

WHAT IS BLASPHEMY?

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Views and Opinions.

What is Blasphemy?

THE other day I received from one of my readers a question which, I confess, rather puzzles me to answer. He tells me he has been reading the articles I wrote on the Blasphemy Laws, and now wants me to tell him just what constitutes blasphemy. He says he quite understands that legal blasphemy at present consists in criticizing Christian beliefs in an offensive manner, but wants to know just what language is offensive and what is not. He is puzzled, and so am I. I know no more that he does just what language constitutes blasphemy. That is what makes blasphemy, nowadays, such a curious offence. If I am charged with theft, or murder, I know quite well whether I have committed the crime. It is the task of the judge and jury to find out, but I know. On the other hand, if I am charged with blasphemy I really do not know whether I am guilty or not until the jury has returned its verdict. How can I tell whether the language is offensive or not, or whether it has passed the limits of decent controversy? I obviously did not think it offensive, or should not have used it. The other men, the twelve good men and true (Christians) in the box may decide it was offensive or they may not. But how can I tell what they will decide? If I refer to the claims of the Pope to be God's representative on earth as downright imposture, any Roman Catholic will consider that very offensive indeed. But the Protestant Alliance will regard it as quite sober and quite justifiable language. It is not for me to say whether my language is offensive, but for those who listen to it: and whether they consider it so, depends entirely upon their habits, usual language, and other circumstances. So when a man is charged with blasphemy he cannot honestly plead either guilty or not guilty. He can only reply with accuracy, "My Lord, I do not know. It depends entirely upon what the jury has to say about it."

This and That.

Let me take one or two examples of what *might* be thought by a Christian jury to be blasphemy—I can only say "might," because it is the jury that actually makes the offence. In the story of the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt, and their taking forty years to do a journey—under God's guidance—that any travel agency would have done in a few days, we read that God said:—

And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy feet.

Put in that way, and read with a solemn intonation, the average reader never stops to think what it is all about. Put it in this way, with a running commentary so as to make clear what it does mean:—

The Jews took forty years crossing the wilderness. During that time their clothes never wore out, their shoes never got thin. The little boy who left Egypt in short breeches arrived in Palestine with long trousers. His clothes grew with him. What would not a man give nowadays for a piece off the same roll of cloth!

and it becomes blasphemy.

There is, again, the plague of lice which God sent on the Egyptians. It will be remembered that when Moses performed other miracles the Egyptian magicians were able to imitate them, but:—

The Lord said unto Moses, say unto Aaron, stretch out thy rod and smite the dust of the land that it may become lice throughout the land of Egypt . . . and it became lice in man and in beast . . . And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not . . . Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God.

Now try another version:—

God told Aaron to take his rod and turn all the dust of Egypt into lice. This was done, and the Egyptian miracle-workers tried to imitate it as they had successfully imitated other miracles. They failed, and at once recognized the lice as evidence of the handiwork of the Lord. A commentator might well ask why was this miracle so quickly recognized as coming from the Lord.

That, I expect, would be recognized by a Christian jury as sheer blasphemy.

Or the Birth of Jesus:—

When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with the child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph . . . was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on those things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is of her is conceived of the Holy Ghost.

Another version in ordinary language :—

A young Jewish woman was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph. But Joseph discovered, before they were married, that Mary was about to become a mother. Joseph was very much disturbed in mind, and felt inclined to break off the match. But he had a dream, and dreamed that God was the father of the child. That was enough, and the marriage went forward as arranged.

That, again, would probably be taken as affording grounds for a charge of blasphemy.

A final example from another direction. Bishop Barnes some time ago created a furore by saying that the doctrine of the Eucharist—the transformation of bread and wine into flesh and blood, and its eating afterwards by Christian worshippers, was a relic of barbarism. Being said by a Bishop, and in the way in which it was said, it would nowadays have taken a jury of Roman Catholics to have declared it to be blasphemy. But if the Bishop had said exactly what he meant—that the practice originated by men eating as a religious ceremony the actual flesh and blood of a selected human being, that the foundation of the Christian Eucharist was a crowd of savages indulging in an orgie of religious cannibalism, then I fancy that a Christian jury would have said such a statement was decidedly blasphemous.

* * *

Letting Out the Truth.

It will be observed that the only ground for calling certain of the statements made above "blasphemous," is that they are put in a modern setting, and expressed in modern language, that is, they are expressed exactly as any man of to-day would see them if he came into contact with them for the first time, and looked at them with a quite unprejudiced mind. Look at the outcry made when some "sacred" character is placed on the stage! The believer reads of Moses coming down from Mount Sinai, and finding what the Children of Israel were doing, and in his rage smashing the two tablets of stone which he had just received from God. But if an actor was to play that part on the stage, and after raving round in a wild temper smash the things he was carrying, there would be an outcry of blasphemy. The same with the character of Christ. Keep him in the background of a play, more as an influence than as a character, and the hazy, indistinct notion that people have of Jesus is undisturbed. But picture him, as he must have been if he ever existed, as an ordinary human being, getting into boyish scrapes with his parents, quarrelling with other boys, getting into trouble with his teachers, arriving late in his father's workshop, troubled about the cut of his hair or the fit of his cloak, etc., etc., and the censor would be invoked to prevent so blasphemous a performance. Yet if Jesus ever lived as a real human character something of the kind of thing described must have occurred. Sometimes he must have got up sleepy, or been late at an appointment, grumbled at the way his dinner was cooked, or had a row with his playmates, or have had a thrashing from his teacher. But the moment you begin to think about the man-god in this vein he loses his glamour. So soon as you are allowed to translate what you are told about him in an archaic terminology that obscures its meaning, into the language of everyday life which enables you to see more clearly the nature of your thought, the absurdity of a god-man becomes apparent. Religious belief is undermined most effectually by the process of understanding it.

The Sham of Religion.

But this does bring us to the real reason for the existence of the Blasphemy Laws to-day. If religion were a part of life, based upon the life and thought of to-day, people could afford to laugh about it, to joke about it, to caricature it, to use the language of uneducated or coarse men and women about it, as they do about marriage, parentage, and a score of other things, the value of which no one questions. We do not need laws to enforce respectful language towards any of these things; we would rather they were spoken about in good than in bad language, but that is all. With religion the case moves on a different level. Here the only chance of preserving it is to surround it with a number of artificial restrictions that may prevent recognition of its true nature. A special form of language, a special mode of approach, a separation of religious beliefs from the test of actual contact with real life, stands between the believer and the recognition of the nature of his beliefs. It is the basic sin of blasphemy in modern Society that it strips away all these artificial supports and all disguise and brings the believer into immediate and recognisable contact with "true religion." As in so many other directions the savage persists in civilized society only so far as he manages to disguise his savagery under recognized cultural forms. Religion could survive laughter, or irreverence; it did survive these things, so long as the belief in it corresponded to the existing social state. It is possible for modern men to tolerate a Bishop dressed in all the canonical finery of the modern Church. But habit him in the paint and feathers of the primitive medicine-man and he would be impossible outside of a circus.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Towards Disestablishment.

"Words are things, and a small drop of ink,
Falling like dew upon a thought, produces
That which makes thousands, perhaps millions think."
Byron.

WHEN the World-War started, the thousands of clergymen in this country hailed the event as the happy harbinger of a spiritual awakening. Unfortunately, the war lasted four dreadful years. During that prolonged period it tested so many men and institutions, and it did not spare the many Christian Churches. It did, indeed, bring out strongly the unselfish sacrifice of hundreds of thousands who were utterly indifferent to all the Churches, but it also revealed, on the part of the clergy and their leaders, a spirit of cant, compromise, and cowardice, that tended to lessen what influence the Black Army possessed with the mass of ordinary citizens.

Freethinkers do not need to be reminded that this priestly influence is diminishing in this country, and has long been a slowly vanishing quantity. The clergy themselves have not been slow to perceive the waning allegiance of their flocks, and the high-sniffing contempt of people who do not often trouble the pew-openers. Even the wealthy and State-protected Anglican Church has at last been roused to action. Realizing the growing disfavour of the clergy and the anachronism of a clerical caste in a democratic country, the Church of England authorities have sought to restore their Church's balance of power by the creation of numerous additional bishops, and by the erection of new churches in Suburban London.

These new bishops are supplemental to the present Bench of Bishops, who not only safeguard the politi-

cal position of the State Religion, but act as a first line of defence against Democracy in the House of Lords. The elder bishops are aloof even from the rank and file of the priests, and they have no sort of understanding of the laity and the ordinary citizen. This creation of many fresh bishops is an astute move, for it leaves the existing bench of bishops in their places, and, in the event of disestablishment, creates a fresh batch of vested interests which might require financial adjustment.

This clerical manœuvre shows how far removed this Church of England is from democratic hopes and ideals. In the piping times of pre-war complacency the anachronism of a clerical caste in our midst passed almost unnoticed, but the post-war troubles have brought out in strong relief the extraordinary position occupied by these priests. Is it strange that there should rise a note, not so much of remonstrance as of revolt, which suggests that the nation is dissatisfied with the behaviour of the clergy, from the wealthy Archbishops to the rotund tenant of Little Pedlington Vicarage, who have proved themselves equally out of touch with the general life and aspirations of the nation. At a time when the civilized world was in convulsions, at a period when Europe was deluged in blood, Christian bishops found time to discuss the claims of King Charles the First to the highest rank of saintship. When the flower of the manhood of one generation of men was cut down as with a scythe, these priests busied themselves in the trifling matter of altering the "vile body" of the Church of England burial service to "this body of our low estate." They also found leisure to discuss the barbarities and indecencies of the Christian Bible with a view to bowdlerizing them to make the volume fit for modern readers.

On the great issues of the present day, how incomparably great should be clear to the thickest heads, these priests have shown a complete and shameless indifference. Only one thing interests these reverend gentlemen, and that is the safeguarding of the prerogatives of their own sorry and questionable profession.

What real value is this alleged sacred calling? Bishops are not only "reverend," but are "right-reverend Fathers-in-God." They should have a double dose of spirituality. Yet the votes of these same bishops in the House of Lords are sufficient to rouse the lasting hostility of all right-thinking citizens, and their shameful opposition to all progressive measures shows how hopelessly this so-called Church of England is out of touch with democratic issues and humanitarianism.

Bishops voted against admitting Nonconformists to University degrees, and against the removal of civil disabilities from Roman Catholics, Jews, and Free-thinkers. They opposed the introduction of Free Education, and voted against the admission of women to London Borough Councils. They even opposed the provision of seats for tired shop assistants. Scores of measures for the bettering of the condition of the working class have been opposed by these mediocre and reactionary ecclesiastics, and their spiritual record is a caustic commentary on their spiritual pretensions.

Multiplying bishoprics with four-figure salaries and erecting tin-tabernacles in the newest London suburbs, will not save this Church of England, nor will it alter the fact that only one citizen in twenty is interested in her ministrations. It is a natural misfortune that a clerical caste can so hinder national progress in the way that this Church of England does. It is a survival from the bad, old days of Feudalism, and the enemy of democracy, and must

be fought until it is no longer a power for evil. For this Church is opposed to the hope of progress which animates the peoples of the world.

MIMNERMUS.

Materialism and Recent Physics.

ANOTHER argument against Materialism has been finally exploded as a result of careful experiments by Professor Harkins.

The argument alluded to is summed up in the phrase, "universe running down like a clock." This was the idea of Sir James Jeans, and was based on the observation of radiant energy "flowing away" from matter. Radio-active substances, giving out energy and not accumulating it, suggested the possibility of a breakdown of the principles of conservation of substance and of energy. In short, the radiant energy seemed, like Clementine, gone for ever.

How on earth this, if true, could establish any theory other than Materialism it is hard to imagine. But it was seized on by many opponents of Materialism. Let us instance one probably well known to readers. In the Caxton Hall debate between Mr. Cohen and Mr. Joad, the latter said in his first speech, "It rather looks as if the material universe is like a clock that is running down," etc., etc.

To the idea of Sir James Jeans the American Dr. Millikan then replied that he had discovered cosmic rays continually flooding through space; rays which were more penetrating than the minutest X-rays or radium rays; and said that these effected a process in the island universe outside the Milky Way, where *matter is being built up* by radiation—new atoms to replace the old. This remained a very plausible theory, but the actual manner of the procedure was, of course, not understood. Harkins experiments lasted seven years. He was helped by Rutherford's suggestion that sometimes the atom of a gas, when furiously bombarded with electric particles, would lose or exchange of its own particles, and change into another kind of atom. Aided by very powerful electric bombardments Harkins has been led to the conclusion that an atom of nitrogen, after collision with an atom of helium, charging into it at 11,000 m.p.s. gives rise eventually to atoms of hydrogen or even oxygen, when an atom of higher atomic weight which has been created (if we may be allowed the word) out of atoms of lower weight. Thus a new and heavier atom is built up. Both Harkins and Millikan believe that somewhere new matter is being built up.

The outcome of all this is a strengthening of the position of Democritus, that nothing comes from nothing, and nothing is ever annihilated. It has also illustrated that matter and energy are so closely related that one may be said to be a form of the other.

Matter and energy have merged into one another, and are controvertible one into the other. Stars and atoms disintegrate into radiation, and can be rebuilt by collisions in interstellar space.

* * *

Sir Oliver Lodge, in his latest work, *Phantom Walls* (1929), claims that owing to this disintegration of matter Materialism is exploded, and chooses to interpret matter as a form of energy. Following on some speculation concerning radiation, electricity, magnetic fields, and even life itself as "modifications of space," he goes on to assert that "a glorified mechanism holds the field," because we must interpret the behaviour of matter in terms of a more fundamental reality—mind. In this way we are to get a

universe in harmony with the human mind. [N.B.—A case here of Materialism plus Teleology.]

What we fail to see is how the process of matter being changed into radiant energy, and then changing back again, can be part of a Divine Purpose, as Lodge would have us believe. Verily the onus of proof lies on him. To the Materialist it is merely a case of a passage from the relatively static to the relatively dynamic and vice versa. Still, we have no wish to put *Phantom Walls* in a poor light. It is worth reading from more than one point of view. Prof. Lodge has already charged the *Freethinker* with being "amusingly cocksure," a remark which makes one wonder if he ever reads it. There is plenty of cocksureness in *Phantom Walls*, but it is too stale to be amusing.

We are taking Prof. Lodge as an example of how scientific developments are interpreted to explode Materialism, merely because they make for a different conception of matter. We now add the name of Prof. Hocking of Harvard, who has recently published *Types of Philosophy* (1929). In that book he (a) says the Atheist says there is no God; (b) says Materialism is dead; (c) says Philosophy must assume Purpose; (d) uses the "logical refutation," and (e) calls himself a philosopher. Prof. Hocking says, in effect, that because the billiard-ball theory of matter is essential to Materialism, the latter "is now excluded from the possible alternatives" in Philosophy.

In the *Journal of Philosophical Studies* (quarterly) for January, 1930, a writer affirms that the mechanical system (i.e., Materialism) is broken down owing to (1) phenomena of radioactivity and the discharge of electricity through gases, showing matter to be electrical in nature; (2) Quantum Principle [i.e., the energy of a body varies only by multiples of a certain fixed amount—Planck's h constant]; (3) Mass varying with velocity; (4) Relativity and; (5) the apparent free will in electronic "jumping." But he then goes on to say something that takes away most of his arguments and gives the Materialist all he needs. He says that, after all, a mechanical model may be vital to fruitful research!

* * *

Before closing we have a word to say, with the editor's permission, on the argument from ignorance. To put it briefly, it is frequently assumed that because a materialistic explanation fails no materialistic explanation will succeed. We are told that mass varies with velocity. As the speed of matter approaches that of light its mass increases to infinity. Who knows but what the swiftly moving matter collects radiant energy en route which in becoming assimilated adds to the mass of the moving body? This is one among several lines of attack. Naturalism is being constantly reinforced by almost incredibly accurate microscopic measurements framed to trace reality to its last hiding place. New discoveries are made by examining the infinitesimal residues which former explanations left unaccounted for. As for atomic free will, this is rejected by Prof. Lodge himself as "the result of inflicting our own feelings on things which do not possess them, and extending them into regions where they do not apply." (*Phantom Walls*.) And it is quite nonsensical to talk of the principle of relativity as destroying Materialism. As used by Heisenburg, for example, it questions the validity of Determinism by taking into account the interaction of the observer in noting the position and velocity of any body. By this we are supposed to reach the Principle of Indeterminacy. To what does this amount? Simply that, given omniscience, the state of the world at any moment can be predicted only by a hypothetical person standing outside the

flux of events and not related to them. It does not show that experiments made by human beings on a smaller scale have no validity and are no criterion.

There is still some eagerness to take the inadequacy of a materialistic explanation as a sign that no other such explanation will fill the gap (an attitude exemplified by the biologists, Driesch and Haldane). I see a man in the street with a black eye and am asked to guess the cause of it. I frame the hypothesis that he has gone one over the eight and walked into a lamp-post. It transpires, however, that he is a teetotaler. And so a materialistic explanation fails. My vitalist friend is soon on the spot, and brings in his Life Force, which has struggled with a material obstacle in an effort to gain self-perfection. But on further investigation, we learn that the man failed to hear the golfer shout "Fore"; and all other explanations have reached their Nirvana.

G. H. TAYLOR.

The National Secular Society.

EXECUTIVE'S ANNUAL REPORT.

WHILE it is altogether inadequate to estimate the work or influence of the National Secular Society in terms of its membership, it is gratifying to be able to report that during the year there has been a steady influx of new members, thanks, largely, to the constant advertising of the Society in the columns of the *Freethinker*. New Branches of the Society have also been opened at Bradford and Paisley, and in both places an active band of young men hold out a promise of effective work in the future. In some areas the intense trade depression has made the work of the Branches more difficult than it would have been otherwise, but in general the propaganda has been more than maintained in London and the Provinces, both as regards indoor and outdoor meetings. There is indeed a marked tendency with some of the Branches to broaden the area of their activities, and that is an evidence of enthusiasm which it is trusted will reap its reward.

The weekly reports in the *Freethinker* obviate detailed reference to what has been done, but it may give some idea of the work as a whole to point out that during the year the Executive has been responsible for the delivery of over 300 lectures, which, when added to the much larger number for which Branches of the Society are directly responsible, total a very considerable volume of work done. At all these meetings literature was sold or distributed, so that one may hope that the good done did not stop with the spoken word.

It is fitting before leaving this part of the Society's activities to add a word of acknowledgement and recognition of the help given by members and friends all over the country in preparing and carrying out these meetings. This often involves journeys up to twenty miles, with an expenditure of both time and money. In the open-air there is sometimes, but not so often as in earlier years, the facing of very hostile audiences. It is impossible to particularize, but the Executive desires to express its appreciation of the value of the help thus given, without which the successful carrying out of the work would be almost impossible.

But while much has been done, much more might be accomplished. A resolution that will come before the Conference suggests that where the geographical situation of a Branch is favourable a

speaker should be appointed to work the district. For several years the Executive has been moving along these lines, and the time appears suitable for this policy to be systematized and extended.

But for this work to be properly done the Society requires a much larger income than it now has. The Executive is already responsible for the whole-time employment of Mr. George Whitehead during the summer months, besides sending out other speakers. But very much more might be done with larger funds. It is gratifying to be able to report that the income for the past year is larger than it has been for some years; but in spite of this it represents a little more than a fourth of our expenditure. This means that we have to draw to too great an extent upon our very limited capital. The membership subscription it may be said, is purely nominal, and it is hoped that this will be borne in mind by those concerned.

During the year the Trustees of the Society have received legacies from the estates of Miss Hinley, Mr. Knox, Miss Harriet Baker, and Mr. S. Blogg to the value of £210 18s.

One more word on the financial side of the movement. Owing to the largely increased cost of halls and printing, together with the depressed trade all over the country, the Executive has given considerable financial assistance to the Branches in carrying out their work. This is quite proper, so long as assistance from headquarters is not taken as an occasion for relaxing local effort. Losing touch with those able and willing to help means, not merely a loss of financial help, but, what is much more serious, a weakening of local interest. As usual, a considerable quantity of free literature has been distributed.

Among the deaths of the year the Executive regrets to note that of Mr. A. J. Fincken, a very old, staunch and generous friend to the movement. A man of fine character, he was one who commanded the deep respect of all who knew him. Another very ardent friend of the Society will be missed in the person of Mrs. James Neate, the wife of a very old member of the Executive. A Freethinker from childhood, her interest in the Cause never faltered for a moment. She lived long enough to see many of the ideas for which the Society stood becoming almost commonplaces with advanced thinkers.

At the last Conference the appointment of a General Secretary for the year was left to the Executive. The Executive appointed Mr. R. H. Rosetti. He has been connected with the Society from boyhood, and the choice has been thoroughly justified. Mr. Rosetti is methodical, enthusiastic, and has shown himself in every way trustworthy. He is nominated for election by the Executive.

For some years there has been an expressed desire that some tangible expression of the Society's esteem for its President should be made. This had been brought up on several occasions, but the President himself had always stood in the way of anything being done. At the last year's Conference this opposition was overcome, and a committee was formed to give the proposal concrete form. The result was the presentation to Mr. Cohen at the Annual Dinner of a cheque for £1,645 8s. 0½d., accompanied by letters of esteem from all parts of the world, together with a handsome basket of flowers to Mrs. Cohen. The Dinner was one of the best attended for many years, there being an unusually large number of provincial visitors present.

Turning to other matters. Two events of fundamental importance to the Freethought Movement have transpired since this Conference last met. For some years the Society for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, on the Committee of which your President, Miss Kough and Mr. H. R. Clifton represent

this Society, has promoted a Bill for the repeal of these survivals of medieval intolerance. Mr. Harry Snell and Mr. George Lansbury have introduced the Bill on previous occasions. Last year the Bill was introduced by Mr. E. Thurtle, and by a fortunate chance secured a Second Reading on January 21. There was a lengthy discussion, but in spite of some peculiarly venomous opposition from Mr. Lovat-Fraser, who showed that the art of religious vilification is not dead, and some opposition from Lord Eustace Percy, a former Minister of Education, and Sir Charles Oman, the quality of which made one wonder whether one was living in the sixteenth or the twentieth century, the Bill secured a Second Reading. The Bill might have come before the House for a full discussion on a Third Reading, but for the action of the Government. An amendment was sent to the Committee which meant abolishing the present Blasphemy Laws and enacting a new Blasphemy Law of a much more dangerous character. Some support was unquestionably gained for this amendment by the Law Officers of the Crown misdirecting certain members of the Committee on a point of law. The misdirection was quickly exposed by your President in the *Freethinker*, but by that time the damage was done. The Government was clearly afraid of offending its religious supporters by performing an act of social justice, and there was nothing left for the promoters of the Bill but to withdraw the measure. It will be reintroduced so soon as is possible.

Commenting on the situation, the *Freethinker* said that the only thing we could do was to make the bigots pay as dearly as possible for their victory. Their defeat is only put off for another day, and that day may not be so very far away if Freethinkers act as they should act. It is the first time that a Bill of this kind has ever reached the stage of a second reading, and press comments, and expressions of opinion by prominent men and women, all showed that there exists a considerable body of opinion in this country in favour of the abolition of these laws. The danger offered by the present Blasphemy Laws not merely concerns attacks on specifically religious opinions, but a very slight strengthening of the more orthodox Christian parties might well bring within their scope questions that affect the reform of the marriage laws, and many other questions of morals. It is the strenuous opposition of the National Secular Society to the operation of these laws, its policy of setting them at defiance at all times, and fighting every case of Blasphemy that is entrusted to its care, that has done much to weaken this instrument of oppression.

The other matter has to do with the question of Secular Education. The Blasphemy Laws threaten the freedom of such as are agitating against the Christian religion; but the question of the abolition of religious teaching in all State-supported educational establishments involves the perpetuation of the Christian superstition, and ultimately the direction of social evolution.

Ever since the educational failure of the Churches compelled the Government of the day to take over the duty of elementary education, the fatal mistake of 1870, in allowing for two classes of schools, the Voluntary and Board Schools, and the provision of religious instruction in the Board Schools, has kept alive the religious controversy. Nonconformists and Churchmen have been permitted to use the schools as battlefields for their sectarian antagonisms, and both have resisted genuine advances in education because of the extra burden it would place upon them if they were compelled to bring their own schools up to the level of the State establishments.

Government after Government has tinkered with the question, and Education Minister after Education Minister has tried the experiment of bargaining with the different sects in order to effect an agreement with them, as though the question of national education was one that could be decided by gratifying sectarian demands. It is monstrous that the education of the rising generation should be treated as though it were something to be bandied about between the interests of political expediency and the selfish demands of religious organizations. Against this our protests can never be too strong or too frequently made.

At the last election the votes of certain Churches were almost openly for sale, and in its report the Executive called the attention of Freethinkers to the urgent gravity of the situation. It was obvious that if the protests of those who stood for a genuine equality, and who placed the welfare of the child before all other considerations were not made insistent, the present Government would act very much as its predecessors have acted. That warning has been fully justified in the Bill at present before Parliament, which proposes to sell to the sects in return for their acquiescence in certain directions, the right of the managers of sectarian schools to insist upon the appointment or rejection of a certain number of teachers, who are paid wholly from State funds, solely upon the grounds of their theological fitness. Depend upon it that if this measure becomes law we shall see, as more and more State schools are built, the attempt to extend the principle contained in the Bill.

An objection is being lodged by some Nonconformists on the ground that this Bill will mean that Nonconformists will not be given headships of certain schools, and that it means theological tests for teachers. The objection is sound, but the conditions against which complaint is made already exists. In all but very few schools in this country to-day, would a Freethinker who allowed his opinions to become known stand the smallest chance of a headship? There are thousands of teachers in the country who are compelled to play the hypocrite in Council schools. For with the Councils, as with the managers in non-provided schools, and just so long as religious teaching is given, are teachers appointed with regard to their religious opinions, or their applications declined because they are known to be opposed in opinion to current theological teaching. You cannot avoid having religious tests for teachers so long as religion is in the schools. The tests will either be explicit, as in the sectarian schools, or implicit, as in the Council Schools.

The only way, the only logical and honest way, is to leave religion out altogether. Those parents who desire it should have it taught in their own way and at their own expense. The one sound principle in modern politics is that of the secularization of the State. Children should no longer be used as pawns in the game that is played by opportunist politicians and theologians who fear to trust their teachings to the judgment of the educated intelligence.

The fate of the Bill for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws and the continuous sectarian squabbles over religion in the schools drive home the same moral. If we are ever to secure genuine equality of all opinions before the law, there must go on a much wider propaganda on the part of this Society, and a much greater degree of insistence on the part of individual Freethinkers. It is quite clear that political parties will pay no attention to anyone or anything that cannot bring adequate pressure to bear upon them. It has been too much the fashion for Freethinkers to remain silent concerning their anti-religious opinions while permitting religionists—pro-

fessional and otherwise—to freely ventilate theirs. We have too long taken it for granted that persecution must be the badge of our tribe, and unchecked licence to the Christian to ventilate his superstition on any and every occasion his unquestionable privilege.

On all matter, wherever there are a number of Freethinkers living near each other, there should be some concerted action on all agreed subjects. They could unite in protesting against the intrusion of religion in civil affairs, they could unite in withdrawing children from religious instruction in schools, and induce others to do likewise. They should, in every case, demand the right to affirm and raise strong protests against any attempt to infringe or belittle their legal right to do so. A demand should be made, in the case of civil marriages, for the setting on one side of a suitable room in the Town Hall, where such marriages could be performed with fitting dignity. Every attempt should be made to introduce Freethought literature into local libraries and similar institutions, and in all possible ways there should be created a recognition of the fact that Freethought is a principle essential to the orderly progress of life. What it is possible to do from headquarters is being done, but how much it is able to do must depend upon local effort and co-operation. To join the Society is good, but this should only be the initial stage of active co-operation.

The present is the Sixty-Fourth Annual Report since the first one was read in 1867 by Charles Bradlaugh; and this report may well close with a brief glance over the general work of our organization. Looking back at the world of the 'seventies is almost like catching a glimpse of a dead world. It was still the early days of the all-conquering doctrine of evolution, and to profess belief in it was clear indication of disbelief in religion. In 1867 the echoes of the trial of Bishop Colenso for doubting the accuracy of the Pentateuch had hardly died down; even some score of years later Britain's famous Prime Minister could write in one of the leading reviews a defence of the scientific accuracy of Genesis. No right of affirmation existed for Freethinkers, a bequest to a definitely anti-Christian organization was still counted illegal, Sunday entertainments were clear indications of a dissolute scepticism, while many other reforms, such as the equality of the sexes, the reform of the marriage laws, Birth Control, etc., were pointed to as some of the evil consequences of a rejection of Christianity. In general the structure of Christianity, while showing marks of the batterings it had received, still presented an appearance of superficial strength.

There is no need to detail the tremendous change in public opinion when we compare the days when the National Secular Society first saw the light with the present. It would, too, be foolish to claim that this revolution of thought was wholly due to the activities of this Society; but at least it may fairly be claimed that no other single organization has contributed so much to its consummation. In this matter the N.S.S. was but following the traditions of militant Freethought in this country since the time of Thomas Paine. Those who know the history of Freethought know that its most significant work has been the circulation among the people by means of lectures, discussions, cheap pamphlets and periodicals of ideas they would otherwise never have encountered. It was the Freethought movement that broke down the assumption that heresy was, to quote one writer, a privilege of the upper classes. As Bradlaugh said in his great pioneer work on Birth Control, any knowledge that is good for one class of the community is good for all classes. And in mak-

ing these ideas current among the masses of the people, the National Secular Society made it safer for those in high places to say a little more than they otherwise would have done. It was directly the work of Freethinkers, mainly belonging to the National Secular Society, that led to the breaking down of the old sabbatarianism, the popularization of what is now known as Birth Control, the right of affirmation for all who chose to avail themselves of it, the legality of bequest to anti-Christian organizations, and the weakening of the Blasphemy Laws. More still, in carrying its message among the people it encouraged the more timid, scientists, novelists, and others to say more than they otherwise would ever have dared to say. It was this form of advocacy, an advocacy that could be neither bribed nor coerced that, more than anything else has been responsible for the growth of Freethought in our time. Revolutions, whether in the social or the intellectual sphere, are seldom effected from the top. It is an alteration in the general mental atmosphere that makes orthodoxy seem curiously out of place, and so creates a zone of safety in which the more conventional and the more-timidly heretical minds may operate.

This, in the main, has been the work of the National Secular Society. It is its proud boast that during the whole of its history it has been the pioneer of many unpopular ideas among the people, and at all times the uncompromising upholder of freedom of thought and speech. And there is not a movement in the country that has not been more or less indebted to it for its activity. This indebtedness is not always acknowledged. An established aristocrat seldom boasts of his humble beginnings, and the upholder of a one time obnoxious heresy that has achieved a degree of respectability will seldom publicly acknowledge the unfashionable sources from whence his ideas are derived.

Sixty-four years of strenuous labour has thus served to clear a space on which the banner of Freethought appears to be firmly established. That word "appears" is used advisedly, for the mass of crude superstition still prevailing all over the civilized world is amazing in its intensity. It is as rife in the so-called educated as it is in the frankly uneducated classes. From the throne to the cottage its presence is manifest, and at all times it holds out the threat of an advance into the territory we flatter ourselves we have made secure. It has been noted how the power of religion in this country has prevented a Government representing a political party which contains more non-Christians than any other party in the country, performing a simple act of justice by repealing the Blasphemy Laws, and induces it to palter with the interests of the rising generation by arranging for the subsidizing of Christian sects so that they may retain some measure of control over education. It is from the alliance of retrogressive religion with political opportunism that the danger may come in the future.

The only way to guard against this danger is to go on making Freethinkers, and to inspire them with pride in their opinions and courage in their expression. A broadening of thought is one thing, a strengthening of thought is another, and without this breadth of thought is robbed of a great deal of its value. Liberal thinkers are common, determined and brave thinkers are as scarce as ever. We have a great cause, a vivifying principle, an inspiring tradition. It should be our aim to prove ourselves worthy of the cause, to illustrate the principle by our actions, and thus show we are worthy of a tradition that has been established by a long line of brave men and women.

Acid Drops.

The *Methodist Times* says that though it is true that the Churches too often have opposed real progress and sided with oppressors and were timorous in accepting new truth, yet it cannot be denied that the great reformations that have purged cities and redeemed social life and given great opportunities for the development of spiritual things have been led by men and women who have derived their inspiration from the religion of Jesus. We gather from our contemporary's statement that the religion of Jesus has a two-fold inspiration. It inspires some Christians to oppose progress and new truth, and others to support it. From this it would appear that the efforts of one set of the inspired cancel out those of the others. So one is forced to conclude that it is the people who are not inspired who do most to support new truth, encourage progress, and effect the most useful of social reforms. In any case, it cannot be denied that Freethinkers have been very prominent in this direction. The seminal thoughts of Freethought thinkers have set many a Christian searching his Bible for approval of such thoughts. And while Christians have been searching, and asking God's advice, the Freethinker has been busy educating public opinion in the direction of the reforms he desired.

"The trouble with us (Christians) has been that we have wanted to have things so much more precise and definite than the New Testament cares to make them," says the Rev. George Jackson. For our part, we should be inclined to call it not a "trouble," but an intelligent wish. If only the New Testament had been more precise and definite, and informative generally, what a vast amount of squabbling and bloodshed among Christians might have been avoided! And we salute the intelligence of any Christian who is alert enough to perceive that fact, and to wish it could have been prevented.

God has been so busy watching the right and proper burial of an Archbishop, encouraging the Lord's Day Society, and blessing a Christian mission on Epsom race-course that something was bound to be overlooked. This explains the French train wreck, a collision in the English Channel, and various greater disasters in other parts of the world.

Christians have a right to expect something to happen, says a parson, as a result of the union of the Methodist Churches. Freethinkers can guess what is likely to happen. Bigotry and intolerance will be more blatant. And there will be more attempts at puritanical interference with other people's freedom of choice and action. When the narrowly pious amalgamation, hard-won liberties will require to be defended. In this connexion, a vigorous offensive is the best defence.

Mixed bathing in the Serpentine will be permitted after June 16. We think a Bible placed in every disrobing cubicle would help to avert any immoral mishaps among the bathers. As a further precaution, a parson could be instructed to attend each day and deliver a Christian homily. The Empire must be safeguarded against moral corruption.

After a column of theological word-spinning about the "Meaning of the Cross," a Methodist writer concludes with this statement: "The Cross remains for us what it has always been, the symbol of sacrifice, service, and undying love." On the other hand, psychologists and historians of the future will probably regard the Cross as the symbol of irrationality indicating an adolescent stage of human mentality.

From Berlin comes a report that the Minister of the Interior, Dr. Wirth, has sent a sharp letter to the Premier of Thuringia, demanding the immediate suppression of the proposed "prayers" in the State schools desired by the State Minister of Education, Dr. Frick.

The gospel of Christ is claimed to be capable of creating universal brotherhood. On analysis that gospel is seen to be aiming at merely a brotherhood of Christian believers. Yet after nineteen hundred years of Christian propaganda, even the brotherhood of believers is not an accomplished fact. For the *Methodist Recorder* says:—

... if there were the same freedom of fellowship between Anglicans and Nonconformists as there is between the Free Churches, the scandal of our divisions would be removed, and there would be nothing in the variety of our organizations and forms of worship to hinder the world from believing.

"If . . ." There is much virtue in an "if." But were the "scandal" of lack of brotherhood to be removed, the world would still be hindered from believing. For one thing, men would continue to suspect a creed that had induced fighting and squabbling among believers for nineteen hundred years. Again, since each sect would continue to claim that its teaching and practices were the only interpretation of the religion of Christ, the non-believer might well decide to wait until the various sects had agreed among themselves as to what that interpretation ought to be. Still, both difficulties might perhaps be smoothed over, if the Churches collectively affirmed either (a) that Christ inadvertently forgot to explain exactly what his religion meant; or (b) that God erred in trusting stupid human intelligence to interpret his wishes.

The Rev. Dr. John R. Mott who, we are told, is an intellectual giant, has been explaining all about the "rising spiritual tide." Never, he says, have the doors of every continent been so widely open as they are now to the penetrating influence of Jesus. Christ has become the last court of ethical appeal in Asia. There is a rising tide of religious faith in India and China, and among the students of the world. Dr. Mott is an intellectual giant, and therefore, he sees so much more than ordinary observers. The latter, we believe, complain that although the people of India, China, and Turkey are "forsaking their own religions," they reveal little interest in the imbecilities of the Christian faith. What interests them more is Western knowledge and not Christian theological speculation. Again, enquiries among students in American and English colleges suggest that very few are concerned about Jesus or Christianity or the Churches. Dr. Mott has been watching an ebbing tide, and his vast intellect has imagined it to be rising.

The religious teaching in Sunday schools to-day, says a superintendent, touches all sides of the unfolding life of the scholar. This is the superintendent's grand way of explaining that Sunday schools organize all kinds of week-day amusements and recreation, with the object of retaining the child's allegiance to the church. In fact, one suspects that Sunday school teachers nowadays spend far more time over Secular recreations and its organization than they do over religion. The plight of the churches has reduced them to that. Again, to the modern Sunday school scholar, the religious stuff he has to submit to on the Sabbath is coming to be regarded as an unfortunate extra tacked on to the week-day amusement organized by the church.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has been addressing the Early Closing Association in regard to "defence of Sunday." He said he was "gravely concerned at the extension of Sunday labour." What cant that is! If all Sunday amusements and games could be enjoyed without Sunday labour, the parsons would still strongly oppose such amusements and recreations. The real objection is a religious one. And for the men of God to profess concern about people having to work on Sunday is sheer hypocrisy. Have the Churches ever advocated a six-day week for all employees? They have not. If that were made law, and amusement and refreshment caterers allowed to open on Sunday everywhere, provided each employee had a free day in seven, the parsons would be just as antagonistic to Sunday amuse-

ment. What the parson hates is competition to his own Sunday trade. And being Christian, he is unscrupulous enough to employ any argument that may seem to help his cause.

The Archbishop of York was slightly more frank on the same topic of Sunday defence. He "depreciated the great disturbance of those fundamental habits upon which the Church had naturally and properly relied as the foundation upon which it has built up the whole system of Church life and corporate worship." We can understand the Archbishop's sorrow. The fundamental habits, which the Church have worked hard to inculcate, have come unstuck of recent years. And the parsons' trade is suffering grievously. Pass the bucket for the Archbishop's tears! But, we presume, he has one consoling thought and last hope—he is still able to keep religion in the nation's schools. All is not quite lost.

The converted man, declares the President of the Primitive Methodists, is always like the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day. Well, we have no objection to the converted man shining, if he does it quietly and abstains from bawling his pious drivel in other people's ears. But unfortunately in this Christian country, that is an offensive assault which the police are instructed not to protect one against. It is, we presume, one of God's mysteries that persons who are the most sure they have "found Christ" want to bawl particulars of their mental mishap into other people's ears.

If all the churches, says the *Methodist Times*, will unite in a vigorous and vigilant campaign, the "boon of the English Sunday may yet be preserved." It certainly needs preserving—in a museum. Undoubtedly, one of the few things which the churches can be got to agree upon and unite for is that of preserving Sunday as the parson's market-day. For all their vigorous and vigilant efforts, the churches are not likely to turn Sunday into a day of gloom once again. There are too many thousands of people who prefer making another kind of "boon" of Sunday, and who will see that the parson is not permitted to dictate to them the manner in which Sunday is spent.

The complacent superiority of Christian critics or writers is one of the seven wonders of the world. This creed has enjoyed and abused both privileges and power in the past, and invariably it could always depend on the policeman's baton for protection, and the putting down of the ungodly. For half a crown, one can buy *India in the Dark Wood*, by Nicol MacNicol—that is, if one is prepared to take Christians at their own valuation. One of the problems in this book, so a critic states, is, how far Christianity may tolerate heathen institutions, not directly immoral or antagonistic but containing some negation of Christian ideals. This may be a problem to anyone who thinks he is of sufficient importance for one man to have died for him; to those who have a close working acquaintance with Christian ideals, the problem can be dismissed as a piece of cool cheek.

The Very Rev. H. R. L. Sheppard, in *My Hopes and Fears for the Church*, is asking for the moon; he would welcome a declaration that Christianity and War are incompatible. In the vicious world of Christian metaphysics, bloodshed and humility get on very well together. The Church throughout history has consistently played the fool with the sword and the lily.

A writer thinks that English humour has changed of recent years. Present-day humour, he suggests, is perhaps more intellectual. There may be some truth in this. We have noticed, for instance, that many people stay away from church because the antics of the priest, and the queer "facts" he wants them to believe, make them smile. This surely indicates that they possess an intellectual kind of humour rather than the "red-nose" type of fun.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

R. G. FORSTER.—If you read the *Freethinker* during the war years you should have known that we held, first, that once the Government had seen fit to decree conscription it was idiotic to exempt anyone; second, that having promised exemption, it should honestly have kept the promise; and thirdly, that the genuine conscientious objector was the one man who gave clear indication of courage, inasmuch as it was the courage that dared to defy general opinion. With regard to newspapers, we had in mind the ordinary newspaper press.

H. MARTIN.—Sir Arthur Keith is clearly an Atheist. We do not know what he calls himself, but what he calls himself can no more affect the fact than a negro calling himself a white man can affect his colour. It would certainly be a good thing if public men said without hesitation or qualification what they were, but that is too much to expect in this country at present.

H. W. BEATER.—Would it not be better to try to understand what is the position of the Atheist before you attempt to refute it? It might save you a lot of time. We suggest you read either Mr. Cohen's *Atheism or Theism*, or his *Foundations of Religion*. Meanwhile you are tilting at windmills.

E. H. COOPER.—Thanks for verses which we regret we are unable to use.

(Mrs.) M. MORRIS.—What is known as the stigmata is a fairly common phenomenon. It is nearly always associated with hysteria in some of its forms. There are plenty of examples in medical literature.

W. JAMIESON.—The *Sunday Express* is not at all likely to publish an article from us, and we are too busy to write without we are certain of publication. These papers always protect the writers on religion in their columns, by declining any serious exposure of what is said. Their desire is to keep the general ignorance undisturbed.

M. McTAVISH (Winnipeg).—Order received. Pleased to have your appreciation of the paper. Our circulation in the United States and Canada is on the upward grade.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

We publish this week the Annual Report of the National Secular Society's Executive. The report of the Conference proceedings will appear next week. The Conference ordered that the Report be printed and circulated among members. This will be done at once. It will be sold at the nominal price of one penny, and we

should like all friends of the Society to see that it is well circulated. Special rates will be quoted for, say, fifty or one hundred copies.

The business meetings of the Conference were well attended, there being a good representation from the provinces. The whole of the proceedings were animated by a spirit of enthusiasm which augured well for the future of the movement, a feeling strengthened by the fact that side by side with the veterans of the past were the bright faces of young men and women, which guarantees the carrying on of the work. One of the most cheerful features of recent Free-thought meetings is that while the Churches are losing their hold on the rising generation Free-thought seems to be enlisting their interest and their services. There were many letters of regret from different parts of the country, and from abroad came telegrams from the Viennese Freethinkers, the Militant Society of Atheists of Russia, and from the French Esperantist Free-thought Society.

It was a brilliant day, so far as the weather was concerned, and not at all suitable for indoor public meetings. Nevertheless the new Conway Hall was comfortably filled when the President mounted the platform, and for two hours the interest in the speeches never flagged. Mr. Moss gave some of his experience of the changes that had come over the religious world during his lengthy career, Mrs. Rosetti, in a very graceful speech, pleaded for the abolition of religious teaching in the schools, Dr. Carmichael gave a sketch of the natural history of Religion, Mrs. Chance, a newcomer to a Conference platform, in a too brief speech, riveted the attention of all, while she spoke of the value of the Free-thought point of view in considering important problems. Mr. George Whitehead exhibited the absurdity of religious beliefs, Mr. Clayton drove home their meaning, Mr. Rosetti dwelt upon the promising outlook for Free-thought, and finally, the President delivered a closing speech, which seemed to send everyone home in a thoroughly good humour. Altogether a successful and satisfactory day, one that should fill a Freethinker with delight and a parson with gloom.

Dr. I. Edwards writes:—

Permit me to congratulate you on your *Foundations of Religion*. With a considerable knowledge of Free-thought writings, I do not know anywhere of a more concise, or a more brilliant exposition of the modern attitude towards fundamental religious belief. The lecture must have left a deep and lasting impression. The "Illustrative material" is a little lecture in itself.

We are glad to say that the booklet is selling very well.

Mr. G. Whitehead will be in Cardiff, on a lecture tour, from Monday, June 16 until Friday, June 20. Details as to time and localities will be found in the Lecture Notices column. There are enough Freethinkers in Cardiff to make a really strong and useful Branch of the N.S.S. One enthusiast has already revealed himself, and will others prepared to lend a hand, either at Mr. Whitehead's meetings, or in forming a local Branch, communicate with Mr. J. Marsh, 22 Ascog Street, Cardiff.

The Liverpool Branch has taken a step in the right direction by appointing a small Committee, whose duty it is to keep an eye on the press for all matters that concern Freethinkers. Mr. Ready, the Branch Secretary, has been very active himself in this direction, and we have noted some very telling letters from his pen in the local press. The move by the Liverpool Branch is one that should be followed all over the country.

We are asked to announce that on Sunday, June 22, the Liverpool Branch has arranged a circular "Ramble," in the Prenton area of the Wirral. Members and friends will meet at the Pierhead at 2 o'clock.

God and the Legal Oath in the United States.

(Continued from page 358.)

It may be suggested that the nonbeliever can relieve himself of the legal disabilities by steadily professing the required religious belief. So he can. If he does, he may testify. If he is so honest and truthful that he cannot pretend to believe what he does not actually believe, he is disqualified as a witness, and that too on the theory that he cannot be trusted to tell the truth. But why insist that the nonbeliever should "conform" and pretend to believe in divine vengeance? We are not in the habit of making any such suggestion with reference to the Pilgrim fathers who were "nonconformists" in England. No one contends that the Catholics in England should have evaded the disabilities, restraints, forfeitures and inconveniences of the law against "Popish Recusants" in force during the reign of James I by professing to be conforming Protestants. We do not criticize the Quakers of the early days of Massachusetts for failing to adopt the Congregationalism of their persecutors as a means of evading the laws providing for the whipping of the followers of George Fox.

The nonbeliever in divine vengeance who admits his nonbelief is, in the jurisdictions mentioned, practically stripped of all civil rights. If he is a white man of culture and learning he cannot depend on the southern insistence upon White Supremacy to give him such privileges, as a witness, as are accorded to an ignorant negro wench. Injuries and wrongs may be freely inflicted upon him by Christians, but in the absence of disinterested eyewitnesses he is not allowed to testify in any court of justice concerning the acts committed by the *torl feasons* or assailants. He cannot even attempt to expose the perjury of his adversaries. The courts of Virginia¹¹ and of West Virginia¹² have recognized the injustice, if not the horror, of such a situation, for they have used the following language:—

The proscribed man may suffer in his property, or in the persons of the members of his family. His goods may be stolen, his dwelling broken into by the midnight robber, or burned by the incendiary; his child may be beaten, or his wife murdered before his face, and the offender escape because of the incapacity of the injured man to give evidence against him. This very incapacity may have caused the calamity . . .

The statutes disqualifying disbelievers in divine vengeance as witnesses, even in their own cases, are consistent with the following view of an English judge, quoted without any disapproving comment by a Mississippi¹³ court:—

All Infidels are, in law, perpetual enemies (for the law presumes not that they will be converted, that being a remote possibility), for between them, as with the Devil, whose subjects they be, and the Christians, there is perpetual hostility, and can be no peace.

The enmity is evidently borne on the part of the Christians only, for they only are the ones who claim that "Infidels" are the "subjects" of "the Devil."

Under such statutes if an "Infidel" desires to testify against the murderer of his mother or the rapist of his daughter, he may find himself in a situation similar to that noted by an editor (Christian) of

an edition of Blackstone's Commentaries. The editorial note says:—

I have known a witness rejected, and hissed out of court, who declared that he doubted of the existence of a God, and a future state.

This note was quoted, with apparent satisfaction and approval, by a New York court in 1858.¹⁴ The rejected witness may further find that there are no hisses for the murderer or rapist.

William Emmons, a non-believer, had stolen from him a pocketbook containing a promissory note. On the trial of the thief, John Lee, Emmons was not permitted to testify. The court held him incompetent because of his opinions, reported as follows by Hon. William Cranch, chief judge of the Circuit Court of the District of Columbia:—

He said he believed Nature to be God, and God to be Nature, and that in him we live and move and have our being. That he did not think himself more bound to speak the truth by being sworn on the Bible, than on any other book. That when a man died, he died like a tree, and was resolved into his original elements, and that intelligence was the consequence, and not the cause, of organization.

Nevertheless, the accused was convicted, on other evidence than that which would have been given by Emmons, and hence there is no probability that Emmons would have testified falsely regarding the theft of his pocketbook. The court was very solicitous of the rights of the thief. He was not convicted of the theft of the promissory note. The indictment charged the theft of a note for \$200 at sixty days *without* interest. Cranch, chief judge, was of opinion "That a note for \$200 at sixty days *with* interest" did not prove the averment of the indictment.¹⁵

The law, or rule, disqualifying witnesses on account of their lack of orthodox religious belief has often been the refuge of criminals. In 1906 the Supreme Court of Alabama¹⁶ set aside a conviction of rape because one of the witnesses for the prosecution, being nine years old, "showed no such religious training and instruction as excited a hope of future reward to the good and fear of punishment to the wicked." In Illinois¹⁷ a convicted forger attempted to secure a reversal of the judgment on the ground that the victim and prosecuting witness did not believe "in the doctrine of receiving punishment after death for crimes done in this life." He failed in his attempt, but only because the witness did believe "in the existence of a God and a future state."

In Tennessee,¹⁸ John Harrel, probably a thief, was sentenced to three years in the State penitentiary for receiving stolen goods. The appellate court reversed the judgment on the ground that the trial court erred in refusing him permission to show that Stephens, the prosecuting witness, was a non-believer.

In another Tennessee case,¹⁹ Charles Koppee sued S. K. Odell in a civil action and obtained a judgment. The Supreme Court of that State remanded the cause for new trial because the trial court had refused to permit Odell to show that Koppee "disbelieved in God or a future state of rewards and punishments." In addition to depriving Koppee of the fruits of his litigation, in which Odell was accorded the same rights as a witness as were exercised by the plaintiff, the court compelled Koppee to endure the

¹⁴ Stanbro v. Hopkins, 28 Barb. 265, 268.

¹⁵ U. S. v. Lee, 4 Cranch, C. C. 446; Fed. Case No. 15,586.

¹⁶ Jones v. State, 40 So. 947.

¹⁷ Noble v. Peo., 1 Ill. 54.

¹⁸ Harrel v. State, 1 Head, 125.

¹⁹ Odell v. Koppee, 5 Heisk. 88.

¹¹ Perry's Case, 3 Gratt. (Va.) 632.

¹² State v. Hood (W. Va.), 59 S.E. 971.

¹³ Heirn v. Bridalut, 37 Miss. 209, 226.

publication of the court's opinion containing the following:—

. . . The man who has the hardihood to avow that he does not believe in a God, shows a recklessness of moral character and utter want of moral sensibility, such as very little entitles him either to be heard or believed in a court of justice sitting in a country designated as Christian.

If Koppee should thereafter have sued the judge writing that opinion for libel, the law would have permitted the Christian jurist to hide behind the skirt of "privilege" and to invoke the rule that a person is not civilly or criminally liable for words published in the course of a judicial proceeding.²⁰

The part of the opinion of the Tennessee court which is above quoted has been regarded so highly as a gem of legal literature that it was quoted by an annotator in a monograph on "Religious Belief as Affecting Competency of Witness."²¹ There are ample grounds for concluding that the use of such language reflecting, as it does, upon the moral character of a class of our citizens, is a criminal libel, in many circumstances. Other classes of citizens have invoked the aid of the courts in protecting them against aspersions. Protestants have been convicted of criminal libel for publishing matter reflecting upon members of the Knights of Columbus.²² Words imputing to another, or to a class, lack of moral character or want of veracity, or perjury, are unquestionably libelous.

Recently, September 16, 1929, in North Carolina, at the trial of a conspiracy case at Charlotte, the witness, Ben Wells, was asked:—

"Do you believe that if you would tell a lie God would punish you either in this world or in the hereafter?"

Wells answered:—

"No, I don't; but I won't tell a lie because of my own convictions."

The court held that the witness, by that answer, had disqualified himself.²³

Referring to a witness in a similar situation, the General Court of Virginia,²⁴ in 1846, remarked:—

"If he is honest enough to subject himself to the disability, rather than tell a lie, why exclude him?"

FRANK SWANCARA.

(From the *New York Truth Seeker*.)

(To be concluded.)

Consider what you have in the smallest chosen library. A company of the wisest and wittiest men that could be picked out of all civil countries, in a thousand years, have set in best order the results of their learning and wisdom. The men themselves were tied and inaccessible, solitary, impatient of interruption, fenced by etiquette; but the thought which they did not uncover to their bosom friend is here written out in transparent words to us, the strangers of another age.—*Emerson*.

The enlargement of freedom has always been due to heretics who have been unrequited during their day and defamed when dead. No (other) publisher in any country ever incurred so much peril to free the press as Richard Carlile. Every British bookseller has profited by his intrepidity and endurance. Speculations of philosophy and science, which are now part of the common intelligence, power and profit, would have been stifled to this day but for him.—*George Jacob Holyoake*.

²⁰ 37 C. J. 143.

²¹ 12 Am. & Eng. Ann. Cases, 155, 156.

²² *Peo. v. Turner* (Cal. App. 1915), 154 Pac. 34; *Crane v. State*, 14 Okla. Crim. Rep. 30, 166 Pac. 1455.

²³ *N. Y. Times*, September 17, 1929, p. 23.

²⁴ *Perry's Case*, 3 Gratt. 632, 642.

"Monistic Religion" and Hocus Pocus.

EVERYWHERE we see a tendency to cling to pious dialectics, long after the essential religious meaning and value has apparently faded out. Like children, we think too much in the logic of relatively empty word-symbols, rather than with an imagery of things and their behaviour. In religion, theology or metaphysics, the word-symbols represent chiefly our feelingful necessities, and therefore have relatively little objective value or meaning. I know clergymen who are calm, unreligious, purely dialectic church-members, but actually unavowed Atheists. I also know persons with a thoroughly religious temperament who passionately proclaim Atheism. The former misconceive "religion" as practical social service. The latter quarrel with fundamentalists about theologic dogmas, that are without objective meaning or value. The noisy evangelical type of Atheist, often has more of the evil subjectivism of a religious temperament than many church members. Most of such seeming inconsistencies express a divided interest, a "split personality." In other cases they signify the persistence of immature social habits. Such persons accept unquestioningly the theologic dialectics of their social group, without discovering that such words have no objective meaning, and hold for them very little subjective value.

It is this unconscious or half-conscious word-jugglery which has given us such a confusing variety of religious labels. We have religion of science and scientific religions; religions of nature, and supernatural religions—religions of immanent as well as of transcendental gods; religions of æsthetics, and of asceticisms; a "religion of life" and many for dying; we have deistic, theistic, and pantheistic religions, each with its many sub-varieties, as well as the religion of monism and of humanism, with several sub-varieties.

As one illustration of all this hocus pocus, I propose to exhibit the process by which an Atheist may attempt to make a religion of pious aspirations and empty dialectics. Let me begin with a quotation from Professor Ernest Haeckel. He says: "The goddess of Truth dwells in the temple of nature, in the green woods, in the blue sea, and on the snowy summits of the hills; not in the gloom of the cloister, nor in the narrow prisons of our jail-like schools, nor in the clouds of incense-burning Christian Churches. The path that leads to the noble divinity of truth and knowledge is the loving study of nature and its laws, the observation of the infinitely great star-worlds with the aid of the telescope, and the infinitely tiny cell-worlds with the aid of the microscope—not senseless ceremonies and unthinking prayer, not alms and Peter's pence. The rich gifts which the goddess of Truth bestows on us are the noble fruits of the tree of knowledge and the inestimable treasure of a clear, unified view of the world—not belief in supernatural miracles, and the illusion of an eternal life."¹

This is a rather unusual bit of poetry to come from a scientist who asserts "the unity of God and the world." By the whole of his life-work it is made clear that Haeckel was a non-religious Atheist, who seemingly endeavours to escape detection by using the religious word "God" to designate what to him is surely a "godless" automatic, undesigned and undesigned universe.

¹ *Confession of Faith of a Man of Science*, p. 192 (?)

"Truth" in general is a mere abstraction and practically non-existent to us. We know only separate and more or less remote approaches to some concrete truth. "The goddess of Truth" is a meaningless figure of speech, designed to carry over to the scientist some of the emotional value customarily attached to "God" by the hysterically devout. The "Goddess of Truth" cannot become even a delusional reality to one whose devotion to the scientific method is exclusive of all other methods. Even to seem real this goddess must cease to be a mere fascinating verbalism. She must first become objectivized so as to appear to possess some qualities of personality, or *as if* embodied in something material, as in an idol, or in special phases of nature, or it must become a concretized concept, as the content of a genuine hallucination. Only when the word "goddess" thus becomes symbols of the concrete could she become literally the object of religious sentiments.

The ordinary scientist's "loving study of nature" is due solely to the obsessive development of protracted concentration of attention. When that concentration of attention is mainly due to the conscious influence of objective conditions and aims, then it can hardly ever be religious. When it is mainly due to a subjective feeling-state, or ecstacy of unconscious origin, but which is ascribed to transcendental sources and explains or objectivizes itself in terms of a metaphysical over-lord, as an administrator for the physical universe, then it will seldom exist except as a symptom of prior religiosity, and morbid psychology. Properly speaking, the scientist's "loving study of nature" is never religious until it has become more intensely "loving" than a scientific temperament permits. The exact line of demarcation is not clearly definable for, like all evolutionary transitions, they so gradually fade into each other that it is only in the extremes that we clearly see the differentiations. It therefore shows itself most clearly in the wide divergencies, if we compare the relatively mild obsession of the most devoted scientific temperament with the frenzy of the religious ecstatic, or of the theomaniac.

This added intensity, of the non-scientific love-life of religion, always tends towards what Haeckel denounces as "senseless ceremonies and unthinking prayer." These ceremonies are "senseless," and the prayers are "unthinking" only when objectively viewed by an unsympathetic onlooker, perhaps with a scientific temperament, and without much psychologic insight. Except for the subjective value of prayer and religious ceremonials these would never have existed. The attainment of the religious ecstacy, which so often follows prayer and religious ceremonials, are admirably adapted to promoting the comforting delusion of nearness to superhuman power. Therefore, they are not wholly "senseless." Neither are the means, which are manifestly so well adjusted to that subjective end, wholly "unthinking." The scientific temperament is the antithesis of all such pathologic suggestibility and subjectivism which is always so characteristic of the religious temperament.

"The rich gifts which," according to Haeckel, "the Goddess of Truth bestows," are also clearly non-religious or irreligious. "The noble fruits of the tree of knowledge" have ever been destructive of confidence in the prior supernaturalism of religion, errors of religion if you please, but deemed most vital to many ecstatic religionists. That it was only a little of the "false," in the symptomatology of their religion, that was destroyed does not alter the fact that the particular individual involved deemed it an essential to his special religious truth. There-

fore its denial or destruction was resented by him, though it be unimportant to other religionists. This tends to show that mere calm, scientific devotion to the pursuit of truth by the scientific method cannot be made the end of anything properly and literally designed as "religion." The scientist's search for truth is conditioned by continual open mindedness such as precludes the intensity of devotion and the extreme certitude of a feeling-conviction, such as is the characteristic product of the religious temperament, and the "religious experience."

The height of religious love goes out only to the concrete, or its seemings and symbols. No devout religionist was ever devoted, to the scientific method in preference to his more pious predisposition, its phantasmal creation, or to the religionist's subjective method. Because of this, when carried to the extreme of enthusiasm, religion always arrives at either idolatry, hallucinations, or the passionate love of some conspicuous minister of religion (a saviour) as symbolizing, or in an unusual measure embodying, the divine supernatural.

THEODORE SCHIROEDER.

(To be concluded.)

Superstition, Religion and Science.

THROUGHOUT the ages Mankind has had Faith in lucky charms.

When possession of one of these "Mascots," "Healers," or "Preservers," was accompanied by good fortune, it has been assumed to be due to some Magic power in the article.

Such belief is universal, and the less civilized the people the greater the credulity.

Witchcraft, whereby certain individuals are credited with supernormal powers, presents similar psychological features which explain the phenomenon of Faith reposed in Medicine-Men by savages.

Mystic ceremonies are looked upon as containing intrinsic merit, the "Baptism" of Babies and Battleships is performed to gain "Blessings" thereby; "Consecration" of waters and wine is supposed to alter the nature of the original constituent elements thereof; and ordinary ground is alleged to be made "Holy" by such means.

Faith in Icons, Incantations and Prayers come within the same category, and believers, *from experience*, fervently testify to the efficacy of such agencies.

Claims, of a like character, are made with regard to the *indwelling* power of "The Grace of God," "The Spirit of Christ," and other superhuman sources, beneficiaries stating with earnest conviction and assurance, how they know they have received help and comfort therefrom. Shrines, Holy Wells and Laying of Hands, are responsible for numerous so-called "Miraculous" cures, and said to be caused by the Supernatural influences operating thereat.

Trust in "The saving power of Jesus" has been instrumental in bringing about countless "Conversions," with changed lives and reformed characters, rightly ascribed to Belief.

Is such Faith founded on fact or is it a delusion—even though effective?

Is it in accordance with Truth?

Here, on this all-important issue comes a cleavage, little understood.

Religionists contend that results (Conversions) prove belief to be true, and affirm *the power to bless is contained within the object of Faith*, while Rationalists assert, though Faith be efficacious, *the object* (the lucky charm) *has in itself no virtue to impart*.

Thus, both parties will admit that Faith, though unsound and untrue, may be beneficial.

While acknowledging the effects of Mind on Matter, the Scientific attitude is to seek the true cause, whereas

the Religious mentality professes to accept and believe in other mystical causative factors.

Reconciliation between Science and Religion is impossible while this gulf is unbridged.

Religionists will persistently justify their position by reference to Conversions and other answers to Prayer; the cause of these phenomena will continue to be attributed to "God," "Christ," or whatever it may be—*always something believed in, and therefore unknown.*

Scientific research has not penetrated such realms, and has nothing to say with regard to the undiscovered.

Scientists have their speculative opinions respecting the unknown, but that must not be confused with Science.

Religionists have their codes of Ethics, based upon knowledge and gained by experience of Life, but that is not Religion, inasmuch as it is common to Mankind—including those who are not Religious.

When such Moral maxims are coupled with Faith in something unknown, to which authorship is imputed, then it becomes Religion.

Confusion, through conflicting creeds, indicates the superstitious content of Religions; each sect has proved the truth of its Faith *by experience.*

But is such experience reliable? When young, we, on Christmas Eve, called up the chimney to Santa Claus. The next morning, our stockings bulged with his gifts. The *experience of asking and receiving was real*, but our conclusion drawn therefrom, was untrue. Later on we learnt from whom and by what means the presents came.

Superstition is the mistaken guess arising out of Ignorance, it is belief in the existence of power which is not where it is supposed to be; it endeavours to attach effects to unconnectable causes, and thus misleads. Knowledge conjoined with sincerity is the only remedy.

Many Ministers of Religion realize this, but they are not free to say what they know or think.

Scientists have no such restriction in expression, with the utmost candour they can be sincere and outspoken.

Is it a matter for surprise why searchers for Truth and Wisdom are leaving the Churches?

Such deserters, in place of "Superstition" have found a reliable basis for Morality, based upon Human and Natural conditions, and proved by experience.

What has "the Church" to give, or to say, to these?
C. E. RATCLIFFE.

The Parson and The Tiger.

"Can France accept the fables of her priests when the whole tragic tale hangs on a broken blade?"

Meredith.

WE still talk of the "Great War." It would be a pity to forget it. It was heroic, stupid, sordid, sublime. It was for the glory of God, it reflected in the immolation of man, almost the eclipse of a civilization. Hell was let loose upon the earth in four years of senseless, needless butchery, followed by an aftermath of which one cannot visualize the end. How I have wished to be a "great writer," say in the *Sunday Express*, and "utter the thoughts that arise in me," say, under the title: "The Great War, by One who wasn't There!" But, alas, I am merely a silent, suffering soul, yet I cannot rest content—no, not till the kirkyard receives me in its final repose—which the armies of the future, marching over it with thundering tread, shall disturb no more for ever! In these wiser, sadder, if not better, days, and in my native, yet alien, corner of the world I should not like to be without my friend, R.S.—bookman, humanist, atheist, humourist, with many other faults, yet Sun-treader to me, the unacknowledged "Squire" of my neighbourhood, to whom at his happy best I must listen—and learn. There is a rare inbred nobility of nature, almost a freak of creation, developed by reading and culture that now and then redeems the world of its commonplace. Reason and reality are not everything; the Freethinker has his "spiritual world" also; indeed none but he; even the atmosphere of illusion at its finest; his

airs from elfland faintly blowing; all the scent and beauty of the rose of life, born often in and of, its most despicable, hammered actual. So we meet the sun-treader and he lifts us bodily from the ground in song and joke and story, in that "diviner intoxication." So I was intensely interested and amused the other night with my friend's account of how, in the most "glorious" days of the great war, he met, in a railway carriage, that curious but common contradiction, a militant ambassador of the pacifist Christ, and was finally "flooded" by the parson. Flooded?—to use an American phrase, he was whittled away to the small end of nothing, chewed up, cornered! In answer to my ingenuous friend's sane and humane arguments the parson had simply said: "When a tiger enters my drawing room, I shoot it!" There was no more to be said, for at that very moment the formidable hosts of Germany were menacing at every gate of Europe—or—Britain was like a storm-beaten vessel, with rending beams, and the sea, with but a plank to cover it, yawning round it like a hell (vide Byron and Dickens). Who says parsons are timid and puny creatures? Here was a moment to doff the God and put on the man! What was Christ doing in this galley? the eternal and unchangeable one, the one perfect hero of the innumerable pulpits of the many centuries held up naked without a pious blush, minus one scanty rag of logic or commonsense to cover it; and now, still more unblushingly, metamorphosed from the man of perfect peace into the man of war, hounding on alike the German and the British Christians to inevitable unimaginable shame and savagery—and, yes, glory, if you like, glory of all the other virtues, of man, not of God, even in war; but Christ, the Chameleon Christ, was not dethroned. The Churches were open, if the pubs were shut, but the spiritual drink more deadly than the spirituous, the former nerving even the arm of a parson to shoot the German tiger . . .

"You, Sir, are a patriot, brave and eager to defend your country against foreign aggression—a virtue shared by millions not of your creed or cloth—you are also a Christian minister: what is a Christian as taught by the alleged words and deeds of your acclaimed Master? Is it a definite ideal, or a plastic criterion changing with the varying circumstances of mankind, of peace and war, good and evil, ease and extremity of the human race? Is it something remote, immune, unattainable, eternal in the heavens? Are its commands obeyed: can they be obeyed? If no, then your Gospel is a huge imposture, and you, Sir, an impostor. Your purely human instincts, right or wrong, serve you in your or your country's need, as it serves millions who know not Christ. War is a bull in a china shop. Who lets it in? I, like you, but not by *Christian* example, would shoot the tiger in my drawing-room—or in my but and ben, so much more humble than the manse; but the analogy is not perfect; it is not so simple as all that; that is the end, not the beginning of the story, and it is purely human, not Christian; for, so far, Christianity has never prevented war, but its holy priests have always been its most efficient recruiting sergeants—you, sir, are a shining example of these. . . .

Yes, after all, I think the parson could have been answered.

ANDREW MILLAR.

Without free speech no search for truth is possible; without free speech no discovery of truth is useful; without free speech progress is checked and the nations no longer march forward towards the noble life which the future holds for man. Better a thousand fold abuse of free speech than denial of free speech. The abuse dies in a day, but the denial slays the life of the people and entombs the hope of the race.—*Charles Bradlaugh.*

For my part, I trust that the antagonism between science and theology will never cease; but that, to the end, true science will continue to fulfil one of her most beneficent functions, that of relieving men from the burden of false science, which is imposed upon them in the name of religion.—*Huxley.*

Society News.

MR. G. WHITEHEAD held a successful week's meetings in the district of Camberwell and Brixton. One meeting was wrecked with a downpour that fell upon South London, but all the others passed off in good style.

The message is very sympathetically received in this district as a result, largely of the incessant work done by Mr. Heath and his colleagues, and except for what seems to be an irreducible minimum of Christian stupidity the crowds were exemplary.

The Christian Evidence Society, unable to attract an audience on its merits, has recently taken to holding meetings where ours are in progress. Their speaker then yells out provocative stuff, some of it often abusive to Secularists, in the hope that some unwary Freethinker will interrupt and help to provide a crowd otherwise difficult or impossible to get. We hope that in future our supporters will allow these gentlemen to waste their substitute for sweetness, on the desert air, by ignoring their nonsense; otherwise attempted opposition helps them to achieve their object. Their matter is only of interest to the public when we make it so by heckling at their meetings. Our thanks are due to Mr. Heath for his usual enthusiastic assistance at all the meetings.

G. W.

Obituary

MR. HARRY BOULTER.

ON Thursday, June 5, the remains of Harry Boulter were cremated at Golders Green. The immediate cause of death was the bursting of a blood vessel in the throat, and the end came suddenly on May 29, at the age of fifty-eight.

Harry Boulter had an active record in the Freethought Movement extending over thirty years, which was not confined to the platform. As a member of the Shore-ditch Borough Council he was instrumental in bringing about a cessation of the mayoral church parades. His advocacy of Freethought brought him into conflict with the authorities, bringing with it inside experience of the prison cell. He leaves a widow and five children, three of whom are married. We offer sincere sympathy to all. Many friends were present at the Crematorium, where a Secular Address was given by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

SCHOOLBOY HOWLERS.

The Esquimaux are Gad's frozen people.

In the United States people are put to death by elocution.

If anyone should faint in Church put her head between the knees of the nearest medical man.

A bibulous man is one who frequently quotes from the Scriptures.

The first book in the Bible is Guinnessis.

Salome was a very wicked woman who wore very few clothes, and took them all off when she danced before Harrods.

What did the Israelites do when they came out of the Red Sea? They dried themselves.

A Protestant is any one who is not a Catholic. Roman Catholics believe what the Pope speaks, but Protestants can believe what they like.

Henry VIII was very fat besides being a Nonconformist.

They gave the Duke of Wellington a lovely funeral. It took six men to carry the beer.

"Howlers," Selected by Cecil Hunt.

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INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 11.0, George E. O'Dell—"The Pageant of American Life and Character."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand) : 3.15, Mr. J. Hart—A Lecture.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrolds Road, North End Road) : Saturday, 7.30—Various speakers.

FINSBURY PARK BRANCH N.S.S.—11.15, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—A Lecture. The *Freethinker* can be obtained from Mr. R. H. Page, 15 Blackstock Road, Finsbury Park.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain) : 6.0, Mrs. Grout—A Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.—Sunday, 11.30, Wren Road, Camberwell Gate, Mr. L. Ebury; 7.0, Stonehouse Street, Clapham Road, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : 12.30, Mr. James Hart and Mr. A. D. McLaren; 3.15, Messrs. E. Betts and C. E. Wood; 6.30, Messrs. A. H. Hyatt, B. A. Le Maine and E. C. Saphin. Every Wednesday, at 7.30, Messrs. C. E. Wood and J. Hart; every Thursday, at 7.30, Messrs. E. C. Saphin and Charles Tuson; every Friday, at 7.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine and Mr. A. D. McLaren. The *Freethinker* can be obtained after our meetings outside the Park, in Bayswater Road.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (outside Municipal College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.) : 7.0, Mr. White—A Lecture.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith) : 3.15, Messrs. Charles Tuson and W. P. Campbell-Everden.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

CARDIFF.—Mr. George Whitehead (of London) will lecture on Monday and Tuesday, June 16 and 17 outside Victoria Park, Canton; Wednesday, outside the Council Schools, Cathays Terrace, Cathays; Thursday, outside Grange Gardens, Holmsdale Street, Gragetown; Friday, Grosvenor Square, Splott. Commence at 7.30 each evening.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) **BRANCH N.S.S.** (corner of High Park Street and Park Road) : Thursday, June 19, at 8, Messrs. D. Robinson and J. V. Shortt. Chairman, Mr. A. Jackson. Current *Freethinkers* will be on sale.

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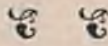
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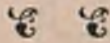
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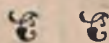
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