

*The*  
**FREETHINKER**

FOUNDED · 1881

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

VOL. L.—No. 51

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1930

PRICE THREEPENCE

**The West Ham Council and The N.S.S.**

On November 23 I lectured at the Town Hall, Stratford. The Town Hall is under the control of the West Ham Council, and was booked, in accordance with the custom followed for many years, by the West Ham Branch of the National Secular Society. Personally, I have lectured there nearly every year for, I should say at least, a quarter of a century without any kind of disagreement whatever. Members of the Council have often been on the platform, and usually some members of the Council among the audience. It was the more surprising to find that the following letter had been received by Mr. E. Pankhurst, who was the person who booked the hall:—

*re letting of Town Hall to the West Ham Branch of the National Secular Society, Sunday, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1930.*

I am directed by the Chairman of the Finance Committee to call your attention to the fact that complaints have been made that objectionable and distasteful language is used at your meetings by the lecturer, and desire to point out that in accordance with regulations Nos. 4 and 5, you with your guarantors, will be held responsible for any damage done by anyone contingent upon any disturbance that may take place.

Yours faithfully,

E. J. JOHNSON.

Mr. Johnson is the Borough Treasurer.

Now as I have been the only speaker at the Town Hall meetings for many years, there could be only one conclusion—I was the lecturer who had made use of "objectionable and distasteful language." Had it concerned myself only it is just possible that I should have smiled at the disapproval of some unnamed denizen of West Ham finding my language concerning religion objectionable and distasteful. The supposition that a speaker with my experience—and I may add, my reputation—had used language that Mr. W. T. Nichols, Chairman of the Finance Committee of the West Ham Town Council had legitimate reason to label as objectionable and distasteful is simply grotesque.

But in a way the matter involved the honour of the Society, and I could not let it pass unnoticed. So on my behalf Mr. Pankhurst wrote the Borough Treasurer:—

Dear Sir,

In reply to your letter of October 29, I am requested by my Committee to say we are greatly surprised at its contents. The lecturer on the last occasion was Mr. Chapman Cohen, and he will again be the lecturer on November 23.

Mr. Cohen is a lecturer of many years standing, and is well known to the public all over the country. He has lectured in the Town Hall for about thirty

years, and this is the first time that there has been the slightest suggestion as to his language being of an improper character.

I may presume that the Chairman of your Finance Committee would not have instructed you to write as you did without having very precise information as to the alleged objectionable language used. In common fairness it would only be right for you to supply either Mr. Cohen or myself with a copy of what it is he is charged with saying. It can then be dealt with in a proper manner.

May I suggest that you or your Chairman, or someone representing him should make it a point of being present on November 23, and form an opinion for yourselves on the matter.

Failing some satisfactory reply in substantiation of the charge made, I feel that Mr. Cohen will be forced to seek other methods of publicly raising the question.

This letter was dated November 3, and received an acknowledgment that it would be dealt with at the next meeting of the Finance Committee. Why an answer to a plain question could not have been given before that I cannot see. I have good reason for believing that it was not the Committee who instructed the Treasurer to write in the terms he did, and as the Chairman could himself formulate the charge, there seems no reason why he could not himself have dictated a simple answer to a quite simple question. There was no need whatever for him to take shelter behind a Committee.

No reply coming to hand I instructed Mr. Rosetti to write on behalf of the General Society for an explanation. To that, on December 2, more than a month after the original statement was made, we received the following reply:—

I beg to inform you that following the previous letter (one sent Mr. Pankhurst) the Town Council confirmed the Finance Committee's recommendation that no further action be taken in the matter.

That is all! But this is only adding impudence to slander. I am accused of using in a public meeting language of such an objectionable and distasteful character as to shock the chaste susceptibilities of a member of the West Ham Borough Council, and to merit the issue of a solemn warning. When asked for a copy of what it is I am reported to have said, so that I may either justify or repudiate it, I am informed that the Finance Committee has decided to take no further action in the matter! Confound their impudence, I am not asking for their mercy, but for their justification in making the charge they have made. Surely the Chairman did not act merely upon some one saying to him that I had used objectionable language; he must have had



enough common sense to enquire what was the language like; and common decency, the most elementary sense of justice, should have prompted him to give to the accused person a copy of the accusation! Writing as he does, and from where he does, the Chairman is protected against action. If he will have the courage to make the same charge in the same words, but in another place, I will soon find means to deal with him as he deserves. I think that the majority of the voters in West Ham will see the justice of my request, and will not be slow to characterize the conduct of the Chairman of their Finance Committee in language which, while it may be distasteful to him, will be held justifiable by every one else.

Now I have excellent reasons for believing, and for saying, that the *form* of the letter dictated by the Chairman was entirely his own, and if I am right in this, then the letter becomes an exhibition of downright religious bigotry.

There has never been a disturbance at any of my many meetings at the Stratford Town Hall. But there have been disturbances at other meetings both political and religious. And it was a row at a religious meeting that gave the Chairman of the Finance Committee a chance to give vent to the slanderous letter he dictated, and then after declining to do an act of common justice, crawl out of his responsibility under cover of the impertinence of offering to forgive me for an offence never committed.

Some time back there was a meeting of Kensitites and others in the Stratford Town Hall. As is not unusual at such meetings there was a row. The lights were turned off and some damage done. Following this the Treasurer was advised to send to everyone using the hall, notice that they would be liable for damage done by any disturbance arising from the meeting. Had this general notice been sent, I should not have taken the slightest notice of it. Notice was not legally necessary to create responsibility, by issuing a warning, but if the Committee thought proper to remind holders of meetings of their legal responsibilities no one could raise reasonable objection.

But this was not done, and in the face of a refusal to let me know the language I am accused of using, and in the face of the impertinence contained in the letter of December 2, I am driven to the assumption that the Chairman sought to gratify his religious bigotry by utilizing the perfectly harmless warning issued by the Committee as a cover for untrue and slanderous charges concerning myself. It may have been an act of loyalty on the part of the Committee to try to cover up the slander of the Chairman by deciding to take no further action. But when loyalty involves injustice and slander it should come last, not first.

I am compelled to let the matter rest where it is, at least for the present, unless the Chairman has the courage to come into the open and repeat his statement where I can take other action. As I have said, I probably should not have bothered about it at all, but for the sake of the National Secular Society. My own personal reputation in the country is not such that it is likely to be affected by the opinion of the Chairman of the Finance Committee of the West Ham Borough Council. But I do not think the slander would have stopped where it is. Presently, when application was again made for the use of the hall, some Christian on the Committee would be likely to say, "Oh, these people had to be warned against using disgraceful language because of the complaints that had been received about them." The minute would have been there for reference, the Borough

Treasurer would have recalled the incident, and the Freethinkers of West Ham would have been refused a right exercised by Christians. That game has been tried before, and will I expect be tried again.

But it shall not, if I can avoid it pass without publicity. I am fairly well known in West Ham, and am not without friends in the Borough. Freethought is also not without its champions. And I am asking the voters of West Ham, what are they going to do about it? The Chairman of the Committee will receive a copy of this issue of the *Freethinker*. So will the Borough Treasurer. A proof will also be sent to the local papers. What will they all do about it? The Finance Committee is *their* Committee; the Chairman of that Committee is their representative. If they had not known they might disown moral responsibility, and ask when they did find out, "Why were we not told?" Well, now they are told. They do know about it. I have asked for the details of the accusation and they are not forthcoming. I am challenging the Chairman to again make the statement in a completely public manner, and we shall see whether he will do so or not. It is not I that am on trial, it is the Chairman of the Finance Committee of West Ham Borough Council, and ultimately the Council's reputation for justice and fair play.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## The Smile of Voltaire.

"Voltaire was a stupendous power."—*John Morley.*

"Of all the intellectual weapons which have ever been wielded by man, the most terrible was the mockery of Voltaire."—*Macaulay.*

"Clericalism, there is the enemy."—*Gambetta.*

FRENCH literature has been one blaze of splendid scepticism from the days of Abelard to those of Anatole France, but no name has inspired such terror in the breasts of the orthodox as that of Voltaire. Indeed, Victor Hugo regarded Voltaire as the protagonist of Freethought, and, in his epigrammatic way, said: "Voltaire smiled, Christ wept." And that smile of Voltaire's cost him dear, for none has been more hated, none more reviled by pious folks. The reason is simple. He attacked bigotry and superstition, not in the dry-as-dust fashion of professors writing for the few, but with wit and pleasantry which survives the winnowing of generations. He made priests appear ridiculous as well as odious, and those who felt the lash denounced him as a literary Mephistopheles, whose writings all should avoid as they would a plague. All whose interests were bound up with orthodoxy stigmatized Voltaire as a shallow scoffer, railing at all things holy and of good repute.

In his own day this jaundiced view of Voltaire was very prevalent. Old Sam Johnson, not at all a bad-hearted man, has voiced this prejudice. In a conversation with Boswell he said: "Rousseau, sir, is a very bad man. I would sooner sign a sentence for his transportation than that of any felon who has gone from the Old Bailey these many years. Yes, I should like to have him work in the plantations." "Sir, do you think him as bad a man as Voltaire?" enquired Boswell. "Why, sir," returned the Doctor, "it is difficult to settle the proportion of iniquity between them." In artistic circles the same abuse was current. Joshua Reynolds, in one of his most popular pictures, introduced Voltaire as the personification of sophistry. The clergy, of course, made him the target of innumerable insults. He was the



helot of countless homilies, and served to point many alleged morals. The priests lied to such purpose that whole generations of innocent Christians firmly believed that Voltaire was personally responsible for the French Revolution.

In England there is still great prejudice against Voltaire, which, said Buckle, only ignorance can excuse. The shouts of friends and foes still fill the troubled air, and the dust of controversy is blinding. One turns with a sigh of relief from books about Voltaire by enemies and partisans alike to his own books and letters. Here one finds the man himself, no mere buffoon, but a sensitive nature bent on the destruction of cruelty and intolerance, and striking at the superstition of which these vices are the outcome. His keen eyes saw the atrocities and absurdities bound up with Christianity. He saw it was essential that the religion in which intolerance had its root should be proved detestable and ridiculous. Men, he said, will not cease to be persecutors until they have ceased to be absurd; and, more than any other man, he caused the European world to smile at its own absurdities.

Voltaire's motto was, "Straight to the Fact." He brought, smilingly, all creeds to the test of truth and common sense. Was it true or not that Omnipotence had chosen Oriental barbarians as his peculiar people? Was "god" born of a virgin? Did he, indeed, ascend from the earth "like a balloon?" To ask these questions and to cross-examine priests was to provoke inextinguishable laughter.

Voltaire was a man of serious aims. He had profound convictions, and employed his exquisite wit as a weapon. There is no case of Voltaire mocking at any men who lived good lives. He did not gibe at the English Quakers, but he was merciless when he attacked the French priests, who invoked the laws to murder their opponents. A Protestant pastor, Rochette, was hanged for merely exercising his functions in Languedoc. The Protestant Calas was broken on the wheel, because his son was found dead, and someone chose to say that the father had killed him to prevent him joining the Romish Church. Even Calas's widow and children were put to the torture. La Barre, a lad of eighteen, was condemned at Amiens, for damaging a crucifix, to have his tongue and right hand cut off, and then to be burnt alive, a sentence which was commuted to decapitation. It was Voltaire who cried, "Halt! Enough!" and reminded Frenchmen that their's was the country of the St. Bartholomew Massacre. "The whole man," says Carlyle, "Kindled into one divine blaze of righteous indignation, and resolution to bring help against the world." His services in undoing such foul wrongs will never fade from the memory of men.

Voltaire was always sensitive concerning human suffering. The news of the awful horrors of the dreadful earthquake at Lisbon, in which 40,000 people lost their lives, roused Voltaire like a blow in the face. Moved, as he always was, to reproduce his strongest feelings in his writings, he cast his protest against Optimism into the two very different shapes of a poem and the novel of *Candide*. Both amply prove that beneath the caustic cynicism of the author beat a heart aflame with sympathy for his fellows.

The story of *Candide* is, briefly, that of a young man brought up in the belief that this is the best of all possible worlds. He meets with a hundred adventures which give it the lie direct. Life is a doubtful bargain, but one can make the best of it. That is the moral of *Candide*. "What I know," says *Candide*, "is that we must cultivate our garden." In the last resort, "with close-lipped Patience for our only friend," Voltaire's philosophy was Secularistic.

Voltaire was ever an apostle of common-sense.

One is as much struck with the soundness of his judgment as by his felicity of expression. A book might be written on his anticipation of modern thought. In a pre-scientific age he accepted the view of man's savage origin. He derived the belief in ghosts from dreams, and discerned the magical nature of early religion. He anticipated so many of the social and political problems of our time. Before Malthus, he stated the population question, and helped to clear the way for modern science. He saw through the myths of the Christian Bible more than a hundred years before the clergy were forced to recognize them.

For sixty years Voltaire waged unending war against the Great Lying Church, and when he died the priests refused him burial, hoping that he would be thrown into the gutter like the famous actress, Adrienne Lecouvreur. But, as an author and humanitarian, he had carved his name too deeply on his country's roll of honour, and his remains now rest beneath the dome of the Pantheon, with its front glowing with the splendid words, "Aux grand hommes la patrie reconnaissante." Here he sleeps undisturbed, and by his side rest the ashes of Rousseau. Shoulder to shoulder, these great soldiers of the Army of Human Emancipation rest under their magnificent tombs:—

"With the sound of those they wrought for,  
And the feet of those they fought for,  
Echoing round their tombs for evermore."

MIMNERMUS.

## Language and The Abstract.

As man's knowledge of the Universe increased, so did conviction become more certain that every part of it is correlated. We have come to realize that there is no one thing which can be regarded as a truly separate entity, entirely self-contained or independent of everything else. Everything is, in some sense or other, and in some degree or other, relative to everything else.

In spite of this we are compelled for convenience of thought, speech and experiment, to divide experience up into "units" or to condense it into "classes" or "categories" of various sorts. One reason for this may be that our only means of acquiring knowledge is through the senses. If we had possessed one single sense, it seems possible that our view of the universe would have been less complicated. As it is, every sense presents us with a different aspect of experience; and the permutations and combinations produced by them all give a corresponding complexity to our knowledge. In our attempts to resolve and understand this complexity we adopt various methods of simplification.

We think and speak, for example, of "leaves" as units distinct from "plants," though one could not exist without the other. We refer to units of "weight" or "length" as though they could be separated from "matter" and "motion." We distinguish "herrings" as a class, though they are one with a larger class called "fish," which again merges into the still larger class called "animals." We use the term "mind" as distinct from "brain" to refer to two different sets of ideas.

These prefatory remarks are necessary, in order that when we use such abstract terms as "mind" or "thought" we should not fall into the error of regarding them as entities distinct from the brain or body. For mind may be looked upon as a function of the brain, much in the same way as digestion is regarded as a function of the stomach. "Mind"



does not "exist" of itself any more than "digestion" does.

We are accustomed to talk of "mind" as that function of the brain which deals with such things as "thoughts," "ideas," "problems," "beliefs," etc. And these words again are no more than verbal categories invented for the convenience of speech and do not represent entities which can be regarded as separate realities. A "thought," for instance, is nothing in itself; the word is just a convenient linguistic abbreviation for a much longer series of words, which would involve lengthy explanations of sensory impressions, nerve conduction, cerebral action, etc., Similarly with "ideas," "beliefs," "problems," and all other abstract terms.

Were it not for this method of condensing our verbal descriptions and explanations of experience into single symbols, the business of passing on, recording or discussing knowledge would be a far more cumbersome and lengthy one than it is. Yet, convenient as it certainly is, this condensation has had, and still has, its serious drawbacks. In saving us labour it has made us lazy. So much so that many of us have lost the ability and inclination to analyse the very instrument we so readily use. We are like those who have learnt to drive a motor-car without having any clear knowledge of its internal mechanism. In becoming habituated to the symbolism we have become unconscious of its artificial nature, and we are too often apt to believe that whenever a verbal symbol is used it is evidence of the existence of some corresponding entity or reality.

One of the most urgent needs of present-day education is some form of instruction which will make people realize what the nature of language is, and what are its functions and limitations. For as long as speakers or writers labour under the delusion that "speech conveys thought," or that "words correspond to realities," so long will there be the ever-recurring misunderstandings and the interminable wranglings which arise from an ignorance of the imperfect and mechanical nature of the instrument (language) they are using.

Words are not realities, and sentences are not thoughts. They are symbols, either visual or auditory, which serve, as a machine or tool serves, to produce some result that could not be so well produced without them. And the result which language in the main is intended to produce is an act of reference between two or more persons. If I speak or write, my usual purpose is to get my hearer or reader to refer in his mind to the same things as I am referring to in mine. The more experiences we have in common, therefore, the more probable is it that my language will be "understood." Conversely, if my experience differs considerably from that of my hearer or reader, the less efficiently will my language act as a means of reference. Even in the case of single words, with whose use we are both quite familiar, the mental associations aroused may be sufficiently different to create serious misunderstanding. It is only by a process of constantly referring back to points of common experience that such errors can be rectified. This process may conveniently be called "definition."

If we take individual words of any language and examine them, the truth of the foregoing remarks becomes clearer. Supposing I were to utter the one word "as," it would be of no more use as a symbol of reference than the sound "glog," or any other absurd noise. And there are hundreds of similar words in every language which, apart from a context of other words, are quite meaningless. Indeed, no word can have meaning (that is to say, can act as an adequate symbol of reference) without a context of

some sort. There are certain words, such as the commands "come," "stop," or "hurry," which appear to have meaning by themselves. But even in these cases there must be a context of circumstances, if not of previously spoken words, to give them meaning.

It is when we come to those words known as nouns, or substantives, that the error of believing them to represent some clearly defined reality becomes more frequent. Words such as "dog," or "chair" are credited with having meaning of themselves, when in fact they are as meaningless without context as the words "if," "or," etc. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that, even with an appropriate context, circumstances may arise in which words such as these will fail to act as an adequate means of reference.

If I meet a man in the road and ask him: "Have you seen my dog?" there is no doubt that I am using an appropriate context for the word "dog." It is also clear that I am referring to something in my own mind, and that I wish him to refer to the same thing. But if this man happens to be a Frenchman who speaks no English, my question is so much waste of breath. We lack the one element of common experience necessary to understanding—namely, a common linguistic education. If, however, the man is an Englishman and a stranger, the chances are that he may reply: "What sort of dog is yours?" thus showing the inadequacy of the word "dog" as a reference, and the necessity of referring it back again to some common experience (definition). To do this I would proceed to further definition of the word and say: "My dog is a white wire-haired terrier." If the man had little or no experience of the kind of dog called a "terrier," I would again have to define this word by reference to some similar kind of dog which he had had some experience of. And so on, until some satisfactory ground of common experience had been reached.

C. S. FRASER.

(To be concluded.)

## In Fear of the Truth.

DURING the past few weeks I have been re-reading portions of my copy of the late Bishop Colenso's once famous work entitled *The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined*, which was published by Longmans Green & Co., and bears the date 1873.

In the early 80's I used this book frequently when, as a young man, I lectured at various open-air stations in London, on the question of "Is the Bible the infallible Word of God?"; and it was quite amusing to see how easy Christian Evidence Lecturers of those days were knocked over by the irrefutable arguments and illustrations of the learned bishop. To each part of this book—there are five parts—Dr. Colenso wrote a Special Preface, and in these the learned Bishop referred to certain letters he wrote to his brother Bishops, asking them to aid him as a "brother in distress" in the solution of the problems he had endeavoured to grapple with and solve. Some of these letters he did not send, at the time, but waited till he published the first part and answered the replies, in the next part.

"Here," he says, in one of these letters, in this land Natal (Zululand) I have been brought face to face with the very questions I then put by. While translating the Story of the Flood, I have had a simple-minded, but intelligent native—one with the docility of a child, but the reasoning powers of mature age, look up and ask, Is all that true? Do you really be-



lieve that all this happened thus—that all the beasts and birds and creeping things, upon the earth, large and small, from hot countries and cold, came thus by pairs and entered into the ark with Noah? And did God gather food for them all, for the beasts and birds of prey as well as the rest? My heart answered in the words of the prophet, “Shall a man speak lies in the name of the Lord? Zech. xiii. 3. I dared not do so. My own knowledge of some branches of Science, of Geology in particular, had been much increased since I left England; and I now knew for certain on Geological grounds, a fact, of which I had only had misgivings before, viz., that a Universal Deluge, such as the Bible manifestly speaks of could not possibly have taken place in the way described in the book of Genesis, not to mention other difficulties which the story contains.” Colenso thought that five years after he had written his work and got it well circulated, that the Church would not be able to get university men to enter and become candidates for ordination; and thus it would mean the downfall of the State Church. And here we are at the end of the year 1930, and yet this and other Biblical stories, criticized by the honest old Bishop, are still taught and believed by thousands of Christians in this and other countries. That, of course, only shows how long old stories or legends will live even after they have been demonstrated to be absolutely false, especially if they happen to be religious stories. Some of his theological friends had warned Dr. Colenso that if he continued his investigations and applied the same rigid logical methods to them, as to one above-mentioned, they would necessarily lead to *infidelity and Atheism*.

Nevertheless Dr. Colenso went on with his investigations and critical examination of other Biblical stories, for he said in reply to his friends, “Our duty, surely, is to follow the *Truth*, wherever it leads us, and leave the consequences in the hands of God.” But Dr. Colenso like many other searchers after truth found his path impeded in almost every direction. His Christian friends were not only very reluctant to read and try and answer his arguments, but when they did reply they gave such weak and unconvincing reasons, that Colenso declared “that the great body of the more intelligent students of our Universities no longer come forward to devote themselves to the service of the Church, but are drafted off to other professions. The Church of England must fall to the ground by its own internal weakness by losing its hold upon the growing intelligence of all classes—unless some remedy be very soon applied to this state of things. It is a miserable policy, which now prevails, unworthy of the truth itself, and one which cannot long be maintained to “keep things quiet.” And yet although nearly sixty years have elapsed since Colenso published his great work the bishops and clergy generally have by their subterfuges managed to gloss over these manifest falsehoods and to keep things comparatively quiet in the Church to this day.

But how has this been accomplished? First by condemning such works and dissuading the rising generation of Christians from reading them; and second, by declaring that such works were blasphemous and likely to lead to infidelity and Atheism, which views were represented by those in authority to be such heinous offences against God and man, as to lead directly to the damnation of those who read such publications. On many occasions when I have been trying to convert some of my Christian friends to Freethought, and have asked them to read such a work for instance as Thos. Paine's *Age of Reason*, they have said, “I dare not read it—I am afraid. I

don't want to be converted to what you call *Freethought*, and be described as an *infidel*, and to be treated as an outcast from all decent society.” But I have urged “that it is better to be in the right with the few than in the wrong with the many”; to which they have replied, “You may think so, but we do not”; in other words they have not had courage enough to bear the ostracism and cruel persecution of their Christian friends; and so the fear of learning the truth has kept them in ignorance. It is perfectly true that there is much more liberality in the Christian world to-day than there was even twenty years ago—let alone in the days when Colenso was writing his famous work. The Propagandist efforts of men like Richard Carlile, Geo. Jacob Holyoake, Charles Bradlaugh, G. W. Foote, Chapman Cohen and others, have had their effect, and it is comparatively easy to make Freethinkers to-day. All we want is a fair field and no favour, and then we feel that we are bound to win. In the words of the late Dean Alford, quoted by Bishop Colenso in his work:—

Speak thou the Truth—let others fence,  
And trim their words for pay;  
In pleasant sunshine of pretence  
Let others bask their day.

Guard thou the fact; though clouds of night  
Down on thy watch tower stoop;  
Though thou should see thine heart's delight  
Borne from thee by their swoop.

Face thou the wind. Though safer seem  
In shelter to abide,  
We were not made to sit and dream;  
The safe must first be tried.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

### Three Thousand Years After.

On a notice board by the entrance to the Salvation Army Hall in the street in which I live, there is a large sheet containing the following, printed in very large artistic type: SING FORTH THE HONOUR OF HIS NAME, MAKE HIS PRAISE GLORIOUS. Soon after seeing this I put on my wireless phones and heard, in perservid tones, the words (occurring near the close of a sermon), VERY GOD OF VERY GOD. I then looked up other faintly remembered passages in the Bible relating to the establishment of the great god of the Hebrews: “Howbeit men made gods in their own image and put them in the houses of the high places”; “Thou shalt have no other gods before me”; “Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them.” I also turned to the story of the contest between the Canaanite priests of Baal (450 of them) and Elijah, in which the former failed and the latter succeeded in bringing down fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice and noted the conclusion arrived at: “The Lord he is the God”; though we may suppose that the priests of Baal did not admit this, as at the command of Elijah they were all slain. This recalled the earlier contest between the Egyptian priests and the Hebrew champions of Jahveh, when the rods of both were turned into snakes; but as the Hebrew rod-snakes ate up the Egyptian the result was considered decisive—“Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods.”

Before any of these things took place (if they did take place), that is, before about 1500 B.C., when the Hebrews entered Palestine as barbarian nomads from the Arabian Desert, they would have gone through the earliest stages of spirit and god-making. Of these we may note (following perhaps notions of mana and general animatism) (1) the arrival at the belief in a human ghost or double, drawn from shadows, reflections, echoes, and, above all, from dreams and other unconscious states in which some part of a man seemed to leave him and to undergo experiences much like those of his normal conscious life; (2) the decision that these ghosts or shades were spirits, which persisted, remained in the vicinity of the tribe,



and were greatly to be feared by the living; (3) the advance, probably with the rise of tribal organization, to the more powerful and dreadful shades of chiefs, which in course of time would develop into "great spirits," and these into tribal gods. When tribes came into collision these tribal gods would naturally become, like Yahveh, war gods. Following this there would be a tendency, especially in a self-centred people like the Hebrews, to exalt—their praise, honour, glorify, magnify—their own and to suppress other deities; and (4) the last scene of the drama would be (as we know it was in the Hebrew case) the ascent of the victorious god from merely tribal governance to world dominion. Lesser associated spirits became angels, while vanquished gods and their subordinates tended to become "false gods," devils, demons, imps and the like, a process that was evidently an original development in Persia, but not among the Hebrews, as they—and also the Mohammedans—adopted the Persian devil, Ahriman, renamed Satan and Shaitan, as "captain of the evil host."

It becomes clear, then, that Christian religionists are widely engaged in parrot-like repetition of the words of people who 3,000 years ago were just passing beyond the primitive level of ignorance and illiteracy. (The Hebrews acquired writing about 800 B.C.). And the chief ingredient in the remedy for this state of things is probably the dissemination of an outline of the available knowledge of theological development, as evidenced by the beliefs and practices of backward peoples and the earlier records of ancient peoples.

It is gratifying to note that some account of the latest stage of god-making among the Hebrews has begun to appear in books of world or universal history. In Breasted's *Ancient Times* we are told of the trouble of the Hebrew prophets to get the people to confine their attention to "their old Hebrew god, Yahveh" instead of following a not unnatural desire to join in the worship the local Baals of their neighbours; there is a reference to "the bloody butchery practised by Elijah's followers . . . who thought of Yahveh only as a war-god," to the suspicion that "Assur, the great god of victorious Assyria, was stronger than Yahveh"; and also to the fact that Yahveh was long regarded by the people as a local god—even as late as the Captivity (in Babylonia, 586 B.C. and after), when they asked mournfully, "How shall we sing Yahveh's song in a strange land? Had they not left Yahveh behind in Palestine?" But evidently in course of time all of them had absorbed the idea that he was "the creator and sole god of the universe." "Thus," concludes Breasted's account, "had the Hebrew vision slowly grown from the days of their nomad life, when they had seen him only as a fierce tribal war god, having no power beyond the corner of the desert where they lived, until now when they had come to see that he was . . . ruler of all the earth."

Thus do the ghosts of the dead become the gods of the living. And in reply to the objection sometimes contemptuously made that this view is based merely on conditions obtaining among uncivilized peoples we cite the records of older civilized peoples, some of which plainly evidence much earlier conditions than those already mentioned, as, for example, totemism, as shown by the Hebrew story of the Golden Calf, and the animal-gods of the Sumerians, Egyptians and early Greek tribes (in the last case known by the mention of "cow-faced" and "owl-faced" deities in the Homeric Verse). We have also an Egyptian record, inscribed in the pyramid-tomb of King Unias of the Fifth dynasty, which points back to a primitive, cannibalistic, Voodoo-like condition of theological thought and practice: "The heavens are dark . . . the bones of Geb (the Earthgod) tremble when they see him (Unias), as he appears as a god, who lives on his fathers and mothers. He it is who eats their magic and swallows their power. The big gods are his morning meal, the middle gods his evening meal, and the little gods his night meal. The old gods and goddesses (he burns) for his incense smoke."

It remains to be noted that there are some other varieties of deity which do not seem to belong to the main line of evolution of a chief god. They include spirits or deities of the storm, the fire, the sky, etc., which would appear when and where natural phenomena

and their effects had become seriously impressive; and the sex and fertility deities, which developed largely in relation with agriculture. These, of course, had to be appeased, helped or thwarted in their beneficial or nefarious activities; and in some areas one or more of them became high gods, probably by the gradual supersession of ancestral forms.

J. REEVES.

## Acid Drops.

A boy was charged at Mexborough with stealing. This was the second offence; on the first he was placed on probation, and the Probation Officer reported he found him difficult to deal with, and had failed to get the father to co-operate with him in sending the boy to church or chapel. The father explained that he did not believe in church or chapel. He was left thirteen years ago with six children, and had done his best to teach them to do right. The following then occurred, as reported in the *Sheffield Mail* for December 10.

Mr. E. W. Pettifer (the magistrates' clerk): It is possible you don't know what is right yourself.

The Father: Oh, yes I do.

Mr. Pettifer (to the boy): You are suffering because of your father's ridiculous ideas. He sets himself above God and everybody else.

The Father: Oh, no I don't.

Mr. Pettifer: Well, here he is on seven indictable offences at sixteen.

The man added that he was left thirteen years ago with six children to bring up. He wanted the magistrates to talk to the lad and remind him he had got some masters.

Mr. Pettifer: It is the greatest pity he has such a father.

The Father: I leave it to them whether they go to Sunday School or not. The other children go.

The Chairman (Mr. W. Hinchcliffe): You leave it to them. You are shirking your responsibilities. That is what it means. In a lot of these cases it is the parents who should be punished instead of the children.

After consulting in private the magistrates decided to bind the boy over for two years in £10 and his father in £25 as his surety, to place him under the probation officer, a further condition being that the boy should join some sort of organization, either Church, Chapel or the Scouts.

He would also have to report to the probation officer how he was spending his spare time, and in addition he would have to pay 40s. towards the costs at the rate of 10s. a week.

Impertinences of this kind are common enough from these Jacks-in-Office, and they will continue, we presume until such time as public opinion is sufficiently intelligent to deal with them as they deserve. There was no evidence before the court that the father had not done all he could to bring up his children properly, and if the chairman really believed that a father was shirking his duty if he did not compel his children to go to Sunday school, we can only hope that he is childless, and that he will soon pass out of public life. The clerk's address to the father is a mixture of impudence and ignorance, and one of these days the proper authorities may have something to say on this abuse of position. What would a person of this kind make of the number of Sunday school scholars who do figure as criminals? He cannot be ignorant of their number, while the Sunday school experience of himself and the chairman has certainly not improved their conduct in public. We are afraid there is nothing one can do in the matter save hope for an improvement in the calibre and outlook of those who are entrusted with the administration of justice.

A leader-writer in the *Christian World* asserts that God cannot act contrary to his own nature. That is very interesting, because it is another way of saying that God must act according to his own nature, which is no more than saying that God's acts are all determined;



which, again, is an admission that an uncaused will is just nonsense; which once more is a substantiation of what we have always said that determinism is not a question of adopting or rejecting determinism as we take it to be a reasonable or unreasonable theory, but its recognition as a necessity of thought. One might as reasonably talk of accepting the chemical constitution of water as accepting determinism. It is just a case of having wit enough to recognize the fundamental quality of all mental processes.

According to the newspapers, forty operations take place each week at Roehampton Hospital. There are 500 patients at this Institute, and throughout the country, it is stated, there are 10,150 ex-soldiers receiving treatment. One soldier at Roehampton has had ten operations on his chest. It is about time that the human race started to look for the glories of war with a microscope.

The Vicar of St. Barnabas, Sutton, states that Night Watch services have never recovered from the early closing of public houses. When they closed at 11 p.m., all sorts of people used to come to the service; now they go home. There is no pleasing some folks.

A reader of the *Daily Express* has been visited with a bright idea:—

We need new sources of taxation. I suggest that cinemas should pay a fairly heavy licence duty for the privilege of opening on Sunday.

But why a tax for cinemas only? Why not impose it on all that have the "privilege" of entertaining the public on Sunday? This would include not only the B.B.C., but also all the churches to whom Sunday is the great money-making day of the week. As the proverb says, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. If entertaining the public on Sunday is to be regarded as a "privilege," there is no reason why the parsons shouldn't pay for it as well as others—especially as their buildings are exempt from rates and taxes.

The Church, we learn, though it cannot compete with the world in the way of entertainment, has something to supply on its premises that the world cannot supply. Quite so. And it really is a pity the world is so dashed obstinate as not to want what the Church supplies. But, after all, the world is growing up, and to expect juvenile taste for fairy tales to last into adulthood is rather unreasonable.

According to the Rev. E. H. G. Sargent, the aim of the parsons is not to amuse the "goats," but to feed the "sheep." We presume the trouble with the "goats" is that, unlike the "sheep," they refuse to be fed with words, words, words in order to be rendered docile for shearing. This helps to explain, of course, why divine inspiration so often moves the parsons to slander and vilify the "goats."

A weekly journal with a penchant for piety says:—

The Ancient Order of Froth Blowers is finding the times too hard for it. For an ancient order its life has been brief. But we are sure its members will go on being kind to all in need. There will be more charity and less froth.

We should like circumstances to be favourable to our saying something similar about certain pious organization which specialize in high-sounding and frothy aims for catching the imagination of sloppy fools.

Writing about "dockland," a pious scribe says that "there are few areas in London where the Methodist witness is more needed than in Canning Town." Whereupon one suspects that Methodists are still cherishing the stupid Victorian illusions that the chief cause of slums, drunkenness, and poverty is "sin," and the grand remedy is religion. Yet, we believe, competent social investigations disposed of this illusion years ago. Still, one cannot expect Methodists to know that.

The younger generation, we learn, is happy only when it is going fast. But what worries the parsons is not the fast going but simply the going—the younger generation is going away from the Churches. Hence the lamentations, dismal prophecies, and woeful warnings.

The study of fog, we are told, has been engaging the attention of a London scientist for years. He is not the only one so engaged. The *Freethinker* has been studying the cause of fog, as produced by the Christian religion and men of God, for nearly fifty years. The conclusion from our research is that the widespread dissemination of Freethought is the only real cure. And the more Freethinkers there are in the country, the smaller the nuisance resulting from Christian fog.

"The Sunday Question" has been worrying the Rev. G. H. McNeal, and he bursts into prophecy. Says he: "If Sunday goes the Church goes; if the Church goes the home goes; if the home goes the nation goes." How awful! But it only means that the rev. gent is letting off steam because he fears that the modern habit of using Sunday for recreation instead of praying will rob him of his job. Fear lendeth wings to the imagination! Suppose the parsons go, as a commencement? That might induce a change for the better all round.

From a religious weekly:—

Mr. Hore-Belisha, M.P., discussing living speakers, says one of the greatest orators he ever heard was Gipsy Smith. He heard Gipsy several times at the Albert Hall, and says: "We laughed, we cried. We stood up, and sang, and shook hands with one another when he told us to."

The manipulation of a crowd by one skilled in mob psychology—we should say, imbecility—is no doubt a wonderful thing, and we feel sure Mr. Hore-Belisha thoroughly enjoyed himself.

During an evangelical mission at South Moulton, the Rev. Garrett Udy, the missionary, paraded the district in a motor-car fitted up with a big ship's bell. We learn that "a mighty clanging proclaimed his advent, and the reason for it." The gentle Jesus, it will be remembered, attracted a crowd by working a pretty little miracle and no noise. His modern disciples have to resort to the methods of the circus.

Liverpool District Sunday School Council is faced with the fact that the numbers on the roll of Sunday schools continue to fall. A still more disconcerting fact is that the number of children who have no connexion with any Sunday school is great and growing. This is very odd. For a short time ago a Sunday school journal explained that the decline in attendance at such schools is nothing to be alarmed at, because it is due to the decline in the birth-rate during the years following the war. This explanation doesn't seem to fit the facts of where Liverpool Sunday Schools are concerned.



"Love as the Christian way of life," was the theme of an address by the Rev. G. H. Charnley, a Wesleyan. The following is a portion:—

Christianity in its early days started on the way of love, but later the emphasis was transferred to belief. Suppose the Church from its origin had put the emphasis largely on a fellowship of love to Christ and humanity, what would the subsequent history of the Church have been? Certain things could not have happened. In the first place, would there have been any persecution of the Church by the Church? For persecution is the result of insistence upon set creed and form. Again, if love had been given the first place, would the Church have been split into hostile sections?

"If's" and "supposes" are all very well. But the history of the Church is what it is because the Church was founded on the whole Bible. Given that Bible and the type of mentality current in the world, then what Christians did may be regarded as an inevitable sequel or consequence. Assuming that God is All-wise, he must have known what the result of giving the Bible to the world would be. So the Reverend Mr. Charnley may console himself with the thought that Christian history was all according to plan, and offers a further reason for rendering thanks under God.

According to Mr. Hannen Swaffer, whenever a seance is announced the rush of spirits who desire to communicate is so great that queues are formed. Evidently there is one occupation that does not seem likely to suffer from unemployment. The only thing that puzzles us is this. According to most authorities spirits do not occupy space; and certainly in a crowded room people are told of the crowds of spirits that are present. But how do things that do not occupy space queue up? A crowd of spirits would represent something that has neither width, length, nor depth? How does that kind of thing form a queue? We do not suppose that this sort of objection gives a sincere Spiritualist any serious trouble. For does not Professor Dodge, the eminent authority on overhead drainage assure that he has conversed with one of these spirits who had managed to get first in the queue?

Another thing that Mr. Hannen Swaffer tells us is that when we "pass over" we are taken charge of by spirits who act as our guides—a kind of tourist agency in which we should imagine all the dead and gone employees of Messrs. Cook and Sons, would be given posts. During the war, says Mr. Swaffer, the number that passed over was so great that the spirit guides had great difficulty in dealing with them all. But, Mr. Swaffer! After all, people have been dying for thousands on thousands of years, in fact every one who dies had two parents, so that there should be more than enough spirits to provide a separate guide for every one that passes over, and still leave a large number free to move Mr. Swaffer's grand piano. Somehow the explanations do not seem to fit the facts.

By the way. The time has come round for the cleaning of our books, and as we have a very considerable number, and little time, could not a spirit, say, of some house cleaner, manage to do that job? It would be quite impressive to wake up one morning and find that all our shelves had been nicely dusted and all the books back in their places. The job is a very simple one, and would not overtax even the intelligence of the average spirit guide.

Something really ought to be done about it. It will be remembered that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle once exhibited a "Psychic" picture, which he declared was painted by an artist under the spirit influence derived from a seance to which Sir Arthur had taken him, and that the painting had been done in a few hours. The artist afterwards explained that the story told by Sir Arthur was correct, save that he did not paint it under spirit influence, that the subject was selected by Sir

Arthur himself, and that he always did his pictures in a few hours. Otherwise the statement was correct.

Another instance of the same kind was Sir Arthur's dealing with Houdini. When Houdini freed himself from all sorts of chains, boxes, padlocks, handcuffs, or walked through brick walls, etc. Sir Arthur solved the problem by saying that Houdini was really a medium who dematerialized himself to get out of his chains, and then materialized himself afterwards. Houdini always denied being anything of the kind, but being in touch with the spirit world, Sir Arthur knew better, and the story took its place in Spiritualistic mythology. Now, a book has just been published, *Houdini's Escapes*, by W. B. Gibson, one of Houdini's associates. The book is compiled from Houdini's notebooks, and much of it reads like notes made for Houdini's own guidance, giving details of the way in which a number of these mysterious escapes were made. We suggest that Mr. Dennis Bradley—he seems to be able to get any spirit he wants, and as he explains, no one can deceive him—should get into touch with Sir Arthur at once and get his opinion about it. Spiritualists on this side will not be distressed over it, they seem able to stand anything, but it may distress "our friends on the other side." That is why something really ought to be done about it.

Mr. Hannen Swaffer, in a newspaper, imparts the information that Spiritualists are persecuted in the North of England by rival religious bodies. Also, he writes, that a week before Sir Arthur Conan Doyle died Sir Arthur wrote the Home Secretary as follows:—

"I implore you to stop the *agents provocateurs* who, posing as widows, now persecute us," he said.

The one moral we draw from this (and there are a possible hundred) is, that organized religion after hundreds of years of teaching, has saddled the country with a miserable legacy of jangling about things that cannot be proved, and that there is more need for Freethought than ever.

Ilford has recently been inflicted with a lengthy evangelical campaign conducted by the local Free Churches, and—according to a report—700 people have been converted. Further information is that about 80 per cent of those professing conversion were connected with some church. Giving our Christian friends their usual latitude in handling truth, we may presume that the 80 per cent is more likely to be 97 per cent. So having converted the local Christians to Christianity, the campaign may be assumed a huge success. Hallelujah!

Lionel B. Fletcher, the minister who conducted the Ilford campaign, exclaims: "We do not need to pray for a revival; it is here!" The reader must take his word for it. But if the Churches keep on converting Christians to Christianity at the Ilford rate, there will soon be no need for B.B.C. religious services, and the non-pious listener may get something he really wants.

The Bishop of Sodor and Man has discovered three things. One is that there is a great pagan population in England. Another is that the social conscience of England is waking up; nowadays people are really keen about the problems of better housing, and of fighting poverty, drink, and crime. The third is that:—

Behind the problem of a better social order lies the problem of the better man. You cannot maintain a nation without character, and you cannot maintain character without religion.

But, as this great pagan population had admittedly acquired a social conscience more sensitive than that of a former Christian population, one may reasonably conclude that what is really wanted is, not more Christian religion, but more encouragement for paganism. How queer, it is, that the Bishop should have missed this obvious inference!



## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

IGNOTUS.—Received. Shall appear as early as possible.

KERRIDON.—Pleased to have your appreciation of the point.

It is surprising how frequently people miss the obvious and the common-place.

C. F. BUDGE.—Many thanks for cuttings. They are always useful.

R. STEINER.—Thanks for portraits, which we are very pleased to have.

A. HUGHES.—Next week.

W.A.—Next week. We fancy that you are interpreting our position in a rather too narrow sense. Anyway, pleased to hear from you, regret that age limits your range of travel. We have a report of the speech in question.

P. TRAMER.—We should say that Dean Inge's address on religion and science must have lowered him in the estimation of anyone who could think, whether he was religious or non-religious.

W.J.—Mr. Cohen does not, and never has, challenged anyone to debate.

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

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

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## Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen was sufficiently recovered from the very severe cold he caught to fulfil his engagement at Nottingham on Sunday last. The large lecture hall of the university was crowded, with many standing, and the laughter and applause during the address gave clear proof of the attitude of the, at least, majority of the audience. There were many visitors present from Derby and elsewhere. There was the usual lively discussion after the lecture, some of it not quite so relevant as it might have been.

The tickets for the Annual Dinner of the N.S.S., on January 17, are now ready, and may be obtained from the offices of the *Freethinker*, or from the office of the Society, 61 Farringdon Street. The price is 8s. each. Tickets are also on sale at the Sunday evening meetings at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square. Early application is advisable.

With reference to the question of Cinema performances on Sunday. The L.C.C. has determined to appeal to the House of Lords. As it is the ratepayer's money that is being spent, it can do so without compunction. The Cinema Proprietor's Association has advised its members to carry on as usual, and has formed a fund to fight all prosecutions. This is precisely what we advised them to do some fifteen years ago, but they were afraid of offending the police and religious bigots generally.

Maurice Chevalier, who is one of the world's great men—it should be said one of the *Christian* world's great men—for no other reason that we can see than that he is getting £4,000 a week, is booked to give a Sunday evening concert in Cardiff on February 4. He is to be "allowed" to carry this out, according to the *News-Chronicle*, of December 11, provided he submits his songs in advance to the Chief Constable. This is a piece of impertinent officialism that takes place in various parts of the country, and it is unjustifiable in a double sense. There is no power vested in any Chief Constable to act as a censor of songs. A song is either permissible or it is not permissible, but it is not for a mere policeman to say whether they are the one or the other. It is only by terrorising licence holders that this power is exerted, and it is time it was stopped. In the next place in the light of the Act of 1781, the authorities at Cardiff are saying that if the Chief Constable is satisfied that the songs to be sung are such as he thinks ought to be sung on Sunday, he will help Chevalier to break the law. The idea that a song is either legal or illegal on Sunday as suits or does not suit the taste of a Chief Constable, is about as absurd an assumption as one can make.

Three other points. (1) Any song, speech, writing, or picture that is indictable on Sunday is indictable on any other day. (2) If Chevalier can get the Hall for use on Sunday he is legally entitled to tell the Chief Constable, so far as the concert is concerned, to go to the devil. They have simply no more to do with it than they have to do with a concert on any other day. If the outraged humbledom of Cardiff, or elsewhere in similar circumstances, finding itself impotent to stop the concert, turns its bigotry against the licence holder by opposing the renewal of his licence, the case should be carried to appeal, and the licencing authorities called upon to justify their refusal. The courts would certainly hold that the proprietor did not infringe the terms of his licence by opening on Sunday, since his licence could, legally, only cover six days of the week. (3) Now that the Sunday question has been raised in this way, we may remind those interested, that the whole Sunday question should be settled. The regulations against trading on Sunday could be made so impossible that the Act would have to be repealed. It is high time that the rule of the Sabbatarian was ended.

Meanwhile we note that several people have hit on the plan of acting as common informers, and have laid claim to the fines incurred, amounting to about £100,000. These people have probably overlooked the fact that the 38 and 39 Vic. c. 80 gives power to a Secretary of State to remit the fines, and there is little doubt that this would be done. There is only one plain course, and that is to repeal the Act. But in English political life it is very seldom that the plain and honest course is followed, and where religion is concerned, hardly ever.

Here is a true incident. A tram stopped in front of a newsagent's, where a *Freethinker* poster was displayed and the conductor bought a copy of this journal. He said he had been reminded of the existence of this journal by seeing one of his passengers reading a copy. We fancy there are many thousands of people who need a similar reminder. Perhaps our friends will see that some of them get it.

But we know of at least one man who will not subscribe to the *Freethinker*. A Mr. J. F. Sands, who proudly announces himself on his letter paper as a journalist, recently received a copy of this paper. So he wrote to the office in hot haste:—

Kindly cease sending me this "Junk." The trenches cemented my religion. Try Russia. We like that word "cemented." That part of Mr. Sands anatomy that ought to be filled with grey matter has evidently been replaced with cement or some other substance that is impervious to common sense.

Mr. John Sumner writes, apropos of Mr. Cohen's *War, Civilization and the Churches*:—

Reading again in the book, after so many intervening years, the articles of which it consists, do I find them



out of date? On the contrary, they come before me with all their original freshness and beauty, and with added trenchancy in the light of subsequent happenings.

Some, indeed, may now claim the prestige of prophecy accomplished, and I should be inclined to imagine their author, as he turned the pages revising them for publication, saying to himself "I told you so," for again and again may be seen that what he said then must be apparent to everyone to-day.

We appreciate the compliment coming from so old and so staunch a Freethinker as Mr. Sumner.

Although the audiences at Plymouth were not, thanks to the weather, on the big side, there was no doubt as to the interest of those present, judged by the nature of questions put to Mr. R. H. Rosetti at both meetings. We understand there was also a good sale of literature at each session.

A Branch of the National Secular Society is in process of formation at Perth, and Scotch Freethinkers in that district are invited to become members of what is hoped to be a very active Branch. Enthusiasm and energy are certainly behind the movers, and Mr. J. A. Reid, of 70 South Methuen Street, Perth, will be pleased to forward application forms for membership, and answer any enquiries.

Mr. S. R. A. Ready, the energetic Secretary of the Liverpool (Merseyside) Branch of the N.S.S. writes:—

I have received our first consignment of Mr. Cohen's new book, *Opinions*, and I am delighted with it. Its binding, etc., make it very attractive at the first sight, but when one gets inside, binding and everything else is forgotten. I have always known Mr. Cohen as witty, but this collection is wonderful. I have never seen Freethinking put in a more attractive form. I hope it will have a wide sale.

We are asked to announce that Mr. Ernest Thurtle, M.P., will to-day (December 21) speak for the Glasgow Rationalist Society, in the Central Halls, Bath Street, at 3 p.m., on "Rationalism and Parliament." Glasgow friends will please note.

The discussion between Mr. McLaren and the Rev. S. J. Goldsack, on "Is Christianity of Divine Origin?" drew a crowded house to Conway Hall on Sunday last. Both disputants were in excellent form, and the discussion was conducted with courtesy and ability. The appreciation shown by the audience was marked, and all appeared to be having an enjoyable and interesting time.

The Secretary of the Secular Education League suggests that we should advise all believers in the policy of Secular Education to take every opportunity of bringing a resolution in its favour before all suitable associations with which they are connected and send them to the Minister of Education. We cheerfully fall in with the suggestion, and add that it is important, in view of what may be attempted in the near future, to do so as soon as possible. The present government, like previous ones, will yield to the clamour of the sects, unless it is forced upon them that there are others who deserve consideration.

There are very many year books, but with all the newcomers there is no question that *Whittaker's* still takes the lead. Perhaps it is because other year books have some particular purpose to serve other than the one indicated by the title. They are Liberal year books, or Conservative year books, or some newspaper year book, and the trail of propaganda is over them all. But *Whittaker* appears to have no ulterior purpose in view. It gives most of the data that the busy man wants to know, and gives it without "trimmings," of suppressions or misrepresentations. With about 1,000 closely printed pages, bound in half calf, it is as useful a six shillings-worth as one can find of its kind.

## Is Atheism Blatant?

SINCE the time of Charles Bradlaugh we have been familiar with the expression "Blatant Atheism." A Scotch cleric, who has apparently some grand projects in mind for the rehabilitation of the Church, used the expression the other day. But is Atheism blatant? Looking up the dictionary I find the meanings of "Blatant" given are "noisy, clamorous, loud." When we examine and consider the method and manner adopted by Atheists for the promulgation of their opinions, surely the last and least appropriate name to be given to these is "blatant."

No, it is Christianity of the modern type that can most suitably be described in its propagandist schemes as "blatant." The Salvation Army is very often not merely blatant, but *coarse* and vulgar. And look at the gaudily be-plastered "gospel" motors!

Observe the huge appealing posters and placards that are stuck up on the front of so many churches and chapels! Salvation Army lasses invade public houses and other places of public resort on Saturday nights, rattling their money-boxes and shoving the *War Cry* under the nose of everybody. The children are entertained through Boys' Brigades and similar religious organizations with jazz music, community singing and "Jamborees." Christianity is yelled at us through megaphones. It is shouted at us from the house-tops and hoardings. It is an age of advertising, and the Churches believe that "sweet are the uses of advertisement."

No, it will hardly do to call Atheism "blatant." Christians will have to tax their ingenuity to find out some more telling adjective. But they had better remember that the Kingdom of Freethought cometh not with observation. The most revolutionary changes in human thought in the past have been brought about by evidence and quiet persuasion. Great discoveries in science are not heralded by imperial and martial pomp or by the crashing of brass bands. Christians no doubt wish it to be thought that "blatancy" is an indication of ignorance and shallowness of mind on the principle that an empty drum makes the biggest noise. But it is rather upsetting when they, after unthinkingly resorting to the methods which are essentially blatant, find that they are hoist with their own petard and confirm in the minds of thinking people the impression that the older methods are now of no avail in regaling the Churches and Chapels; and that the methods of modern advertisement—pageantry and show posters and loud speakers—have had to be resorted to by them to secure the attention of the public. And still Christianity desintegrates, and Freethought grows!

An old relative of the writer had a saying frequently on his lips which is a wise monition in all the relationships of life. It was: "Gently does it!" We see how for example in the game of golf, instructors are for ever warning their pupils to guard against "forcing" or "pressing." "*Gently does it!*" Loss of temper is responsible for savage and unreasoning retort and abuse in the course of argument or debate. It imports unhealthy heat and obscures the light. In the sphere of dialectics the man who surrenders to passion proves his lack of magnanimity and gives himself away. It is the true mark of the gentleman and the strong man to be studiously courteous, considerate, reticent, reserved; knowing when to speak and what to speak—and when to keep silent. How much harm is done by the people who must always reduce the impersonal to the personal!



No cause gains by coarseness, vulgarity, or personal spleen. The palm goes to the calm, the dispassionate, the impartial and the judicially-minded.

IGNOTUS.

### The Shadow Show.

"For in, and out, above, about, below,  
'Tis nothing but a magic Shadow Shadow  
Played in a box, whose candle is the sun,  
Round which we phantom figures come—and go!"

Omar Khayam.

#### TO-DAY'S TOPICAL TALKIE.

We've the Mosley Manifesto—but no "Herald" angels sing, they're very peeved with Oswald, I am told. There's another Manifesto from that "fearless thinker," Inge, who says the "vulgar Atheist" leaves him cold. For Eddington and Jeans have proved just what God means—a mathematic symbol—that is all. So we'll have no fight or faction—let's call Christ a vulgar fraction (according to the doctrine of St. Paul!)

There's a Poison Fog in Belgium (we've a deadlier one at home) a Fog that clouds the minds of men—and emanates from Rome. The Poison Fog of Ignorance and the Holy Catholic Church! And over a million unemployed whom God's left in the lurch, while he's busy counting sparrows—or if James Jeans is right, is an abstract logarithm whose middle name is Light!

Now Christmas tide's upon us—and also quarter day. They're closing Sunday Cinemas, so let us all be gay. We've Income Tax, and Doctor's bills Lloyd George has said his say—so God rest you Merrie Gentlemen—may nothing you dismay!

#### THE PILLAR OF FIRE.

My favourite comedienne (after Miss Aimee McPherson and Nellie Wallace) is Bishop Alma White, M.A., D.D., founder of the "Pillar of Fire Movement," and editor of that jolly little periodical of the same conflagratory name—though "Columns of Fire" should doubtless be more appropriate.

Glancing through Alma's sprightly editorial paragraphs to-day, I culled the following wise and witty reflections, which one would naturally expect from a woman who is not only an M.A. and D.D. but a bishop to boot—or should we say gaiters?

The lipid clarity of the style, the coruscating epigrams are typical of this big jolly girl.

Listen to Bishop Alma on the Economic Crisis.

"In every walk of life, religiously, industrially, commercially men and women are prone to remark that a solemn crisis seems to be inevitable.

(My italics my olds.)

"The destiny of nations seems to be very precarious at the present. There is the strain of unemployment in almost every nation, finance and commerce are being gravely disputed among statesmen, governments seem to be at their wits end to know what to do . . . The R101 disaster has left a solemn mark on the nation . . . the tragedy was a shock to one and all. Many are wondering if like the Titanic disaster it does not betoken some greater calamity yet to come.

"Furthermore there is an alarming development of Modernism; there is the spirit of Mussolini seeking a revival of Imperial Roman Power, and also a general indifference to that which is spiritual and holy.

"It is very apparent though these symptoms that we are bordering on a world crisis, and what can it be except that the world is being prepared for the coming of its rightful King—the Lord Jesus Christ."

Whoopee Alma! Atta girl!

#### THEOLOGY FOR BEGINNERS.

Mr. E. C. Bentley who has to his credit the authorship of *Trent's Last Case*, one of the best detective novels in the language, seems destined to go down to posterity with Edward Lear and Lewis Carol, those immortal masters of nonsense, for he has originated a new and delightful verse form known as the "Clerihew" after his second initial.

With Mr. G. K. Chesterton, who has done some of his most whimsical and delightful sketches, as illustrations, Mr. Bentley's *Biography for Beginners* is worthy to rank with the immortal Alice in the golden realm of Nonsense. A sample of this delicious in-consequence of the Clerihew is the following:—

Said Sir Christopher Wren,  
"I'm expecting some men—  
If anyone calls—  
Tell 'em I'm designing St. Paul's."

And again:—

"The painter Van Eyck  
Was christened Jan—and not Mike  
The thought of this curious mistake  
Often kept him awake."

Clerihews are great fun, and now that Christmas parties are due will, I prophecy, be immensely popular.

I don't see why we shouldn't compose a few Free-thought Clerihews just to start the ball rolling.

Ready? Let's go. How about a spot of "Theology for Beginners?"

The Dean of St. Paul's,  
Very often calls  
The Pale Galilean,  
Plebeian.

General Booth,  
Had a very sweet tooth,  
His queer behaviour,  
Made him swallow his Saviour.

Mrs. Baker Eddy,  
Unlike Ethelred the Unready,  
Placed great reliance,  
On Christian Science!

Hilaire Belloc,  
Wanted to put back the clock,  
And substitute Mystery  
For History.

G.K.C.  
Wanted to see England free,  
So went home  
To Rome.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle  
Having shuffled this mortal coil  
Awaits with considerable tedium,  
A happy medium!

Bishop Barnes  
Can't swallow some Biblical yarns  
He thinks it absurd  
To call 'em God's word.

Mr. Hannen Swaffer  
Received a most generous offer  
Of God as a biscuit  
But he wouldn't risk it!

Said the Rev. Dean Inge,  
"To thy Cross I'll cling!"  
Then turned with a wink  
To the Street of Ink.

GWYN EVANS.

I have hope that society may be reformed when I see how much education may be reformed.—*Leibnitz*.

In an easy cause any man may be eloquent.—*Ovid*.



## The "Why?" of Ethics.

SECULARISM finds motives to righteousness in human nature. Since the evolution of morality has been traced by scientific thinkers the idea of our moral sense having had a supernatural origin has vanished into the limbo of superstitions. Our social sympathies are a natural growth, and may be indefinitely developed in the future by the same means that have developed them in the past. Morality and theology are essentially distinct. The ground and guarantee of morality are independent of any theological belief. When we are in earnest about the right we need no incitement from above. Morality has its natural ground in experience and reason, in the common nature and the common wants of mankind. Wherever sentient beings live together in a social state, simple or complex, laws of morality must arise, for they are simply the permanent conditions of social health; and even if men entertained no belief in any supernatural power, they would still recognize and obey the laws upon which the welfare, and indeed the very existence, of human society depends. "Even," said Martineau, "though we came out of nothing and returned to nothing, we should be subject to the claim of righteousness so long as we are what we are; morals have their own base, and are second to nothing." Emerson also confesses that, "Truth, frankness, courage, love, humility, and all the virtues, range themselves on the side of prudence, or the art of securing a present well-being."

Not only must all moral appeals be made, ultimately, to our human sympathies; it is also a fact that theological appeals are essentially not moral but immoral. The hope of heaven and the fear of hell are purely personal and selfish motives. They make men worse rather than better. They may secure a grudging compliance with prescribed rules, but they must depress instead of elevating character. By concentrating a man's attention upon himself, they develop and intensify his selfish propensities. Secularism appeals to no lust after posthumous rewards or dread of posthumous terrors, but to that fraternal feeling which is the vital essence of all morality and has prompted heroic self-sacrifice in all ages and climes. It removes causation from the next world to this. It teaches that the harvest of our sowing will be reaped here, and to the last grain eaten, by ourselves or others. Every act of our lives affects the whole subsequent history of our race. Our mental and moral life like our bodily lungs have their appropriate atmospheres, of which every thought, word, and act becomes a constituent atom. Incessantly around us goes on the conflict of good and evil, which a word, a gesture, a look of ours changes. We cannot tell how great may be the influence of the least of these, for in nature all things hang together, and the greatest effects may flow from causes that seem so slight and inconsiderable. And when we thoroughly lay this to heart, and reflect that no contrition or remorse can undo the past, or efface the slightest record from the everlasting Book of Fate, we shall be more strongly restrained from evil and impelled towards good than we ever could be by the expectation of future rewards or punishments.

There are those who cannot believe in any effective morality, and still less any devotion to disinterested aims, without the positive certainty of immoral life. Under a pretence of piety they cloak the most grovelling estimate of human nature, which, with all its faults, is immensely better than *their* conception of it. They declare that, without hopes and fears beyond the grave, the sanest philosophy of life would be, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

How gravely the great Spinoza satirises this "vulgar opinion" which enjoins a regulation of life according to the passions by those who have "persuaded themselves that the souls perish with the bodies, and that there is not a second life for *the miserable who have borne the crushing weight of piety*"; "a conduct," he adds, "as absurd, in my opinion, as that of a man who should fill his body with poisons and deadly food, for the fine reason that he has no hope to enjoy wholesome nourishment for all eternity; or who, seeing that the soul is not eternal or immortal, should renounce his reason, and wish to become insane; things so preposterous that they are scarcely worth mention."

Whether there be a future life or not—which no one can positively affirm, and no one can positively deny—the natural issues of human conduct are inevitable in this life. Secularism bids us be true to ourselves and our opportunities now. Let us realize as far as may be, by practical agencies, that Earthly Paradise where the flower and fruit of happiness shall bloom for the delight and sustenance of all. And let us reflect how much nearer realization that Paradise would be if a tenth of the time, the energy, the ability, the enthusiasm, and the wealth that have been devoted to making men fit candidates for heaven had been devoted to making them fit citizens of earth. The grosser evils of society would by this time only remain as traces of what once was, and a certain prospect of reasonable happiness and usefulness would be the heritage of every child born into the world.

There are others who deny that philosophy which ignores the Infinite can have any grand ideal capable of lifting us above the petty tumults and sordid passions of life, and fit to stand in rivalry with what is called religion. But surely the idea of service to the great Humanity, whose past and future are, to us at least, practically infinite, is a conception vast enough for our finite minds. Carlyle found that "the essence of all true religion," as he chose to term it, was "reverence for human worth." But reverence is not all; love and service are also elements. The instincts of Love, Reverence, and Service may be fully exercised and satisfied by devotion to a purely human ideal, without resort to unverifiable dogmas and inscrutable mysteries; and Secularism, which bids us think and act so that the great Human family may profit by our lives, which enjoins upon us to labour for human progress here on earth where effort may be effective and sacrifices must be real, is more profoundly noble than any supernatural creed, and holds the promise of a wider and loftier beneficence.

G. W. FOOTE.

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### Hush!

---

HUSH! for the moon, the lovely summer moon,  
Slowly her pure white brow reveals above  
The purple hills, while in melodious tune  
The nightingales flood all the dark with love!

Hush! for the night, the peaceful starry night,  
Gently her secret murmurs, murmurs low;  
Tree whispers tree, all bathed in silvery light,  
Glad memories of the sweet old Long Ago!

Hush! for your cheek is laid upon my hand,  
Softly your voice breathes in my listening ear—  
A night of dreams; and once again we stand  
In Paradise, while Love, the ever-new, draws near!

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

Onitsha, Nigeria.



## Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

### BIRTH CONTROL.

SIR,—It is always interesting when a number of people write on the same subject in a correspondence column, because points emerge out of the combination of opinions that are not contained in them severally. The Birth Control correspondence in your recent issues is a case in point. We have Dr. Marie Stopes inveighing against the destruction (she called it "murder") of the embryo at any stage of its development. Mrs. Gladys Evans feels that Dr. Stopes ought logically to extend her protection to the spermatozoon, herself appearing to take the view that the embryo should be liable to destruction, though she does not specify a period after which it ought to be immune. Mr. Kerr, however, comes to the rescue at this point, calling attention to the three months time limit, of which he seems to approve, adopted in Russia. Miss Stella Browne represents a transitional form between Mrs. Evans and Mr. Kerr, for she advocates a time limit without saying what it should be. The interesting thing to me is that these contributors speak with just that little touch of feeling which suggests that they consider the other person clearly in the wrong; but when you view their letters side by side, if anything is clear it is that we are dealing with the ticklish question at what stage of development we should consider the germ of a human being to have gathered around themselves the moral associations which dictate our feelings on the question of destruction; and on this head a man may be wrong, but not clearly so, for the problem is too full of fine distinctions, and the solution can at best be an arbitrary one.

Setting aside for the moment all considerations of the actual risks of abortion to the expectant mother, why not look at it this way? The sense of parental responsibility is unfortunately not a prominent feature of our life to-day, particularly among the poorer classes where children are many and the means of educating them few. Anything that tends to lessen this feeling still more is bad. That the whole problem is one of degree I freely admit, but I strongly suggest that we should lean to that side which tends to foster in people the idea that procreation is a grave and responsible matter. With the release of the sperm you have not in any sense procreated, nor with the discharge of the ovum. Each happens normally without the contact of the sexes at all. But with the fusion of the two in the zygote the thing is done and you have the germ of your child. If you say I am arguing towards the region of sentiment, I ask, "Does not the problem of birth control arise out of questions of sentiment on the social side, and is it not the very fact of sentiment that makes human life worth living?" If the vague beginnings of parental feeling are to be injured by legislative example in the case of a three months embryo, why not in the case of a six months foetus? And if this, is there so very much difference between a seven months child inside the uterus and outside? Don't you see? Contraception is going to enhance parental responsibility because it implies that people are thinking twice before procreating. But carry the thing far enough in the wrong direction and you have begun to lose the clear dividing line between preventing offspring and destroying it.

MEDICUS.

### BIRTH CONTROL AND PUBLIC OPINION.

SIR,—I observe in the correspondence on the above subject, arising out of Dr. Marie Stopes's letter, that a minor, yet somewhat important point, appears to have been overlooked. I refer to the stress laid on the legality or otherwise of certain forms of control by Dr. Stopes. If it does nothing else, it illustrates the advance since the time of Bradlaugh and warns Freethinkers that some form of control over the legislative machinery is imperative. It is hardly necessary to remind Dr. Stopes that slavery was legal until 1833, and that employment of tender children in factories was legal until the same year. Favourable legal diction does not make any prac-

tice right; nor the contrary, wrong. Were legal opinion within reasonable distance of educated opinion it would be unnecessary to describe the law as "a hass," and it has long been recognized that the law is one of two facets of human activity which resembles the tortoise in movement, and the ostrich in difficulty. It is inevitable that when law is intelligently conceived and administered, that abortion either by instrumental interference or use of emmenagogues will be legal.

JOHN McMILLAN.

### A RATIONALIST SABBATH.

SIR,—Mr. Boyd Freeman's plea for a "Rationalist Sabbath" suggests that he is very eager to find some substitute for the Christian Sabbath, to fill the gap left after the latter "horror-day" has been fittingly buried along with various other odds and ends of Christian rubbish.

Many of us would, I think, like to see an increased social life among Freethinkers, and we hope that it will develop as the numbers of Freethinkers grows larger: at present we are scattered in the fashion of outpost sentries with very little communication established. But surely it is not necessary to perpetuate the present English Sunday under another name to achieve that result: and if the English Sunday, with its very limited possibilities for choice of pleasures, is to continue indefinitely in the future, let us retain its present name.

Judging from his contemptuous references to "pleasure," I gather that Mr. Freeman has misunderstood the Freethinker's demand for Sunday to be treated exactly as any other day. We do not suggest that attendance at football matches, cinemas and theatres is the best method of spending leisure: in our fight against the Sunday taboo, we are not concerned with that question, but we are concerned with the liberty of people to choose what form of pleasure they shall enjoy. At present, in the provinces at any rate, if one does not go to church, there is very little left but to spend Sunday in the way Mr. Freeman likes, that is in quiet (I feel inclined to add "and prayer"). Well, the choice between quiet in church and quiet out of church may represent infinite variety to some people, but the essence of the Freethinker's case is that there are other opinions on how to spend Sunday, and the holders of these other ideas are just as much entitled to their way of life as are the "quietists," but in the present scheme their wishes are completely disregarded.

"Variety is the spice of life." Agreed, Mr. Freeman, but let each individual, to the best of his ability, decide what variety he desires.

The Freethinker does not state that the abolition of the Lord's Day Observance would transform the population into Freethinkers, but he does state most emphatically that freedom to spend Sunday as one likes would do much to wean people from church going.

But the main point of the Freethinker's fight for a secular Sunday lies not in its value as a manufacturing process of Freethinkers, but in its increase of freedom from the religious control of social life.

S. R. A. READY.

### GENERAL IDEAS AND BIOLOGY.

SIR,—The letter of Vice-Admiral Beadnell, in the *Freethinker* of December 7, was interesting to me for many reasons, but he is wrong in supposing that in the preparation of my *Principles of Psychology* I neglected to take into account all the aid that the study of biology might afford me. I dislike relying on authority or citation of academic distinctions, but since the question has been raised I may say that at one time I was greatly attracted to biology and physiology, mainly on account of their bearing on psychology, and I devoted some years to the study of these subjects, and also to the developments of morbid psychology; and therefore my remark was not merely an off-hand judgment, it arose from long consideration of the illumination afforded by these studies to the problems of psychology.

The central problem of psychology, the solution of which gives the key to the whole subject may be stated thus: Find all the elemental forms, or, as I have called



them, the Fundamental Processes of the Mind, such that by the various syntheses of these the whole scope of thought, from the simplest to the most complex, maybe built up; show by rigorous demonstration that these Fundamental Processes are complete and not redundant, or as we say in mathematical language, necessary and sufficient; show how from this basis the science can be developed—again by rigorous, cogent arguments—so as to cover the entire field; and finally use the principles so obtained in such a manner that they may be available in the solution of the various subsidiary problems, some of them of age-long respectability, that arise in the sphere of philosophy.

To gain light on these matters, I set out on a course of study involving not only biology and physiology but experimental psychology, and that also which is involved in the ascertainment of the methods of procedure and technique in the physical, as well as the mental and biological sciences. Certain of my experiments occupied a period of four years.

I found that physiological psychology, as, for example, that of Wundt, was mainly a psychology such as one studies from the ordinary text books, followed by a psychology, conceived and worked out with no close reference to the preceding physiology; it was not physiological psychology, but physiology and psychology. The study of biology is certainly highly informative, and it helps to prevent unbalanced judgments in matter of ethics; but it helps only indirectly, and not essentially, in the elucidation of the principles of psychology.

Maudsley, whom I met, once berated me soundly for not confining myself entirely to biology, including physiology, as he conceived it; I listened with deep attention, and with due respect for his own great work; but I was also completely assured that had I followed his advice I would have failed lamentably in the purpose I had set myself to achieve.

Since then I have had occasion to observe that great biologists and physiologists have at times formed two camps of opinion in regard to the interpretation of data which formed common ground to both. The reason was that their psychology was hopelessly inadequate.

One case in particular may be cited. For generations physiologists have taught the doctrine that speech is located in Broca's convolution—the third convolution of the left frontal to be. I concluded from my established principles, that it could not be properly stated categorically that Broca was right or wrong, for the whole doctrine rests on a misconception of localization and a failure to understand all the implications of speech. This conclusion was afterwards supported by the researches of Marie, and in another direction by Monakow, and that already shows that on the same data physiologists of the highest eminence come to different theories. As a matter of fact none of them—in default of a sufficient study of psychology—gave clear explanations of their theories.

The only biologists I have met who seemed capable of grasping the import of the central problem, as I have stated it, were Sir Ray Lankester, a great man, and Yves Delage, a greater, because more subtle in intellect and more fertile in original work. They were the only two from whom I received encouragement.

I write in a somewhat personal way, partly because I am replying to a criticism directed at me personally; but on that point I always regard the diffident modesty, which makes a man appear to underrate his own work, as a kind of invented vanity. I desire to look at these matters with as complete an objectivity as I can attain.

I appreciate the standpoint of our good friend Beadnell, and for that reason I will deal later with Sir Arthur Keith.

ARTHUR LYNCH.

### Society News.

THE vote of thanks accorded unanimously to Mr. F. P. Corrigan by the audience last Sunday night was well deserved. His lecture "Rome and Reason" held their rapt attention for over an hour, followed by many questions, and intelligent discussion. We trust he will shortly be with us again. This Sunday, December 21, Mr. A. D. McLaren will speak, and his subject is "Why Believe in God."—A.J.M.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON.

#### OUTDOOR.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrolde Road, North End Road, opposite Walham Green Church): Every Saturday at 7.30.—Various speakers.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine; 3.30, Messrs. A. D. McLaren and B. A. Le Maine; Every Wednesday at 7.30, Messrs. C. E. Wood and C. Tuson; every Friday at 7.30, Messrs. A. D. McLaren and B. A. Le Maine. Current *Freethinkers* can be obtained opposite the Park Gates, on the corner of Edgware Road, during and after the meetings.

#### INDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Circle House, Great Alie Street, Aldgate, E.1): 8.0, Mr. F. Ridley—"Religion and the Materialist Conception of History."

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (London Co-operative Society's Hall, 249 Dawes Road, Fulham): 7.30, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"Why Believe in God?" No. 11 bus to door.

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8, near Marlborough Road Station): 11.15, Mr. R. Dimsdale Stocker—Mr. Bertrand Russell's "Conquest of Happiness."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Public Hall, Clapham Road): 7.15, Mr. L. Ebury—"Birth Control no Remedy for Poverty."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Mr. R. Dimsdale Stocker—"Our Minds in Sleep."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Mr. S. K. Ratcliffe—"A Year of Destiny."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 7.30, Mr. W. P. Campbell-Iverden—"Science versus Belief."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.7, facing The Brecknock): 7.30, Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe—"Character & Circumstances." On January 1, at "City of London," 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.7. Social and Dance, New Year Carnival, 8.0 to 11.30. Admission free, silver collection.

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

ACCRINGTON (King's Hall, Accrington): 7.30., Debate. "That Christianity has done more for England than Secularism." *Affir.*: Rev. Mr. Whittam. *Neg.*: Mr. J. Clayton, N.E.S.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Cafe, Godwin Street): 7.30, Mr. F. J. Corina—"The Menace of the Church."

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S. (Club Rooms, Front Street): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton—A Lecture.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"Christmas." Questions and Discussion. All welcome.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.—City (Albion Street) Hall. 6.30, a Lecture. Questions and Discussion. Silver collection.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, 41 Islington, Liverpool—entrance Christian Street): Sunday, December 21, at 7.0, Mr. S. Wollen (Liverpool), "A Ghost and His Baby" (A Christmas Story). Current *Freethinkers* and copies of Mr. Cohen's new book will be on sale. On Thursday, December 18, at 8.45 p.m., Mr. J. V. Shortt will speak on "The Philosophy of Secularism" at a meeting of the Bootle I.L.P., at 251 Stanley Road, Bootle. The meeting will be open to the public. *Freethinkers* will be on sale outside after the meeting.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. J. K. Kelly—"Some Essentials for Democracy."

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. J. C. Keast will lecture in the Bigg Market, at 7.30. Subject—"The Decline of Christianity." Literature will be on sale.

PAISLEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Baker's Hall, Forbes Place): 7.0, Mr. C. M. Wilson—"Spiritism."



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