

THE ORIGIN OF BLASPHEMY?

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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>The Origin of Blasphemy.—The Editor</i> - - -	385
<i>Propriety and the Press Gang.—Minnermus</i> - - -	386
<i>Parasitic Pests of Mankind.—T. F. Palmer</i> - - -	387
<i>God and the Legal Oath in the United States.—</i> <i>Frank Swancara</i> - - - - -	389
<i>Mr. Mencken Does it again.—W. Mann</i> - - -	390
<i>"Monistic Religion" and Hocus Pocus.—Theodore</i> <i>Schroeder</i> - - - - -	394
<i>The National Secular Society.—Report of the Annual</i> <i>Conference</i> - - - - -	395
<i>The Bible In the Schools.—George Bedborough</i> - - -	397
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,</i> <i>Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions.

The Origin of Blasphemy.

I TRIED, last week, to explain to a correspondent, what was the existing legal meaning of blasphemy. It is not easy to do this because, as the Christian is the only person who is legally able to say what is offensive to him, and as the offensiveness of the language used is the essence of present-day blasphemy, a Freethinker can never be sure whether he has been guilty or not until some Christian has been good enough to settle the question for him. So long as blasphemy was an intelligible offence, this absurd state of affairs did not exist. When blasphemy consisted in denying the truth of the Christian religion, or of any part of it, a man knew when he had committed it. All that was in doubt was whether the other man would find him out. Blackstone defined blasphemy to be the "teaching of erroneous opinions contrary to the faith and blessed determination of the Holy Church." In the celebrated case of Naylor, who was sentenced for the "horrid crime" of blasphemy to be branded with the letter "B," to be repeatedly set in the pillory, to have his tongue burned with a hot iron, to be imprisoned and flogged, for declaring himself to be a reincarnation of Christ, it was the teaching that was at issue. Peter Annet, at the age of seventy, was sent to Newgate and condemned to stand in the pillory at certain times with a paper inscribed with the word "Blasphemy" on his forehead for making public his disbelief in the Bible. For the publication of *Ecce Homo*, a perfectly temperate discussion of Jesus and Christianity, Houston was sent to prison for two years and fined £200. In very many other cases the issue was quite clear. It was not how the opinion was expressed, it was the opinion itself that was punished. The present cowardly, stupid and radically dishonest interpretation of the law did not exist. Christians were bigots then as now, but at least they were not ashamed of their bigotry.

The Individual and the Groups.

Now all this opens up a curious and pertinent enquiry, and lays bare an interesting chapter in human history. Why does such an offence as blasphemy exist? It is strange that there should exist either a law to prevent any one saying he does not believe in God, or to prevent his speaking disrespectfully about him. No one but such representatives of the Stone Age as Lord Eustace Percy, or "Jix," or the Bishop of London can believe that my opinions about God can have any material effect on my conduct towards my fellow men. Those insurance companies which make it a point of guaranteeing employees do not make enquiries as to the religious opinions of the persons insured, and ask no more for guaranteeing the Secretary of the National Secular Society, than they would for guaranteeing the President of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference. It seems still more absurd to have a law in order to protect God against me. A God who cannot protect himself does not appear to be of very great consequence to anybody.

Yet there must be some reason why laws against Blasphemy are so common, and why they have existed for so long. Long ago it was pointed out that primitive life is passed in an environment that is simply saturated with superstition. Everything that a man does is done under fear of the ghostly powers that surround him. There is no "supernatural" because there is no "natural" to which it can be opposed. Along with this fact goes another—a very vivid sense of collective responsibility. The whole of the tribe is responsible for acts done by any member of it—at least, so far as the Gods and outsiders are concerned. This primitive sense of collective responsibility may still be seen in the least civilized sections of social life, in gang fights, in the relations between nations in a state of war, where every individual belonging to the nation with which we are at war becomes automatically an enemy, and responsible for anything a member of the other nation may have done. Social life to-day retains these primitive conceptions, much as individuals retain rudimentary structures which point to a less developed form of animal life.

* * *

God and Man.

Place these two circumstances together, the sense of collective responsibility and the belief that everything that happens is dependent upon the tribal gods, and we have, not merely the reason for the existence of Blasphemy Laws, but also for the persistence of that spirit of intolerance which has been so great a curse to mankind. The heretic, the unbeliever, is one who either does not do what the tribal gods wish him to do, or he does something they wish him not to do. He will not recognize their existence, neither will he pay them material or spiritual tribute. And that is a very dangerous thing for the rest of the

tribe. The gods may punish the whole of the tribe by sending a disease, or by cutting short the supply of food, or cause them to be defeated in battle. These are not by any means outworn ideas to-day. During the war there were scores of parsons who said that the war was our punishment because we had "forgotten" God; the Lord's Day Observance Society will tell you that God will certainly punish the *whole* of the nation because a certain number are not properly and piously miserable on Sundays, and only a few weeks back the Rector of the Yorkshire village of Hemsworth told the people that prosperity would never come to Hemsworth while some of them neglected the proper observance of Good Friday. In all these cases the godly suffer with the ungodly. The drought which comes to the man who works on Sunday also comes with devastating and asinine impartiality on the man who spends Sunday at chapel. God doesn't seem to care who he punishes so long as some one "gets it in the neck." Your remembering God will not save you so long as the fellow next door forgets him. The Bible tells us it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God; it really appears to be a very unpleasant thing to have anything at all to do with him.

* * *

Rationalizing Blasphemy.

So, indeed, early man appears to have thought. But then he found it impossible to get away from God, so he had to be on his guard. Something unpleasant was always happening, or likely to happen if these gods were displeased. And the heretic being an obvious object of divine displeasure must be suppressed. It was an act of social necessity, just as we find the isolation of a man with an infectious disease a social necessity. Religious believers, ancient and modern, have no respect for the gods, as such, for they will blackguard the gods of other people with a heartiness that seems to speak of the pleasure of venting feelings that have been long kept under. The parsons who talked of the war as brought about by God because he was angry with the existence of unbelief, the Rector of Hemsworth, who said that God would punish everybody in the village because someone had offended him over Good Friday, each was in exact accord with primitive custom.

Although this aspect of a law against blasphemy is to-day concealed, it is always there. The blasphemer has to be punished, not for the original reason that God will get in a temper, but because he endangers the well-being of believers. This was one of the justifications of the Medieval Church for the persecution of the heretic. He acted as a source of infection to the rest of the community, and there was the same justification for removing him as there is for locking up a person who has contracted a deadly infectious disease. If Christianity be true intolerance is a virtue, the removal of the unbeliever an act of social sanitation.

Finally, in even the comic opera proceedings for blasphemy that goes on to-day, the same fundamental idea is present. In the first instance, we have religious persecution because God will punish the whole community if he is allowed to pursue his wicked way unchecked. Then we have it because the unbeliever will infect others with his wicked views and so doom them to eternal damnation. That is what I may call the infective stage of Blasphemy. Finally, we must suppress the blasphemer, not because he "infects" other, not because God will set out on one of his promiscuous missions of punishment because some one has offended him, but because the feelings of some believer in God is outraged. We have grown ashamed of believing in a God who will

ruin the crops because a number of ironworkers have not behaved themselves on Sunday, but we have not yet developed sufficiently to say that if a man feels "outraged" because someone does not agree with his conception of God, he must either get a God of which he need not be ashamed, or train himself to keep his temper in check and to behave in a more civilized manner. The one certain thing that emerges from a study of the subject is that the Gods have been a nuisance since the men of the Stone Age first invented them. In this respect the majority of the most ardent of their followers have intimidated them.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Propriety and the Press Gang.

"In our fat England the gardener, Time, is playing all sorts of delicate freaks in the hues and traceries of the flower of life, and shall we not note them?"

George Meredith.

THE disappearance of the *Daily Chronicle*, after an existence of nearly eighty years, recalls the struggle for life even outside the small and select circle of advanced publications. If editors who tickle the ears of the groundlings find it hard to make headway, it only shows the enormous difficulties that have to be contended with by those who battle against the tide of ignorance and superstition. By a strange anomaly the cheapening of the cost of papers has been accompanied by an increase in the cost of production, and it is this increase which has placed nearly all papers at the absolute mercy of the advertisers.

Prior to the world-war, the price of newspapers had reached an extraordinarily low level, the English halfpenny, the American cent, and the French five centimes. The cost of production was colossal even before the war. An attempt to establish the *Tribune*, an admirable and well-edited paper, involved an outlay of £80,000, and it was unsuccessful. Whilst a few carts were sufficient for a newspaper a generation ago for supplying newsagents, Metropolitan newspapers now spend thousands of pounds weekly on circulation methods alone.

One striking result of this increased cost of production is that the power of the editors and the writers has been constantly diminishing of late years, and the power of the commercially-minded proprietors continually increasing. Indeed, many of these proprietors are purely business-men, and are innocent of the traditions of journalism. This is a real evil, for it means that everything is sacrificed to money-making and "get-rich-quick" methods.

Nowadays, some of the newspapers with the largest circulations are concerned with sensationalism rather than news. Readers are tempted by accident insurances, puzzle competitions, and even gifts. Recently, rival newspapers openly boasted of the amount of insurance money paid out by them to the relatives of the killed in a railway accident. Rightly, the Union of Journalists passed a strong resolution deploring the sorry business as derogatory to their profession and repugnant to all sense of common decency.

Newspapers have become purely commercial speculations. The glorious free press is one of the greatest impositions of the age in which we live. It exists to pervert and corrupt the popular mind, as far as possible, in favour of certain institutions and vested interests. It is the obedient, humble servant of the advertisers. The only really free press in England consists of a few journals founded and maintained for the promotion and defence of principles. They have relatively small circulations, they are

almost free from advertisements, and that they live at all is a tribute to the personalities of their editors. Journals of this kind have to face enormous difficulties. They are neglected by advertisers, and they are subjected to a boycott which prevents them reaching more than a fraction of their potential purchasers. They are perpetually between the proverbial devil and the deep sea, and their existence is a miracle more marvellous than any related in the Christian Gospels or the "Lives of the Saints."

As an example of the difficulties of conducting advanced periodicals, it may be mentioned that over £9,000 was spent on *Justice* during twenty years, and it fell on evil days at last. Even the arresting personality of Hyndman could not make the paper a commercial success. The *National Reformer* had an influential circulation, but it did not long survive the death of Bradlaugh. The *Agnostic Journal*, despite the talents of the editor, Stewart Ross, had to rely upon subsidies from its readers. The *Free Review* was edited by Mr. John M. Robertson, a writer of European renown, and a scholar of distinction, but it shared the fate of the others. If such men cannot make such periodicals a commercial success, how is the thing to be done at all?

The power of the press is enormous. For three centuries weekly and daily newspapers have been supplying people with news. To-day there are 60,000 periodicals printed throughout the world. It is a matter of the gravest concern that such publications should have a reputation for truthfulness and honesty of purpose, rather than being concerned primarily with sensations, thrills, mouthing, snobbery, and cockscombray. The integrity of the press is a world-wide concern. The hungry people have sought bread, and too long have been given a brick.

Journalists can neither do justice to themselves, nor serve the public honestly, in a press dominated by a greedy commercialism. To achieve huge circulations editors must follow the line of least resistance. Although gambling is illegal, every large newspaper in the country gives racing "tips." Editors devote columns to the most brutal murder cases, and report all the salacious details of police-court charges. In the summer, when space is plentiful, there is always the sea-serpent and tales told to the marines. In the midst of a world-war room was found for circumstantial accounts of "angels" on horseback on the battlefields, or for lying stories of miraculous happenings to stone statues of the "Mother of God." Let there be no mistake on this point. The writers of this trash do not all believe it. It is not entirely due to ignorance or fanaticism, but is simply done to promote huge circulations. It is, in the last analysis, largely a matter of business. Journalists know better than that Freethinkers are mere lunatics at large, but they wish to curry favour with the many-headed orthodox, who leave school at fourteen years of age. The medieval nonsense of the Bishop of London, and other clergymen, is reported weekly in the newspapers, but the leaders of Freethought seldom have a line devoted to their work, unless it be of abuse.

The result is that readers of newspapers are kept in blissful ignorance of the intellectual ferment that goes on outside the very narrow limits of the "respectable" press, that is, the press which is, first and last, a money-making concern. Readers must not be worried by unpleasant matters. This explains why the entire press of a civilized country dismisses in a few lines such an awful catastrophe as an Indian Famine, which means death from want of food of thousands of men, women, and children, and gives an exaggerated publicity to the domestic lives of the

members of a Royal family. Whether one august person reads novels, or whether another "god-anointed" person has sugar in her tea is a matter of microscopic importance, but the welfare of thousands of human beings is of consequence. But the flunkeys of Fleet Street will have it otherwise.

Freethought in this country is represented in the popular press by the *Freethinker*, which, in a few months, will celebrate fifty years of continued activity. A wider circulation for this journal is the best antidote to the conspiracy of silence and malicious misrepresentation of the commercial press. If our readers will do a little missionary work it will enhance the value of a periodical which has done valiant service for Liberty during two generations; and will contribute towards the ultimate triumph of what George Meredith called "the best of causes."

MIMNERMUS.

Parasitic Pests of Mankind.

THAT man's secular abode was divinely prepared for his particular benefit remains a popular delusion. The truth that various regions of the earth are practically uninhabitable, and that the larger part of the globe's surface is covered with water does little to lessen this traditional fallacy. Nor do many people ever reflect on the circumstance that, among other anomalies, insects inimical to all domesticated animals and cultivated plants are enormous in number and powers of destructiveness. Fruit trees, flower gardens, vegetable plots, indeed every department of agricultural life is constantly invaded and devastated by baleful insect organisms.

The most highly organized and sensitive animals form the prey of lowly and frequently loathsome species of insects. It appears impossible to reconcile this terrible truth with any conceivable theory of providential design. In terms of the special creation theory bugs, fleas, lice, and other vermin were designed to serve some salutary purpose. But in practice all sane men scout this preposterous doctrine and wage relentless war on domestic pests that irritate and endanger human life.

It is computed that the 350 varieties of plants under cultivation in France yield an annual return of some £400,000,000. These crops are infested by some 2,000 fungoid diseases, while 6,000 species of insects add to the injury. These pests are responsible for a loss of at least £120,000,000 every year. In Canada, the United States and other agricultural areas the ravages of parasitic pests are appalling. In some instances the cultivation of important food plants and other valuable vegetation has been abandoned in consequence of the devastations of insect pests. In the British Isles the economic loss from the ravages of insect organisms is very serious.

The only available remedy for these ills is that provided by economic entomology. And fortunately for English agriculture bird life is, with us, abundant. It is also satisfactory to note that there is an increasing recognition of the invaluable assistance rendered by our feathered friends in checking the destructiveness of parasitic insects that abound wherever man cultivates the soil. The past and present persecution of insectivorous birds so common in Continental lands has encouraged the increase of insect life with dire consequences to the art of husbandry.

Not only is insect hostility a grave menace to the farmer and gardener, but throughout the world nauseous articulated animals have made their home among man's dwellings. The common house-fly is

one of these intruders; but while the bed-bug, the louse, and the flea have long been regarded with marked aversion, the fly, until comparatively recently, has been tolerated as a harmless lodger. The fly's evil propensities were scarcely suspected by the general community. It is true that from the seventeenth century onwards, medical authorities have occasionally surmised that these insects were in some way connected with the prevalence of disease.

As flies in general, and certainly the house-fly (*Musca domestica*) naturally revels in filth of every description, when these flies alight on meat, sugar, and other foods left exposed to their contaminating presence they infect with micro-organisms everything they touch with their legs and snouts. There is small doubt that these seemingly innocent insects are capable of conveying the germs of typhoid fever. Infantile diarrhoea or enteritis is another malady for which house-flies are sometimes responsible. With the progress of science it will probably be proved that the refuse-loving and cesspool-haunting-fly is a pest of the worst character. In the meantime, all who treasure their health will safeguard their food from insect molestation, destroy or render innocuous their breeding-places, and consign as many as possible to an early death.

Fly reproduction is rapid. Each female lays five or six sets of eggs, each of which consists of upwards of 100 tiny white eggs. "Stable manure is the most favoured material on which to oviposit," states the economic entomologist, Mr. C. A. Ealand, "but failing animal excrement, decaying vegetable matter, or even the contents of slop-pails and spittoons may be selected. Under favourable conditions the egg-stage only lasts from eight to twenty-four hours. The segmented cream-coloured, legless larvæ feed ravenously on their filthy surroundings, moult at the end of the twenty-fourth hour, and again a day later when they attain their full growth, and measure about half an inch in length. . . . When fully fed, the larvæ leave their feeding ground for some drier situation, contract, and change into chestnut-coloured, barrel-shaped puparia, from which the adult flies emerge in from three to four days." Were all the eggs deposited by the house-fly to hatch out and reach maturity the resultant swarm of insects would prove appalling. For within eight weeks a single fly might become the begetter of many million descendants. Herrick estimates in his *Insects Injurious to the Household*, that at the close of the first generation fifty egg-laying females would exist. "At this rate," he writes, "at the end of the eighth generation, there would be produced about 1,875,000,000,000 adults. Of course, in nature, a very large part of these would die and never reach maturity, so that actually one female would probably never produce such an enormous number of individuals. However, under normal conditions tremendous numbers are produced."

Entomologists are acquainted with about 100 species of fleas. All these exasperating insects are parasitic on warm-blooded animals, and the various species have usually become adapted to the particular birds or mammals whose blood they suck. The flea so partial to mankind—*Pulex irritans*—is, in common with the others, a wingless insect, probably related to flies. Someone once sagely said that he did not so much object to fleas themselves, although he resented the manner in which they obtain their living. Save in the case of the badger, the human flea confines his attention to man. Moreover, the fleas that infest cats and dogs are apt at times to sample human blood.

During the greater part of the year the female flea

deposits her eggs. In rigorous winter weather only, does this lively insect suspend operations. When the eggs hatch out the larvæ develop in any accessible dirt or rubbish. The adult insect sustains itself on gore, but it can endure long intervals of fasting.

It appears surprising that these seemingly intractable creatures can be trained to perform tricks. The compressed form of the flea's body, associated with long, relatively powerful legs, enables the insect to leap about a hundred times its own length. At flea-exhibitions it is really wonderful to witness the way in which the tamed insects draw miniature coaches, and manifest their agility in leaping feats. And it is usually assumed that fleas are no respectors of persons, and will torment a monarch, or a menial with equal impartiality, but in sober truth these active animals display a pronounced partiality for certain people, while leaving others almost unmolested.

The horrible and evil-smelling bed-bug is another parasite that should never have been spared when Jahveh drowned the world. This unwanted immigrant is said to have entered England in the sixteenth century, and was then popularly described as the wall-louse. But like the flea, the fly, and the various lice, it has since accompanied man in all his wanderings. Although most common in dirty and dilapidated tenements it may appear and prove troublesome in dwellings of spotless purity. This insect is a temporary parasite on the human body. It rarely preys by day, but in the silence of the night it comes forth from its daytime hiding-places to feast on the blood of its sleeping or uneasy victim.

A highly-flattened parasite, the bug can creep into crevices of the narrowest kind, and appears closely adapted to a parasitic mode of life. That this disgusting insect has become degraded from an earlier higher state is evidenced by its wings which have degenerated into a pair of functionless pads which now serve no useful purpose.

Other things equal, the less advanced or degraded the animal, the greater its possible rate of reproduction. The bed-bug is an illustration of this. Its powers of fecundity are great, and where its presence is neglected or overlooked the parasite will infest every nook and cranny, and like the dark superstitions that lurk in the mind of man, emerge at the first favourable opportunity.

But the most pestilent and repugnant human parasites are the several species of lice. These vermin persistently adhere to the body or raiment of their unhappy host. Their whole existence is spent at the expense of their victim's blood. Their eggs are deposited, and their larval stages passed in the closest connexion with man's head and body. Their powers of multiplication are amazing. As we know from what happened during the World War, whole armies were agonized by the multitudes of these loathsome creatures.

In terms of the theory of special creation three species of lice were divinely designed to make men miserable, and to assist in spreading disease. These insects are the head-louse, the body-louse, and the crab-louse. Until comparatively recently these disgusting insects infested all sections of the population. The enormous consumption of powder among the upper classes, even in eighteenth century England, was largely due to the presence of lice on their persons. To-day, in northern lands, the greatly increased cleanliness prevalent among nearly all sections of the community, supplemented by a vastly improved sanitation has led to a practical elimination of this scourge. Each of these insects is exceedingly prolific, the body-louse breeding more rapidly than its relative the head-louse. The body-louse is not

only repulsive but dangerous, and is strongly suspected as a carrier of the germs of typhus fever.

The third baneful member of the louse family is the crab-louse. The most innocent may become infected with these revolting insects. They normally restrict their activities to the pubic regions, but if measures are not promptly taken to extirpate the parasites they may extend their ravages to the eyebrows and arm-pits. Of course, their powers of multiplication are stupendous, exceeding those of the body-louse. Various other parasites prey upon man. As evolutionary products their existence is understandable, but in terms of special creation these organisms suggest an agency much more devilish than divine.

T. F. PALMER.

God and the Legal Oath in the United States.

(Concluded from page 379.)

A DUE regard for the Fourteenth Amendment to the Federal Constitution would, however, compel an unprejudiced court to hold that an Atheist, or a non-believer of any type, is a competent witness in every state of the union, and that any statute purporting to provide to the contrary is absolutely void. The reason is that the Fourteenth Amendment contains the following clause: "No State shall . . . deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." Under that clause the courts have held invalid statutes which deprived negroes from serving as jurors. The Supreme Court of California²⁵ in a case involving the validity of a statute which provided that "no Indian, . . . or Mongolian, or Chinese, shall be permitted to give evidence in favour or against any white persons," remarked:—

. . . The establishment of different rules as to the competency of evidence applicable to different classes of persons may tend to the advantage of one class and to the oppression and encroachment upon the personal liberty of another.

Many observers have recently recognized this situation in commenting upon various rulings made under the North Carolina statute in cases arising in the floggings, murders, and other disturbances growing from the strike in Gastonia.²⁶

Not all courts in North Carolina have disqualified non-believing witnesses. In a recent case at Charlotte, Mrs. Miller, testifying in behalf of her husband on trial for murder, admitted a lack of belief in the existence of a "Supreme Being who punishes for wrong and rewards for virtues." The trial judge held that her views were pertinent evidence as to her credulity and were proper material for her impeachment as a witness. She was not held incompetent. Had she professed a belief in heaven and hell her evidence would have been, according to the ruling of the court, more credible. The trial judge is reported to have remarked:—

"If I believed that life ends with death and that there is no punishment after death, I would be less apt to tell the truth."²⁷

No such reasoning has ever been permitted to operate against a Christian witness. In a trial of persons, who were probably of the Protestant faith, charged with burglary and arson in the burning of the convent of the Ursuline community at Charlestown, Massachusetts, on the night of August 11, 1834, the

prosecution was supported by the testimony of Roman Catholic witnesses. Counsel for the prisoners contended that confession and absolution being parts of the Roman Catholic faith, a witness belonging to that sect might testify what was not true, in the expectation of afterwards obtaining absolution, and that therefore, this was a matter for consideration of the jury as affecting the credulity of the witness. The court refused to admit such evidence.²⁸

A Christian witness cannot be compelled to answer whether he believes it possible to obtain divine forgiveness for perjury, but the non-believer must answer whether he has a belief in divine vengeance. If the latter objects to the questioning, the court is apt to characterize the objection as "frivolous."²⁹

In Connecticut,³⁰ Georgia,³¹ Indiana,³² Iowa,³³ Maine,³⁴ Massachusetts,³⁵ Montana,³⁶ Nebraska,³⁷ New Mexico,³⁸ and Tennessee³⁹ statutes exist which preserve a permission to show a disbelief in a personal Deity for the purpose of affecting the credibility of a witness. Professor Wigmore says that such statutes are "a sop of medievalism left to satisfy those who would otherwise not have consented to abolish theological qualifications for the oath."⁴⁰

In Arizona,⁴¹ Oregon,⁴² and Washington⁴³ constitutional provisions exist which forbid any witness being questioned touching his religious belief to affect the weight of his testimony. In California⁴⁴ the constitution was held to produce the same result. Colorado,⁴⁵ Michigan,⁴⁶ Pennsylvania⁴⁷ and Vermont⁴⁸ have statutes to the same effect.

The courts in Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, and New York have held, in the absence of any specific statute, that want of religious belief is not a ground for impeachment of a witness.⁴⁹

The Court of Appeals in Kansas⁵⁰ recognized the injustice of this procedure or practice, and held that a witness must not be questioned as to whether he is an "Infidel" because:—

To permit the question to be asked would assume that a stigma was cast upon a person who disbelieved in the existence of a God in accordance with the doctrine of the Christian church or churches, such as felons suffer by reason of the conviction of a crime.

If it is permissible to impeach a witness by showing that he is an Atheist, or a Deist without belief in divine vengeance, there is nothing to prevent the examining lawyer from going through the form of impeaching the credibility of a witness in that manner for the illegal, but nevertheless real, purpose of

²⁸ Com. v. Buzzell, 16 Pick. (Mass.) 153, 156.

²⁹ Peo. v. Most, 27 N. E. 970.

³⁰ Conn.—Sec. 5705 G. S. 1918.

³¹ Ga.—Sec. 5857 Park's Ann. Code 1914.

³² Indiana—Sec. 505 R. S. 1896, Burns' Ann. St. 1914, Sec. 529.

³³ Iowa—Sec. 11255 Code 1927; State v. Elliott, 45 Ia. 486.

³⁴ Maine—Sec. 111, Ch. 87 R. S. 1916.

³⁵ Mass.—G. L. 1920 c. 233, sec 19; Allen v. Guarantee Co., 148 N. E. 461.

³⁶ Montan.—Sec. 10534 Code Civ. Proc. 1921.

³⁷ Nebr.—Code Civ. Proc. Sec. 330; 42 L. R. A. 561.

³⁸ New Mexico—Sec. 2165 Ann. Sts. 1915.

³⁹ Tenn.—Sec. 5593 Thompson's Shannon's Code 1917.

⁴⁰ Sec. 936 Wigmore on W. (2d. ed.)

⁴¹ Ariz.—Const. 1910, Art. II, sec. 12.

⁴² Ore.—Const. 1859, Art. I, sec. 6.

⁴³ Wash.—Const. 1889, Art. I, sec. 11.

⁴⁴ Cal.—Peo. v. Copsy, 71 Cal. 548, 12 Pac. 721.

⁴⁵ Colo.—Sec. 6561 C. L. 1921.

⁴⁶ Mich.—Sec. 12570 C. L. 1915; Sec. 7459 Howell's Mich. Stat. 1882; Peo. v. Jenness, 5 Mich. 395.

⁴⁷ Pa.—Act of April 23, 1900, P. L. 140.

⁴⁸ Vt.—Sec. 1503, P. S. 1906.

⁴⁹ 40 Cyc. 2614.

⁵⁰ Dickinson v. Beal, 10 Kan. App. 233, 62 Pac. 724.

²⁵ Peo. v. Washington, 36 Cal. 658.

²⁶ Literary Digest (November 9, 1929).

²⁷ Literary Digest (November 9, 1929), p. 22.

arousing antagonism against him. If the witness is himself one of the parties litigant, the resulting injury and practice may be substantial. There is always the possibility that one or more jurors may be of such religious mould as to bear hatred toward any one they characterize as an "infidel." This possibility is somewhat evidenced by the fact that the Supreme Court of Errors in Connecticut in 1820 took occasion to observe that the "infidel" lacks the "esteem of mankind" and is, to Christians, "odious and detestable." The same feeling is often entertained by members of one religious sect against adherents of another. Even if the witness is a believer it is possible to insinuate that he is an "infidel," especially if he is known to entertain advanced and liberal religious views in a community where such views are held by only a small minority. The insinuation may be very damaging in the presence of a jury holding Fundamentalist opinions.

FRANK SWANCARA.

(From the *New York Truth Seeker*.)

Mr. Mencken Does it Again.

MR. MENCKEN, the brilliant American author of the series of criticisms entitled *Prejudices*, to which we called attention some two years ago, has just published a *Treatise on the Gods* (Knopf, 10s. 6d.), in which he continues the war against religious beliefs with exhilarating and uncompromising vigour.

It deals with the nature and origin of religion, its evolution, its varieties, Christianity, and its outlook to-day. The nature of religion, says Mr. Mencken, is quite simple, there is nothing secret about it, whether it is the Mumbo-jumbo of the savage, or the ornate ritual of the Archbishop, "its single function is to give access to the powers which seem to control his destiny, and its single purpose is to induce those powers to be friendly to him." These powers he individualized, he imagined they were like himself only more powerful. And he evolved a great many of them. The Egyptian pantheon was so numerous that it was sardonically remarked that the gods were nearly as numerous as the men. Then there was the Indian pantheon and the teutonic pantheon, whose gods got drunk and fought, and were served by retainers in the form of valkyries, dwarfs, giants. The Greek pantheon, the most artistic of all represented the Greek ideal of the physically perfect man and woman.

When the all-conquering Romans encountered these very human gods, says Mr. Mencken, they were not shocked, they had plenty of their own. "At Rome, the cross-roads of all the world, all the gods of East and West were mingled. There were so many of them that no one believed in them any more, not even the priests. . . . It is no wonder that no educated Roman believed in any of them. Rome had become the sewer of theology, as the United States threatens to become to-day. All the streams of superstition ran into it, and all the streams of sacerdotal fraud. To be priest, in the high days of the empire, was to be set down confidently as a swindler. . . . Cato used to wonder how one priest can avoid laughing when he meets another." But, of course, they appealed to the uneducated then, just as religion is strongest among the uneducated Fundamentalists in America, and among "Bible Christians" and Salvationists over here to-day. They also had their reconcilers of new with the old, says Mr. Mencken: "As in our time, there was a furious and fatuous effort to reconcile such exact knowledge

as existed with the prevailing theology; there were, indeed, quite as many Robert A. Millikans, A. S. Eddingtons, Henry Fairfield Osborns, and Oliver Lodges in Athens as there are in Anglo-Saxondom to-day."

Of the Old Testament god Yahweh (mistranslated Jehovah in English Bibles), Mr. Mencken says: "They imagined Him as a sort of glorified desert *sheik*, a veritable father of His tribe, full of very human whims and caprices, eager for flattery, sociable in His more amiable moments, but quick to punish contumacy, or even mere impoliteness." He has always been a favourite with the more simple-minded varieties of Christian, he continues:—

He is what bucolic Methodists and Baptists think of when their thoughts turn to the Most High. There is no metaphysical nonsense about Him; His yea comes with a roar and His nay is accompanied by a blow of the fist. In His jurisprudence there are no ethical subtleties, but only whites and blacks. He is pre-eminently the God of all the gloomy Little Bethels behind the railroad tracks, of all the fantastic sects which rage where life is drab, of the Salvation Army, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Holy Rollers, the Pillar of Fire Brethren, the Prohibitionists. (pp. 232-233.)

And as for the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, "it reeks with irreconcilable contradictions and patent imbecilities." It was through contact, or combination, of the Hebrew, the Greek, and the mystic oriental religions that Christianity was born. Mr. Mencken takes Renan's view of Jesus, that he was a moral teacher but had no more supernatural power than any other man.

Of the Gospels, he says, "The collection of tracts called the New Testament is so full of inconsistencies and other absurdities that even children in Sunday school notice them." "The simple fact is that the New Testament, as we know it, is a helter-skelter accumulation of more or less discordant documents, some of them probably of respectable origin, but others palpably apocryphal, and that most of them, the good along with the bad show unmistakable signs of having been tampered with." He also notices a phenomena that adds something to the gaiety of life, namely: "the effort of certain alarmed and conciliatory scientists to prove that exact knowledge and theological dogma are not actually at odds." This attempt to reconcile science and religion, says our author: "In part, I suspect, it is simply cowardice—a disinclination to provoke formidable and unscrupulous antagonists too far—a craven yearning for the cheaper sort of popularity. But in part it is also due to inner turmoils, congenital doubts."

On the other side of the fence, the theologians listen courteously to the advances of these weak-kneed scientists, but seldom make concessions of their own, save under compulsion:—

The truth is that every priest who really understands the nature of his business is well aware that science is its natural and implacable enemy. He knows that every time the bounds of exact knowledge are widened, however modestly, the domain of religion is correspondingly narrowed. If Christian theologians admit to-day that the world is round and revolves round the sun, it is only because they can't help themselves—because the fact has been so incontrovertibly proved that even the mob has had to accept it. So long as they could do so safely they denounced it bitterly, and launched their most blistering anathemas upon those who defended it. (p. 303.)

The only real way to reconcile science and religion, says Mr. Mencken, is to set up something that is not science and something that is not religion.

"This is done with great earnestness by Robert A. Millikan, A. S. Eddington and other such hopeful men—all of them bred so deeply in the faith that they have been unable to shake it off in their later years, despite their training in scientific method and their creditable professional use of it." Millikan's Christianity "is simply a vague sort of good will to men": and "the thing that he describes as science is so halting and timorous that it is quite as unreal." Moreover, to argue that the gaps in our knowledge must be filled by intuition and reverence instead of by patient enquiry "is simply to give ignorance a gratuitous and preposterous dignity," and a confession that, to that extent at least, he is not a scientist at all, but a theologian, and: "This is precisely what Millikan, Eddington and their like come to. They reconcile science and religion by the sorry device of admitting, however cautiously, that the latter is somewhat superior to the former, and is thus entitled to all territories that remain unoccupied. All they really prove is that a man may be a competent astronomer or physicist and yet no scientist, just as Blind Tom was a competent pianist without being a musician." Equally weak and foolish is the position of the other school of reconcilers, led by J. Arthur Thomson the zoologist who teach that science belongs to the intellect, and religion to the emotions. "Such childish 'proofs' are typically theological, and they remain theological even when they are adduced by men who like to flatter themselves by believing that they are scientific gents." (pp. 308-309.) Religion is everywhere a gauge of respectability, says Mr. Mencken: "Thus one may understand that lady of London told of by George Lansbury who, when advocates of secular education began soap-boxing in the East End, rushed out of a public-house brandishing a gin bottle and yelling, 'These are the blighters who want to rob us of our bloody religion!'" (p. 329.)

W. MANN.

FULLY EXPLAINED.

The Rev. Oswald Green came amongst us—the little sawmilling community of Sandfly Bay—to spend, as he put it, the balance of his vacation. There being no pub or boarding-house, Old Joe, the sawmiller, played host, and the kindly old parson made a lot of friends. When Sunday came round Joe announced to his employees and their families that Divine Service would be held at his house, and the entire population of the Bay rolled up. The service ran on the usual lines, till the sermon was reached. The Rev. Oswald smiled at his congregation. "I have decided to substitute a little direct talk in place of a sermon," he said, "and I am taking for my subject a few lines from a classic, the name of which escapes my memory. 'How does the little liver pill know where your liver lives?' We have all taken pills at some period of our lives, yet how many of us have asked ourselves: 'What guides the pill to its destination?' We make its task more difficult by swallowing draughts of water or jam, yet in spite of this it gets to the appointed place. I am sure the word pill is merely an abbreviation of pilgrim, a traveller to dark and inaccessible places; one who does good and casts out evil. Just as here are white, brown, pink and black pills, so are there corresponding colours in pilgrims. The pill is round in shape, the symbol of a rolling stone or traveller; so, my dear friends, next time you take a pill say to yourselves, I am sending forth a pilgrim, that he may do good." And the reverend gent., beaming happily, sat down. That evening two more strangers arrived at the Bay. "Have you seen a stray parson about?" they asked. We said we had. "Ah well, if you gents. have quite finished with him we'll take him back to the asylum." But I've heard a lot worse sermons.—From the "Sydney Bulletin."

Acid Drops.

Dr. Nicholas Murray, of Columbia University, thinks that the next step to be taken towards world peace is that of training the nations and educating public opinion to think in terms of a world without war. We should say that the Churches are eminently suited for the job of educating the public. The parsons know all the arguments in favour of war. So all they need to do is to say exactly the reverse of what they said during the last war.

A tale is told of two delegates who attended a world conference of Baptists. Two of the delegates met on a train and tried to get into conversation. Each spoke several languages, but failed to find a common tongue. Suddenly one cried out, "Hallelujah!" and immediately the other replied, "Amen!" A wonderful thing is Christianity. It supplies a universal language. But nothing really intelligible in the way of ideas. Hallelujah!

Newspapers are said to be a necessity. It is also said that necessity is the mother of invention, and that the newspapers have taken the place of the Church. We shouldn't care to deny it.

The average intelligence in Britain is said to be going down. If that be so, then there really may be a danger of a revival of the christian religion. Still, the quality of intelligence is rather unlikely to be deteriorating. For the Christian Church, which once had a great influence is keeping intelligence at zero level, has lost its hold on the people. And this means that better influences are getting a chance to make themselves felt.

Sir Oliver Lodge says that the world is too small for international quarrels and wars; the nations "must learn the art of living together for mutual assistance and mutual dependence." Sir Oliver's advice is good and timely. But that it should be necessary after 1900 years of Christian influence...! The suspicion may well be raised that that influence was and is not quite so civilizing and valuable as the exponents of Christianity claim for it. There is, for instance, the fact that almost all European wars, and particularly the last large one, have had the approval and backing of the Christian Churches and priests.

Sister Aimee Macpherson has returned from the Holy Land and to the preaching of the Four-Square Gospel. During her trip she has changed the colour of her hair—from red to golden, but her nose for dollars remains as it was. Going through the New York Customs she was held up for not declaring some fashionable gowns and silk pyjamas, and was charged the purchase value, plus a fine, amounting to £55 8s. She paid as she was in a hurry to resume her preaching. Sister Aimee resembles Mrs. Eddy and other American evangelists in having a very keen eye and a clutching hand for the dollars. Our own evangelists are not greatly different, but things of this kind are more regularized and institutionalized than they are in America.

According to a speaker, most people have something of the flunkey in them. Possibly so; but certainly Christian people have. Look how they cringe before their God. When he kicks them hard, they praise his magnanimity in not kicking them harder.

Sunday school teaching, says the Rev. T. Grant, is hard, but it is going to be harder, when the school-leaving age is raised, and all scholars are receiving a kind of secondary education. In other words, we presume, the better the education the harder will be the job of getting the religious dope to take. What a nuisance that is! This education business is surely an invention of the

Devil to defend the ends of God, and to harry the worthy Sunday school teacher.

A contemporary pleads for all theatres to be open on Sunday, so that the slump in the theatrical profession can be cured, and the need for charity for the profession be lessened. This is a rather narrow plea. It is far better to boldly agitate for Sunday theatres so that people can get rational amusement on Sunday, and be saved from the dangerous boredom ordained by the Churches. "Sacred taboos" are an anachronism in a modern society. But our fearless Press is too much afraid of the Churches to say so.

Nowadays, says Mr. Augustine Birrell, many readers are at least as clever as most authors. This gentle hint to the wise will probably be wasted on our parsonic scribes, who appear to assume in their readers an inveterate stupidity and ignorance. Perhaps, however, we ought to allow these scribes the credit of knowing intimately the kind of readers they cater for.

A German gun is to be removed from the recreation ground at Shirebrook in Derbyshire. The sooner it goes the better. A weapon that has prevented hundreds of human beings enjoying recreation is decidedly not suitable for a recreation ground. This point of view can be commended to other towns with guns. A more suitable place for a war trophy is in a church, seeing that God, according to the parsons, gave the victory.

Mr. James R. Ogden, President of the National Sunday School Union, declares that:—

... it must be admitted that public life of to-day is all the better and sweeter for the gracious influence of the Sunday school teachers' work.

Mr. Ogden refers to the fact that many Sunday school teachers and ex-scholars are serving as magistrates and councillors. For our part, we think the influence of such people not particularly gracious or sweet. They, it is, who are mainly responsible for initiating or enforcing various taboos and restrictions on the ordinary citizen's liberty of choice and action, especially as regards Sunday recreation and amusement. They are the puppets who dance to the tune called by the parson. The public services would be far better without them, and certainly sweeter and more gracious without their narrow influence.

After indicting commercialism for destroying or disfiguring the beauty of the countryside, the Bishop of Southwark said that:—

The Church has an unrivalled opportunity of taking the lead in setting a high standard of artistic excellence. The interiors of some of the best of our churches are sometimes half ruined by tasteless colour and inartistic ornaments and furniture. Clumsy and heavy reredoses, garish tiles and carpets, pretentious pulpits and ridiculous lecterns, hangings and curtains drab in colour and stamped by machine-made designs, windows with insipid and unreal figures, colours on walls and floors which are in violent discord, cheap and conventional vases and lamps, are found in many churches and made persistent progress against the worship of God in beauty as well as in holiness. For our sins against beauty we should sometimes have litanies of penitence.

In light of this indictment of Christian lack of aesthetic taste, the Bishop's condemnation of commercialism's sins against beauty seems rather impudent. Also, he might have remembered that cause and effect operates in this connexion as elsewhere. The poor taste that a Christian people acquire in their churches is sure to be reflected in secular matters. Anyway, one thing emerges from the Bishop's remarks. This is that, despite the arrogant claim of priests, it is not the Christian religion and the Churches which nurture aesthetic taste. The Bishop has furnished evidence of that.

Rajah Sir Harmann Singh, of the Sikh race, has died aged seventy-eight, and a weekly journal tells how, as a young man, he rejected his throne and the "good things of this world" because he was a Christian. We learn, however, that the Rajah was always invited to attend the Sikh social functions, and it appears he was wealthy enough to send his five sons to English universities. From this one gathers that he jibbed at the Christly injunction to "sell all thou hast and give to the poor." The probability is that the Rajah merely had a quite human desire to live his own life apart from the fettering customs and ceremony of princely play-acting, and his Christian faith provided an excuse for doing so, although almost any faith could have been made to serve the purpose. Whereupon his Christian friends acclaim what he did as a great piece of self-sacrifice for the Christian faith!

The British Youth Hostels Association are organizing a scheme to provide simple and cheap accommodation for ramblers and cyclists. *John Bull* commends the scheme, but asks for as few taboos as possible. "Your hostels must be at least as free from Mother Grundyism as an ordinary hotel." If the Association takes this advice, I had better warn off all parsons, secretaries of young people's (pious) improvement societies, and the Salvation Army. For the parsons will not be happy until they can get a footing in the hostels, so that they may introduce prayers and mission services, and suggest taboos in conformity with their narrow and stupid religion.

In all directions, declared a Christian Endeavour speaker, is heard the lament that so few church members actively participate in the work of their church, but leave it to a fervent few, and attend church none too regularly. If the reverend speaker wants an explanation, we can suggest one. The truth is that these lukewarm adherents are really non-believers, but they are mentally too timid to quit the herd with which they were brought up. Taking these persons into account, and also the millions of indifferentists outside, we should say the material for a coming revival of religion is none too promising. But this need not hinder the parsons from prophesying. Every ass has a right to bray.

What might easily have been a first instance of "spirit intercourse," and so have taken its place in the stock Spiritualistic literature, has just come to an end in Genoa. For five days, according to newspaper reports, squads of detectives, numbers of Spiritualists, and others, have been investigating strange noises heard in a house in the Via Maragliano. No natural explanation could be found by the professional ghost-hunters, or as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle called them, "psychic experts." The ghosts were winning hands down, when a servant-girl confessed that she had been trying to scare her employer. The authors of the other ghostly noises, accounts of which are given in standard works on Spiritualism did not confess.

St. Paul's Cathedral is to be closed for a week, for the first time, to permit of a spring cleaning. It would not be at all a bad thing if all the churches were to close for about three months every year. It would give everybody a rest, and, if there is a God, it would give him a rest also. Probably an objection would come from the clergy, who realize that if people once get out of the habit of going to Church they seldom get it again. No one who has ever got rid of religion ever desires to acquire it again. It is only the man who is still under its influence who wonders how anyone can get on without it.

A religious weekly in its haste to prove that Christianity is on the side of progress reminds its readers that "The voice of the people is the voice of God," is an old religious maxim. Maybe. In that case it also resembles the voice of God in often backing up the most ridiculous teachings, and in the difficulty of getting it to mend its ways. It is more wisdom we need, not more voice.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

F. SHALLER.—Cutting forwarded as requested.

W. JAMIESON.—You are quite wrong. There were many "conscientious objectors" during the war who were Freethinkers, as there were many on the other side. We visited several of them who were in prison, and we know that their stand required as much courage as any enlistment did.

DR. K. NOYES.—We are afraid there is very little chance of our being able to see you on your native heath. We have our hands too full here.

C. G. COOK.—We are afraid your advice is not likely to be adopted. Thanks all the same for your interest in the matter.

H. SWAN writes to say that he sent a copy of the *Freethinker*, containing our "Views and Opinions" on the Education question to the member representing his (Barry) Division. We hope it will do good.

D. MATHEWS (Transvaal).—Sorry your letter arrived after we had announced the discussion was closed, and there is little use in reopening at the moment.

H. HAYTER.—Thanks. You must, however, bear in mind that the first concern of a newspaper is to get sold. What it sells, and how it sells are secondary consideration. Once upon a time the editor of a newspaper was a man of strong opinions who ruled his paper. Now they appear to be a compound of promoted office boy and astute salesman who receives his instructions and carries them out.

L. GOLDSTEIN.—We fancy that the ostracism of children in school on account of their being withdrawn from religious instruction is largely imaginary. In any case there would be little fear of this occurring. But we should be quite pleased to hear from parents how far children who have been withdrawn from religious instruction suffer on that account.

E. A. PHIPSON.—As we do not believe in a future life we have nothing to tell you as to what happens after death. That information is dispensed by the Churches, and the variety of the information ought to be enough to satisfy anyone.

A. H. MILWARD, BAYARD SIMMONS & JOSEPH BRYCE.—Received with thanks. Shall appear.

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. Rosett, 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.

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

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.

Looking over some back volumes of the *Freethinker*, we find that in 1906 Mr. Ramsay Macdonald said, in reply to a letter from Mr. F. J. Gould, "I shall do everything I can to get the Blasphemy Laws removed from the statute book." What he appears to have done is to acquiesce in an amendment that meant the establishing of a new Blasphemy Law worse than the existing one. Perhaps he did not then expect to be in a position when he might be called upon to redeem his promise. But his record with regard to religion in the schools and the Blasphemy Laws is quite a pretty one.

In an appreciative review of our two latest publications, *The Foundation of Religion* and *A Heathen's Thoughts on Christianity*, the *Daily Worker* sums up Mr. Cohen as one who "surveys Christianity with the amused interest of a professor in a museum of antiquities." The writer might easily have written a less accurate description of Mr. Cohen's mental attitude towards the religions of the world.

The Annual Conference of the S.A.T. organization (the proletariat Esperanto Association) will take place in London from August 3 to 9. The meeting place will be the Conway Hall, and the Freethought Section of the S.A.T. will as usual, hold a sectional meeting, and possibly, a public demonstration. All Freethinkers willing to help or able to offer hospitality to Foreign Freethinkers for the above period should write to the Section Secretary, Mr. L. Corinna, 30 Wheatley Road, Halifax, Yorks. All Freethinkers who wish to meet Fellows from abroad are invited to attend. Here is a practical way of showing our strength. Fuller details will be issued later.

The Editor of the Polish *Freethought* would be glad to receive any works in English dealing with the Inquisition. Such works are quite scarce in Polish, and are needed for a forthcoming volume on the subject to fill the gap. Those who have such volumes to spare may send them to: H. Halpern, Skr. Poze, 152 Lublin, Poland.

The *Rationalist* (Melbourne) reprints our "Views and Opinions" of February 9, dealing with the Bill for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. We hope it will do good among Australian readers.

Mr. H. B. Price, of 44 Alexander Street, Chesham, Bucks, would like to get into touch with any other Freethinkers in that district. Write or call.

Mr. G. Whitehead will be lecturing in the Swansea and Neath districts from June 21 until July 4 inclusive, details will be found in the Lecture Notice column. Freethinkers, whether members of the N.S.S. or not, should consider it their duty to be present in support of those meetings.

A Conference of the Glasgow, Shotts and Paisley Branches of the National Secular Society has just been held in Glasgow. The work for Freethought in the West of Scotland was discussed, and certain decisions made. Another meeting will be held at an early date, and any Freethinker wishing to lend a hand, or requiring information should communicate with the Secretary, Miss Isa Hill, 17 Battlefield Gardens, Langside, Glasgow. We hope that a good response will ensue from this notice.

To-day (June 22) the Liverpool Branch has arranged for a "Ramble" in the Prenton area of the Wirall. Those joining will meet at the Pierhead at 2 o'clock. No arrangements have been made for refreshments, so each one will bring with them whatever is required. It has not been found possible to arrange for refreshments anywhere on the route.

"Monistic Religion" and Hocus Pocus.

(Concluded from page 380.)

So long as scientists are content to seek "God and His Kingdom," without emotional predisposition and solely in the unresponsive world of the noumenal theory, their temperament will be scientific and their lives secular, both distinguished from the religious. Changing the labels will not change the mental content. When an attitude of mind is dominated by some intense emotionalism of unconscious origin, it may become religious, but it can never be scientific. If the psychologic imperative drives us in a rapturous ecstasy to its subjective goal; when such a person has more regard for the internal "evidence" of truth (for the imperatives of the love-life) than for the objective checks and correctives, and for the objective, relative verity, the resultant concepts, then, and not till then, has the essence of religion come into being.

The converse of the foregoing truth can be observed in the working of Freethought and Agnostic associations. It is the absence of this kind of love-life which explains the evident difficulty of maintaining secular societies, solely for discrediting religious beliefs. When secular societies are not called into being by a necessity for the defence of personal liberty or material "justice," they are prone to die for the want of dynamics, for want of emotionalism if you please, but more exactly for want of the particular misdirection of the love-life, such as is the common characteristic of all true religionists. It requires a much greater maturity of the intellectual methods and of social consciousness, than has been generally attained, to insure a strong devotion to the scientific method and its fruits, as applied to the human animal, functioning in social relations.

"The inestimable treasure of a clear, unified view of the world" is an "inestimable treasure" to Professor Haeckel and other men of science, only because the discoverable beneficence of the universe seems to be inestimable, that is, of infinite possibility. "The rich gifts" which the "goddess of Truth" bestows from the tree of knowledge are inestimable, only because the secrets of nature are seemingly inexhaustible in quantity, and certainly inestimable in human values. In other words, the "inestimable treasures" of science are sought for and derived only from the objective order of the relations and behaviour of things. Only a religionist finds his "inestimable values" within himself, and ascribes them delusionally to the supernatural. The scientists' sense of values, whether of nature's treasures or of psychologic factors, is derived from their objective, relatively emotionless consideration, at least in so far as he is a pure scientist. Not so with the religionists. There "the kingdom of God is within," and its "inestimable treasures" are subjective. They are discoverable only as unconsciously determined emotional valuations, which imply personal feeling-standards, or ecstatic states which are valued as being of "supernatural" sanction. Often the religionists experience of supreme value is described as an apprehension of "divine love," or the consciousness of the "divinity" within.

That which distinguishes a religious belief from a similar scientific belief is a difference of temperament and of intellectual method. In the case of religious beliefs, according to the uniform testimony of all serious professors of religion, conviction does not depend upon the scientific temperament used in con-

nexion with objective data or observation. On the contrary, it rests upon subjective experiences, ecstatic in nature, not induced by any experience of the external world through our sense organs. If any mental life is to be classed as non-religious, then manifestly every ecstatic state, which is accompanied by a belief, is not necessarily a religion. Although we may be unable to differentiate between ecstasies as such, so as to separate the religious and non-religious variety, yet perhaps we can differentiate these states according to the antecedent temperament, the associated or accompanying "super-material" or secular mental content, or according to its materialistic or metaphysical interpretation and valuation, or by the subjective aspect of the intellectual methods that were used.²

When a scientist grows ecstatic over a new discovery, we readily see that the thing discovered is the objective stimulus which, through the newly acquired consciousness thereof, becomes the important determining factor of the thought-content. This discovery is valued according to secular, objectively derived standards. By scientists the material objective thing discovered is seen to be the efficient, finite and natural causal determinant of the joy. Whatever of subjective and unconscious factors enter the valuation of the discovery or the ecstatic release which may accompany it, no person of scientific temperament will ever explain this in terms of supernaturalism, or supermaterialism.

An objective study of the religious ecstasy reveals a different situation. In the first religious experience of such persons, I believe we can always find that other ecstasies, which are physically indistinguishable, have been previously experienced. A new set of more acute subjective tensions and predispositions, have given an added intensity and a new perspective. All of this combined to cause a particular ecstasy to be given a supernatural valuation, and a consequent occasion for a transcendental explanation. Yet for others it is indistinguishable from common-place natural ecstasies, except by the words used in describing it. But the religious differential cannot be made to consist only in that added intensity, because equally intense feelings, which, by almost common consent, are non-religious and at present physically indistinguishable, exist in many, if not all, of us. Because this is so, we conclude that the differential essence of religion is not the ecstatic state, merely as such, nor in its necessary and natural causal antecedents. Therefore we are led to conclude that the differential essence of religion consists in a special temperamental preparedness and the ecstasy, combining to induce a metaphysical, or superhuman, or transcendental interpretation, or self-explanation. Theology is not necessarily religious, but may be only a theory about religion, and not based upon "religious experience."

THEODORE SCHROEDER.

The most important part of education is right training in the nursery. The soul of the child in his play should be trained to that sort of excellence in which, when he grows to manhood, he will have to be perfected.—*Plato*.

Public Opinion: The public buys its opinions as it buys its meat, or takes in its milk, on the principle that it is cheaper to do this than to keep a cow. So it is, but the milk is more likely to be watered.

Samuel Butler.

² "Psychoanalytic Approach to Religious Experience," *Psychoanalytic Review*, XVI, pp. 375-6, October, 1929.

The National Secular Society.

REPORT OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

LONDON, JUNE 8, 1930.

As was the case in Manchester last year, brilliant sunshine greeted delegates and members on their arrival at the Grafton Hotel, London, on Sunday, June 8. It was just the kind of day, of course, when one would have liked to be in the country or at the seaside, enjoying the wonderful air, but the yearly Conference of the militant Freethinkers of this country gives also its pleasures to those attending the important function.

Punctually at 10.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, the President, greeted the audience, which had already filled the Palm Court, and commenced the day's proceedings by saying he had received several letters and telegrams from absent members wishing the Conference every success, and the best salutations from Freethought Societies in Moscow, France and Vienna. Good wishes, he said, would act as some sort of inspiration.

Mr. Gorniot (Swansea) proposed and Mr. Rosetti (South Shields) seconded, that the Minutes of last year's meeting should be taken as read, which was carried.

The Secretary then called the Roll of Delegates.

The following is a list of the Branches represented, with the names of the delegates. Manchester, Messrs. W. Blaney, H. I. Bayford; Nelson, Mr. J. Clayton; Ashton-under-Lyne, Mrs. E. M. Warner; Liverpool, Mr. W. McKelvie; Birmingham, Mr. Heritage; Bolton, Mr. F. G. Warner; Chester-le-Street, Mr. J. T. Brighton; Darlington, Mr. C. G. Quinton; Glasgow, Mr. L. M. Werrey Easterbrook; Hull, Mr. M. Myers; Houghton-le-Spring, Mr. J. T. Brighton; Leeds, Mr. H. Preece; Newcastle, Miss K. B. Kough; Plymouth, Mr. W. J. W. Easterbrook; Paisley, Mr. C. Tuson; South Shields, Mr. & Mrs. A. C. Rosetti; Swansea, Mr. T. Gorniot; Shotts, Mr. Selmer; North London, Mr. L. Ebury; South London, Mr. A. Heath; Bethnal Green, Mr. A. Read; West London, Messrs. B. A. LeMaine, H. J. Savory, J. Jacobs and Miss E. Lusher; Fulham and Chelsea, Messrs. E. Bryant and F. Day; West Ham, Mr. L. Venton, Mrs. H. Rosetti and Mrs. E. Venton. Among those present may be noted Mr. H. Black, Mr. A. B. Moss, Mr. J. Ross, Mr. J. G. Neate, Mr. W. Kensett, Miss Ballard, Mr. G. Hall, Mr. F. Terry, Dr. Carmichael, Mr. W. Moore, Mr. T. Dixon, Mr. Easterbrook, Junr., Mr. Quinton, Junr., Mrs. Quinton, Mr. S. Clogg, Mr. H. B. Price, Mr. Andrew Millar, and Miss Vance.

The second item on the agenda was the reading by the President of the Executive's Annual Report, given in full in last week's paper, which it need hardly be said, was received with loud applause.

Mr. Jacobs (West London) moved and Mr. Tuson (Paisley) seconded the adoption of the Report, which was carried. In the subsequent discussion, it was proposed by Mr. Savory and seconded by Mr. Rolf, that the Report be printed as a pamphlet and sent to all members as well as to any enquirer who wished to know what the N.S.S. stood for. The number to be printed and other details would be left to the Executive to settle.

Mr. Brighton (Chester-le-Street) moved and Mr. Bryant (Fulham & Chelsea) seconded the adoption of the Financial Report. Mr. Easterbrook thought the Executive deserved credit for several of the items, and wanted to know what we were doing to combat

the extravagant statements made in many quarters regarding the enormous wealth of the Society and the dreadful things we were doing with our ill-gotten gains? The President said he had no method by which one could stop such stories, and the best plan was to, when possible, pay no attention to them.

On the election of the President, Mr. Cohen, as the retiring President, asked Mr. A. B. Moss, as one of the oldest members to take the chair. This was done, and after brief speeches from representatives of the Branches, in whose names the nomination stood, Mr. Moss declared Mr. Cohen duly elected. In returning thanks Mr. Cohen said the Conference had for the fifteenth time conferred upon him the only honour it was in its power to confer, and the only one to which he attached any value. The office had been held by two very great men before him, and if he could prove not unworthy of the tradition they had established, he would be content. When he was first elected he made no promise beyond that he would do his best. He had no further promise to make to-day.

On the motion for the election of the General Secretary, the President said it had been left to the Executive to appoint a Secretary for the past year, and it had appointed Mr. R. H. Rosetti. He had been found trustworthy, enthusiastic, and the Executive nominated him again for the post. This was seconded by Mr. Le Maine, and carried unanimously. Mr. C. G. Quinton was then re-elected Treasurer of the Society.

On the proposal that Messrs. H. Theobald & Co., be appointed Auditors, Mr. Easterbrook suggested that it was desirable this motion should come from some one who was not a member of the Executive.

The President said that if the Conference agreed, he saw no objection to the Executive's name being withdrawn and another substituted. This being agreed to Mr. Moore (Swansea) then moved the election of Messrs. Theobald & Co., which was seconded by Mr. Dixon, and carried.

The next resolution was:—

"That Rule No. 7, allotting the number of delegates to the Executive be amended to read "Wales 2," "Scotland 2"; the amendment to date from the present Conference, the extra members for 1930-31, to be appointed by the Executive after consultation with the Branches concerned.

It was pointed out that the sole object of this resolution was to strengthen the Executive. Mr. Easterbrook enquired whether there was any possibility of a larger number of provincial members attending the Executive. The President agreed that this was highly desirable, even if they could attend but once every three months. That matter was, of course, in the hands of the Branches themselves.

The motion having been seconded and carried, it was moved that the nominations for the Executive be voted for *en bloc*. This was agreed to. Mr. Easterbrook thought it highly desirable that all delegates to the Executive should forward periodical reports to their constituents, an expression that elicited general approval. The Executive was then elected.

Mr. Savory (West London) moved and Mr. Bryant (Fulham & Chelsea) seconded:—

"That a bi-annual meeting be held of London and Provincial Branch Secretaries for the discussion of matters of general interest, bearing upon the work of the Society and the conduct of its business."

Mr. Easterbrook pointed out that Secretaries sometimes override the Executive, but the idea was to exchange opinions. Mr. Ball thought it a very good idea, and in reply to Mr. Holt, who asked, who will pay, suggested the costs should be pooled and equally divided between the Branches represented. Mr.

Gorniot and Mr. Ross suggested that Branch Secretaries should present a monthly report to the Executive. The President said it was difficult to get any reports—except when the Branches asked for money. The motion was then carried.

The President moved :—

“That this Conference desires to place on record its high appreciation of those members of Parliament who promoted a Bill for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, and congratulates them on having, for the first time, achieved the result of a Second Reading. It protests in the strongest possible manner against the action of the Government in deliberately wrecking the Bill; it regards this as an unwarrantable concession to religious bigotry, and trusts that Freethinkers all over the country will recognize that it is only by a weakening of religious influence in political life that Freethinkers can hope to receive the justice given to other sections of the community.”

He pointed out how much we appreciated the splendid efforts of Mr. Thurtle, though it was only fair to Mr. Snell, to say he was always ready to take up the Bill against the Blasphemy Laws. Mr. Cohen paid a tribute to the speeches of the supporters of the Bill, and said that after the Amendment introduced by Mr. Clynes, they were compelled to drop it. Still they were all ready for the fight again. Mr. Blaney seconded, and Mr. Easterbrook said that the member for Plymouth, Mr. Isaac Foote, though a lay preacher, voted for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, and had a very unpleasant time from the bigots in his constituency, even from members of the Labour Party. Mr. Black also gave his experiences of propaganda on behalf of the Bill. The resolution was carried, and instructions given that the substance of the resolution should be sent to all parties concerned.

Motion No. 12 :—

“That wherever the geographical situation be favourable, a speaker for local propagandist work shall be appointed by the Executive. The speaker to work under the control of the local Branch, acting on instructions from headquarters.

was formerly moved on behalf of the Executive. It was pointed out that there were many districts in the country where a number of towns offered opportunities to establish speakers, where there would be the minimum of travelling and other expenses occurred. But it was not possible to properly supervise such work from London, so the resolution proposed that such speakers should be under the supervision of a local Branch, working under instructions from headquarters. Mr. Jacobs (West London) seconded. In the course of the discussion it was pointed out that much good could be done if a class for the training of speakers was established. The Executive was asked to see what could be done in this connexion.

On the motion asking for the introduction of a private member's Bill into the House of Commons for the taxation of Churches and Chapels, Mr. Easterbrook, Jun., gave a number of figures proving that at least £3,000,000 annually was lost to the taxpayers in this way, which equalled a grant to the Churches every year of this amount. After some general discussion Mr. Easterbrook promised to draw up a leaflet for distribution dealing with this matter. The figures could only be roughly approximate.

At the opening of the afternoon session Mr. A. C. Rosetti moved :—

“That this Conference enters a strong protest against the Government's policy of calling together representatives of the Churches, with a view to settling the Education question on lines agreeable to their sectarian interests; sixty years of religious squabbling has resulted in permitting the nation's

schools to be made a cockpit for religious fighting, and has demonstrated that the only way to permanent peace is to confine the education received in State-aided schools to purely secular subjects.”

He pointed out that while this was an old standing resolution it was nevertheless a very important one. The Churches depended upon capturing the children, and anything that gave the child a fair start in life, with the opportunity of using its intelligence free from the initial bias established by religious instruction made for Freethought. The motion was carried.

Mr. W. J. W. Easterbrook then moved :—

“That this Conference regrets the determination of the Army authorities to persist in the practice of compulsory Church parades, which is objectionable to the majority of soldiers, an infringement of the equal rights of citizenship, and a denial of the principle of religious equality.”

He said, with the permission of the Conference, he wished to enlarge the scope of the motion by the introduction of terms which would include the Navy and the Air Forces. This was agreed with, and after some discussion as to the precise position of soldiers and Sailors with regard to religious services, was carried.

In the absence of the delegate from the Bradford Branch, Mr. Whitehead moved the resolution that the Conference supports the proposal for the establishment of Municipal Birth-Control Clinics. This gave rise to a deal of discussion, in which the opinion was expressed that the matter was outside the scope of the Society's objects. Mr. Wishart thought Birth-Control one of the most important things of the day. The Newcastle Branch objected to it on the grounds above-mentioned. Mr. Ebury thought the Society could not leave the subject alone. Miss Kough cordially supported the resolution, as did Mr. Dixon. The President summed up by remarking that the resolution was really taking up the position of Bradlaugh in his pioneer fight, that information that was good for one class was good for all, and the information and advice that could be purchased by those with means, should be at the disposal of the poor, whose need was really greater. The resolution was carried.

Mrs. Venton moved, and Mr. McKelvie seconded :—

“That each Branch of the Society should, wherever possible, appoint two of its members to act as publicity agents, with special attention to press correspondence, whose duty it should also be to acquaint headquarters with all local happenings bearing upon the work of the Society.”

In seconding, Mr. McKelvie said that his own Branch had already appointed a Committee to watch the press, and it was felt that considerable local influence might be exerted in this way. Newspaper editors would pay attention to us when we made our influence felt. The resolution was carried.

The two resolutions regretting that nothing had yet been done towards acquiring central premises, and protesting against the use made by the Churches of broadcasting passed with some little discussion, Mr. Jacobs suggesting the opening of a Building Fund, to which he promised a contribution. The President promised to give the matter consideration. The rest of the time of the Conference was given to the reading of papers by Mr. Easterbrook, Jun., on “Friendship and Goodwill,” Dr. Carmichael on “A Strange Illusion,” and “Some Difficulties of Outdoor Propaganda,” by Mr. J. Clayton. Unfortunately there was but little time available for discussion, as the time for the conclusion of the Conference

had been reached. The President, in bringing the meetings to a close, expressed the pleasure that all felt at so successful a Conference, and hoped that the proceedings would serve as a renewed inspiration to them to continue the good work during the forthcoming year.

Evening Public Meeting.

Following the Conference a public meeting was held in the new Conway Hall, Red Lion Square. In spite of the very brilliant holiday weather that prevailed, there was a good attendance, and each speaker from the opening until the close by the President, kept the attention and the interest of the audience. The platform provided the pleasing spectacle of two lady speakers, Mrs. R. H. Rosetti, who made an exceedingly graceful speech in defence of Secular Education in the schools, and Mrs. Chance, who made a powerful and well phrased speech, dwelling upon the value of the Freethought method of approach to all social problems. The other speakers, Messrs. Clayton, Moss, Rosetti, Whitehead, Dr. Carmichael and the President, were all in excellent form, and nothing was more striking than the fact of eight speakers, without any previous arrangement, dealing with the principles of Freethought, and none treading on the ground of any other speaker. It was no mean performance to maintain the interest of the audience for a full two hours on such a day. We question whether it could have been done in many instances. Newcomers to such meetings, and it is to be hoped there were many, must have gone away with an appreciation of the many-sided character of Freethought, which will, we hope, lead to a closer acquaintance. Altogether the Conference Sunday, from the time when the President opened the meeting at 10.30, until he closed his speech at just after 9 in the evening, was full of interest, and, we are sure, profit.

The Bible In the Schools.

THE folly of religionists who have, apparently for religious reasons, attacked Russian Atheism, may have some serious repercussions (to use a word of recent popularization). Many critics of the Churches regard the papal and Protestant denunciations of Russia as something unscrupulous and aimed at inspiring a new war. This view is justified. The folly of the attack is like the proverbial blunder which was said to be worse than crime. Its wickedness might succeed if allied with armies, and the millions of pounds spent by Mr. Winston Churchill in pro-Tsarist slaughter. Its folly may be its doom.

It would not have suited the Christian priesthood to investigate the facts, and to concentrate its protests against any verified official act of the Russian Government which could be construed as persecution.

The Churches in all nominally Christian countries have so long been accustomed to unfair privileges that they regard as persecution any attempt to curtail those privileges.

To teach the Christian Bible in the public schools is the singular privilege of one religion. It is a distinct unfairness to all who do not believe in the Christian religion. And if one may pay any credence to innumerable preachers, writers and citizens who remain nominal Christians, but repudiate a large percentage of Bible "truth" and Bible teaching, this privilege inflicts grave disabilities on people who like to call themselves emancipated Christians.

The English Secular Education Movement is familiar, and its support should be tremendously increased by the free advertisement given it by such pronouncements as

those of Pope and Archbishop, who so curiously object to religious monopoly ("as far away as Russia is"—to paraphrase Lowell).

In America the fight is going to be taken up in earnest. Soon the clerics will be sick of the very idea that they are in favour of "fair play and no privilege."

A taxpayers' suit has been filed by Joseph Lewis (President of the Freethinkers Society of New York, and well known to *Freethinker* readers). He demands that the Department of Education shall be restrained from permitting readings from the Bible to the school children of New York.

This suit is going to be "fought to a frazzle." Clarence Darrow has undertaken to fight the case in the Supreme Court against criminal lawyers representing Mayor Walker and the Board of Education.

There are 1,200,000 in New York City public schools. The law does not compel Bible reading, but it permits it. Darrow and Lewis claim that the law is unconstitutional and should be set aside by the Supreme Court.

If this action succeeds, similar actions will follow in Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, and elsewhere. The New York case opens on Monday, May 26.

The answer of the Defendants will be that for seventy-six years the law has permitted Bible reading; that the Bible has moral, historical and educational value . . . at least that is what one imagines will be the defence, although it is curious to notice how the word "moral" is slipping out of the argument. That word does not appear in the *New York Evening Journal* interview with Corporation Counsel Hilly, who outlines the nature of his defence.

Already one sees the sort of prejudice which is going to be imported into the case by the Christians. One newspaper assails Clarence Darrow on the ground that "he saved Leopold and Lobel, confessed Chicago kidnapers and murderers from the chair."

Darrow will be supported by other lawyers including Arthur Garfield Hays, and Major Joseph Wheeler. The attack will be on these lines according to Mr. Lewis:—

One of the reasons we do not want the Bible even read in the public schools of New York City is because we consider it a violation of one of the most fundamental American principles—the separation of Church and State.

We consider the Bible a sectarian book, which teaches a very sectarian doctrine.

Religion has full protection under the law but it has no place in the government.

No public funds should be used to support a particular religion.

We base this present suit on the specific provision as given in the State constitution, which says that no public money should be used for sectarian purposes.

What we want to do is to make everybody in this country recognize the Government under which we live, and not to make their religion the most important thing of their lives.

We believe that higher ideals can be inculcated in the minds of our school children by teaching them the life and character of our revolutionary fighters like Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, not to leave out Abraham Lincoln, who could gain more by that than we can by teaching from particular precepts of the Bible.

The teachers in the schools put a halo around the Bible; that it is infallible, that the book is sacred and holy. It gives the impression that the book is perfect and that it is God's word, so to speak, or divine revelation.

If the Bible is read, as the law provides, without comment, what is quoted is given an air of sanctity that will be generally accepted. If we quote from any scientific book or history, we investigate and ask questions before we accept it.

The things that the Bible contains are, from an educational point of view, in direct variance and conflict with the things that are taught in the schools. The history of the Bible has been proven to be false.

Every point of view of education quoted from the Bible and dealing with verifiable matters has been rejected.

The struggle will be followed with interest by Secularists all over the world. Good luck to Clarence Darrow and Joseph Lewis.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

VOLTAIRE AND DE LA BARRE.

SIR,—In the course of the article on "Voltaire the Liberator," appearing in the issue of the *Freethinker* for June 8, it is stated that Chevalier de la Barre was charged with damaging a crucifix, and as a consequence was beheaded.

In a tiny pleasure garden immediately in front of the Church of the Sacred Heart, in Paris, there is a statue erected to the memory of Chevalier de la Barre (of which I enclose a photograph), the translation of the inscription being: "To Chevalier de la Barre, executed at the age of nineteen years, the 1st July, 1766, for not having saluted a procession."

I understand that his "crime" consisted in refusing to acknowledge a *religious* procession, and it would be interesting to know which version is correct.

I would like to bring this memorial to the notice of any of your readers visiting Paris, as it appears to be almost unknown to English Freethinkers. On the occasion of my last visit, the statue was decorated with wreaths, and although coach-loads of tourists were rolling up to visit the "Sacre Cœur," needless to say none of them were directed to this monument. I wonder if it would have conveyed anything to them? The garden, which is very small and might be easily overlooked, lies just to the left of the main entrance to the church, and the Chevalier de la Barre is depicted bound to the stake, with his eyes directed towards the church as though still gazing defiance at the mighty symbol of his executioners.

The contrast between this solitary figure and the overshadowing solidity of the church gives rise to varied reflections, and the fact that this statue is erected in its present position is proof that the secular power of the Church has vastly diminished since 1766.

G. BAZIN.

Society News.

MR. GEORGE WHITEHEAD commenced the first week of the provincial tour for this season in Plymouth. All the meetings were well attended, and the lectures were very favourably received. Nothing remarkable happened except on one evening, a half-drunken interrupter took off his coat and vest and offered to fight the lecturer or any of his supporters, but upon the appearance of a policeman his pugnacity evaporated, and we were left in peace. Messrs. MacKenzie and E. Lyndon acted as chairmen and general assistants.—G.W.

Ruthless Rhyme!

SAID the self-denying Bishop of Ibo:
"Just believe only what you can see, boh!
Though we all live by Faith,
As the Prophet well sayeth,
In a cottage—retired!—soon I'll be, boh!"

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

Nigeria.

Miscellaneous Advertisements.

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

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INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"The Rebuilding of Europe."

OUTDOOR.

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

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

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

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6.0, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—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 HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (outside Municipal College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine—A Lecture.

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

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S.—Ramble to Helensburgh. Train leaves Queen Street at 11.22.

HIGHAM—Monday, 7.30, Mr. J. Clayton—A Lecture.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of High Park Street and Park Road): Thursday, June 26, at 8, Messrs. A. Jackson, D. Robinson and J. V. Shortt. Current *Freethinkers* will be on sale. Sunday, June 22. Ramble in Prenton district of Wirral. Meet at Pier Head, at 2 p.m. Own refreshments to be brought.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Moor, near North Road entrance): 7.0, Mr. Brighton—A Lecture.

PRESTON MARKET—Sunday, 3.0 and 7.0, Mr. J. Clayton—A Lecture.

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. George Whitehead will lecture from Saturday, June 21 till July 4, on the Sands, commencing each evening at 7.30.

TRAWDEN—Friday, 7.45, Mr. J. Clayton—A Lecture.

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