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## Views and Opinions.

### The Condescending Christian.

I have before remarked that the Christian in his treatment of the Freethinker passes through three distinct stages. In the first instance he depicts the heretic as someone almost incredibly vile. There is a good reason for this, since in order to justify his suppression, he must be loaded with moral opprobrium and the social censure used to enforce the religious condemnation. So to the orthodox imagination unbelief becomes a mere cloak to cover incredible scoundrelism. A catalogue of vices is drawn up of which the Freethinker ought to be guilty, and the heretic of religious fiction is made to live up to the programme. The next stage is when the Freethinker is better known, and the Christian assumes a pitying attitude. The heretic may be a decent sort of a fellow, although he is terribly mistaken in his views, but—and the "but" is altogether fatal. Then, as Freethinkers become better known, he is promoted to almost the level of the Christian himself. Sometimes we are told that he *may* be as good as a Christian, a degree of excellence which to a visitor from another planet would hardly appear to mark an incredible degree of moral development. Of these three stages I much prefer the first. I would rather be slandered than snivelled over at any time, and to be told that one is as good as a Christian, or is a Christian without knowing it, is to insult one in a ladylike sort of a way that is annoying without its giving one a plain chance of resenting the impertinence. Personally, I have no desire to be mistaken for a Christian, and I hope never to so act as to give reasonable ground for the imputation.

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### The Human Atheist.

What has been said has been suggested by a paragraph which occurs in a review of *Revelations of a Library Life*, by David Cuthbertson, sub-librarian of Edinburgh University. The author tells the following story of Professor Drummond. Said Drummond, addressing a class, "I knew a student in Edinburgh, an avowed Atheist. He lodged with a man who came from a good home, but contracted typhus. What do you think the Atheist did? He neglected his classes to nurse his chum, who after a severe struggle, re-

covered. What of the nurse? He contracted the disease and died. That Atheist died and went to heaven and received the 'well done, thou good and faithful servant.'" I have no doubt the author of the book regards this as a fine testimony to the liberal character of Drummond's mind, and it may be that Drummond intended the story to be a lesson in liberalism to his students. Nor do I, in commenting on it, mean to imply that this is quite a common sort of thing for an Atheist to do, and is in some way characteristic of Atheists. To imply this would be only to act as the Christian acts—with the same narrowness of view and the same mental impertinence. The right moral for Drummond to have drawn from this act would have been that human nature is at its best greater and better than all the theologies, and the finer virtues have nothing whatever to do with our religious beliefs. But it will be observed that this is clearly not the moral drawn. The "well done, thou good and faithful servant," with the promise of entrance into the Christian heaven proves it. Drummond's moral was the old one, the Atheist might be as good as the Christian, he could not be better. And the greatest reward the Christian can think of, even in the next world, is that the Atheist will find himself on a level with the Christian. If there is a next world, I for one, hope that will not be the case. I should raise no objection to Christians having a heaven all to themselves. They deserve it.

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### Showing Their Hand.

There is nothing at all startling in Drummond's story—to an Atheist. I could parallel it with an experience of my own, that of a personal friend, a young and rising medical man who contracted typhoid through more than professional devotion to some of his poorer patients, and who died telling the nurse that if there were a God there would be some pretty plain speaking when they met. What is interesting is the psychology of Drummond's story. There would be no point in it unless it were believed that the Atheist had less humanity about him than has the Christian. And the only foundation for that belief is the wholesale lying and slandering by perfectly good Christians about those who do not believe their doctrines. That can be the only reason why Drummond thought it worth while pointing out that an Atheist did what hundreds, probably thousands, of people are doing every week in some form or another. Of course, in the majority of cases it is not advertised. Men and women help each other, nurse each other, take risks for each other, and sometimes pay the full cost of the risks they run. It is only advertised when it happens to be done in the name of Christ, while the larger number of cases are known only to an immediate circle of friends. Clearly, if Christians had lied less about their opponents, if they had slandered them less, if they had been brought up with a healthier appreciation of the qualities and capabilities of normal human nature, Professor Drummond would not have needed to inform his class that an Atheist might be a decent human being. The story was doubtless intended as a compli-

ment to some Atheists. It is actually an indictment of Christians and Christianity.

\* \* \*

#### The Humanity of Atheism.

I am not at all concerned in trying to prove that Atheists are in some mysterious way made of superior stuff to that of which Christians are composed. To argue thus is to repeat the stupidity of Christians with a variation of terms. With many of us it is a case of "There but for the grace of God go I." Most of us can trace in our experience little things, educational, social, often accidental, which lifted us out of the Christian rut and put us on a better path. What I am arguing against is that detestably unhealthy habit of labelling merely human virtues as though they were peculiarly a product of Christianity or of Christian influence, and what I am arguing for is a recognition of the healthy truth that morality is a social product. The author from whom I have taken the Drummond anecdote tells the story as illustrating the latter's liberality of mind. But it is quite clear that had his hearers really understood the nature of morality, had they been taught that morality springs from, and has sole regard to the social relationships, there would have been no point in the story and no need for its telling. The Atheist does not need an anecdote to inform him that a Christian may act in a human manner. He knows that human nature, like murder, will out, and the moral promptings which are the expressions of so many thousands of generations of associated life cannot be prevented expressing themselves by the most anti-social religious teachings. The Atheist, in fact, outdoes the Christian in breadth of morals as he does in intellectual view. His philosophy embraces and explains the Christian, the Christian can neither understand nor explain the Atheist. We understand him because most of us have been where he is. He has never been where we are, and he faces us like a man on crutches marvelling at the insecurity of balance of one who has only two legs on which to depend.

\* \* \*

#### The Evolution of Materialism.

Those who are interested in dead books will remember that Professor Henry Drummond was the author of *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*. The book made a stir among religionists when it first appeared because it pretended to apply the concept of evolution to religion and morals, and claimed to effect the same reconciliation between religion and evolution that Bishop Butler did with natural and revealed religion. For a time what are called in the religious world—with unconscious sarcasm—advanced thinkers seized on the book, lectured on it, wrote on it as though the age-long warfare between religion and science were at an end. In a very few years the book went the way of numerous other religious defences, and the pious found the enemy steadily gaining ground. Now one of Professor Drummond's discoveries was that religion was a product of evolution, and that the evolutionary process itself was a designed preparation for the creation of religion. This was, of course, a misunderstanding of the whole position. Of course, religion is a product of evolution, but so is everything else, good, bad, and indifferent. One of the fundamental lessons of evolution is precisely that which neither Drummond nor his temporary supporters saw. Thus it is that religion itself is only a stage in the mental evolution of mankind. Of necessity man's early conception of the play of the natural forces is cast into a supernaturalistic form. And to this rule morals form no exception. Deeply rooted though morality may be in the affective life it is in early application coloured by what man conceives to be the will of the gods. In this way the historic association between

religion and morality is established, to the confusion of morals in theory, and to its injury in practice. The true lesson of evolution is that just as man has got rid of the rule of the gods in the world of physical forces, so he must get rid of them in the world of ideas and of moral activity. The laws of morality are as inherent in social life as the laws of physics are in the world of atoms and forces. In the recognition of this truth lies the end of all religions.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### "The Resurrection as the Evolution of Man."

SUCH is the title of a most remarkable sermon preached before the University of Cambridge on Sunday, May 6, by the Rev. J. H. Skrine, D.D., and published in the *Guardian* of May 11. Dr. Skrine was vicar of St. Peter-in-the-East, Oxford, and well-known through his writings and sermons, particularly by his contributions to the correspondence columns of the *Guardian*. Unfortunately the reverend gentleman died a few days after the delivery of his last sermon, having expressed a wish that it should be published in the *Guardian*. There is much in this discourse that is perfectly true and beautifully said. For example, it rejects the common theological notion that the Resurrection of Christ was a miracle, "an event without a cause in anything under heaven, an irruption of the Divine on the course of human history." Dr. Skrine says:—

It (the Resurrection) has been called by Christian apologists the supreme miracle which makes irrelevant the sceptic's criticism of lesser miracles. This conception, I will urge, must be exchanged for its opposite. So far from a contradiction of Nature, this rising from the dead is Nature's fulfilment, is the world-process consummated, the world-secret uttered at length aloud, the riddle of the painful earth solved at last.

Whatever else he may have been, Dr. Skrine was a thorough-going evolutionist. To ascertain whether or not his conception of evolution is scientifically sound is the object of the present article. As a result of a most careful examination of the sermon as a whole we are bound to pronounce its conception of evolution so thorough-going as to be wholly unscientific. In a word, natural evolution, which is whole-heartedly recognized, is used simply as a peg upon which to hang a peculiar theory of supernatural evolution. The discourse starts with life which is admitted to be a struggle of the organism to win harmony with its environment, but which is claimed to be something more, namely, "the mutual adaptation of the creature and the creative power, the interchange of selfhood and them, the interpenetration of part and whole, of the unit and the universe." The sermon proceeds thus:—

If life is this, what is the picture of the world of Nature and human nature which this category of life unrolls before us? We see a universe endeavouring to live, to live unto God, to unite itself with the final reality by that mode of union which is the vital oneness, the mutual creation of life between two. Even on the level below organic life, that of the mechanic universe, the principle of existence is this reciprocal self-donation; it is by the interchange of the force of attraction and of light-reflection that in Wordsworth's phrase, "the most ancient heavens are fresh and strong." On the level of organic existence, the herb and tree exist by absorbing one element of the atmosphere and breathing out another; the animal by reciprocating the stimuli of air, moisture, and soil. Man as animal by respiration, circulation, digestion, and the reaction of tissue to heat and cold.

Thus far we have had a bit of science coloured and vitiated by theology. What we see is not a universe trying to live unto God, but a universe actually living unto itself, a universe which cannot help living, having no choice whatever in the matter, and without the remotest idea of a God unto whom to live. At this point we come to theology naked and unashamed, whose originator for the preacher is Paul:—

But this endeavour of the universe to live unto God by the indwelling of the creature in the Creator is an endeavour which does not attain. Paul describes the failure: "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in all its members until now"—travails to be delivered of a birth, the birth of life, of life indeed, life unto God; travails but has not deliverance. Need I illustrate that? How infinitesimal is the circle of space with which the most potent creature unifies his being, and how brief a time does it maintain such union. Man, whose note is progress, whose type is not like the beast's stereotyped and unexpandible; who began as a feeble crawler in primeval woodlands, then rose erect and marched to the shores of ocean; who yesterday made him boats to cross the sea, to-day has made wings to navigate air, to-morrow (who can say?) may navigate the ether; man whose mind outstrips his body and moves at large into the infinite numbers and measures and weighs the stars of the great deep—how little is the life has even he unto God, with how little of the world spiritual has he identified himself.....Thus the whole creation groaneth and travaileth to give birth to a manhood wholly alive unto God, and is not delivered of that birth. Mankind, the roof and crown of Nature, did not attain to the life of oneness with God.

In that strange theology there is no room whatever for the doctrine of the Fall, for, according to its teaching, man is not a being who has fallen from an ideal state to one of utter lostness and helplessness, but a being who passed through all the stages of evolution and became "the roof and crown of Nature," whose sin consists not in his ever having had a great fall, but in his incapacity to rise to a sense of complete union with God. The truth, however, is that this idea of the groaning and travailing of the universe in pain until now, has no foundation in fact but only in a theological dream which has never, and never will, become true. Science can discern no trace of it anywhere. It is not true to any fact in the universe at large, or to any stage in the evolution of life in particular. Of a Supreme Being called God we know absolutely nothing, nor does Nature ever so remotely aim at or recommend a life of communion with such a being. In all probability, if it had not been for the theological bondage from which he failed to extricate himself, Dr. Skrine would have been fully as consistent an evolutionist as Sir Ray Lankester or Professor Schafer. Unfortunately, his theological captivity necessitated his indulgence in several most absurd statements. Take the following:—

Mankind did not attain. But a man attained. The man, Jesus of Nazareth, he alone of all men before him and after him, lived within a brief mortal span, a life of perfect union with that reality which he called, "My Father that is in heaven." It was an existence of unreserved sacrifice, a gift of self to God and to his fellow-men which was absolute. When we speak of Christ's work as a revealing of the Father by teaching and example and sinlessness of conduct, we are leaving the essential act of Christ unnamed. Sinlessness is a negative goodness, and, like all universal negatives, cannot be proved. Who could show us that Jesus never sinned? But that he wholly lived unto God, this can be shown.

Here Jesus is treated as a mere man, without the slightest hint at his deity; and yet he is represented as achieving what no other man in all the world has ever succeeded in doing. Of the truth of this wild assertion no evidence whatever can be adduced. We

have no means of ascertaining what even his teaching really was. It was not taken down in shorthand, and there is no proof that it was written in longhand for many years after his death. It was simply impossible for anyone to offer a verbatim report of his discourses and conversations. His private life is not known at all. We must bear in mind that Dean Inge has just stated that the materials for a biography of Jesus "are miserably scanty," and that "some of these are not scientific history as we understand it." Even granting the historicity of the Gospel Jesus, we hold the view that there is nothing to show that he led an ideal life or possessed an absolutely perfect character.

The Gospel accounts of his crucifixion and resurrection likewise are to be taken with many grains of salt, for they were written many years subsequent to the alleged event described. If the Resurrection did occur it must have been a stupendous miracle, a direct violation of natural law. And yet in this discourse its miraculous character is flatly denied, and it is described as "the final and all revealing moment in that orderly process (of the world)" as "the full evolution of mankind." This is really the old argument so passionately stated in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, in a new setting, which is a totally unscientific and impossible setting:—

Whither went the Christ when he had entered into his glory? Will he fulfil his promise, "Because I live ye shall live also"? Using the word "evolution" as we are no longer afraid to use it in a Divine connection, I will say that, as the past of the Christ-event was the evolution of mankind in the person of one man, Jesus the Christ; so the sequel of that historic event is the evolution of the eternal Manhood of Christ in the race of his fellow-men.

From the merely theoretical point of view all that is intensely interesting. One wonders how the Manhood of Jesus Christ is "for ever being enlarged by uniting to him in the union of a mutual life the souls one by one that react to the touch of his human personality, present and active everywhere, and let the Christ enter in and dwell in them." Of course this is pure metaphysics, which no one does nor can understand, and the more is said about it in this sermon the more incomprehensible it becomes. To the people generally it sounds like sheer nonsense; and the Modern Churchmen as a whole are renouncing it as mischievous mysticism calculated to injure the prospects of the Church. The plain duty of all sensible people is to treat the story of the Resurrection as a fairy tale, or an interesting legend, and devote themselves to a serious attempt to face and solve the many difficult and intricate problems of the present life.

J. T. LLOYD.

## A Woman's Work for Freethought.

Hail to the spirit which dared  
Trust its own thoughts, before yet  
Echoed her back by the crowd!

—Matthew Arnold on Harriet Martineau.

A PRESS announcement that Mrs. Annie Besant is in indifferent health must cause a pang of regret to old Freethinkers who recall her many years association with the Freethought Movement. For fifteen stormy years this gifted woman was in the very forefront of the battle for Liberty, and her secession, a generation ago, was a real and unmistakable loss to the Army of Human Liberation. Those of us who remember her in the prime of her dazzling womanhood regarded her much as the fervent Royalists of France esteemed Marie Antoinette. She was a queen among women; at a time when female speakers were uncommon on public platforms. Cultured to the finger-tips, she

carried a weight of learning gracefully, and brought a breath of romance to the sombre background of propaganda.

Brought up amid the ease and luxury of a middle-class home, she never flinched at the stern call of duty. Matriculating at London University, she took the Bachelor of Science degree, with honours. Her knowledge of foreign languages was turned to capital account, and she translated Soury's *Religion of Israel* and *Jesus and the Gospels*, and Buchner's works. She also wrote a volume of the admirable *Freethinker's Text Book*. As a debater and orator she had no serious rival of her own sex, and some of the later belauded women speakers on the temperance and other platforms seemed timid and commonplace in comparison.

Thrust into leadership by her rare talents, she was forced into journalism by the accident of her position, but, even in the narrow way of propaganda, she, like her illustrious colleague, Charles Bradlaugh, found time to encourage genius. He, it will be recalled, introduced that shy genius, James Thomson, the author of *The City of Dreadful Night*, to the reading public; whilst she published Bernard Shaw's novels, long before that most brilliant of living writers had stormed the bastions of success.

It is one of life's little ironies that this militant Free-thought apostle should have been a clergyman's wife. It was whilst she was alone in her husband's church that she discovered that she had the gift of oratory. She had gone there to play the organ, but the whim seized her of mounting the pulpit and delivering an address to the empty benches. "I knew of a verity," she wrote afterwards, "that the gift of speech was mine, and that, if ever—and then it seemed so impossible!—if ever the chance came to me of public work, this power of melodious utterance should at least win hearing of any message I had to bring."

Popularly regarded as a leader, she was in reality as much a disciple as any of the rank and file. She sat at the feet of so many teachers, such as Dr. Pusey, Dean Stanley, Charles Voysey, Moncure Conway, Thomas Scott, Charles Bradlaugh, Mdme. Blavatsky, the Fabians, to mention a few names that can be recalled readily. After thus boxing the compass of belief, she still finds numbers of well-dressed and apparently educated people who regard her as the last of the oracles, and who wait upon her lightest words.

What is the secret of her hold on such large numbers of people? The explanation lies, we think, in her bright and forceful personality, and also in her gift of oratory, which is very remarkable. How vividly do her speeches come through the mist of the years! When she was at the meridian of her splendid power she was easily the first among women speakers. When she chanted, in a voice as sweet as a silver bell, the Galilean's requiem, or retold, in awed accents, the piteous story of Giordano Bruno, or when she pleaded for greater liberty in social matters for men and women, the audiences cheered themselves hoarse in their admiration of her consummate oratory. She was an artist, and played on her audience as a musician plays on an organ. At her farewell address at the old Hall of Science, after fifteen years battling for Free-thought, she made a most moving speech. Some of her audience actually broke down, and grey-haired men were not ashamed to be seen in tears.

She had fought a good fight. During those fifteen stormy years she had suffered much for Free-thought. Sticks were broken across her; lime was thrown at her; the foulest words in the language were used against her. She was even declared to be unfit to have the care of her own child. Most men would rather have given up altogether than have endured this treatment, if they had to break stones for a living. Here was a cultured lady used to the refinements of a

gentlewoman, but she never flinched. The proud and courageous record deserves a gesture of admiration.

Since that time her golden tongue has won a hearing for many causes, but the fact emerges that her best and most lasting work was done for militant Free-thought. In estimating her remarkable career, this part of her life looms largest, and overshadows the smaller interests that succeeded. Paradoxical as it may seem, this gifted high-priestess of a fashionable latter-day superstition seems fated to pass through life and to leave no lasting vestige save that memorable time when she gave fifteen years of her splendid maturity to the cause of Secularism. MIMNERMUS.

## Luther in the Light of To-day.

### VI.

(Continued from page 300.)

LUTHER ON THE JEWS.—These "impudent lying devils" ought not to be allowed to praise or pray to God, since "their praise, thanksgiving, prayer, and teaching are mere blasphemy and idolatry." The penalty for any act of worship on the part of a Jew should be loss of life. Not only all their books, but even "the Bible to its last leaf" shall be taken from them. Not only are their synagogues to be burnt, but "let him, who can, throw pitch and sulphur upon them; if anyone could throw hell-fire, it were good, so that God might see our earnestness, and the whole world such an example."—Luther, cited by Karl Pearson, "Ethic of Free-thought," p. 217.

It is often urged, in defence of Luther's intolerance and violence of language, that he was engaged in a life and death struggle, that his enemies were seeking his life, and that it was no time for kid-glove warfare. This excuse, however, will not cover Luther's treatment of the Jews. The Jews had done no harm to Luther, they had no desire to harm him. They took no interest in the Christian squabbles; all they desired was to be left in peace. They made no converts and attempted no propaganda. Nor were they in a position to harm Luther even if they had so desired. All through the Christian ages they had with difficulty preserved a precarious existence. Without a country or government of their own, herded apart from the common life of the cities and towns in their Ghettos like moral lepers, forced to wear a distinctive dress—the Gabardine—they lived like Damocles, under a sword suspended by a hair; living barely by sufferance, never knowing when that sufferance would be withdrawn and themselves delivered to the mercies of the followers of Christ for rapine, spoliation and murder, during those periodical outbreaks of fanaticism so distinctive of the religion of love, and which continue even to this day in the pogroms of northern Europe.

Luther had nothing to fear from the Jews, yet he rages against them even more furiously, if that were possible, than against the Romish Church. At first Luther had an idea of converting the Jews; he thought Christianity as presented in the new light of the Reformation would prove more acceptable to them. Moreover, what a triumph it would be for Luther if he could succeed where the older Church had so signally failed. Luther was of the same opinion about the Jews as the Primitive Methodist old lady was about the Pope; she was convinced that the Pope was not a Primitive Methodist because he had never been properly "argued with." Luther held that the Church had failed because it had adopted the wrong methods. He would try reason and kindness and bring them back to the fold. So in the year 1523 Luther published a booklet in which he points out that the Jews were blood-relations and kinsmen of the Saviour and had been especially marked out by God:—

Hence they must be dealt with amicably and soberly instructed out of Holy Scripture, and not be

scared away by pride and contempt, as had hitherto been the wont; the fools, Popes, bishops and monks, the great dunderheads, had hitherto behaved in such a way that any good Christian would have preferred to become a Jew. Hence he exerts himself in this work, in a calm and friendly way to prove to the Jews from the Bible that their Messiah had already come.<sup>1</sup>

So far was he disposed to go, the better to win over the Jews, that in a sermon delivered shortly afterwards, he advised the teacher, when instructing a Jew, to treat of Christ as a man like other men sent by God to do good to mankind, and only after conversion was mention to be made of his Godhead.

If Luther thought that after denying for fifteen hundred years, in the face of the most terrible persecution to which any race has been subjected, that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah, the Jews would suddenly abjure their religion and kneel at the foot of the Cross, in response to a tract of this elementary character, then he must have been of a very sanguine disposition. The truth is that Luther understood neither the pride nor the tenacity of the Jewish character.

To Luther's great indignation, the Jews refused to be converted. What was even worse, they even dared to criticize some of the renderings of Luther's translation of the Bible, thanks to their closer acquaintance with the original text:—

As early as 1531 or 1532, when a Hebrew baptized at Wittenberg had brought discredit upon him by relapsing into Judaism, he gave vent to the angry threat that, should he find another pious Jew to baptize, he would take him to the bridge over the Elbe, hang a stone round his neck, and push him over, with the words, "I baptize thee in the name of Abraham"; for "those scoundrels," so he adds, "scoff at us all and at our religion."<sup>2</sup>

From that time Luther classes all Jews along with Papists and Infidels:—

"The Jews with their exegesis," he says, "are like swine that break into Scripture.....They are quite at liberty to prefer, as indeed they do, the law of Moses to the Papal decretals and their mad articles, but they have no right to prefer it to the pure Evangel. Sooner than this let us have a struggle to the death!" Such were the thoughts uppermost in his mind when he sat down to pen those two writings which constitute a phenomenon in the history of literature.<sup>3</sup>

These two writings against the Jews are entitled *Von den Jüden und jren Lügen* (published in 1542), quickly followed by his *Vom "Schem Hamphoras"* in 1543. In these works Luther thunders furiously against the blasphemies of the Jews. In the first-named work he earnestly demands that their synagogues and private houses should be set on fire and levelled to the ground, their books taken from them, their Rabbi's forbidden to teach on pain of death; further that the streets and highways be closed against them, that they be forbidden to practise usury, and be expelled from the land unless indeed willing to earn their bread at the sweat of their brow with axe and spade, spindle and distaff.

"These writings," says Grisar, "with their unmeasured vituperation and their obscenity, also bear painful witness to the deterioration of his language with advancing years." In the *Von den Jüden* occurs the following passage:—

"Fie on you," he cries, "fie on you wherever you be, you damned Jews, who dare to clasp this earnest, glorious, consoling Word of God to your maggoty, mortal, miserly belly, and are not afraid to display

your greed openly. That Bible only should you explore which lies concealed beneath the sow's tail; the letters that drop from it you are free to eat and drink; that is the best Bible for prophets who trample under foot and rend in so swinish a manner the word of the Divine Majesty, which ought to be listened to with all respect, with trembling and with joy."<sup>4</sup>

This is vile enough, but Grisar gives worse extracts than this from the same work, which if we were to print would certainly provoke a prosecution for obscenity. For such things can be published with impunity in bulky works of six volumes at 12s. 6d. (pre-war) a volume, which would not be tolerated in cheap publications, the governments apparently taking it for granted that those who can afford to buy such works are so *blasé* that they are not capable of further corruption. Our only object in giving the above sample is to reveal that which the Protestant historians and biographers suppress and ignore, *viz.*, the filthy, bestial obscenity with which Luther assailed his enemies when he was fully roused.

In the other work against the Jews, *Vom Schem Hamphoras*, Luther further elaborates the filthiness about the sow's tail in a most disgusting manner, and continues with savage violence:—

Verily a hopeless, wicked, venomous and devilish thing is the existence of these Jews, who for fourteen hundred years have been, and still are, our pest, torment and misfortune. In fine, they are just devils and nothing more, with no feeling of humanity for us heathen. This they learn from their Rabbis in those devil's aeries which are their schools.....They are a brood of vipers and the children of the Devil, and as kindly disposed to us as is the Devil Father.<sup>5</sup>

Nor were these flowers of speech confined to the Jews, for Luther served all his opponents alike, the Roman Catholics, the Anabaptists, and even the Devil himself; for he tells us some of the obscene remarks he made to the Devil to drive him away. Evidently the Devil was disgusted with Luther, for Luther tells us that treatment never failed to drive him away.

W. MANN.

(To be Continued.)

### March Rain

AN angry sky, with clouds that scowl  
Shooting their icy arrows down;  
Through leafless boughs the fierce winds howl;  
The face of Nature wears a frown;  
Though sky, and clouds, all joy disdain,  
The thrush sings in the rain.

He has no books, nor man-made laws,  
To guide his life from nest to grave;  
For food in winter—hips and haws  
And summer does not bid him save;  
He sings amidst his rhymeless plan  
Not good enough for man.

What priest shall shrive him when forlorn?  
What lawyer counsel him to act?  
What king compel him meekly fawn?  
What sophist teach him lie for fact?  
None come within his free domain  
To mar his wild refrain.

Man is a breath, a pinch of dust,  
With little space to laugh and weep;  
Life is a gift he holds in trust,  
Unsought, but ever would it keep;  
Let him forswear it or complain,—  
The thrush sings in the rain.

WILLIAM REPTON.

<sup>1</sup> Hartmann Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. V, p. 411.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 413.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 414.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 405—Vol. IV, p. 285.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 286.

## National Secular Society.

### Executive's Annual Report.

BY THE PRESIDENT.

THE past year has not been one which presented conditions favourable to a propaganda of the kind to which this Society is committed. The country has not yet overcome the demoralization produced by the war, and the prolonged and abnormally severe depression of trade, combined with the high costs of advertising meetings, etc., have maintained difficulties of the gravest kind. Moreover, when the need for gaining the merest necessities of life is pressing upon large masses of the population, there is a weakened inclination to pay attention to intellectual issues, even though these issues may be of paramount importance to the solving of the more material ones that are absorbing public attention. It is always difficult to get the mass of the people to attend to matters that do not offer the inducement of immediate gain even under the most promising conditions, and it is unusually so in the circumstances that now prevail.

What has been said must be taken as in the nature of an explanation of why more has not been accomplished, and not as a lament concerning results, or a statement of any lack of effort on the part of the Society as a whole. On the contrary the work has been well maintained all over the country, and in several parts there are distinct signs of there being something in the nature of a revival of interest and activity in the Cause. Commencing with the North we may note that the Glasgow Branch continues its flourishing career, and the larger City Hall, seating about 2,000 people, which has had to be taken for some of the special lectures, has been on each occasion well filled with attentive and generally appreciative audiences. On Tyneside little has been done in the way of special lecturing, but that is one of the places in which there are signs of growing interest, and the Executive is taking steps to give the work there a filip. The Leeds Branch has felt the effects of the general depression of trade, but maintains its work with gratifying results. Manchester continues its work with considerable success, although it suffers at present from a very common trouble, that of not being able to find a good central hall for its meeting place. It is to be hoped that it will soon find a meeting place suited to its work. Meanwhile it must be noted that the Branch works hard and is bringing much fresh blood into the movement while still retaining the support of its older friends and members. In Birmingham the Branch maintains its old reputation for steady and fruitful effort.

In Stockport the Branch has been conducting a very energetic propaganda in the shape of a free distribution of copies of the *Freethinker* and other literature, a form of propaganda which might well receive more attention in other parts of the country. In South Wales the excessive depression in the coal trade during the winter prevented as much as usual being done, but the Swansea Branch has continued its meetings with some amount of success. Farther westward the New Plymouth Branch has been holding some very successful meetings and is starting an outdoor propaganda during the summer. In London, apart from the usual Branch meetings few special meetings have been arranged owing to the shortage of suitable halls. A course had been arranged at the Stratford Town Hall, but in the end, owing to the claims of the Council on the hall, only one Sunday was available. This was taken by the President, who had the satisfaction of addressing one of the largest meetings yet held there. A course of special Sunday afternoon lectures at South Place Institute, the lecturers being Messrs. Rosetti, Whitehead, Corrigan, and the President, also passed off satisfactorily. It is the intention of the Executive to do more in London and district during the coming autumn and winter if the proper halls can be obtained.

The Executive has had before it and very seriously considered the question of organizing work throughout the country so that it may be commenced in places where no propaganda is at present going forward, and assisting those Branches that are already at work. This matter involves the two-fold question of men and money. If it

is carried out as it should be, it would involve a very considerable expenditure, but the Executive relies upon the friends of the movement meeting that expenditure as it is incurred. But to assist the summer propaganda Mr. G. Whitehead has been again engaged for several months' open air work during the summer and will lecture in various parts of the country as desired or as arrangements may be made. The Executive has also arranged with Mr. R. Atkinson for several weeks' lecturing in Durham and Northumberland. There is in these two counties ample scope for the energies of at least half a dozen men. There are large numbers of Freethinkers on the spot, and the weekly or fortnightly visits of a lecturer for a given period may have the effect of re-awakening the district to some of its old-time activity. Both these lecturers will act under the control of the Executive. It is to be hoped that this will be only the beginning of an extended and extensive campaign. Whether this is so or not will be determined very largely by the local support given. Freethinkers all over the country have it within their power to see that the work goes ahead. The Executive cannot make bricks without straw, and what it can do must always be determined by the support given.

In this connection the Executive again draws the attention of its members to the fact that the administration of its funds is now governed by a legally drawn Trust Deed. There is now ample security for the receipt of bequests or gifts and also of their administration. The funds can be expended only in the promotion of the Principles and Objects of the Society, and the Trust Deed thus removes a difficulty that has stood for so long in the way of Freethinking propaganda. It is known that several wills have already been devised in the Society's favour, and probably others may follow.

There are two points in connection with the Society's work to which the Executive desires to draw the special attention of the Branches. The first is the necessity for cultivating a good supply of local speakers. If the Society's platform is to be properly maintained it is highly necessary that this should be done. It is not an easy task to accomplish as there are none of the prizes in the shape of well paid posts or public honours to hold out as baits, both of which other organizations may have to offer. Freethought makes its appeal to the very highest in man, it is an appeal to give rather than to take, and for that reason it cannot hope to get the ready response that may be given to some movements. The Freethought platform is, moreover, not an easy one to fill with distinction. It requires wide reading, it demands a high standard of character, and severe intellectual effort. So far as the Executive can it may be relied upon to do all in its power to assist local efforts to introduce new speakers to our platform. That help may take such forms as circumstances may demand. It is mentioned here so that all may know the Executive is alive to this side of our movement and is prepared to give whatever help lies within its capacity.

The second matter to which attention is called is the desirability of members of the Society making whatever use may be made of the Press. Well written brief letters on Freethought matters, or brief and pertinent topical comments on the Churches and their creeds would often find entrance into the Press were they sent, and every letter means bringing Freethought before a wider audience, as well as calling attention to the fact that there is such an organization as the National Secular Society in existence. It is to be hoped that one day the Society will be able to establish at headquarters an official whose business it shall be to attend to this part of our work which has been so long neglected.

The Executive has to announce with regret that the last prisoner under the infamous Blasphemy Laws, Mr. J. W. Gott, died in the Victoria Hospital, Blackpool, last November, very shortly after his liberation from prison. It will be remembered that the savage sentence of nine months' hard labour was inflicted by Mr. Justice Avory in the face of a medical certificate to the effect that Mr. Gott was suffering from an incurable disease. When Mr. Gott was released from prison he came to see the President, and it was clear that he was very bad indeed. What could be done in the circumstances was done. A

(Continued on page 330.)

## Acid Drops.

One of our Anglo-Indian readers sends us a cutting from the *Calcutta Statesman* containing the report of a case in which a native washerwoman claimed damages on the ground that she had suffered defamation of character by being called a Christian. The police court magistrate dismissed the case, but on appeal the judge ordered an enquiry as to whether the statement made was true. There are two rather pretty points in connection with this case. The first is the sight of an English judge ordering an enquiry as to whether a woman had been defamed by being called a Christian. The other is, as our correspondent points out, the indication of the estimation in which Christianity is held by the natives, when a woman belonging to the very lowest caste is affronted at being called a Christian.

In a column entitled "Audiences with the Pope," published in the *Daily News*, we read what is supposed to be an impressive article by Mr. Ernest Smith. The writer has to be topical, and we are impressed. We are impressed with the flunkey-like spirit of Mr. Ernest Smith. This writer records the meeting of the ex-Kaiser with the Pope, when William II trembled from head to foot and dropped—no, not his tin hat—his brass helmet. Mr. Ernest Smith also had the privilege of meeting the Pope. "My heart was as near my boots as it ever was in my life," writes this awe-stricken man, and he kissed the Pope's hand. Such a writer is fitted for his subject, fitted for the dissemination of this kind of blither, and fitted to carry on the hocus-pocus generated from the Vatican. When we read Mr. Ernest Smith we are tempted to believe in the "fall of man."

Christopher Marlowe wrote that a tyrant howsoever great had only one neck; but he saw clearly and spoke clearly and was an Atheist. After all, it would appear that the obvious needs stating or it would be overlooked. Further, we shall have to begin to ask whether religion allows a man to walk on two legs—if we took Mr. Ernest Smith seriously.

Mr. Ernest Smith does not tell us what happened to his hat during his interview. Did it blow off before the interview or did he sit on it? If his heart was in his boots, where was his head at the time? And if he can put us right on these important matters, we will tell him that he ought to be ashamed of himself to write such twaddle after two million men have died to save the world.

During a religious procession in Brussels a motor-car accidentally started, dashed into the crowd, and twenty persons were injured. Providence is getting quite culpably careless.

Most of the leading travel bureaux are advertising excursion trips to Lourdes, and many other Continental shrines. A very pleasant time of the year to attract believers with more money than brains.

Speaking at the Royal Academy banquet, Viscount Ullswater suggested that the Academicians should open their picture exhibition on Sundays. As the National Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery are open on that day, the idea seems a good one.

Christianity and war, says Canon Barnes, are quite incompatible, and the union of the two during the recent war has done religion irreparable damage. It is a pity that Canon Barnes did not say this during the war, and do something to restrain the savagery that was then developed and for which we are now paying the price in the demoralization of social life all over Europe. But like the vast majority of the clergy when the war was on and when some humanizing influence was needed he was either noisily engaged in preaching war or quite silent.

Even now we do not observe any strong or organized protest from the clergy against the new race in armaments that is going on, and which sooner or later must lead to war over again.

It is not true that Christianity and war are incompatible. That would imply they could not run together, whereas the fact is that they have always run together. There has never yet been a war that called down the general condemnation of the Christian Church, and, as we have often pointed out, it was the discouragement of free discussion by the Church with its forcible suppression of opinion in the sphere of religion that did more than anything else to encourage the idea of force as the ultimate fact in international relations. Religion and militarism have always run well together in harness. They appeal to the same feelings and attract and encourage the same mental types.

If the Christian clergy would there is not a country in Europe in which they might not prove a decisive factor in ending war. They need only publicly and privately to dissociate themselves from war and war-like preparations, tell their congregations quite honestly the truth about war, and there would soon be an end to that fictitious glory and cheap heroism which keeps the war-like spirit alive. But that might mean the loss of a deal of the support the clergy now get. And one can hardly expect them to do that.

Finally Canon Barnes falls back upon the statement that to abolish war we must change human nature. And that is downright pulpit stupidity. Human nature does not need changing, it only needs educating, and its present energies directing into better and more useful channels. The qualities of human nature are the same generation after generation, but how they are to be expressed, whether in the crude warfare of the soldier, or in the higher and more useful fighting of the adventurer, the explorer, the discoverer, or the social reformer, is a matter of training, of education, and, of course, of innate capacity.

That is why we keep insistently to the lesson that the best way to end war is to paint war in its true colours. War will never be abolished by talk of its dangers or its cost. That is the chatter of cowards and of those who see nothing better or higher in the world than the amassing of money. But a generation or two that was brought up with the soldier kept carefully in the background, which was taught history free from the glamour of military achievement, which did not see its civic ceremonies decorated with highly coloured military displays, and which had the filth, the meanness, and the brutality of war placed clearly before them would face the thought of war in a far different spirit than it is faced at present. War would not be taught as a "gallant adventure," but as a cowardly, stupid, filthy, altogether brutal business. And that would come near to ending it altogether.

At Glasgow, David Anderson, an Edinburgh clergyman's son, was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude for extensive forgeries. The value of a religious education does not seem very clear here.

A correspondent writes in the *Daily Mail*: "In England for more than a century no one has suffered persecution in the name of religion." This remark goes unchallenged by the editor, who is old enough to know better. We could supply him with a lengthy list of such persecutions.

Defenders of the Benevolent Design Argument never tire of quoting Paley's watch story. Here is something more human, and more up-to-date. In London there are 4,000 deaf and dumb persons, and 400 deaf, blind, and dumb.

The cinema theatre has not only come to stay, but it bids fair to be the premier form of amusement. It already has two censors, that of the police, and another of its own appointing. Yet, through these apparently fine meshes of authority, escape films very open to criticism. One is called "The Man They Could Not Hang," a film dealing with the Babbicombe murder, and attributing the murderer's escape from the gallows to the protecting hand of Providence. It is very curious that the very folk who shout loudly about the wickedness of Socialist Sunday-schools should remain mute over a picture which attempts to show that "God" has a special care for murderers.

At one time the greatest man whom Sir William Orpen could find in France to paint was a "chef." The painter's present academy picture, "To the Unknown British Soldier in France," says in paint what the *Freethinker* wrote during the war. Even the sentries on guard have been robbed of their clothes, and our present old fossils, statesmen, etc., who deny, not the Saviour, but Human Life itself, have slipped backwards to their pre-war vocabulary. In the meantime, the agricultural labourer may study how to live on twenty-six shillings a week. In America, according to Mr. Upton Sinclair's novel, Christ returned to the stained glass window after deciding that the people in New York were not worth dying for, and we should imagine that in England no glaziers would be necessary.

At first glance we thought that the *John Bull* placard read "Doctors who Sing for Money," but upon closer scrutiny it was "sin." The hand that rocks the *John Bull* reader's cradle must be a bishop. Sin was invented so that the priest might rule. Sin is a concept that has no meaning in a law court. It is part of the vocabulary of backworldsmen.

A naked man was found at Farnham racing through the streets shouting, "Get thee behind me Satan." He was, of course, mad, but probably the thought of David dancing before the Ark of the Lord was simmering in his brain. Had he been sane he might have reflected that things which are right and proper in religious ceremonies are quite intolerable in decent society.

The ministers of the Free Church of Scotland and of the United Free Church are trying to make an agreement with the Glasgow Corporation to the effect that they shall be consulted on any question affecting the use of Sunday. They also desire that the number of bands permitted in the parks shall be severely restricted, and suggest that the bandstands shall be open to lectures on educational subjects. The first suggestion almost takes one's breath away by its downright impudence. Evidently these Scottish clergymen imagine they are still living in the eighteenth century when their rule drove men to drink as the only method by which they could feel they were for a time human. And we are quite certain that if the Corporation agreed to the suggestion of using the bandstands for lectures, "educational" would come to mean religious. We wonder what would be said if the use of the bandstands were granted to Mr. Cohen for a series of Sunday afternoon lectures?

"Brigands use row-boats" was the heading to a paragraph of news about Turkey. This is terribly out of date. Those who really keep level with the times use airships and gas bombs. It is strange how orthodox some people are.

The Boston University School of Religious Education has been gathering statistics on conversion. It finds the chances are three to one against a person joining a Church if he has not done so before reaching the age of twenty-one. There is nothing new about this. Mr. Cohen called attention to this fact in the course of some original investigations more than twenty years ago, and he has dealt with the matter more fully in his *Religion and Sex*. The truth of the matter is "conversion" is a

phenomenon that belongs almost entirely to the age of adolescence. The captures of the Churches are no more than an almost criminal exploitation of the instability of the organism during that period. Clinical records have very many cases of the injury done by the methods of professional evangelists to the young, and one day the scientific sociologist will treat this distortion of the growing social consciousness as among the most evil consequences of religious activities. Since Mr. Cohen wrote, many have called attention to the facts, although—thanks to the power of religious organizations—it is seldom done in a thorough-going manner.

An intelligent father thrashed his son with a dog-whip for breaking into the Holy Innocents' Church, Tottenham Lane, Hornsey. For this action the father gained the approval of the magistrate before whom the case was brought. There are many morals, as numerous as the sands on the sea-shore, that we may draw from this distressing case. To be charitable, let us hope that the boy will enter a church in future by the front door, and also remember what he received for entering a church in an unorthodox manner. With the celestial negligence, blows on the boy, parental influence, and the frame of mind of the magistrate, denounced even by Sir Thomas More in 1517, we wonder whether we are living in a world peopled by men, or one composed of men and bipeds.

For something really bloody and impressive we commend our readers to look on the poster advertising the military tournament at Olympia. It depicts the duel between Roderick Dhu and Fitz-James, and is the barbaric appeal to barbarians. The sooner we realize the shrieking difference that exists between men and bipeds the sooner shall we be able to classify the frame of mind having the blood instinct at large in society. This instinct is not confined to a class nor a generation, but it is the peculiar property of a nation that has the phrase "sanctity of human life" on its lips whilst meaning nothing of the kind.

We think we may just as well throw a little sugar dust on the "acid drop" above. In Sir Walter Scott's own words, Fitz-James

".....faltered thanks to Heaven for life.....and  
In Roderick's gore he dipped the braid."

Our classification of men and bipeds would put some of the popular idols in strange company, but a poet must live, and that was the stuff to give 'em.

The *Daily Express* makes a good display of its level by asking on a placard "Is it May or December?" This appears to be an appeal from the half-baked to the overdone, and it illustrates the fine bloom of culture attainable in a country where 50,000 priests could not justify their existence before a jury of navvies, agricultural labourers, or men who sweep roads.

In his "Apology" in *Late Lyrics and Earlier*, Mr. Thomas Hardy makes a statement that bears the mark of wisdom on it, but it could easily be perverted by Jesuitical bipeds. The veteran of letters who has rendered invaluable services to mankind writes:—

It may be a forlorn hope, a mere dream, that if an alliance between religion, which must be retained unless the world is to perish, and complete rationality, which must come, unless also the world is to perish, by means of the interfusing effect of poetry.....

The iconoclast who wrote *The Funeral of God* could not possibly mean by "religion" the same thing that Dean Inge would mean by this word. As it is possible to make a religion of drinking gin, or growing cauliflowers, we believe it is possible to call service to mankind a religion. In the struggle between Dionysos and Apollo, the breaking-down god is vanquished at first. In the renewed conflict he triumphs, and in this last battle Apollo, which is the Church representing form and not matter, will be beaten. After that, it may be possible for those who follow us to read our history without wanting to vomit.



## Special.

THE new scale of postage will enable us to send the *Freethinker* direct to subscribers to any part of the world for one-halfpenny. In future the subscription rates will be as follows: (Home and Abroad) one year, 15s.; half-year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d. It should be received in every part of the British Isles by Friday each week at the latest. Most should get it on Thursday. Those whose subscriptions are still running, will have the surplus paid for postage allowed them. We are also prepared to send this journal to addresses provided by friends for a period of twelve weeks on payment of sixpence to cover postage. This is an excellent way of gaining new subscribers.

## 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.

PHILO.—Your letters, with their broad tolerance and common-sense should do much good. They appear to be among the best things in the paper.

A. ELSEY.—We are obliged for your getting two new readers. That is the very best kind of help that anyone can give a paper such as this one. Personal effort on the part of our friends is the way to negative the boycott, if it does not overcome it. And it will do that in time.

THE Glasgow Branch of the N.S.S. holds the first of its summer rambles to-day, May 27. Those joining will meet at Clarkeston car terminus at 12 o'clock prompt. The destination is Busby Glen. Tea will be provided.

F. BECKER.—We quite agree that excellent propaganda would be made by well circulating the Principles and Objects of the National Secular Society. This is already done, but, of course, the larger the scale the better.

J. BREEZE.—Glad to have the good news in your letter. You will have been experiencing a very anxious time. Of course, all that is the matter with the Christians in Russia is that other forms of opinion are allowed to conduct an anti-religious propaganda, and that is so unusual that Christians regard themselves as being persecuted so long as they are not permitted to persecute others. And Christianity has always developed such a healthy capacity for unadulterated lying where opponents are concerned that any man is a fool who takes heed of what Christians say concerning their opponents.

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.

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

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 the 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 at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—  
One year 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

## Conference Notes.

Although the state of trade had its effect in preventing some being present at the Secular Society's Conference in Leeds who might otherwise have been there, the Conference itself was a pronounced success. There was a general spirit of good will and hopefulness pervading the gatherings, and all looked forward with pleasurable anticipation to the future of our movement. Among the signs warranting this is the number of young men and women who are interesting themselves in Freethought, and it is to the young that we older ones naturally turn to carry on the work at which we have been labouring. The one generation sows and the next generation reaps. That is the eternal lesson of human movements.

The business meetings of the Conference were held in the handsome Council Chamber of the Leeds Corporation, and no Conference has ever been more comfortably housed. It is a change from the time when a Freethought gathering had to find accommodation in some poor little room in an obscure quarter of town or city. A movement is, of course, no better for meeting in a palace, but it may at least be taken as an index of the state of public opinion with regard to the ideas for which it stands.

Whitsuntide is the worst possible time of the year in which to hold a public gathering in either Yorkshire or Lancashire. It is the time for a general holiday, and also for school and friendly society functions on a large scale. Nevertheless the attendance at the public demonstration in the evening was well up to the average. The Leeds Town Hall is one of the largest and handsomest in the country, and it was a very pleasing sight that met the eyes of the President and the other speakers when they came upon the platform. All the speeches were excellent in both form and matter. Mr. Moss led off with a spirited attack upon the claims and pretensions of the current religion, and Mr. Lloyd dropped a score of years off his shoulders once he got upon his feet. His voice rang through the large building in a way that must have surprised many. Mr. Williams was both lively and eloquent, and Mr. Corrigan, who was giving his maiden speech at a Conference meeting, was forceful and logical in his dealing with that arch-enemy of civilization, the Roman Catholic Church. The President's speeches, at the opening of the meeting and again at the close, were received with the greatest appreciation. All the speakers were followed with the closest attention, and every point made quickly seized by those present.

Some of the Press photographers requested permission to photograph the delegates, and this was done on the steps of the Town Hall at the conclusion of the afternoon meeting. A charabanc excursion was arranged for Monday, but as Mr. Cohen had to leave for home in order to get this issue of the *Freethinker* ready, we are unable to say more about that. We are afraid the weather was not over kind, but the prevailing good fellowship will have done something to counteract the wretched season we are having.

The Leeds Branch had worked hard to make the Conference a success, and we feel sure that it felt repaid by the result. We are only repeating here what Mr. Walker, the President of the Branch, said at the close of the Conference. Mr. R. H. Youngman, the ever-zealous treasurer of the Branch, entertained

the delegates and members attending the Conference to tea, and was only disappointed that his hospitality was not taxed to a greater extent. But we fancy he would have felt that way had the number been five times as great. It was altogether, and in view of prevailing circumstances, one of the most successful of Conferences, and we are certain that those who took part in it went away filled with fresh enthusiasm for the carrying on of our great work. It is a time also for the renewal of old friendships, and we were delighted to once again meet so many familiar faces from all parts of the country. If we do not particularize it is because a mere list of names is not a very adequate way of expressing one's feelings.

A message was received from the National Italian Association of Giordano Bruno, which was also holding its Congress in Rome on May 20. The Conference received with pleasure the salutation of their Italian brethren, and despatched a suitable telegram in reply.

We print this week the Executive's Annual Report, and we commend this to the attention of all our friends. There are matters in it that will repay study. The report of the business meetings of the Conference will appear next week.

We are suspending the "Sugar Plums" for this week owing to demands on our space, so we mention here that the Bill for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws will be introduced into the House of Lords directly after the Whitsuntide recess. That will at least help to clear the air. We shall see what amount of regard for liberty of opinion there exists in that assembly. We shall most probably print in these columns a full report of the discussion.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### Executive's Annual Report.

(Continued from page 326.)

sum of money was raised through the medium of the *Freethinker*, and he was sent away to get better, but he became steadily worse and died on November 4, 1922. We hope that Mr. Justice Avory is satisfied that his sentence did something to remove one Freethinker out of the way. But he must be more stupid than is conceivable if he also imagines that his action will do other than to make Freethinkers more than ever determined to sweep these laws out of existence.

During the course of the prosecution the *Freethinker* said that our motto should be "Make the Bigots Pay," and it indicated that the only way to make them pay properly was to sweep these laws out of existence. Some important steps have been taken to this end. As the result of an invitation issued by the Executive a Society for the Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws has been formed and a Bill introduced into the House of Commons by Mr. Harry Snell, M.P. (for Woolwich), and who was for many years an active worker in this Society. He now awaits an opportunity to bring the Bill forward for a second reading. In addition to this Earl Russell has given notice in the House of Lords that he will introduce the same Bill into that House, so that this time the bigots are being attacked, so to speak, from both above and below. It would be too much to hope that this Bill will pass easily. The majority of Christians will cling to their privileges so long as is possible, and one that they have always prized is that of harrying and persecuting those who declined to accept their creed. But we shall have publicity, and there is nothing better than that for the advancement of truth and justice.

The Executive has to note with the deepest regret the death of one of its staunchest and oldest supporters in the person of Mr. Richard Green, mayor of King's Lynn. Mr. Green had for many years taken a very active part

in the municipal life of the town, and throughout the whole of his career had made no secret of his anti-Christian opinions, and had done all that might be done to keep them in the forefront. He was elected twice to the mayoralty of the town, and died during his second term of office. It was his personal desire, backed by the wishes of his wife and family that Mr. Cohen should, if possible, hold a secular service whenever he died. Accordingly Mr. Cohen went to King's Lynn and conducted a funeral service in the Guildhall, where the civic ceremony took place before a very large and representative assembly. Nothing of the kind had ever occurred before in the history of King's Lynn, and it may be taken that Mr. Green's bold and dignified stand for freedom of opinion will do much to make independence of opinion easier for those who have to follow him. The Executive desires to place on record the fact that it requires a man of more than ordinary strength of character to withstand the temptations of public life and to so successfully maintain his own mental independence.

Two other matters of importance to the Freethought movement may here be briefly stated. All Freethinkers will have noted with the greatest pleasure the gradual development of public opinion in the direction of spending the national day of rest in a rational and healthy manner. This has all along been dependent upon a weakening of theological belief, and we may see here one other indication of the result of our propaganda. But the Churches are organizing their forces in order to secure a reversal of this liberal movement, and the greatest vigilance needs to be exercised if they are not to succeed in their aims. It is, therefore, with an eye to the immediate future that Freethinkers are urged to do what lies in their power, particularly so far as they are connected with trade and friendly organizations, to see that the ground gained is not lost. Too often the victories of the Churches are gained largely through the carelessness of reformers, and we must see to it that local bodies are made fully aware of the volume of public opinion behind them in any attempt they may make to throw open to the public opportunities for educational and healthful recreation on Sundays.

The other matter is connected with the teaching of religion in the schools. So far as legislation is concerned there has been no change since this Conference last met, but the Churches have not been inactive. Negotiations have been proceeding between the two chief religious bodies in the State, and it must be remembered that the present Minister of Education is friendly to the strengthening of religious teaching in the State schools. The danger is that some sort of agreement may be reached between the upholders of the State Church and Nonconformists, and the Minister of Education may be able to present the House of Commons with an "agreed" measure, which with the backing of the Government may soon become law.

Here, again, we must be active. We must insist that it is no part of the duty of the State to promote the religious opinion of a section with money raised from the taxation of all. The integrity of the child's mind must be guarded as one of the chief assets of our civilization. Resolutions in favour of Secular Education should be passed wherever possible and forwarded to the Minister of Education. If a League of Parents, made up of all who for various reasons are opposed to the State teaching of religion were formed, and who resolved to withdraw their children from religious instruction, the number would certainly be sufficiently large to make any government pause before affronting opinion so expressed. The Society has no sectarian aim in view in urging this. We do not desire to have our views of religion forced upon children. We are simply anxious that they should receive the best and the most liberal education it is possible to give them, and leave the selection of a religion—if they desire one—till an age at which they are able to choose for themselves and in the light of the knowledge and education that has been given them.

Taking a general survey of the field, the Executive feels that it may rightfully congratulate the Society on the extent to which the ideas for which it stands have gained ground among the general public. It would be folly for a Society such as ours to count either its strength or its efficiency on the mere number of its

members, or even upon the extent of its financial resources. Either test would be fallacious, and would lose sight of the Society's real function. It is not and never has been the aim of the National Secular Society to build up a new sect, an object which, so far as it is successful, can result only in the creation of sectarian standards of value and the perpetuation of sectarian feelings, both of which have already done so much harm to the cause of human progress. Essentially our aim is the rationalizing of life, and we are successful in our efforts to the degree in which we watch that progress taking place in the life of the people.

Tried by that test we have every cause for satisfaction. There was a time when almost the only persons who stood for such things as the rationalizing of Sunday, the equality of the sexes, the scientific treatment of the criminal, the equality of all opinions before the law, with many other reforms, were the abused and despised Freethinkers. We have lived long enough to see many of the things for which we were among the pioneers—if not the sole pioneers—advocated by large numbers of people, many of whom are quite unaware of who they have to thank for the spade work done, and some who still find Freethought too unpopular to acknowledge their indebtedness. We can see ideas about religion which once encountered the fiercest opposition now accepted by educated people, while prominent Christians now resent as a slur upon their intelligence the ascription to them of beliefs for questioning which men and women have been boycotted, slandered, or sent to languish in Christian prisons. It is literally true that only a small number of our converts are members of this Society. The much larger number are outside, many of them in the Churches themselves, and they who listen approvingly to the liberal religious sentiments of this or that popular preacher, are often quite unconscious of the fact that it is to the despised Freethinker they owe their liberation from the dark and demoralizing religious beliefs of an earlier generation.

When all is said and done, the great work of the National Secular Society must remain one of permeation, of breaking the ground and preparing the road for others to follow. This is not a task that brings either financial gain or social popularity, but it is to those who have thrown their energies in this direction that the world owes the progress it has made. In this work we of the Freethought Party have much of which we may be justifiably proud. We have great traditions, and the inspiring example of many brave men and women who have gone before us. And so long as we continue faithful to the tradition they established and to the ideals they held aloft we may be sure that we shall be offering our contribution to the establishment of a Society based upon truth, reason, and justice.

## Richard Carlile.

(Continued from page 315.)

### VII.—WISDOM AND STRUGGLE.

CARLILE was freed suddenly from prison on November 18, 1825. Without any compromise on his part, his recognizances had been abrogated, and he had been swept out of gaol bag and baggage. This quitting gaol meant no more to him mentally than a change of lodging. He resolved that his course should be onward, and that he would continue the same disposition, unimpaired, with which he began his pioneer career—a disposition to suffer fines, imprisonment, or banishment, rather than any man should hold the power and have the audacity to say or decide that any kind of public discussion was improper and publicly injurious.

During his imprisonment his vigorous pen had treated of many social abuses and familiarized his readers with many indictments of priestcraft, ignorance, and mystery. We cite the following:—

“He who sets himself up as an instructor to his fellowmen should offer nothing but what is clear and

intelligible to all who should read what he wrote. The fine figurative writer will in future ages, be read with disdain and contempt. The daily avocations of those who labour for a livelihood are such that they have not time to unriddle figurative writings such as the Bible and many other books abound in. They stand in need of that mental refreshment which is as simple as the diet they make use of.”

“It is reason that endows man with the gift of speech; without reason he could not communicate an idea but by dumb show. His voice would be of no further use to him than the power of barking to a dog or of braying to an ass. It is evident that without reason man would be a beast of the forest, and a prey to many a stronger animal. And yet this glorious light of reason becomes a dreadful eyesore to the priest! And for why? Because the priests of all ages, of all sects, and of all doctrines, impose nothing but error and falsehood on the multitude, and they find their doctrines rejected by those of the multitude who exercise their reason. This is an assertion that bids defiance to contradiction.”

Carlile also observed that “the priest who is about to take holy orders is necessitated to vow in the church before the bishop that he does not seek the office for the sake of lucre, but that he is impelled by the holy ghost!” After such a base perversion of his reason and sense of shame, it seemed to Carlile inevitable that the priest “should studiously endeavour to degrade every other person to the same level as a cloak and a safeguard against his own infamy, perjury, and villainy.”

Throughout his struggle with the Vice Society and the Government, Carlile was supported loyally by his wife, Jane Carlile. The latter was seven years his senior and had made his acquaintance whilst he was on a visit to Gosport in 1813. They were married after a courtship of only two months duration. Finding that their temperaments were incompatible, they wisely agreed to separate in the year 1819, but postponed putting this resolution into effect owing to their common determination to resist the Government's attempt to suppress Paine's writings and other radical literature.

In January, 1821, the authorities, who had wasted a good deal of time in threatening, arresting, and then releasing Jane Carlile, brought the numerous indictments against her to a trial and she was sent to join him for two years in Dorchester prison. She welcomed him back to liberty on his release, and finally separated from him in 1832.

During her imprisonment Jane Carlile's place was taken in the shop by Richard's sister, Mary Carlile. She was, in turn, sent to jail and succeeded by the now famous but then much abused shopmen and shopwomen, all of whom not only volunteered for the task, but defended themselves in order that their defence might evince their defiance. Prominent among these heroes of civil liberty were:—

Name	Date of Conviction	Sentence Length of
Susannah Wright	Nov. 14, 1822	Two years
James Watson	Apr. 23, 1823	Twelve months
Richard Hassell	May 28, 1824	Two years
William Campion	June 8, 1824	Three years
John Clarke	June 10, 1824	Three years

Besides these the following toed the line:—

1820—Joseph Swann, four and a half years; Thomas Tyler, three months.

1822—Samuel Waddington, one year; Humphrey Boyle, twenty-three months; Charles Trust, six months and £20 fine; Joseph Rhodes, Joseph William Trust, William Holmes, two years each; William Rance, Charles Sanderson, Turner, Atkinson, one year each; John Barkley, six months.

- 1823—William Tunbridge, two years; James Watson, one year; John Jones, six months; William Clarke, four months.  
 1824—William Haley, T. R. Perry, three years each; T. Jefferies, eighteen months; W. Cochrane, J. Christopher, M. J. O'Connor, six months each; James Affleck, three months.

In each case the charge was based on the sale of Paine's much dreaded writings, or Palmer's work, or Carlile's *Life of Paine*, or a current *Republican*, or Shelley's *Queen Mab*. In all, 150 persons suffered incarceration for acting as Carlile's agents in this struggle.

This brings us to February 7, 1828, when Robert Taylor was sentenced to one year's imprisonment for blasphemy and ordered to find recognizances for his good behaviour for five years in £1,000. Carlile at once identified himself with Taylor and toured the country lecturing on Taylor's behalf. He had concluded the *Republican* with his release from prison, and now commenced the *Lion* in order to rally sympathy to Taylor and provide him with a medium of expression. Although his shopmen and shopwomen were still in prison, his release in 1825 had marked the end of Press persecution, and he now determined to establish the equal right of untrammelled oral discussion. Carlile made full use of the *Lion's* columns for the employment of his own versatile pen. "There cannot be a superstitious civilization," was one of the maxims he proclaimed. Protestantism came under his lash in the following terse indictments:—

The Protestant faith includes all that faith which protests against the Roman Catholic faith; but reasons for that protest, which would not apply as forcibly to the Protestant faith, I have never met.

The last fires in Smithfield were Protestant fires; the last religious murders in England were Protestant murders. All the religious persecutions of the last two centuries in England and Scotland—and they form the blackest period of England's ecclesiastical history—have been Protestant persecutions; not the persecutions of Protestants by Catholics, but the persecution of Catholics, Protestants, and Infidels, by Protestants.

Carlile dedicated much space in the *Lion* to the denunciation of oath-making as a vice, on the ground that "the principle induced is that of fear, and whatever is done through fear, which would not have been done in the absence of fear, is viciously done. Thus, upon the highest pretension that has yet been made for the practice of oath-making—that of its being a necessary binding to a purpose, which binding is to be produced through the operation of fear—vice is exhibited and oath-making is, in its best sense, a vice. It supposes vice in its presumed necessity, and proves it in its practice. It engenders the vice against which it would be presumed to guard us."

"The New Testament," Carlile argues, "is the only religious book in the world that positively forbids oath-making as a vice; yet its so-called defenders are the most prone to practise it."

Oath-making encourages fear without securing any pledge of truth or good either in believer or unbeliever. Pressing this argument, Carlile says: "The good man of either party will do as well without it; the bad man of either party will do as ill with it; and each alike, in not respecting that which he professed to respect..... An idle charm is uttered, and a dirty book is lipped, with as little failing as any other animal may be brought to the practice. A trial cannot be witnessed at the old Bailey without the perception that the swearing is superfluous, and not useful to guide or correct the evidence to be given. If the oath were valued as giving weight to the evidence cross-examination would be a very great presumption, for it presumes that the oath has not given weight to the evidence, and that it cannot give it weight."

Carlile concludes that the history of oath-making shows it to have "been established upon the idolatry of mankind," and only available where idolatry continues to exist. Idolatry, superstition, and oath-making must fall in company.

To hasten the day of that collapse Carlile indicted "belief" and "faith" in the following terms: "Tell me there is a peculiar kind of animal or vegetable in China of which I have not seen the like in this country and I can credit your tale, because I see a variety of animals and vegetables the product of this country. But tell me of heaven and hell, of gods, devils, and angels, of future states of existence to continued or reproduced identities, and I cannot credit your tale because I have no analogy, in the literal sense, whereupon to proceed to conjecture, and because I do not see material identities so composed and decomposed, as to leave me any idea of other existence for those identities. The earth is all sufficient to produce and sustain them as compositions and to receive them as decompositions.

"All faith is in danger because faith has no relation to the knowledge of mankind. All faith is in danger because faith has no relation to the welfare of mankind. All faith is in danger because it injures and disorders mankind. All faith is in danger because it is a cheat upon mankind. All faith is in danger because it is openly and ably assailed by infidelity. All faith is in danger because truth exhibited must triumph over it."

GUY A. ALDRED.

(To be Concluded.)

## What's Wrong with the League of Nations?

LET me explain at the outset of my criticism that I do not complain of the idea of a League of Nations, for the chaotic condition of the world and its peoples, through the turmoil of war, makes such an institution highly desirable in many respects, particularly with regard to the educational influence it should have in diverting men's minds from thoughts of conflict and revealing to reason the utter absurdity of wars, with their wastage of lives, money and time, and by their policy of destruction, retarding the progress of civilization. The founders of the League doubtless cherished these noble ideals, but they were not sufficiently organized to properly equip and set the machinery in motion on the right lines. The construction of the League was faulty; it was too imbued with the old political diplomacy, and not representative of the true leaders of the people, men independent of the wire-pullers of the various nations, capable of judging as to the merits of disputes, and in whom complete confidence and trust were reposed; and it was not even representative of the nations, for the country whence it emanated declined to join! In consequence, the result has been that, instead of this important body inspiring the awe and respect it should, its counsels are unheeded, ridiculed or ignored, and it is proving a costly failure.

Cynics have called it the "League of Nations," but British taxpayers have been heard to describe it in stronger language. Can we be surprised? I think not, upon investigation of its claims, status and finances.

This fantastic gathering of "highbrows" started off with most lofty aspirations. An elaborate secretariat costing £250,000 a year; a Secretary-General at a salary (I understand) of about £10,000 a year; established in a palace at Geneva for which £220,000 was paid! However, money is by no means the sole essential to success, grandiose and imposing as the figures may be, totalling well over a million pounds a year all

told—and constantly increasing. *Results* are what count and really matter, and herein is the dismally weak spot in the noble scheme. So far, these have been mainly instrumental and successful in the direction of extracting, for various foreign commitments, money from taxpayers' pockets, and so far from the League having had a tranquilizing or pacifying effect upon nations, or being the means of preventing war between turbulent peoples with grievances (imaginary or real), I fear the decisions arrived at have had a tendency rather to provoke friction than peace!

This, of course, was not unexpected, because man has always been a quarrelsome beast, and needs to be taught self-restraint, unselfishness, etc.—factors which the present League, lacking a sound knowledge of human psychology, failed to perceive. For precisely the same reason a previous international league failed. There have, in fact, been numerous minor wars under the very nose of the League of Nations throughout the whole course of its existence, a direct challenge to its authority and *proof of its impotence*, if such were needed.

But listen to the pathetic confession of Earl Balfour (at the Geneva Conference, November 22, 1920): "We stand like people on the shore looking at the survivors of a wreck."

This from one of the League's staunchest supporters!

Then consider the adverse criticisms of other former prominent advocates of this mutual admiration society.

Professor George Saintsbury, in his book, *A Scrap Book*, published this year:—

As a humble but lifelong student of politics, may I ask whether there was ever such a cabbage-stick as the League of Nations? So tall! so polished! so finely knotted! so suggestive of a real oak-plant! and so certain to crack at the first serious strain!

Professor Einstein, who resigned from the League's Intellectual Co-operation Sub-Committee recently, "being convinced as a pacifist that the League lacks the force and good-will to fulfil its tasks."

And here is the crushing opinion of Lieut.-General Sir Ivor Maxse, commanding-in-chief the Northern Command, in his address to the boys of St. Peter's School, York (reported in the *Daily Telegraph*, July 3, 1922):—

It was being dinned into us by the Press and people who make speeches that a thing called the League of Nations could take the place of force. Don't you believe it, boys. It's all "tosh," absolute "tosh." It suits people to say it for certain reasons.....it is not so. If ever we fought again—and we should some day—we should have to put the whole nation into it.

I think the above nicely sums up the futility of this absurd brigade of amiable old ladies, superior high-brows, and benevolent baldheads.

Among other "notions" (at the expense of British taxpayers) the League of Nations, evincing great concern for the welfare of every nation save Britain, recently conceived the idea of Britain supporting 25,000 Greek refugees in Cyprus—as though she had not already enough refugees and unemployed, etc., of her own to support at home!

It would appear that this grandiose League (a mere excuse for extending our costly foreign bureaucracy) is deciding upon what terms British authority should be exercised and British taxpayers' money expended in foreign interests—while the House of Commons plays second fiddle! This reply was given in the House to an M.P.'s question:—

There is no question of any further ratification of the Palestine Mandate by Parliament, the Mandate having been accepted by his Majesty in April, 1920, and the terms of the Mandate having been approved by the Council of the League of Nations in July last.

And Lord Sydenham mentioned in the House of Commons, on March 27, that it had been stated that we were incurring the costly administration of Palestine at the request of the President of the League of Nations.

The gallant attempt of Lord Robert Cecil to boost the League in America was recently declared by Senator Reed to be "an impertinence," and I am not surprised.

It is not generally realized, but the taxpayers' diminishing money is being poured out on *Labour* in connection with the League. Towards the cost of the "Labour Bureau" of the League for the coming year Great Britain will have to contribute £33,000.

The sooner the present League of Nations is scrapped as a fiasco, the better for everybody, for its extravagance is more than Britain can afford to-day, and its impotent interferences may even become a source of further international strife. A. LEONARD SUMMERS.

### Ending in Smoke; Or, The Catholic Church's Revelation to America.

A PAPAL delegate has lately been sent to America, I mean by that the United States, to take care of the souls of the faithful there whom this gentleman claims to be no fewer than 23 million. Accepting his figures—with a grain of salt—one need not be particularly impressed by them. The pious gentleman's name is Peter Fumasoni Biondi. The first half of the second name means in Italian "smoke." The second and third together irresistibly suggest—blond Freemason. His important charge of souls includes the islands of the Pacific, the Hawaii Islands and Guam, wherever that may be, but not Cuba, Costa Rica, and the Philippines. It is hardly worth deducting the faithful of the former region, they are probably not very numerous. Assuming then 23 million to be the number of nominal Papists in the States, one must remember that there are more than ten million Irish and five million Italians there, omitting other members of Popish races, such as Poles, and so on. The five million Italians will be mainly fanatical and ignorant Sicilians, and southern Italians from Campania, Le Puglie and Calabria, and form part of the so-called dregs of the population, with a large sprinkling of Camorristi, Mafisti, and members of the secret so-called criminal society, La Mano Nera. Again, at least ten million of the sons of Erin will be in the same religious and social pickle as the five million Italians of the "household of faith." Besides this the ten or more million negroes and a broad margin of half-castes must not be lost sight of. Eurasians, quadroons and octaroons are particularly sensitive to the secret or expressed contempt they have to face, from your more or less pure blood Anglo-Saxon Protestant, with his strange and quite unscientific conceit. In this respect the Roman Catholic Church has more common-sense, than the whitey-brown superior parties treating its dusky proselytes, on the whole, with the same respect as its whitey-brown ones, whose "Baltic shumier" after all does not flash much whiter than Munich *spaten braun*. And the above remarks are equally or more to the point as regards the still more outraged and despised nigger, with his inherent love of show and glitter and hot-pressed religious and emotional faculties. Deducting all these factors, of pure blood and typical Yankees, there cannot be more than four or five million Catholics at the outside. The reverend prelate contrasts the church attendance of his flock with that of the *una* virtuous in the Protestant little Bethels, an average of 900 per Sunday, against 66 in the little Bethels. Let

alone the stimulus of fear upon the ignorant so-called dregs of society, the sordid, joyless surroundings in which they pass their lives naturally render the more or less theatrical performances in Roman Catholic churches more attractive to these wretches than the monotonous platitudes of the Protestant "house of God." The crotic music, incense, and showy staging of the Popish performances on Sunday give a fillip to their exhausted vitality and help them to drag through the drab coloured week in expectation of the next stimulus from the Sunday religious dram drinking.

"His Grace" contemptuously sets down the number of "members of other denominations," *i.e.*, heretics, whom he would no doubt reduce to cinders if he had the chance, at 24 million. "It is appalling to think," he exclaims, after making the most of his "flock of Christ" marge and pure lanoline all humped together, "that in this great Christian nation, there are some 60 million of people without God, so far as we know." This pious wail comes perilously near to an Irish Bull, though I do not for a moment wish to challenge its amphibious and baptismal character, for if only 23 million—the dregs of society are true Christian—24 million heretics who ought to be burnt alive, and 60 million nothing at all, it is difficult to see how Yankee Doodle merits the title of "Great Christian Nation." From the standpoint of sanity and common-sense, it is satisfactory to find that more than half the people of the United States have got rid of the pernicious and idolatrous god idea and the sacrificial forms of religion that are its invariable and necessary concomitants.

W. W. STRICKLAND.

La Paz, B.C. Mexique.

## Intellectual Dishonesty.

THAT all religions were equally *useful* is said to have been the dictum of the old Roman magistrates. And this appears to be the modern defence of savage survivals in which most educated people have long ceased to believe.

Sir Sidney Low claims credit, not only for Christianity, in which he may possibly believe, but for Buddhism, Mohamedanism, Hinduism, Judaism, etc., in which, presumably, he does not believe—at any rate, we are entitled to say he cannot swallow them all. So that his argument comes to this: It is not the point whether these religions are *true*, but it is so very useful to have something extra, rational, to support and "justify" irrational morality, which certainly could not stand by itself!

I am not concerned with the Bolsheviks or how they may govern or misgovern their country, but to claim that religion is a humanizing force will not do; on the contrary, they are just revising the prayer-book because the earlier texts and poems are too blood-thirsty to be tolerated in the twentieth century!

No, the progress of humanity will not come from ancient altars dabbled with blood, but from applied wisdom, solely concerned in righting the wrongs of this present world. That is hard enough without the intrusion of other issues.

Whatever the next phase may prove to be we cannot be wrong in having done our best to relieve the distress and right the injustice which we are condemned to witness in the world we are living in.

Let us always remember those grand words of Ingersoll: "The object of life is to be happy, the place to be happy is here, the time to be happy is now, the way to be happy is by making others happy."

Is that the morality of the beast?

TAB CAN.

## 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, E.C.2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "Rationalism, Old and New."

#### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.15, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park): 6.30-8.30, Mr. Reeling, Mr. Mowbray, Mr. Saphin, Mr. Blady. Discussion Circle meets every Thursday at 8 at "Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6, Mr. George Whitehead, a Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 3, Mr. F. Shaller, a Lecture; 6, Mr. E. Baker, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Outside Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7, Demonstration; speakers, Messrs. Warner, W. Hicks, A. B. High, and H. White.

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (12a Clayton Street East): 3 Members' monthly meeting—Conference Report, etc.

#### OUTDOOR.

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S.—May 28 to June 3, Mr. G. Whitehead, open-air campaign.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.—Summer Arrangements: June 3, Ramble to Darwen; meet Cromwell Monument 11 a.m. June 16, Freethought Tea (Mrs. Mapp's) on American lines. July 1, Ramble to Monk's Heath. July 29, Ramble Altrincham to Wilmslow. September 15, Freethought Tea (Mrs. Ballards). All going on the Darwin ramble should let Mr. T. F. Greenall, 34 Goulden Street, Pendleton, know at once by post card.

TYNESIDE LECTURING CAMPAIGN (Mr. Atkinson's Programme.—Saturday, May 26, at 6 p.m., Wesley Place, Blaydon-on-Tyne. Sunday, May 27, morning at 11 a.m., Hotel Corner, Chopwell; afternoon at 3 p.m., Main Square, Winlaton; Evening at 7 p.m., Town Moor, Newcastle-on-Tyne. Monday, May 28, at 7 p.m., New Herrington. Tuesday, May 29, at 7 p.m., Market Place, South Shields. Wednesday, May 30, at 7 p.m., Bigg Market or Hay Market, Newcastle-on-Tyne. Thursday, May 31, at 7 p.m., Borough Bank, North Shields.

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