, and in any case have to eke out a living by selling other things beside newspapers. Street sellers of papers belong to an obviously poorer and more defenceless class. The shopkeeper has out of his margin of profit to pay the proportion of overhead charges due on the sale of papers, he has to employ someone for house to house delivery, and has to run the risk of bad debts. The street seller has to ply his trade in all sorts of weather, and in the slack days when for some reason or other there is no racing (the evening papers concerned depend upon tips for racing and the results of races for quite fifty per cent of their sales) finds his sales drop off very materially. In the best of times he must dispose of about two hundred copies a day in order to get round about £2 per week. It is calculated that the loss of one copy per week, while it will bring in to the Combines something like £60,000 per year, will mean a reduction to the sellers of anything from 5s. to 20s. per week.

It is from these two classes that the Beaverbrook and Rothermere Combines propose filching one copy per quire. There is not even the excuse of bad trade, or losses, or of a dividend so small that it does not pay the proprietors to work on the basis that has existed for about forty years.

According to the *National Newsagent*, the profits of the Associated Newspapers have been in the last three years well over £3,000,000. Before that a bonus of a quarter of a million shares were distributed among the shareholders. One copy per quire is "not much," but it is the pettiness of the reduction that well exhibits the mentality of those responsible. The decrease was not decided on after consultation with the Retail Newsagents Federation: shopkeepers and street sellers were simply told what was going to be done, in the full expectation that they would be too powerless to resist. It is a shameless and contemptible attack upon the profits of small men by those, whose only claim to public notice is that they have made money, and with no other object than to make still more money. It exhibits the real character of these guardians of English morality and English religion, and we do not expect that it will disturb for a moment the rhapsodizing of *Express* writers like Mr. James Douglas on the Beauties of Love, and Brotherhood, and the need of living for others. We are quite sure that it will not move any of this high-souled type of writer to say a word in defence of the street seller who is having five shillings a week taken from him by a powerful and unscrupulous body of newspaper magnates.

The Newsagents Federation threatens strong opposition, and we hope they will live up to their promise. On the other hand the Syndicalized press threaten to set up their own distributing agency, and it may certainly manage this with regard to the large centres, but it is hardly likely to do so all over the country, particularly as once the meanness of the proposed reduction, and the inordinate greed of it is made clear it may set up a general indignation that it will not care to face. For these newspaper kings are not overburdened with courage when it comes to facing popular feeling. We suggest to the Federation that it should have a few million leaflets printed setting out its case. They have, obviously, their own distributing agency in every newsagent in the country.

For our own part we shall watch this contest with

interest, and with even a little amusement. Free-thought owes nothing to the press of England, and has shown itself able to live in spite of its negative or positive hostility. And so far as we are concerned we have never ceased to point out the extent to which the modern Yellow Press has managed to degrade the English Press. For years it has poisoned reasoned and balanced opinion instead of promoting it. It has shown itself a real danger to that informed opinion upon which the stability of popular government must depend. If now it is realized that in the interests of increasing its already swollen profits it is anxious to filch a few shillings a week from the street news-boy and the struggling newsagent, the general public may awaken to its true character and value.

C. COHEN.

## A Forgotten Chapter in Biography.

### I.

SOME weeks ago I called attention to a criticism of R. G. Ingersoll, by Prof. H. J. Laski. I think it had better be repeated again:—

Mr. Robertson praises R. G. Ingersoll; to me his writings are those of an eloquent rhetorician, who had nothing new of his own to contribute, and was inferior to a score of people performing a similar function.

Now we are all entitled to our opinions and should be allowed to express them; but when a new-comer into the movement like Prof. Laski disagrees with a veteran like Mr. J. M. Robertson, who, apart altogether from his other qualifications, is one of the most famous of living critics, it is not unfair to examine the new opinion.

First of all, I, in common with a large number of Freethinkers, deprecate any attempt to belittle the work of one Freethinker by comparing it with the work of other Freethinkers. It is excessive bad taste and all the more so coming from one who is a new-comer in the movement. Moreover, we are all soldiers in the cause, and some of us can never be anything else. But without the devotion and self-sacrifice of the rank and file, our leaders could never have made much headway. Even the genius of Marlborough or Napoleon would have been powerless without the big battalions. Thus one must measure the success of any individual Freethinker with results: did he make other men and women Freethinkers? not, did he write, in the opinion of some individuals, a great work, which ought to have made Freethinkers, but somehow didn't. I am not saying that the great writer does not deserve his niche in our pantheon. But there must be on this question a sense of proportion. Paine's *Age of Reason* is very elementary to us living in an age which was helped to freedom by this very book. It did its work at a time when, to be anti-Christian not merely evoked horror but danger. It is easy for us to sell or read Paine, but Richard Carlile had to defy authority and spend many years in prison so that we could enjoy the freedom he so passionately worked and bled for. To say that we have produced many superior works to *The Age of Reason* may be true in fact, but how small we should be to make such a claim. The work of Ingersoll must be judged by results. Did he make Freethinkers or not? Did he help to mould public opinion in the direction of Freethought or not? Do his inimitable essays and addresses still carry on the good work or not? The answer must be obvious to anybody who has even an elementary knowledge of the history of popular or militant Freethought—which obviously Prof. Laski has not. To say that because Ingersoll never wrote a book like, say, Gib-

bon's famous work, or Darwin's, is utterly beside the point, and the fact that there are very few of those who know something about our movement who would agree with Prof. Laski, is in itself not only significant but a sufficient answer to his preposterous criticism. I should like to have left it at that, but in response to Mr. Franklin Steiner of America, Prof. Laski has given us the names of ten Freethinkers superior to Ingersoll. Here they are: Paine, Huxley, Haeckel, Holyoake, Bradlaugh, Clifford, Laing, F. W. Newman, Winwood Reade and Leslie Stephen.

For most of these, comprising as they do some of the most famous men in our movement, one can only say they did the best that was in them for the cause; and so did Ingersoll. But it would be particularly interesting to learn exactly how many Freethinkers F. W. Newman made in the course of his long career? He was an ardent Theist, far more so than Paine, but in spite of his courageous *Phases of Faith*, what part, real part I mean, did he take in the militant movement during the nineteenth century? How much did he suffer for the cause? He was, in fact, an enemy of Atheism, and yet he is put forward as superior to Ingersoll!

It is, however, with Sir Leslie Stephen I wish to deal with in these articles; and first, I should point out that Stephen's most famous book, *The History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, which one would imagine a treatise, reliable and unbiassed, comes in for some heavy and destructive criticism by Mr. Robertson. Both in his *Short History of Freethought* and in *Thomas Paine: An Investigation* (published as far back as 1888) Mr. Robertson does not spare Stephen; and, indeed, were he far more severe, he would have been thoroughly justified.

Prof. Laski puts Stephen forward as "superior" to Ingersoll, but it is difficult to imagine he has ever read Stephen's *History*. For this work is not merely biassed, it is positively wicked in its treatment of the early Deists. Sir Leslie Stephen may have called himself an Agnostic, but with his work before me, I can hardly believe it, so spiteful and uncharitable is his description of men like Collins, Woolston and others of those splendid early fighters in the cause of intellectual freedom. How many Freethinkers did Stephen make? How much did he suffer for the "best of all causes"? And is it not a fact that his safety and respectability as an Agnostic were due to those early Deists and militant Freethinkers whom he so despised?

This is how the "historian" described Thomas Paine:—

We have already encountered Paine as an assailant of the religious belief of his day. No ingenuity of hero-worship can represent him as an altogether edifying phenomenon. Indeed, he is commonly made to serve the purpose of a scarecrow in religious tracts. One of his biographers describes his first interview with the old reprobate after his final flight to America. Paine appeared shabbily dressed, with a beard of a week's growth and "a face well carbuncled, fiery as the setting sun." Sitting over a table loaded with beer, brandy and a beef-steak, he repeated the introduction of his reply to Watson; a process which occupied half an hour and which was performed with perfect clearness, in spite of the speaker's intoxication. The details of his habits during the few remaining years of his life are simply disgusting; he was constantly drunk, filthy beyond all powers of decent expression, brutal to the woman he had seduced from her husband, constantly engaged in the meanest squabbles, and in short, as disreputable an old wretch as was at that time to be found in New York. Two or three well-meaning persons tried to extort some sort of confession from the dying infidel; but he died in a

state of surly adherence to his principles. The wretched carcass, about which he seems to have felt some anxiety was buried in his farm.

Now if Stephen is right about Paine, if Paine was a filthy drunken old reprobate, a disreputable old wretch, anxious about his wretched carcass, a man constantly drunk and brutal to the woman he had seduced, what a fine specimen of a Freethinker to have in a gallery of superior persons to Ingersoll! You will notice that Stephen gives no hint that he might be mistaken—nor does he show the slightest charity to a fellow-Freethinker. Paine is held up before us in all the brutal realism Stephen could muster, even to the beer, brandy and beefsteak which the horrible beast actually had for a meal.

Now it need hardly be said at this time of the day that the whole passage is a foul libel on a very great Englishman, whose name has never stood higher than at the present time in the minds of all decent people. It is a libel that Stephen himself came to see was a libel, but his retraction had to be literally forced out of him. In the second edition of his work, published a few years later, Stephen alters "one of his biographers" to "a hostile biographer," says "the portrait is drawn by an enemy," and that "Paine was not likely to receive full justice from his adversaries," and actually allows the passage to stand as first written! It seems incredible that a responsible historian on our side should actually have given a picture of Paine to the world which the slightest investigation could have proved was a beastly libel. And there is the passage to this day!

Sir Leslie took no notice (as far as I am aware) of Mr. Robertson's *Thomas Paine*, but he had most ignominiously to admit he was wrong in 1892, after the publication of Dr. Moncure Conway's monumental *Life of Paine*, which annihilated the slanderers once for all. Sixteen years after the publication of his *History*, Sir Leslie Stephen made "handsome amends." His only excuse "if it be an excuse," he tells us, "was the old one, pure ignorance." Bless the dear man! He, who dilated on Paine's vast "ignorance" has to fall back on an old "excuse." But the matter does not end here, for after the foul personal attack on Paine, Stephen did his best to disparage *The Age of Reason* and (as far as I know) he never admitted he was wrong. Read this:—

Paine, indeed is, in a sense but the echo of Collins and Woolston; but the tone of the speaker is altered. . . . The early deists wrote for educated men. Paine is appealing to the mob. . . . His ignorance was vast and his language brutal. . . . Paine reproduces the objections to the Bible, which occurred to him on a hasty reading, or which had reached him through the diffused scepticism of the time. . . . His reasoning, indeed, though defaced by much ribaldry, is simply the translation into popular language of a theory expounded by more accomplished critics. . . . He is apparently ignorant that anything of the kind had been said before. . . . *The Age of Reason* indeed sometimes amuses by the author's impudent avowal of ignorance. . . . Paine indeed deserved moral reprobation for his brutality and his book has in it an unpleasant flavour. . . .

Fancy this reverent Rationalist who is so much superior to Ingersoll, who is no rhetorician, who has something new of his own to say, treating such a mild Deistic work like *The Age of Reason* in this way! Brutal language, indeed! Prof. Laski's hero has the right to throw stones at glass houses, of course.

There is no need to controvert Stephen's criticism of Paine these days. It was done by that fine humanist, Dr. Conway, so thoroughly that only a religious ignoramus would ever again dare to throw mud at the great man. And I should not have called atten-

tion to the wretched incident, but for the fact that in his small way Prof. Laski is doing exactly what Stephen did. Safe to utter his heretical opinions, he wants to give no credit to the work Ingersoll did in the cause of freedom. Some of us are not going to allow that—as Prof. Laski already knows.

Let us see, however, what Ingersoll did for Paine and Paine's memory.

H. CUTNER.

(To be concluded.)

## Book Chat.

"TEN LADIES OF JOY" (Harleian Press, 21s.), by G. Ryley Scott, is a work that will interest most readers and shock many. Ten famous women are dealt with, Queen Elizabeth, Lady Hamilton, Nell Gynne, Ninon D'Lenclous, Marguerite of Navarre, Catherine the Great, George Sand, Madame du Barry, Lady Blessington, and Madame de Stael, and all come rather badly out of examination. For Mr. Scott is no respecter of persons. Queen or commoner, each is subjected to a critical examination, although it can hardly be called an examination of character as a whole.

Mr. Scott might well have given to his book the subtitle "A Study in Prostitution," since it is from this point of view that these characters are studied; and in so doing he is right in his resolve to tear away the veil that conventionality uses to cover women who are highly placed, or fashionably placed, while reserving its undiluted scorn for their sisters in temperament who are more lowly placed. But this leaves out of sight the fact that women whose sex-passion is abnormally developed, may have outstanding qualities of mind or character which form no small part of their attractiveness to the male. In some instances this feature is recognized, but not, we think sufficiently.

Perhaps the most interesting part of Mr. Scott's work, to those who will not be so greatly interested in his "Scandalous Chronicle" is the introduction, and we wish that it had taken up a larger portion of his book, for here Mr. Scott does make an interesting study of prostitution, a rather elastic word in his vocabulary. He will not have it that the prostitute is forced to her profession as a consequence of starvation or seduction, these are mainly excuses offered by women, to those who are looking for some such explanation. It is because women of a certain type—Mr. Scott would probably say of the ordinary type, long for the clothing, the luxury, the distinction that prostitution gives but which are denied them in the ordinary way. And they become more interesting to the average male. Mankind in general do not worship the blue-stocking, the woman preacher, the reformer; they pay their homage to a different type altogether. Mr. Scott is thus taken back with an aspect of the problem that is certainly as old as ancient Greece, and probably older. The psychologist will note the following passage:—

The attitude of the Puritan towards what he terms vice is based on repression either through fear of consequences, or through actual incapacity physiologically or psychologically induced. He knows well enough that he is itching for those forbidden joys, which in himself becomes all the more titillating through their impracticability, and in the mind of every other individual on earth he conceives the presence of the identical desire that dominates his own mind. Thus are born coincidentally his conception of vice, and the hatred of those who are capable of indulging in it. Thus in turn does he devise measures to protect the individual from himself.

We wish Mr. Scott had made his introduction longer.

Messrs. Watts & Co. have added four more volumes to their cheap and useful "Thinkers Library," all at 1s. each. Mr. Joseph McCabe's *Twelve Years in a Monastery*, is a reprint of his well known work, and describes his own experience as a priest and his transition to Freethought. The second volume is also a reprint, of Mr. A. W. Benn's useful *History of Modern Philo-*

sophy, a very satisfactory guide through the mazes of modern philosophy from Bacon to our own day. Mr. Robert Arch contributes an interesting and a concluding chapter, designed to bring the volume right up to date. He thinks that "a synthesis of realism and idealism will be the outcome of the long conflict of opposing systems." The third consists of Part I and the concluding chapter of Part III of Darwin's *Descent of Man*. In our judgment the remarkable fourth chapter might well have taken the place of the last. It shows Darwin's remarkable fertility and breadth of mind as hardly any other part of his work does. Major Leonard Darwin contributes a preface to this volume. Last on the list comes a reprint of the famous fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of The Roman Empire*. Mr. John M. Robertson writes the introduction which is a guarantee of its thoroughness. Even at this day Gibbon's two chapters are almost indispensable to any one who wishes to understand the rise of historical Christianity.

### Antiquarianism.

WRITING from the Rome of his period, on December, 1823, Leopardi says to his father:—

As to the men of letters, concerning whom you question me, I really know but few of them, and these few have quenched my desire to know more. All would ride in a coach to immortality, as the bad Christians to Paradise. According to them the crown of human knowledge, indeed the sole true science of man, is Antiquarianism.

I never fail to recall this passage when the village antiquary visits our "Literary" and reads one of his intimate studies of past persons and things, parochial or national. The subject under review was Joseph Train, a Scots poet and antiquary of note and contemporary of Sir Walter Scott, whose letters are just being published, and in which Train is assured of honourable mention, this humble scholar having often played the magnanimous part of "Jackal" to the lion of the great Sir Walter, supplying indeed many plots and incidents of the Novels. In the discussion following the paper it was, as might be expected, left to the village Atheist—the village idiot was not in evidence that evening—to enliven the members who are so prone to take matters all too seriously. He (the V.A.) grown impatient of a mere academic and historic past in the eternal crisis of the present, thought it was time to disencumber our minds and, as far as possible, review and reorganize *de novo* society and industry. Unemployment was a menace, even a rugged and awful crisis, while rapt revivalists were shouting in the streets about the sins, not the sorrows, the natural calamities, of men! while only echo answered from the deaf walls of the mean street. While the dead hand of the past and living suspicion of the present were pulling the strings of the Naval Conference and the delegates of five nations, four Christian, and one as good, held solemn conclave as to how they could possibly avoid murdering one another. The difficulty of that prohibition was the criterion of civilization.

Regarding the subject of the Essay, like all the others, the Freethinker confessed he "knew not Joseph"; and as another diversion recalled an incident of his own life: he had been more or less intimate with a certain Mr. Walton Newbold, then a red-hot Communist, now an ordinary member of the Labour Party—it is with a kind of malicious joy one recalls those levelling processes, for it is never pleasant to feel oneself sunned out, expunged and razed. Newbold's inside knowledge of "Capitalist" machinations was, and is, phenomenal, his energy untiring. My dear mother's knowledge of the inter-relations of Royalty was only second to it—my mother, Queen Victoria, what contemporaries! Who was the greater? Who can doubt?—even if the former were also a Christian!

But the V.A. had spoken to Newbold, in the latter's unregenerate days, a good many years ago, when, with the light of battle in his eye, he was about to address an open-air meeting: "Do you remember me, Mr. New-

bold," he had said. The answer flung at him by the superb young Bradlaugh was: "Who the hell are you?" The fear of genius is the beginning of wisdom. One learns to respect ones betters. But this is not likely to reach the eye of the Marcus Superbus that was, and might not confound him if it did, even if he knew at last, "Who the etc.," it was!—So the inquirer, previous to learning, might have asked—"Who the hell is Joseph Train?"

On an earlier night at the "Literary" we had the parson. Once a year at least the society must have:—

One honest man  
To grace its damned infernal clan.

The subject on this occasion was *The Three Scots Leaders*—Wallace, Knox, Burns. The patriot; the man who made Scotland a believing nation: Burns who taught it the gospel of man to man—all their virtues derived from the fountain of Jesus Christ. But, questioned the Disturbing Element, virtue was not confined to any one person or period, but the offspring of the modest years, the experiments, the necessities of man: there was, for instance, the pre-Christian Marcus Aurelius, a model moralist—here the preacher seemed to inquire who was the speaker. But he did not contest the matter. He had had five years of the Christian ministry, and a bit, with emphasis on the "bit," yet a poor record compared with so many parsons we had known who in this harsh world drew their breath in pain, in self-denying absence from felicity! He agreed, agreed, agreed, even with the opposition, in the growing good of the world and the power of Jesus Christ (the latter clause his own pure interpolation!) He arose and departed shaking hands all round—pal, al; pal al—and the poor soul faded from the room, the pathetic shadow of a fading God.

ANDREW MILLAR.

### Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S.

SIR,—The Bethnal Green Branch N.S.S. has been strengthened (after the late Secretary's illness) with some fresh young Bloods, who are looking forward to a vigorous campaign in Victoria Park this summer—which will open on April 20, at 3.15. We hope to have some evening meetings during next winter, near Aldgate.

We wish to make an appeal to East London Freethinkers to join up and so make success sure.

The new Secretary, Mr. Selmer, is a vigorous and ardent worker for Freethought.

JAMES NEATE.

### SCIENCE AND RELIGION.

SIR,—In the course of a recent broadcast last night, of his point of view, Sir Henry Newbold said that the conclusions of modern science have disproved the Materialistic theories of a generation ago, and that these conclusions suggest design in the universe, and that behind the latter there is a mind working to a certain end. Is it true that modern science sees or realizes that there is a mind at work behind all phenomena?

For my own part the idea of a personal God, one who has power to grant me eternal life, one who notes my every action, is repugnant and distasteful. I was of the opinion that the findings of science had disproved the existence of a personal deity, a creator of the Universe.

ICONCLAST.

MRS. PANKHURST AND MR. BALDWIN.

SIR,—The current issue of the *Freethinker* contains a paragraph relative to the unveiling of the statue of Mrs. Pankhurst by Mr. Stanley Baldwin. The article states that Mr. Baldwin "delivered a speech, presumably as leader of the party that opposed her (Mrs. Pankhurst) so bitterly during her life."

Mr. Baldwin, and possibly a majority of the Conservative Party to which he belonged, may have been opposed to Mrs. Pankhurst, but their opposition could hardly have been "bitter," as the Conservative Party was not in office at any time during the militant suffrage campaign. Under Mr. Asquith, the Liberal Party, of which the majority of its members were pledged to support women's enfranchisement, was responsible for all the bitterness which undoubtedly prevailed.

WM. SKATE.

### Society News.

A MOST interesting lecture on "Egyptology" and the "Book of the Dead," was given by Mr. F. W. Read.

I am sure that all those present will be visiting that section of the British Museum to look further into that subject. Little was known of Egyptology before the latter end of the eighteenth century.

Nothing yet has been discovered to corroborate the statement in the Book of Exodus, that such a tribe as the Jews were ever in bondage in Egypt.

We hope to have the pleasure of listening to more of this interesting subject in the near future.

B.A.L.E.M.

### Obituary

MR. OSWALD GODMAN.

THE remains of Oswald Godman were cremated at Golders Green on Thursday, March 20. At the comparative early age of forty-nine death came under tragic circumstances. Cycling home, he was knocked down by a motor-car and died without regaining consciousness.

A member of the N.S.S. for some years, his Freethought principles were always in evidence. To his sorrowing wife and family we offer sincerest sympathy. A Secular Service was conducted by R. H. Rosetti.

Though to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children may be morality good enough for divinities, it is scorned by average human nature.—*Thomas Hardy.*

### Miscellaneous Advertisements.

**PENSIONERS.**—To Let at 5s. weekly, Small Bungalow, use of Kitchen, and large garden.—"SCHOPENHAUER," Elm Cottage, Dawes Heath, Southend.

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## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON.

#### INDOOR.

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8, near Marlborough Road Station): 11.15, Mr. William Platt—"Schemes of Family Endowment."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Carrie Hedges—"Greek Drama," with Illustrated Readings from *The Medea*.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Public Hall, Clapham Road, close to Clapham North Station): 7.30, Debate—"Is Christianity True?" *Affir.*: Mr. H. Hewitt; *Neg.*: Mr. I. Ebury.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Mrs. Corbett Ashby—"The Influence of Women on International Work."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (The Orange Tree, Euston Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Debate—"Is Parliament Unnecessary?"—*Affir.*: Mr. Manne; *Neg.*: Mr. Bonar Thompson. Thursday April 10, at 101 Tottenham Court Road, Dance and Social, 7.30 to 11.30. Admission 1s.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, entrance Theobald's Road): 7.30, Mr. W. P. Campbell Everden—"The Meaning of Evolution."

#### OUTDOOR.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.30, Messrs. Charles Tuson and James Hart; 3.15, Messrs. F. 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.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"Freethought and a Future Life."

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, A Door, City Hall, Albion Street): 6.30, A Musical Evening.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Right Hon. John M. Robertson.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street): 7.0, Mr. Arthur Middleton (Manchester) Secretary, Humane Education Society—"Social and Medical Reform." Will all those intending to be present please note the change of time, 7.0 instead of 7.30, and will they also please remember that 7.0 means 7.0, and not 7.30.

MINERS' HALL, NEW HERRINGTON.—Mr. John T. Brighton (Secretary Chester-le-Street N.S.S.) will lecture at 7.0, on "Christianity and Persecution." Admission Free. Collection. Questions invited. Freethought literature will be on sale at the door.

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## 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.

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