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Views and Opinions.

Christian Intolerance.

Last week I was dealing in this column with the boycott which Christians enforce when and where they can in relation to Freethought and Freethinkers. I did not say then what I might have said, and what has been impressed upon me by a newspaper cutting that came to hand just as I was passing the proofs of the last issue of the *Freethinker*, that Freethinkers unwittingly help to make this boycott much more easily applied than ought to be the case. We live in a world which is very apt to take one at one's own valuation, a world in which to put on a timid air is to invite attack, to assume an apologetic air where opinions are concerned is to make affront easy. Christians are in power. That is a fact that must never be forgotten, and the last thing in the world that the vast majority of Christians ever display is consideration or tolerance for the opinions of other people. For his own opinions the Christian demands the utmost consideration—the existence of the infamous Blasphemy laws is evidence of this. But in relation to antagonistic opinions the ordinary Christian appears to consider that he has manifested extraordinary tolerance if he permits them to exist. If he takes his religion lightly he may pass these opinions with a smile. But if he takes his religious beliefs very seriously he is apt to become that most dangerous of persons—a persecutor on principle. And, as I have so often said, one of the hardest tasks before us is to persuade the Christian that there are others in the world beside himself. It is not easy to do this, and it is certain that we shall never do it until we make up our minds what our rights are, what they ought to be, and see that our reasonable demands are satisfied.

* * *

Magistrates and the Oath.

The illustration to which I have referred is contained in a brief paragraph in the *Daily Express* of May 5. It is headed "Atheism Barred," and I give it in its entirety:—

A witness at Tottenham Police Court yesterday, on being handed the Testament, said: "I cannot take the oath in this form; I do not believe in a God. I am prepared to affirm on my word of honour as a man."

Mr. Jessop, the magistrate's clerk (turning his back on the man with an expression of disgust): Is there any other witness?

The man repeated that he would pledge his word, but he was ignored, and left the witness-box.

I do not know the name of the man who was called as a witness, but it is quite evident that beyond the vaguest sort of belief that he might be allowed to affirm, he was quite hazy as to what were his rights. Yet the Oaths Amendment Act was passed so far back as 1888, and its scope is quite plain. For the benefit of others I give it here:—

Every person upon objecting to be sworn, and stating as the ground of such objection that he has no religious belief, or that the taking of an oath is contrary to his religious belief, shall be permitted to make his solemn affirmation instead of taking an oath in all places and for all purposes where an oath is required by law, which affirmation shall be of the same force and effect as if he had taken the oath.

The Act is not merely permissive, it will be noted. It does not place it within the power of any official to say whether the oath *may* be taken, it is within the rights of the witness to demand that he shall make affirmation. The only question to which he must give an answer is as to which of the two grounds stated in the Act he rests his claim upon when he demands to affirm. Had the witness been sure of his ground, he would have demanded to affirm, and the magistrate would hardly have dared to refuse, nor would the magistrate's clerk have been permitted to act as he did.

* * *

Impertinent Bigotry.

I must, of course, assume that the newspaper report is a correct one, and, at present, I have no further knowledge than is supplied by that. And taking that for granted, one needs to keep one's feelings well in hand to say merely that the attitude of Mr. Jessop, the magistrate's clerk, was grossly impertinent and an outrage on the dignity of the public administration of the law. His turning from the witness with "a look of disgust" on hearing that an Atheist had actually got into a police court (one must assume, hitherto sacred to the presence of God-fearing people who received their sentences and meekly departed to receive the ministrations of the prison chaplain) would have been properly met by the witness giving the clerk a good plain talking to. Had that led to any action on the part of the court, this would have given a good chance of the matter being raised in another place and in another way. It is also difficult to understand what the magistrate was about to permit the clerk to behave in so ill-bred and so impertinent a manner. For while he is there the dignity and the honour of the court are in his hands. It is his business to see that justice is done to all, and that all who come there are given their full legal rights. It is true that the Act does not say that the magistrate must inform the witness of his legal rights, but one would have thought that common decency would have led him to suggest as much to the witness. At any rate, in permitting his clerk to over-ride him in his own court, and to insult an apparently reputable witness, he showed himself either ignorant of his own responsibilities or grossly negligent in their discharge. I do not know

whether the "I am prepared to affirm on my word of honour" would be legally construed as a request to affirm within the meaning of the Act. If it would, then the action of the court amounts to a deliberate refusal to act according to law, and the matter is still more serious. But it is quite evident that the religious beliefs of these two gentlemen do not prevent their committing an act of injustice, and actually led one of them to conduct himself in a way that the most elementary sense of decency and right would have prohibited.

* * *

The Moral of the Case.

Cases of this description are continually cropping up, and they forcibly illustrate two things. The first is the mistake of those who assume that because a certain number of Christians are more liberal in tone than they used to be, and some others are sufficiently alive to the drift of modern thought to renounce a few of the orthodox doctrines, therefore the fight is nearly over. We are all apt to lose sight of how few these liberal Christians are when compared with the entire body of believers, and that even many of those who profess liberalism would need very little to send them back to the ranks of the most conservative of believers. It is the pressure of advanced opinion on the Christian world that causes some of the most alert to make concessions, not an impulse from within, and with any weakening of that pressure one may assume that reaction would set in. But the vast majority of sincere believers have not altered to any appreciable extent. There is still the same intolerance, still the same cool assumption that the Christian, because he is a Christian, is deserving of special consideration, and, as the police court incident proves, still the same reluctance to grant to avowed Freethinkers not alone the courtesies of common decency, but also those rights which the law allows. All this holds plenty of promise of reaction should circumstances prove favourable, and it is unfortunately true that the bulk of men and women are not yet sufficiently civilized in their thinking to put a reaction outside the bounds of possibility.

* * *

The Need for Combination.

The next thing which the conduct of this impertinent magistrate's clerk illustrates is that a great deal of the power and opportunity of Christians to boycott or insult Freethinkers is derived from Freethinkers themselves. Strength is always a relative term; it depends upon the relation of two objects or of two persons, and my neighbour may be strong with regard to me, not because he is—measured by the average standard—a very strong man, but only because I happen to be abnormally weak. And to my mind there is no question that a great deal of the strength of present-day Christians is due to the reticence of a very large number of Freethinkers. There can be no exact figures of the number of Freethinkers in this country, but it is safe to say that the number must run to several millions, and of these it is also safe to say that not one per cent. belong to any Freethought organization or subscribe to a Freethought paper, both of which exist to protect their rights and to further their interests. I know it may be said in reply to this that Freethinkers are scattered, that the boycott is still powerful, and that Christian malignity will, where possible, ruin a man if it can. But that does not remove the fact that the only way to teach Christian bigotry that it cannot express itself in action with impunity is to make public the strength of non-Christian or anti-Christian opinion. It is quite certain that had this magistrate's clerk felt that the witness before him was a member of a powerful organization, or the representative of a large body of opinion, his

conduct would have been very different from what it was. It would have reduced him to his proper proportions, and would have ensured decency of treatment. I have no greater faith in sectarianism with a Freethinking cover than I have for it in a religious dress, and the last thing I should dream of achieving is the building up of a Freethought Church which should differ only from a Christian one in the form of the ritual used. But we must recognize that we are carrying on a warfare against a strongly organized and unscrupulous enemy, and while Freethinkers hold themselves aloof from an organization, and keep their views to themselves, they are encouraging Christians in the belief that they may oppress and insult with impunity those who differ from them. We must meet organization with organization, and break down the efforts of bigotry by proving that we will be neither insulted nor boycotted with impunity. There are enough Freethinkers in this country to make the Christians pause in their work, if those who differed from them only made their existence and their opinions known. It is time that all Freethinkers gave this matter their serious consideration.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Ichabod.

IN 1 Samuel iv., 21, 22 it is stated that having been informed, as she lay in childbirth, that the ark of the Lord had been lost, and that Eli and his sons were dead, the wife of Phinehas named her new born babe Ichabod, saying, "The glory is departed from Israel." As the late Professor Cheyne observes, the story is exceedingly touching, "but one that is obviously suggested by a popular etymology." Be that as it may, the prevailing legend was that with the theft of the ark and the death of Eli and his sons, the Divine glory departed from the chosen people. It was a superstition, cherished by the people, that Jehovah had his abode within the ark, and that the loss of the latter involved that of the former. So, likewise, throughout Christian history, the tradition has persisted that the Church forms God's residence on earth. It is within its bounds that his glory is believed to dwell and his presence to be enjoyed. But to-day some Church leaders are sorrowfully convinced that the only appropriate word to be inscribed above its portals is Ichabod. It has lost its power, its glory is departed, and its ancient fame is in peril. Only the other day the Bishop of Birmingham presided over a meeting held at the Church House, Westminster, to investigate the reasons why men neglect the Church. The Bishop regretfully admitted that "a great change had come over the whole idea of Sunday which was for good in some respects, but not in others." He is in favour of allowing the people to have a Sunday of recreation and refreshment; but the pity of it is that no sooner is such a concession made to them by the clergy than they take advantage of it to omit the public worship of God altogether. In the discussion that followed, emphasis was laid upon the fact that for a hundred and fifty years the Church had remained silent and inactive whilst a vicious policy of grinding the faces of the workers was being increasingly indulged in; that for seventy years it had stood aloof from all industrial and economical problems, stretching forth no guiding hand in times of difficulty and distress; and that, consequently, the notion kept steadily growing that those who went to Church were at least passively conniving at a stupendous sham.

The fact is that the Church long ago ceased to be a guiding and controlling factor in the life of the people. It never was, even at the best of times, a reliable moral and social guide, and when it possessed controlling

power it generally exercised it to the detriment of the people, with the result that now the masses almost totally ignore it. Politically its voice is utterly unheeded, as a restraining and directive moral agent it is wholly impotent, while from the intellectual point of view it is often treated with contempt. It is at this time being realized as never before that Christianity has completely failed to set Christendom in order, taking no part in destroying its vices and building up its virtues; and yet despite this conspicuous failure at home it has had the audacity to insult such Pagan countries as India, China, and Japan by invading them in the character of the only true and infallible religion, forgetting or deliberately ignoring the undeniable fact that some Pagan nations are even morally superior to the very highest Christian country. Curiously enough, the secretary of the Church Missionary Society, in presenting the report for 1921 at the annual meeting just held in the Queen's Hall, asserted that "the growing Christian Churches throughout the whole world were proving a sure bed-rock for constant faith," though avowedly face to face with the fact that "the foundations of a semi-Christian and yet semi-Pagan civilization in Europe had been shaken." The question naturally arises, does not this shaken condition of the foundations of European civilization tend to weaken peoples' confidence in the uplifting and ennobling efficacy of the Christian religion? At any rate, the secretary of the Church Missionary Society informs us that "there was a deficiency on the year's working of £57,363," which "with previous deficiencies made a total debit balance of £138,677 to be carried forward." Consequently, the chairman significantly "hinted at a drastic reduction of the work abroad." This will be good news to some of the Pagan countries upon which the Society's propaganda work has been forced. Truly upon the banners of the various Foreign Missionary Societies may be written, in flaming letters, "The glory has departed."

As a direct result may be cited the dying interest in the May Meetings. Mr. J. Penne, in an interesting article, entitled, "The May Meetings: Stands it where it did?" in the *Christian World* of May 4, laments its undoubted decay, whilst frankly admitting it. Even in the religious weekly newspapers, it figures much less prominently than it used to do. Mr. Penne, who has attended the May Meetings regularly for thirty-five years, says:—

The May Meeting, to my mind, has never been quite the same since Exeter Hall disappeared. What a characteristic creation of English religion Exeter Hall was! Many denominations and many societies, but most of them going on Spring Pilgrimage to that Mecca. It seems to me that Exeter Hall audiences had greater holding-out power than audiences have had in other halls and churches since. A Bible Society anniversary lasted six to eight hours, and the principal speakers took three quarters of an hour to an hour each to turn round in, yet nobody ever thought the meeting too long. They loved a meeting, as Schumann said of an hour-long symphony of Schubert, to be "of heavenly length." They had come from Dan and Beersheba and they wanted fullest value for their journeys. Yet even now the Bible Society anniversary is compressed within two-and-a-half hours.....The May Meeting has suffered from the tired feeling there has been in the Churches.

Now we approach the most important point of all, namely, why has the glory departed from the Christian Church? What accounts for the Church's present impotence and insignificance? The explanation is not far to seek. On Monday, May 8, a typical petition, protesting "against the violation of the law and neglect of moral obligations, which are now allowed to prevail among many of the clergy of the Church of England," was presented to the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace. The petition protested

against two sections of the Church, namely, the Ritualists, who belong to the Catholic party, and those who style themselves Modern Churchmen, and who held a memorable Conference at Cambridge last August. With the views championed by those two parties this article is not in the least concerned. The presenters of the petition evidently represented the Low Church or Evangelical party in the Anglican communion. Their complaint is that, as a result of the permitted disorders, "in any parish in our country, parishioners may find themselves under the ministry of a Rationalizing or a Romanizing character, and are without a remedy, because the bishops will neither allow them to appeal to the law, nor take action themselves." The spokesman of the deputation was Sir William Joynson-Hicks, M.P., who appealed to the Primate to give them, the middle party in the Church, "some help in these difficult days." Now, it is in the Archbishop's reply to this deputation that is to be found the key to a satisfactory solution of the problem involved in the existing powerlessness of the Church. The Primate said:—

He wondered whether everyone recognized that a very considerable change had taken place on the subject, not only in the opinions of what were called the advanced men, but in the minds of churchmen generally. They would probably admit that there had been a change and a shifting of opinion in the orthodox standards since the days when Bishop Wilberforce, of Oxford, delivered his charge, which was not an unfair exposition of the views then held. Bishop Wilberforce in his charge uttered a warning against new views which tended to regard some of the Old Testament narratives as legendary, and threw doubt on the arresting of the earth's motion and the universality of the Deluge, and said, "Once let those things be accepted and we are imperilling the very foundations of our faith." He did not know how that would be regarded by those present, but he would be surprised if anyone would desire to put his name to the charge as then given by a profound exponent of orthodoxy.

There had been, and they must admit it, a change of attitude in these matters. No two persons in writing an account of the composition and character of the Bible as a whole would correspond precisely with what was the opinion half a century ago. It became, therefore, a question of degree, and he said without the slightest hesitation that some of the utterances, which had lately been made public, were absolutely inconsistent with the responsibility and the promises accepted by men when they became accredited ministers of the Church.....They were not living in an age of rigid acquiescence, either in things political or ecclesiastical. He did not think it either expedient or desirable.

That is an extraordinarily weighty and judicious deliverance, so far as the existing delicate ecclesiastical situation is concerned. In that respect Dr. Davidson is clearly the right man in the right place. From our point of view, also, that utterance is of the greatest possible value, because it effectually disposes of the once popular contention that the orthodox creeds were supernatural both in their origin and their character. They are merely human constructions which have been subjected to numerous reconstructions throughout the ages. This, of course, contradicts the testimony of the New Testament Epistles, where we read of the "pattern of sound words," the "sacred deposit," which the Church was enjoined to piously guard. These are terms which fixed the standard of orthodoxy in the Pauline communions. For them there was a faith which was something "once for all delivered to the saints," or that had come down from heaven once for all "through revelation of Jesus Christ." We have the high authority of the Primate of all England for saying that we have outgrown that primitive superstition, and arrived at a time when no

rigid acquiescence in anything is to be insisted upon. That is to say, Christianity is now to be regarded as a man-made religion which is slowly but steadily becoming a man-destroyed religion. The glory of Supernaturalism has already departed; and even the Archbishop is doing something towards hastening the advent of that consistent and full Humanism which is destined to shine in all the glory of practical verification.

J. T. LLOYD.

May Moanings.

At present the Church has to make itself cheap in all sorts of ways to induce people to attend its services, and the cheaper it makes itself the less the people attend. Its articles are out of date; its services are out of date; and its ministers are out of date themselves.

—Bernard Shaw.

MANY years ago Lord Macaulay complained, in his lordly fashion, that "Exeter Hall sends forth its annual bray." Exeter Hall, as a religious centre, no longer exists, but the May meetings are still an attraction to the believer and a source of amusement to the unbeliever. Indeed, the annual outburst of the various religious bodies is, in its way, a barometer which shows the condition of affairs within the Christian fold.

A careful examination of the various manifestoes of the various Churches reveals one important fact. Religion is fast losing its hold on the people of this country. Hundreds of thousands of the kind of men and women who, two generations ago, were regular attendants at public worship no longer trouble their heads about religion. Every Church has the same complaint that, while the older portions of their flocks remain steadfast, the young men and women are indifferent altogether to the claims of Christianity. The curious thing, too, is that the rising generation is not so much hostile as indifferent. Except for fashionable churches, whose pulpits are occupied by men of more than average ability, the clergy complain of a beggarly array of empty benches at their services.

Another important fact also emerges from the annual balance-sheets of the religious bodies. Whenever a Church makes a slight increase in its membership it is always at the expense of another Church, and the converts are not drawn from the ranks of the unbelievers. So grave is the situation to-day, that it is doubtful if five per cent. of the population of this country attend places of worship with any regularity.

The clergy are past masters of the art of camouflage, and they pretend that the present situation is due to all sorts of quaint reasons. For instance, they allege that people do not like sermons, and so stay away from church. They forget, conveniently, that, a few years ago, people did actually like sermons. Spurgeon, Parker, Newman Hall, and other ministers, used not only to preach constantly to crowded congregations, but their sermons were sold by tens of thousands, and they were circulated throughout the English-speaking world. These preachers, it must be noted, confined themselves to strictly religious subjects, so unlike the present-day ministers. To-day it appears to be the rule that a modern Christian audience cannot be held without some appeal to sensationalism, and with a due choice of topical subjects. Theology, indeed, almost seems to be considered bad form, and the lack of intellectual grip on the part of the preachers has so often to be supplemented by the presence of singers, orchestras, and other theatrical attractions.

In order to hide the decline in their influence, the clergy declare that there is a more truly religious spirit in the world than ever before. That is a very open question, but it cannot be disputed that the

people who no longer attend places of worship no longer contribute to the support of such places. The attitude of the great Churches on social questions, on divorce, and on other vital matters, shows clearly that the ecclesiastics are out of touch with modern movements. Public opinion is drifting away from Christianity.

The Churches will fail. Knowledge expands in search of light and truth. The Churches are still entombed within the covers of an Oriental fetish-book. Men and women ask for the bread of knowledge; the Churches offer but the stone of superstition. No wonder the rising generation is indifferent to the Christian religion.

MIMNERMUS.

Christianity and the Masses.

III.

(Concluded from page 309.)

It (the decline of religious belief) continues without violence, continuously, steadily, as a kind of impersonal motion of secular change. It is the passing of a whole civilization away from the faith in which it was founded and out of which it has been fashioned. Mr. Hueffer, in his *Spirit of the People*, tells the story of a neighbour who after a late evening service in the village church suddenly discovered that he no longer believed in the immortality of the soul. And that is typical of the change in the world of to-day. It is not becoming Atheist. It is ceasing to believe, without being conscious of the process, until it suddenly wakes up to the fact that the process is complete.—C. F. G. Masterman, "The Condition of England," 1911; p. 223.

As to the soldiers' idea of Christianity it is simply one long series of *Thou shalt not*s. One witness states: "Their idea is that a Christian man must not drink, must not swear, must not (according to some authorities) smoke, must not grumble, and must not amuse himself; as to positive duties, he *must* go to church" (*The Army and Religion*, p. 65). An engineer staff officer observes:—

Although they admire and respect our Lord, His Life and Example, it is usually looked upon as absolutely unpractical, unattainable by men in this life, and He himself an unpractical dreamer and lacking in very many of the manly qualities which we admire so much among our fellow men (p. 67).

"To them," says another witness,—

a Christian is a church-goer, a man who prays, who reads his Bible and generally lives a meek, inoffensive sort of life and believes he goes to heaven when he dies. To the man who has this idea of a Christian, it means life with all pleasure, pure or otherwise, crossed out with the words "Thou shalt not" (p. 66).

A chaplain writes:—

All men seem somewhere to feel the lack of positive force in the Church. A man does not drink, does not smoke, does not swear, so he is a keen Christian. A man is unselfish, generous, self-sacrificing, loving and loyal, he is not necessarily a Christian at all. These are not the "Christian" virtues, but the human (p. 67).

Christian preachers and apologists constantly claim that there can be no real morality, or virtue, apart from Christianity. Christian theologians have declared that the very pagan virtues themselves were merely splendid sins, which would not save them from perdition. Many earnest Christians discovered, to their immense surprise, that all the virtues flourished apart from any profession of religion. One witness writes:—

Comradeship, friendliness, brotherliness, are realities in the Army; men drawn from every station of life are knit together for a common cause in a common fellowship. This feeling of fellowship is not

in the least associated in their minds with religion as expressed by the Churches, quite the reverse, in fact; but having experienced it they feel they have got hold of something worth keeping, and Church-people at home will do well to remember it.

Practically every paper speaks of it, and many speak of it as a great discovery. Many emphasize in particular the heights of self-sacrifice to which the men would go for their "pals," and the beautiful sympathy which they have shown amid all the horrors of war. "They are vastly sensitive to suffering or misfortune and will sacrifice themselves to the uttermost to help a 'pal.'" But note what follows. "They perceive no connection between this tenderness and self-denial and the Christian religion" (*The Army and Religion*, p. 131).

An artillery officer observes:—

The general view of religion is that it is something entirely separate from every-day life—at the best, something to be put on on Sunday morning and cast off again in the evening—but in spite of this one can see day after day countless acts of unselfishness and self-sacrifice which show that the essence of the Christian life is there in practice if not in theory (p. 132).

The committee seem greatly perplexed by this phenomenon, and observe, "Here is something that deeply needs explanation. Do we find some light on it in our next quotation from a private in the R.A.M.C.?" :—

I have been puzzled often to find men of no profession of religion exhibit such an unselfish, brave, kind and just spirit to an extent not seen in professing Christians. It is probably true of them that they are not far from the Kingdom of Heaven.

We cannot see that the last quotation throws any more light upon the subject than the previous one, unless it is to confirm the fact that morality and virtue are in no wise dependent upon religious belief. A major even gives it as his opinion that "Great zeal for some Church or other is a bar to friendship over there" (p. 130). An officer in a North of Ireland regiment writes: "The men have set aside their Church conventions, and are now on a footing of good fellowship with Southern Roman Catholic Irishmen, a thing undreamed of before the war." Which shows convincingly that the whole root of the trouble in Ireland arises from religion and nothing else. •

Another witness shows a better grasp of the subject of this un-Christian morality by observing:—

They are quite willing to make the supreme sacrifice because of their keen sense of duty. It is a strange quality, but it is a quality which was common to certain races before the Christian era and a quality not unknown amongst non-Christian nations to-day (p. 134).

A chaplain of a Scottish regiment says, "I was immensely impressed by the native grandeur of human nature. Unredeemed human nature is infinitely nobler than I had dreamed" (p. 127).

Another witness states that doing a good action "is generally regarded as doing the straight thing, not so much a good turn, and to suggest it was a Christian act would be instantly denied" (p. 66). Even the vague and indefinite ideas of God, held by the mass of the Army, are not connected with Christianity. A Y.M.C.A. director of religious work in a base camp declares: "The Theism of the Army is Mohammedan rather than Christian" (p. 36).

"Nearly all the men are fatalists," says another witness; "If there is one for you you'll get it." And the committee states, "Many witnesses might be quoted to a similar effect, some of them saying that practically all the men are fatalists" (p. 160).

An officer describes it as more of a philosophy than a religion. He says:—

It is the kind of fatalism practically every man

who has fought in this war must regard as his property. It is not a blind declaration of "Kismet," nor is it, except in a few cases, a feeling of being in God's hands for good or ill, but rather it is an active philosophy, that if there is a bullet made for you, it will get you some time. It is only a philosophy like this, heathenish though it sounds, that enables many men to stick it (p. 161).

Several are struck by its resemblance to the fighting creed of Islam. An officer of a Scottish Highland regiment, in what the committee describe as "a striking paper on 'Trench Religion,'" accounts for it as follows:—

Nowhere, as on a battlefield, is there such evidence of the powerlessness of the mightiest human organization to protect his own individuality. A millimetre's deflection in the laying of a gun is the difference between life and death to him. He knows how a shell will burst between two men, blowing one to pieces, yet leaving the other unhurt and amazed.....What eats into his soul is the knowledge that all this violence is blind. Chance rules as an autocrat in the metropolis of our most perfect mechanism. Is it strange that the child of these conditions should be a thorough fatalist? Most men are familiar already with the soldier's catchword, "If there is a bullet with your name on you'll get it." History would seem to stamp such fatalism as the best seed-ground for martial virtues, as the history of Islam will bear witness. At the same time it is always Theistic; and withal the most empty of moral content. Such are its tendencies at the front, and here is the chief matter for consideration. The soldier's God is once more the God of Battles, who clothes Himself with the storm. He is not the judge of righteousness and wrong, not the friend of the fatherless and the widow's protector, not holy, or just, or good, but simply the controller of all the forces of Nature which burst from the little grasp of man; the Lord of Fate and the Master of Life and Death (p. 163).

The conclusion the committee reach after considering all the evidence is that, "The immediate task before the Church in the coming years is nothing less than the winning of the great majority of the youth of the nation to faith in God through Jesus Christ and conscious dedication to His Kingdom" (p. 402). Well, they will not succeed. The Reformation destroyed, for Protestants, the authority of the Church and substituted the authority of the Bible. Now Science has destroyed the authority of the Bible, and the Protestant Churches are now trying to substitute the authority of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. But all we know of Christ is contained in the Bible, which has been thoroughly discredited, and with the rejection of this authority has disappeared belief in the Judgment Day, in a personal Devil, and eternal punishment. It was the latter beliefs that were vital to Christianity. It was by working upon these fears that Wesley caused the great Revival.

A distinguished university teacher reporting his experience at a great French Base, says:—

The intellectual difficulty to-day for four persons out of five is to see why they should listen to any sort of padre if they do not want to. *The fear of the Lord has vanished imperceptibly like morning mist.* There is now no intellectual compulsion to believe the Christian tale, to accept the Christian view of the world and of man's responsibility. And therefore those who realize how different the world imagined by the ancients is from the world as set forth by modern knowledge, and who are not already dressed in the Christian robes, do not see why they should put on so old-fashioned a suit, one made for another age and climate and now nearly worn out (*The Army and Religion*, pp. 196-7).

To bring about another Revival it would first be necessary to restore the old beliefs. Even Wesley him-

self would be powerless to-day to cause a Revival. Religions, like men, when once dead cannot be brought to life again. It is as impossible to revive the old belief and faith in Christianity as to restore belief in the gods of the ancient Greeks, in many respects much worthier of worship, and who certainly did not bring upon the world a tithe of the calamities which attended the triumph of Christianity.

W. MANN.

Acid Drops.

Our Home Secretary, who can see no reason why he should relieve Freethinkers from the infamous imposition of the Blasphemy laws, has conceded the right of nuns to be relieved from attendance on juries. Personally, we should be inclined to agree with this, as if a person has really a conscientious objection to discharging such a function he, or she, is better relieved than forced to serve. But the action of the Home Secretary is significant. He opposed the concession in committee, but granted it, under pressure, in the House. As was clear from his cowardly action in the case of the Blasphemy laws, his opinions are always open to modification—providing he finds it unsafe to persist in them.

The *Church Times* sees in the concession proof that it is impossible to make the State entirely secular. We do not see it. A State must of perforce deal with all classes of citizens, and this often involves a departure from the strict application of rigid principles. But that is an entirely different thing from the State selecting a particular religion, endowing it with national funds, relieving its ministers or buildings from their share of taxation, and giving them an official recognition at its official functions. After all, the State has in some countries confined its activities to secular matters, it is the unmistakable trend in all civilized centres, and we see no reason for believing that England is so impervious to reason, or so far removed from the currents of civilization as to remain permanently outside this tendency.

"What percentage of men of the world are really human?" asks the Dean of Norwich. The question would be still more pertinent if asked concerning pious people in monasteries and nunneries. Even petticoated priests are savage survivals.

"Ask and it shall be given" may be a good text for Christians, but it appears to have little practical value. Regent's Park Chapel has been closed owing to the inability of the congregation to pay the increased rental.

"Materialism is trebly bankrupt," declares Dr. E. A. Burroughs, Dean of Bristol, in a Sunday paper, and then he devotes two columns of small print to attacking the already slain. It looks as if the wish were father to the thought.

The late Rev. W. H. Skene, of Wigan, was the son of a parson and one of seven clergymen brothers. This seems an undue anxiety to enter a "starving" profession.

On the front page of the *Times* (London) recently, the death was recorded of twenty-two persons whose ages totalled 1,651 years, an average of seventy-five. Nine were over eighty, and one was ninety-eight. Adam and Methuselah would have considered that these people died in their childhood.

Without pointing out the fallacy in a victorious nation gabbling economy, it would be well for Freethinkers to note that the Dean of Durham is in favour of less money being spent on education. Says this dignitary of the Church, "Every great institution rested upon finance." It will need particular discrimination to find out whether

the great institution he represents was floated on thirty shillings. What man can temporize with this state of mind? This continuous standing in the light—this opposition to definite advancement—this holding to a static creed of a square world, and stating views in the field of economics where religion can have no place. If the Dean wishes to go to heaven on a cloud of glory let him preach—with understanding—the Just Price—but that would mean the sack—and rubbing shoulders with the unemployed ex-soldiers whose education was levelled down to the Field Service Card.

The *Leeds Mercury* thinks that "if the Churches would throw their edifices open, invite criticism, admit discussion, and generally have recourse to the original Christian system," they would stand a greater chance of success. The leader-writer of the *Mercury* is very simple. We wonder whether he seriously believes that the early Christians invited criticism or willingly admitted discussion. Of course, those who became Christians had to listen to the Christian preachers in order to get converted, but once converted their readiness to listen to criticism or to admit discussion ended. This intolerance was not a product of mediæval Christianity, it belongs to the essence of that religion. It simply developed the evil latent in its nature as it grew older.

Bishop Morley, late of Madras, is "horrified" at the sight of Christian people wearing mascots. But why should he be surprised? Superstition is superstition, and it makes little real difference whether it is dressed up in the elaborate ritual of the Church or sold in more or less expensive forms to be worn by the people. Really, the one is a preparation for the other. If you bring up a child to believe in the semi-magical and wholly ridiculous doctrines of the Christian Church, you have no ground for surprise if it takes to forms of superstition other than those it has been accustomed to. As we have often pointed out, the rage for mascots, from the Royal family downward is only an indication of the poor type of mentality that is current, and the standing danger it offers to whatever genuine culture our society possesses. The cure for mascots is to bring people up in a more rational manner, and that means providing them with an environment in which all forms of religion are rendered innocuous.

An American reader sends us a copy of the *Los Angeles Examiner*, and asks us what we think of its statement that the Bible had nothing to do with the backward condition of Europe during the Dark Ages, which, it says, was due to the irruption of the Barbarians. This is, of course, the stock explanation which, in the interests of Christianity, has become current. All we need say now is that nothing could have suited a body of barbarians better than this same Bible. It enshrined the most stupid of superstitions, it taught the genuineness of witchcraft, demonism, with all their attendant evils. And its teachings with regard to the structure of the world and the nature of man were such as were well suited to barbarians or worse. What the *Los Angeles Examiner* should do is to inform its readers how, with such a book, it was possible for Europe to become anything else than uncivilized. And it is one of the plainest lessons of European history that the world has only become civilized in proportion as it has shaken off the controlling influence of the Bible.

At a recent meeting of All Saints' Church, Streatham, the Rev. H. H. Skinner brought forward a motion of protest against (1) the inclusion of lessons from the Apocrypha on Sundays in the new alternative Lectionary, and (2) the exclusion of St. John's Gospel from the proposed Harmony of the Gospels. Speaking to the motion, Mr. Parker said that "the meeting probably knew nothing of the subject under discussion." This is highly significant and doubtless applies to a large number of "Christian" communities besides those in Streatham. In the palmy days of the faith the Fourth Gospel was pre-eminently the believer's guide and consolation. It is worth noting, too, that *Daniel*, which long held a post of

honour among the popular Old Testament books, has been completely elbowed out of this position. The few "survivals" in the field of Biblical prophecy are regarded as dupes rather than hypocrites, and in England the latter are always on far safer ground. The *International Encyclopædia* (1914) says that much of the apocalyptic material of *Daniel* "has a foreign origin, in Babylonian and Persian mythology." That the very two books of the "inspired" record which evoked so ready a response from the faithful, should now be declared of late and uncertain date and authorship, or largely mythical, is more effective than libraries of comment as an answer to the assertion that "the Bible is its own witness."

Several issues of the *South Wales Daily Post* during the last week of April are full of interest, albeit of a sinister nature, when read side by side with proposed schemes of Christian reunion. At Cockett one section of worshippers in the Anglican Church demands services in the English language, another section wants services in Welsh. On Easter Sunday there was considerable "brawling" during the English service, and on the following Sunday "in view of possible trouble in the district the police were reinforced during the day." Here in London, when asked to subscribe to organizations for spreading the Gospel in the slums, we are assured that city missionaries are less expensive than policemen. We advise these workers in the vineyard to go to South Wales for a testimonial.

"Within fifty years it is quite possible that England will be Catholic." F. Vassall-Phillips, described by the *London Catholic Herald* (May 6) as a "redemptorist convert," is responsible for this utterance. "The harvest is not distant." We are inclined to think that this convert has been reading Tennyson's *May Queen*, with its tender refrain, "Call me early, mother dear," and the words linger in his memory. At the same time Freethinkers should be wide awake to the campaign being organized by The Catholic Truth Society and The Catholic Evidence Guild. Protestantism is disintegrating rapidly. Are we taking full advantage of our opportunities? The spirit of Rome and submission has centuries of history behind it. But so has the spirit of free thought and resistance to ecclesiastical authority. It is difficult for some Englishmen to imagine this country going back to the Invocation of Saints, Purgatory, Relics and Indulgences; but they should bear in mind that there are still a good many people, even in England, who want to save their souls, and Rome can offer them salvation on very acceptable terms.

We referred recently to Mr. William Jennings Bryan and his anti-evolution campaign in U.S.A. The present "spiritual" condition of the Great Republic—perhaps it would be more correct to say the Big Republic—is an interesting study both in "varieties of religious experience" and in national character. An American correspondent sends us the following advertisement from a journal published in Norfolk, Virginia:—

The only photograph in the world of the model of the Holy City (Heaven) as described in Revelation xxi. 10-27. It shows the many mansions and the place being prepared—John xiv. 2, 3. Price, with descriptive reading, 50 cents. Every Bible student should own one and should read instructive books as below: *Where are the Dead? Shall we know our Loved Ones in the Next Age? The Great Pyramids of Egypt*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and many others. Any of the above by mail, 15 cents.

Fifty cents, say about two shillings, cannot be considered an excessive price for a photograph of the New Jerusalem, "with descriptive reading" and detailed plan of "the many mansions." There are many enterprising speculators in the States. Could not some of them organize cheap excursions, by aeroplane, to the Holy City? This is the sort of venture that should attract Billy Sunday, D.D., and a go-ahead people might just as well go all the way.

The *Evening Sun*, Baltimore (February 14), has a leading article on "Morons." The word is Greek and is

meant to represent "feeble-minded." The Baltimore organ is seriously perturbed at the announcement that, according to a classification based upon army intelligence tests, 47.3 per cent. of the American population are morons. Those conducting the tests, our contemporary declares, "have confused intelligence with education." The former is the gift of the gods, the latter often marks the withholding of this gift. But different gods bestow different favours, and on reading the above advertisement one is inclined to ask what deities are at work in the land of the dollar and the sky-scraper. We are beginning to doubt whether they are much ahead of our own intellectually, after all.

The Chinese general, Wu, who recently won what is said to be a decisive victory in the civil war in China, is said to be a Christian. The religion of love and brotherhood has evidently not prevented him becoming proficient in the art of warfare. Or perhaps superior skill in the art of war is about all he has found worth taking from Christianity. Now all that he need do is to fit out an expedition for the plunder of some country and he will then show that his Christian education is complete, and if he visits this country the May Meetings will receive him rapturously as a newly gained brother in Christ.

Dr. E. A. Burroughs, Dean of Bristol, is considered to be one of the educated men of the Church of England. In a recent article in one of the weekly papers he said that much of the present decline of religion "is the direct result, as well as the cause, of the parallel decline in morals." That comes from one of the leading men of the Church of England. It is another reminder of the little intelligence and genuine culture it takes to become a leader in the Christian Churches.

We use the last sentence deliberately, and, in our opinion, it expresses an important truth. A Church can only command the best intellect in a nation so long as its teaching is in harmony with the best knowledge and intelligence of the day. Once upon a time the Church stood in a better position in that relation than its wildest advocate can claim for it to-day. And then it did command the services of a number of able men. To-day the best intellect of the nation is outside the Churches, and much of it is in open opposition. The consequence is that the Church is compelled to take whatever it can get and be thankful for it. Able men stand outside and give their energies to some other branch of life. But the Church must have servants, and so a Winnington Ingram becomes Bishop of London, and other men, who in the open market could not earn twenty-five shillings a week by their intellectual output, occupy positions of importance and draw very comfortable incomes. The strongest indictment of modern Christianity is to be found in the intellectual character of its leading men. God may have chosen the foolish to confound the wise men. There is no doubt as to the choice, but the confounding is not quite so apparent.

Some of the pious folk of Weston-super-Mare are agitated by the question of whether or no one of the local vicars ought to teach dancing. So long as he does not appear in the costume—or want of costume—in which David danced before the Lord, we should not think there can be any reasonable objection to the vicar doing something entertaining and probably useful.

Those Freethinkers who congratulate themselves on orthodox Christianity being dead would do well to pay attention to a deliverance of the Rev. F. B. Meyer. Speaking at Leicester to a missionary gathering, this gentleman said that the rebellious angels who became demons, after their revolt in heaven, were at the back of the pagan religions. There is nothing new in this theory; Paul propounds this among other foolish theories, and, as a matter of fact, it was generally accepted among Christians. We note it here, however, because Mr. Meyer is a prominent Nonconformist preacher with a considerable following, and he may serve to remind us that, certainly so far as religion is concerned, if not in relation

to other things, there are multitudes of Christians who are still moving on the level of the intellectual barbarism of the pre-scientific ages.

We are all too apt to pay little attention to this class of people, and to the importance of the persistence of this barbaric type of intellect in our midst. It not only serves as a constant threat to our general progress, but the emergence of the preacher in the political field makes it a very constant danger. The old tag of the mind working in water-tight compartments is here a dangerous simile. Irrationality in one direction tends to breed irrationality in others, and the man who takes a jaundiced view of his fellows in matters of religion is not likely to take a healthy one with regard to other matters. Liberality is a characteristic which belongs to a man's whole mental-make-up, or it does not. And a careful analysis might trace a deal of the ignorance, the narrowness, and the stupidity of the political world to the influence of a religion that belongs to the ages of barbarism, and which ought to have died with them.

A correspondent sends us a copy of the *Yorkshire Observer* for May 11 containing a report of a sermon on "The Use and Abuse of Sunday," by the Principal of Bradford United College, the Rev. E. Griffith Jones. There is very little in it that is above the average Non-conformist production on such a subject; that is, it has a few common-places of no particular importance, some historical inaccuracies, and a deal of Christian unctuousness and silliness. Why editors of papers take up their space with such is a bit of a puzzle, but one supposes that the rule is that laid down by Charles the First as explaining the popularity of a certain bishop with the people. Said Charles, "His foolishness suits their foolishness." That seems nearly all that can be said in such matters.

The quality of Mr. Griffith Jones' thinking can be seen from his conclusion. This has the saving merit of pointing out that Sunday must be a day of recreation, and recreation must be of a varied character in order to suit different people. But, on the other hand, no man spends the Sunday well "who does not habitually unite with his neighbours in praise and prayer." So that whatever we do we must not forget to patronize the parson's place of business, or have a prayer rehearsal at home which may induce us to attend an official performance later on. But the gem of Mr. Griffith Jones' advice is contained in the following passage:—

Sunday is the festival of family life. Unless some hours of the day are spent in cultivating family affection its tie will be dangerously relaxed.

One suspects that what Mr. Griffith Jones' has in mind is more family prayers. But we will give him the benefit of the doubt and assume that it means just what it says. In that case it well illustrates that formal cant which is characteristic of Nonconformity in this country. Family affection is a good thing, but it cannot be cultivated by a formal spending of several hours together in the conscious resolve to cultivate it. If it exists it grows out of the normal relations between the members of the family, not on Sunday only, or on Sunday mostly, but throughout the week, and no less on a busy day than on a slack one. The notion that members of a family can cultivate affection by getting together once a week with "now-let-us-cultivate-brotherly-love" kind of an air is one of those absurdities that could only occur to a Christian preacher. Let any number of people make that experiment and they will soon find that they have hit on a first-rate method of developing cant, hypocrisy, and priggishness, in addition to making Sunday a day which all will look forward to with dread and bid good-bye to with the greatest pleasure. Mr. Griffith Jones serves to illustrate the danger to which a country is exposed so long as its moral and intellectual guidance rests to any extent in the hands of Christian ministers.

At the annual concurrence of the National Chamber of Trade, held on May 9, several members urged that religious bodies engaged in business should be taxed, like

ordinary trading concerns. The proposal was not agreed to, but it serves to show how much leeway we have still to make up before we attain to religious equality before the law. All the churches are exempt from payment of rates, the Establishment draws a considerable income from tithes, and its clergy, if in charge of a benefice with £300 per annum or less, pay no poor rate, and certain religious concerns engaged in ordinary commercial pursuits also escape taxation. The complacency with which the community accepts this state of affairs is instructive as an indication of national character.

The *Scotsman* (May 8) contains a long article, "Labour Day in Czecho-Slovakia," which shows that all over the Republic there is a strong and growing demand for the separation of Church and State. The article is written by a correspondent in Pilsen, which has had a "traditional reputation for fanatical devotion to Roman Catholicism." "It is amazing to find this hatred and contempt for the Papacy universally expressed." The Socialist Mayor of Pilsen declared on May Day: "The Republic has settled with the Habsburgs; we must now settle with the other enemy of our race—Rome." If those people in England who listen so eagerly to the siren voice of the Catholic Evidence Guild could be brought face to face with the concrete evidence of Roman Catholicism wherever it is established, they would see a striking picture of the difference between theory and practice. Despite her extravagant claims concerning her progress in England, Rome is far from happy on the Continent.

In an article on Saint George the *Times* (London) says "perhaps the Saint was with his people amid the tornado of German shell-fire." Perhaps, not!

The roof of a Spiritualist meeting place in Moor Crescent Road, Leeds, fell in on the congregation. That is an instance where a little warning from the spiritual world would have been of service. We are sorry for anyone who happened to be injured, but the circumstance shows that in all that matters they were no better protected than the most thorough-going materialists. Spirits are about the most useless things in an emergency that we know of.

In a leading article, "Protestant Bishops and Modernism," the *London Catholic Herald* (May 13) discusses the recent resolutions of the Convocation of Canterbury. It is possible, our contemporary thinks, that such proceedings may hasten the disruption of the Establishment "by accentuating still more deeply the cleavage between those who believe in a Divine Revelation and those who look on all religion as the result of man's intellectual development and environment." The *Herald* has not the slightest doubt that the chaos of the twentieth century is the aftermath of the sixteenth century's apostasy. It is the Nemesis of disobedience. The Establishment does not, any more than Rome, like the Modernists. It tolerates them because it cannot help itself.

The Rev. Dr. Fitchett, speaking on May 3 at the annual meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society, said that at the Girls' College in Australia, of which he was the head, he made the girls learn by heart the following lines, each holding her Bible in her hand:—

Within this awful volume lies
The Mystery of Mysteries.
Oh, happiest they of human race
To whom our God hath given grace
To hear, to read, to watch and pray,
To lift the latch and force the way.
But better had they ne'er been born
That read to doubt, or read to scorn.

This sort of thing confirms beautifully the assertion that the "Bible is its own witness." It also gives practical evidence of how large a measure of "spirituality" the Freethinker loses in rejecting the Christian religion. And the men and women who solemnly repeat such doggerel as that quoted, and teach it to children, will talk by the yard of "the dead-hand of tradition" when Roman Catholicism is in question.

N. S. S. Conference.

THE Annual Conference of the National Secular Society will be held this year on Whit-Sunday, June 4, at Nottingham. There will be the usual business meetings at 10.30 and 2.30, and in the evening a public demonstration will be held which will be addressed by a number of speakers, the President in the chair. This year the afternoon will be devoted to a general discussion of the position of Freethought and Religious Equality in the Home. Brief papers will be read by members and they will be followed by discussion. It is hoped that there will be a good rally of members and friends from all over the country. Those intending to visit the Conference and desiring arrangements to be made for their stay in Nottingham, should write the General Secretary without delay, stating their exact requirements. The question of an excursion for the Monday following the Conference is under consideration.

To Correspondents.

Those subscribers who receive their copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN WRAPPER will please take it that the renewal of their subscription is due. They will also oblige, if they do not want us to continue sending the paper, by notifying us to that effect.

F. GAYTON.—Pleased to know that "an old reader in a new place" has not forgotten the old paper. After all we have struggled through we are entitled to consider the *Freethinker* as near indestructible as a paper can be.

S. M.—We saw the case, as you will see on turning to our front page.

TAB CAN.—What would you? A Church lacking the countenance of the better class brains must put up with what it can get. The misfortune arises with those who go to such churches under the delusion that they are getting something worth going for.

(MRS.) A. LEE.—Pamphlets on the Blasphemy question have been sent. Hope they will do good.

W. J. MACKENZIE.—We shall be glad to do anything we can to help you in pushing Freethought in your locality. So, we are sure, will the Glasgow friends.

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

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

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When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.

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

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

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

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.

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—

The United Kingdom.—One year, 17s. 6d.; half year, 8s. 9d.; three months, 4s. 6d.

Foreign and Colonial.—One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

Sugar Plums.

We are pleased to see that our readers are keeping up the bombardment of members of parliament with regard to the Bill for the Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws. From one of them we have received a copy of a letter from Sir Herbert Neild, M.P. This gentleman says:—

I have considered the letter and the Bill which you send. In my opinion the times are not such as would entitle us to surrender the security we have against undue license in speech and writings. I should require a very strong case to be made out by the promoters before I could support the Bill. I am quite prepared to listen and very carefully consider all that can be urged in favour of the Bill, but I certainly can go no further.

We really think someone ought to compile a guide as to the right amount of stupidity necessary to qualify a man for Parliament. The above letter is a case in point. The Bill does not attempt to remove any security against "undue license in speech or writings"—whatever that may mean. It simply wishes to abolish special privileges for religion, and to take from the Christian religion a protection at law that is denied other religions and other opinions. If that is not plain to Sir Herbert Neild he must have read the Bill very carelessly, or must be quite unacquainted with the Blasphemy laws and their scope. It is evident that before the Bill does pass we shall have to educate members of Parliament very carefully; and we fancy that requiring "a very strong case" to be made out in order to support it means, in a very large number of cases, making it quite plain that votes will be lost if the right thing is not done. That is the reason why our readers must keep the game alive. Make it quite clear that if Freethinkers' votes are to be got candidates must do the right thing.

Last Sunday, in the afternoon and evening, Mr. A. D. McLaren had two exceptionally good meetings in Brockwell Park. At 3 p.m. he spoke on "Christian Mythology" and at 6.15 p.m. on "Belief in God." The address in the evening was followed with keen attention by a large audience, including a noticeable proportion of young men and women, and at the conclusion there was a big budget of questions. A good deal of literature was also disposed of. This Branch is working energetically and appears to be making considerable headway in South London. The speaker to-day (May 21) will be Mr. R. H. Rosetti, and we hope he will have large audiences at both meetings, including a good sprinkling of Christian inquirers.

We are asked to add to the note last week on the Charabanc excursion to Hindhead which is being arranged by the South London Branch of the N. S. S. that arrangements have been made so that in the event of the weather turning out to be unfavourable the excursionists will be protected in every possible way. The excursion, it will be remembered, takes the form of a run to Hindhead and back, via Brookwood, with a halt at Bradlaugh's grave, and a first-class tea at Hindhead. The run will occupy the whole of the day, and the total charge will be 10s. There are still some vacant places to be had, but application should be made for these as early as possible. Address to Mr. J. Brandes, 89 Union Grove, S.W. 8. The vehicles will start from the Trades Union Hall, 32 Brixton Road, Kennington Oval end, at 9.30. If successful the excursion will be followed by others.

The Glasgow Branch of the N. S. S., despite the dull weather, had a most enjoyable outing on Sunday, May 7, when they held the first of their series of rambles at Philipshill. The second will take place on Sunday, May 28, this time visiting Calderwood Estate, near Dalton. Members and friends who intend to be present will meet at Cambuslang car terminus at 12 noon. Each person will bring their own refreshments, but tea will be procurable. A good turnout is desired.

An attempt is to be made to start a Branch of the N.S.S. at Milngavie, near Glasgow. Things have been moving

there since Mr. Cohen held a debate in the Town Hall, and some Secularists are anxious to see the work done in a more systematic manner. Will those Freethinkers in the district who would like to lend a hand please communicate with Mr. W. J. Mackenzie, 1 Barloch Terrace, Milngavie? The place is just outside Glasgow, and there are a very large number of Freethinkers in the neighbourhood. We wish the endeavour every success.

The Manchester Branch is also arranging for an outing to-day (May 21) to Altringham. Members and friends will meet at the Victoria Monument at 10 o'clock. Tea will be provided at Heald Green.

One of our readers asks us whether it is true that Colonel Ingersoll modified his opinions in relation to religion before he died. It is as true as the stories that Christians usually tell about dead Freethinkers. But anyone can form an opinion for himself if he will read Ingersoll's last lecture, delivered only a few weeks before his death. For the benefit of all we reprint the following summary which Ingersoll gave of his opinions then, and which remained unaltered. The lecture is entitled, "What is Religion?" and can be purchased from this office for one penny—special price for quantities. Here are the important passages:—

If we have a theory we must have facts for the foundation. We must have corner-stones. We must not build on guesses, fancies, analogies, or inferences. The structure must have a basement. If we build, we must begin at the bottom.

I have a theory, and I have four corner-stones.

The first stone is that matter—substance—cannot be destroyed, cannot be annihilated.

The second stone is that force cannot be destroyed, cannot be annihilated.

The third stone is that matter and force cannot exist apart—no matter without force; no force without matter.

The fourth stone is that that which cannot be destroyed could not have been created; that the indestructible is the uncreatable.

If these corner-stones are facts, it follows as a necessity that matter and force are from and to eternity; that they can neither be increased nor diminished.

It follows that nothing has been, or can be, created; that there never has been, or can be, a creator.

It follows that there could not have been any intelligence, any design, back of matter and force.

There is no intelligence without force. There is no force without matter. Consequently there could not be any possibility have been any intelligence, any force, back of matter.

It therefore follows that the supernatural does not, and cannot, exist. If these four corner-stones are facts, nature has no master. If matter and force are from and to eternity, it follows as a necessity that no God exists.

That ought to be enough to stop the mouths of even Christian Evidence lecturers.

FREETHOUGHT ON TYNESIDE.—It has now been decided that some attempt at propaganda shall be made at an early date. It is generally agreed that a lecturer should come to Tyneside for a protracted period. There is a fine field for outside as well as indoor speaking. It is thought that Mr. Whitehead should be invited to spend, at least, a few days amongst us. There is still a good nucleus of the old brigade of Freethinkers spread over the district. And we have also a few staunch young workers who, perhaps, only want a gentle incentive to spur them on their way. Our case is such that we do not depend upon large numbers in order to have marked effect. Each one is a phalanx. If only this could be appreciated our work would be assured. Will all who are willing to help on this project please communicate with—J. FOTHERGILL, Secretary South Shields Branch, 12 Straker Terrace, Tyne Dock.

There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has realized itself in the supposed fact, and now the fact is failing it.—Matthew Arnold.

Buddhism, God, and the Soul.

THERE is no teaching in the Buddhist philosophy which is more categorically precise than the doctrine of Anatta—the non-existence of an Absolute, whether considered as God, "ego," or soul. The Atta, or Atman, is a prominent feature of Hindu theistic philosophy, and it was on this question that Gotama, the Buddha, parted company with the principal schools of his time, as well as with the predominant forms of religion. The Atma theory also occupies a prominent position in that pretentious farrago which is known to-day as Theosophy. Modern Theosophy claims to be "the ancient wisdom religion" which underlies the outward expressions or forms of all other religions. But this is, most certainly, not true of Buddhism. In order to bring Buddhism into the Theosophical corral, an "esoteric" Buddhism has been invented, and a book was written by the late Mr. Sinnett called *Esoteric Buddhism*. Of this book it is only necessary to say two things; first, that it is not esoteric, and secondly, that it is not Buddhism.

As regards esotericism, it is stated in the Book of the Great Decease¹ that, shortly before his death, the Buddha was approached by the disciple Ananda who asked him whether he had not an esoteric teaching to leave behind. The Buddha replied: "I have preached the truth without making any distinction between exoteric and esoteric doctrine; for in respect of my teaching I have no such thing as the closed fist of a teacher who holds something back." The Buddha everywhere repudiated secrecy, esotericism, and occultism, which he said were characteristic of priestcraft and false doctrine. He also discountenanced magic and mystery and miracle-mongering. On one occasion, when asked to display "a miracle of magic power" for the confounding of certain opponents, the Buddha said: "I despise and reject the miracles of magic power and divination. I and my disciples gain adherents only by the miracle of instruction," and all such practices as fortune telling, astrology, prophecy, spells and supplications, sacrifices to gods, witchcraft, and what is nowadays called Spiritualism are classed together as "low arts of deception."

As regards the Atma theory, the Buddha said to Anathapindika, the wealthy merchant who presented the Buddha and his disciples with the Jetavana park:

If by the Absolute (Atta, or Atma) is meant something out of relation to all known things, its existence cannot be established by any reasoning. How can we know that any thing unrelated to other things exists at all? The whole universe, as we know it, is a system of relations; we know nothing that is, or can be, unrelated. How can that which depends on nothing and is related to nothing produce things which are related to one another and depend for their existence upon one another? Again, the Absolute is one or many. If it be only one, how can it be the cause of the different things which originate, as we know, from different causes? If there be as many different Absolutes as there are things, how can the latter be related to one another? If the Absolute pervades all things and fills all space, then it cannot also make them, for there is nothing to make. Further, if the Absolute is devoid of all qualities, all things arising from it ought likewise to be devoid of qualities. But in reality all things in the world are circumscribed throughout by qualities. Hence the Absolute cannot be their cause. If the Absolute be considered to be different from the qualities, how does it continually create the things possessing such qualities and manifest in them? Again, if the Absolute be unchangeable, all things should be unchangeable too, for the effect cannot differ in nature from the cause. But all things in the world undergo

¹ *Maha-parinibbana-sutta.*

change and decay. How then can the Absolute be unchangeable? ²

The Buddhist denies the existence of all Absolutes, but he does not deny the existence of the internal or external world. For him the world is an aggregate of conditions or relations, which are themselves not self-existent, but interdependent. Only when conceived in its totality has the world any meaning. ³

Thus a quite modern "discovery" on the part of Professor Einstein is nothing new in itself. The principle of relativity, although set forth by him in modern, scientific terminology, is quite readily grasped by the Buddhist, even if he may have no knowledge of modern science. It simply confirms a fundamental principle of his own philosophy, namely, that whatever exists must be relative to something else and is quite unthinkable otherwise. Time, for instance, is relative to a fixed point in space; without this relativity, there can be no conception of time. In the absolute sense there is no time. In the same way, dimension cannot exist save in relation to actual or theoretical fixed points in space. In the absolute sense there is no dimension. Objects moving in space build up different time intervals, thus space and time are interlinked. Again, without the relativity of actual or theoretical fixed points, there can be no conception of space. In the absolute sense there is no space. In the same way soul or spirit can only be conceived in relation to being, as we shall see later. In the absolute sense there is no soul or spirit.

From the Buddhist point of view the theory of a First Cause, whether transcendental Absolute, or a concrete, personal god-creator, are ruled out as illogical and not in accordance with reason and experience. These ideas have led to the intellectual derailment of every school of thought into which they enter.

There can be no First Cause. In experience we find no absolute beginning. We come across no change instituting a series of changes which has not itself been preceded by some other change. The question of cause never arises except where there is change, and the cause demanded is always another change. Hence it is meaningless to speak of a first cause. ⁴

As regards God in the aspect of a personal creator, the Buddha argued the matter as follows:—

If the world had been made by God, there should be no change or destruction, there should be no such thing as sorrow or calamity, as right or wrong, as all things, pure and impure, must come from him. If sorrow and joy, love and hate, which spring up in all conscious beings, be the work of God, he himself must be capable of sorrow and joy, love and hatred, and if he has these how can he be said to be perfect? If God be the maker, and if all things have to submit silently to their maker's power, what would be the utility of practising virtue? The doing of right or wrong would be the same, as all deeds are his making and must be the same with their maker. But if sorrow and suffering are attributed to another cause, then there would be something of which God is not the cause. Why, then, should not all that exists be uncaused too? Again, if God be the maker, he acts with or without a purpose. If he acts with a purpose, he cannot be said to be perfect, for a purpose necessarily implies the satisfaction of a want. If he acts without a purpose, he must be like a lunatic or a suckling babe. Besides, if God be the maker, why should not people reverently submit to him, why should they offer supplications to him when sorely pressed by necessity? And why should people adore more gods than one? Thus the idea of God is proved false by rational argument, and all such contradictory assertions should be exposed. If, as Theists say, God is too great for man to be able to comprehend him, then it follows that his qualities also surpass

our range of thought, and that we can neither know him nor attribute to him the quality of a creator. ⁵

Is not, then, the world in which we live an orderly world where everything is governed by law? All the order which exists in the world arises from the simple fact that, when there are no disturbing causes things remain the same. The observed grouping of things and sequence of events we speak of as the order of the world, and this is the same as saying that the world is as it is, and no more. No natural law is the cause of the observed sequence in nature. Every natural law merely describes the conditions on which a particular change is dependent. A law of nature does not command that something shall take place, it merely states how something happens.

From the Buddhist point of view, such a thing as a "disembodied soul," a conscious, mentally active being without a body, and therefore without the mechanism of sensation and perception, is not only an impossibility but is unthinkable. In the Buddha's time there were many theories concerning this soul-entity, notably that it is an indwelling "spark" of the Absolute, or Atma. It was supposed to be eternal, indestructible, unchangeable, and to enter successive bodies over an almost interminable series of re-incarnations for the sake of gaining knowledge and experience, eventually returning with the knowledge so gained, presumably to inform the parent Atma. But, since Atma contains everything within itself to begin with, such a pilgrimage would seem to be an unnecessary work of supererogation, to say the least of it.

The Buddha examined the various schools of Theistic philosophy in which this theory of a soul, as a subtle, permanent entity dwelling within the body but independent of the life of the body, plays a part. In the first of the discourses of the *Digha Nikaya* no fewer than sixty-two variants of this theory are enumerated. The Buddha described the theorists as "eel-wrigglers" on account of the nature of their arguments, and the discourse is called the Perfect Net because he has them caught in the meshes of his argument drawn so close that none of them can wriggle through.

According to the Buddha's teaching a human being is a natural phenomenon, the product of natural causes like all other phenomena. It is a complex, or compound, phenomenon, and is in the first analysis divided into five khandhas, or aggregates: (1) rupa, the body, or vehicle; (2) sensation, feeling; (3) perception; (4) consciousness; (5) mentality. These aggregates are further subdivided, but it is unnecessary to labour our enquiry unduly. There are six senses, sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell, and mind (mano); and six sense organs, eye, ear, tongue, contact (of the body), nose and brain.

It is obvious that without a body to contact the surroundings there can be no feeling or sensation, without sensation there can be no perception, without perception there can be no consciousness, without consciousness there can be no mental activity. To reverse the proposition. Mentality depends upon consciousness, which depends upon perception, which depends upon sensation, which depends upon a body. The aggregates are relative to and dependent upon each other. Separate them, and there can be no being. The whole in association is called Nama-rupa, a term often, and erroneously, translated "name and form." Nama has reference to the psychic aspect and rupa to the physical aspect of being. But these are not to be understood as two separate and distinct things, but simply as two sides of one and the same thing. Thus the word namarupa serves to emphasize the essential monism of the Buddhism philosophy. E. UPASAKA.

(To be Concluded.)

² Buddhacharita.

³ Narasu, *Essence of Buddhism*.

⁴ Narasu, *Ibid.*

⁵ Buddhacharita.

Gilbert Frankau's Poems.

THE immensity of inspiration often bursts upon the mind with a force sufficient to destroy the triple husks of year-long growth. In that fiery moment all that went before vanishes, all that is to come reposes in a blackness the deeper for the light of the present. Dazzled, astounded, perplexed by splendour of the vision so suddenly seen, and so shockingly unforeseen an unfortunate wight walks the world, "his heart thumping against his ribs, what for sudden wonder, what for the hope of renown, that has flashed upon him as such a sudden flame of strange light." Blankly unperceptive of the commonplace, he is dubbed mad until the virgin conception becomes concrete. Then he may gain praise, perchance but pain.

In some such spasm of prevision Mr. Frankau's poems must have been glimpsed, and therefrom have been pursued into the light of printer's ink. Thus only can the very differences of the work be accounted for, unless—and that would be a sorry thing to believe—he has adopted a conscious attitude.

He is the decadent, looking upon life with a smile that is more than half a sneer, life of a world hurtling to destruction, knowingly, of its own vices, and impassively impervious to happiness, though always and for ever it seeks gaiety. He is the realist, sobbing bitter tears over the ineptitude of man and woman caught in the toils of civilization, cast out, destroyed and quite unable to burst the shackles of circumstance. Again he is the warrior poet.

So far as confessedly imitative work is concerned it may as well be admitted that an artist who indulges therein but for the purpose of mental exercise is a waster of talent, or at least a learner trying out his ability on the forms which have achieved some share of commendation theretofore. The art of satire is so essentially delicate that the warmth of feeling of youth is to be pardoned for the strenuous bludgeon blows it deals on first entering the crowded life arena. Flail-like, vigorous, the ardour of attack is such as to whelm any who are smitten, but the void reverberates hollow too frequently.

One day an allied aeroplane crashed in No Man's Land. Two British infantrymen sallied forth and brought in the pilot. Fritz opened fire with his artillery on the damaged plane, and after expending many an hundred rounds he succeeded in making a direct hit, completing the destruction of the plane. And so Mr. Frankau has brought the great guns of his talents to bear upon an almost equally insignificant object, an object, moreover, that was similarly already damaged, and upon which a piece of much longer range and heavier calibre had now secured the dreaded direct hit.

Much more sincerity, much more true poetry, much more dramatic art went to the making of the inhuman realism of the second phase of Mr. Frankau's work. Fatalistic, nature-loving, buoyant with the hope of the moment, lost in the sorrow of the eternal impossibility of hope, "Tid'apa" is a thing to weep over and to rejoice in. A thing of the East, the poem has in places caught the very air of the poets of those parts.

Like ramparts of jade, in a garden sea-circled
of blues and of greens—
A garden all frangipanni, and moonflowers and
mangosteens
Wine red under lustrous foliage where the mating
parrots scream—
Due south from the Great Pagoda, four days of a
favouring steam,
Rise the ridges of Lallong Island;—jade ramparts
that beetle down
To the straight white roads, and the palm trees,
and the beaches of Lallong Town.

But though the air has been caught in the charming handling of nature, the story is truly Western in its intensity of life-satiety, of two souls' desperate endeavour to pretend that prisoned in toils stronger than the most ingenious physical fetter they could believe even for a moment that a better day could dawn for them together. And in the midst of their torment—

A bullock cart
Creaked past them, out of the shadows—dark
beasts against moon-bright road,
Lit lanterns a-swing from the palm-tilt, tired
driver asleep on his goad,—

exemplifying the beauty of a world unconcerned with individual distress.

The warrior poet follows on!

The dominant note in Mr. Frankau's war poems is sudden death, intimate, constant, all pervading: the sub-dominant is the herculean labour of modern war. Monstrous, mechanical, this thing has overwhelmed us and destroyed individualism, but it is only in the description of vivid personal action that he achieves romantic poetry.

His picture of Ypres is in some extraordinary fashion a thing of the studio, academic, eviscerated, as if of pure imagination and not of life. Mankind has been pledged, an army has been made, but it is the warrior admiration of personal courage that lends to these songs their merit. Here are the things of the heart at last!

The sudden unexpected burst of fire and Rifleman Brown—

stood up in the forward sap to try and fathom
the game.
Sudden, their shells come screaming; sudden,
his nostrils sniff
The sickening reek of the rotten pears, the death
that kills with a whiff.
Death! And he knows it certain, as he bangs oh
his cartridge case,
With the gas-cloud's claws at his windpipe and
the gas-cloud's wings on his face.....
We heard his gong in our dug-out, he only
whacked on it twice.

Thus by common consent was earned Joe's seat in Valhalla! And so Mr. Frankau has shown that he has learnt the lesson which has to be learned of all artists, the lesson of the love which goes hand in hand with the deadliness of war. His Hebraic Gods are dead! He worships the Pagans, the stern Norse Pagans, who have tormented the man throughout time in such dour fashion.

We scorned the Galilean,
We mocked at Kingdom Come;
The old gods knew our pean—

The old gods who have praised the fiercer loves!

Growl of the guns cannot shatter the dream
of you!
Banish the thought of one exquisite hour,
Or the scent of your hair in the dawn, or the
gleam of you
White as white roses through roses a-flower.

The very divergence of the subject, the essential difference in treatment, the extraordinary dissimilarity of the mental states which could have been the foundation of such work render it difficult to arrive at a true valuation or even a true feeling for Mr. Frankau's verse. He says:—

The man and the woman in Jimmy fought over
the night's mishap.

It must be that the many men in Mr. Frankau, each superior to the others in certain circumstances, have not yet consolidated into a concrete personality such as the possession of a name is understood to correlate.

G. E. FUSSELL.

Spectrum Analysis.

In a previous article, "The Composition of Light," I explained how white light, on passing through a glass prism, emerges as a band of coloured light, ranging from red at one extreme to violet at the other, called the spectrum. Now, when any chemical element is raised to incandescence it gives out light of a character peculiar to itself. When a spectrum of the incandescent element is obtained by passing the light which emanates from it through a spectroscopist (an instrument in which the light passes through a glass prism or a system of such prisms), a series of distinctive bright lines is obtained which discloses the identity of the element as unmistakably to the spectroscopist as a thumb-print does the identity of an individual.

Furthermore, if light from some such source as a gas burner, which would give a continuous bright spectrum, is passed through the vapour of an element at a high temperature, the element absorbs just that light which it would itself give out if raised to incandescence. As a result, what was originally a continuous bright spectrum is now marked by dark lines corresponding to the bright lines of the incandescent condition of the element through which the light has passed.

For example, if some common salt (which is a compound containing the element sodium) be heated in a colourless, non-luminous flame it produces a yellow flame, arising from the atomic vibration of the sodium atoms in the flame; and in the spectrum are two bright yellow lines close together. This is the only spectrum visible. The reason is that this is the only rate at which sodium atoms produce optical vibration waves.

If now the spectroscopist be turned towards the sun, so as to obtain the spectrum of sunlight, a spectrum consisting of a bright band of colour ranging from red to violet is obtained. But this band is interrupted by a series of thin black lines, and two of these lines lying close together in the yellow are in the exact position of the two sodium lines of the sodium flame.

Suppose light from some source, such as a gas-burner, be sent through hot sodium vapour. A spectrum identical with the solar spectrum, so far as the sodium lines are concerned, is obtained. The two lines show up like two ink lines in an otherwise continuous spectrum. One is forced, by such phenomena to conclude that the light from the white-hot central part of the sun passes through an upper zone which contains sodium vapour.

By analogous reasoning, the presence of many other elements has been detected in our sun, and in many of the other suns. The nebulae have also been studied and chemically classified.

Terrestrial chemistry has learned much from these terrifically hot furnaces set in the heavens, giving human observation an opportunity, which would be totally unrealizable on earth, of observing the effects of high temperatures and the results upon the constitution of matter.

In the stellar spectra many thousands of lines are visible in definite positions. Some are very strong, and visible with ease through a pocket spectroscopist (e.g., the double line or D line of sodium). Such powerful lines, starting from the red end of the spectrum and proceeding towards the violet end are named by the capital letters of the alphabet, and some by the small letters. These lines act as landmarks in assigning a position to any given line or absorption band in a spectrum of a substance.

Stellar chemistry has thrown considerable light upon a number of vexed questions, and has given rise to a great deal of interesting speculation concerning the constitution of matter. With this I hope to deal in my next article.

W. H. MORRIS.

National Secular Society.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

THE CORN EXCHANGE, NOTTINGHAM.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4, 1922.

Agenda.

1. Minutes of last Conference.
2. Executive's Annual Report.
3. Financial Report.
4. Election of President.
Motion by Bethnal Green, Manchester, West Ham, and Birmingham Branches:—
"That Mr. C. Cohen be re-elected President of the N. S. S."
5. Election of Secretary.
Motion by the Executive and the West Ham and Manchester Branches:—
"That Miss E. M. Vance be re-elected General Secretary."
6. Election of Treasurer.
Motion by the Bethnal Green Branch:—
"That Mr. C. G. Quinton be elected Treasurer."
7. Election of Auditor.
Motion by the Executive:—
"That Messrs. H. Theobald and Co. (Incorporated Accountants), be appointed Auditors."
8. Nominations for Executive.
SCOTLAND.—Mr. James Neate, nominated by Glasgow Branch.
WALES.—Mr. J. T. Lloyd, nominated by Swansea Branch.
N.E. GROUP.—Mr. C. H. Kelf, nominated by Newcastle Branch.
Mr. A. B. Moss, nominated by South Shields Branch.
N.W. GROUP.—Miss Pitcher and Mr. R. H. Rosetti, nominated by Liverpool and Manchester Branches.
MIDLAND GROUP.—Miss M. Pankhurst and Mr. J. G. Dobson, nominated by Birmingham Branch.
SOUTH LONDON.—Mr. F. R. Corrigan, nominated by South London Branch.
NORTH LONDON.—Miss K. B. Kough, nominated by North London Branch.
EAST LONDON.—Mr. H. Silverstein, nominated by Bethnal Green and West Ham Branches.
9. Motion by the Executive:—
"That this Conference hereby approves the Trust Deed of the National Secular Society, and commends it to the favourable consideration of all Freethinkers who are desirous of financially benefiting the Freethought movement."
10. Motion by Manchester Branch:—
"That in view of the fact that the funds of the National Secular Society are legally secured by Trust Deed, this Conference requests the Executive to make this information known as widely as possible among Branches, individual members, and friends of the Society."
11. Motion by Mr. A. B. Moss:—
"That in view of the proposed concordat between the various Churches, and the promise of the Minister of Education that, provided agreement can be reached between the Nonconformists and the Established Church, the Government will introduce a new Education Bill which still further establishes religious teaching in State supported schools, this Conference enters the strongest possible protest against the proposed sacrifice of principle to the preferential treatment of religious sects, and calls upon the Government to end this sectarian struggle by confining the State to its proper function—that of imparting purely secular education—leaving it to parents and Churches to give whatever religious

instruction they desire at their own cost and convenience."

12. Motion by Mr. R. H. Rosetti:—

"That in view of the growth of non-religious opinion in the community, and of the gradual secularising of the State in all centres of civilization, this Conference is of opinion that the time has arrived when a united effort should be made to exclude religious offices and functions from every branch of civil administration, and calls upon Freethinkers, on and off public bodies, to do what lies in their power to bring about this much needed reform."

13. Motion by Mr. J. T. Lloyd:—

"That this Conference strongly protests against the repeated application of the Blasphemy laws as being contrary to the best thought of the day, and views with disgust and indignation the infamous sentence of nine months' hard labour passed upon Mr. J. W. Gott by Mr. Justice Avory and confirmed by the Court of Criminal Appeal for the priest-made crime of blasphemy, and calls upon Secularists throughout the country to bring such pressure upon the Government as will force the abolition of the Blasphemy laws as an intolerable survival of religious intolerance."

14. Motion by Glasgow Branch:—

"That the Annual Conference decide the place of meeting of the next Conference. Branch proposals regarding same to be forwarded to the General Secretary in time to be placed on the Agenda. The meeting place for 1923 to be selected as under present rule."

15. Motion by South London Branch:—

"That demonstrations in connection with the open-air propaganda of the London Branches be held under the auspices of the President and the Executive during the summer months."

16. Motion by Birmingham Branch:—

"That this Conference deplores the marked tendency of Labour leaders and other reformers to appeal to religion and religious feeling in their advocacy of social reform. It considers such appeals to be fraught with grave danger to genuine progress, and instructs the Executive to take such steps as may be necessary and possible to counteract a policy that is, at best, fruitless, and, at worst, inimical to the best interests of the nation."

During the afternoon session papers will be read on the following subjects: "Freethought and Religious Equality," by Mr. A. D. McLaren and Mr. R. H. Rosetti, and "Freethought and the Home," by Mr. F. W. Walsh and Mrs. Bayfield. Each paper will be followed by a general discussion.

The Conference will sit at the Corn Exchange. Morning session, 10.30 to 12.30; afternoon session, 2.30 to 4.30. Delegates will be required to produce their credentials at the doors. Members, the current card of membership. Only members of the Society are entitled to be present. A public demonstration will be held at 7 p.m. in the Corn Exchange. Luncheon for delegates and visitors at the "George" Hotel at 1 p.m.

By order of the Executive,
C. COHEN, *President*.
E. M. VANCE, *Secretary*.

The chief founder of mechanical science was Archimedes, who worked out from the steelyard the law of the lever, and deduced thence cases of all the particles of a body balancing on a common centre, now called its centre of gravity; he even gave the general theory of floating bodies, which mathematicians far on in the Middle Ages could hardly be brought to understand. Indeed, mechanical science, after the classical period, shared the general fate of knowledge during the long dead time when so much was forgotten, and what was left was in bondage to the theology of the schoolmen.—E. B. Tylor, "Anthropology."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice" if not sent on post-card.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C. 2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "The New Psychology."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.15, Mr. A. D. McLaren, "Religion and Science."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Regent's Park): 6.30, Mr. George Whitehead, A Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): Mr. R. H. Rosetti, A Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Corner Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. E. Burke, A Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (12 Straker Terrace, Tyne Dock): 6.30, Arrangements for representation at Conference; proposed lecture campaign on Tyneside; Mr. R. Chapman, "The Greek Dramatists."

OUTDOOR.

NEW MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S.—Rambles.—Hazel Grove to Altringham via the Bollin Valley. Meet at the Victoria Monument at 10 o'clock. Tea will be provided at Heald Green. June 18, Darwen and District; July 16, Prestwich Clough and Philip's Park; September 3, Dunham Park.

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