

# The FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions.

### Atheism and Its Critics.

In another part of this issue there appears a letter from Canon Dorrity dealing with some comments of mine on a recent sermon of his in Manchester. Canon Dorrity disclaims any intention to be offensive with regard to Atheism, and so far as intention is concerned I readily accept the disclaimer. The unfortunate thing is that Christians have for so long been in the habit of adopting a quite unjustifiable air of superiority, and have for so long talked about Atheism as something not merely intellectually unsound, but as morally repellent, that it is difficult for them to realize how their remarks strike one who may take his Atheism at least as seriously as the Christian takes his Theism. It will be remembered that Canon Dorrity originally divided Atheism into theoretical and practical, a division which he again adopts in his letter. In criticizing this I said I was at a loss to understand what was meant by practical Atheism, unless it stood as a synonym for something that was actually offensive. Practical Atheism must stand for one of two things. In the first place it may stand for one who ignores in his daily life the existence of a God. In that case I should say that the overwhelming majority of Christians in a civilized country are bound to come within that category, not excluding the Canon himself. If a Christian is an engineer, or a working scientist, he is compelled to make his calculations just as though there were no God in existence. That is true of every case where the Christian is brought up against facts and is compelled to deal with them. And he acts thus, not because he consciously ignores God, or because he is a hypocrite, but because the whole pressure of civilized life compels him to act in this manner. He may believe in God ever so sincerely, but when he comes to deal with an actual problem of life—moral, intellectual, or physical—he acts, and is compelled to act, as though there were no God able or ready to interfere in the normal processes of Nature. If that was all that Canon Dorrity meant, his complaint lies not at the door of Atheism, as such, but at the door of civilization.

### Atheists and Christians.

But I do not think that Canon Dorrity meant this; and those who read the original quotations from his sermon, and also the present letter, will agree with me in so thinking. He is contrasting the lives of Christians with the lives of Atheists, and although he does not accuse them directly of being worse than Christians, he does complain of Christians not being better than some selected Atheists, the obvious inference being that the Atheist ought to be a bad man because he does not believe in God, and the Christian ought to be a good man because he does. Canon Dorrity says he cannot say anything fairer than that he believes the "daily life of many an Agnostic, Free-thinker, and even [I like the 'even'] Atheist, is often of such a character as to put to shame that of many thousands of professing Christians." Canon Dorrity thinks that evidence of liberality. Perhaps he will not mind my saying that to an Atheist it sounds suspiciously like pious arrogance. When will the Christian realize that it is not at all complimentary to an Atheist to be told that some Atheists are as good as Christians. To the Atheist the Christian does not appear as such a model of moral perfection that he feels honoured by being placed in the same category with him. The degree of excellence attained by Christians does not strike one as being of such a character as to be unapproachable save with supernatural assistance. When Canon Dorrity gets better acquainted with Atheism he may perhaps realize that the natural morality endorsed by Atheists is considered by them to be of a much loftier and a much more serviceable character than that endorsed by strictly Christian teaching. The assumption of superiority is quite unwarranted, either from a theoretical or a practical standpoint. And it is just this assumption of superiority by the Christian which I had in mind when I said that the remarks of the Canon were offensive. That he does not realize them to be so, only adds fresh point to what I have said.

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### Christianity and Morality.

But even that mild praise of Atheism is not given without qualification. If Atheists are decent folk, this is "in spite of and not because of their belief." Either they have the natural Christian spirit, or they have lit their tapers at the Christian sun, in other words, "the Christian religion has created the atmosphere in which alone these 'natural' virtues can continue to live." I hope the Canon will not mind my saying that this comment is not offensive, it is simply stupid. Does the Canon mean that there is no natural basis and justification for every one of the virtues generally acknowledged by mankind to be such? Were there no such things as truth, or justice, or chastity, or generosity before Christianity? Are there none where Christianity is unknown? If the Canon would remember the history of the various revolts against Christian teachings he would also recall that in very many cases these have been largely motivated by the moral dissatisfaction felt with Christian



teaching. Moral indignation contributed very powerfully to kill the Christian doctrine of eternal damnation, gross punishments for unbelief, etc. The impeachment of Christianity has always been, in fact, two-sided. There has been the intellectual impeachment, which has exposed its utter falsity as mere teaching; and there has been the moral impeachment, which has indicted both its actual teaching and the consequences to which that teaching has led. I would remind Canon Dorrity that we are living in the twentieth century, not in the fourteenth; that we live in a time when the theory of evolution holds the field; that the history and nature of morality is known; that it can be traced from the rudest animal beginnings to its highest expression in man; and that at no stage is the idea of a God necessary to either its understanding or its development. If Canon Dorrity is not aware of this, he but serves to illustrate the customary unfitness of the Christian preacher to stand as moral mentor to the people.

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#### The Wicked Atheist.

Canon Dorrity says he does not take Atheism to be a synonym for wickedness, but he does hold that the tendency of Theism is towards goodness, while the tendency of Atheism is towards badness. And he asks: "Did we ever know a real belief in God to lead to carelessness and wickedness of life; but it has been known, too often indeed, that these have been the natural results of Atheism." That is very ingenious, but it is not courageous. Canon Dorrity evidently desires to say that Atheism is, morally, a very bad thing, but hesitates to say so because it would involve reflection on the lives of actual Atheists as compared with actual Christians. So he falls back upon "tendencies," with the vague statement that at some place and time, unnamed, the natural tendencies of Atheism are towards wickedness. But tendencies are discovered by consequences, so that we get the very statement which the Canon disclaims saying or intending, and the statement is none the better or the truer because it is not made straightforwardly and courageously. And one wonders what kind of a world Canon Dorrity has been living in, what kind of history he has been reading, and what sort of reflections are occasioned by the people he meets. I must leave it for him to explain what are the *natural* ills flowing from Atheism, as I quite fail to see why the fact of a man not believing in a God should lead him to pick pockets, ill-treat his family, or be disloyal to those around. It seems to me, which is strange in one having Atheistic opinions, and as one who has never had what I regard as the misfortune of being a Christian, that truth, justice, honour and kindness remain just what they are whether there is a God or not, and I come to that conclusion because of the value of these qualities in affecting human relationships. Still, I will not dogmatize, and it is possible that had I been brought up as Canon Dorrity has been brought up I might have the same curious opinions as he has. "There but for the grace of good fortune go I." And one should be thankful for good fortune, but not boast about it.

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#### Religion and Evil.

But I think I can deal with the question of whether we have ever known a belief in God lead to evil. I have met with it in thousands of cases: historically, in reading; actually, in personal experience. Let me remind Canon Dorrity of the lengthy and hideous chapter of religious persecution. To what else was that wickedness due, but to man's belief in God? At present a very large number of Christians are complaining that bodies of Christians have been left under

the jurisdiction of the Turks. They say that the Mohammedan ruler will not treat his Christian subjects with justice. The Mohammedans retort that Christians will not do their duty as loyal subjects to their Mohammedan rulers. I do not care, so far as my argument is concerned, which is right. It is enough that the trouble here is the belief these people have in God. Again, when we take Roman Catholics in their relations with Protestants, we find the same thing—the social relationships disturbed owing to belief in God. Among the less civilized races there is the same lesson. All sorts of cruel and brutal practices exist, and owe their existence to the belief in particular tribal gods. It is useless saying that certain people have a wrong conception of God. A right conception is, after all, only my conception, and a wrong one some other fellow's. The point is that owing to what people thought their Gods wished, history has been stained with blood, and men and women brought up in mutual hatred when they might have been brought up in peace and brotherhood. And, if I may without offence, I can take Canon Dorrity himself as an example, in a mild way, of the same thing. It is his belief in God that causes him to think as he does think of fellow-citizens who do not believe with him. He says their non-belief in God has a natural tendency to wickedness and evil. Two or three centuries ago, holding that opinion, he would have felt justified, as a believer in God, to suppress men whose opinions had this tendency. He does not ask for their suppression to-day, he argues with them. But the difference is due to no influence exerted by his religion. It is the pressure of a more civilized life upon primitive religious barbarism.

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#### The Christian and the Atheist.

There are several other questions opened by Canon Dorrity's letter, to some of which I may return on another occasion. I will now only point out that my reverend critic's philosophy of life does not appear to be either wide enough or deep enough. He does not realize that Atheism implies a far wider philosophy than does Christianity, and that while the Atheist can explain the Christian, the Christian cannot explain the Atheist, and is therefore driven to the wild assumption that he must either be more or less of a blackguard, or, if he is not that, it is due to the saving influence of Christianity. Our knowledge of the nature of morality and our appreciation of the quality of human influence enables us to understand why the Christian is as good as he sometimes is, and our understanding of nature and history of religion helps us to understand why he is sometimes as bad as he is. We are not puzzled when we see a Christian who is a good man, nor astonished when we come across a Christian who is a bad one. The Christian cannot understand the Atheist being a decent man, because according to his philosophy the Atheist ought to be an indecent person. Generally he is obliging enough to assure the Atheist that he ought to be a blackguard, and is rather astonished when the Atheist refuses to live up to the character the Christian has given him. From one point of view it is very amusing to find the Christian giving himself these airs of superiority, and under the cloak of humility strutting arrogantly as an exhibition of human super-excellence. The serious side of the matter is that these men still exert a very strong influence over the educational forces of the country. And when we look closely at the nature of that influence, while we may cease to wonder, we have plenty of grounds for lamenting its consequences on the mental and moral development of the rising generation.

CHAPMAN COHEN.



## "The Reality of the Unseen."

THIS is a subject upon which Sir Oliver Lodge has often both written and spoken, but his last deliverance thereupon occurred at Lyndhurst Road Congregational Church, on April 6, in place of Dr. Horton's Monthly Lecture. Many allusions to this address by Sir Oliver appeared in the press, both religious and secular, and not a few quotations were given. Following the speaker's order we begin by asking what meaning he attaches to the term "unseen," and his answer comes at once: "We mean the unsensed. Seeing is perhaps our chief sense, and by 'unseen' we must understand not only unseen, but unheard, unfelt, untasted—everything; that is to say, unseen things are those which do not come to us, which we do not apprehend through the channels of the senses." That is strictly scriptural teaching, for in the Old and New Testaments we read: "Things which eye saw not and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him. But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit." Sir Oliver Lodge looks down with deep pity, if not with withering contempt, upon those "who say that they will not accept anything that does not come to them through the senses." Poor, unfortunate people, their universe is of very little value, and too narrow for words. They are practically on a level with the animals. He says:—

Our notions of the universe are, in a sense, derived from the channels of information which we possess, but those channels are not specially human; they belong to the animals just as much as to us. A dog can see as well as we do, hear as well as we do, can smell a great deal better than we do; he has the same senses; we share our senses with the animal creation; they are part of our animal ancestry. On the bodily side we are developed from the animals, and our channels of information are the same as theirs.

After stating so clearly that we and the animals possess the same senses, Sir Oliver institutes a wholly unfair comparison between the views of the universe which we and the animals are able to form. We have no direct means of ascertaining what animals think about abstract questions, if they think about them at all; but that they do think is as certain as that they exist. Only yesterday some extremely interesting incidents took place. A canary bird and a parrot were in cages close together on a table. At dusk the canary, tired and sleepy, likes to have his cage covered, while the parrot has a strong objection to being covered at all, and so almost immediately he proceeded to destroy the canary's cover, whereupon his majesty was removed to another room. A dog in the room, friendly to both birds, resented the removal so violently that in the doorway of the other room he cried pitifully, and every now and then ran to the person responsible for the removal begging that the parrot might be brought back. Did not those animals, the parrot and the dog, do some very serious thinking, and did they not sit in open judgment on human conduct of which they disapproved? What Sir Oliver Lodge ignores is that which differentiates man from the lower animals is the stupendously long process of evolution, consisting chiefly in the development of speech and an enormous improvement in the size and quality of the brain. Sir Oliver simply cannot prove that man possesses a single faculty or power which is not germinally present in the lower animals.

Of course, we are familiar with the lecturer's peculiar theory of the origin of life and mind. We do not forget that as a physicist he has done most excellent work, which will keep his memory green for

many generations after his decease; but as a biologist and psychologist he is at least fifty years behind the times. He regards matter as "the instrument and vehicle of mind; incarnation is the mode by which mind interacts with the present scheme of things." Into this matter life and mind enter, and for a time adopt it as a vehicle of their expression. But this theory has long ago been utterly exploded and repudiated by all accredited biologists and psychologists. Now nobody has ever seen, felt, heard, or tasted life and mind, and consequently no one is aware of their existence. Listen to Sir Oliver:—

The bigger the telescope the farther we see, and by the photographic camera attached to the telescope we can see farther still, because the photograph accumulates the light for hours, instead of our being able only to glimpse the things for a second. World upon worlds, world without end, that is what we see. Majestic, astonishing, overwhelming, awe-inspiring is the revelation of the heavens, the tremendous magnitude of the universe. In the case of some systems the light has taken thirty thousand years to come to us; it started long before the pyramids were built or even thought of. We see them now as they were then; we see them as glimpses of the past. Yet we find that those distant objects are composed of the same materials as our own planet, they can be analysed chemically by the light that they bring; that light carries with it the information that the atoms are the same, they vibrate at the same rate, they have the same constitution, they obey the same laws. The laws of chemistry and the laws of physics rule throughout the universe.

Here Sir Oliver Lodge deals with the facts of his own department of science, and he speaks with supreme authority. The so-called physical universe is well known to him, and we all listen to him with delight when he discourses about it. Then, curiously enough, he asks if the laws of biology rule through the universe, and answers thus:—

We do not know. But, so far as we can tell, the laws are the same throughout the universe; certainly the physics and the chemistry are the same; showing a unity of design, a unity of plan, a unity of law and order, without limit.

He says all this concerning the magnitude and splendour of the physical universe *after* declaring: "The things seen, what are they? Trivial. The things unseen, what are they? Majestic."

He talks eloquently about the immense progress made in recent years. He tells us that the planet Venus is always clouded over, the inhabitants of which have probably never seen the stars, and they know nothing about the marvel of creation. "We might have been in the same predicament; and miserably dwarfed our notions of existence would then have been." He informs us of the breaking up of the atom, or its being resolved into electrons; "how it is composed of a central nucleus with satellites or planets revolving round it; how each atom is, as it were, a solar system built on the plan of the solar system, so that there is growing up an atomic astronomy." All this is extraordinarily interesting; but Sir Oliver's aim is to convey the idea that matter itself is more than half spiritual—

I sometimes wonder whether "big" and "small" mean anything except to us human beings. I do not know. But you see these atoms elude our sense; they are all matters of the mind. They are there physically, no doubt; but we do not see them, we never hope to see them; yet we are as sure of their existence as we are sure of the things that we can see. They compose all material things. Material things are not what they seem; matter is a kind of, I was going to say accident, but that would be a wrong term, except in the technical sense; I would



rather say a kind of slight modification of the ether of space. The ether of space, which makes no impression on our senses, which is so elusive that many people do not know it exists, is the substantial thing. Certain modifications of it are what we call matter—a kind of very slight milky way or cobweb or gossamer structure in the ether. The ether is the fundamental thing; matter is the secondary thing.

Again, we repeat, this also is highly interesting, but profoundly speculative, and leads to no intelligible interpretation of the universe. It yields no manner of proof of the reality of the unseen. Of the existence of an unseen, immaterial realm in which great hosts of unbodied, invisible beings dwell no one is in a position to offer us any assurance whatever based on knowledge.

J. T. LLOYD.

## A Priest-Made Crime.

The Gospel is fundamentally on the side of liberty.—*Dean Inge.*

I for one think it abominable that any man in modern England should be prosecuted for blasphemy.—*G. K. Chesterton.*

The crime of enquiry is one which religion never has forgiven.—*Shelley.*

ONE of the most pressing legal reforms is that of making a clearance of all those unrepealed statutes which are either superseded, obsolete, or no longer in harmony with the present age, and which remain in evidence of the barbarity and tyranny of the bad old days. That in this much-belauded twentieth century persons should be subject to imprisonment for impugning the Christian religion is simply monstrous, and would be incredible were it not true. English law is saturated with priestcraft. It is, according to law, a misdemeanour to say anything in derogation of the Christian religion, the Bible, or the Book of Common Prayer. It is an offence to speak against the Church of England, as by law established. Yet in the famous trial before Lord Coleridge, George Foote argued that it was absurd to maintain that Christianity was any longer part and parcel of the law of England, as Jews had been admitted to Parliament, and had been admitted to the highest offices of the State; the plea was a sound one. The Lord Chief Justice supported this argument in his masterly summing-up in what was then hoped would be the last prosecution for liberty of speech in matters of religion. It is therefore humiliating to think that there have been more prosecutions during this century than during the previous hundred years. There have been more prosecutions for spoken blasphemy during this century than during the previous hundred years; and in no single instance have other than poor men been prosecuted.

When is blasphemy a crime? This question may be asked. When George Foote was on trial he asked why should the blasphemers who addressed the classes be petted and admired by society, and the blasphemers who wrote for the masses be treated as pariahs and outcasts. He then quoted telling passages from such famous writers as Matthew Arnold, John Stuart Mill, Huxley, Herbert Spencer and others, and urged upon the jury that the only real and essential difference between the passages quoted and the incriminated parts of his own writings consisted in the different prices at which they were published. Lord Coleridge, in his summing-up, had to admit the force of this argument. His own words were: "They [the passages] do appear to me to be open to exactly the same charge and the same grounds of observation that Mr. Foote's publications are." Yet, curiously, all the

many later prosecutions for blasphemy have been directed invariably against poor men and not against any others. Matthew Arnold, Swinburne, the Duke of Somerset, the Marquis of Queensberry, Viscount Amberley, and other offenders, were never proceeded against, although their offence was "gross as a mountain, open, palpable." Let there be no misunderstanding on this matter. In poem after poem Swinburne treated the fundamentals of the Christian religion with the whole resource of a great poet's scorn. He even spoke of the central figure of Christianity as "carrion"; and another poet, Matthew Arnold, did not hesitate, with a polite smile, to compare the Holy Trinity with "Three Lord Shaftesburys."

Men of genius often write astonishing things concerning religion. Mr. Rudyard Kipling, for instance, has written in startling fashion of the amazement of the Hindoo brought face-to-face with the strange dogmas of the Christian religion:—

Look, you have cast out love! What gods are these  
You bid me please?  
The Three in One, the One in Three? Not so!  
To my own gods I go.  
It may be they shall give me greater ease  
Than your cold Christ and tangled Trinities.

No policeman calls attention to this outburst; but if Kipling had been a poor man and uttered them at a street corner—we wonder! The late Mr. John Davidson, the poet, rightly enjoyed a Civil List pension during the last years of his life. Yet he had described "Jesus" as—

A sloppy word,  
Mainly a sponge to wipe the tiresome tears  
Of foolish people.

And he had also said that "God" is—

The shutters of the mind;  
A fire-proof curtain, ghastly cul-de-sac;  
A last excuse; sublime taboo; a tip;  
A patent medicine; an accepted lie.

John Davidson actually enjoyed Government favour; but other men have had imprisonment for less, which shows the difference between "blaspheming" to the comfortable classes and "blaspheming" to working men. It is only poor men's infidelity that is in any danger. Prosecution for opinion is always the resort of the rich and strong against the poor and defenceless.

Christian apologists never tire of boasting of the tolerance of the religion they profess. What irony there is in the plain fact that the days of religious persecution are not past, and that priests and their satellites should still use cruel laws which ought to have been erased long ago from the Statute Book of a civilized country. It is still more monstrous that working men should always be selected for attack, whilst those in a superior position should be safeguarded and shielded.

MIMNERMUS.

## THE LITTLE VAGABOND.

Dear mother, dear mother, the Church is cold;  
But the Alehouse is healthy, and pleasant, and warm,  
Besides I can tell when I used well  
The poor parsons with wind like a blown bladder swell.  
But, if at the Church they would give us some ale,  
And a pleasant fire our souls to regale,  
We'd sing and we'd pray all the livelong day,  
Nor ever once wish from the Church to stray.

—Blake.

When we desire or solicit anything, our minds run wholly on the good side or circumstances of it; when it is obtained, our minds run wholly on the bad side.

—Swift.



## Adventures of a Propagandist.

If ever thou didst hold me in thy heart,  
Absent thee from felicity awhile,  
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,  
To tell my story.

—Shakespeare.

THE poor, misguided individual who takes upon himself the thankless duties of a propagandist of unpopular opinions has only himself to blame if he receives more kicks than ha'pence. If he expects to be received by brass bands, and rapturous cheering from a dotting multitude, he has certainly mistaken his calling. Speaking for myself, I obtain considerable enjoyment from my propagandism. Of course, we all have different ways of obtaining satisfaction; and maybe I derive consolation from activities that to others differently constituted would be extremely distasteful. I suppose even the poor devils who parade town with banners warning us of the coming of the wrath of God must derive enjoyment from it, or they wouldn't do it. "There's no accounting for tastes," as the old lady observed when she kissed the cow.

One of the chief delights of lecturing is assuredly the questions and discussion that (occasionally) follow. Some time ago an opulent lady with a well-upholstered chassis—built on lines suggestive of comfort rather than speed—arose in the audience and asked me: "Do you doubt the existence of a Higher Power?" "No! madam," I replied, in my best bedside manner, "I married her!" Occasionally I get some venerable, old grey-beard with side-whiskers and a fossilized brain, who has never done half an hour's sustained thinking in his life, arise and talk patronizingly of my youth (I am told I look younger than I really am) and suggest that when I get older I shall know better. To this form of criticism I usually reply as follows: "Were I as personal as my friend, I should reply that there is no fool like an old fool" (laughter) "but as it is I will content myself by saying with Shakespeare: 'I beseech you, let his lack of years be no impediment to let him lack a reverend estimation, for I never knew so young a body with so old a head.'"

Of course, I realize that under certain conditions a criticism of the age of a believer or unbeliever is quite valid as affording an explanation of the reasons leading to the adoption of certain views (Dr. Edward Lyttelton once told me that at the age of 27 I might experience a change of mind—I am now waiting), but one naturally resents the charge that one's views—the result of much wrestling with the Lord—are mere aberrations of adolescence and will disappear with the growing pains!

Speaking of wrestling, I once "sat the fire out" in a provincial boarding-house in an attempt to convert to Atheism the world's wrestling champion, George Relwyskow. But the man who had twice beaten Peter Gotch was taking no chances with God Almighty! It appeared that he and his friend Jim Driscoll, the ex-featherweight boxing champion, had fallen under the spell of that magnetic personality "Woodbine Willie." Surely the Lord never had "Three Musketeers" like to these.

A short time ago a well-meaning lady hearing that I was to lecture in Birmingham expressed the hope that I was not going to advocate "that horrid Bolshevism." I replied gently, and to her horror, that the hydra-headed monster Bolsh was a mere cooing dove beside my heresy—which was Atheism!

At the time of the Gott trial I endeavoured unsuccessfully to solicit the interest of several of the clergy in the cause for the abolition of the blasphemy laws.

The results were not noteworthy, except that they all made use of one phrase; after deprecating persecution for opinion, they went on to speak of the need for protecting the feelings of believers, and wound up by saying: "After all, there is such a thing as abstract truth." When I found them all using this phrase, I began to think there must be something in it, but I have yet to discover exactly what "abstract truth" is. Perhaps it is like that persecution, which they all deprecated *in the abstract*, but which they willingly supported in the concrete!

Occasionally one finds support in unexpected places. When lecturing before avowedly Christian bodies, such as adult schools, I have often had members of the congregation get up and agree with me quite unequivocally, to my own surprise and to the consternation of the faithful. On another occasion I casually mentioned to my friend, Vanwy Chard, the Welsh songstress—in her dressing-room at the Nottingham Empire—that Mr. Cohen was to lecture in Nottingham on "A Candid Examination of Christianity"; there was a pause in the application of lip-salve, and the laughing retort, "But will it *stand* it?" Those who had the pleasure of hearing Mr. Cohen on that occasion can supply the answer.

When lecturing at adult schools I have always stated the Freethought case as strongly and uncompromisingly as possible. One gains nothing by compromise, whereas by a clear statement of one's position and a whole-hog advocacy of Freethought one gets at least the sympathetic hearing of that section of the audience whose goodwill is worth the having. There are some people, of course, who are quite impervious to any amount of reasoning, and the man who could gain their assent to a single proposition that is reasonable—well, he could sell Kruschen Salts to a Christian Scientist! As an example of the uncompromising way in which I advocate Atheism before religious bodies, the following is a typical example. Dealing with the moral aspect of the Design Argument, I proceed as follows:—

There is, in the Antipodes, a bird known as the devil-bird, who feasts upon the kidneys of live sheep. Now we have here a pretty problem: if there be a God such as Theism postulates, he made this devil-bird and endowed him with a taste for devilled kidney; he endowed him with the claws and beak by which he seizes upon his victim; and he also provides the sacrificial lamb. We have God (there is only one God, you know—the same that watches over the sparrows and the lilies in the fields), the devil-bird and the sheep—a sort of unholy trinity. Now, mark you, it is the *believer*, not me, who says that God is responsible for this. He lays this monstrosity on God's doorstep like an unwanted child, and says, "there, that's yours!" It is the *believer* who says this; I am here to deny the Divine paternity. I don't think God is the father of this monstrosity. Now even God is entitled to a fair trial, and so I hope that, if there is anyone here to-day with the grace of God in them, I hope they will get up and defend this barbarity on moral grounds!

There has never yet been any response to my challenge! Although many people have got up and—in a truly humble Christian spirit—condemned me for my arrogance. On one occasion the result was so profound that the meeting broke up without a hymn or benediction! I am convinced that much good can be done by propaganda in the Adult School Movement and kindred societies; they are becoming permeated with freethought ideas, and I hope (D.V.) to be able to deal with this at the Whitsuntide conference. The life of a propagandist may not be a bed of roses, but it is great fun.

VINCENT J. HANDS.



## Letter to Aunt Muriel.

V.

"ARE we any worse for our belief?"

Your question, Aunt, should be: "Are we any worse for making believe that we believe?" With the light that is abroad, it is not possible that you believe.

Once more, look at the cardinal doctrines of the Church: the Miraculous Conception, Vicarious Punishment. Do you believe the story of the Dove and the Virgin, Aunt? When I have asked you this, face to face, I have seen the corners of your mouth wreathe and your eyes twinkle. Are those reassuring signs for your parson?

It is the little twinkle in the eye  
Will spoil the parson's business by and by.

Faith can work wonders; faith and a dozy solemnity; but that pigeon story, Aunt, whatever proof Rome may hold among her relics, whatever pigeon marks on Mary's clothes, you can't swallow.

Years ago, a young aspirant to honours and emoluments in the Church fell into company with a few of our local heretics. (I was one.) It was inevitable that religion should come into the conversation, and I asked him if he believed in the miraculous conception. He said he did. "The holy pigeon—the dove?" I queried. His face, ears, neck reddened as if a fire had scorched them. "Y-yes," he stammered. "And you believe that God who was operating through the pigeon is God who created (as you say) the earth and planets and stars?" "Yes," he answered, a little relieved to get away out into space, and to let the pigeon arch his crest and flap his wings at a cooler distance. "Have you any idea, Tommy, of the size of the stars?" I asked. He said he hadn't. "Our sun, how many times the size of the earth would you think it is?" Thomas looked as wise as he could and said: "About four times." "Four times! Will it surprise you to learn that on the calculation of the astronomers it is eight hundred and fifty thousand times the size of the earth, and one among millions of stars, some of which are thousands of times the size of the sun? God, who created these, to do that pigeon trick!" A few months later I heard that Thomas had gone into an office as clerk. The Church lost the benefit of his astronomical enlightenment. But how before, Aunt, could a sense of relativity have suggested to Thomas that there was something wrong with his theology?

Take your other cardinal doctrine, Vicarious Punishment. "This God, who has God put to death to appease God!" laughs Baron de la Hontan.<sup>1</sup> "The evidence of a hundred volumes written for or against Christianity has not the force of the ridicule of those few words," says Diderot.

You still pin your flag to this absurdity, Aunt? Or is it the parson? ("He's so nice!") See to what this leads! Living down to the pretence of belief robs millions of good temper, makes them say and do things of which, if not in bondage to creed or cleric, they would feel shame. A year ago, when just out of hospital, I was discussing with a lady relative and her son the question of the inspiration of the Bible. Quoting some of the grossest of the absurdities in the book, I asked: "Are these inspired?" Instead of giving way to reason, my lady gave way to anger; and, turning on her son, who had expressed agreement with me, she told him she hoped some terrible illness would

come to him that would bring him to his knees in belief. Could she have meant it? Cancer? Consumption? What a creed!—that can make a woman stifle her tenderest feelings and give the lie to her dearest hopes!

You talk of religious truth. Let me remind you of what that heretic cleric of Oxford said (you heard it, Aunt Muriel): "There is no such thing as religious truth. A thing is either true or it is false." You want more candour of that kind among you. But because this man has left the Church, as it moves too slowly towards its own emancipation and is a block to social progress, left it at great monetary sacrifice and at great personal inconvenience, a Wesleyan lady with whom I was speaking a fortnight since tells me she thinks it "selfish and cowardly" of him. Such a tort can bigotry give to judgment!

Thus, between you, Aunt, you play the parson's game for him. But what a penalty for this!—the apprehension that your belief makes you a laughing-stock; the bad blood, the ill-grace this engenders; even the common decencies in human relationship flouted! This more: when a sense of equity might prevent, your creed prompts you to indulge yourselves in your peccadilloes and animosities. "Jesus will save!" Not now, from the bad act or the bad utterance, but hereafter, from the consequences. And you ask: "Are we any worse for our belief?"

H. BARBER.

## That's That!

THERE is a suburb of Cape Town called Observatory where no liquor licences have ever been granted.

One day a young fellow, who had just served four years before the mast in the Royal Navy, found himself in a leading church there listening to an anti-liquor sermon. It was not a temperate address, but abounded with abuse, not only of "the trade" and of drunkenness, but also of moderate drinkers. The preacher even said that everyone who kept liquor in his house was a hypocrite.

At the close of the service the preacher slipped round to the door and shook hands with the people going out. Our sailorman, however, refused to shake hands. He said he didn't agree with what the parson said; he himself took an occasional glass of beer, and resented being held up as a scoundrel; and his people kept liquor in the house, and the parson had no right to call them hypocrites—he would like to debate the matter.

Well, the man of God thought he had a soft thing on, so it was arranged that they should argue the matter out before the church debating society. Mr. "A.B." had to conduct his own case without a single supporter, and he carried the war right into the enemies' country, and said, among other things, that there was more liquor consumed in Observatory than in any other suburb of Cape Town; that if the parson would meet the late trains he would see his parishioners rolling home by scores; that the bottle store trolleys were always in the streets—not in front of the houses that bought the liquor, but a few doors down, smuggling it in by the back door; that he could see in the audience six prominent supporters of the church whom he knew to have regular supplies of liquor.

At this point a gentleman in the audience jumped up and said they were being insulted. When the chairman had restored order, "A.B." said it seemed there were seven to whom his remarks might apply.

Eventually the debate was concluded, and the chairman whispered that by their system of marking "A.B." had five points to the clergyman's four, and

<sup>1</sup> "Ce Dieu qui fait mourir Dieu pour apaiser Dieu!"

It was a slip in my first letter, Aunt, in attributing this *bon mot* to Baron von Humboldt. The credit of it is to Baron de la Hontan.



had, therefore, won the debate. The parson refused to let him announce this to the meeting, and turned on "A.B." and began abusing him as an insolent young intruder. "A.B." said nothing: he took up his chair, smote the parson on the back of the neck and laid him out, and walked off down the centre of the hall.

J. L.

### Acid Drops.

When the exhibition was opened at Wembley there were offered up prayers by a representative of the Established Church. It was a piece of mummery, but it was gone through. Since then Nonconformists have complained of being left out, for while they are on principle opposed to State patronage, in practice they get as much of it as they can, and usually ask for more. One Nonconformist parson, however, writes to the *Daily News* expressing the hope that the Free Church Council will not continue to protest at their exclusion. He says the glory of the Free Churches lies in their indifference to State patronage. But that is not so. The Free Churches have never yet refused State patronage or State assistance. Their main quarrel is that one Church gets more than they do. They do not really desire the disestablishment of Churches. What they are really after is the equal establishment of *all* Churches. There is no principle at stake.

The Dean of Manchester has been visiting Monte Carlo and returns disgusted with the use of mascots by the players. But if that was all the Dean found to denounce he need hardly have gone to Monte Carlo to find material. Mascots are common enough in this country. All the same, we imagine that if these people had been wearing a crucifix for luck the Dean would have seen little to denounce in that. And yet the same stupid superstition lies at the base of both beliefs. More than that, the soil in which the belief in the protective power of the mascot grows is the same soil that permits the whole of religion to flourish. The Dean himself is one of the masters of the general superstition factory, and he ought not to complain if he has imitators. After all, imitation is a form of flattery.

All is not well with Copec—which is not a patent stain and varnish. Miss Maude Royden is full up with indignation that so many attending the conference have rattled from the resolution against war. Let Miss Royden be of good cheer; the next war will be over before our Bishops and smaller fry will have the time to make up their minds. And, with the Bible as a handbook, it can only be through a miscarriage of thought that anyone can stand for reason, common sense, or sanity. The history of the bulk of the leaders of Christian thought is too well known during the last war to hope that the leopard can change his spots; and as the precious skins of 50,000 of them will *all* be in the next war, we see no reason to worry about what they think, as it will not be a matter of studying inches of territory gained on a map spread on the breakfast table.

In the "Copec" discussion at Birmingham one of the subjects was that of Christianity and war. The Conference came to no conclusion, although there were some vague amiabilities about Christianity and peace, etc. Since the Conference closed, many of its principal members have been at pains to explain that Christianity was not against war so long as it was a righteous one. It was only against unrighteous wars. But as an unrighteous war is always waged by the "other fellow," it would be rather difficult to find a nation that ever did fight anything but a righteous war. The moral of the whole thing is that in the present state of public opinion the Church cannot find that Christianity has anything definite to say. If we go to war the leaders of the Churches will find it quite righteous, and if we get disgusted with war they will find it unrighteous. It depends which way the cat jumps.

Painting spots on rocking horses and bell-ringing do not come under any category of indispensable trades. The Rev. A. H. Price, of Winhill, Burton-on-Trent, explains a dispute with the bell-ringers of the Parish Church. The Church Council decided to instal the Ellacombe chiming apparatus and discontinue paying six bell-ringers, whereon five of them resigned, stating that they would only ring for people requiring the use of the bells who communicated with them, and not the vicar. It would appear from the report that industrial unrest has crept into the Lord's Vineyard, which place has now no difference from any business concern—and echo answers that it never had.

Anatole France will not be honoured by the left-handed compliment of the *Daily News* leader-writer. Religion to many is like a face with a nose of wax, and when the industrious fogleman mentioned above writes: "His rationalism is, in fact, a religious thing....." one is inclined to retort that the Bishop of London's religion is Atheistical. There would be just as much sense in this stupid and inaccurate conclusion. When religion has cleaned out its stables and can speak intelligently and be understood it may qualify for a new suit of clothes; in the meantime, we put the *Daily News'* cant in the same patronizing category as the correspondent of the *Daily Mail*, who desires that the name of Byron shall be recorded in Westminster Abbey. Any interested reader will find Byron's views on Westminster Abbey in his preface to Cantos vi, vii and viii of *Don Juan*.

According to the *Daily Mail* there is to be, at Wembley Exhibition, massed bands, massed pipers and a massed choir—this, writing in terms of circulation as it were. As you cannot have a mass in England without the most superfluous of mankind trying to prove their indispensability, the Bishop of London will offer up a prayer. It is fitting that a representative of religion should be at this apotheosis of advertisement, but, fortunately, what he has to sell need cause no anxiety to business men who, in the words of Mr. Sydney Pascall at the Copec exhibition, would be most pleased to know of a remedy against foreign competition.

Mr. H. Taylor, Wesleyan Minister of St. Agnes, Cornwall, is very much disturbed over the operations in Cornwall of the Berkshire Aviation Company. This company has not merely "seriously impaired the sanctity of the Sabbath," but it has interfered with "the attendance at the sanctuaries of God." That is the most serious thing of all. If the Aviation Company had arranged for a church parade before and after taking a Sunday flight they might have been forgiven. But to keep people away from the place of business run by Mr. Taylor is a very grave offence. So the inhabitants of St. Agnes are advised to guard their heritage by keeping their children from contact with men who disregard both God and religion. We suggest that a vote be taken among the children as to whether they would sooner go to the "sanctuary of God," or witness flights of aeroplanes. After all, the youngsters ought to have something to say in the matter.

It is a curious thing that "sweating" should be associated with piety. During the last century Bibles were produced by badly paid labour; and now teachers in Church schools, organists, choristers, church cleaners, and others, are paid starvation wages. The latest complaint is made by the Tailors' and Garment Makers' Union, which alleges that awful wages are paid for the making of priests' vestments.

Newcastle-on-Tyne has no further use for a "tank" presented as a war trophy. This symbol of brotherly love is to be scrapped by metal merchants on the ground that it is an eyesore and a nuisance. We hope—but in vain—that the clergy will be as active in the "throwing out" ceremony as they were when they fussed round our



gallant lads in those days when the world was being made safe for first class railway tickets for graduates from the P.S.A. movement.

Dean Inge is in favour of emigration. Well, why not start a parson's emigration society? Provided there were plenty of emigrants we would subscribe towards a fund to assist their passage.

The Bishop of London's intelligence does not improve with the passing of years. Those who listened to his wireless Easter sermon will agree with us on that point, for anything so childishly inane it would be impossible to conceive. But for the fact that people do not look for anything really sensible in a sermon it might be taken that the B.B.C. was either trying to discredit the clergy or insult the intelligence of its listeners. Really, if preachers must be there, it should be possible to get better sermons than they are in the habit of inflicting on the public.

One of the things said by the Bishop of London was that young men did not apply for the ministry on account of a false modesty. They did not think they were fitted for so high a calling. The Bishop was good enough to warn them not to be deterred by so small an estimate of their powers if they felt the "call." We are really surprised to learn that this is the reason why the number of candidates for the ministry are declining. In any case, the Bishop might have strengthened his case by pointing not a very great distance from Lambeth Palace. It would certainly never strike the average man that the pulpit called for such a superlative degree of either mental or moral excellence that young men should fear they were unworthy of it.

In a sermon recently preached at St. Paul's Cathedral, Dean Inge admitted that in the five years after the war "organized Christinity had visibly lost ground....." Furthermore, "there was an increase of vice, of idleness and self-indulgence." This is the Dean in his happiest vein. It is gratifying, however, to learn that Dean Inge considers that the Church has no reason to be discouraged. "It [the Church] was a leaven working secretly. No one could say how far its real influence extended, but we could be sure that it worked through the faith and love of its members, and not through the political and corporate action of its rulers." Is this a sly thrust at C.O.P.E.C.? Perhaps, however, it is merely another example of the ancient trick of the Christian apologist, of claiming that all that is fine and admirable in human affairs is directly or indirectly due to Christianity; whilst all that is ignoble is the result of "human nature," materialism, or some other non-Christian influence.

The Bishop of Sheffield has refused to allow a brother minister, the Rev. J. Vint Laughland, to occupy the pulpit at Doncaster Parish Church for an Industrial Sunday Service. It was explained at a meeting of the Trades Council that they had been invited by the Industrial Christian Fellowship to co-operate with them in a service. The council invited Mr. Laughland, who is a minister of the First Community Church of Liverpool to preach; whereupon the Bishop intimated that he could not give permission for him to preach in the church. The Christian Churches are quite prepared to make an attempt to permeate the industrial and political movements, in the hope that thereby they may gain a new vitality and lease of life, but they strongly object to meeting with competition from non-Christian sects. A few such cases as this may make the Labour movement realize the sham of the sympathy which Christianity extends to them in their efforts to bring about social amelioration.

It is estimated that a congregation of 800 persons connected with the liquor trade will attend a special service for publicans of Islington and Finsbury, to be held by

the Rev. W. Francis, vicar at All Saints' Church, Caledonian Road. A case of publicans and sinners. We trust the publicans will be well and truly edified.

A correspondent to the *Daily Herald* complains that among his many burdens is a title rent of £10 3s. 4d. to the Church. By working from 7 a.m. to dusk on seven days a week he makes about £1 a week for himself. If C.O.P.E.C. proposed to tackle problems of this kind, or if some of the clerics who give a sentimental adherence to the Labour Party programme denounced such things, the public might begin to suspect that there was some sincerity in their declarations of love for humanity, and in particular the working classes.

The Fellowship of Freedom and Reform is to continue its agitation for the opening of the Wembley Exhibition on Sundays. Its early appeals were answered by a statement that a partial opening on Sundays was a practical impossibility, but a careful inspection of the grounds by the Fellowship leads it to the belief that the objections to partial opening are absurd. Of all the cant and hypocrisy talked by Christians there is none, perhaps, so contemptible as that used by the Sabbatarians. It is perfectly obvious to any common-sense observer that the solicitude for those who may have to work on the Sabbath is sheer humbug, merely hiding the real religious objection to making Sunday a day of real relaxation for the mass of the people.

The Rev. James Price Roscommon Bacon-Phillips has been summoned at Tottenham Police Court for deserting his wife. The cleric's wife declared in her evidence that her husband was "neglectful and cruel." She was granted a separation order, and her husband was ordered to pay £1 a week and extra for the child. What a pity that the reverend gentleman is not a Freethinker. He would provide a magnificent example of the hateful results of Freethought; and might be held up as an awful warning to Christians wavering in their adherence to religion.

The Archbishop of York announces that through the generosity of Mrs. Christopher Turner, her beautiful house, "Kiplin Hall," near Northallerton, has become available as a Diocesan House for the Dioceses of York and Ripon. Mrs. Turner offers the house, its grounds, and all the furniture free of rent, and, furthermore, takes the responsibilities for all landlord's repairs. She also offers £200 a year towards the upkeep. The Archbishop now appeals to the diocese for a further £1,000 towards initial expenses and the upkeep of the house during the ensuing year. A most becoming disregard for the good things of this world, for a follower of the poor and lowly carpenter, who is said to have had a lively disregard for material wealth.

Private William Fergusson, of the Black Watch, was absent from Church Parade on a recent Sunday. On the Monday he was found hanging in a disused building in Borden Camp. He left a note saying that he knew he committed a sin in not going to Church, and so intended to hang himself. It is wonderful the courage and strength and balance religion gives a man when he really believes it.

*The Religion of Fear, and its bearing on the Price of Fish*, is the title of a book not yet announced. It is an eschatological work in seven volumes, wherein it is proved that the credulity of the marines gives hope to the thought that the parson will always be top dog. The bone of contention is, "Can a Vegetarian be a Christian?"; and it is illustrated from the story of Cain and Abel. The bareness of Mother Hubbard's cupboard is explained by the fact that the Church had taken the widow's mite and left her to pay the dog license. The author is the erudite Professor Suckfist, well known in ecclesiastical circles by his *opus magnum: The Blessings of Poverty on a Full Stomach*.



## 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.

L. MASON.—We are pleased to know that the member for South Islington, Mr. Cluse, promised to vote for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws when a Bill for that purpose is introduced. Freethinkers should keep this subject well before their members.

A. CLARK.—The leader-writer of the *Referee* has much to learn on the subject of comparative mythology, and would do better to keep to subjects on which he is better informed. Blood and water is a very old piece of symbolism in early religions, and has no positive significance whatever. The statement that no man could have "invented" Christ is one of those banalities that almost defy criticism. The figure of Christ is quite plainly a character that is built up on the basis of legends and myths of previous "saviours." And the building up—and pulling down—of that character is still going on. In the case of Mr. MacDonald, for example, we have the Socialist Christ, and others have their particular version.

C. F. BUDGE.—We fancy that Macmillan's have a commentary of the kind you require. The standard edition of *Omar*, published by the same firm, contains notes on the poem.

A. D. REID.—The original publishers of Buckle's *History of Civilization* were Longman & Co. The work is still issued by them in three volumes. A one-volume edition was issued by Routledge.

J. GORDING.—We quite agree with you that the civil marriage in this country ought to take place under more dignified conditions than is at present the case. That it has not the dignity given it in France is largely due to the influence of the parsons. We will use your letter next week. Crowded out of the present issue.

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

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

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

Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by 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.

Despite the wretched weather on Sunday last there was quite a good attendance at South Place to listen to Mr. Cohen's lecture on "Why Not Secularize the State?" The lecture was followed with appreciation, and there were questions at the close. Mr. Moss occupied the chair, and Mr. Samuels officiated at the bookstall. To-day (May 4) Mr. Cohen delivers the concluding lecture on "The Making of Man." We are hoping for a still better audience for this subject.

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference will be held this year at Preston. Preston is very well situated geographically for those who wish to attend, and we are hoping to see a good attendance of members and delegates. Preston is also one of the strongest centres of Roman Catholicism in the country; and the fact of the Conference being there and the public demonstration in the evening is likely to arouse great local interest. The New Branch is working very hard to make the Conference a success, and their efforts should meet with success. Fuller details of the Conference will be published next week.

The General Secretary asks us to remind Branches of the N.S.S. to call early meetings to elect their delegates to the Conference. Mr. Arthur Rogerson, of Leyland Road, Penwortham, Preston, the Secretary of the Preston Branch, will make arrangements for local accommodation, etc. His work will be greatly facilitated by an early application. Preston being so centrally situated, there should be a large attendance of sympathizers at the Public Evening Meeting, which will be held at the Star Cinema Theatre, Corporation Street, Preston.

For the information of Delegates who propose holiday-making during Whit-week. Preston is within easy reach of Blackpool, Southport, Morecambe, Lake District, Liverpool, Manchester, Lancaster, Grange-over-Sands, and the Ribble Valley. A frequent service of trains and chars-à-banc is established, running to these places as well as to Chester and North Wales, Derbyshire and the Peak District, Harrogate via the Yorkshire Moors, etc.

Our readers will be interested in the following passages which we take from a review of the life of Olive Schreiner, which appeared in the *Western Mail*, of April 15, from the pen of D. Lleufer Thomas:—

Her masterpiece, *The African Farm*, has been described as an "agnostic" novel. It is true that in her early teens, if not even earlier (so abnormally precocious was this child-genius), she had cast aside her parents' narrow creed and had ceased to believe in Christianity. She, however, retained throughout life the whole of the Christian ethic, except with reference to marriage. Like Edward Carpenter (who, I believe, had a far greater influence on her than is recognized in her life), she held that the State should have nothing to do with the sexual relation, and but very little with the control of the family. The best, and indeed almost the only, writing in which she specifically explains her religious standpoint is a fine letter of hers to a great personal friend, Mr. J. T. Lloyd—a Welsh Presbyterian minister in South Africa who was then experiencing intellectual difficulties of his own in his pulpit work. To him she sums up her pantheistic creed by saying: "The universe is One, and It Lives; or if you would put it into older phraseology, I would say: There is Nothing but God." In another of her letters to him, which is reproduced, she fully explained her views on marriage.



From 1892 onwards Mr. Lloyd was a close personal friend of hers; they corresponded a good deal, and saw one another for some months prior to the outbreak of the South African War, when she and her husband lived in Johannesburg, where also Mr. Lloyd had a church. He and the Schreiners, escorted by ex-President Reitz, paid a visit to Kruger when the storm clouds were gathering. Oom Paul gave them a graphic account of the defeat of the Zulus under Dingaan in 1838—a battle in which he as a boy had taken part. During our own sojourn in the Cape in 1893-94 my wife and I met Mr. Lloyd, then recognized as the most eloquent and cultured preacher in South Africa. He simply venerated Olive Schreiner, and his conversation was full of her. He was, if I remember rightly, a native of Llandderfel, near Bala. A few years later he sacrificed everything rather than continue to preach what he had ceased to believe. I have lost sight of him for years, but should this happen to meet his eyes—my greetings to him!

Mr. Thomas will be pleased to know that the above will reach Mr. Lloyd, and will certainly be interested to learn that Mr. Lloyd has never regretted the giving up of his Church for the Freethought platform. If all the Christian clergy were of equal honesty and courage there would be some rare gaps in the Christian ministry.

The Finsbury Park Branch holds its first meeting of the summer season to-day (May 4). The time is 11.15, and the speaker will be Mr. George Whitehead. Mr. Whitehead will also be speaking at Highbury Corner on the evenings of May 5, 6 and 7, at 8 o'clock. We hope that North London friends will turn up in force.

The Newcastle Branch intends conducting a vigorous open-air propaganda this summer, and it makes a start on the Town Moor, near the North Road, to-day (May 4) with speeches by Mr. Vincent Hands, Mr. R. Atkinson, and Messrs. Hogan and Carlton. We are advised that there are several energetic young men who intend taking part in the work, and for that reason local Freethinkers should make a point of turning up in force in order to give them a good send-off.

In London the Branches are also opening their campaign to-day. The Bethnal Green Branch will meet at its usual place in Victoria Park, and West Ham will meet outside the Technical Institute, Romford Road, at 7, with Mr. Corrigan as the speaker. We hope the weather will by this time be in a more gracious mood than it is at the time of writing this paragraph.

The Camden Town Branch of the St. Pancras Public Library, acknowledges the receipt from the Secular Society, Limited, of two copies of Draper's *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science*. The books have been placed in circulation. For the benefit of our friends all over the country we may state that the Society is prepared to send free copies of books published by the Pioneer Press to any public libraries that will accept them and put them into circulation.

It is not often that Mr. Andrew Millar makes his appearance as a speaker on the Freethought platform, but we hear from him that the Bolton Branch is taking advantage of his coming South for a brief holiday to get him to lecture to them on May 10. We do not know the time or place of meeting, but his subject is "What is Freethought." We hope the new Branch will make the most of the opportunity.

Now that the summer looks like coming, may we renew our annual appeal to all our friends to see what can be done while on their wanderings to introduce the *Freethinker* to new readers. A great deal of work can be done in this direction with scarcely any trouble, and it is a most important piece of propaganda. Very many new subscribers are secured in this way.

## Few That Find It.

CHRISTIANITY has always taught an exclusive salvation. Its divines have very rarely doubted that all non-Christians would be damned. The wisest and best of the "heathen" were all doomed to everlasting perdition. Not even in Purgatory, but in Hell, the great Christian poet, Dante, saw (or placed) Brutus, Saladin, and that mighty Aristotle, "the master of those who know." "Firmly believe, and doubt not all," said Augustine, "that not only all pagans, but also all Jews, heretics, and schismatics, that end this present life without the Catholic Church, shall go into eternal fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels." The Church of England articles declare that "they are to be held accursed that presume to say that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to pass his life according to that law and the light of nature." The Book of Homilies admits that "Jews, heretics, and pagans do good works," that "they clothe the naked, feed the poor, and do other good works of mercy," yet because their good works are "not done in the true faith" the doers of them are "lost." Bishop Beveridge sums up the whole doctrine vigorously and logically in his treatise on the Thirty-Nine Articles. "Let a man," he says, "be never so strict a Jew, never so strict a Mohammedan, never so strict in any religion whatsoever, unless he be a Christian he can never be saved. So that, though many Christians may go to hell, yet none but Christians can ever go to heaven."

Every missionary society is founded upon this doctrine. Nothing else could excuse the diversion of such vast sums of money from Christian countries, where so many people suffer destitution and misery. You might leave a hungry man for a while in order to save a man who was in immediate peril of being burnt to death; in the same way, you might leave a suffering white man, who had at least a chance of going straight to hell without knowing it.

There is another consideration. If you admit that anybody but a Christian may go to heaven, you destroy the necessity of Christianity altogether. If every honest man is entitled to a seat in paradise, what is the use of all those myriads of churches and chapels, all those armies of priests, and all those multitudes of sermons? Salvation by good works subverts the very foundations of priestcraft by making churches and preachers superfluous. This is clearly understood by every denomination. The Catholic Church allows a certain efficacy in good works, but does not admit their sufficiency. The Protestant Church denies the efficacy of good works altogether, and derives salvation entirely from the free grace of God. Both Churches, therefore, assert the necessity of faith; in other words, they affirm, by implication if not explicitly, that it is impossible to go to heaven without being a Christian.

Now if only Christians go to heaven, and many Christians go to hell, what is the real number of the saved? It cannot be a great one. Many are called, few are chosen. The way to heaven is narrow, and few there be that find it. Jeremy Taylor says in the plainest terms that the future will be "bad to the greatest part of mankind." "The greatest part of men and women," he declares, "shall dwell in the portion of devils to eternal ages." Thomas Watson, a puritan preacher much studied by Spurgeon, puts the matter most pointedly. "The Devil hath the harvest," he exclaims, "and God only a few gleanings."

What a pitiable God! One commiserates the poor



Deity who is doomed to such unprofitable labour in the field of his own creation.

What reason is assigned for this extraordinary state of things? Nothing but the old story of the Fall of Man in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve sinned by eating forbidden fruit, and thus entailed "original sin" on all their posterity. Every educated person knows that the story is fabulous. The clergy know it as well as the laymen. And if the story be fabulous the doctrine must be false. It is not even true that man is fallen. According to evolution he has risen. His faults of sensuality and temper do not spring from the temptations of a devil. They spring from his strong passions, weak judgment, and lack of self-control. They are not an intrusion upon his primitive innocence; they are a legacy from his far-off animal origin, and they gradually disappear in the upward cause of his development.

If there be a God, it is inconceivable that he is eternally baffled by one of his own creatures called the Devil. It is incredible that he should desire the happiness of all his children, and yet allow this Devil to lead off the vast majority of them to everlasting misery. Those who argue that this arrangement is part of an infinitely wise and good plan, and even that God has a right to do as he likes with his own, are guilty of intellectual absurdity and grovelling immorality. That cannot be wise and good in God which is foolish and wicked in man. And the real blasphemers are not those who denounce the puerilities of theology, but those who represent their God as possessing the intelligence of an idiot and the character of a criminal.

It was inevitable that the doctrine of exclusive salvation should perish, however gradually, in the presence of modern civilization. Men's religion is perceived to be, for the most part, a result of the geographical accident of their birth. Christians, Mohammedans, Buddhists, Brahmans, belong to their various religions because they were brought up in them. Their own personal initiative counts for next to nothing in the matter. Their parents and teachers made them what they are. Salvation which depends on this or that faith is, therefore, purely arbitrary. It has no relation to sense or justice. And it is still worse, if possible, from the point of view of humanity. People have become more tender and sympathetic. Consequently we seldom hear of hell nowadays; and exclusive salvation is at variance with the growing solidarity of mankind.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Water Power.

With coloured shawls which are pulled over heads, bare-footed brown women—Hindus—gracefully descend temple steps, kneel as they arrive at the river, and push small lighted lamps on to the stream, and eagerly watch the flames as they dance towards the sea. The going-out of a light betokens misfortune during the coming year. Such scenes may be beheld at the Indian city of Benares every October-November; and they are recalled to us by a picture in R. P. Masani's book on *Folk-lore of Wells; being a Study of Water-worship in East and West*.<sup>1</sup>

When I visited Bombay in 1913 I saw and entered up-to-date high-schools and a university. Under the shadow of these learned institutions there still lives an old-time belief in sacred waters—rivers, pools, springs and wells. For example, Mr. Masani (a Parsee, who acted as municipal secretary) tells that, about 1912, the city council decided to close certain wells

which bred the deadly mosquito known as *Anopheles*. This fly conveys the microbes which give rise to malaria. But many citizens greatly objected to filling up the wells with earth, or even placing lids over them, for they believed that spirits dwelt in the water, and that the spirits, who possess powers for good and evil, wish to have free access to the light. Fine wire netting was therefore in many cases allowed to fulfil the office of lids. A Parsee lady declared that since the sealing-up of the well in her house by a thick lid her husband had been constantly ill; and a Parsee gentleman in the same locality complained that he was struck with paralysis for a like reason. The spirits resented the darkness.

There is a *vav*, or reservoir, on Mount Girnai, in India, known as Rasa-kupika-vav. A person bathing in it becomes as hard as marble, and if a piece of stone or iron is dipped, it is instantly transformed into gold. "But," adds Mr. Masani, "the *vav* is only visible to saints and sages who are gifted with a supernatural vision"; in which case we must reverse an old saying, and agree that "Believing is seeing!" Equally disappointing is the pond "near Khapoli, in the Kolaba district." The villagers say that the nymphs in the pond used to provide pots for wedding festivities if (and this sounds like bureaucracy!) a written application was made the day before the ceremony. The pots must be sent back within a stated period. Once a man failed to comply with this condition; the nymphs ceased to lend pots; and the villagers suffer to this day in consequence of the lapse of this one wretch; just as 1,700 millions of people (this being the present population of the globe) are said to be enduring various inconveniences to-day through the sin of Adam.

Of river demons, and their passions, and their demand for the blood of goats (in older days it was human blood) before granting the abatement of floods, Mr. Masani has many tales to relate. His account of ocean spirits is happier; for, he writes:—

A cocoanut is enough to keep them in good humour, and a special day is named for this offering, called Narali Purnima, or Cocoanut Holiday. On that day multitudes of people flock to the seashore in Bombay to offer their Puja to the sea, to keep it quiet after the monsoon. The Brahman first offers prayers, then the votary throws into the sea the holy water which the Brahman pours into the hollow of his hands, then some red lead, then a few flowers and some rice, and last of all the cocoanut.

Besides giving numerous instances of water-worship from India, Mr. Masani collects many illustrations from European countries, including Great Britain and Ireland.

In warm climates it is not to be wondered at that early ages should have regarded water as a gift of the gods, and as endowed with creative force—as "living water," in fact. Professor Robertson Smith considered that in such environments property in water would be valued before property in land. The Old Testament preserves a legend of a well which God disclosed to the thirsty Hebrews, and to which the tribes sang a joyful hymn—

The children of Israel journeyed to Beer, that is, the Well whereof Yahweh said unto Moses, "Gather the people together, and I will give them water."

Then sang Israel this song:—

Spring up, O well! sing ye unto it;  
The well which the princes digged,  
Which the nobles of the people delved,  
With the sceptre, and with their staves.

Among such people, and in such times of simplicity and ignorance, grew up beliefs in the Water of Life; and, even in our own day, the Holy Water of Catholic churches is a reminder of ancient ideas. It is curious

<sup>1</sup> Published in 1918, by Taraporevala & Co., Bombay.



that the Gospel which is usually deemed the most philosophic of the Four Gospels—namely, John—should employ Jewish folk-lore in the story of the Pool Bethesda:—

Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a Pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a multitude of them that were sick, blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the Pool, and troubled the water; whosoever then first, after the troubling of the water, stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" (John v, 2-6.)

The story goes on to picture Jesus as healing the infirm man without the aid of the sacred pool. Some learned commentators even suggest (I believe, correctly) that the writer, "John," who has a singular taste for playing with divine numbers and hidden arithmetic, meant to say that the Jewish people, whose faith was entered through the Five Porches, or Books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), and who had suffered the miseries of thirty-eight years' wandering in the Wilderness till they came to the brook Zered (Deut. ii, 14), could only be healed of their collective vice by the Évangél of Jesus. However that may be, this passage in the New Testament indicates the type of popular mind in the midst of which the legend of Jesus was evolved. If you open the Bible at the first chapter you find the Spirit of God moving on the face of the waters. If you turn to the last chapter of all, you again view a magical water, in the river "clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb"; and on each bank of this heavenly stream grow trees, whose fruits are for the healing of the nations.

I should no more think of blaming the Jews, Hindus, and New Testament writers for entertaining such belief in the virtue of sacred waters than I should blame children for accepting Santa Claus as an authentic visitor at Christmastide. The Bible, which is the Word of Man, enshrines conceptions of miracle and magic similar to those held by innumerable unscientific minds all over the world. F. J. GOULD.

## Confessions of a Hypocrite.

### NOTES FROM A LIFE.

I HAVE no hesitation in writing myself down a coward—a hypocrite—but I take comfort to myself that I am not alone, we are indeed a very great multitude.

My experience has been peculiar, indeed, I was trained religiously by parents who really thought moral behaviour was based upon Christianity. They sent me to Sunday school, and in time I got converted, joining the Church before I was eighteen years of age.

I was then plunged out into the world of reading and thinking more or less independently. One of my early friends was a Freethinker—a delightful man; high-minded, brave, generous, and pure.

I dropped Hell Fire out of my belief—very easily. The Atonement went more slowly. Then I went to hear a Freethought lecture; who was present but my own Sunday school teacher, who was also thinking his way along; we became personal friends and grew in thought together, resigning Church membership.

I gave up all thought of entering the Ministry,

which seemed my natural bent of mind, for I was both a teacher by instinct and ethically minded.

My dear mother was broken hearted over my heresy. She saw me a popular minister, for I had somewhat the orator's touch of fancy.

It was said of my mother that she suffered more over my change of attitude than over the awful follies of a drunken brother of mine.

I bent to my mother's weakness, somewhat because I loved her; I feared to give her pain. I stayed on the edge of religious life. Social reform was my passion. I was asked to join Church life; always backing out by polite refusals.

I was once described as a splendid Christian, yet I was an Agnostic all the time; I went to Church to please a beautiful wife. Children went to Sunday school; I trying to undo any serious harm they gathered there, at home, by quiet talk and good books. I supported Bradlaugh; stood by Foot, sometimes too far off, like a celebrated Peter.

I read the *Freethinker*; I hear its lectures; I still go to church—even subscribe to both.

If I die I shall be buried as a Christian. The family have never known exactly where dad stands. Am I a hypocrite? Does Mr. Cohen despise me? I admire him. I have broadened in thought many whom I have come in contact with. I send the *Freethinker* every week to a reverend gentleman. I have done a little from a distance.

A HYPOCRITE.

## Eden Forfeit.

### The fruit

Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden.—*Milton*.

TIME was, in Eden's drowsy keep,  
When knowledge had not come to dawning,  
When laughing Love still lay asleep,  
And Adam spent his leisure yawning.

Fair, at the garden-centre, stood  
The tree forbidden, all untasted;  
And virgin Eve was yet unwoo'd,  
And time in paradise was wasted.

But, evil hour! the Serpent spake,  
And tempted Eve with joy yet hidden,  
And (were the angel guards awake?)  
Eve reach'd, and pluck'd the fruit forbidden.

Of knowledge she and Da partook.  
And need one tell of what came after?  
Of snugging in the shady nook,  
Of Eden changed with love and laughter,

That, when the stars came out, the twain  
Forgot Jove, left unsung their pæan,  
While Nick, who had strung his harp again,  
Sat down and twang'd the hymenean.

Afar in heaven sat frowning Jove,  
Beside him, Juno, looking grumpy;  
Little between them now of love,  
Juno was grown so fat and lumpy.

Jove closed his eyes, and feign'd to nod,  
His sullen lips all parle disdaining,  
When spies brought word unto the god  
With those in Eden joy was reigning

Moody and jealous, Jove took whip  
And drove them forth the happy portals.  
Ah! loss of Eden! Yet, ah! lip  
Of love! which would ye, modern mortals?

Say! would you turn that sun-warm'd grove  
Into a doleful Wesley chapel?  
Or are you glad, in spite of Jove,  
That Eve was game and pluck'd that apple?

H. BARBER.



## Correspondence.

CANON DORRITY AND THE "FREETHINKER."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

MY DEAR BROTHER,—For we are all Brethren, however we differ theologically, or otherwise. Two kind friends (and both anonymous) have sent me your article on my address upon "The Folly of Unbelief"; and I am moved to write a few lines upon your second and third paragraphs.

There is no need to lose such a temper as one may have, and I certainly did not lose, and have not lost, mine; and so I may point out that I did not say that unbelief was a vice, a crime, or a sin, but a "folly," and your own statement of 40 years unremunerative labour surely adds point to the points I made—or tried to make—in my sermon, and I will certainly make a point of it when next I preach upon the subject.

Your insinuation that "a powerful Church"—presumably the Ecclesia Anglicana—has done, and is doing, something unstated to hinder and "prevent" your "movement," moves me to ask who or what you mean by this "powerful Church," and what it is that it or they have done and are continuing to do?

If you confuse and confound this "Church" with its Bishops and Clergy as a body and speaking *ex cathedra*, then I have to reply that I do not know of any *ex cathedra* deliverance of the Ecclesia Cathedra which has dealt with your "movement."

If, however, your term includes Bishops, Clergy and Laity, each delivering from time to time their individual judgment upon "unbelief" and its folly, then I claim that they are just as "Free" in their thinking as you and those who think with you, and have equal right to freedom of expression. In the exercise of your freedom you have decided that there is nothing worth bothering about in the Christian religion, and we in a similar exercise of our freedom have decided that there is. Very well, *c'est tout!*—all is said. Wisdom or freedom was not born with the free thinker (N.B.: not the Freethinker), and they will certainly not perish with him if and whenever, if ever, he does perish. Let us go our separate ways, if separate they must be, thinking the best of each other, and not the worst, as so often happens.

And I certainly do not wish my "hearers and readers to think of the practical Atheist as a very evil-living creature," nor have I ever said anything like that in the course of many years' preaching! I believe, on the contrary, and have often said, that the daily life of many an Agnostic, Freethinker, and even Atheist, is often of such a character as to put to shame that of many thousands of professing Christians! I can't say any fairer than that, can I? But I have generally added that this has been in spite of and not because of their unbelief. You cannot prevent me from thinking and adding that, can you? Nor do I even suppose that you would wish to prevent me.

The truth as it appears to me is either (a) that, in Tertullian's phrase, these men have the *anima naturaliter Christiana*, or (b) that they have climbed and lit their taper at the Gospel Sun, and then have kicked down the ladder by which they climbed. I claim that the Christian religion has created the atmosphere in which alone these "natural" virtues can continue to exist.

You remark that you "do not know the distinction between a theoretical and practical Atheist," but that my "intention is quite clear." You appear, however, to have confused it, but this may be due to the fact that your comments are based upon a five-line paragraph in a local paper. As a matter of fact, the "practical" Atheists of whom I was speaking were, and are, professing Christians who live day by day as if it were demonstrated that there is no God; "Atheists in practice" would have been a better phrase; but I fear you were a little disingenuous in saying that you "do not know the distinction between a theoretical and a practical Atheist." Anyhow, the distinction I had in my mind was between those who are Atheists on theory, and those who are Atheists in practice though professing the Christian faith.

I repudiate heartily the suggestion that I hold Atheism to be "a synonym for wickedness"; but I nevertheless hold that if we compare the respective tendencies and results of these two opposing systems of thought, Theism and Atheism, we shall not long be in doubt as to which is the *better for human kind*, apart from any question as to which is right or wrong. Did we ever know a *real* belief in God to lead to carelessness and wickedness of life? Such a thing was never known in the history of mankind; but it has often been known, too often indeed, that these have been the *natural* results of Atheism; and by their fruits we shall know them. "Take my word for it," said the great Sir Robert Peel, "it is not prudent, as a rule, to trust yourself to any man who says he does not believe in God, or in a future after death." (N.B.: Sir Robert was not a Parson! *Verbum sap!*).

With cordial good wishes, believe me,  
Your friend and Brother,

St. Ann's, Manchester.

DAVID DORRITY.

## FREEDOM OF THOUGHT IN JAPAN.

SIR,—It seems that a bold expression of common sense is a dangerous thing for the authorities in this country. The attitude of the Japanese Government towards freedom has recently become very nervous. Religion has failed to show the necessary stability to appeal with lasting force to thinking people. It is the most unstable thing in the world; unstable, because it cannot be reconciled to reason. It is, therefore, quite obvious to anyone who thinks and enquires that Japan will not be converted by any religion—whether Christian, Buddhist or Shinto, etc.—and there will be no future for religion in this country. If, then, we ask any enlightened Japanese people to say what will be the future of religion, they reply, destruction. Religion, seeing this tendency, bowed to the Government, who intend to direct attention to religion as a means in State development. Of course, as in all countries, there will be old people and ignorant people who will cling to the old superstitions and refuse to be guided by reason, but I am sure, with enlightened people, religion in Japan will no longer have any power.

To encourage religion in Japan by our Government—Christian Buddhist and Shinto—as a great moral and thought movement to the human race, at the present time shows a gross ignorance. At first Buddhist monks and Shinto priests stood for equality, justice and brotherhood of man; but the glittering generalities were soon lost in the morass of greed. It is now acknowledged by liberal-minded Japanese people that jealousy, pride, envy, hate and ignorance sway the Japanese monks and priests, instead of love, hope, charity, money and intelligence.

Too much emphasis is laid on the need of the Japanese Buddhism and Shinto. But the Buddhist and Shinto movement, like the Christian movement, is not perfect by any means.

Nothing pure can arise from the religious motives, and hence religion is a constant process of compromise with the base, the false and the ugly. YOSHIO OYAMA.

Japan.

## RELIGION IN POLITICS.

SIR,—It has often been suggested in business circles that a business man who makes open profession of his belief in and practice of Christianity should be especially watched.

The presumption is that by virtue of his pretensions he is more than usually suspected of deceitful action for ulterior purposes, the chief of which is material gain represented in money value. In short, that he is suspected of being a base materialist. That there is good reason for this suspicion the writer could verify from personal experience and observation.

It was not expected, when the Socialist Party entered into Governmental office, that the head of that Party would adopt the religious tactics of the "Wizard of Wales."

If the present Prime Minister is going to persist in meaningless religious platitudes he will not complain if he is suspected of playing the Christian game as in the case of the business and worldly-wise man. A nobler



and loftier policy is expected from those who profess to represent Labour than from others who, for political purposes, have been willing to perpetuate the Christian superstitions.

I submit for the consideration of the Prime Minister the advice of a past Rector of St. Andrew's University to the former's own countrymen: "To say nothing to others that you do not think; and to play no tricks with your own minds. Of all the evil spirits abroad at this hour in the world, *insincerity* is the most dangerous."

He will not complain if those who hoped for improved, ordered Government under his guidance should lose faith in his worthless platitudes, and suspect him of appealing for political support from the unthinking, the prejudiced, and the superstitious voter.

Your satirical criticism of the Prime Minister's nonsense about "the living belief in Christian doctrines, and the simplicity of the spirit which the Christian faith engenders," is richly merited. Nobody knows better than he that these doctrines are like "the smile that won't come off."

SINE CERE.

#### NATIONAL TRAITS.

SIR,—A word of thanks to Mr. V. J. Hands for his friendly letter. Epigrams and generalizations, while they may contain much truth, are, from their very nature, apt to be exaggerations, or the reverse. Nations differ, on the surface, in habits and customs, even towns and villages in the same country breed characteristics peculiar to each, but I have never been much impressed with supposed great differences between peoples. On the contrary, I have always been impressed with what all have in common, as catalogued in the great protest of Shylock—what G. W. Foote called, "the greatest passage in all literature." From such an elevation I looked down upon the "Great War"—not without compassion—as a mere battle of ants on an ant-hill; but much less justifiable. Again thanking friend Hands.

A. MILLAR.

### National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY,  
APRIL 24.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Clifton, Corrigan, Moss, Quinton, Rosetti and Silverstein; Mrs. Quinton, Miss Kough and the Secretary.

New members were received for the Birmingham and Glasgow Branches and the Parent Society.

The Branch votes for the town in which the Conference was to be held resulted in a majority for Preston. It was formally moved that the Conference for 1924 be held in Preston. Carried unanimously.

The list of speakers for the Evening Meeting was decided upon and the Secretary instructed to proceed with the arrangements.

Notices of motion for the Conference Agenda and nominations for Officers were received and remitted to the Agenda Committee.

Messrs. Corrigan, Moss and the President were elected as an Agenda Committee.

Correspondence from Glasgow and Birmingham and various other items were dealt with.

The applications in connection with the suggested Lecture Scheme were referred to, and Messrs. Corrigan, Clifton and Moss were elected, as a sub-committee, to examine and report thereupon.

The President reported that a deputation from the Society for the Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws has been favourably received by the Home Secretary on April 16; the N.S.S. being represented by the President (Mr. C. Cohen), Mr. and Mrs. Collette Jones, Mr. Clifton, Miss Kough and Mr. Quinton. A report of the deputation had appeared in the *Freethinker* of April 27. The Executive expressed their full appreciation of the President's attitude in the matter.

Outstanding accounts were ordered to be paid, and the meeting adjourned.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

### 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, Dr. C. W. Saleeby, "Hippocrates and Harley Street."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, John A. Hobson, M.A., "A Fair Wage."

SOUTH PLACE INSTITUTE (Finsbury Pavement, E.C.): 7, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "The Making of Man."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.30, Mr. E. Burke, a Lecture.

FINSBURY PARK.—11.15, Mr. G. Whitehead, a Lecture. Also Monday, May 5, Tuesday, May 6, Wednesday, May 7, at Highbury Corner, Islington, N., at 8.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY.—Freethought lectures and debates every evening in Hyde Park. Commencing to-day, at 3. Speakers: Mr. Baker, Mr. Beale, Mr. Hyatt, Mr. Hafris, Mr. Hart, Mr. Keeling, Mr. Knubley, Mr. Saphin, Mr. Shaller, Dr. Stewart, D.Sc., etc., Mr. Vincent, B.A., B.Sc.

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

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

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

NEWCASTLE (Town Moor, near North Road entrance): 7, Speakers—Messrs. Atkinson, Carlton, Hands, and Hogan.

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