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

Views and Opinions.

Exploiting Science.

WHEN I left for Nottingham the other Sunday I found a lady sitting on the opposite seat in the train reading Professor Jean's *Mysterious Universe*. She began to read steadily enough, but I noted that after some time she was turning the pages as though in search of something not easily discoverable. So I ventured on a conversation. "That is an interesting book," I remarked. "Ye-es," came the hesitating reply; "I bought it because I saw so much about it in the papers, and thought I would like to read it." "Does it come up to expectations?" was my next query. "Well, yes," came the reply, still rather hesitatingly, "but it is not quite the book I imagined it would be." A little judicious conversation brought out what I expected. The lady had been induced by the press talk, as I imagine a large proportion of the purchasers, male and female have been, to think of the book as a mixture of a defence of religion and treatise on magic. For the book has been selling, so several booksellers have told me, as though it were a novel that had been branded as "indecent," and it is impossible to think of the British public being so interested in science as to rush for the work purely on account of its scientific interest. It would indeed be interesting to compare the sales of a much better written and more informative book for the general reader, *The Mechanism of Nature*, by Professor Andrade, published a few months ago, with that of *The Mysterious Universe*. Professor's Andrade's book is more sanely written, more coherent, and very much more useful for those who wish to obtain a sketch of what the world looks like to the modern physicist. But I question if it has had a third of the sales of Sir James Jean's book.

Problem or Mystery.

The very title of Professor Jean's book was almost a stroke of genius—and it was quite non-scientific. One cannot imagine Professor Jeans reading a paper before a scientific assembly on "The Mysteries of the Atom," but a treatise that aims at presenting some sort of an apology for religion is on a different level. The very words "mysterious" and "mystery" have so great a religious flavour that their use inclines the thoughts of most people heavenward, and away from everything that is of the slightest earthly use. "Mysteries" have always been associated with religion, and they have always implied either something that was completely and everlastingly unexplainable, or a secret knowledge that was only to be gained through initiation into some mystical religious sect, or information given directly from the God. It has much the same significance even to-day—something that is unexplainable, or associated with the weird and the non-understandable. That is why Professor Jeans, while he would not talk about "mysteries" to a scientific assembly on a question of science, does unconsciously drop into this nebulous narcotising phrase when he is talking about religion and science to a non-scientific audience.

For there are no mysteries in science, there are only problems. The universe is not a mystery, it is a problem, and science is concerned with problems only. Some of these problems are, at present, unanswerable, it is just possible that some may never be answered, but we do not call even an unanswerable problem a mystery, we call it simply insoluble. But to call a thing a problem, whether unanswered or unanswerable, is to make an appeal to the intellect; to call it a mystery is an appeal to ignorance and religion. Sir James Jeans, on scientific problems, deserves careful and respectful attention. Sir James Jeans on "mysteries" deserves the same degree of respect and attention that is the due of the Bishop of London. Mystery implies ignorance, irremovable ignorance, and it appeals to that ignorance which is an essential element in all religion.

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Holy Asinity.

The editor of the *Evening Standard*, following the articles on religion and science, which we noted a few weeks ago, congratulated his readers on the assumed fact that the sense of certainty which marked the great men of the Victorian era had been replaced by a state of mind in which:—

the profoundest thinkers are not ashamed to wonder aloud whether man's reason is capable of ever understanding the nature of the universe. The scientist who thought that everything could in the end be explained by what may be called, in a restricted sense, natural causes, has disappeared. The modern scientist knows how much there is which he not only



cannot explain at present, but which there seems no rational hope of his ever being able to explain.

I cannot altogether blame a journalist in one of the "stunt" dailies writing in this way. He must write to tickle the ears of the groundlings, and whether he understands what he is writing about is of no consequence whatever. But it is depressing to find this kind of thing encouraged by the incautious utterances of scientific men who have been harping on the ignorance of science when they might more usefully have dwelt upon its triumphs and its advances.

But one must point out that it is simply not true that modern scientists as a body have come back to the attenuated theology of an Eddington or a Jeans, or the vacuous religion of a Julian Huxley. Some have distinctly repudiated such opinions, although the majority remain silent. And as the world goes their silence may safely be attributed either to the fact that they are not interested in theology, that religious belief has no bearing on their work, or that they do not care to risk the social disapproval that follows drastic criticism of religious beliefs. There are, of course, a few survivals in the world of science who still swear by the science of the Bible—provided they are permitted to use their own interpretation of what the Bible teaches. All that one can say about them is that it is as difficult to keep folly out of the scientific laboratory as it is to absolutely exclude common sense from a church.

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#### Science and Scientists.

There is, however, some distinction between scientific men and science. Science is impersonal; it belongs to no man and it is independent of any particular man. There may be a theory of Professor Eddington on astro-physics, or of Professor Huxley on biology, but so far as these opinions are peculiarly their own they form no part of science, they are the opinions of scientific men and may be right or wrong. And so soon as they become part of science they lose their personal character. They are no more the opinions of Professor Blank than they are the opinions of Bill Jones the dustman. They form part of that mass of verifiable, calculable knowledge which the world calls science. It is, of course, always good to know what a scientific man thinks, but his opinion carries no greater warranty than that of his personality. It is, therefore, one thing to say that certain scientific men have made overtures to religion; it is quite another thing to say that science is becoming religious. It is one thing to say that our local sanitary inspector believes in Old Moore's Almanac. It is another proposition to say that sanitary science is learning to depend on Old Moore.

Another thing worth noting is this. The overtures to religion made by Eddington and Jeans move along the line of the inadequacy of science. I have given reasons elsewhere—I might almost say given proofs—for believing this statement to be wildly untrue. In any case the argument is suicidal. If it be true that there are two worlds, one to be given over to science, the other to religion, how can science be any authority on that other world? It cannot be that this region is at the same time beyond science because science can tell us nothing about it, and within the field of science to the extent that science can tell us that it is mind, or God, or something of which we can make a religion. If, on the other hand, science can tell us anything at all of this other world, then it must so far fall within the scope of science and be subject to scientific methods and standards.

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#### God as a Vacuum.

The joke of it all is that when these men give us in

the name of science what they call religion, or God, it amounts to—just nothing. They call it a religion because they don't know what it is. They call it God because, as Bradley says, they don't know what the devil it is or what the deuce it does. The two Professors with whom we have been dealing are both careful to state that their equivalent for God is introduced only because at the moment either our scientific knowledge or our scientific method breaks down at a particular point. Both admit that in the light of fuller knowledge this assumed impotence of science may turn out to be a delusion. The editor of the *Standard*, seeks some consolation for his readers by reminding them that "the Agnostic of yesterday who defiantly said he didn't see any reason why there should be a God is replaced by the Agnostic of to-day (who) humbly proclaims that he can see no reason why there should not be a God." That is not surprising, even if true, for the man whose thought is no clearer than to make the first statement does not need a much greater degree of muddle to advance to the second. If I sit shivering in one room saying to myself, there is no reason why there should be a ghost in the next room I may easily develop to the point of saying there is no reason why there should not be one there. The truth is that this brand of shivering Agnostic never rises to the real issue. The man who has really outgrown religion never goes back to it, and never regrets having grown beyond it. It is just probable that the editor of the *Standard* knows this as well as I do, but he must keep up the pretence of belief in the value of religion so long as newspapers are what they are to-day—dependent upon two classes of readers—one enlightened without speaking, the other speaking without being enlightened. The humour of the situation is that there really is a large public for the newspaper that will be the first to throw open its columns to a genuine discussion of religion. If this public is discovered by all the papers at the same time none will gain the technical advantage of being first in the field.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### A Festival of Falsehood.

"Ye must have gods, the friends of men,  
Merciful gods, compassionate.  
And these shall answer you again,  
Will ye beat always at the gate,  
Ye fools of fate."—*Swinburne*.

THERE is a legend as old as any in the Christian Church, which has put a premium upon gloom and has made it part and parcel of the orthodox superstition. It is that the Second Person of the Trinity was never seen to smile, but often to weep. This does not concern Freethinkers overmuch, for those jocose sinners do not think it likely that the mythical "Man of Sorrows" would, as Shakespeare says, "laugh mortal." Man is, however, a laughing animal, and in this he is superior, if in nothing else. To be ashamed of laughter, to hold back mirth and merriment, to live in gloom and seriousness, may suit the ascetics and fanatics, but is unworthy of men, who love sunshine and the song of children, and the open breezy day, rather than the spectral quiet and gloom of the cloister.

Hence the convivial nature of Christmas Day, alleged to be the birthday of Christ, has frequently been noted to the discomforture of theologians, who object to all scientific explanations of Christianity. "God's Birthday" is an annual orgy of gluttony and godliness, and the reason for this merry birthday of the Man of Sorrows is an excellent piece of Christian



evidence. It plucks the heart out of the orthodox superstition, and exposes the Pagan origins of the national faith.

Why a god, who is described as eternal, should have a birthday, is a matter that Christians have never settled satisfactorily. Non-Christians regard Christ as a purely legendary character, like all the other saviours and sun-gods of antiquity, who were generally born miraculously of virgin mothers, and whose careers, like that of Jesus, were full of the most extraordinary happenings. Whether there was a man called Jesus, who lived and taught in Galilee, is a matter of small importance. Christians worship the legendary figure in the four "Gospels," and not a Syrian carpenter, and have done so for many centuries.

Christmas Day was not kept regularly as a holiday until many generations after the alleged birth of Christ. When first observed it was kept on varying dates. The precise time of Jesus's birth, like that of Jeames de la Pluche, was "wropt in mystery," but it was not in December, even according to the gospel narratives. Why, then, do Christians observe Christmas Day on December 25, and why is the birthday of the ascetic Nazarene a veritable carnival of conviviality?

Like all human institutions, the Christian Churches and their feast-days have had to contend in open warfare for survival. The festivals of Pagan Rome were numerous, and it was in competition with the feast of the Saturnalia, one of the principal Roman festivals, that Christmas Day came to be instituted by the Christians, and the date fixed as December 25. The anniversary of Saturn was an old-fashioned institution, and the propensity of converts from Paganism to cling to custom proved invincible. If the apostates were to be retained in the folds of the new religion, it was imperative for the Christian ecclesiastics to incorporate the old under the mask of the new.

This struggle for survival has also incorporated other Pagan features. In the far-off centuries, white-robed Druid priests cut the sacred mistletoe with a golden sickle, and chanted their hymns to the frosty air. These features were absorbed also, and the mistletoe and the carol-singing still play their minor, if amusing, parts in the divine comedy of the Christmas celebration.

The clergy have always had a very keen instinct for proselytising. In the past the Christian priests sought for adherents by increasing the festal days, and they crushed opposition by bribing the weak and murdering the strong. In the twentieth century the sacred bagmen of orthodoxy are still at the same old game. They are cajoling apostates all over the Non-Christian world by means of medical missionaries and schools. Nearer home they have instituted Pleasant Sunday Afternoons in the place of painful Sabbaths, and by hypocritically identifying themselves with social measures likely to appeal to the working classes.

Nor is this all, for the bitterest irony is everywhere interwoven in this hypocritical celebration of a man-god who never lived. Professing to worship a carpenter-god, who had not where to lay his head, the Church of England is the wealthiest of our religious organizations. It is one of the largest property owners and drawers of royalties in the country. Its bishops live in palaces, and have seats in the House of Lords. "Peace and goodwill among men," proclaim their thousands of priests, who also bless regimental colours, and christen battleships in the name of the Prince of Peace and an apostle of non-resistance.

To such a pass, after so many centuries of the

Christian Superstition, has this country come. It reads like the bitterest mockery. The Christmas festival itself, with all its hypocritical professions and its legendary associations, is largely pretence and make-believe. It is the paradox of paradoxes that the woeful welter of unemployment and widespread industrial depression is going on in almost every corner of a world that professes to worship a god who answers prayer. Christmas, so far as the Christian Churches are concerned, is an organized hypocrisy, a fitting celebration of an event that never happened.

This annual festival has Druidic, Pagan, Roman, and Christian associations. It will continue to be observed, not because it is temporarily associated with a particular faith, but because it affords a holiday refuge from the haste and worry of the work-a-day world.

MIMNERMUS.

### Santayana: Modern Materialist.

[In exhibiting the professional support which is accumulating—not that it is essentially needed—for the position of modern Materialism as outlined in *Materialism Re-stated*, we now take another mental trip across the herring-pond and consider that sometime Professor of Harvard, George Santayana. Prof. Santayana has just completed his *Realms of Being*; i. *Realm of Essence* (1929) and ii. *Realm of Matter* (1930) thereby amplifying the standpoint taken up seven years ago in *Scepticism and Animal Faith*. Quotations used are taken from these works.]

METAPHYSICS, said Bradley, is the finding of bad reasons for what we believe on instinct.

There is some truth in it. Our workaday opinions may be well grounded, but ill expressed. Johnson kicked a stone, and raised a laugh. Every philosopher begun in the same crude realism. The pen with which he wrote existed—exactly as he saw it.

In the stream of writers who followed Descartes the pendulum swung to the opposite extreme, and in Fichte, Hegel, etc., the stage was reached where the kicked stone was a mere mental projection. But there have been writers who, adopting a sane middle course, have taken sensation as the registered effect of an external existence which is inferred, and at the same time posited in a region outside investigation.

Such was the position taken up in *Materialism Re-stated*, and such is the position taken by Santayana. In *Materialism Re-stated* the inference landed the author in a region where agnosticism was legitimate. The name given was matter, though it might as well be "X," and if a better name was forthcoming it was left to Science.

So also with Santayana. "I am," he says, "a decided Materialist. I don't know what matter is in itself. I wait for the men of science to tell me what matter is. But whatever matter may be, I call it matter boldly, as I call my acquaintances Smith and Jones without knowing their secrets," and "if belief in hidden parts and movements in nature be metaphysics, then the kitchen maid is a metaphysician when she peels a potato."

The inference of X is a reasonable one. But it is more than that. It is compulsory, fundamental, inescapable. It is not born of a profound and prolonged philosophical meditation. Such a process is more likely to remove it. It comes in infancy—exactly how we leave to psychologists (see *e.g.*, *Psychology, A New System*, p 553 et seq. for an original form of treatment, by Arthur Lynch). Lotze regarded the whole of philosophy as "the attempt to justify scientifically a fundamental view of things which has been adopted in early life.

It would be interesting to speculate on the effect it



would have if our philosophers would congregate occasionally and vociferate with emphasis "matter exists," leaving it to science to say how we are to think about it, and then at every new turn in their system conscientiously retrace their steps in that direction.

Santayana meets the point, aptly we suggest, with his "animal faith." Science, he asserts, can give us only symbols (compare Eddington)—"space," "gravitation," etc. But action (*i.e.*, human behaviour) presupposes a world of connected events, a flux of existence which must be continuous and measurable, otherwise action in it could not be prosperous, or indeed consecutive. This field is appreciated only by "animal faith." It is given different names—"world of events," "substance," "the only object posited by animal faith is matter," and so the field of action is the realm of matter. "Matter is properly a name for the substance of the natural world, whatever that substance may be." In readiness for action, the faith thereby involved posits a field existing substantially for science to describe, and scientific knowledge will be just this "faith meditated by symbols."

Matter, moreover, is his principle of existence, and is attributed to a flux of events which can never be the data of intuition [*i.e.*, here used as sense-data], but "only objects of a belief which men and animals, caught in that flux themselves, hazard instinctively."

"The postulate of substance—the assumption that there are things and events prior to the discovery of them, and independent of this discovery—underlies all natural knowledge." Philosophy must assume this existing matter, and need not trouble even to justify it, but must "carry it out consistently and honestly so as to arrive, if possible, at a conception of nature by which the faith involved in action may be enlightened and guided." Native to this primary stuff is "a blind impulse and need to shift," and matter is by definition the "principle of all motions."

It was shown in *Materialism Re-stated* that "in being driven back to ultimate ignorance" of what matter is in itself we are confronted with a field, "in which all kinds of useless and unnecessary fancies may disport themselves."

Santayana is equally unattracted by them. He deems the mass of British and German philosophy as so much mere literature, with the universe a novel and the ego its hero. "The spirits posited by Berkeley, Malebranche and Leibnitz," for instance, "are simply mythological names for certain operations of matter poetically apprehended," and "God is such a mythological name for the universal power and operation of matter," while Idealism has that "covert reliance on matter by which all Idealisms subsist"—a latent Materialism, as it were. Nor will he flirt with any kind of teleology, in one form, another "poetic synonym for the actual fertility of matter." "Mechanism is the alternative to chaos." Nature is "a web of adaptations, and teleology, if it be a name for them, is a patent and prevalent fact of nature."

He finds "no vital analogy between the cosmos and the human organism," and sees "no need to attribute animation to substance [this, indeed, leaves little or no room for emergence]. But "substance . . . sometimes takes the form of animals in whom there are feelings, images and thoughts," immaterial manifestations of substance. "Mind is bred in the material movements to which it refers" and which control it, and "all origins lie in the realm of matter, even "when the being that is so generated is immaterial, because this creation or intrusion of the immaterial follows on material occasions and at the promptings of circumstance." Santayana is apparently not averse to using the term spirit for mind in the abstract, and Psyche for the concrete, meaning by it "a

habit established in matter," to be investigated, for scientific purposes, behavioristically. "'I' am a substance in flux," whose organs are material structures. "I" am "a system relatively complete and self-centred." Psychology reports certain complications in the realm of matter, giving spiritual fertility, and spirit is "the natural light by which existence, in its waking moments, understands itself." Here is a region in which final causes [*i.e.*, human purposes] may operate, but they are nothing more than "moral perspectives, superposed on natural causation," in which they are rooted. "Purposes presuppose organisms."

"Respect for matter," he concludes, "is the beginning of wisdom."

This substance, or matter, apprehended only by the "animal faith," is of course, never intuited [*i.e.*, sensed] what is intuited is an essence, and here we come to a distinguishing feature of Santayana's philosophy, namely, a consideration of the whole realm of essence, into which it is not opportune here to enter, save in a general way.

Nothing given, he says, exists as it is given. Anything existent [matter; noumenon] is more than the given description of it [essence; form]. Substance, or matter, in endlessly passing from one form to another (in its "blind impulse and need to shift"), is fertile in appearance, and "that which appears will be an essence." Essence is nothing if hypostatized; "consciousness," though materially conditioned, will be spiritual in essence; unlike, say, "cathedral." Unembodied essences (*e.g.*, moral principles) may appear to Spirit.

It is only by movements of matter that essences are made relevant. "Two natural conditions, organ and stimulus, must come together like flint and steel, before the spark of experience will fly." Thus a body reacting on its environment kindles intuitions which are "light of awareness lending actuality to some given essence," which in being thus realized—exemplified, as it were, by its reduplication in substance—is rendered significant, and acquires natural relations. That is, it passes from the bare realm of essence into actual existence, and, inasmuch as substance can only exist as essence—whether or not its essence is actualized by appearance to Spirit—"existence itself is a momentary victory of essence." It is from essence that it borrows its individuality. In emergence the essence of the whole is not that of its parts. An arisen "new" has to assume an essence not that of its conditions, and so "a pure pain may result from an elaborate disorder."

As for essence "in itself," it is of course non-existent. "That which without existing is contemporary with all times" includes the whole realm of essence. Essence then, is "the condition for the existence of facts," an "impalpable, infinite, unwritten catalogue," an "infinite field of selection," and "an indelible background to all transitory facts," indifferent to being discovered, and non-relevant save where "by spirit essences are transposed into appearances." "Substance is the speaker and substance is the theme; intuition is only the act of speaking, and the given essence is the audible word."

"Those who reject essences as terms," he asserts, "swallow them as myths." Overlooked in science, he believes them to intervene and cause illusion. The scientist, nay, anyone, is "assured of nothing save the character of some given essence"; the rest is "arbitrary belief added by the animal impulse."

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Lying at the core of Santayana's philosophy is the "animal faith" in matter; and this, as we see it, is the most fruitful result of that method of investigation



begun years ago by William James, since whom no American philosopher has been quite able or willing to shake off the claims of Pragmatism. In Satayana's conception and presentation of animal faith—though it was dimly foreshadowed in Bacon, Hume and Reid, we discern the most valuable hypothesis ever given to the world by American philosophy.

G. H. TAYLOR.

### The Life and Times of Savonarola.

IN the Rome of the Renaissance, the cynical disregard of the Papal Court to the claims of common morality exercised a baneful influence on Italian life. The evil example of the clergy furnished a plausible excuse for every form of vice. Moreover, the doctrine founded on Holy Scripture that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just men that need no repentance reconciled the wicked to the reflection that if they made atonement to the Church at the eleventh hour all would be well in the world to come.

A profound thinker, long vilified and misconceived, Machiavelli bluntly accused the Catholic hierarchy of treason to the City States of Italy. He compared the lofty pretensions of the Papacy with its shameful performances, and deplored the weakness imposed upon the Peninsula by a Papal policy that deliberately sustained disunity. While not powerful enough to subject the whole of Italy to its temporal dominion, the Church when in peril of losing its worldly wealth, never for an instant hesitated to entice alien princes to invade and devastate the land. "In this way," asserts Machiavelli, "the Pontiffs at one time by love of their religion, at other times for the furtherance of their ambitious schemes, have never ceased to sow the seeds of disturbance, and to call foreigners into Italy, spreading wars, making and unmaking princes, and preventing strong potentates from holding the province they were too feeble to rule."

Another celebrated contemporary observer, Guicciardini declares that: "It would be impossible to speak so ill of the Roman Church, but that more abuse would not be merited, seeing it is an infamy, an example of all the shames and scandals of the world." Yet, century after century, the Popes, despite all the misery they inflicted on their distracted country, stood unharmed, and actually increased their power. At its very source the well of life was poisoned by clerical and political corruption, and many were the able men who succumbed to temptation. But there remains sound reason for concluding that the heart of the people was largely unaffected by the depravity of the upper classes of society. The ideals portrayed in many of the artistic productions of the period certainly indicate this. Nor was the voice of the reformer silent, fantastic as were several manifestations of the revivalists' zeal.

In her splendid historical novel, George Eliot has depicted Florence at this time. The characters of *Romola* include Tito Melema, an alien adventurer domiciled in Italy, and a matchless scoundrel of true Renaissance type. But most of the other characters in this masterpiece are excellent specimens of humanity. *Romola*, herself is a noble figure, a true descendant of the chaste matrons of Pagan Rome. Savonarola, despite his all too-human frailties is animated both by ethical and emotional fervour.

Arnold of Brescia and others protested against the turpitude of their age. In stately Florence grand Italian types such as Lorenzo the Magnificent, and

that marvellous many-sided intellect, Leonardo da Vinci, were two only, among many. A long list of illustrious Florentines could be compiled whose fame is immortal.

Jerome or Girolamo Savonarola, like the German Luther, was a monkish reformer. But while Luther was prepared to destroy the Papacy, Savonarola remained in mental bondage to the past. The Florentine prophet scowled upon the classical revival in Italy, and said that an old woman had more saving grace than Plato. Savonarola desired to restore and preserve the austere simplicity of an ideal monastic life. He was oblivious to the last towards the vast intellectual revolution necessitated by the studies, discoveries, and inventions of the times. Yet, beneath the shining surface of a prosperous and, for the moment, peaceful period he discerned more clearly than any of his contemporaries the rapid approach of calamity and ruin. Unless the Papacy underwent purification, and the lives of the despots were better ordered, God's suspended anger would descend upon the people. And, as the tragic fate of Florence proved, this Puritan prophet did not prophesy falsely.

Savonarola was born at Ferrara in 1452. Of noble parentage he was intended for the post of court physician. But he turned aside from social attractions and spent his boyish days in meditation and prayer. This intensified his naturally melancholy temperament. Aristotle, as interpreted by the pious, and Aquinas became his trusted guides. The light of humanism was hidden from his eyes. A fifteenth century Newman, he was shrouded in a sense of sin. To the supreme disappointment of his parents who anticipated a splendid court career for their son, Girolamo departed in secret to Bologna, and was there received into the Dominican Order. As a friar, he meditated on an imaginary past to him distinguished by its saintliness, learning, chastity and freedom from fleshly lusts. The present had declined sadly from its earlier estate. To the young Dominican, departed days possessed a glory from their being far.

Savonarola's maiden speeches in Ferrara and Florence made no impression. As yet a novice, his unprepossessing appearance, his shrill tones and dry-as-dust scholastic matter scattered his audiences. He had yet to develop those oratorical powers, reinforced by passion and invective, which later made his name a household word throughout Italy.

Lorenzo the Magnificent, the reigning prince of Florence, was a munificent patron of the arts and artists, the libraries and scholars who dwelt in his peerless city. This liberality was intensely distasteful to the austere Savonarola whose censorious sermons so far passed unheeded with cultured society in Florence.

Perched on a hill top, a tiny town called San Geminiana, standing between Florence and Siena, was the scene of Savonarola's first successful preaching. But his full powers of utterance were not displayed until at the age of thirty-four he called the people of Brescia to repentance with passionate outpourings from the Bible. His fervid appeals thrilled his audiences and his fiery denunciations filled them with mysterious dread. Convinced himself of the certainty of his predictions of coming disaster, his emotional eloquence convinced his listeners. As his congregations increased, he cast aside all restraint, took every advantage of crowd psychology, and thus commanded their tears and terrified assent.

Lorenzo recalled the loquacious preacher to Florence. But his pulpit prophecies proved unpleasant, for the impolitic monk predicted the advent of a foreign army, the fall of Lorenzo, and the Pope's



peril. Lorenzo attempted to conciliate the now haughty preacher, but with small success. Even when Lorenzo was on his death-bed Savonarola is said to have refused him absolution.

In the turmoil that accompanied the expulsion of the Medici the monk played a prominent part. Placing himself at the head of the populace he demanded the restoration of liberty to Florence. The French invaders came and went. Two of the prophecies had been fulfilled, and Savonarola was venerated as the messenger of God. He was acclaimed dictator, and the motley multitude consigned its pomps and vanities to the flames. Cards and dice were deemed unchristian, and the triumph of the Puritans appeared complete.

Savonarola assailed the Pope with increasing virulence, and at last Florence was placed under interdict. The City's commerce suffered severely. No prayers were offered for the dead. Traditional fear of Papal excommunication, and dissatisfaction with monkish rule, combined with the rallying adherents of the old order in securing the arrest of Savonarola and the overthrow of his dictatorship. Then all his supporters forsook him and fled.

In the plenitude of his power Savonarola had several times offered to vindicate his supernatural claims by the ordeal of fire. A Franciscan friar now offered to accompany his Dominican brother to the fire as a test of the latter's genuineness. The furnace blazed, but neither monk entered it. The populace spent many weary hours in waiting for the Friar's triumphant ordeal. Heavy rain descended, and dispersed the disappointed multitude. The once popular idol had fallen, never to rise again.

The trial, torture, and execution of Savonarola followed. How much he endured on the rack, and what confessions he made in his agonized delirium will never be known. At last, on a morning in May, 1498, he was conducted in company with two of his fellow friars to a stage erected in the Piazza. Savonarola's companions in misfortune were hanged first. While the executioner was placing his rope round the reformer's neck a spectator shouted from below: "Prophet, now is the time to perform a miracle!" The Bishop who officiated at the execution solemnly separated him from the militant and triumphant Church. Then came the hanging, and let us trust that the prophet was beyond the reach of pain when the flames encircled his body. His cremated remains were flung into the Arno, and it is recorded that Savonarola's heart, like Shelley's in later days, resisted the heat of fire. That the preacher deluded himself, as he deluded others, there seems little doubt. Yet, he was mainly sincere in his claims, and entirely so in his abortive efforts to reform the Church. He remains a signal illustration of the truth of the sage's saying that, "The crown of every reformer is a crown of thorns."

T. F. PALMER.

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Liberty is a slow fruit.—Emerson.

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Where slavery is, there liberty cannot be; and where liberty is, there slavery cannot be.—Abraham Lincoln.

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Knowledge, love, power—there is the complete life.  
Amiel.

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Any man may make a mistake, but none but a fool will continue in it.—Cicero.

## The Book Shop.

If one were asked what was the central theme of Mr. Eden Phillpott's work, the answer might faithfully be given as hope. He has not trifled with tragedy; there are scenes in his novels where passion has had full fling, but few or none of his characters are utterly depraved. The handicap on much thinking has been that gawdy myth of man being a fallen creature. Man had to be a fallen creature for the sake of providing a means for the astute to ride on his back. It is less difficult to prove that man, with all his blunders, is a risen animal, rather than a being booted out of Paradise. It is so long ago that it cannot be verified. Even the Basques now claim that the fabled fruit was not an apple but an orange grown in that country thrusting its nose into the Bay of Biscay, and the Esquimo version is only now wanted to make the story cosmopolitan. It was a poet who took pity on the first two who encountered the housing problem, and he made a gift of something denied by Omnipotence, which, for one so accomplished, was in comparison, less than the widow's mite:—

"The world was all before them, where to choose  
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.  
They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow,  
Through Eden took their solitary way."

So wrote an old English lover of Liberty, and another poet takes up the theme, but making a distinct divergence from the austere Puritan who could make beautiful melody with language but could not manage a wife. With the thorough workmanship that we expect, Mr. Phillpott gives his best to *A Hundred Lyrics*, Ernest Benn, Ltd., 6s. net. There is no straining for effect, no word torturing, and no new vocabulary, but the whole work is created wherein the poet weaves the golden strand of hope and faith in human betterment. If you like a vignette of the to do round the gates of Eden, here it is from the book of another—it is entitled *The Singers*:—

"When Adam and his lady fell  
From out their horticultural dell,  
The robin said 'I'm coming, too,'  
Because I only sing for you."

This is not exactly as highbrow as Rossetti, Francis Thompson, or Miss Edith Sitwell, but it is a nice little exercise in making the complex simple. Man is, and has been tied in knots, metaphysical, theological, and there is now a new knot from France called metapsychical to fit round his neck; perhaps it is only because there are men like Mr. Eden Phillpott and a few others that man is not strangled. Those who love poetry of the countryside, who enjoy the giving of a straight left at the ugly jaw of imposture will be pleased to add this volume to their bookshelves.

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Fireside Interlude. Critic on the Hearth, or True Progress. "Wireless helps you to get your mending done."

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The Cambridge University Press in issuing *The Mysterious Universe*, by Sir James Jeans from a publishing point of view, has certainly achieved a success. To a student of true Buddhism as distinct from the many spurious forms of it now appearing in the West, most of the conundrums in this book do not arise. There may be some who find amusement or satisfaction in speculating on the origin of the world; no one denies any person from having an object in life; given certain conditions it keeps them out of mischief, and every one's ambition cannot be as simple as the farmer boy who wanted nothing more than to be able to swing on a gate and eat fat bacon. Applying Mr. Chapman Cohen's aphorism on the war, that the problem was not how many Germans could be killed, but rather how we could live with them, whilst the scientist can amaze us with wonderful information about the millions of stars there are, there is a gigantic mass of work to be done on the one on which we live. And as to mysteries, and the mysterious, why is it that so many people push a door open when there is a label on it marked pull? Also, why should a young lady pick on the present writer to explain to her how to



get a penny stamp out of one of the G.P.O. automatic machines? From the teachings of Buddha one may find the following advice to take or leave: "Do not waste your mind on thoughts on the finiteness or the eternity of the world. Vain problems are such as these. Is the universe eternal; is it finite; are body and soul one; are they separate; have I existed before; shall I exist in future ages." This may be one point of criticism. The book is prefaced by an extract from Plato. He was an early love of mine until I read *Imaginary Dialogues*, of Landon, in which the old lion places Plato in a new light, and throws out a few fallacies. In addition, I object to a scientist using the word "mysterious"; that word belongs to a religious category and ought to stop there. There are plenty of words, more apt, and in keeping with the vocabulary for those who are supposed to be exact—and exacting. I have read the book through carefully, have no pretensions to scientific knowledge, but I have come to the conclusion that if religion is the metaphysics of the poor, then this book must be the metaphysics of the middle-classes, and was probably thrown off the chest in the same way that ugly daubs are perpetrated by artists who pull the leg of the public. On page 149 the author writes: "We discover that the universe shows evidence of a designing or controlling power that has something in common with our own individual minds." The author must speak for himself, and not insinuate with that tricky word "we." This is only a re-hash of Paley's watch, and a clutter of dust to blind one's memory of earthquakes, fires, terrible wars, and all the melancholy events that speak of the indifference of Fate in man's history. It is possible that the human race may reach the promised land through making a crick in its neck to look at a minute piece of the sky with the help of the largest telescope in the world—one may mildly be sceptical, and turn to such mundane inventions as catching fish with a vacuum cleaner.

Before passing away *The Times Literary Supplement* for December 6, I turned to a review of "Soldier's Testament," headed "A Defence of War." The article was a perfect jig-saw of yes and no, black and white, and the writer had to fall back on Mr. George Santayana to help him out. An introduction to the book by Mr. Douglas Jerrold takes up one-third of it, and Quinton's thesis is invoked, which is partly indicated with the the statement, "It is the intention of Nature that man should die in his prime." Now this is good rollicking news, and should reach the level of a jelly-fish caught in a thoughtful mood. Quinton's thesis is quoted by the introducer, and the reviewer thinks that it is curious that this book should defend war because both the author and the introducer are evidently Roman Catholics. I do not share his curiosity. The Roman Catholic Church sat on the fence during the European dog-fight, and, one may safely say that it will occupy the same place in the next. It even teaches children that they must fight all the days of their life the devil, the world, and the flesh. This is a pretty tall order for youngsters, and does not leave them with much time for marbles, or the acquisition of a little social common sense. And as a Nunc Dimittis the reviewer concludes his article with "Christianity and reason, however, teach us to seek a life of felicity and peace." The few million of dead in the war have found peace, that is, if the spiritualists will leave them alone, and Catholics and Protestants during the war did precious little to delay the discovery of it—for the other chap. To come into the clear air of sense, and in a few words to sum up the contempt that must exist in the minds of those who survived the war, this paragraph finishes with an extract from Santayana: "To call war the soil of courage and virtue is like calling debauchery the soil of love." But then, the mind of Santayana has not been addled with the jargon of Rome; neither has the ex-soldier forgotten that a daily de-louseing of himself helped to make the world safe for anything but disarmament.

Further Interlude: There is now in existence a League for Prohibition of Cruel Sports. The title is not the happiest that could be chosen, but it at least locates a certain

individual "The Savage in our Midst," and he is the real conundrum of civilization.

The late Lord Birkenhead's library has now been scattered to other shelves. A first edition of Whitman's poems fetched a good figure. In the words of Mr. Augustine Birrell, "They will form new combinations, lighten other men's toil, and soothe another's sorrow. Fool that I was to call anything *mine*."

C-DE-B.

## Acid Drops.

The surprisingly small amount of either knowledge or understanding with which a man may undertake the conduct of public affairs is always being thrust on one. Even after the decision of the Courts on the question of Sunday entertainments, the London County Council calmly decides to "prohibit" all boxing entertainments in the area controlled by them. But the L.C.C. has neither the power to prohibit nor to permit. It simply has nothing to do with it. Boxing entertainments, so long as admission thereto is by money are statute barred, anyone can initiate a prosecution. The L.C.C. is simply making itself ridiculous in another fashion. First of all it solemnly grants a permit to certain people to break the law, then it just as solemnly decides to issue a decree that it prohibits them breaking the law. In a public the one is as ridiculous as the other. It might as well issue a decess that it has decided to prohibit murder and arson in the area controlled by them. Sunday entertainments are now just where they were. They were illegal then, they are illegal now, and those who run them are always open to attack.

Now that the mighty question of the reservation of the sacrament has faded away from the public mind, such smaller items of news as baths at pitheads may be considered. We are told that forty-two are being erected in England, Scotland and Wales. Still better news might be, that the coal in the bowels of the earth could remain there; but the invention of poison gases and instruments of war take up too much time of some of our scientists. Any one but a fool knows that it is easier to kill than preserve or construct—but we are a Christian country, so onward Christian soldiers.

A question we should like answered, and it is one that would interest theatre goers, arises out of Mr. Hannen Swaffer's information that when news of a seance is received in spirit land, spirit queues are immediately formed. Are these queues entertained during the wait by singers, spoon-smashers, conjurors, and those who produce from newspapers (incredible feat) something useful in the form of table-centres? If this is so, or in the House of Commons language, the answer is in the affirmative, what is the good of being dead?

The Headmaster of Harrow told a Mathematical Society that this is an ugly age, and that the worst people in it are journalists, parsons and politicians. It looks as though one or two skirmishes for truth are won on the plain fields of Harrow; there is nothing like calling things by their proper names.

If a large proportion of the nation started discarding boots and shoes, all the shoe makers and repairers would get alarmed and issue a "manifesto" warning the nation against so dangerous a tendency. Inspired by a similar kind of fear, our leading Anglican and Nonconformist parsons have issued, in the interests of their trade, a manifesto on the right and proper use of Sunday. The most pleasing aspect of the manifesto is that it says nothing about the fearsome evils which the Lord God will inflict upon the nations if his representative's advice be ignored. One wonders why the divine threats were omitted. Can it be that the Christian God has grown less vindictive, and do the parsons think that threats will only make the un-godly smile? Anyhow, the mani-



festos very solemnly hints that Sunday pleasure-seekers are selfish in enjoying recreation which may cause other people to work. That, however, is solemn cant, dragged in as a make-weight to the main religious contention that Sunday must be regarded as a taboo-day. Sunday recreation has definitely established itself as a custom of the nation. If this entails any inconvenience, the remedy is not to suppress all Sunday recreation, but to pass an Act ensuring that every employee shall have one free day in every seven.

Writing about Christmas, the President of the National Sunday School Union says:—

The advent of Jesus ushered in a new principle of life among men . . . In the new era, a law of love was to be operative. Curses were to rebound in blessings, and hatred in love. This wonderful change of principle among men we are now going to commemorate.

It might be right to commemorate the ushering in of the wonderful new principle. But there are no grounds for celebrating its successful practice among Christians. Christian history is a record of wars between nations and wars between sects, of torturing, burning, slaughtering and banishing; of priests cursing, by "hell, book, and candle," those who dared to differ from them. The world couldn't have been any worse if the wonderful principle had never been ushered in at all.

"Prayer meetings" in the Methodist Church seem "to have petered out. As the Rev. Morris Bold says: "We do not realize the value of meeting together for prayer. Praying alone can never be a substitute for praying together." Quite so. What the brethren must be made to understand is that slabs of prayer sent up in mass formation stand a much better chance of barging into heaven, and letting the Almighty know what he knows already.

Apropos of the present epidemic of small boys caroling, how grateful we all ought to be that there are no rival religions in England with birthdays of their God's all to be celebrated at the same time of the year!

English girls have a ready sense of humour, says a writer. Still, if one has noticed that Church congregations largely consist of women, and that solemn nonsense is the chief feature of sacred edifices, then one might be inclined to question the statement. A possible explanation, however, is that Christian education is more effective with women in making solemn nonsense appear otherwise than what it is.

Speaking of Eastbourne, a Wesleyan journal says:—

During last winter a determined attempt was made to secure the opening of cinemas on the Lord's Day. When the Churches stopped that, they were naturally challenged to provide something for the young people who are about the streets. The Central [Wesleyan] trustees and leaders . . . rose to the demand . . . The Central Hall is open to about 100 young folk, half of whom would go to no service. Already a few have been drawn into touch with our Scouts, and new Guilders have been enrolled.

What is obvious is that the policy of the Eastbourne churches is to suppress all competition on Sunday as far as possible, in the hope of reducing the young people to boredom. This achieved, the parson's then altruistically organize something for the young people in order to make clients for the churches. What a contemptible game it is!

The Rev. Kennedy McWilliamson suggests—as he says, "with a smile"—that the rich, the learned, and persons of high estate are often "worldly" and this need hardly be wondered at since they are apt to be neglected for the sake of dust men and charwomen. He adds:—

Should not someone start a mission for the evangelization of the wealthy? Could we not have a society for slumming in Mayfair, and a . . . University Settlement in Knightsbridge? Having worked for eight years in those parts, I am in a position to state *ex cathedra* that they desperately need a little friendly oversight and evangelizing. Perhaps we might have . . .

open air services in Belgrave Square . . . there can be no doubt that the Upper Tenements are being neglected.

These be excellent suggestions. A strong and regular dose of Salvation Army tonic applied to the West End of London, although it might not "save" anybody, would perhaps make the "classes" appreciate that noisy Salvation is an intolerable nuisance to ordinary people who want a little peace when the day's work is done. Then perhaps the nuisance might be abated, though we fancy nothing less than a determined effort to "save" all our M.P.'s by Salvation tactics will ever result in any improvement.

Sir Warren Fisher declares that it is quite premature for anybody to try to put any limit on what women may do in the future. Still, one might venture to suggest that the possibility of women ever becoming priests and high officials in the Roman and the Anglican Churches is rather remote. For these Churches are committed to the noble Christian theory that women are inferior human animals, whose proper classification is with the ox and the ass and other household chattels. This, by the way, does not prevent some humourists in these Churches from claiming that the Christian religion and Church have emancipated woman and raised her status! The noble theory, however, does impose a quite definite limit to woman's enterprise in the sphere of religion. But perhaps even that may disappear if the future reveals an acute shortage of male candidates for "holy orders." Our old friend "progressive revelation" will conveniently suggest that St. Paul hadn't got properly in tune with the infinite on the question of women.

A Committee appointed by the Church of Scotland and the Education Committee of the Corporation of Glasgow has drawn up a syllabus for use in the *Glasgow Daily Record*, omits all such stories as those of Adam and Eve, Abraham and Isaac, etc., but "retains the old idea of creation as told in the book of Genesis." But the story of creation minus the creation of Adam and Eve, the snake tale, the eating of the apple, and so forth, will be a very drab affair. The general scheme, we are informed, will portray Christ as the hero and saviour of mankind, and will be based more on the New Testament than on the Old, "parts of which are considered unsuitable for the youthful mind." In practice this means that the Committee will go on telling lies to children about the New Testament now that it is no longer safe to tell them lies about the old Bible. This follows on quite usual lines of Christian practice—keep on with the old lies so long as it is at all possible to do so, and when it is no longer safe then drop them without a word of regret about the opposition that has been offered to the truth concerning the generations that have been brought up with these priestly lies. If there is a more contemptible creed than Christianity in practice we should be delighted to have it pointed out to us.

Consider, after all, what this move actually means. As a matter of well-known and demonstrable fact, the story of the New Testament is as mythical as the story of the Creation. The divine birth of Jesus is as clearly mythical as is the creation of Adam and Eve, the tales of the conflicts of Jesus with the Devil as mythical as Eve's encounter with the same personage disguised as a snake.

Ethically the idea of Jesus as a friend and saviour of mankind is no more applicable to Jesus—even if we take the absurd estimate of his teachings—than it is of scores of others of the world's teachers. And we are certain that the children will not be told that the name of Jesus has been taken to cover and sanction all sorts of villainy—slave holding, submission to tyranny, the subjection of women, the belief in witches, demons and the like. The children will not be permitted to learn that there are other views of Jesus than those which are placed before them, and any teacher attempting to enlighten them will be discharged or forced to resign. As we have said, it is a new phase of the old game in which the children are exploited in order that they may grow up clients of either church or chapel.



## National Secular Society.

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

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

I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society, and I direct that a receipt signed by two of the trustees of the said Society shall be a good discharge to my executors for the said legacy.

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

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

THE EDITOR returns thanks for the many seasonable greetings that have reached him from his readers. Good wishes are always encouraging.

BENEVOLENT FUND N.S.S.—C. S. Fraser, £16.

C. L. MCGOWN.—Thanks, but regret unable to use at present.

ALMA KATE.—Shall appear as early as possible.

T. GREEN.—Resolution from the Bradford Branch with reference to the Sunday question received. You may rely upon our doing all we can in the matter.

F. HOBDAV.—Newspaper cuttings are often very useful even when not commented on at the moment. A variety of circumstances determine their use at the time they are received.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums.

We hope that those who intend being present at the Annual Dinner on January 17, will take our advice and write for their tickets as early as possible. There is a deal of work to be done to make a dinner of this kind run smoothly, and the labour is appreciably lessened by things not being left till the last minute.

Those Vegetarians who are attending, and would like a special menu preparing must acquaint the General Secretary at least three days beforehand. There was some little delay in serving on the last occasion owing to this not being done.

Most of our readers will remember that some time ago attention was called to a report of a trial for blasphemy which had taken place in Montreal, but about which there seemed some very suspicious features. The letter that reached us, and which was published as received, said that the defenders of the man were held up from taking further steps for want of funds. About £100 was required. We wrote at once stating that if the case was as stated, there need be no doubt about the readers of this journal providing the sum required to prevent what

looked like a case of gross injustice. But before anything could be done, we said we must have evidence on which we could go, and some official report of the proceedings.

There seems to have been an unaccountable delay in providing us with the necessary information, but it came to hand at last, and the case certainly looks black. The facts before us—so far as the legal side of the case is concerned, are as follows: On October 30, 1929, J. A. S. Gaudry, a bailiff of the City of Montreal, was arrested and charged with having circulated writings containing a blasphemous libel. On November 14 and 21, he was brought before a judge and remanded on each occasion. On December 5 he was formally placed on trial for blasphemy, but the trial was interrupted by the Judge, and on the motion of the prosecution the prisoner was sent for mental examination to Bordeaux Jail. On a further hearing (apparently) Dr. Derome, a brother of the Rev. L. Derome, assistant chancellor to the bishopric, said Gaudry had written the libel and was insane. The defending lawyer produced the testimony of Gaudry's family doctor and an alienist, Dr. Mackay, both of whom testified to the sanity of the accused man. But on January 7, 1930, Judge Lacroix, against whose conduct in the case the defending lawyer protested several times, committed Gaudry to an asylum.

The reply of the defence was to secure a writ of Habeas Corpus, and on January 14 Gaudry was brought before Judge Desaulniers, who ordered Gaudry's unconditional discharge. On the same date Judge Lacroix issued a "Bench Warrant," and on the 24th Gaudry was re-arrested and sent back to the asylum where he has remained ever since. We do not understand how when a man has been unconditionally discharged by one Judge another Judge can order his re-arrest without a further trial, but this is the case as presented to us. What is required now is a sum of about £100 to pay costs involved in obtaining another writ, and to see that the case is properly fought.

What we have done is to cable to Montreal giving our guarantee, and that of the National Secular Society, that the money will be forthcoming, and to go ahead with the case, provided responsible lawyers have the handling of it. We are quite sure that our readers and the members of the N.S.S. would wish to do as we have done, and that either or both bodies will gladly find the funds. But we do not wish anyone to send any money at present. When we require it we will let it be known, and we know quite well that all needed will be forthcoming.

The above are the bald facts as given us, and as supported by the official report of the evidence that has been sent us. But there are other things that lead us to believe that we have here one of those ghastly cases of injustice which have over and over again distinguished the Christian Church when it has the power to work its will. Montreal is an intensely Catholic place. The Church rules there as in few other places in Canada, unless it be Quebec. Now, as far back as 1916, Gaudry found his wife on terms of intimacy with a certain Father Valere Cote, the parish priest of St. Peter's. He kept the priest at his house until the arrival of Father Dozois, the rector. Cote was censured and removed from St. Peter's. In April, 1927, Gaudry obtained a separation from his wife. While therefore there was a reason for Gaudry carrying on a campaign against the priests, there was a very strong reason for the priests doing what they could to suppress and silence Gaudry. And we know enough of the priesthood to know that in such circumstances hardly any conduct is too vile for the attempt. The case of Ferrer is not so distant as to be quite forgotten, and if Gaudry is sane, his plight is terrible enough to excite the widest indignation.

That is a bald, a very bald outline of the case. On the face of it there seems to have been a gross outrage on liberty and decency. On humanitarian as well as on Freethinking grounds we feel there is a good case for



examination, and we feel that those who look to us to act, would have us act as we have done. Mr. Gaudry, it should be said, is not one of our members, nor is the gentleman, Mr. G. A. Field, who drew our attention to the case. But the National Secular Society and the *Freethinker* have never been deaf to such an appeal, and we hope they never will. The case must rest now where it is until we get fresh news from Montreal.

Writing of Mr. Cohen's new work *Opinions*, Mr. Sydney Gimson says:—

I find it difficult not to use words of extravagant praise. I think it is quite delightful. The wit and the wisdom are so perfectly mingled that one chuckles with amusement and then sees that a deep truth has been put into just the right words to make it stick in one's memory.

We are pleased to say that the book is selling well. It makes a capital New Year's gift.

We compliment Alderman Frank Porter, of Derby, on his common-sense and his courage. He told a reporter of the *Derby Daily Telegraph*, that:—

I shall never vote against Sunday games. Those people who wish to play in the Parks on Sunday should be allowed to do so with the same liberty as those who attend church . . . I am out motoring every Sunday. I prefer the fresh air of the countryside to the atmosphere of Church or Chapel. Why cannot the churchgoers face facts? Let what they think is right be put to the test. If both churches and recreation grounds are open on Sundays, that which is best will eventually survive.

But, of course, that is exactly what church and chapelgoers will not do. They know quite well that, other things equal, that people will simply not go to church, particularly the younger generation.

## Language and The Abstract.

(Concluded from page 804.)

It will be seen that as long as the verbal method of reference proves inadequate, there can be no hope of true understanding unless, and only unless, the actual thing referred to is produced. In other words, the ultimate reference must be to some reality. Only for such persons as know my dog (*i.e.*, have had experience of it in common with myself) will the word "dog" and its context prove to be adequate as a means of reference without further definition being necessary.

This simple illustration proves that we should be extremely chary, particularly in serious discussions, of assuming an identical or similar experience among those with whom we are in conversation or correspondence. If there is at the outset of such a discussion a mutual desire to arrive at some definite result or agreement, then the moment when any point of dispute or argument arises, it should act as a warning that some word or phrase requires further definition. This word or phrase should promptly be isolated and nailed down for elucidation before the general discussion is proceeded with. Only by such constant and careful reference back to common ground will any discussion be likely to reach a practical conclusion. There is no other method.

The most prolific cause of futile argument and actual disagreement is the use of "abstract" terminology with little or no reference to the concrete and real. The classification of nouns into "abstract" and "concrete" is a convenient one in many respects, but the distinction is not so easily made, nor so obvious, as many of us might suppose. The word "dog," for instance, might well be considered as an example of a concrete noun. Yet, from the illustration previously given, it will be seen that only in one particular case did it actually serve as a symbol of reference to a real animal. In most other cases this

noun would refer to a class of animals—that is to say, to an abstraction.

The fact is that verbal classifications, like most others, are seldom distinguished by hard and fast boundaries. The scale in which we find abstract and concrete nouns extends from the nonsensical and imaginary at one end to the concrete and "proper" at the other; and it ranges through all degrees of abstraction and concretion in between. A series of nouns such as the following may help to emphasize the point: Jabberwock; satyr; fairy; spirit; life; personality; hope; patriotism; shape; temperature; green; thunder; animal; dog; mastiff; London.

This list does not pretend to any exactitude of degree; but as one reads from one end to the other, it becomes apparent that the things these words refer to vary considerably in their clearness of definition and reality for those who are familiar with their ordinary use. "London" refers (for most Englishmen) to one and only one city; "mastiff" refers to one special breed of dog; "green" refers to a particular colour which is known by sight, but by no other sense; "temperature" is a relative term which refers to conditions in which the sense of feeling is involved, and which can be tested by thermometers, etc.; "hope" is a definitely abstract term which refers to a number of things such as wishes, fears, opinions, etc. So we proceed from the more definite to the more indefinite end of the scale, till we reach the purely imaginary "Jabberwock."

The important point to note is that the "reality" of the things referred to by these words increases in proportion as they can be directly apprehended by the senses. And the more senses we employ in determining the things referred to, the more "real" do these things become. One is forced by this analysis to the conclusion that the only satisfactory test of the "reality" of anything lies in its ability to be apprehended by the senses.

Unfortunately for logical and rational thinking, these very words "real" and "reality" have come to be used in a number of ways, and with a number of different meanings, which are incompatible with each other. Few, if any, metaphysicians and not many philosophers bother themselves about the exact use of these terms. It would kill their business if they did. It is for this reason that, when we have read most of the books on these subjects we are as far from solving any problems or acquiring any new information as we were before we started. It is for this reason too that nearly every language has its own special variety of metaphysics, which can never be adequately translated into any other language. For unless these terms are precisely defined, and the definition adhered to in all cases, every author using them will be likely to mean something different to every other author. Indeed, each author is likely to mean one thing in one sentence, and something else in the next. Seeing that the majority of problems which such writers tackle are purely verbal ones, it is to be regretted that philosophers and metaphysicians are usually the worst offenders in regard to the careless use and definition of abstract terms.

If, then, we adhere strictly to the most efficient definition of the word "real," namely, "capable of being apprehended by the senses," much of the fog which is created by philosophy and metaphysics will be dispersed. If at the same time we appreciate the fact that this word is often misapplied to qualify abstract nouns or unreal things (because language lacks a more appropriate terminology) we shall be far on the road to clear thinking. For, to speak of "real ideas," or to refer to "beauty" or "mind" as "realities," is as misleading and absurd as to speak



of "tangible colours," or to refer to "tension" or "imagination" as "solidities." It were better that more frequent use of such adjectives as "true," "genuine," "actual," or "correct" should be made, rather than to continue with the slipshod use of the word "real."

Little more need be said to demonstrate the mechanical nature of language, and the necessity for precise definition and consistent use of terms in problems or discussions where language is the chief instrument used in attempting to arrive at a conclusion. Language is a kind of machine, and most persons using the same machine are assumed to have the same sort of experience of its use. But while this is probably true for most parts of the machine, it is not true of all. To take those parts called "nouns" alone, we find that the nearer they come in the scale to the concrete, the more likely are they to serve as efficient symbols of reference. And this is due to the fact that, in cases of doubt, users of these words can generally refer those whom they are addressing to real examples or to the actual object which the word refers to. They can, in other words, refer back to some common experience, or to an experience which, should necessity arise, can be made common.

Perhaps the most illuminating method of realizing the truth of all the foregoing contentions is to imagine ourselves in the position of having to explain to some person wholly ignorant of our language what we mean by an abstraction such as "beauty."

If we had to explain what we meant by "apple," our task would be comparatively easy. We would repeat the word and at the same time point at, touch or otherwise indicate one or more real apples. In a similar way we would proceed to build up for him a vocabulary of concrete words (*i.e.*, words symbolizing real things) until a sufficient number had been acquired to proceed further.

From the concrete we would gradually work up to the abstract by attempting first to indicate the meaning of such words as "here," "there," "mine," "yours," "sweet," "sour," etc. So by constant and repeated illustration in the concrete and reference to the real, the meaning of abstractions such as negative, positive, similar, unlike, solid, etc., would be built up. Finally the somewhat more abstract conceptions of "beauty," "honesty," etc., could be arrived at.

The point to be noted in this process is that it would be impossible to arrive at the use of abstract terms, or to give them meaning, had there been no realities upon which to build an initial framework of reference. Indeed, the more we understand the functions and limitations of language, the clearer does the evidence become that abstractions are not, and never should be referred to as, "realities." They are nothing more than verbal abbreviations or condensations, shorthand symbols for linguistic convenience.

C. S. FRASER.

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Religions are not proved, are not demonstrated, are not established, are not overthrown by logic. They are, of all the mysteries of nature and the human mind, the most mysterious and most inexplicable; they are of instinct and not of reason.—*Lamartine.*

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A writer who builds his arguments upon facts is not easily confuted. He is not to be answered by general assertions or general reproaches. He may want eloquence to amuse or persuade; but speaking truth he must always convince.—*Junius.*

## Clericalism: That is the Enemy!

WHEN will people understand that the strongest opponents of Freedom and truth are the clerics of the various ecclesiastical corporations? Clericalism, as it is founded and rooted in falsehood, can only continue to exist by the continuous manufacture and promulgation of lies. Paid Priesthoods, be it remarked at the outset, have no sanction in the Bible. By the New Testament dispensation, it is stated without equivocation that all priestly systems were obliterated and the only priest and intercessor for mankind with God after Christ's advent was Christ himself. But to-day not only Roman Catholics, but many Protestants, maintain that each cleric as he holds his commission directly of God and not of man (or men) is really a priest and invested consequently with the faculties known previously to belong to the old priest-hoods only as the revealers and enforcers of what (they say) is God's will.

The exceptions are the old Scotch Baptists, the early Methodists, Quakers, Plymouth Brethren and unclerical bodies of believers in Christ, who designate themselves as mere "Disciples." All these accept (or accepted) the simple New Testament declaration and teaching that priesthoods were done away with or merged in Christ; and the most capable of their members arrange and conduct their meetings and services and administration without remuneration, and without giving up the respective secular occupations to which they were respectively trained, and in which they continue to work. These bodies reasonably point out that in the New Testament the evangelists and apostles—even Christ himself—all followed various trades and occupations for their personal sustenance. But *fashion* is a tremendously influential thing, and that is why the so-called "men of God" have managed to dig themselves in so securely by means of dogma, custom and tradition.

But there are other and more important, because material, circumstances and influences which have enabled clerics to retain their security of tenure. The fear of hell (here or elsewhere) is still the hangman's whip to hold the wretch in order! So long as the only adherents of Christianity were poor carpenters, fishermen, slaves, labourers and tent makers, there was no separate paid profession of priesthood. Clericalism was born and throve into full-blooded and arrogant life when Christianity secured for its sponsors the mighty and powerful ones of the earth, Emperors, Statesmen, Pro-consuls and wealthy potentates. When monarchs professed belief in supernaturalism, their courtiers and sycophants had perforce to follow suit; and the former belief in the necessity of priest-hoods revived; so the New Testament dispensation in one of its greatest essentials was flouted or disregarded and priest-hoods in all their former (ay in greater than their former) power were re-instituted and reinstated under royal protection. So was promulgated the false "divine right of Kings," a doctrine that has been responsible for more bloody cruelty and human degradation than any other. So long as the masses of the people remained weak, ignorant and fearful their *obedience* could be depended upon. But even in the early days there were devoted heroes who saved the lamps of knowledge and reason from the claws of Despotism!

Now there is no more oily or sycophantic courtier than the great cleric. History attests this by innumerable proofs. And this kind of courtier is the arch-hypocrite. He assumes an air of independence of human authority, which he knows very well as regards his rich constituents, he dare never practice. He preaches that his God-given office is one for the



protection of the oppressed, the help of the needy, the consolation of the bereaved and the sad, the welding of *all* men into a universal brotherhood by inculcating the practice of righteousness, mercy, goodness and truth. Fine sounding *words*; but where, looking round us, do we find the evidential results of the *deeds*? No, to-day as ever, the deeply imbedded instinct of the priest or theological teacher is to kow tow to *power*. His independence is only a sham. He is independent only of the very poor. His practice suggests the belief that all personal prosperity and wealth are divinely conferred, so we are to assume that the richest people are the godliest—and best (?) and that the poorest are the most devilish and worst! Anyway, the cowardly supernatural confidence tricksters, once they knock up against any earthly power surpassing their own, obsequiously bow down to it and take shelter under its shadow! What other is the moral of the "Vicar of Bray?"

So it is, has been and ever will be, world without end amen, if clericalism, that adaptable jump-with-the-cat fraud, continues to exist.

IGNOTUS.

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### Cease Fire!

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It was a little French village bearing evidence of war, but not greatly knocked about. We had been in occupation about two days, and expecting orders to move forward at any moment. At eleven o'clock the "Cease Fire" would be sounded, and four years of madness would stop. Snow lay deep everywhere, the morning was bright, dry, and healthy, and the only depressing feature was the silent, moody troops, mechanically carrying out the routine duties of a soldier's life. The depression seemed to grow more intense until at last eleven o'clock actually arrived, and fighting was over. The greatest, bloodiest, and dirtiest war in human history had been fought among the leading Christian nations of the earth. The chief actors were the great Christian powers, Christians fought Christians, and to victors and vanquished the glory of the ghastly record was for Jesus Christ and Christianity.

The slump in cheerfulness remained during the whole day and all were glad to turn in, and perhaps sleep. My night quarters were in a disused loft, but my bed was the most comfortable I had experienced for many months. Four or five trusses of hay, shaped like a coffin, minus the lid, was luxury indeed. During the night, land mines, planted by the retreating Germans continued to explode, as though reminding one that the "Cease Fire" did not necessarily mean closing the Roll of Honour. With time cheerfulness returned, and visions of a return to civil life began to appear. One day the joyful news came that my turn for leave had arrived. There was a rapid calculation, and a tinge of disappointment: I was due to return from leave on Christmas Eve. Still I would apply for an extension, and three courses were open, two of them being army methods, and the third a man's. To over-stay leave, or go sick, were the usual army methods. I applied for an extension on the grounds of a wish to spend Christmas at home with my family and friends, not having seen them for more than a year. Extension was not granted, and I reported at Victoria, London, at 6.30 a.m. on Christmas Eve. To please the folk at home I packed a few sandwiches in my kit-bag. The trip across channel was enjoyable—to me. The sea being too rough to make Boulogne we were brought back to Dover and confined to barracks, but not for long. A tumult in the barrack yard turned out to be a decisive demand for the opening of the gates. I immediately joined in the demand. The demand succeeded and we were soon doing the sights of Dover. Next day—Christmas Day—we reached Boulogne safely, and were soon on board a train of cattle trucks safely. Each truck had a small stove, but no signs of any fire. Then somehow, from somewhere, by someone, wood was found or salvaged, and a bit of a blaze was kept going.

After pelting along for some time we pulled up with a series of jolts and jerks, and peeping out of a partly open door, there, not far away, was a string of waggons loaded with coal. In a twinkling there was a scene of animation and crowds of khaki-clad figures were streaming over the coal waggons, and when after a further series of jolts and jerks we started again on our journey, the coal supply for each stove was ample enough to last for the journey.

Each man had been given a tin of bully beef, but no bread or biscuit, and with the glow of a coal fire thoughts turned to a meal. I preferred my two days old sandwiches, and began to coax them down my throat. I remembered having bought a copy of the *Daily Mail* and took it from my pocket, the first article which met my gaze spoke of the Christmas feast our troops would be served with in France. Such episodes of the Great War are but memories now, but if the Christian nations of the world have their way, there are prospects of actual repetitions for our forces in the near future. In 1914 such a great and ghastly war was only possible with Christian nations, so in 1930 another such upheaval is only possible among Christian powers. The heathen powers have not the enormous war forces, materials, or money to carry on wars on such a scale as the Christian countries of the earth. It is the Christian powers that are preparing for a far more atrocious and cowardly war than the last, and rest assured if it comes, the clergy in this country will play the same game as in the last war; they will be the recruiting sergeant's keenest competitors, will urge every man of military age to join the fighting forces, and claim exemption for themselves.

R. H. ROSETTI.

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### The Wellsian God.

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All through the ages, man has made numerous attempts to formulate ideas of God. He, as a rule, makes God in his own image. And when one comes to think of it he cannot very well do anything else. In theory he may endow him with contradictory qualities, but in the main, he is a magnified man.

Many of our publicists manufactured a God for themselves. There is a kind of fashion in Godmaking. Jones is not to be outdone by Robinson, even if Jones ascribes to his Deity attributes that are neither fish nor fowl, or even red-herring.

Bernard Shaw has his "Life-Force," which he thinks as good a God as there's going. Anything bearing the imprint of G.B.S. can be relied on to produce food for thought and perhaps laughter. All the same Mr. Shaw would doubtless be much annoyed if anyone infringed his copyright in the gentle art of Godmaking.

Recently I have read Mr. H. G. Wells on *The Invisible King*, written in 1917, during a time of great stress, to have read it only now, argues a critic very much behind times. I apologise. I ought to have made myself acquainted with Mr. Wells' great discovery years ago. As an original Godmaker he ought to have had more honour in his own country. But Wells is difficult to keep peace with. He is almost as bad or as good, as Edgar.

We like the way he jumps into the arena full-panoplied, ready for the fray. Like some of the Gods that have been manufactured, he is no respecter of persons. Clergy, scientists, atheists, philosophers, barristers, all come under his castigating lash. And the Early Christian Fathers were no better than they should be. He says, for instance, that "it was left for Alexander, for little, red-haired, busy, wire-pulling Athanasius, to find out exactly what their Master was driving at, three centuries after their Master was dead.

Well, Athanasius may have been right, or he may have been wrong. A man that could render current such a mass of jumbling confusion as the creed which bears his name, must surely have been occasionally right. But to pass remarks on the colour of his thatch is surely the last resort of any Godmaker.

The forcefulness of Mr. Wells' language is a pleasure to sample. He seems almost omnipotent in his vigorous



descriptions. "Blood-stained, tangled heresies," "ill-phrased Levantine creed." The Orthodox God has become "a celestial log-roller." One revels in these thrusts, and if Wells had only confined himself to the smashing of existing mumbo-jumbos, he had done well. He may not have figured so largely in our libraries, or had the seal of respectability so prominently fixed upon him, but his destructive criticism would have been eminently useful.

But alas! Wells must make a God of his own patented and copyright secured in all countries. With one hand he pulverizes all the shoddy Gods on the market. With the other he erects an idol of his own, using language that might be expected from any mild-mannered curate. Generally he hates the cant phrases of the average religionist. At other times he uses them, perhaps as a sop to Cerberus. His particular brand of Deity "Closer he is than breathing, and nearer than hands or feet."

Mr. Wells' God is a fighting God. He dislikes the meek and gentle character represented by the Crucifix. He is finite and had a beginning. As far as I can see he has no end. He is not perfect by any means, and keeps struggling with evil for the express purpose of benefitting both himself and us. He hates creeds and formulas, is very tolerant and good-natured, and would like to leave the world better than he found it. His principles are quite sane and sound, he is full of courage, he is a kind of captain leading us to victory, and his ideals are clean, healthy, wholesome, stimulating. How he is to be reduced to a workable proposition I cannot tell, and I scarcely think Mr. Wells can tell, though he may think he has done so in this book.

Professor Metchnikoff, Gilbert Murray, Jos. McCabe, Sir Harry Johnston, Dr. Chalmers Mitchell, are all roped into the fold, in order to show how mistaken these gentlemen were when they imagined they were leaving God out of the Universe. Their very doubts prove his existence. Their scepticism is a warrant for his reality. What can be done with such a man? We must admire his courage and his outspokenness, but his reservations, and his fanciful picture of this ill-defined Deity who is to sweep the world into one vast brotherhood, well—they leave us wondering. "The Invisible King" does not seem to be extending his sovereign sway.

ALAN TYNDAL.

## Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

### BIRTH CONTROL.

SIR,—Your correspondent "Medicus" suggests that there is no difference between abortion performed at three months and performed at six months. If he is a medical practitioner, he knows quite well there is a vast difference: that the three-months term is selected, not for moral reasons, but for surgical reasons. It is safe and easy to empty the uterus under proper surgical conditions at the end of the third month: it is unsafe and difficult to do so at the end of the sixth month.

To any logical mind there is no ethical difference whatsoever in preventing an undesirable conception, and interrupting an accidental pregnancy which has resulted from some technical failure in applying contraception. Self-inflicted abortion is anti-social because it is highly dangerous; otherwise no logical objection to it can be raised by those who say that women should be in charge of the fertility of her own body; that births should be the result of conscious effort, not the result of mere chance; and so forth. The objections are raised by those who, like "Medicus," really regard the uterus as a piece of ecclesiastical furniture, to be open and shut at the will of the Church. That the mind of your correspondent is sacerdotal rather than scientific is clearly shown by the fantastic distinction he draws between the sperm, the ovum, and the germ: the sperm and the ovum are inert matter, but the union of the male and the female cell, he says, is a living child. What he really means is that

the male spermatozoon has no soul, and the female ovum has no soul, but the germ has a soul. Freethinkers will naturally ask where the germ got its soul from? Perhaps "Medicus" gave it to the poor little germ.

Anyway, supposing the sperm and the germ united just on the tip of the entrance to the uterus, and were washed away by contraceptive douching, would that be a mortal sin? Where would its soul go to?

Leaving the realm of sacerdotalism and entering that of science, "Medicus" announces that "Contraception is going to enhance parental responsibility," which he says is not a "prominent feature of our life to-day"—in fact at the time of the three months embryo there are only "the vague beginnings of parental feeling." Whether these beginnings are in the embryo or in its mother or in its father, "Medicus" does not explain. He just says they are "vague"—they are indeed: very vague. Don't the medical schools teach their students that humanity, in the long slow course of evolution, has inherited its sexual instincts (attraction, selection, reproduction)?

All that "Medicus" proves in his letter is that there is something radically wrong with the education of doctors.

ETTIE A. HORNIBROOK.

### BIRTH CONTROL, AND SENTIMENT.

SIR,—The arguments put forward by Medicus, against abortion are perfectly sound if one admits that "sentiment" is a useful adjunct to the solving of any given problem. But is it? In every case which has come under my notice, I have been forced to the conclusion that sentiment is one of the prime causes of confused issues, illogical debate and bad temper.

Medicus rightly jibs at Dr. Marie Stopes' use of the term "murder," but he is himself inclined to stray when he asks the question: "Is it not the very fact of sentiment that makes human life worth living?" For the answer to this question is not a clear affirmative. Some sentiment is good and some bad; and as long as there is no definite ruling as to which kind we ourselves possess, the less we introduce sentiment into a discussion the less likely are we to err in our judgments.

"The sense of parental responsibility," says Medicus, "is unfortunately not a prominent feature of our life to-day." But why "unfortunately"? I know of several cases where the sense of parental responsibility has made hell of a home. Even assuming that Medicus means a right sense of parental responsibility is not the very absence of this sense in the poorer classes often due to over-large families? And by his own argument, anything which tends to the avoidance of over-large families would be so much to the good, in that it would encourage the growth of a right sense of parental responsibility.

The necessity for destroying the sperm, the ovum, the zygote, the foetus or even the new-born child, is a matter for calm and careful consideration by the best-informed persons, and each case should be dealt with in accordance with the practical and immediate issues which concern it. It would surely not be beyond the capacity of human intelligence to evolve a *modus operandi* which would be fair and just to the individuals concerned, and to the community at large?

C. S. FRASER.

### BIRTH CONTROL, AND ABORTION.

SIR,—If you can spare space for another brief letter, on a subject of which most editors are mortally afraid, may I say that your correspondent who signs himself *Medicus*, seems to miss the point of my argument, in his courteous and temperate letter. In my opinion, the crux of the question is the right of that particular parent who endures the burden of pregnancy and the pain and risk of childbirth (and whose attitude of mind towards the unborn must have a profound influence on the mind and body she is building up)—to choose freely, whether she thinks the business worth while. I advocate the legalization of abortion at the woman's request, up to the end of the third month, and would refer Medicus to the W.L.S.R. Congress Report, for some further considerations in its favour. Moreover, all honest birth controllers admit that there is as yet, no completely reliable and satisfactory contraceptive for everyone.



Thanks and appreciation to your correspondent, John McMillan, for pointing out that laws should be made for men (and women too)—not human beings racked by imbecile and outworn statutes! F. W. STELLA BROWNE.

#### THE TEETOTALLER AND FREETHOUGHT.

SIR,—You make it very hard for a man to be a Freethinker, and also an abstainer and temperance reformer.

Your columns are not open, and rightly so, for a discussion on prohibition or temperance reform, yet scarcely a month passes without some snippet of a jeer or a sneer at the teetotaler or his cause.

Temperance men are not all Pecksneffs or bigoted Christian believers.

The "Management" of the *Freethinker* seems not to know the history of the movement.

It originated with working men, and for half a century its biggest battle was with the Church. It is only of late years that the Church, when it found the cause had gained some power and respectability, has taken to exploit it. And what is the result—I write as a Scotsman—our national temperance organizations are almost entirely divorced from the toiling masses. It has become a branch of the Church which in its own struggle to live can do little for it. And it might die with the Church, were its roots not now established in gathered experience, in its discovered benefits, and in the testimony of medical science.

The *Freethinker* may stand for the best of all causes, but it has long been impressed on me, that it would do no harm to Freethought, if he recognized there may also be some other good cause for which it is worth living.

W.A.

#### THE ACT OF 1781.

SIR,—In "Views and Opinions on "Sabbatarians and the Courts," it is stated:—

It is of some interest to Freethinkers to note that the real motive underlying the passing of the Act of 1781 was not that of suppressing entertainments, but the prevention of Freethinking discussions of political and religious questions.

This was not the only motive; indeed, it probably was not the chief motive.

To state all the reasons for the Act of 1781, which was drafted by Dr. Porteous, the then Bishop of London (how London has been blessed with its Bishops!) is to reveal an ecclesiastical type of mind at that time worthy of the intolerant and malicious sacerdotalism of the bloody "Ages of Faith" from which it sprung.

The Act had a two-fold design—against the growing power of Secularism on the one hand, and on the other against Dissent and Methodism which was especially successful with the poorer classes who were less in touch with the Established Church than were those in affluence. Methodism was sweeping the country to the detriment of the State Church; and it was in 1784—only three years after the passing of the Sunday Observance Act—that the Bishop of London saws his efforts almost nullified, for it was then that Wesley executed the "Deed of Declaration," from which dates the beginning of modern Methodism. Had the times been a little more suitably disposed to given effect to the desires of the chagrined dignitaries of the State Church; and had Freethought not by then established, through reason and sacrifice, its truly righteous cause, the fires of Smithfield would have blazed again with a Freethinker and a Methodist chained back to back at the stake.

But the Act of 1781 is not the only one of its kind. There is the Sunday Observance Act of 1677, which demands attendance at Church, and forbids anyone to work at his accustomed business on the Sabbath. This Act was repeated, in part, by the Bread Act of 1836, by which baking bread on Sunday was punishable by fine. The Act of 1627 forbids butchers to kill or sell meat on Sundays, and carriers to travel. The Act of 1625 forbids games on Sundays and also theatrical performances. Some of these Acts have fallen into desuetude, but they are all revivable at any given moment, and prosecution to this day still takes place for selling newspapers on Sunday. All these Acts were fathered by the Church to "save the souls of the people," and for "The Greetah

Glowry of Gard." But "the common mob" and the "lazzaroni," soaked in damnable ingratitude will not understand. Lor' bless yer little 'eart, Sir, England is not priest-ridden!

The Sabbatarians, therefore, have plenty of ammunition in the shape of old laws to fall back upon. The conglomeration of "forbiddings" in all these Acts might well seem invincible. In any adjustment of the law it will be essential that, to avoid the future resuscitation of any one point of antagonism to a completely rationalized Sunday, the entire enactments be swept away and not a vestige be left behind.

ARTHUR HUGHES.

#### Obituary.

##### MR. FRANCIS WILLIAM THEOBALDS.

ON Thursday, December 18, the remains of Francis William Theobalds were interred at Chingford Mount Cemetery. Like most Freethinkers he refused to live up to the orthodox description of "Miserable Unbelief," and was esteemed for his cheerful disposition and active life until a short time before his death, which took place at eighty-one years of age, after a short illness. A member of the N.S.S. for many years, his interest in the movement was sustained until the last. His wish for a purely Secular funeral was duly honoured by his family, which, with friends, made a numerous gathering at the graveside, where an address was read by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

##### MR. JOHN MCPHERSON.

AT Cathcart Cemetery, on Monday, December 15, there was laid to rest the remains of an old member of the Glasgow Branch, John McPherson, fifty-one years of age, who died suddenly on Friday, December 12. We desire to express our sincere sympathy with his widow and family. A Secular Service was given at the house and at the graveside, before a large number of friends, by the President, Mr. W. H. McEwan.

#### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

##### LONDON.

###### OUTDOOR.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrolds 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.

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8, near Marlborough Road Station): No Service.

HIGHGATE DEBATING SOCIETY (The Winchester Hotel, Archway Road, Highgate, N.): Wednesday, December 31, 7.45. Debate—"That Materialism Fails to Account for Human Consciousness." *Affir.*: Mr. J. Newton; *Neg.*: Mr. T. E. Palmer.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): No Service.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Public Hall, Clapham Road): 7.15, Mr. H. Preece—"A Priest."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.): No Meeting.

##### COUNTRY.

###### INDOOR.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.—City (Albion Street) Hall, 6.30, Mr. D. McKillop, "The Conquest of Peru."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Xmas Tea, Entertainment and Dance.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, 41 Islington, Liverpool—entrance Christian Street): Sunday, December 28, at 7.0, Mr. J. V. Shortt (Liverpool)—"Through Catholic Spectacles." Current *Freethinkers* on sale.

BRITISH

LIVERPOOL



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