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Views and Opinions.

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The Truth About Russia.

WE are bringing these articles on religion in Russia to a close, not because the subject is exhausted, but because there are other things that demand attention in these columns, and because the aim in writing them was to give a general view of the situation. And I think enough has been said to show that the purpose of this clerical agitation—apart from the political motive—was to discredit Freethought in this country by associating it with a catalogue of horrors that reminds one of the Christian Church during its most active years, and so frightening timid unbelievers into silence with respect to their Freethought, or into support of the agitation by getting them to denounce "atrocities" for the existence of which we have to rely mainly, if not entirely, upon clerical testimony. It will also be observed that in these articles I have said nothing of the Soviet denials of the religious persecution, of the rebutting testimony of those favourable to the Soviet or of the distinct denial of the Russian Jewish Rabbis that such persecution exists. I note here the *Church Times* regrets that the *Manchester Guardian* should have been so false to its traditions as not to join in the "Protest." But all that the *Guardian* has asked for is evidence, and that deaths that may have occurred during the Revolutionary years 1918-23 should not be broadcast as events of yesterday, and that tales which, when tracked down are found to depend upon statements made by exiled Russian priests, who have no proof to offer, should not be accepted as irrefutable evidence.

* * *

Making Martyrs.

Let us bear in mind that the original case on which the agitation was built was that religious worship

was forbidden in Russia, that all the churches were closed, that thousands of priests were murdered in circumstances of almost unbelievable brutality, and that these things occurred at the direct order of the Government. But against these statements we have the generally negative and sometimes positive evidence of visitors to Russia, witnesses who are very often without sympathy with the Ideals of the Soviet. Thus, Alderman Womersley, of Sheffield, stated in the local *Independent*, that in 1927 he found the Churches open and people worshipping as usual. The well-known American journalist, Dreisser, who spent several months in Russia (1927) says that he heard of executions and imprisonments all over Russia, but does not attribute these to the suppression of religion, and does point out that the deaths which took place immediately after the revolution were due to the hatred felt to a class that had always treated the people as dogs. He also says that he saw established in Russia "the finest educational system I have ever seen." In an interview with Archbishop Platon he could hear no complaints of persecution, but he did get the complaint that the Church was very poor, and that the youth of the country were learning to laugh at religion. (Our own House of Commons has just declared that this is a crime that ought to be punished with anything up to twelve months imprisonment.) Positive statements of this kind might be multiplied indefinitely.

From another angle, the Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, the Rev. Mr. Rushbrooke, complained in the *Christian World* for March 6, that too much stress had been laid on "mere horrors," which might easily be exaggerated, but that the real menace is that the Soviet intends destroying religious belief. In the same article he says he has "definite grounds" for believing that not less than 200 clergymen were imprisoned in Russia in 1929. But it happens that a few days later Mr. Henderson informed the House of Commons that he had asked Mr. Rushbrooke for particulars of persecution, and had been supplied with the names of seven people. So that evidently the "definite grounds" were not definite enough to include 193 out of 200. In any case 200 would have been a very small bag for one year while Russia was under the rule of the Holy Synod. Multiplication by fission is well known in biology, but for seven to develop into 200 is a very rapid rate of growth.

In the same issue of the *Christian World* there appears an article from a "Russian Priest," who mentions the execution of three priests, but with no details. Incautiously he says they were killed for storing grain—an offence in Russia, as food-hoarding was in England during the war. He mentions the closing of three monasteries—cause unnamed—but says nothing of atrocities. His personal complaint is that he is in trouble for non-payment of taxes—and

as the clergy were tax free before the revolution, we can understand the feeling of persecution. I do not wonder that the *Church Times* says it is "certainly possible" that the numbers persecuted "have been exaggerated by Russian exiles," and that "the assassinations have been over-coloured." What a blow for our good Christian "Jix"!

* * *

The Closed Churches.

That a number of Churches and Synagogues have been closed is clear. The Government puts it at 2,000 out of 50,000, and as this number is mentioned as a sign of progress, and not by way of excuse, it may be accepted. It is, moreover, what one would expect. The educational policy of the Government has now been in operation for some years. It has exposed the frauds worked by the priests in the shape of miraculously preserved bodies of saints, and miracle-working images. It has conducted a general education, from which all religion has been eliminated, and an active propaganda has been carried on by Atheistic organizations, to which Government officials have given their countenance much as in this country they give it to religion. It is only to be expected that this would have the effect of turning people away from religion, and so help to close some churches. It must be remembered that by law a religious congregation may have the free use of a church, with everything pertaining to the worship of the cult, but if after a given notice there is no application for such a purpose, the building, on the request of the people may be put to other uses. Mr. Hindus says of Jewish Synagogues, that he found many closed for want of attendants, and the same is true of churches. In some case religious buildings have been closed because they did not fulfil sanitary requirements. These considerations will unquestionably explain why many churches have been closed, a fact of the situation carefully avoided by the "Atrociteers." At any rate, the mere fact that both Jewish Rabbis and Christian priests in Russia have issued statements denying the existence of religious persecution, is enough to prove, at least, that their worship is going on unhindered.

* * *

Summing Up.

Now let me sum up the situation as I see it. (1) We are witnessing one of the greatest experiments in sociology the world has seen for centuries, even if it has a parallel in any age. Following the close of a disastrous war, and the collapse of one of the worst Governments in the civilized world, and with a population for the most part little removed from sheer barbarism, an attempt is being made to give civilization a new orientation, and in direct antagonism to many prevailing ideas in other centres of culture. To say, as did Archdeacon Thorpe, of Macclesfield, the other day, that "the Russian Government were actually teaching the little children all kinds of immorality," or with Bishop Welldon, that "the aim of the Russian Government is to contaminate the souls of the young with every vice and with the most shameful excesses," or with another Bishop "that Russia intends to destroy all civilization and all morality," is to show extraordinary ignorance, or a wonderful capacity for sheer lying. If men can be said to degrade life it is men of this stamp. We may disagree with the Soviet conception of civilization, or with their revision of moral values, we may feel confident of its failure, or hope for its failure, but we ought to at least be able to show some little sense of decency and honesty when dealing with ideas from which we dissent—unless we happen to be a Christian Bishop. Then all things are possible.

(2) By means of a Dictatorship, an attempt is being made to establish a system of Communism, in which the merging of self in a sense of social service shall become an accomplished fact. Russia is not at present a Communistic State. It aims at becoming such, but at present it is a Dictatorship by a class, and it makes no concealment of the fact. Much of what is being done would not be tolerated in other countries, nor could the plea of necessity be set up. But Russia is not England, or France, or Germany. It is Russia, and its past history has been a very terrible one. That this history has been so black, is due to Czardom and its Church, and if the reaction is severe, the responsibility must rest largely with its past rulers.

(3) The principal method by which the Soviet seeks to achieve its end is by a system of intensive education, which shall eliminate everything that is opposed to Communism. To all such objections that this education is harsh, even repressive, the reply is made that it is necessary. And if there was ever an excuse for such methods anywhere, the excuse certainly exists in Russia. The rule is an iron one, there is no pretence that it is otherwise. But, again, Russia is not England, and constitutional methods that would suit the conditions obtaining in England, France, or Germany, cannot be held to be applicable in every other country without regard to its position. The plight of Russia, judged only from the influence of the war on the old regime was desperate, and with a Church such as the old Czarist Church, which even in the terribly famine-stricken condition of the country, declined to surrender any portion of its vast wealth to feed the people, there was neither time nor the occasion for the application of English constitutional methods. Those who think that it was possible to treat the Russian Church exactly as we might treat the English Church in a process of disestablishment, simply have no proper understanding of the situation.

(4) The Soviet avows publicly that one of its aims is the elimination of religion from life. I do not think it would hesitate to do this at once, if it could manage it, but it is sufficiently "realistic" to recognize that it must reckon with the ignorance, the habits, the traditions of the people, and contents itself with encouraging an anti-religious propaganda, while preventing the teaching of religion in any public building or institution, apart from those Churches licenced for that purpose.

(5) Nearly all who have visited Russia agree that the Revolution has given the average Russian a sense of his own manhood such as he never before had. The old order can never be restored in its entirety. Neither the Church nor the Monarchy can ever again be in Russia what it was.

On the other side of the question, and the one with which we are immediately concerned, the following may be taken as representing a rough outline of the situation.

(1) The stories of the compulsory closing of all the Churches and the Governmental prohibition of religious worship are now dropped, but only after repeated exposures of their falsity. There is no prohibition of worship, and any religious body in Russia, Christian, Jewish, Mohammedan, or other, may have a place of worship placed at its disposal on application.

(2) The list of "massacres" appears to emanate from Russian priests, who have collected a number of deaths which occurred during the revolutionary period of 1918-23, when the revolutionary armies of Dennikin, Koltchak, Wrangel and others were in the field, and the Czarist Church was doing what it could to incite the peasant against the Soviet.

(Even to-day the Moscow Correspondent of the *Spectator* (March 22), points out that the clergy are inciting the peasants to resist the establishment of Collectivist farms, which the Soviet regards as essential to its agrarian policy). To these have been added imprisonments and executions of priests for all sorts of offences, and lumped together as evidences of religious persecutions, leaving it for the irresponsible minds of such men as "Jix" to supply whatever details their imaginations suggested. The quite unscrupulous character of the people who manipulate these atrocities may be gauged by a recent incident. On March 15, the *Morning Post* published an account of a bishop Serafini, via its Rome Correspondent, concerning the latest "atrocities in Russia." Among these was the case of Archbishop Benjamin who for his religious belief was tied to a paddle steamer, dragged through the icy water and died in unspeakable agonies. On March 17 the well-known writer, and anti-Bolshevist, F. A. Mackenzie, wrote saying that Benjamin was not killed recently, but in 1923. He was not dragged behind a paddle-boat, but was tried in the Old Nobles Club, in Leningrad, for resisting the government decrees, ordered to be shot, and was shot. Mr. Mackenzie says he was in Leningrad at the time and knew all about it. Most papers would at least have been silent after that. But the *M.P.* is built of sterner stuff. Mr. Mackenzie published, the other day, a book on Russia, *The Russian Crucifixion*. He repeats his statement, with details as to the shooting of Benjamin. But the *Morning Post*, in its review of the book writes, with the book before it (March 28), writes that the book tells the story of Benjamin, who was "brutally murdered by drowning bound to the paddle of a steamer." Mere facts are not to be permitted to stand in the way of a lie told for religious purposes.

(3) The dominating motive of the agitation here is avowedly hostility to a Government that has withdrawn all privileges from religion, and which gives societies engaged in the combating of religious beliefs the same kind of unfair encouragement that our own Government gives to those engaged here in the dissemination of religion. It is the reaction of this policy on their own privileged position that men like Bishop Welldon fear.

Finally, let me say again that I am not writing as a defender of Communism or of Dictatorships. I do not believe in Communism and I dislike Dictatorships. But I do recognize that Russia is not England! and that it was inevitable that Russia should pass through the fire before it could be even partly cleansed from the infamy of the late Russian Czarist Church. The future of the Russian people is in their own hands; it will be the better for their being left to work out their own destiny in their own way.

I am writing as a Freethinker, and I am not to be deterred from saying what I think about the situation because of any possibly objectionable things that may be done by people who call themselves Atheists. Atheism can well look after itself in any comparison that may be made with Christianity on that score. Bolshevism could at least plead that if it has been severe, even brutally severe, it had to deal with a generation that had been brutalized and kept in ignorance by centuries of Church rule, and that its severity was dictated by the hope of a regenerated humanity. But the religion that has over and over again drenched the earth with blood, which has laid provinces waste, and which, in Russia, kept millions of people in a state of animal subjection to a viciously corrupt aristocracy and Church, acted for the greater glory of God and the aggrandisement of his Church.

The blood that was shed century after century in that cause may easily be forgotten and forgiven, the blood shed even in a mistaken attempt to better man can never be overlooked. Seven centuries of misgovernment in the name of God may be excused; but ten years of stern, tyrannical rule in the name of man can never be extenuated.

I may paraphrase Carlyle on another great world struggle. History looking back over the years 1917-30, will cry out at the repression, the waste, the bloodshed, at the tyranny of it all. And yet history, if it be impartial, when it looks at the Russian people, and notes how—not in their thousands, but in their millions—they were robbed and murdered, their homes degraded and their women ravished, will say there is one thing even worse than the history of these past twelve years, and that is the sight of a people living under such a system, and who yet lacked the courage to rise, and at all costs send such a damnable thing hurtling hellwards.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Adderley's Apologia.

"We have done with the kisses that sting,
The thief's mouth red from the feast,
The blood on the hands of the King,
And the lie at the lips of the priest."—*Swinburne*.

A story is told of Napoleon that, examining a mass of correspondence which had accumulated during his absence on a campaign, he remarked: "It is strange how these letters answer themselves." The clergy sometimes answer themselves, and cause merriment when they intend to rouse enthusiasm. Recently, the Rev. Percy Dearmer has been writing on "The Splendour of the Church of England," in the pages of *The Contemporary Review*, and he instanced "The Authorized Version" of the Christian Bible and *The Book of Common Prayer* as being no small part of the splendour he so admires.

Still more recently, Canon James Adderley, Rector of Saint Edmund's, Lombard Street, replying to a lady's complaint that portions of the *Book of Common Prayer* were very highly unsatisfactory, said that Members of Parliament were responsible for the continued use of this Prayer Book, and that the blame must be placed on the broad shoulders of the politicians and not those of the priests—poor things!

The plea for the overhauling and re-upholstering of the *Book of Common Prayer* came from Miss Margery Lawrence, the novelist, and she urged, particularly, that parts of the State Church services are not only out-of-date, but are highly objectionable, and embarrassing to the fair sex. Freethinkers have said the same thing for generations, and Miss Lawrence is very belated in her criticisms. But had the lady before writing her article troubled to read more attentively the full services in this official prayer book, she would have learned that all these out-of-date, highly objectionable, and embarrassing passages have full Biblical sanction, and in so many cases are actually accompanied by lengthy quotations from the Old and New Testaments in support of what she complains of.

Canon Adderley knows this quite well. He says "there is no excuse for continuing the old and offensive language" of this Prayer Book sanctioned by Parliament, but he urges that the "Prayer Book as Proposed in 1928" would meet these feminine difficulties, because the very worst features of the older edition have been cut out or altered. So he blames the Members of Parliament for refusing to sanction these repairs and alterations designed to give a

further lease of life to Priestcraft in this country, and to safeguard the enormous properties vested in the hands of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.

Canon Adderley's ruse is a smart one, but it is no more convincing than his gibe at the "cocktail" critics of the present Prayer Book. The present edition of the *Book of Common Prayer* is too well known, and its close association with the "Authorized Version" of the Christian Bible too well recognized for it to be thrown thus rudely to the rubbish heap without disastrous results to Orthodoxy. It is not only a desperate policy in the particular instance, but a precedent which will exert, in the long run, anything but a happy effect on the Christian position.

The Canon "roars like a sucking dove," but even he cannot alter facts. The decision of the State clergy to excise portions of "God's Word" from the proposed Prayer Book is not a paltry matter at all. For the Christian Bible is not an ordinary book. It is stamped as "God's Word" by Act of Parliament; it is forced, including its unseemly passages, into the hands of little children in the national schools, it is used as a fetish in order to attempt to make men speak the truth in Courts of Law and Houses of Legislation. Men and women have been robbed of their children in its name, and excluded from public positions. And people are still liable, at law, to penalties for bringing it into "disbelief and contempt."

Yet it is as plain as a pikestaff that the Christian Bible is vulnerable, and very open to present-day criticism. It is a thankless task to enumerate the false, foolish, and wicked features of these Holy Scriptures, but the sacred volume is full of barbarism from cover to cover. From the first error in "Genesis," to the final absurdity in "Revelation," much of the writing is of anthropological interest, although presented in exotic forms of verse. In far too many places in the Old Testament the writing is filled with the turmoil of battle, the champing of horses, the flashing and bickering of swords of barbarians. Only on rare occasions does the still, sad voice of humanity make itself heard. As for the New Testament, it is open to still graver objections. The highly evolved moral perceptions of to-day are shocked beyond expression at the awful doctrine that countless millions of our fellow-creatures will suffer eternal punishment. Freethinkers have long pointed out that it is not theology which uplifts humanity, but humanity itself which purifies theology. Man civilizes himself first, and then civilizes the deities of his degradation, and the priests walk at the tail of the procession and take the credit and the offerings of the faithful.

Canon Adderley is a peer's son who has for years marched with the Socialist Army, and has also attained high distinction in the State Church. How he reconciles these "fell, opposed opposites" it is for him to determine. Socialists ought to believe in Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, but the Christian's beliefs are still entombed within the covers of an Oriental fetish-book. Men ask for the bread of knowledge; the State Church offers but the worn stone of superstition, which has done duty for thousands of years. Such priestly teaching is no longer of any practical use, and represents but a sluggish backwater in the river of human knowledge. The great river of thought rolls on, and bears us further and ever further away from the ignorance and superstition of the past, further and ever further from the shadow of the Christian Cross with its ghastly burden.

"No soul that lived, loved, wrought and died,
Is this their carrion crucified?"

MIMNERMUS.

A Black God.

Two years ago we had an American film of the Gospel story of Jesus Christ, under the title of "The King of Kings"; characterized, in the words of Mr. Squire, by "a complete absence of intellect, imagination, dramatic sense, and religious awe." And by Mr. Sidney Carroll, the dramatic critic, as being "conceived by a mind attuned, not to the noble and inspiring spirit of the New Testament, but to the spectacular orgies of Hollywood potentates," and arousing similar emotions to those kindled by "religious eleographs." Now America has gone one better and placed God himself on the stage, in a play entitled "Green Pastures," and doubtless we shall soon see God on the "movies."

"Green Pastures," according to the description of Mr. R. J. Cruickshank, the New York correspondent to the *Daily News* (March 15), is a dramatic version of Old Testament stories as seen through the eyes of Negroes, and has swept sophisticated Broadway off its feet. He declares, "No play in recent years has made such a sensation. On the first night of its production hard-bitten critics were moved to tears, and one of the most distinguished of their number avowed that he was too shaken by it to do more than blurt out that it has done something which will make 1930 remembered when other years are forgotten." A famous essayist has declared that he prefers "Green Pastures" to "Hamlet," and others speak of it as sublime."

Evidently the New York critics belong to a different species to our London critics; for we cannot imagine anything less than an earthquake shaking our dramatic critics out of their Olympian calm. Having read so far, perhaps our readers are prepared for some startling revelation of awe-inspiring majesty, representing all that is highest and noblest in humanity. Nothing of the kind; God, and all the other characters in the play, are represented by Negroes!

The play, in fact, is founded on Mr. Roark Bradford's book *Ol' Man Adam an' His Chillun*, and the author of the play is Mr. Marc Connelly (himself a white man). It is claimed that the success of the acting is due to the fact that the negroes are faithfully presenting the religious experiences, and beliefs, of their race. The *Daily News* correspondent describes the play as follows:—

God himself is the chief figure in the play, depicted as an infinitely kindly white-haired negro preacher, wearing the conventional long black coat and white tie. His endless patience, His good-humoured tolerance, His bitter sorrow over the wickedness of mankind, touched the hard-boiled New York audience as no sermon could have done.

The atmosphere of reverence was so genuine that no one in the theatre was even startled when God was revealed sitting in a small, homely office, managing the universe from a roll-top desk, and ordering the sun to be a little less hot.

His despairing comment to the Archangel Gabriel, "Being God is no bed of roses," expressed more than moral preachments the suffering human evil causes the Creator. After all, this is the way the devout negroes on the cotton plantations dramatize God, as a kind old gentleman who loves them.

We know that in the old Medieval plays, God and the Devil, Adam and Eve—in a state of nature—and other Bible characters were represented on the stage. And on Cathedral buildings sculptures are often to be seen of God making the sun, moon, and stars, and hanging them in the firmament. In the *Nuremberg Chronicle* (1493), God is represented making Adam out of clay, on the bank of a stream, he has him finished as far as the waist. The next illustration

shows Adam asleep and God extracting Eve from his ribs. But we have never seen God depicted as a Negro. Still, as nobody but Adam, Abraham, and Moses ever saw God, and strange to say, neither of these thought it worth while giving a description of the maker of the universe, he is quite as likely to be a negro as a white man, and we must face the possibility with resignation. But how does this accord with the paternity of the only-begotten-son? He was not a negro. But here we are touching on delicate ground and may easily fall into the sin of blasphemy and attract the attentions of Mr. James Douglas, ever waiting to pounce on sinners. We will imitate the theologians and call it a mystery, and leave it at that.

The New York correspondent says that although there is said to be an old law against representations of the Deity, no one has sought to put the law in motion, and many of the clergy approve of the play. Continuing his description, he concludes:—

Tears mingled with smiles as the black-faced, snowy-winged archangels and angels were seen enjoying their Saturday night fried-fish supper in Paradise before God made the world, and a piccanniny angel got a fishbone stuck in its throat.

There is the same exquisitely naive charm in the scenes of the angel charwomen dusting Jehovah's roll-top desk, and in Noah sounding his steam-whistle like a Mississippi steam-boat captain and hustling the animals into the Ark.

It seems to us that American ideas upon religion are radically different from ours, and from those prevailing in Europe generally. Speaking personally, I know that the idea of God being a Negro would have appeared most revolting to me when I was a believer. The average American, to judge by his films and much of his literature, is lacking in the sense of awe and reverence that characterizes the religion of most other countries. Perhaps the democratic sentiment has killed it. The idea prevailing in the States that one man is as good as another has, unconsciously, been extended to supernatural beings as well, hence the familiarity. We can imagine an American meeting God in the street and inviting him to come right in and sit down and make himself at home.

The vulgar and shallow familiarity with religion displayed by Moody and Sankey, Mrs. Aimee McPherson, and other American evangelists, appears profane and shocking to our Church and Chapel congregations. Although, of course, there is a lower stratum at the Salvation Army level who find it satisfying.

We are curious to see whether the play will be performed over here, and if so, how it will be received.

W. MANN.

A FAREWELL.

The lofty shade advances;
I fetch my flute and play;
Come, lads, and learn the dances
And praise the tune to-day.
To-morrow, more's the pity,
Away we both must hie,
To air the ditty
And to earth I.—A. E. Housman.

What reasonable explanation can be offered for the fact that God, supposed to be absolute perfection, should have absurdly taken the trouble to create something imperfect, only to impose on us, poor mortals, the task of perfecting it, and then should have punished us with eternal damnation for not succeeding where he had failed.—Georges Clemenceau.

A Forgotten Chapter in Biography.

(Concluded from page 204.)

II.

WHEN, after the civil war in America, Ingersoll started his Freethought campaign, he was immediately assailed in every foul way known so well by religionists. Fundamentalism as is part of America to this day, it is a very mild Fundamentalism compared with what the great American had to contend with. Hundreds of towns and villages were packed with childish and credulous believers led through the nose by either equally stupid ministers or astute gentlemen on the make. The psalm-singing and devout negro of to-day is typical of thousands of the American citizens of sixty or seventy years ago, and the "infidel" was taught how very unpleasant unbelief could be made.

But Ingersoll was not quite the man to take things lying down. A born orator—one of the most remarkable ever produced by the United States of America—a magnificent lawyer, gifted with wit and humour and great powers of repartee, he was quite a different proposition from the average "man-in-the-street" heretic. His profession made him independent of personal attacks. "All right," he would say, "I am a liar, a thief, and a murderer; now let's get on with the argument." His charity, his humanity, knew no bounds. The religious leaders, Calvinist, Presbyterian, or Roman Catholic, could rail and fume against Colonel "Bob" Ingersoll, the title and the nickname both used in contempt and derision; they could scream he was in favour of whisky and suicide; but they were powerless to stop his enormous success, his immense audiences and the phenomenal sale of his lectures and addresses. To say he had "nothing new" of his own to say, as Prof. Laski claims, is the kind of criticism which must make anyone who has read his life and works, simply smile. Of course he has no *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* to his credit, or *Hamlet* or even *David Copperfield*. But why should one belittle the magnificent work he did in his own field on that account?

What is "new" anyway? Did Darwin discover Evolution, for example? Did Gibbon or Grote write something absolutely "new"? The interpretation of known facts or their representation can be "new" and in that sense what Ingersoll gave us was new. Bishop Colenso wrote I don't know how many volumes in his demolition of the Pentateuch. I should say they contain all the mistakes possible to be discovered in the Mosaic account. Ingersoll wrote as one of his longest and most entertaining pamphlets, *The Mistakes of Moses*. It is packed with his inimitable wit and humour and Ingersollism. If anything can be called new surely it is this splendid addition to our Freethought armoury. He analysed that dreadful Evangelist—De Wit Talmage. He—not literally—wiped the floor with this devout and all-believing Christian, and he wrote a dialogue, reprinted as *A Christian Catechism*, in which all his irony and sarcasm are used to pulverize the stupidities and incoherences and superstitions, not only of Christians in general, but of Talmage in particular. Was not this "new"? It may not be, of course, to Prof. Laski; but to those of us who can appreciate the enormous difficulties of writing Freethought stuff enlivened with attic salt and more, to say Ingersoll "had nothing new of his own to say," is nonsense. No one would credit that fine veteran Humanist, Mr. Henry S. Salt, with fierce militant Freethought, but even he was led to protest against the absurdity of Prof. Laski's criticism. When Ingersoll

commenced thinking for himself, he found the name of Thomas Paine hated and reviled almost beyond belief, and the very first speech he ever made in public was in his defence. The blackguardly lies with which Paine was reviled are not nowadays willingly repeated by Christians, mainly because of the work of Ingersoll and Moncure Conway. But till the latter produced his *Life of Thomas Paine*, it was Ingersoll who made the defence of Paine almost his supreme battle cry. Year after year he defended the Englishman's name and honour. He was not content with mere defence. He met the slanderers and liars on their own ground, and backed his challenge with gold. When the editor of the *New York Observer* repeated the lie that Paine recanted on his death-bed, Ingersoll offered 1,000 dollars to any minister who could prove it. That was in 1877. The challenge was accepted, says Ingersoll, "but the paper then told a falsehood about it. But I kept after the gentlemen, until I forced them, in their own paper to print these words:—

We have never stated in any form, nor have we ever supposed, that Paine actually renounced his infidelity. The accounts agree that he died a blaspheming infidel."

Christians, of course, won't give up the various "infidel" death-bed scenes, particularly those in which the screaming unbeliever has a Bible in one hand, a bottle of whisky in the other while shouting for Jesus with the third, but Ingersoll killed that particular lie once for all.

Now could anyone imagine Sir Leslie Stephen stumping the country in defence of Paine? Or offering £200 to the slanderers to prove their lies? Ingersoll was not a respectable reverent Agnostic writing "history" without making any attempt to verify his authorities, and then asking to be forgiven because what he did was "in pure ignorance." This, according to Prof. Laski, shows one has "something new to say," if only it repeats the old, old lies. But the man who used his tremendous personality, his oratory and his purse in defence of one of the most maligned and hated of all Freethinkers—he, naturally, is vastly "overrated," and has "nothing new to say." I want the reader to compare the two passages I gave last week, written by Sir Leslie Stephen about Thomas Paine, with the following taken out of Ingersoll's lecture on Thomas Paine, given in 1880 in Chicago:—

He hated superstition; he loved the truth. He hated tyranny; he loved liberty. He was the friend of the human race. He lived a brave and thoughtful life. He was a good and true and generous man and he died as he lived. Like a great and peaceful river with green and shaded banks, without a murmur, without a ripple, he flowed into the waveless ocean of eternal peace. I love him; I love every man who gave me, or who helped to give me the liberty I enjoy to-night; I love every man who helped to put our flag in heaven. I love every man who has lifted his voice in any age for liberty for a shameless body and a fetterless brain. I love every man who has given to every human being every right that he claimed for himself. I love every man who has thought more of principle than he has of position. I love the men who have trampled crowns beneath their feet, that they might do something for mankind, and for that reason I love Thomas Paine.

One cannot, even with the best will in the world, imagine Stephen writing like that of almost any Deist, and certainly not of Thomas Paine. I admit the words Ingersoll uses are not new. They will be all found in Shakespeare, for example. But the way Ingersoll has combined them is—in my humble opinion—quite new.

Finally, I want to call attention to Ingersoll as a controversialist. He met Dr. Field, Judge Black and Gladstone, and replied to Cardinal Manning. He proved himself a master of debate. I have read a good deal of this kind of literature, and I take off my hat to Ingersoll. His opponents were not nonentities. They were almost at the top as Christian defenders, but they had little chance with the American Colonel. He did not simply unhorse them; he made them, in many passages, look positively silly. They had neither his wit nor his humour, nor his urbanity, nor—though it might upset Prof. Laski to say it—his learning. Ingersoll had much more than book knowledge; he knew exactly what it was worth.

We, who honour the great militant Freethinkers, who are proud of Paine and Carlyle, of Robert Taylor and Hetherington, of Bradlaugh and Foote, recognize in Robert G. Ingersoll a great and worthy companion of those others who fought so long and valiantly for Freethought and free speech. We know their work and what they did for us and we salute them all across the unknown abyss.

H. CUTNER.

The Goodness of God.

"GOOD MORNING! What a lovely day!"

It was indeed a glorious morning, the sun had dissipated the night fog and occupied a serene sky.

"Yes," said my Christian friend, "who can refuse to believe in the goodness of God on such a fine day as this?"

"But surely your memory is very short," I replied, "to forget all the disagreeable weather we have had lately. Have you already forgotten the torrential rains and wild storms; the great loss of life on land and sea, the damage to property, the large number of beautiful trees thrown to the ground? Yet, because we have had one fine day—you give praise to God!" "God may have his reasons for the bad weather, he moves in a mysterious way we cannot understand," asserted my friend.

"But there is nothing mysterious about the weather, at least not to the meteorologist, by the law of Nature there must always be bad weather somewhere, it is always extremely cold in the arctic, as it is extremely hot in the tropics," I said.

"Yes," said my companion undaunted, "the laws of Nature are the laws of God, the bad seasons and conditions are meant to try us and teach us our dependence on God."

"But," I persisted, "the ways of Nature are very erratic and soulless, actuated by no moral or divine laws, but conforming to inherent causation, quite opposed to the fictitious laws of religious goodness. God is supposed to be good by you Christians because you have identified what you think good with God, and you never consider that he may equally be identified with what someone else thinks evil."

"But, surely all Nature is good and beautiful," he rejoined.

"Yes," I replied, "the brilliant days, the warm and restful nights, with all that delights and pleases us, you consider good, and you assume that all good can only come from God."

This is a fundamental error for all Nature's products are at variance, violently struggling to consume and destroy, for in this way it constructs and creates. Suffering is as much a part of Nature as joy. If God could be identified with Nature, *i.e.*, as consciously controlling natural forces, such control would be demonstrably evil. If God has no control, his existence must be questionable and unnecessary. If on the other hand he is able to exert a beneficial influence here and does not do so, he must be assumed to be an evil genius, for no conscious mind could survey the mass of error, misery and murder in the world and not seek to modify its effects or limit its horror.

We see a lamb frisking in the sunshine, the bird

chirping on the bough, the smiling infant in the cot. We do not consider the lamb fatted for the slaughter, the bird crippled and dying in the hedgerow, the infant struggling through life endowed with physical defects, miserable to the grave.

"As in their birth—wherein they are not guilty
Since nature cannot choose his origin."—*Hamlet*.

Civilization succeeds only so far as Nature is subdued. Bacterial, animal and plant pests seek constantly to invade the territories made safe by man.

To relax the fight would allow Nature or God to again depasture the fields with thorn, thistle and nettle, to debilitate our bodies with malignant germs and to permit domesticated animals to revert again to savagery. What nonsense to describe God as good!

The soil is crowded with malignant and beneficial bacteria struggling perpetually for the mastery, the water with warring animalcule, the air we breathe with germs and the whole natural world is perpetual strife. Man is the only adaptable animal capable of peace, and this only by subordinating all natural propensities to social purposes.

Our present semi-cultured development (we are still nationally capable of appalling cruelties and exquisite torments) and social laws merely veneer crude animal tendencies.

We may say some of Natures' infrequent moods please us when our animal nature is satisfied in food, clothing, warmth and circumstance; an artist or naturalist (free from economic need) admires the tangle of weeds, the golden dandelion in the sun, the wayside brambles, the wild thorn, the scuttling rat. But these survive, not by the will of God, but by man's tolerance.

"I must admit that Nature at least does not seem to deserve the attribute of Good," conceded my friend.

"Then," I replied, "why not examine the other illustrations of the Christian teaching. Christian beliefs are like the idea of God's goodness, merely illusions exploited by the clergy. They have dressed up and reformed the Hebrew God Jave in an attractive guise, with all the best human attributes. But look beyond the mask, penetrate the reality and it is merely the struggling priests desperately warring to preserve an old superstition."

MAX COORLEGH.

Acid Drops.

The chief work of the Naval Conference now appears to be that of discovering a "formula" which will help to disguise its failure. We are not surprised. For the topic of ending armed warfare is not within its scope, and perhaps not within the thought of more than one or two of its members. The Conference does not discuss the possibilities of a permanent peace, but only that of "What is the smallest number of ships with which we can make war with a chance of success?" And as delegates mean, by success, having either an army or navy that will cripple the particular potential enemy he has in view, and as the "enemy" takes the same kind of view of the other fellow, the result is inevitably a deadlock. Each goes away with nothing done, or with a feeling that he got the best of his antagonists. The whole Conference is vitiated by two things. First, war is too costly and must be made cheaper; second, war is too deadly and must be made safer. The idea that war must be made impossible because it is brutal, stupid, and settles nothing, has hardly a place.

Making war cheaper and safer will never stop war. Reducing armaments will not stop war. What reasonable difference can it make if, instead of armies being what they are, there is a proportionate reduction all round? Wars were not less frequent when armaments were smaller than they are, and wars less deadly. And when war breaks out again, with all the nations armed in the same proportion as they are at present, does anyone doubt but that there will be an instant conversion of all our mechanical and scientific resources into war making instruments. If sub-

marines are wanted each nation will mark time until submarines are built. If war-planes are not numerous enough, there will be clouds of other planes which can do their bit in dropping explosives and poison. And in the laboratories scientists will be at work elaborating still more deadly methods of destruction. And meanwhile the search for more deadly methods of destruction is going on in every country in the world. That simply cannot be stopped, because the search for deadly chemical products is part and parcel of the search for greater chemical knowledge, and whether that knowledge be applied to warlike or to peaceful ends depends entirely upon those in whose hands they are placed. With that lack of memory on the part of the people which is "the gift of God" to politicians and parsons, it appears to have been forgotten that some of the deadliest instruments of destruction were brought to perfection *during* the war. It is the belief in the efficacy of militarism that needs to be destroyed.

We again return to the advice we have offered scores of times. Eliminate all military displays from civil life. That will leave the imagination of the rising generation free from the fantastic glamour of the military life. To that we may add, let our Royal family surrender all their military titles and displays, and the clergy can lend a hand by declining to sanction militarism both during seasons of war and of peace. They need not actively oppose it, simply they can leave it alone. If soldiers wish to attend Church or Chapel, they can attend these places wherever they happen to be stationed, and the parson will preach to them just as he preaches to ordinary persons. But there will be no parsons to sanction militarism by their official presence, there would be no blessing of battleships and guns, there would be no military emblems and captured or shot-riven battle flags displayed in cathedrals. They will be helping to create the will-to-peace, and that is the one thing necessary, and the only thing that will tell.

The British and Foreign Bible Society has decided to distribute 2,000 copies of the Gospels among sufferers from the floods in Southern France. And if the necessity arises, the number will be substantially increased. Excellent! The Society is anxious that the sufferers shall know exactly who is responsible for the "act of God" which caused their sufferings and losses. And on this point, obviously the Gospels are the very best source of information. After carefully perusing these, only the more intelligent victims will refrain from giving thanks unto the Lord for his mercy and loving-kindness.

The highly religious and virtuous *Daily Mail*, organizer of countless "stunts," and general panderer to anything that will increase sales, in a leading article in its issue for March 24, is horrified that we should receive in London, ambassadors from a country in which there is going on a five year's campaign with the object of wiping out the belief in God. If it was a country that had set itself the task of wiping out Atheism, the situation would be, of course, quite different. Directly under this leading article it has another one headed "Flat Racing To-day." We imagine that the way it was written was "Flat Catching To-day," but there was some mistake in setting up the copy.

Another illustration of the Soviet tyranny. All soldiers in the Russian Army are ordered to attend parades at which lectures on Atheism are to be delivered by government appointed lecturers. Officers have the power to excuse soldiers who may raise a conscientious objection to attending such lectures, but as this usually means some form of penalization, no one is likely to make such application.

On looking over the news paragraph again, we find that we have made a mistake. It is not an order in the Russian, but in the British Army, and the compulsory attendance is not at Atheistic lectures, but at Church services. And the British War Minister informed the House of Commons, on March 24, that he found the

arrangement quite satisfactory. So everything is quite as it should be, and we may hold that up as an example to Russia of how to do things.

"Candidus," of the *Daily Sketch*, says the late Lord Balfour stood for the spirit of scepticism in politics and life. Probably aware that Christian notions as regards the words "sceptic" and "scepticism" are distorted and false, "Candidus" hastens to add that the sceptic must not be confused with the cynic, who denies truth and beauty and reduces all life to mere animalism and calculating self-interest. The sceptic, says the writer, is an enquirer who goes through life interrogating, analysing, assaying it. "Candidus" ends on the following note:—

Great can be the service of the honest sceptic to our public life if he always loves life and his fellow men; greatest of all if, as Balfour did, he worships at a few but precious inward shrines of beauty and truth.

"Candidus" is to be congratulated on his attempt to break down ignorant Christian prejudice against the sceptic. But we fail to see the need for attaching the word "honest" to sceptic; unless, of course, "Candidus" wishes one to understand that his eulogies are reserved for the sceptic who openly avows his opinions. But probably the writer hadn't this in view. He was merely coining a phrase analogous to the stupid Christian term, "honest doubter," in order that he might not be suspected of praising the anti-religious kind of sceptic. Such, of course, couldn't possibly deserve to be styled "honest."

The Archbishop of Canterbury says he does not doubt but that to the end the late Lord Balfour could have said "with his own interpretation, 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.'" We like that phrase, "with his own interpretation," because you can make the "Gospel of Jesus Christ" mean what you darn well like. And it is so illuminating as to the character of current official Christianity. So long as you will say you believe in Jesus it doesn't matter what you mean by it, and the clergy will be careful not to enquire. All they want is the formula; it can then be used to fool the numerous classes whose heads appear to have no other use than that of preventing their ears knocking together.

John Bull is responsible for the following:—

To the British soldier in Egypt most of his district is out of bounds. So he is forced to use one of the many religious soldiers' homes.

And they skin him, charging him 3¼d. for a small plate of porridge, and 5d. for ten Woodbines, and treat him as a potential thief—stamping all papers and periodicals, "Stolen from the—," so and so. And all in the name of religion!

Meanwhile, the managers of these "soldiers' homes" can always supply headquarters with glowing reports concerning the large numbers of soldiers using the homes, and the gratitude of the soldiers for services rendered.

A Methodist reporter has been prowling around Cardiff to discover signs of godliness and also of wickedness. At an hotel he met some interesting commercial travellers. One seems to have been rather unpleasant:—

Then I listened to a lot of talk from another man who, at breakfast, gave his views of life generally. He taught his children there was nothing supernatural; they were not to be punished or forgiven, they were to be their own judges; the Church (and I hear this at least once a week) supported the crime of the war and was self-convicted—and so on and so forth.

This is, no doubt, a garbled version of what was said. But we gather that our Methodist-friend had the good fortune to encounter a Freethinker, and had his piety jarred up a bit.

The same reporter rather regretfully, it seems, records the fact that there are in Cardiff great counter-attractions to the Churches on Sunday. A large number of

people went to hear community singing in one public hall, and a symphony concert at another gave enjoyment to many more citizens. And our friend dolefully remarks: "As I see the life of a city like Cardiff, the more I see the need for aggressive Methodism." We feel sure that Cardiff citizens with all their faults do not deserve to be punished like that.

After the Lausanne Conference the Anglican Archbishops appointed a Committee to consider the findings of the Conference. The Committee has now issued its report. As regards the Union of the Churches, we are told that the desire for union is found in all Christian communions, but that at present the desire is confined to comparatively few and even among these it is not very strongly felt. The Committee also considers that intercommunion, or even united communion services, must be the last stage in any movement towards union. The comment of a Methodist journal on this is "If so, it would seem that we must wait for the other world before we sit down together in the Kingdom of God." It only remains to add that for nineteen hundred years the Churches have been preaching about a Brotherhood of believers, and boasting how the religion of Christ would make all Christians as brothers.

The *Methodist Recorder* says in regard to Church unions:—

We greatly rejoice in these manifest signs that the gulf between Anglicans and Nonconformists is being bridged. We are deeply convinced that the way of further advance lies not through argument and debate, but through common prayer and fellowship in the things of the spirit.

The thing that will bring the Churches together quicker than anything is the fear of being robbed of their privileges. In days to come, the fear that "if we don't hang together we shall hang separately" will be the real factor in achieving some kind of union among the denominations. Not common prayer and "fellowship in the spirit" will do the trick, but a common dread.

Mr. Maurice Bannister, a professional Jewish singer, was engaged to sing at the Grafton Square Congregational Church in a Lenten Cantata entitled "The Last Hours." He was to take the part of the Saviour. But at the last moment it was decided by the Church that he could not be permitted to take the part as he was a Jew. The objection seems to us trivial and irrelevant. The first performance of the "Last Hours" had a Jew taking that part, so why not let another Jew take the part now? We expect that if Jesus ever comes to England again he will have to come back under the Aliens regulations, and if he is unlucky enough to try to land in the United States he may be sent to Ellis Island and deported because the quota from Jerusalem is already made up.

The World's Evangelical Alliance has issued a "call to prayer" for Christian Union, the call to operate on Whit-Sunday. On that day millions of Christians will disturb the peace of heaven by telling God he really ought to do something towards making Christians accept one another as brothers. This is setting God a rather difficult job. The Bible being what it is—something hardly any two believers can agree over—we think God will best solve the difficulty by taking the Bible out of the world. This quite simple and practicable solution will, we feel sure, appeal to all good men who have at heart the welfare and peace of mankind. Anyway, there would be no harm in just tentatively mentioning it next Whit-Sunday.

The Rev. Whitehead Clegg, of Bournemouth, believes in "tithing." He impresses upon all good men and true, that they ought to deduct a tenth of their income for Church appeals. And they should be sure to deduct the "Lord's portion" before attending to other calls. The rev. gent is very earnest about this. No one need be surprised. It is a prominent characteristic of those who live on the Lord.

National Secular Society

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.

The following form of bequest is sufficient for anyone who desires to benefit the Society by will:—

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.

Any information concerning the Trust Deed and its administration may be had on application.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. P. BUDGE.—We are obliged for your weekly batch of cuttings. These are always useful, either at once or later, and save us much time and trouble.

L. MARTIN.—Glad the articles on Russia have clarified the situation for you. It would be folly to assume that fanatical Atheists in Russia are not to be found abusing their opportunities; human nature being what it is, one would expect that. But without very drastic action, action which in this country would have been quite intolerable, the Russian Church would have remained what it was, and a standing threat to any attempt at social reorganization and political liberty.

R.B.—There is no reason whatever for your experiencing difficulty in getting your copy of the *Freethinker*. It is supplied by all the wholesale agents, and if your man orders it, it should reach you by Friday evening at latest. The story you send us about Voltaire's death-bed is a religious lie that has been exposed times out of number. But nothing seems capable of curing an evangelistic Christian of his fondness for lying where his religion is concerned.

J. GREEVZ FISHER.—Thanks for pamphlet. It is a very interesting memento.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."

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

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

Sugar Plums.

To-day (April 6) Mr. Cohen will bring his winter lectures to a close with an address in the Mechanics Institute, Bradford, on "Do the Dead Live?" Judging from the meeting held in Bradford a short time back, the gathering should be a good one.

The Annual Conference will be held in London this year, and it is hoped every Branch will be strongly represented. Motions for the Agenda must reach the General Secretary by April 26. These may be sent by either Branches or individual members.

We have had several complaints of late of difficulty in obtaining copies of this paper. Nothing of the kind should happen, the paper is supplied through all the trade channels, and difficulties of the kind named can be created only by sheer bigotry. Friends will help by insisting on their copy being supplied regularly and promptly, or changing their newsagents. If the name of newsagent or wholesaler who fails to deliver regularly is sent on to us, we will take the matter up at this end.

We also ask the help of all our readers in securing new subscribers. That is the best kind of help, and a very good method of breaking down the boycott. Our offer to send the *Freethinker* for six weeks to any likely subscriber on receipt of threepence postage is still open, and is the means of obtaining many new readers. We are spending as much as we can afford on advertising the existence of the *Freethinker*, and we want all interested to join in the crusade by "doing their bit."

Some time ago Mr. Patrick Braybrooke wrote a study *The Genius of Bernard Shaw*. He has now issued another, a companion volume *The Subtlety of Bernard Shaw* (Palmer, 7s. 6d.), which we think is the better of the two. Mr. Braybrooke, in spite of his great admiration for both the genius and subtlety, flavours his appreciation with the spice of dissenting criticism that keeps alive the reader's interest, and quickens his own critical powers. He notes as one of the difficulties in dealing with Shaw, that one who is "brilliant in words," and less brilliant in deeds, and he might have said with equal truth that the faults of his plays as character studies are often overlooked in the glamour cast by his stage craft. He also hits on another truth in relation to Shaw, when he points out his knack of seeing a half truth very plainly, stating it very strongly, and missing its real nature. We may take an illustration of this—not Mr. Braybrooke's. Talking of that nonsensical abstraction the "life force," Shaw says:—

If you once allow yourself to regard a child as so much material for you to manufacture into any shape that suits your fancy, you are defeating the experiment of the Life Force . . . In this you are sure to be wrong; the child feels the drive of the Life Force (often called the will of God) and you cannot feel it for him.

There is an important truth here, but in the way stated it exhibits four serious flaws, all of which might have been avoided had Shaw been more of an exact thinker than he is. It is quite obvious that if the Life Force is at the back of all life it is working no less through the parent than it is through the child, and in that case it has all the incoherences of the Salvationist's God, who knocks over with one hand something he has set up with the other. There are certainly more reasonable ways of pleading for the individuality of the child than this one.

We do not agree with Mr. Braybrooke's estimate as to the greatness of Shaw's "St. Joan," however attractive it may be from the mere dramatic point of view, it shows very strongly Shaw's weak historic sense, and his lack of understanding of Church history. Mr. Braybrooke says that in the play Shaw is "pedantically careful to be fair." But the truth is that the lack of historical perspective, and the very shaky psychology of the play prevented Shaw being even moderately fair. It was no

new discovery that the Inquisitors were fighting for the souls of the accused—that lay at the basis of the Inquisition, but it was obvious that as Judges they simply could not be fair. The accused was condemned in the accusation. It was his religious conviction that prevented a judge of the Inquisition being just, he would have got into trouble had he been fair. Anyone who will contrast Shaw's "St. Joan" with the "Jeanne D'Arc," by Anatole France, will see the difference between making an interesting play and recreating an historic situation. Mr. Braybrooke has given us an interesting book.

The Executive has engaged Mr. G. Whitehead as usual for lectures in London and the provinces during the coming summer. Branches desiring the services of Mr. Whitehead should apply without delay, stating date and period. It is important that new ground be brought in, and Freethinkers willing to help in holding open-air meetings in their district should notify the General Secretary, stating the nature of their help, and suitable pitches for holding meetings. For instance, Mr. Whitehead when working Swansea, could spend one or two evenings in Bristol and Cardiff, if local saints will offer a hand. Names and addresses should be sent at once to the General Secretary.

The National Secular Society has just issued a leaflet, *Mr. Ramsay MacDonald on Secular Education*. This consists of a report of a speech in favour of Secular Education, and in view of the attempt that will almost certainly be made to pass a new Education Bill, the leaflet should be distributed by the thousand. They can be forwarded to any address at the rate of 6d. per hundred. We suggest that as many as possible should send for 500 or 1,000 copies.

Broadcasting Freethought.

THERE is one adjective which suits the B.B.C. more than any other, and that adjective is "smug." And upon no other subject does the B.B.C. exhibit such complete smugness and self-satisfaction as on the subject of religion. The fact is, of course, that the B.B.C. is a monopoly, and those who are in authority are fully alive to the unfair advantages which this gives them. Having fallen into Christian hands the management of the B.B.C. is naturally not going to allow anything in its programmes which might show up religion (and especially the Christian religion) in its true colours.

It would, therefore, be too much to expect the B.B.C. to arrange for the broadcasting of a lecture by some prominent Freethinker. But one can, without any great strain on the imagination, picture to oneself a situation in which a Freethought lecture might be given by accident. Some eminent foreigner, noted for his obscurantist philosophy, might be invited to give his views on religion. On his journey to London he is converted to rational thinking. Being entirely ignorant of the ban upon freedom of speech, he innocently decides, on the spur of the moment, to substitute an impromptu lecture on his new outlook for the carefully prepared twaddle which the B.B.C. authorities had expected of him.

The situation is pregnant with humorous possibilities. There, seated round the board-room, in various attitudes of soporific self-complacency, are the Great Ones of the Great B.B.C. The hour for the lecture has arrived. One of them, with benign smile, rises from his arm-chair and presses a button. From the mouthpiece of the loud-speaker the slightly accented tones of the eminent stranger ring clearly out.

Gradually a change comes over the scene. First one, then another of the Great Ones raises himself from his semi-recumbent position. One of them

grows rapidly more purple in the face; another turns a livid yellow; all begin to mop the sweat of horrified anticipation from their brows. At last one, less flabbergasted than the rest, dashes to the telephone. Instantly the voice from the loud-speaker dies out and a holy silence supervenes. Half an hour later the announcer is heard to apologize in his sweetest manner for the "unfortunate breakdown" which so providentially interrupted the eminent foreigner's speech. The B.B.C. is saved!

But let us turn from fancy to fact—and let us take heart. For the B.B.C. is not the only broadcasting company in the world; and though the truth be suppressed in one quarter, it is certain to bob up in another. The first broadcast lecture on Freethought has already been given in Berlin, and the speaker was Gen. Max Sievers. The following extracts from it will prove of interest to all who are regular readers of the *Freethinker*, and possibly to many who are not. They are taken from the issue of the *Vienna Atheist* dated March 1:—

So it is by this historical method of approach that the Freethinker builds up his world philosophy. It is materialistic inasmuch as it adheres only to real events, admits only of facts and confines itself only to the realm of concrete truth. Within the framework of a freethinking philosophy no room is left for fanciful illusions. Speculation concerning possibilities which cannot be measured in terms of man's natural knowledge are of no concern to the Freethinker. The only things that matter to him are those that can be proved, that can be understood, that can be attained. If we make an appeal to humanity, we do so not by playing upon its emotional and sentimental feelings, but by calling upon its intellect and understanding. For we regard man's capacity to think as the greatest boon he possesses.

The recognition that there are boundaries to man's knowledge does not imply that the Freethinker is content to remain within the limits set by these boundaries. On the contrary, his aim is to push them further and further away. Just as in the past human activity and thought enabled each succeeding generation to penetrate more deeply into the secrets of nature, so by the same process will these secrets continue to be unravelled in the future.

For this reason we can say that the Freethinker's philosophy maintains that no philosophy is absolute or true for all time. It can only be the product of the knowledge available at any given time, and the result of a temporary stage of cultural development. There is no philosophy, there is no religion, which time in its passing has not materially altered. On the strength of this fact alone we Freethinkers discard not merely all hard and fast dogma, but also all ideas about gods and supernatural powers. This does not mean that we hate or preach hatred of those who think otherwise, nor that we despise their philosophies. On the contrary, it is in the nature of Freethought philosophy, with its historical method of approach, to treat all philosophies and religions as phenomena which can be analysed and explained. We unearth their origins, we discover the roots of their power, and in so doing we show their dependence upon temporary conditions and influences. We only strive to conquer some other philosophy when we see that it sets itself up in opposition to new knowledge and hinders the spread of truth. Who can really feel offended, or who would deny the truth of my statement, when I say that many persons who are to-day deeply religious, and who cleave with their whole hearts to old beliefs and dogmas, would never have accepted one tithe of these same teachings if they had not been handed down to them from of old, but had been presented to them as something new?

A time will come when class and race antagonisms will all disappear, and when there will be no room for hatred between nations. Yet this era will

not arrive of its own accord, much less by way of a miracle. Human endeavour alone will succeed in climbing these heights. Social equality will come, because it alone can form the basis of a rational order; and Freethought philosophy points the way to this attainment. Pessimism and resignation are strangers to our outlook on life. We believe in no "god," but in the great future which lies before humanity. We do not teach mankind to expect help from the land of Nowhere, but to rely upon and trust to its own powers. Ceaselessly do we strive for mental and social improvement; yet our work and thoughts are not for ourselves alone, but in the interests of humanity as a whole.

With all due respect to the great moral purpose behind the present B.B.C. Sunday programme, we suggest that this would be equally well served (if not better) by the inclusion of a few sermons on the lines of Ger. Max Sievers' lecture. They will not have far to seek for speakers in our language who are as interesting as he is.

C. S. FRASER.

Time's Corridors.

"I looked far back into other years,
And lo, in bright array,
I saw as in a dream the forms
Of ages passed away."

ON the north bank of the river Tyne stand three places, once busy hives of industry, but of late years noted for little more than their holy names—Saint Anthony's, Saint Peter's, and Saint Lawrence's, all of which display the dirty appearance of a smoke-dried past.

At the first-named of these the present writer was born and spent his early boyhood. Now wearing well on in life, towards what is sometimes termed "the psalmist's allotted span," an occasional inclination arises to see again the haunts of old; and perchance to meet an old schoolmate, of which, alas, few now remain. Once in a decade or so, the inclination becomes an urge, and half an hour's walk from the maddening crowd finds me once more:—

"Passing the pleasant fields traversed so oft,
In life's morning march, when my bosom was young."
I again near the skylark singing aloft
In the same warbling strain that his ancestors sung."

Before entering the village, I sometimes stand at the old Church School door and listen again to the musical ring of children's voices from within, where as a child, I received my first lesson from the vicar. At that time the vicar was a tall, long bearded, burly Irishman, named Shortt. That first lesson, the only one of which any recollection remains, was as unappreciated for children, as was the name of the vicar, who, with a voice to be envied, read aloud a chapter on the genealogies of the patriarchs. In my mind's eye I can still see that vicar. Nor shall I ever forget the words, *begat*, and *begat*, and *begat*, from beginning to end of the chapter. Strange to relate, this same vicar had some six years previously also begat a son, who in after years became a lawyer, and later a member of parliament, and who, on being questioned on his views in regard to the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, sent an excellent and manly-toned letter to the present writer, in which he stated: "I am opposed to all laws which attempt to stifle freedom of speech or discussion, whether they emanate from priestcraft or any other source. I think the sooner the Blasphemy Laws are abolished the better," etc. Twelve years rolled by after that letter was written, and that member of parliament became Home Secretary, shortly afterwards to be reminded of his fair-minded statements, and that an opportunity had arisen by which he could demonstrate his

love of justice, by his intercession for one who had been sentenced to nine months' imprisonment for blasphemy. But, also, the soothing words of the politician were not exemplified by his deeds as a Home Secretary; and beyond sending a misleading statement to the press, declaring that the conviction "was not under the Blasphemy Acts, but under the Common Law," he did nothing; whereby he received a severe spanking, or shall we say castigation from our able editor.

But my thoughts go back to that church school door. It was there my first stand-up fight took place, with the son of the village cobbler. Again I see the old schoolmaster as he rushed out of that door, with a roasted herring in his hand, the poor man's mid-day meal having been interrupted by the noise or news of the fight, which, on his appearance, promptly terminated. Why did we fight? I know not. But it is just possible that had the vicar instilled into our young minds a moral lesson of love and duty to each other, that fight might never have taken place.

Across a green patch of grass, opposite the school, once stood "Pottery Square," and there lived the mender of soles, the village cobbler. But this was before the days of eugenics, or birth control advocacy; and the cobbler's efforts to multiply and replenish the earth had been somewhat blighted, one of his family being blind, one hunch-back, one lame, one a bad talker by impediment, and another badly pock-marked. This was said by some of the neighbours to be a judgment or punishment of God upon his conscience, a further risk of multiplying with a neighbour's daughter caused a summons to the police court for the swearing of an affiliation order. Yet as we shall see, Saint Anthony's was a holy place. It had at that time six public houses and three places of worship for a population of about three hundred.

Passing the school, towards the old village on our left, are heaps of overgrown debris and vacant land, where once we were wont to watch through the low windows, the potter at his wheel, and the printing and painting of the unglazed wares. What a flood of memories are here again recalled. Once again I seem to see poor old Worley at his gigger wheel. Sometimes we would stand and watch him shaping his wares, until the poor man became thoroughly exasperated at our eager and lengthy stare; he would then throw a handful of slurry at our noses flattened against his window pane. Poor Worley! His dexterous hands now mingle with a darker clay, the very memory of him almost as extinct as many of those who watched him well over sixty years ago.

"Like leaves on trees, the race of man is found,
Now green in youth, now scattering on the ground.
The following year another race supplies,
The fall successive and successive rise,
So generations in their course decay,
So flourish these, when those have passed away."

In our years of childhood we were regularly led by the hand on Sunday mornings, to the old Wesleyan chapel, standing on the river bank, where John Wesley was said to have preached. On our way there, we were obliged to pass a corner where village gossips usually stood smoking and chatting, amongst whom could always be seen a tall man with massive frame and happy face, known as the village "infidel." On our near approach, our hand would feel a firmer grasp, and in a whisper we were told, "that's him," which seemed to imply "Go quietly in case he might jump at you." This corner passed, there comes to view a large, stately, old hall, surrounded by a high wall, built over three centuries ago for Dame Dorothy Lawson, who, as history informs us, for greater privacy than Heaton afforded,

chose this spot on account of its holy name, and in order to convey signs to Roman Catholic seamen in passing ships. In 1625 we find that Bishop Neil of Durham complained to the Mayor of Newcastle, "that Mrs. Dorothy Lawson was a notorious recusant and a dangerous neighbour." The story of her life shows her to have been a devoted adherent of the old faith, and that the suspicion that fell upon her was not without reason. Choosing the place because, in Catholic times, it had been dedicated to Saint Anthony, she had his picture placed in a tree in her grounds near the river for the comfort of seamen. This was afterwards substituted by a large name of Jesus in fabric, which she had fixed on the wall of her house facing the river, "Believing herself ever safest under that standard, especially when she had greatest frequent of priests. Also that seafaring men of other nations might know it to be a Catholic home and fly thither, as truly they did in swarms for their spiritual reflexion. Although ships could pass in full view of the house, notwithstanding, Catholics might resort thither with such privacy that they are not exposed to the aspect of any." This statement probably gave credence to the belief of there being a secret underground passage to the house, every room of which was named after a Saint, except the part used as a chapel, and this was dedicated to the Mother of God.

Freethinkers cannot but admire the bravery of this heroic lady, Dorothy Lawson. What a tower of strength she might have been had her zeal been nurtured by reason instead of fears of hell and bribes of heaven. Living at a period when to be designated by a Bishop as "a convicted recusant, reported pragmatical in ill offices of conveying, receiving and harbouring, persons of all sorts ill-affected to the State" was to risk more than imprisonment and even death. This is obvious when we read of the Municipal accounts of Newcastle, and the costs for the execution of a seminary priest on the Town Moor. The bill runs as follows: "Paid to a Frenchman who did take forth the seminary priest's bowels after he was hanged, 20s.: For coals which made the fire at the execution of the seminary priest, 6d.: For a wright's axe which beheaded the seminary priest, 4s. 6d.: For a hand axe and cutting knife which did rip and quarter the seminary priest, 14d.: and for a horse which trailed him from the sledge to the gallows, 12d.: for four iron stanchels with hooks on them, for the hanging of the seminary priest's four quarters on the four gates, 3s. 8d.: for one iron wedge for riving wood to make the fire on the Moor, 18d.: and for a shovel for the fire, 2s.: to a mason for two days' work setting the stanchels of the gates fast, 10d. a day, 20d.: for carrying the four quarters of the seminary priest from gate to gate, and other charges, 2s.: for fire and coals for melting the lead to set the stanchels of the gates fast, 8d."

This took place in 1592. At that time Dorothy Lawson would be twelve years of age, and must have been well aware of the grave risks she afterwards ran against the charges of Bishop Neil. Yet we find on two priests being apprehended and lodged in Newcastle Gaol, one of whom was known to be attached to her house; she in no way disguised her connection with them, but provided them with comforts, visited one of them in prison, and made suite to the magistrates that he might enjoy the liberty of the town for the good of his health. Had Mrs. Lawson not been a wealthy and charitable lady, and the Mayor, Thomas Liddel, to whom Bishop Neil reported, being disinclined to harras her—probably because Mrs. Liddel and their eldest son had become recusants—it is dreadful to think what might have befallen her. Her biographer, Father Palmer, in giving a quaint

and lengthy account of her illness and death, which occurred on Palm Sunday, 1632, says: "Our Lord came not to her suddenly, or at unawares, much less unprovided, he knocked and gave her above six months' warning by a languishing consumption of cough of the lungs, and she expecting his coming, with the resigned patience of Judith and indefatigable love of Jacob, opened willingly the garden door of her soul that he might enter and reap the fruit he planted . . . after repeating the life-giving name of Jesus, to gain the pardon of the sin last committed, as in manner of jubilee with Jesus in her mouth and a jubilee in her soul, she sweetly departed at about twelve of the clock, and of her own age fifty-two." Then follows an account of how the corpse was taken at midnight in her own boat, accompanied by at least twenty other boats and barges, with lighted torches, and about twice as many horses escorting them on both sides of the river until they arrived at Newcastle—a distance of about three and a half miles—where it was met by magistrates and aldermen, and buried with Catholic rites. This probably was made possible by wealthy friends who conducted the ladies and magistrates to a sumptuous banquet in the finest house in the town.

But to return to the place of abode of this pious lady: After the influence associated with this saintly and sanctifying trinity of holy names—Saint Anthony, Dorothy Lawson and John Wesley—who can wonder that airs of piety were still assumed by the natives there, and that the fact of the village being infested by one known and unashamed "infidel" should be a disturbing factor to the minds of these pious villagers? Yet as often as they passed and repassed the object of their pity, only once did I see the Wesleyan minister and two of his friends stop to speak to that benighted man. Whatever the purpose may have been, the interview seemed short and decisive, and within three minutes the minister gave a handshake and left. But "where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise." And those pious people were, as I afterwards found, in blissful ignorance of six more heretics in their midst at that time, all members of the National Secular Society. What a flutter would have been caused in this dovecot had those six only declared we are seven. Later examination of old membership lists proved Saint Peter's and Saint Lawrence's also to have been infested, and I sometimes wonder why, when odium has to be borne for being an "infidel" one should bear what seven should share. And then I think of Jane and Mary Ann Carlile, Matilda Roalfe, and Dorothy Lawson.

J. G. BARTRAM.

Prayer for Russia.

ETERNAL Father, strong to save,
Thy humble servants beg to mention
That there's a state of things most grave
In Russia needing your attention.

Just what is happening we can't say,
And those who can won't draw the curtain;
But things grow worse from day to day.
They're boiling priests in oil, that's certain.

And praying babes at mothers' knees
Are done to death; and so they grow up
Discussing Birth Control! Oh please
Step in, and shut the wicked show up.

Against this land, unblest by laws
Designed all blasphemy to smother,
The ancient faiths find common cause,
No longer free to damn each other.

Oh God, our help in ages past,
At present you're a bit neglectful.
So come, do something, Lord, at last,
To make these Russians more respectful!

P.V.M.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

MATERIALISM.

SIR,—Our difference on the above subject is partly one of terminology, and I do not want to exaggerate it. If Materialism is only another name for Determinism, then I am a Materialist. But I do not think it is, since I find that there have been Determinists who were not Materialists, and Materialists who were not Determinists (e.g., Lucretius, who upheld freewill).

Let us take Determinism for granted as common ground. My difficulty in accepting your theory of cause and effect is that it seems to me to be inconsistent with Determinism. For if cause and effect are, as you say, only names for different aspects of the same phenomenon (to wit, its factors viewed first analytically and then synthetically), where does necessary sequence come in? It can clearly obtain only between successive events; and you apparently deny that cause and effect are, or even can be, successive. If we accept that, it follows that no two successive events ever stand in causal relation; the past and the future can never be inferred from the present; and Determinism has the bottom knocked out!

I forbear to pursue this point, as I recognise the limitations of your space, and moreover this does not seem to me to be the vital part of Materialism. The real question is whether mind originated from the non-mental. Now say it did; and in saying so you appear to me to contradict your own axiom that "the world we know is a world of experience," and that a world outside experience is unthinkable and unknowable. For if so, "non-mental" is a meaningless phrase. A brick is as much a fact of experience as a thought; and how can a fact of experience be non-mental?

I readily agree that physico-chemical conditions provide the field for the appearance of mental life *in us*. But if a world outside experience is unthinkable, physico-chemical conditions themselves must be *within* experience—if not ours, then some other; and we are led straight to Professor Julian Huxley's (and my) view that all matter has a mental aspect, just as all mind has a material aspect. This has no necessary connexion with Theism, "disguised" or otherwise.

ROBERT ARCH.

[It may clear up Mr. Arch's difficulty if I point out (1) That to say the difference between cause and effect is the difference between a fact and its factors is not the same thing as saying that cause and effect are two aspects of the same thing. I did, in my book, use the expression "two phases of the same thing," and that may have misled Mr. Arch. But each of the factors has an aspect of its own, and in the whole a new aspect, not there in any of the factors. The difficulty of seeing how the future may be inferred from the present is removed if we think of past, present, and future as consisting of groupings of various factors, each grouping initiating a fresh relationship to other groupings. "Time" then refers to the appearance of the groupings not to the nature of their constituents. (2) "Non-mental" is no more a meaningless phrase than is "mental." Both of them stand for distinct categories of experience, both are equally real as indicating aspects of experience, both are equally nonsensical when they are used as constituting the ground of experience. (3) My position is to content myself with stating what we know, and to insist that the world we have to deal with can only be described in terms of experience. In its crude form Theism postulates the existence of a man-like intelligence as the cause of natural phenomena. In its more "refined"—really less intelligible—form Theism throws away the animal form of intelligence, and gives us a fact minus the factors. That is why I say the ascription of "mind" to everything is a survival of Theism. It has no other roots. (4) In arriving at the correct meaning of Materialism I am no more concerned with some who may have called themselves Materialists, but repudiated Determinism, than I should be impressed by a Roman Catholic priest who called himself a Freethinker if I were trying to determine the meaning of Freethought.—C.C.]

SLEEP AND DEATH.

SIR,—The argument that "it is foolish to fear death

when you do not fear sleep," is very common in Freethought writings. It appears in the *Freethinker* of January 19, in an article by Joseph Marah, and has appeared often before. So I suppose most people do not fear sleep. But certainly a minority do. I have done so all my life, sixty-four years. When I realize I am dropping asleep, I start awake again in a panic. It is like the panic produced by a choke, but there is no choke. This happens about every second night, sometimes two or three times before I finally drop asleep without realizing it. The fright is not at all like a dream; my dreams are very numerous, vivid, and fanciful, and nearly always pleasant—wish-fulfillments, I suppose the psycho-analysts would call them. To me the fright seems explainable on the animist theory. The self may be like an electric battery, whose current takes some other route if the resistance on the usual one rises. The moment of change is a moment of death. I presume the people who feel no fear of sleep are differently constituted. Perhaps they are dynamos, not generators. I see no reason to assume that either sleep or death is the same for everyone.

C. HARPUR.

DEAN SWIFT.

SIR,—In repeating some critic's assertion that Dean Swift *hated mankind*, is not Mr. W. Mann unjust to Swift? *Gulliver's Travels* expresses, I think, Swift's hatred of what is stupid, brutal and base in human nature—that's all. But the book also reveals what qualities Swift admired in human beings. Had he been a hater of mankind, he would have been a mere satirist, laughing and jeering at human folly. But the fact that he indicated the qualities he admired, reveals Swift as an idealist who, by his own particular method, endeavoured to excite disgust at what is stupid, brutal and base, and admiration for what is best in human nature.

D. P. STICKELLS.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD MARCH 28, 1930. THE President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Quinton, Gorniot, Moss, Clifton, Corrigan, Easterbrook, Mrs. Quinton, Junr., Mrs. Venton, and the Secretary.

A number of apologies for unavoidable absence were read.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted, and monthly financial statement presented.

New members were admitted for N. London, W. London, West Ham, Swansea, Bradford, Manchester, and Parent Society.

Reports of lectures and arrangements were submitted from Birmingham, Newcastle, Burnley, Bradford, and Chester-le-Street district.

Correspondence from Plymouth and Bethnal Green Branches was dealt with and the Secretary instructed.

It was decided that the Annual Conference be held in London this year, and the Secretary instructed to proceed with arrangements.

A number of minor matters were dealt with and the meeting closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,
General Secretary.

Social at Caxton Hall.

THE Council Chamber at Caxton Hall was well filled with a large and merry party on Saturday, March 29, for the Social organized by the Executive of the N.S.S. Dancing to the excellent music provided by the Somerville Band was a very popular feature, and many encores were demanded. On the vocal side the singing of Miss Dickeson, and Mr. Beresford, and the clever impersonations of Mr. Kit Keen were thoroughly appreciated and applauded. The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, also contributed to the vocal side with one of his bright and witty speeches, always one of the looked for

good things of the evening, and always assured of a reception in which pleasure and affection are mingled.

Miss Somerville's Violin Solos were charming and delightful.

Coming to the mundane, Mrs. E. Venton and her band of voluntary workers, by foresight, enthusiasm and hard work, achieved a triumph in the catering department, the result of which may be summed up as Efficiency, Quality, and Plenty. The M.C. played his part well, which was, of course, to be expected of Mr. H. R. Clifton.

Old acquaintances were renewed, new ones made, and a thoroughly enjoyable evening ended with many expressions of hope that the Executive will arrange more of such functions in the future.

R. H. ROSETTI,
General Secretary.

Society News.

THE last of our indoor meetings at the Conway Hall, on Sunday last, was well attended. Mr. Campbell-Everden lectured to an appreciative audience on the "Meaning of Evolution."

The explanation given so clearly has left little room for discussion.

The description of the various constellations, their size, distance and volume, proved how little, in comparison with others, is our own solar system.

A desire expressed that the Conway Hall should be booked for the next season met with general approval—the meeting concluded.—B.A.L.E.M.

The Ever-New.

How old the world!—
Withal how young
Each rose new-furled,
Each song new-sung!
How young, yet old,
The river-bed;
How warmly cold
The Dead!

While Youth's bright dreams
Outspan the years:
Old as our dreams,
Young as our tears:
The stars above
Our doubts console,
Since young is Love
To each new soul!

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

Nigeria.

Miscellaneous Advertisements.

CAN any Freethinker offer employment to fellow Freethinker, professional musician (Cellist); displaced through Talkies. Any light job or position of trust apart from the profession welcomed, but musical profession preferred. Can provide references. Apply—Box B.E., FREETHINKER, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

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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. R. Dimsdale Stocker—"The Poet as Mystic." Tuesday, April 8, at 8.30, Evening Discussion at 80 Harvard Court, N.W.6 (by kind permission of Miss Gorva)—Mr. H. Michaelis—"The Ethics of Spelling Reform."

LEAGUE OF NATIONS UNION (South Place Branch). A meeting will be held in Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1, on Tuesday, April 15, at 7.0, when Leslie R. Aldous will speak on "International Traffic in Noxious Drugs." Admission free.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Mr. Linecar—"Maurice Maeterlinck."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Sir Albion Banerji, C.S.I., C.I.E.—"Indian Educational Problems."

WORKERS CIRCLE FRIENDLY SOCIETY (Circle House, Great Alic Street, London, E.1): Saturday, April 5, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"Nature, Man and God." Commence at 8 p.m.

OUTDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Kennington Road, outside Kennington Theatre): 11.30 a.m., Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Clapham Road (Stonhouse Street): 7.0, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.30, Mr. James Hart, A Lecture; 3.15, Messrs. E. Betts and C. E. Wood; 6.30, Messrs. C. Tuson and B. A. Le Maine and A. H. Hyatt. 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.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (The Mechanics' Institute, Bradford): 6.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, President of the National Secular Society, and Editor of the *Freethinker*, will lecture on "Do the Dead Live?" Doors open at 6.0. Commence at 6.30.

CO-OPERATIVE HALL, CHOPWELL. Mr. J. Brighton (Secretary Chester-le-Street N.S.S.), will deliver a lecture on "Christianity and Persecution." Admission Free. Collection. Question invited. Freethought literature will be on sale at the door.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. Jack Clayton, N.S.S.—"Thou Shalt Do no Murder."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Dramatic performance.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street): 7.0 prompt. Annual General Meeting of members only. It is hoped that all members will attend as this is a most important meeting.

OUTDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S.—Ramble on Sunday to Harelaw Dam. Meet at 11.0 at Barrhead (centre).

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(November, 1929). Verbatim Report of the Deputation to the Home Secretary (The Right Hon. J. R. Clynes, M.P.) 1d., postage 1/4d.

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President:

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Secretary:

MR. R. H. ROSETTI, 62 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

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

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

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

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

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

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Name.....

Address.....

Occupation

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