

# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

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

*Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper*

VOL. XLIII.—No. 22

SUNDAY, JUNE 3, 1923

PRICE THREEPENCE

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## Views and Opinions.

### Truth and the Pulpit.

Teaching by way of parable is a common feature of all early religions. It takes the same place that the personification of natural objects, or even of the letters of the alphabet does in the training of young children. In both cases the power for dealing with abstract terms is weak, and by personification a more concrete form is given to the lesson that one desires to impart. For example, one can picture a world of difference in telling the story of the good Samaritan in abstract terms, and introducing it as having happened in actual life. The moral is visualized more thoroughly, and the intended lesson takes its place more firmly in the imagination. No one is injured by it and many may benefit. But at a later stage of mental development the parable loses its force. When a tale is then told the hearer may not trouble about the personification, he is concerned with the more abstract issue, and he rejects or accepts it on that ground alone. And in this connection we reach a curious and instructive stage in the history of Christianity. As the parable, as parable, dropped out of fashion, the Christian clergy appear to have used the same kind of thing in a different manner. The lesson to be enforced was not told as a parable but as an actual fact. The person talked about was no longer so much a type as he was an actual member of some body of which the Christian clergyman disapproved. In other words teaching by parable seems to have degenerated in the pulpit into the practice of deliberate lying. And with the clergy it appears as though age cannot wither nor custom stale its infinite variety.

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### An Ancient Practice.

We notice elsewhere in this issue the curious advice of a writer in the *Christian World* that preachers should use plenty of illustrations in their sermons, and that if they cannot find suitable ones in their text-books they should make them. To openly give this advice is new, but it is a very ancient practice. In the West parables never appear to have had the vogue they had in the East. From various causes more concrete teaching was required, and the Christian clergy soon supplied what was wanted. The man of the parable who did a good action became a sincere member of the preacher's own sect. The man who did a bad action

was a Mohammedan, or a Deist, or a heretic, or an Atheist, also known to the preacher, and the moral intended was not that a bad action is ugly and a good one beautiful, but the one sprang from a rejection and the other the acceptance of certain sectarian teachings. And as the person pilloried very seldom had the opportunity of replying before the same audience that heard the anecdote, teaching by illustration became a powerful weapon of slander and misrepresentation with the pulpit generally. On the one hand there was built up the conviction that the heretic was a vile person that should be shunned; on the other the belief that the Christian really did represent the salt of the earth, and they who opposed him the natural enemies of God and man. Christian egotism and Christian malignity were both fed from the same source.

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### Inventing the Facts.

Consider how easily and naturally this Christian manufacture of incidents to illustrate sermons goes on. The Bishop of London spends a few years in the East End, and every now and again to illustrate one of his sermons we get the story of some wonderful experience of his with Atheists. No one but himself remembers these public encounters of the Atheist speakers that were silenced by his eloquence, of the dying unbeliever who sent for him, of the evil liver who confessed to him that his first step in vice was the neglect of Christianity. But they serve. Such stories were not told for the first time yesterday, they have been in vogue for many generations, they who hear them are used to them, they expect them, and when they are told them they feel more than ever convinced of the value of the gospel and of their own moral superiority. Once upon a time these tales appeared in a more drastic form. Before Sunday amusements became as popular as they are now there were scores of stories of boys who were killed or drowned for the offence of staying away from Sunday-school. Those conversant with the tracts of about a century ago will remember that these tales were told with the greatest detail. Names and places were given—a safe plan since credulity never enquires, it accepts. When the notorious evangelist Torrey was over here he narrated the stock stories of "infidels" and packed most of them on to Paine and Ingersoll. He was exposed, fully exposed. So fully that prominent clergymen admitted that the man was a thorough-paced liar. But they refused to say so publicly. He had only been doing what so many of them do, making illustrations that would suit his preaching, and if it "brought souls to God why should anyone complain? God will count the number of worshippers he gets, not the lies that are told to get them."

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### Infidel Death-Feds.

Look at the circumstantial lies told about the death-beds of unbelievers. There is hardly a week passes without my getting from some part of the country an enquiry as to whether Charles Bradlaugh died an Atheist or not. The dying unbeliever is a very ancient piece of Christian lying. It can be found in the very earliest pages of Christian history, and it shows much

vitality still. The Christian is so afraid of death, is so full of mental terror at the thought of facing what all will have to face sooner or later, that he cannot picture men meeting the end with a perfect serenity of mind. At any rate, the stories may serve to keep some Christians in a state of mental subjection to their creed. For my own part I quite fail to get angry or even greatly interested in these stories of dying and repentant unbelievers. They are interesting from the point of view of psycho-pathology, but that is all. I should not feel the least disturbed if it were proven that every well-known Freethinker for the past century or more had died raving for Jesus to save him, or even if I were assured that I should follow their example when my end came. A sensible life with a silly death is far better than a silly life with a sensible ending. The world gains much from the former and loses nothing from the latter. If Freethought can only have the services of men and women while they are strong and healthy, Christianity is welcome to them five minutes before they die. But if Christianity could only get people as they are dying, and if there were a law against leaving money to the Churches I do not imagine the clergy would in that case trouble how men died.

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#### On Taking Them Seriously.

Perhaps the greatest mistake that any Freethinker can make is to take these Christian "illustrations" seriously. Here is a friend who writes me from South Africa about a cock-and-bull story told in a South African paper to the effect that Charles Bradlaugh had arranged to have a debate in Bristol, but at the last moment was afraid, and sent down G. W. Foote to take his place, and when the latter got there all he could say was that he did not know. And as a result the National Secular Society has called itself Agnostic ever since. There is little use in categorically telling a man who circulates a story of this kind that he is a liar. At all events it should be unnecessary information to his friends. The National Secular Society has never called itself Agnostic and every one of its leaders has preferred the straightforward name of Atheist. Anyone who knew either Bradlaugh or Foote knows that to run away from a discussion was exactly what Bradlaugh was always doing, and all that Foote could do on the platform was to confess he did not know and beg his opponent not to expose him. Really such things are not to be seriously argued against. It pays the Christian "illustrator" too great a compliment and is a slur upon the intelligence of other people. I have come across numerous circumstantial stories of how certain Christians have met poor me on the platform and given me such a verbal thrashing that I have ignominiously slunk from the platform, and that town has known me no more. The same fate has befallen every other Freethinker of note, and I feel complimented on being placed in such distinguished company. And I really have met Christians I could not answer. There are some Christian controversialists who could only be answered by a talkative inmate of an idiot asylum. Successful controversy implies some sort of equality between disputants.

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#### The Social Reaction.

I believe profoundly that ultimately the only person who can injure a man is the man himself. I am not hurt by the lies some other man tells about me, but he is. It is not Freethinkers who suffer by the lies that Christians tell, it is the Christian who is the sufferer. All the manufactured experience of all the Christian preachers concerning Freethinkers has not made Freethinkers a bit the worse. It is the preachers and their flocks who have suffered. Burnings and imprisonments and torturings of unbelievers by Chris-

tians make very useful material for the rhetoric of the platform or for the pen of the pamphleteer, but these are not by far the greatest injuries that Christianity has inflicted on the race. The greatest evil of all is the creation by the Christian Church of an environment in which truth is regarded as of minor importance, and the search for it as the amusement of cranks and faddists. It has discounted the value of reason as a factor in settling affairs and enhanced the importance of force and self-interest. It has given a lower mental tone to the pulpit with its thousands of occupants, and given them full sanction to invent whatever falsehoods and suppress whatever truths might serve sectarian interests for the time being. We are always saying that the present generation is the parent of the next. It is one of those cheap generalizations that appeal to so many and which says very little. What we do not always realize is that what the next generation will be like will be very largely determined by the kind of environment we frame or create. It is that to which they will react, and an environment in which people feel at liberty to invent "illustrations" to suit their purpose and to pass these off as transcripts of actual experience will be one in which a sense of truth and justice cannot but be poorly developed.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

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## The Holy Ghost.

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THE third member of the Christian Trinity, as a distinct personality, is a creation of the Christian Church. Tertullian, a born controversialist, was the first to use the term "Trinity," and also the first to affirm distinctly that "tri-personality pertains to the one God as he is in himself." In the *Christian World* of May 24 there is an article entitled "The Coming of the Spirit," by one who signs himself "A. T. S. J." According to this writer, "after the Four Gospels, the most significant thing in the New Testament is the narrative of Pentecost." Without Pentecost there might have been no Church, and without the Church certainly there would have been no Christianity. "A. T. S. J." does not go quite as far as that, but even he admits that if there had been no Pentecost "there would have been no Acts of the Apostles, and very little Christian history of any kind." Let us look at the story of Pentecost as told in Acts ii, 1-4:—

And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Wind, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Wind gave them utterance.

The great word in that passage is "wind," which undergoes a subtle transition from an impersonal to a personal sense. The sound from heaven that filled the house resembled the rushing of a powerful wind. Then there was the appearance of flame-like tongues, parting asunder and sitting down on each one of those present, with the result that all were filled, not with the old, natural element, the wind, but with what the translators audaciously call the Holy Spirit. In the Greek text there is no change of word at all, but only the placing of the adjective "holy" before the same word in the second instance. In John iii, 7, 8, the audacity of the translators is more glaring still, if possible:—

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born from above. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not

whence it cometh and whither it goeth : So is everyone that is born of the wind.

The Greek there boldly sticks to the same word throughout, and there is not even an adjective introduced to indicate any change of meaning in the second use of the word "wind," though clearly a personification is implied. What puzzles us is why in English *pneuma*, translated spirit, becomes personal, whilst *pneuma*, rendered wind, remains impersonal. Our contention is that in secular literature *pneuma* always signifies primarily wind, breath, respiration, gale, blast, and secondarily the life and disposition of man, while in mythological or sacred writings it gradually came to connote, in specific circumstances, a Divine Person, generally spoken of as the *Pneuma* or Wind of God, or as the Holy Wind, usually Englished into Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost.

But to be in the realm of mythology is tantamount to walking among empty dreams, vain shadows, and tantalizing phantoms of the mind—a land wholly peopled by purely imaginary beings and forces. Now, it is our deep-seated conviction that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost are simply invented personalities, the creations of minds steeped in superstition. Of course, alas, it matters not whether a person is real or mythical if you can but bring yourself to believe with all your hearts in his objective reality. Take the case of the sorrowing disciples who had been assured by their Lord before he left them that happy experiences and marvellous developments awaited them in the immediate future; in fact that they would receive power as soon as the Holy Spirit came upon them. Power was a thing to grasp at with avidity, to pray and work for with boundless enthusiasm, and it had been promised to them with the descent of the Holy Ghost.

Well, now, looking back upon that whole scene, across nineteen dark and stormy centuries, the only rational conclusion to which we can come is that the strange experiences through which the disciples passed on that never to be forgotten Day of Pentecost, coming as they did after ten days devoted to meditation and prayer, could only have ended in unintelligible ecstasy, hysteria, or madness. The record says that they spoke with strange tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance, and yet not a single word uttered by them has been preserved, probably because not one intelligible word was spoken. They were in a state of nebulous, irresponsible frenzy—a quite natural outcome of a ten days' nerve-strain. After so long an orgy of religious dissipation nothing could have been reasonably expected but what actually came to pass. It was a signal instance of the operation of the law of cause and effect in the domain of the nervous system; it was pre-eminently an ecstatic transport. *But what is ecstasy?* It is a Greek noun formed from a verb which means to remove, displace, deprive, amaze; and it is usual to define it as mental alienation, amazement, or wandering of mind. Many of us remember what a great authority on the meaning of words the late Archbishop Trench, of Dublin, was universally considered to be. The following is what that eminent etymologist says about the word now under discussion:—

Ecstasy was madness; there is intense delight, but has in no wise thereby broken with the meaning from which it started, since it is the nature alike of madness and of joy to set men out of and beyond themselves.

Ecstasy is often pathological. There is a temporary loss of normal self-control in consequence of the entire absorption of the mind in the contemplation of one dominant object. There is often a close resemblance between this disease and catalepsy, though in reality they are two distinct complaints. Some strong emo-

tion assumes varying degrees of intensity, and though the patient is unconscious, yet on awaking he recollects clearly all he saw and felt during the continuance of the aberration. There is usually a profound, even violent, emotional disturbance which reveals itself in wild irresponsible speech, and in certain extravagant contortions and gesticulations of the body. Now, it is people in whom such a pathological tendency but slumbers who most easily fall victims to any wave of religious excitement that may sweep over the communities in which they reside. If the wave happens to roll over and submerge them, they almost immediately sink into a state of temporary, and in some instances, permanent insanity. For the time, all earthly interests are lost sight of; home and society with their respective delights and duties are forgotten; time itself has ceased to be; it is eternity alone that commands and receives their undivided, exclusive attention. Under such conditions, those people, when the religious wave is at its highest and worst, lose their balance and go mad, while others, in whom the constitutional tendency to hysteria is not so pronounced, experience only an intensification of feelings which induces a state of supreme joyousness, or an all-consuming passion of felicity. Of course, in every community there is a large majority of people who are so hale and strong that no revival ever subdues them, all waves of abnormal emotionalism passing over them without producing any effect, except one of contempt and disgust.

Those are facts which "A. T. S. J." completely ignores. His article is a devotional meditation. He describes religious experiences which Pentecost made possible, such as the sweet sense of Christ's presence in believing hearts. He says:—

The New Testament teaches us that to those who receive him, Christ makes himself so fully known that they cease from themselves, and become new creatures, and can do all things in his strength.

According to this writer "two things accompanied this plain assurance which the early Church had of Christ's presence in the heart of the disciple." They are other-worldliness and prayerfulness. Other-worldliness engenders a strong disdain for this earth and its things. In the early Church and during the Middle Ages "a very clear line of separation between the Church and the world" was drawn, and yet during most of those times the world was immeasurably purer and nobler than the Church, while the Church owed its inferiority and wickedness to its trust in God and prayer. Prayer and self-reliance are mortal enemies, and can never be reconciled.

The descent of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost is a most injurious myth, and the sooner we get rid of it the better for all concerned. It is earth, not heaven, that needs cultivation. J. T. LLOYD.

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## The Vocabulary of Virtue.

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What have we done, and where have we wandered, we that have produced sages who could have spoken with Socrates, and poets who could walk with Dante, that we should talk as if we had never done anything more intelligent than found colonies and kick niggers?

—G. K. Chesterton.

MATTHEW ARNOLD, in one of his delightful essays in which he was endeavouring to infuse "sweetness and light" into his hard-headed and commercially-minded countrymen, criticized adversely the aggressive manner in literature and journalism. The apostle of culture called it the manner which "aims rather at an effect upon the blood and senses than upon the spirit and intellect, and loves hard-hitting rather than

persuading." Matthew Arnold, be it remembered, could hit hard himself, but he always wore the velvet glove over the steel gauntlet, although it was always difficult to persuade his opponents that he was a Bayard rather than a boxer.

Arnold never tired of the pleasant pastime of bishop-baiting, and he chaffed unmercifully a former Bishop of Gloucester for his publicly avowed intention of "doing something for God." Even the sanctity which hedges an archbishop had no terrors for this most light-hearted of theologians. Once he fluttered the doves of Orthodoxy by comparing the Most Holy Christian Trinity to "three Lord Shaftesburys," and nearly shortened the life of the pious and distinguished philanthropist who bore that name. That, however, was "pretty Fanny's way." Like the curse directed against the famous jackdaw of Rheims, nobody was a penny the worse for it. Religious animosity, on the other hand, has always been responsible for much that was really brutal in speech and in action. Roman Catholics actually burned Protestants, and Protestants killed Catholics. Both Catholics and Protestants murdered Freethinkers. In less savage and less religious times, ruffianism was still the order of the day. The austere Milton left the slopes of Parnassus and used the language of Billingsgate when he attacked priestcraft. The light-hearted Sydney Smith could no more speak civilly of Methodists than Mr. Hilaire Belloc, or the editor of the *Morning Post*, of Jews. William Cobbett was more than usually brutal in his treatment of Quakers, the most inoffensive of all religious bodies. That a Freethinker must be either an idiot or a rogue is a postulate of leather-lunged Christian Evidence lecturers. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has latterly denounced Materialists with most unsavoury rhetoric, a form of speech he never by any chance used before he embraced the superstition of Spiritualism.

Old Doctor Samuel Johnson was not a bad-hearted man, but Goldsmith was right when he said: "There's no arguing with Johnson, for when his pistol misses fire he knocks you down with the butt-end." Johnson was at his worst concerning sceptics. He calls Bolingbroke "a scoundrel and a coward." Yet the doctor never read the author he so savagely pillories. "I have never read Bolingbroke's impiety," he remarks, with unexpected ingenuousness. To Johnson, Freethinkers are vermin, which his rhetoric would fain exterminate. Hume, Gibbon, and Voltaire are all scoundrels. Men like Priestley and Price were an offence and an abomination. Boswell says that when Dr. Price came into a company where Johnson was, the latter instantly left the room. Rousseau, to this dear old Tory, was "one of the worst of men, a rascal who ought to be hunted out of society." And the Archbishop of Paris was saying the same thing of poor Jean Jacques, and trying to live up to it.

The poet Shelley should have been an authority on Christian charity. His known Atheism incurred the hatred of Christians, and no enmity is more relentless and more venomous. The abuse which was supposed to have killed Keats was the quintessence of courtesy compared with the assault and battery made upon Shelley by the enlightened Press of a civilized country. Here, for example, is what the *Gentleman's Magazine* had to say when the news of the poet's death reached England:—

Percy Bysshe Shelley is a fitter subject for a penitentiary dying speech than a lauding elegy; for the muse of the rope than of the cypress.

That was what a periodical edited by a Christian gentleman for Christian gentlemen had to say of the young Freethinker who had devoted his life to the service of Humanity. Not long before another representative of the "Religion of Love" met Shelley in

the post office at Pisa, called him "a damned Atheist," and knocked him down.

The late George W. Foote, the first editor of the *Freethinker*, had his full share of abuse. His waste-paper basket was seldom without an insulting letter or post-card sent to him by pious folk. "I have been accused of all the crimes in the calendar, except murder," he once remarked, smiling. "That solitary exception is due to the difficulty of finding a corpse." Charles Bradlaugh was subjected to similar abuse, and he was also excluded from the House of Commons for thirteen years on account of his known Freethought opinions. Annie Besant was subject to a Niagara of insult before which a strong man might have wavered. Not even her sex shamed her traducers. In the Great Republic of the West, Christian prejudice barred Robert Ingersoll from important positions in the political world. A man of his extraordinary genius might easily have attained the proud position of President of the United States. The names of Francesco Ferrer and Alfred Dreyfus remind us to what lengths religious prejudice has been carried in Spain and France.

This pious hatred represents the very last fruit of a very ancient Upas tree, which is dying slowly. It once bore scaffolds, stakes, prisons and torture-chambers; latterly its worst branches have been lopped by the activity of the Freethinkers. Time, after all, largely adjusts the balance, for, after the lapse of the years, the memory of the Freethinkers is kept sweet, whilst that of their opponents is utterly forgotten, or become but a name of little meaning.

MIMNERMUS.

## Luther in the Light of To-day.

### VII.

(Continued from page 325.)

One other grave objection to the writings of Luther I have not hitherto been called upon to mention; but I will not wholly omit his scandalous grossness, especially as Archdeacon Hare has entered upon an elaborate apology for it. We all know quite as well as he does that the manners of different ages, different countries, and different conditions of life, are not alike; and that what is universally condemned in some periods has been tolerated in others. Such an excuse may often be made with great fairness, but it cannot be made for Luther. We have writings of his contemporaries, we have writings of grave men in ages less polished than his own. No serious author of the least reputation will be found who defiles his pages, I do not say with such indelicacy but with such disgusting filthiness as Luther.—Hallam, "Introduction to the Literature of Europe," p. 307.

It is true that the writers of the sixteenth century were more outspoken than they are to-day, but Luther surpassed them all in the filthiness of his expressions. Moreover, it is not enough to exonerate Luther to say that he was no worse than the profane and literary men of the time. Luther was a professedly religious writer, and claimed to be a great religious and moral reformer. For instance, if the Archbishop of Canterbury were to interlard his charges and exhortations with the expletive "bloody," it would be no excuse for him to point out that Mr. Bernard Shaw uses the same word in his play *Pygmalion*. But Luther went further in this direction than any writer of his time; several of his contemporaries told him so openly:—

One tract of Luther's which dates from about this time (1522), that *Against the Clerical State falsely so-called of Pope and Bishops*, contains a chapter concerning Vows, in which the descriptions are so coarse and the language so nasty that Staupitz might well have considered even his censure of certain earlier writings of Luther's not sufficiently strong: "Your works are praised," he had told him, "by those who keep houses of ill-fame." Several par-

ticularly violent polemical tracts of those years, meant by Luther for his theological adversaries generally, are so brimful of words descriptive of the vilest parts and functions of the human body that it would be impossible to match them in the writings of previous ages. His manner of speech was considered by his foes to have reached the lowest depths of thought and feeling. The vulgarity of his language was held to display the utter depravity of his mind. In polemics Luther was not merely the "greatest, but also the coarsest writer of his century" (Hausrath, *Luther's Leben* I, p. 226). Such is the opinion recently expressed by a Protestant historian.<sup>1</sup>

Bullinger, the leader of the Protestants in Switzerland, complains repeatedly and bitterly of Luther's frightful invective. He says of Luther's writing against the Jews: "There is Luther's filthy, swinish *Schemhamphorasch* for which some small excuse might have been found had it been written by a swineherd and not by a famous pastor of souls." And yet, he continues, people "even go so far as to worship the houndish, filthy eloquence of the man. Thus it comes that he goes his way and seeks to outdo himself in vituperation." Bullinger told Bucer that Luther ought to have someone like Melancthon at his side to check him, "so that Luther may not ruin a good cause with his wonted invective, his bitterness, his torrent of bad words and his ridicule."<sup>2</sup>

Erasmus in his *Hyperaspistes*, addressed to Luther, says:—

Scarcely one of your books have I been able to read to the end, so great and insatiable is the tendency to libel which they display. If there were only two or three libels one might think you had given vent to them without due consideration, but as it is, your book swarms with abuse on every page. You begin with it, go on with, and end with it.

Nor did Luther stop at this; to obscene words he added obscene illustrations. His *Popery Pictured* consists of nine pictures, one of which represents the "birth and origin of the Pope." In this revolting picture the Devil is portrayed as a hideous woman with a tail, from under which Pope and Cardinals are emerging head foremost. Another picture consists of a stool decorated with the Papal insignia, and placed upon it the Pope's tiara upside down, into which men-at-arms are relieving themselves. A third shows the Pope in his tiara riding upon a sow, representing Germany. It is entitled "The Pope gives a Council in Germany." Grisar says:—

As for the Council which the Pope is giving the German people it is depicted as his own, the Pope's excrement, which he holds in his hand pledging the Germans in it, as Luther says in the passage above. The Pope blesses the steaming object while the sow noses it with her snout.<sup>3</sup>

Grisar cites worse things than these, quite unprintable here, but even expensive books have a limit, and he has to veil many of them in Latin. Nor was this indecency assumed for the mere purpose of assailing his enemies, it was natural to Luther. In private life in the company of his friends, male and female, he was in the habit of making indecent jokes. Even his letters to his friends are not free from them. For instance, writing of his friend Jonas, who was married, he says:

<sup>1</sup> Hartmann Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. II, pp. 151-152.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 115.

<sup>3</sup> Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. V, p. 423. Luther tells Duke Henry of Brunswick that he is "as expert in Holy Writ as a sow is on the harp." Let him and his Papists confess that they are "verily the Devil's whore-church." "You should not write a book," Luther tells him, "until you have heard an old sow s—; then you should open your jaws and say: 'Thank you, lovely nightingale, now I have the text I want.' Stick to it; it will look fine printed in a book against the scripturists and the Elector; but have it done at Wolfenbuttel. Oh, how they will have to hold their noses" (Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. IV, p. 288).

"As he has had no child we call him the virgin." In another letter he says that Jonas "was accustomed to write his letters on paper which had served the basest of services; he (Luther) was, however, more considerate for his friends."<sup>4</sup>

His table-talk abounds with indecent anecdotes and witticisms which are totally suppressed in the English translations. Grisar says:—

These anecdotes are all related more or less in detail, but apart from them, we have plentiful indelicate sayings and jokes and allusions to things not usually mentioned in society, sufficient in fact to fill a small volume.<sup>5</sup>

We give one as a sample, by no means the worst. Treating of the Bible passage according to which woman must be veiled "on account of the angels" (1 Cor. xi, 11), Luther adds, with his customary vulgarity, "And I, too, must wear breeches on account of the girls."<sup>6</sup>

These things will come as a revelation and a shock to those Protestants who only know the reformer through the bowdlerized English translations of his works. Much more might be said upon this unsavoury subject, but we have gone quite far enough. The silence maintained upon this side of Luther's character by English Protestants amounts to nothing less than a pious fraud; but it is quite in keeping with that monstrosity, the Nonconformist conscience. W. MANN.

(To be Continued.)

## The Mediæval Church and Miracles.

THE writings of the Fathers, especially of those of the fourth and fifth centuries, are full of the most extraordinary tales of miracles of the most diverse kinds. The historian Lecky says:—

They were a kind of celestial charity, alleviating the sorrows, healing the diseases, and supplying the wants of the faithful. They were frequent incitements to piety, stimulating the devotions of the languid, and rewarding the patience of the fervent. They were signs of great and saintly virtue, securing universal respect for those who had attained a high degree of sanctity, or assisting them in the performance of their more austere devotions. Thus, one saint, having retired into the desert to lead a life of mortification, the birds daily brought him a supply of food, which was just sufficient for his wants; and when a kindred spirit visited him in his retirement, they doubled the supply; and when he died, two lions issued from the desert to dig his grave, uttered a long howl of mourning over his body, and knelt down to beg a blessing from the survivor. Thus, another saint, who was of the opinion that a monk should never see himself naked, stood one day in despair upon the banks of a bridgeless stream, when an angel descended to assist him, and transported him in safety across the dreaded element.<sup>1</sup>

Here is another tale of miraculous aid vouchsafed to an anchorite. It is from the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great:—

In Campania, upon Mount Marsicus, a venerable man called Martin lived for many years the solitary life shut up in a very small cave. Many of us knew him and were witnesses of his deeds. I myself have heard much of him both from Pope Pelagius, my predecessor, and from other religious men who related anecdotes of him. His first miracle was this: Hardly had he established himself in the cleft of the moun-

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 143-144.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 267.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 271.

<sup>1</sup> This was Paul the Hermit. His visitor was Saint Antony. The quotation comes from *The Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*.

tain, when from the very rock which was hollowed out to make his narrow cave burst forth a stream of water just sufficient to supply the daily need of the servant of God, and there was never too much or too little.....

But the ancient enemy of mankind envied the man's strength, and laboured with his wonted skill to drive him forth from the cave. For he entered into the beast that is his friend—the serpent—and sought to make the monk afraid and to drive him from his dwelling. He came at twilight and stretched himself out before the holy man when he was praying, and lay down with him when he went to rest.

The holy man was entirely unafraid. He would hold to the serpent's mouth his hand or his foot, and say to him, "If thou hast leave to smite me, I do not say thee nay." After these things had taken place continually for three years, on a certain day the ancient enemy of mankind, vanquished by such great endurance, groaned, and the serpent let himself glide over the steep mountain side to a precipice. And the flame that went out from him burned all the trees in that place. Almighty God constrained him to burn the mountain side, and so compelled him to show forth the great virtues of the man from whom he had departed, conquered.<sup>2</sup>

In the Middle Ages the demand for such absurd stories was boundless. Many of the miracle-tales of that period seem so grossly materialistic to the modern mind that it is difficult to feel any sympathy with the type of mentality that could believe them. According to these popular beliefs, men of great sanctity were not uncommonly visited by angels, or by the Virgin; or in the midst of their devotions they were lifted up and held suspended above the ground by no visible agency. Each town had its holy relic, or relics, that worked marvellous cures; or it had some extraordinary image that bowed its head, or made some other sign to earnest worshippers. There is a humorous story in Grimm's *Household Tales* that is a good sample of the kind of fable to which I have just referred. Incidentally it sheds some light upon the status of women in the Middle Ages, and the attitude of the Church towards them. The tale goes thus:—

St. Bernard went into a Cathedral to pay his devotions to the image of the Virgin. He fell twice on his knees before it, and full of religious fervour exclaimed, "Oh, gracious, mild, and highly favoured mother of God!" Thereupon the image said, "Welcome my Bernard!" Straightway the saint, his sense of propriety outraged, answered, "Silence! No woman is to speak in the congregation!"

One might give many more examples, but this, I think, well illustrates the queer attitude of the mediæval mind in such matters.

At Burgos, in Spain, there was a crucifix the hair of which grew, and had to be cut once a month! At Saragossa, the Virgin of the Pillar, at the earnest petition of one of her worshippers, restored whole a limb that had been amputated! The lives of the saints are impregnated with the supernatural; miracles continually occur in them. Some idea may therefore be formed of the vast accumulation of tales of the miraculous, from the fact that Guizot, the celebrated French historian, estimated the number of these lives, in the Bollandist Collection, at 25,000. Whenever a new saint was canonized, it was necessary, of course, to prove that he had worked miracles. And so the number of childish stories of the saints continually grew. Here is one taken from the first *Life of St. Francis*, by Thomas Celano, written in 1228:—

The most blessed Father Francis once made his way through the valley of Spoleto, and he came to

a place near Bevagna where birds of divers kinds had gathered together in a great multitude—crows, doves, and others which are called, in the vulgar tongue, bullfinches. Now Francis, most blessed servant of God, was a man full of zeal and moved to tenderness and gentleness toward all creatures, even those that be lowly and without reason. So when he had seen the birds he did run to them quickly, leaving his companions upon the way.

When he came near to them he saw that they awaited him, and he made salutation, as he was wont to do. Wondering a little that they did not take flight, as is the habit of birds, he begged them humbly, yet with great joy, that they would hear the word of God. And among many things that he said unto them was this which follows: "My brother birds, greatly should ye praise your Creator and always serve him, because he gave you feathers to wear, wings to fly, and whatsoever ye needed. He exalted you among his creatures and made for you a mansion in the pure air. Although ye sow not, neither reap, none the less he protects you and guides you, and ye have not any care."

At this the birdlings—so one said who was with him—began to stretch out their necks and raise their wings, to open their mouths, and to look upon him. He went and came, passing through the midst of them, and his tunic touched their heads and bodies. Then he blessed them, and made the sign of the cross, and gave them leave to fly to other places.

Somewhat similar to this was the story of how the fish thronged to the shore to hear St. Antony preach. But all the miracles related by mediæval wonder-mongers did not concern the saints, or holy relics, or speaking images. Many of the tales current in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were used by preachers and writers to show the wondrous workings of the sacraments. Here is one from the apologues of Stephen Bourbon, a Dominican inquisitor—a man of experience and some sagacity:—

I have heard that a certain rustic, wishing to become wealthy and having many hives of bees, asked certain evil men how he could get rich and increase the number of his bees. He was told by someone that if he retained the sacred host on Easter and placed it in one of his hives, he would entice away all his neighbour's bees, which, leaving their own hives, would come to the place where the body of our Lord was and there would make honey. So he did this.

Then all the bees came to the hive where the body of Christ was, and just as if they felt sorrow for the irreverence done to it, by their labour they began to construct a little church and to erect foundations, and bases, and columns, and an altar; then with the greatest reverence they placed the body of our Lord on the altar. And within their little beehive they formed the little church with wonderful and most beautiful workmanship. The bees of the vicinity, leaving their hives, came to that one; and over that work they sang in their own manner certain wonderful melodies like hymns.

The rustic hearing this, marvelled. But waiting until the fitting time for collecting the honey, he found nothing in his hives. Finding himself impoverished through the means by which he had expected to be enriched, he went to the hive where he had placed the host, and where he saw the bees had come together. But when he approached, just as if they wished to vindicate the insult to our Saviour, the bees rushed upon the rustic and stung him so severely that he escaped with great difficulty and in great agony. Going to the priest, he related all that he had done, and what the bees had done.

The priest, by the advice of the bishop, collected his parishioners and made a procession to that place. Then the bees, leaving the hive, rose in the air, making sweet melody. Raising the hive, they found inside the noble structure of that little church and the body of our Lord placed upon the altar. Then, returning thanks, they bore to their own church that

<sup>2</sup> Anatole France, in *Thais*, presents us with a delightfully ironic picture of the life of the early anchorites and the trials inflicted upon them by the Devil and his demons. There is, I believe, an English translation of the book.

little church of the bees, constructed with such skill and elegance, and placed it on the altar.

By this deed those who do not reverence, but offer insult instead to the sacred body of Christ, or the sacred place where it is, ought to be put to great confusion.

This is one of the "moral" tales with which the mediæval Church, when at the height of its power, maintained its sway over the ignorant masses of the period.

Even when the power and prestige of the Church was on the decline its capacity to produce wonder tales intended to impress the ignorant, and to add to its own reputation, did not pass away. Here is a tale, directed against heresy. It is from *Luxe, Bishop of Tuy* (thirteenth century):—

From the lips of the same brother Elias, a venerable man, I learned that when certain heretics were scattering the virulent seeds of error in parts of Burgundy, both the Preaching Friars and the Minorites drew the two-edged sword of God's word against these same heretics, opposing them valiantly, until they were finally taken up by the magistrates of the district. He sent them to the stake, as they merited, in order that these workers of iniquity should perish in their wickedness as a wholesome lesson to others.

Quantities of wood having been supplied in plenty to feed the flames, suddenly a toad of wonderful size appeared, and without being driven betook itself of its own accord into the midst of the flames. One of the heretics, who was reported to be their bishop, had fallen on his back in the fire. The toad took his place on this man's face, and in the sight of all ate out the heretic's tongue.

By the next day his whole body, except his bones, had been turned into disgusting toads, which could not be counted for their great number. The inhabitants, seeing the miracle, glorified God and praised him in his servants, the Preaching Friars, because the Lord had, in his mercy, delivered them from the horror of such pollution.

God omnipotent surely wished to show through the most unseemly and filthiest of animals, how foul and infamous are the teachings of heretics, so that all might thereafter carefully shun the heretic as they would the poisonous toad.

Such then were the instruments of intellectual and moral suasion that the Christian Church employed to maintain its supremacy. And if these foolish superstitions have been largely relegated to the limbo of exploded fallacies and traditions, it is not through any particular merit of the Church (or Churches). It is chiefly because our machine-civilization, based upon a scientific knowledge and conception of the universe has so moulded men's minds that there is no room in them for the miraculous.

In the words of Paul Lafargue (*Social and Philosophical Studies*):—

The labour of the mechanical factory puts the wage-worker in touch with terrible natural forces unknown to the peasant, but instead of being mastered by them, he controls them. The gigantic mechanism of iron and steel which fills the factory, which makes him move like an automaton, which sometimes clutches him, mutilates him, bruises him, does not engender in him a superstitious terror as the thunder does the peasant, but leaves him unmoved, for he knows that the limbs of the mechanical monster were fashioned and mounted by his comrades, and that he has but to push a lever to set it in motion or stop it. The machine, in spite of its miraculous power and productiveness, has no mystery for him. The labourer in the electric works, who has but to turn a crank on a dial to send miles of motive power to tramways or light to the lamps of a city, has but to say, like the God of Genesis, "Let there be light," and there is light.....He would be greatly surprised if one were to come to him and tell him that a cer-

tain God might, if he chose, stop the machine and extinguish the lights when the electricity had been turned on; he would reply that this anarchist God would be simply a misplaced gearing or a broken wire, and that it would be easy for him to seek and find this disturbing God. The practice of the modern workshop teaches the wage-worker scientific determinism.

Also, as Professor Henderson of Chicago University said: Religion is losing its hold on the business world because business men associate religion with miracle, and miracle is foreign to the business habit of thought.

W. H. MORRIS.

## Acid Drops.

Several years ago there was propounded an Army education scheme. This was not very wise, from the military point of view, as a really sound education would not develop a good army. It might make men critical, enquiring, and independent, and that is not the type of which militarism thinks very much. But a large number of books were bought, and as many of these have now been sold, the *Daily News* in looking over the titles is astounded, and agrees with Captain Gee, late M.P. for Woolwich, that the scheme was "education gone mad." It selects for example Owen's *Sceptics of the Italian Renaissance*, De Quincey's *Confessions of an Opium Eater*, plays of Euripides, etc.

Now Owen's book happens to be one of a series which although written by a clergyman are really good works and do cast considerable light on the world's intellectual movements. And what better training could any man have than a study of the world's great writers, from Euripides onward? A little more of that kind of thing would turn us out much better citizens than we are getting at present. Presumably the *Daily News* would have considered it good educational matter had it been volumes of sermons, or essays on "The Footsteps of Our Lord," or some other of the brain befogging literature that is usually served out in the name of education.

As a sample of what is considered education we may take the comments of some of the daily Press on the fact that the king and queen having talked into a recording instrument the same was duly ground out to many thousands of school-children. The *Daily Chronicle*, for instance, thought it a wonderful thing that the children were thus able to hear the actual voice of their king and queen. We have no objection to the children hearing the voice of king and queen, we all ought to hear or see what we pay for. But in what way is this harnessing of science related to the cause of education? The notion that a child forms of a king and a queen is not that of certain officials whose value to the State is to be measured as we measure the value of any other official. The words come to a child with all the glamour of fairyland, and king and queen mean to it something very different from what it means to the intelligent adult. It is precisely to this cultivation of fictitious images in the child's mind that we owe the difficulty of effecting reforms as the child comes to manhood. We Freethinkers see this quite clearly in the case of religion. We see that the false ideas of things created in the mind of the child often dog it throughout its life. And the same thing holds good with purely social matters. The child should be educated so as to be as free in mind to judge the value of a king or a queen to a country as they ought to be to judge the value of a Prime Minister or a Chairman of a local council.

The Rev. Silas K. Hocking, the popular Methodist preacher, says, referring to the Great War, "in the present state of the world the Sermon on the Mount seemed unworkable." Brother Hocking need not have waited until he had retired from active service before making this confession.

A conference between ecclesiastics of the Government religion and the leading Free Churches is advertised to take place at Murren, Switzerland, in September. A most delightful time of the year, and a charming place to sing: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

St. Andrew's Church, Worcester, has been struck by lightning, much damage being done to the spire. God seems as careless of his houses as a jerry-builder.

While sheltering under a tree at Hadlow, near Tonbridge, Miss Johnson was struck by lightning and badly injured, being afterwards conveyed to Maidstone Hospital. Apparently, Providence is only interested in sparrows.

There was, or rather there is, a proposal to erect a chapel at Harvard University as a war memorial. This will, of course, suit the clergy, who care not what the memorial is for or where it is placed so long as it advertises their craft. But the proposal is being opposed by the college paper, *The Crimson*, on the ground that "the college religious service no longer plays any part in the lives of the majority of students nor is it likely to become more important in the future." That is quite a plain statement from the students themselves, and we may put it by the side of the interested statements of so many of the clergy that there is quite a revival of interest in religion among university students. The truth is that a real religious revival is like a miracle—it always occurs somewhere else and to someone else.

Our British clergy are very politic. When they can get their way by underground methods they seldom care to come out in the open. Hence the delusion that we are not priest-ridden while other countries are. When we were dealing with the wireless business a fortnight ago we said that we suspected the hand of the parson in the postponement of the Sunday evening concert till after church time. In America the clergy—or a section of them—seem more open in their trickery, and a war is being opened on the broadcasting of concerts on Sunday on the ground that it tends to keep people away from church. That is quite straightforward and we know where we are. But in this country we must have a moral reason for every piece of trickery that is engineered, and that comes out more strongly in connection with religion than with anything else. That is quite what one would expect, for the chief function of religion to-day appears to be to provide an outlet for the seamier side of human nature.

The *Yorkshire Post* is responsible for the statement that Mr. J. Brotherton, Labour M.P. for Gateshead, is the father of eight children, not one of whom has been baptized into any church. The *Yorkshire Post* says that some of his fellow Labour M.P.'s are trying to persuade Mr. Brotherton to have the whole eight baptized at once by Canon Carnegie, the Chaplain of the House of Commons. It is said that Mr. Brotherton is considering the matter. Now what is one to make of the intelligence of a number of members of Parliament who are bothering their heads and their fellow members about a thing of this kind? Is there any wonder that the affairs of the nations are as they are when that kind of intelligence gets elected to manage affairs? It really looks as though Parliament will do for anyone who cannot get on with anything else.

A writer in the *Christian World* points out to preachers the importance of using illustrations in sermons, and adds the advice "If you can't get the latter, make them." But that is just what is already done. Most of the stories of the wonderful experiences with unbelievers, etc., are manufactured for the purpose of illustrating sermons, but they are not given as manufactured things but as transcripts of actual happenings. The illustrations thus become deliberate lies. They pass into religious history as actual truths, and they are as truthful as most things are connected with religion. Lying for the greater glory of God is a very old Christian pastime.

The following, told by the Vicar of Addlestone, Surrey, in his parish magazine may or may not serve to illustrate what has just been said. He tells his readers that he is sure the people will never encourage Sunday games because he overheard a conversation between a number of working men in a barber's shop. Each speaker condemned Sunday games, and each speaker announced that he never attended church. But they regarded it as the thin end of the wedge towards Sunday labour. We should really like to hear more of this remarkable gathering of working men, not one of whom attended church, all of whom were opposed to games on Sunday, and who were also convinced that if their young men played cricket or football on Sunday that would certainly lead to their being employed seven days a week. It was a remarkable experience, but as the *Christian World* writer says, get illustrations, and if you can't find them, make them. We expect to find now that other parsons will meet with the same experience. If it can occur in one place it will certainly occur in another.

The Rev. B. G. Bouchier, of Hampstead, threatens to leave his church on account of the smallness of the contributions of those who attend. He says that huge congregations attend every week, but few make any return in aid. Unless the situation is altered he promises to resign next Michaelmas. This will hardly amount to a national catastrophe. Mr. Bouchier belongs to the narrow ecclesiastical type, the kind of person who covers a considerable amount of educated ignorance with a cloak of pseudo-culture. We heard him but once, and our impression of either his learning or his ability was far from flattering. So probably the congregations gave what they considered the sermons were worth.

The President of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (America) says that in Timbuctoo and Tahiti ragtime music delights the minds of the savage, and when "sacred words" are set to ragtime the natives sing it with vigour. So they would sing with equal vigour if the words referred to the virtues of Beecham's pills or Pear's soap. The statement throws more light on the minds of these missionary folk than it does on that of the native. So long as they can get the natives to repeat "sacred words," no matter from what motive, they can be counted as converts and used to extract money from the folk at home.

There is unconscious satire in the comment of the editor of the *Leeds Mercury* on the above. He says that General Booth found the same thing when he wedded popular tunes to hymns. Now if we had placed the followers of General Booth on the same mental plane as savages we should have been accused of coarseness. The editor of the *Mercury* does it by way of praise, and truth to tell, we do not think he is very far out. Indeed, on the general question, we can better understand Christianity making converts among savages than among civilized people.

Here is a study in contrasts. At Middlesex Sessions a man named Walter Rose was sentenced to five years' penal servitude for the theft of a clock from a church. At the Court of Criminal Appeal, a sentence of nine months in the second division, passed on Richard Taggart, son of a parson, for misappropriating money collected for St. Dunstan's Home for the Blind, was reduced to a period of probation under the care of his uncle. These things happen in a country popularly supposed to be free from priestcraft.

Speaking at the annual meeting of the Society for Promoting Christian knowledge, the Archbishop of Canterbury said that a native singer in West Africa sung into a gramophone and "absolutely blew the machine to bits." Some noise! Not the "still, small voice" of the Scriptures.

An East End clergyman named Radclyffe has been preaching on "Sensible Commercialism." Presumably the kind of business methods used in Gospel shops.



## The National Secular Society.

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

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

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

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

### To Correspondents.

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.

"SELBY TIMES" received. Thanks.

V. NEUBERG.—Nothing has come to hand yet.

H. R. PHILLIPS.—No, we have not seen the book you mention. Book buying is an expensive taste in these times.

A. W. COLEMAN.—Received with thanks. Shall appear as early as possible.

H. MORTIMER.—We are glad to know that we converted you to Freethought nearly thirty years ago, but the reminiscence makes us feel something like an antiquity. But, as you are still enthusiastic in the Freethought cause, we evidently made a convert worth having.

A. RADLEY.—The *Yorkshire Post* is only following the usual policy in its exercise of the boycott. Still, as our late editor used to say, if the Press does not make us there is the consolation that it cannot break us. We are independent of it. But we suggest that the exercise of the boycott would not be nearly so easy to put into operation if Freethinkers were more ready to plainly avow their opinions.

R. H. ROSETTI.—Pleased to learn that Mr. Whitehead had such successful meetings at West Ham.

H. MCCOLL.—Thanks for bringing the *Freethinker* before your Library Committee. Freethinkers have the same right as others to have their paper placed in the public reading rooms, and they should insist on their rights being respected. Insistence is the quality that tells here.

S. BETTS.—It is amusing to see a Christian editor surprised at the stupidity of uncivilized people sacrificing a young man to get rain, and at the same time blind to similar beliefs imbedded in his own creed, but if Christians saw that their own beliefs were really on a level with those of savages the churches would soon have to close their doors.

A. E. MADDOCK.—Thanks. Shall appear as early as possible. You may be right, and some of the papers will again be raising their price. For ourselves, we are finding the struggle pretty severe, although we never looked to making a profit. If we had done so we should have thrown up the sponge long ago.

H. DAWSON.—Thanks for cuttings. There is room for experiment in Freethought propaganda as in other things, and we are always ready to consider suggestions. We fancy we called attention to the obituary notice of Stewart in the local Press. You probably overlooked it.

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.

## Sugar Plums.

A Birmingham friend writes us on the old question of the return of unsold copies of the *Freethinker*. We can only say what we have said often before, that the *Freethinker* is supplied to all wholesale agents, and to all others who are supplied direct, on sale or return. There is, therefore, no reason that we can see why agents should refuse to take them back. We cannot force the agents to take returns, but if the retail sellers were to insist upon being treated fairly they might give way. It is evidently an attempt to place obstacles in the way of sales. The only other method would be for agents to get their supplies direct.

We again call attention to the fact that we are willing to send free copies of the *Freethinker* for six weeks to any address on payment of postage, which at present rates amounts to but threepence. This is quite a capital way of getting new readers, and we have had a number of addresses sent in during the past week. They are certain to bear good results sooner or later.

The wretched weather we are having has greatly handicapped the special out-door propaganda which is being conducted by the N.S.S. On Tyneside Mr. Atkinson's work has been interfered with, but he has had some good meetings and is putting in some useful work hunting up lapsed members and trying to induce them to once more take an active interest in the work. This is very important and we wish him every success.

Mr. Whitehead concluded a successful week's campaign in West Ham, and as the outcome of his lecturing in Finsbury Park and Wood Green meetings have been arranged for each Sunday in June at 11.15. Mr. Corrigan will be the first speaker. Local friends will please note. In North London the weather prevented Mr. Whitehead delivering more than four lectures, but the audiences were good and much interest was shown in the lectures.

We hope to see this side of the work greatly extended in the near future, but we must remind our friends that paying lecturers, with their expenses, comes expensive in these days, and what can be done must depend largely upon the support given the Executive in its efforts.

It seems a little sarcastic to announce that Branches are arranging for "Rambles," but we suppose they are optimistic about the weather. At any rate the Manchester Branch has fixed one for to-day (June 3). Members and friends will meet at the Cromwell Monument, Exchange Station and travel thence to Darwen by car, when they will walk—or swim—over Turton Moor, where tea will be provided by our old friends Mr. and Mrs. Hampson. The Birmingham Branch has also fixed one for the following Sunday, starting from New Street Station at 2.30, thence to Coleshill, via Marston Green. That gives the clerk of the weather an extra week for repentance.

## N.S.S. Annual Conference.

HELD IN THE TOWN HALL, LEEDS,

Whit-Sunday, May 20, 1923.

THE Annual Conference of the National Secular Society was held in the Town Hall, Leeds, on May 20, under the presidency of Mr. C. Cohen.

The following branch delegates were present: James Neate (Bethnal Green); Mrs. Clifford Williams and E. Clifford Williams (Birmingham); J. T. Lloyd (Glasgow); R. Atkinson (Greenside); Mrs. E. Baxter and J. Walker (Leeds); Harold I. Bayford, S. Cohen, and F. E. Monks (Manchester); K. B. Kough (Newcastle-on-Tyne); K. B. Kough (North London); F. P. Corrigan (South London); R. Chapman and J. Fothergill (South Shields); J. T. Lloyd (Swansea and District); R. A. Crank (Stockport); F. C. Warner (West Ham).

Amongst others present we were pleased to see: Mr. H. Black (Manchester); Mrs. Alice Lee, Miss Mildred Taylor, and Mr. Ben Lee (Huddersfield); Mr. T. J. Thurlow (West Ham); Mr. Andrew Millar (Glasgow); W. A. Holroyd (Nelson); Mr. John Wilson and Mrs. Wilson (Nottingham); Mrs. Neate, Mrs. Warner, A. B. Moss, etc. (London); Mr. and Mrs. George Brown, Ben Goldberg, Donald Duncan, Jack Jacobs, P. C. Harding, J. G. Robertshaw, J. W. Taylor, H. R. Youngman, Mrs. Greenwood, Aubrey H. Fisher, and Mrs. Lyon (Leeds).

The President, in opening the Conference, said that the depressed state of trade had influenced the number of delegates and friends present, but the value of a movement could not be estimated by numbers. The great work of the world had always been initiated by forceful minorities, and there were many signs that no other movement in this country had done more to mould public opinion on purely intellectual issues than had the National Secular Society. The Society would continue to play its part in the life of the country, and not all those who benefited from its existence were aware of the source from which that benefit came.

The Minutes of the previous Conference having been read and confirmed, the President read the Executive's Annual Report which was received and adopted. (This was published in the last issue of the *Freethinker*.)

On the presentation of the Annual Balance Sheet, Mr. F. E. Monks (Manchester), in moving its adoption, said that there was only one matter on which he wished to ask a question. There appeared to be no provision for and no statement made as to any payment made to the President for such out of pocket expenses as were incidental to the office. Our late President, Mr. G. W. Foote, received a regular honorarium, and it was only proper that a similar provision should be made with reference to others. Other delegates agreed, and after some discussion, the President said that while it would be idle to pretend that the office of President did not involve a financial tax which he was ill able to afford, he could not see his way to accept a vote of money which was brought before the Conference in this sudden way. Still, for the sake of other occupants of the office, if not for himself, he felt it was a matter which the Society as a whole ought to deal with and accept as one of its responsibilities. He suggested that the matter be adjourned for the present. On the motion of Miss Kough the matter was remitted to the Executive with instructions to take whatever steps were considered necessary. The balance sheet was then adopted.

On the motion of the Bethnal Green, Manchester, West Ham, and North London Branches Mr. Cohen was then unanimously re-elected President of the Society. In returning thanks for his re-election Mr. Cohen said that when he was first elected to the post, eight years ago, he made but one promise. That was to do his best. He could only repeat that to-day.

Miss E. M. Vance was then re-elected Secretary, and Mr. C. Quinton Treasurer. Messrs. Theobald and Co. (Incorporated Accountants) were reappointed auditors. The new Executive was then elected as printed.

The President then moved on behalf of the Executive Motion No. 9:

(a) That the words, "and accompanied with an entrance fee of one shilling per member," be added to clause 1, section 3, of the Constitution and Rules.

(b) That clause 5, section 17, of Constitution and Rules read, "All motions to be submitted to the Annual Conference must be forwarded to the General Secretary at least six weeks before the Conference. The complete Agenda to be issued two weeks before the Conference."

(c) That the Executive be empowered to fill any vacancies that may arise between Conferences, and that it be further authorized to appoint other members as it may find desirable, provided that the number so appointed does not exceed one fourth of those elected at the Annual Conference.

After some explanations were asked for and given, these were approved.

Mr. A. B. Moss, in a brief speech, moved a resolution on behalf of Secular Education, which was seconded and carried.

The President then moved a resolution urging upon Freethinkers all over the country, in view of the present position of the Bill for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, to bring pressure upon their Parliamentary representatives to support this measure, and do what they could to educate public opinion on the subject. The resolution was carried.

Motion No. 12 from South Shields calling attention to the evil of Freethinkers engaged in political and social work subordinating their Freethought to considerations of political expediency was then moved by Mr. J. Fothergill and carried.

The South London Branch moved a resolution urging upon local bodies the need for extending opportunities for the rational use of the day of rest, and protesting against the action of the Churches in fighting a movement which made for both the moral and physical well-being of the people. This was carried, as was a similar resolution brought forward by the Greenside Branch.

The latter Branch also moved:

That Freethinkers everywhere should avail themselves of their rights under the Education Acts by withdrawing their children from religious instruction in public schools. This Conference is of opinion that if such withdrawals were generally practised it would serve as a valuable lesson to the religious world, and whatever inconveniences experienced would be negatived if there existed some sort of combination between Freethinkers in different areas.

The President suggested that if local groups of Freethinkers were to organize all those who for various reasons were opposed to religious instruction being given in State schools, the number would be sufficiently large to obviate any sort of inconvenience to children. Catholics and Jews took care that their children were withdrawn, and others should act on the same plan.

Mr. F. E. Monks then moved on behalf of the Manchester Branch:

That the words, "The abolition of the death penalty for the crime of murder," be added to the Immediate Practical Objects of the National Secular Society.

There was a deal of discussion on this resolution, but it was afterwards adopted as being in line with the whole tendency of Freethinking advocacy of the rational treatment of crime and criminals.

Mr. Walker, President of the Leeds Branch, in moving

That each Conference shall decide the place at which the next Conference shall be held,

said it was felt that the present arrangement did not give quite enough time for Branches to arrange matters for the Conference. If the proposed plan were adopted it was felt that there would be a chance of each Conference being made a bigger success than at present. After some discussion the motion was lost, the President promising that arrangements should be made so that the Branch visited by the Conference should have a little longer notice of the place selected.

Motion (a) by North London Branch—

(a) That in order to bring each Branch into more direct touch with the Executive, the present system of grouping be abolished, and each active Branch nominate

its own representative, such nominations to be made 21 days before the Annual Conference.

was lost, the Conference preferring the present method of nomination.

Motion (b), in view of the ground being covered by the Executive's motion, was withdrawn:

(b) If any member of the Executive shall fail to attend three consecutive meetings, the Executive shall, after informing the nominating Branch, declare his position vacant and appoint a substitute.

The two motions sent in by the Birmingham Branch recommending arrangements for an exchange of speakers between the Branches and representative preachers were carried as was also one advocating the cultivation of social functions as a means of bringing Freethinkers into closer and more friendly touch. It was clearly felt by all present that something of the sort ought to be attempted as a regular feature of our work, and it was pointed out that the Executive already had the matter before it and hoped to deal with it so far as London was concerned.

The larger part of the afternoon session was taken up by the discussion of two papers, one by Mr. J. Fothergill on "Freethought and Economics," and the other by Mr. Clifford Williams on "Secularism, the Philosophy of Life." The discussion was of an interesting character, Messrs. Moss, Thurlow, Corrigan, Black, S. Cohen, the President, and, of course, the authors of the papers taking part.

In closing the Conference the President moved that the thanks of the Conference be given the Leeds Branch for the trouble taken by them in order to make the Conference a complete success. Mr. Walker replied on behalf of the Branch, and said that they had been repaid by the success achieved, and hoped that one day the Branch would be able to entertain the Conference in a meeting place of its own.

Mr. H. R. Youngman, the treasurer of the Branch, entertained the delegates to tea on his own premises. The entertainment was well conceived and well carried through. It was much appreciated by those present.

### N S.S. Conference Excursion.

ON Whit-Monday an impromptu char-a-banc excursion for some of the delegates and local friends was arranged under the genial guidance of the President of the Leeds Branch, Mr. J. Walker.

The party left the Town Hall at ten and proceeded via Harewood to Harrogate and Knaresborough, where an enjoyable day was spent viewing the wonderful Dripping Well, exploring Mother Shipton's Cave, and revelling in the many natural beauties of the surroundings.

Returning to Leeds at 5.15, they started again for Adel Craggs and Meanwood, determined to enjoy the beautiful Yorkshire scenery as fully as possible.

Meanwhile, other friends, whose trains left earlier in the day, including the undersigned, were entertained with music, singing and tea in the capacious rooms of our good friend Mr. Youngman, the Branch treasurer, whose interest in the Cause cannot be too highly estimated.

E. M. VANCE.

Animism on the one hand, and taboos on the other, such are the essential factors of religion. To the natural, I might almost say the physiological, action of animism are due to the conceptions of those invisible genii with which Nature teems, spirits of the sun and moon, of the trees and of the waters, of thunder and lightning, of mountains and rocks, not to speak of the spirits of the dead, which are souls, and the spirit of spirits, which is God. To the influence of taboos, which create the idea of sacred and profane, of things or actions forbidden or permitted, religious laws and piety are due. The Jehovah of the rocks and clouds of Sinai is a product of animism; the decalogue is a revision of an old code of taboos.—S. Reinach.

## Secularism the True Philosophy of Life.

PAPER READ AT THE N.S.S. CONFERENCE.

By Secularism is meant that mental attitude of reserve to all speculative opinions on subjects which at the present state or stage of human intelligence appear to transcend the utmost limits of human knowledge.

This attitude is necessarily Atheistic to the idea of belief or beliefs in God or gods.

It is anti-theistic, anti-polytheistic feeling that this attitude is the logical one, and recognizing that the onus of proof lies on the person, persons, system, systems, or cult that makes the affirmation.

It does not accept the definition even of one of its particular adherents, for the simple reason that it is progressive, moving, and having its being in the gradual but unmistakable progression in the realms of ethics, morality, and scientific sociology.

In the early 'forties of the last century, G. J. Holyoake, first used the word to denote a system of teaching which had for its immediate object the betterment of the material conditions of the proletariat classes of this country, and admirable as was his advocacy, powerful as was his pen, it must be distinctly understood that he was merely popularizing into a codified system attitudes and feelings which in a general sense had been left previously to express themselves through individual minds and channels. Mention is made of George Jacob Holyoake only to illustrate the point.

Secularism in its philosophical sense emphasizes the word "philosophy" as meaning "the application of pure thought to the explanation of things," or "the rationally thought out explanation of things." It does not set out to prove, to deny, to affirm that of which it has no knowledge, it rests its belief, and beliefs, on the sure foundation of the known, not in the ephemeral star-mists of the unknown.

In totality, the Secularist mariner of the present, which is ever changing (and all Secularists are mariners on the sea of life), affirms as its preserves the latest deductions, or results, of all knowledge, classified and yet to be classified.

Secularism is world-wide, it has no geographical borders, it knows that individuals act as they must—not as others would like—and that this is the resultant of all the forces that went before; that man is the child, the necessary child of the past, and that as individuals think individually, so the sum total of thinking at any time in a given community represents in bulk the accumulated errors, mistakes, and wisdom of the past.

It postulates that individuals, nations, and groups of nations, are acted upon, through, and by outside or extraneous forces just as a child, and, in the same manner, responds to such stimuli. Therefore, Secularism is anti-war, anti-aggression, anti-patriotic (when patriotism means the lauding of one's country at the expense of, or the insulting of another country). When attacked it defends itself by reason, is supported by experience, demands that justice shall be the judge, and that the freedom it desires for itself is the freedom it extends to others; and this freedom is limited only when it treads upon the freedom or liberty of others; others meaning individuals, tribes, or nations.

Secularism does not threaten its opponents with purgatory, hell, or damnation. It does not use, nor has it any necessity to use, boycott, ostracism, lies, nor bigotry. It does not mask its face with a smirk of smug respectability, to stab an opponent in the back with a dagger.

In its work and advocacy it meets its opponents as soldiers of thought, fights like an intellectual soldier, and does not dodge like an assassin. It gives to others

the same rights it claims for itself. It does not wish to suppress even the Christian superstition, but seeks to explain it, believing that when people understand how superstitious beliefs and beliefs in the supernatural arose, and when they understand the primitive mind acting in a primitive environment, the Secularist knows that then, and then only, will the believer cease to believe.

Secularism affirms that Christianity is not to be judged by its present-day promises or pose. Secularism affirms that Christianity—yes, and all forms of religious belief—must be judged historically, not by an aphorism from here, the life of a man from there, but by its influence along the past centuries as a whole.

Secularism affirms that Christianity must be judged by its persecutions, its crusades, its inquisition, its effect on mankind when it wielded almost world-wide power. Judged, yes, by its dissensions, its hypocrisy, its general insistent and persistent retardation of all progressive movements of the past. It condemns Christianity even on its present-day methods, it condemns its mendicancy, its privileged position as being exempt from paying just rates for its chapels, churches, and cathedrals. It denounces it for its insular and supercilious attitude to other religions and systems antagonistic to itself. It describes it as anti-social, and affirms that its outlook is narrow, and attacks it because it is the historical enemy of mankind.

Secularism will not and cannot persecute. Christianity does. Secularism does not desire preferential treatment. Christianity does. Secularism does not interfere with the rights of individuals. Christianity does.

Secularism does not desire the light of truth hidden from any subject. Christianity does.

Secularism is the friend of science, of achievement, of knowledge. Christianity is the friend of revealed religion. Secularism has no gods, ghosts, Christs, or Devils. Christianity has.

Secularism looks upon life as natural, that birth means death, that death means birth.

Christianity fears death—Secularism confronts it after a life well-lived, knowing it is as natural to die as to be born.

Christianity possesses in its archives of the past, records of its persecutions, its dungeons, its faggots, its chains, its thumbscrews, its iron maidens, its racks, its massacres, its murdered and violated thousands, its pyramids of suffering, its horrors, its broken hearts, its unfulfilled promises, its pious frauds, its pious forgeries. It has its anti-Semitism, its bitterness against opposition, its opprobrium, its relentless and pitiless attack on advanced thought whenever and wherever found. But thanks to the spirit of Secularism, its power is on the wane; it is suffering from atrophy of the brain.

The spirit of Secularism is permeating the very vitals of modern Christianity, and is slowly but surely destroying (by explanation) its very foundations.

The Christian Church and Churches admit this by the feverish efforts they are making to close their ranks; but too late, their centre has been pierced by Secularism, and Freethought is rolling up its flanks. Therefore, let us all feel how important is our work, let us recognize that "Secularism is the true Philosophy of Life," that it is cleansing the rocks of modern life of their limpets, that it is removing barnacles from the ship of progress, and that it is accelerating its speed forward to the goal of human perfection, to a world in which every child will be welcomed with truth, where woman will be mistress of herself, and man the rock upon which both rest.

CLIFFORD WILLIAMS.

## Credit and Salvation.

What! From his helpless Creature be repaid  
Pure gold for what he lent him dross—allayed,  
Sue for a debt he never did contract  
And cannot answer—oh, the sorry trade!

It may be that the modern man would hesitate to accept St. Paul as an authority on social questions of to-day, but he had the makings of a New Economist in him when he defined credit as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Credit is a term often used very loosely, and in order to be clear as to our meaning we could hardly do better than accept the definition of those economists who distinguish sharply between Real and Financial Credit.

Real Credit they define as the correct estimate of ability to deliver goods and services as, when and where required; whereas Financial Credit is the correct estimate of ability to deliver money as, when and where required.

Now as money is, ultimately, merely a token—a tool of exchange—it follows that Financial Credit rests, ultimately, upon Real Credit, and is consequently credit of an inferior order.

The days have past when Financial Credit could be said to rest to any extent upon savings, and when Bankers might claim that they issued credit from the store of savings which their customers deposited with them. The modern large-scale credit system rests less and less on anything done in the past, and more and more on a correct estimate of something to be done in the future.

Every considerable output of goods must begin with a credit issue, which credit will be cancelled when the goods have been sold at a profit. If it be urged that the production of one batch of goods is paid for out of prices recovered from the sale of a previous batch, that is merely to say that one credit-issue is only cancelled by the creation of another. The time-order is credit—goods—sale, and as the manufacturers do not keep large current balances they are absolutely dependent on access to financial credit, of which to-day banking institutions hold practically a monopoly.

The enormous importance of credit can therefore hardly be over-estimated, and we shall do well to enquire more closely into its composite nature.

What are the various factors which enter into the constitution of our Real Credit?

There is, firstly, a vast inherited knowledge of scientific investigation, invention and discovery, with the corresponding ability to apply it in the use of tools and processes. There is the natural wealth of the land, both in the fertility of the surface soil and in the deposits of fuels and minerals below, and including such sources of power as waterfalls. There is, moreover, the factor of an orderly and law-abiding body of citizens, with the security of life and property which this entails, together with the willingness of these same citizens to co-operate in the production of goods and services. Lastly, there is the need for goods and services by all members of the community. The list is by no means exhaustive, but is sufficient to show the essentially communal nature of Real Credit.

Now a government, if it were really representative of the interests and wealth of the community, should utilize this national Real Credit through its organ, the Treasury, as a basis on which to finance directly all national undertakings.

So far from this being the case, our Government never creates its own financial credit, but borrows such credit principally from the banks, and for the use of this inferior credit it is saddled with the necessity of taxing the community in order to pay interest on these loans.

During the late war the Government borrowed heavily from the banks, but unfortunately the situation is obscured by the fact that it also borrowed from individual investors, who parted with something more than paper—namely, their hard-earned cash. Only a small proportion of the total war loans was so raised, however, and it is not generally realized that the bulk of the taxation for interest on war debts goes to banks and financiers in return for the doubtful privilege of using the Financial Credit which, however, rests—at one remove—on our communal Real Credit.

And here it may be mentioned that very interesting developments are going forward in Canada in connection with the renewal of the Canadian Bank Charter Act, and members of the Canadian House of Commons are asking, in various ways, why it should be necessary to obtain financial credit from the U.S.A., when the brains and muscles and energy of millions of Canadians are available, as Real Credit, for backing an issue of financial credit at home.

However, as things now stand, the high priests of finance have forbidden us the direct use of our own credit, and insist not only that we come to them for their particular brand, but that we pay them handsomely in interest for their grace in granting such a privilege.

Freethinkers will perhaps recognize here a situation closely akin to that which obtains in the case of the high priests of religion in this country.

In this connection, the goods and services—if we may retain the term—required by the community are of a moral order; we desire the working out of all that is symbolized by "the ape and tiger" in us—in a word, salvation.

Following the analogy, Real Credit is here also of a composite nature, but, briefly, may be said to be resident in and represented by our ideals.

We have evolved, and are still evolving, ideals of truth, righteousness, justice, mercy, loving-kindness, fatherhood, and many another; and these, during the ages, man has credited to the gods which have sprung to birth within his busy brain.

But the high priests of religion would to-day withhold from us the use of our Real Credit in order to obtain salvation, and would have us come to a God for the use of a credit which is but a reflection of our own.

And the Christian priesthood insist that their particular deity is the only one having the necessary credit: "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

These gentlemen will not even give us credit for good works. Listen to the thirteenth of the Thirty-nine Articles laid down by the high priests of religion as by law established in this country:—

Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, inasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or deserve grace of congruity; yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.

Was ever there penned a more damnable blasphemy of kindly human nature?

And so it comes about that we pay interest, in the form of worship and homage, to gods whose attributes are but a form of "man's giant shadow—hailed divine."

The old Persian philosopher was content to "take the cash and let the credit go." No so the priests of God. They first take the credit, and then on the strength of that proceed to take the cash also—as witness the balance-sheets of the numerous religious bodies.

The high priests of both finance and religion have studied this subject of credit, well knowing that thereby hang all the law and the profits. It is high time that Freethinkers also turned their attention to the study of this vital matter.

The demoralizing effect of receiving credit in the form of vicarious sacrifice and atonement can only be counteracted by man working out his own salvation, not in fear and trembling, but in the full enjoyment and uttermost use of his own humanity—his own credit.

You can no more evolve a race of men and women, morally virile and self-reliant, by a system which holds them to ransom to gods and their priesthoods than you can have a prosperous and peaceable community under a capitalist-financial system which holds them to ransom to the priesthood of finance, and denies them the unfettered use of their own credit.

A. W. COLEMAN.

## The Chosen People.

ABOUT six hundred years before the Christian era there existed a race of people in Asia Minor who claimed to be the descendants of a man named Abraham, an owner of large flocks of sheep, of many goats and cattle, and who was noted particularly for his piety. This people was happy (?) in the exercise of religious rites presided over by numerous priests, estimated to be at least ten per cent of the population. The writings, or scriptures, of the priests were naturally voluminous, and many of them have come down to us, being translated, more or less accurately, into modern languages. Deuteronomy, one of a series of books called the Pentateuch, is of this nature. It contains the laws, or commandments, of the priestly government; it is clearly written by many hands, is full of interpolations or additions, and makes a number of claims which are without the slightest evidence. Perhaps the most astounding is that this particular race was "chosen" by the God of Abraham for special benefits, and that the God was the only true one in existence. One of the commandments runs: "Thou shalt not kill" (chap. v, 17), but in the following chapter the people are ordered to raid a certain country, kill the people living there and take possession of the land. "Thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them." Why? Because "thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth."

Not only is the race rewarded with the land they are to steal, but other benefits are to be theirs, for a promise is made that all sickness shall be taken away from it if they have no pity upon the nations they attack, but consume them and destroy their altars and burn their graven images with fire. "That ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers."

In other Jewish books the claim of being "chosen" is repeated. Thus: 1 Kings, iii, 8; Chron. xvi, 13; several times in Psalms, and three times in Isaiah. The only one which calls for notice here is in chapter xviii of the last, the twentieth and following verses. Here may be seen the whole game given away. A complaint is made at verse 23 that the people have not brought sacrifices to their God: "Thou hast brought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of the sacrifices." In other words the people have not supported the priests as they should. This is the unforgivable sin and accounts for preachers of all denominations hating, maligning and denouncing the independent thinker, who does not attend the services nor subscribe to the funds of the Churches.

I have said that there is no evidence outside its own books to support the claim that the Jewish race has been chosen. If I believed in gods and devils, which I do not, I should have to come to the conclusion that it has rather been god-forsaken than the reverse, for I have read history and noticed the very terrible experiences which the race has suffered. Even in our own time the pogroms in Russia and Central Europe are strong evidence that ghostly protection has not been vouchsafed to the race. Perhaps some may say that these trials are punishment, but we can answer that many other races have suffered even more than the Jews and have been destroyed. On the other hand some have not suffered to any extent.

Are the "chosen" people particularly good or gifted? Are they faultless? Yet one would expect that a "holy" race would be a pattern to others, and be, at least, reasonably free from faults. I have many Jewish friends, and I value their friendship, but I cannot say that the race is generally better than all others. Judged from a communal point of view, acquisitiveness is inexcusable and this trait is a special feature of the race. In art and literature there have been many great and clever men among the Jews, and many have given their energies to aid their fellowmen; on the other hand, the teaching of the priests to keep them a separate and exclusive race is a source of great trouble which can only be abolished by ending priestcraft.

E. ANDERSON.

## Correspondence.

### TOO MUCH INOCULATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—My son joined the Royal Air Force a little over a year ago. In twelve months he has had eleven inoculations, and he assures me that the other boys have had an equal number, though, as a rule, they have no idea what they are inoculated against. Healthy young civilians are not inoculated once a month. Why are members of the Forces? There seems to be only two possible explanations. Either soldiers are a peculiar race, needing artificial stimuli to their blood, or the Army doctors are experimenting on them. As my son's health has been greatly injured, undoubtedly through this unnatural treatment, I am trying to get him back into civil life.

W. H. SHEPHERD.

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## 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 LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7 p.m., Arthur B. Moss, "George Jacob Holyoake—The Father of Secularism."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, Dr. Marion Phillips, "A United States of Europe."

#### OUTDOOR.

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

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park): 6-9.30, Mr. Keeling, Mr. Saphin, Mr. Hyatt, Mr. Mowbray. The Discussion Circle meets every Thursday at 8 at the "Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Finsbury Park): 11.15, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture. Regent's Park (near the fountain): 6, Mr. J. J. Darby, a Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 3.30 and 6.30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan will lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Outside Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. Shaller, a Lecture.

### COUNTRY.

#### OUTDOOR.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.—Ramble to Darwen (bring lunch). Meet Cromwell Monument Exchange Station, 11 a.m. Route: Car through Pendlebury and Bolton to Dunsear. Walk over Turton Moor to New Barn Farm, Lock Hales. Tea provided by Mr. and Mrs. Hampson.

STOCKPORT BRANCH N.S.S. (Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission)—Monday to Friday, June 4-8, Mersey Square, 7.30.

TYNESIDE LECTURING CAMPAIGN (Mr. Atkinson's Programme)—Saturday, June 2, Blaydon-on-Tyne. Sunday, June 3, Shields Market. Monday, June 4, New Herrington. Tuesday, June 5, Shields Market. Wednesday, June 6, Shields Market. Thursday, June 7, North Shields. At 7 p.m. each evening.

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