

The

# FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

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

Registered at the General Post Office as a Newspaper

VOL. XLV.—No. 49

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1925

PRICE THREEPENCE

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## Views and Opinions.

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### The Asylum of Ignorance.

I did not get very far last week with my proof of Spinoza's dictum that the Will of God is the asylum of ignorance, because I took up all the space I dared take with the excellent essays of Professor Singer. But I can now illustrate the maxim by way of noting the two essays by Professor Eddington and Professor Needham. Both these are men of repute, they are properly looked up to with respect in their own departments, and yet the evidence that "God" is but another name for ignorance is as clear with them as it is with the undeveloped intellect of a Gypsy Smith. For neither of the Professors appeal to the facts with which they are most conversant in support of the belief in God. Professor Eddington, as astronomer and physicist, is quite able to deal with all the facts that come within his department without assuming a God. He is quite clear that everything can be dealt with in the strictest mechanistic terms. But he is hopeful that it will not satisfy in the realm of living beings. So he leaves the production of evidence to the biologist or the bio-chemist. We turn to Professor Needham. He treats with cool contempt those who try to explain that mechanism will not do in biology, and who put in a plea for Vitalism. The history of Vitalism, he reminds them, is one of continuous retreat in the face of acquired knowledge. The history of the mechanistic conception is one of a continuous advance. Neo-vitalism, as represented by Haldane and Dreisch, is as unsatisfactory as the older form. He asserts roundly that "The triumph of mechanistic biology is undoubted, and it has no serious rivals." Again:—

Vitalism has been, if anything, a hindrance to research. Of all the hypotheses put forward to account for the phenomena of life, Vitalism in all its forms has been ever the least stimulating. Whereas the Mechanistic hypothesis does at least provide definite theories which can be proved or disproved, Vitalism simply fills up the gaps in mechanistic descriptions after the fashion of Columbus's map-maker, "where unknown, there place terrors!.....The bio-chemist and the bio-physicist.....can and must be thoroughgoing mechanists."

Professor Eddington has no place for God in physics, but thinks the biologist may have some use for him. Professor Needham receives the commission and replies that he has no use for him either, but while "Mechanism in biology is perfectly justified, and, indeed, essential, it cannot be applied to psychology." That is, he hands it on to the next party to see whether he can find God. The psychologist in this case is Professor William Brown. He cannot hand it on to anyone else since psychology is the newest—in a genuinely scientific form—of the sciences, it is the most complex of all subjects, and there is no one else to whom he can pass it on. But the treatment here is precisely what one would expect. He takes a number of states of mind, the experiences of religiously-trained adolescents, the visions of "Mystics," etc., and assumes that they are in touch with a deeper reality than the ordinary person. But as he is also compelled to admit that everyone of these frames of mind is explained by others without the slightest reference to God, and as there is nothing whatever offered in the shape of proof on behalf of his own hypothesis, his demonstration cannot be called very convincing. Readers of my *Religion and Sex* will be aware that I have gone very carefully into the causation and the significance of these "mystical" and abnormal experiences, and have shown that there is not the least need to call in religion to explain them. And I would put to Professor Brown the question I have so often put to others, What substantial difference is there between the visions of the religious mystic and those of the opium eater? To talk of the mystic entering a larger world of reality is mere gibberish. It has no meaning whatever to those who wish a statement to be intelligible before they will accept it. It is a theory that exists only so long as one does not understand the phenomena in front of one. It is a still further illustration of the truth that God is the asylum of ignorance. Physicist, biologist, psychologist, each unconsciously illustrate its truth. The whole might be reduced to a formula—When you don't know the cause of a thing call it God, and call it so because you don't know what the devil is the cause of it.

### A Bogus Deity.

Of course, neither Professor Eddington nor Professor Needham put the case as plainly and as brutally as I have put it. If they had done so they would have realized what they were doing, and would not have done it. What I have been doing is to strip these pseudo-ideas of the philosophic jargon in which they are disguised, and expose them naked, even if ashamed. Both Professor Eddington and Professor Needham point out that while a thoroughgoing mechanistic conception is valid throughout biology and physics, its weakness lies in the consideration that the "laws" of nature on which it builds are mental creations, and the values upon which it builds are mental creations likewise, and that being so, we are encouraged to believe that we have here evidences of the working of a supreme "Power," or of

some ruling and creative mind. Well, so far as the first part of the statement is concerned, I have been pointing out for years that laws of nature are not something that we find in nature, as one finds the laws of the ancient Babylonians on clay tablets; they are only descriptions framed to express our experience of the way in which things behave. And the same is true of the "values" we ascribe to the universe. Ultimately this is an Atheistic conclusion, not a theistic one. And for the second part I may point out that the mere existence of some "Power," spelt with capital letters, is not what people usually mean by God. A mere something which we choose to call "mind," will not do for God. Professor Eddington realizes this in the last paragraph of his essay when he says it must be left for others to determine whether the "spirit in whom we have our being is approachable to us; that he is to us the beneficent Father, without which it seems to me the theoretical existence of God has little significance whatever." So, after all, the only God that Professor Eddington thinks science may find room for is one that he confesses will be of no value to anyone, because it will not answer to what people have always meant when they said God existed. When dealing with Dean Inge it was pointed out that the essential issue was not what it was possible to make Christianity mean, but what had always been understood by Christianity. If what people had always understood by Christianity was not true, then, so far as historic Christianity was concerned, the whole thing was a delusion. Exactly the same holds true of "God." When believers talked about God they meant a personal being akin to themselves, one who loved and hated, took sides with or against them, answered their prayers, and was concerned with their welfare. They did not mean an undefined "power," or some metaphysical "substance." They did not mean merely that something existed outside themselves. No one outside an asylum has ever doubted the possibility of that. The belief in God does not affirm mere existence, it affirms an existence of a specific type, and those who argue that there is evidence for the existence of God because they see proof of the existence of some "Power," or of something that is not themselves, are either stupid or dishonest. They are bolstering up a belief they know to be false, by using an identical term for something quite different.

#### Mind and Nature. \* \* \*

The attempt to undermine the Mechanistic or Materialistic position by contending that inasmuch as natural laws and values are mental creations, the known universe is a product of mind is a contention of a rather more subtle character, although not a stronger one. And for the benefit of those of my readers who are not conversant with the history of philosophical speculation, a few words of introduction and explanation are necessary. Those who do know the history of this particular controversy will remember the celebrated analysis of Bishop Berkley of our knowledge of an external world. He pointed out that our knowledge of an external object, a table, a chair, etc., was really a consciousness of certain mental states. Every mark by which we know a table—shape, colour, hardness, and so on—are no more than so many sensations. Any object we take turns out to be no more than an integration of sensations. We do not know something which people called "matter," we only know a cluster of sensations, and assume "matter" to exist as the substance underlying these properties. So far, Berkley was impregnable. To use a figure of Huxley's, everyone who has bitten on that file has broken his teeth. But Berkley was chiefly interested in providing room for

the existence of God, and to pave the way for that he went further than his analysis warranted. He proceeded to deny altogether the existence of "matter" as a substance, as experience gave us no proof of its presence, but as our knowledge of an eternal world was reduced to a knowledge of mental states, he argued that the universe existed as so many emanations of a divine mind. So was Atheism killed and Theism established.

\* \* \*

#### A Two-Edged Weapon.

But Berkley found his nemesis in Hume. When I examine my consciousness, said Berkley, I am aware of colour, shape, hardness, sweetness, and so forth, but never do I come across a substance that cannot be brought under the head of some sensation or another. And, he said, I can explain everything as well without "matter" as with it. As a substantive "matter" does not exist. Very good, replied Hume, but when I examine consciousness what I discover is a number of passing mental states, with ideas and memories and compoundings of these states. But never in any case do I come across this substance which you call mind. Just as you have no cognizance of matter apart from sensation, so I have no knowledge of "mind" as a thing in itself, but only of a series of mental states. Your substance "mind" does not help me to explain anything; I can do all without it that you can do with it; it is a figment of the imagination. Berkley was hoist with his own petard. The same argument destroyed both "substances." Berkley had risked all to prove a God, and Hume had used his reasoning to abolish him. Two hundred years of controversy has left these positions substantially untouched. Of matter in itself, and mind in itself, we know nothing. The one is no more than a name given to an existence which is believed to be the unknown cause of our sensations, the other is a general term covering a succession of mental states. Both are abstractions. They are no more than names given to two aspects of human experience. But there is this distinction to be borne in mind. While Materialism, Atheism, or the Mechanistic conception of nature is not in any way dependent upon the reality of "Matter," the belief in God is dependent upon the reality of the abstraction, "Mind." God still remains the asylum of ignorance.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be Continued.)

### Theism Found Wanting.

CANON PETER GREEN, of Manchester, is a paragon among the theologians of to-day, a distinguished defender of the Christian Faith, and a firm disbeliever in the triumph of organized Christianity. So pronounced was his statement of the dismal failure of organized religion in this country, made in the Manchester Cathedral and published in the press everywhere, not many years ago, that several newspapers suggested the propriety of applying to him the sobriquet of the "Doleful" Canon. That was the time when Dr. Inge was generally referred to as the Dismal or Doleful Dean. The miserable nickname is now applied to neither Dean nor Canon, because at present there is nothing startling nor distracting in the admission that organized religion has been, and is, a gigantic failure. It is as a Christian apologist, however, that Canon Green is best known out of Manchester. It is in this capacity that the *Guardian* regularly engages his services; and it must be frankly conceded that his qualifications for the rôle set to him are second to none. Already he has contributed fifty-

six articles under the general heading of the "Difficulties of Life and Belief." The problem considered in the fifty-sixth is the one involved in the sub-title, "The sense of God's presence," which appeared in the *Guardian* of November 20. A correspondent wrote: "A man wants evidence of the Divine presence (Nature does not help) and complains of lack of awareness of God, and of never having had a sense of God's nearness." The correspondent is evidently thinking of a person who has never been in any orthodox sense a Christian, or even a veritable believer in the existence of God. Genuine belief of necessity gives rise to experience, and experience is generally regarded as a convincing test of the truth of the belief. Such is the alleged discovery of present-day apologetics, and to multitudes of unthinking people it is entirely satisfactory. We are not told whether the correspondent's man believes in the existence of God or not; but the probability is that he does not, for if he did, surely the term God would convey some practical meaning to his mind. Whether he does or does not, this is what Canon Green says:—

How are we to deal with a case like this? What methods can be suggested by which a man may hope to come to a direct personal knowledge of God? We may, indeed we must, recognize that people differ so widely in the matter of their awareness of God as in all other respects. Just as some people have great sensibility to beauty and others very little; just as some people have great intellectual powers and others powers of a very low order; just as some people have a ready tact, and quick understanding of the characters and feelings of others, while some, with the best possible intentions, seem quite unable to enter into other person's minds; so too in the matter of what we may call sensitiveness to spiritual influences, there is wide difference between different men.

In that extract the Canon unconsciously betrays the essential weakness of the case for Theism. In the first place, he forgets that God is not an object of knowledge. To speak of "a direct, personal knowledge of God" is utter folly, because there is no avenue along which such knowledge can be acquired. Zophar's question, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" can only be answered in the negative. All we know is that all the Gods of whom there are descriptions are non-existent; and they are, as Matthew Arnold calls them, but "magnified, non-natural men." Even Canon Green has no direct, personal knowledge of the Christian Heavenly Father. In the second place, the reverend gentleman ignores the vast difference between knowledge and faith. Tennyson was by no means a great theologian, and yet even he clearly perceived the difference to which our clergymen seem to be blind. At the beginning of *In Memoriam* we find this significant line:—

We have but faith; we cannot know.

Canon Green's "direct and personal knowledge of God" exists only in his own imagination; and there are no methods by which a man may come to it.

On the subject of religion in early childhood the Canon writes more sensibly than most clergymen do. He says:—

For young people the matter is pretty simple. I once got into trouble with a distinguished leader of religion for saying that scarcely anyone had any direct first-hand religious experience before the age of sixteen, and that many people did not attain to it till even later. So, then, if a thoughtful boy or girl, under the age of twenty-one, is troubled at having little or no first-hand religious experience, there need be little hesitation what to advise. Here are three sound rules. Be good; fleeing fleshly lusts which war against the soul. Be humble and patient; not expecting to know everything while you are

still young, but willing to wait and to learn. Be in earnest; believing that there is something worth experiencing, something worth finding out. I have known very many young people in whose lives these rules have been faithfully followed out with the happiest results.

We repeat that, coming from a clergyman, the paragraph just quoted is highly rational. The majority of ministers, especially in the Free Churches, emphasize what they regard as the bounden duty of infusing religion into the child's mind at the earliest possible age. The present writer was a full-fledged divine at twelve, was admitted to the Communion table in his early teens, and had all that time what was considered a strong and rich religious experience. This was the natural outcome of the strictest and most patient religious training by pre-eminently pious parents. The children whose lot it was not to have been so trained lacked religious experience altogether, and most of them have made no profession of religion to this day. If asked whether they believe in God or not, they will probably not have the courage to answer No, and they certainly cannot honestly say Yes. The vital point here is that without religious training children cannot have religious experience. That is to say, religion is foreign to our nature, and unless it gets instilled into it by artificial means it will ever remain outside. Religious teachers tacitly admit this when they declare that if a man is not converted to Christ before he is twenty it is safe to predict that he will never be converted at all. But we have a further conviction, namely, not only that religion is foreign to our nature, but that it is also a disease which can do our nature nothing but harm, causing us to believe in and cling to unreal, non-existing things, and so diverting our attention and energy from the things that really matter.

We now come to a middle-aged man who is without religion, with whom Canon Green deals as under:—

It is necessary to ask why he has been without that which should be the possession of all men. It is legitimate to ask, in no carping or unfriendly spirit, whether he is really in earnest in desiring the knowledge of God.

That is extremely like the nauseous twaddle talked by an earnest but ignorant evangelist who takes it for granted that every man, however far away from religion he may appear to be, has yet a lurking desire in his heart to find God and get saved. That may be true enough of people who are sufficiently silly to attend revival meetings, or to read Canon Green's articles in the *Guardian*. In point of fact, however, if a middle-aged man is really without religion, an unbeliever in God and Providence, the probability is that he is *against* religion and a whole-hearted *denier* of God and Providence. Consequently, it would be an upardonable insult to ask him "why he has been without that which should be the possession of all men." He is profoundly convinced that the so-called knowledge of God has been, and is, the damning curse of mankind. Possibly his one aim in life is to bring historical and logical discredit upon all supernatural beliefs, and to teach his fellow beings to put their trust in themselves rather than in a hypothetical Deity. On him Canon Green's superficial argument would have no effect whatever. Indeed, the reverend gentleman deliberately goes from bad to worse, saying:—

Again it is legitimate to ask whether there is anything in the man's life which he himself knows is keeping him from God. "Ye therefore cannot believe because your eyes are blinded," said Christ. And nothing so blinds the eyes as wilful sin. I know a man well who passes as an Atheist. But I know, and he knows quite well, what is really the root of the whole matter.

That is a cowardly statement, with a vengeance. It may be perfectly true that Atheists are not all excellent characters; but is not the same thing equally true of Christians? Generally speaking, however, in point of character Atheists compare most favourably with professing Christians. They are usually most zealous and loyal citizens, doing their utmost for the good of the community. They are firm believers in social reforms and work hard to hasten them on. Their faith in the value of education never wavers, and their deepest longing is to free it from the thralldom of superstition. They are vehement advocates of economic justice, social fair play, the annihilation of all false distinctions which separate class from class, and the bringing together of all mankind into the ring of universal brotherhood and altruistic service.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Man or Myth?

*Jesus Christ in History and Faith*, by the Right Reverend A. C. Headlam, Bishop of Gloucester. (John Murray.)

THE battle-ground of the conflict between Freethinkers and Christians has shifted during the past century from the Old Testament to the New. So far as the earlier part of the Christian Bible is concerned, the victory is entirely with the Freethinkers. To-day Christian ministers repeat in the pulpit the very language for which the "Intellectuals" formerly suffered imprisonment and even death, and the infidel martyrs are avenged.

The New Testament will, sooner or later, share the fate of the Old Testament. In the meantime the Christians are doing what they can to defend the personality of Christ. One of the latest defenders of the Faith is the Bishop of Gloucester. This, of course, is not the same courageous and chivalrous Bishop of Gloucester who once declared his willingness to defend Almighty God, and who excited the cultured derision of Matthew Arnold. The present champion is another holder of the same office, and he more modestly proposes to defend "God's" son, instead of the more awful parent. Indeed, the right reverend Father-in-God has done so, and the book is a reprint of addresses delivered at Harvard University, U.S.A., last year to the greater glory of God and the Bishop.

Harvard is not exactly the Modern Athens, and the Bishop appears to have been quite conscious of the limitations of his audience. He dismisses with a lofty gesture all the European Biblical critics from Ernest Renan to John M. Robertson, and actually writes with the easy nonchalance that Orthodox writers adopted in the days prior to the blunt and outspoken criticism of Thomas Paine a century ago. It is true that "Gloucester" is not so saucy and audacious as the older theologians, but his high-sniffing contempt is quite in the manner of Christian apologists who think in contemptuous terms of all opponents. Here is the way the Bishop tickles the ears of young Harvardians, and, incidentally, belittles his opponents:—

I ask you always to suspend your judgment when you have confident assertions made of the untrustworthy character of the Christian traditions, and always to remember that criticism must itself be subject to a very careful process of criticism.

However the critics differ from one another in their methods of approach, the consensus of cultured opinion is that the Christian traditions are untrustworthy. It does not require a great deal of scholar-

ship to see this. For example, one of the gospels is said to be written "according to Saint Luke," and this particular record contains an account of what theologians call "the immaculate conception" of the "Virgin Mary." This manuscript cannot be traced earlier than the third century. Even on its face value the story is more than doubtful. If "Luke" met "Christ" as a grown man, what value can attach to "Luke's" statement concerning "Christ's" mother thirty years before.

The Bishop of Gloucester insists that Christ is a definitely historic personality. One expects a Bishop to live in a balloon, but the young American students should have been somewhat surprised at the life-history of such a workman as the so-called carpenter of Nazareth. The Bishop, however, rather overacted the part of an unsophisticated believer. Hear his innocent apology for one of the "purple patches" in the life of the sacred wielder of the jack-plane:—

I do not doubt that we have here (the story of the transfiguration) a truthful account of a real spiritual experience, and I do not care to speculate as to what exactly were the objective facts.

On the subject of miracles, indeed, the bishop uttered some beautiful nonsense, worthy of a young Sunday-school teacher, whose daily avocation was cutting cheese with a wire. Listen to his full-throated accents:—

Besides miracles of healing there were also nature miracles. It is quite obvious that any rationalistic or semi-rationalistic explanation of these is impossible. The argument which appeals to people with a modern mind is that to work by miracles seems to be inconsistent with God's methods.

Is it not wonderful? If the Bishop were an itinerant evangelist addressing the farm labourers and cowboys of Oklahoma, U.S.A., he could hardly have done worse. The "modern mind" in Europe has some culture and some education, and the best brains of America certainly do not lag behind the older countries, whatever "Gloucester" may pretend.

And what are we to say of the Bishop's remarks concerning the alleged "resurrection" and "ascension" of Christ? "The combination of strong and good evidence with the series of events which followed the resurrection may reasonably bring conviction to our minds."

"Strong and good evidence" is precisely the one thing lacking with regard to the legend of Jesus. The four "gospels" of the "canon" are no more trustworthy than the apocryphal gospels, which are admittedly spurious. No one knows who wrote them; nor when they were written. No one even knows where they were written. If Christ ever lived at all he must have spoken a dialect of Palestine. The gospels are written in Greek. And these anonymous manuscripts narrate the most amazing things, comparable only to the happenings in the *Arabian Nights*, another work of Oriental imagination. Presumably, the young scholars at Harvard University have heard of the great historian, Edward Gibbon. They would do well to check the Bishop's puerilities by consulting the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

The Bishop of Gloucester no more represents the culture of England than the Sultan of Zanzibar's butler. His addresses on the historical Christ simply put the clock back, for no one with a reputation to lose has used such reactionary language since the American evangelist, Torrey, made himself a laughing-stock in endeavouring to convert Britishers to American Christianity, and failed miserably in the attempt.

The Bishop may not care to speculate upon the mysteries of a religion by which he lives, but the ordinary citizen need have no such misgivings. Let us remind the Bishop of some of the things he is defending, and which he pretends are as historical as the Battle of Waterloo. The chief points in the life of Jesus are as follows. A child with a ghost for a father is alleged to be born at Bethlehem. This baby is considered to be so important that a wholesale massacre of children is carried out in order to try and get rid of him. As a child Jesus works miracles. When he grows up he is said to restore sight to blind people, and to bring the dead to life. He is alleged to have fed thousands with a few loaves and fishes, and turned water into wine. At his death a three days' eclipse of the sun takes place, and after death he resurrects and ascends into the ether like an aeroplane, and has not been heard of since. Indeed, he may be "looping the loop," or "nose-diving" in space to-day.

To avoid the difficulties of this very curious story is not to prove that Christ is an historical character. The Bishop has very solid reasons for believing, but there are very cogent reasons for scepticism. One potent reason is that there is no corroboration of this Oriental ghost story in contemporary literature. The three days' eclipse passed unnoticed by astronomers then living, although they noted matters of far less importance. Historians also forgot to note the wholesale massacre of children. So far as sober historians are concerned, no such things happened as the marvels mentioned in the Gospels.

The clergy have a material interest in the question of the historicity of Jesus Christ, but we do not for a moment believe that they are all as innocent as young girls in a nunnery-school. Some of them would perhaps sympathize with the worldly-minded Parliamentary candidate who was asked by a hachet-faced Churchwoman if he believed in the immaculate conception. "My dear lady," sweetly replied the canny vote-snatcher, "I believe in all conceptions that are immaculate."

MIMNERMUS.

## Some Primitive Christians and Others.

SINCE the subject of Mesopotamia, or Irak, is politically important at the moment, it will not be out of place to glance at the religious ideas of the people of that land.

There is a great diversity of opinions among the inhabitants, ranging from belief in ghosts and demons, through various phases of Christianity, Judaism, Moslemism, and Buddhism, to complete Rationalism.

According to Mr. F. W. Chardin, who was Assistant Political Officer in Irak Arabi (the Arab's mudbank), the majority of the people belong to one of the four sects of Christianity. In an article by him, published last month in the *English Review*, he tells us that the Christians "really represent the oldest inhabitants of the land...they form nearly a third of the population of Mosul town." Later we learn that these Christians total 60,000, and 22,000 have migrated to Bagdad and Basra. Two of the sects are very ancient: the Syrian or Jacobite Church, which has no western connections, and the Nestorian Church. Both have branches differing slightly in government and ritual.

The followers of Nestorius hold that the divine and human natures of their Saviour were not combined as to form a single person, and that it was improper

to call Mary, "mother of God," though she might be called "mother of Christ." Nestorius was a patriarch of Constantinople in A.D. 431, when he was deposed and condemned as a heretic.

There are also 40,000 Yezidis in Irak, and, in my opinion, they come from the oldest and most primitive inhabitants, or at least there are no representatives of any who lived there before them. They speak Kurdish and, originally, probably came from Kurdistan, a region to the northward. They are, with a few exceptions, forbidden to write or read, and are therefore quite ignorant of letters, being simple cultivators. They are often loosely spoken of as Devil worshippers, and they have a holy relic: a secret brass image, known as the Peacock King. The historical Saladin was said to be a Kurd, but he followed Mohammed.

We have very little knowledge of the beliefs of the Yezidis. Travellers do not appear to have considered it worth while to get exact information about them, and our accounts of their origin is very meagre. In the *London Quarterly Review* of October, 1869, there was an article by Emanuel Deutsch, which practically gives all that is known of this primitive religion. There are extracts from that article in Arthur Gilman's *Story of the Saracens*, and I think them worth paraphrasing:—

We can but guess at the state of Arabian belief in the earliest days, but from what broken light is shed by a few forlorn rays, we may conclude this, that they worshipped (to use that vague word), the "Hosts of Heaven." Others seemed to ascribe everything to Nature, and some worshipped stones and other fetishes; angels and demons and embodied ideas and ideals, formed part of pious consideration.

Two thousand years before Adam was created, according to the stories of the myth-makers, the Jinns (or Genii) were created, they were formed of pure fire unmingled with smoke. They moved from place to place, loved, married, had children, and died, just like creatures of clay do now. Some were good and some bad; and were divided into classes. Some haunted ruins, and markets and cross roads; some dwelt in rivers and oceans; and some in baths and wells; but their chief resort was a mysterious mountain named Kaf, which, in the imagination of the Arabs, was founded upon an immense emerald and encircled the world, so that the sun rose and went down behind it.

It was this emerald, they thought, that gave its azure tint to the sun's rays (and the sky); it surrounded the earth as a ring surrounds a finger, and it was connected in some way with the earthquakes which shook Arabia.

These Jinns rebelled and Allah sent against them legions of angels, more spiritual, being made of pure light. The Jinns were scattered to the islands and mountains, and out-of-the-way places. One principal Jinn was named Efreect, and another Azazil, or Iblis; the latter rebelled against Allah at the time of the creation of Adam, and became an evil demon corresponding to the Christian idea of Satan. Like Satan, he was proud, and was called the Peacock of the Angels.

The remainder of the population of Irak is made up of a few Jews, who are mostly very poor, and scattered members of other races who have travelled there in pursuit of trade or as refugees from other districts.

My conclusions: It appears to me probable that, long before Persian Sun-worship was superseded by Christianity and Moslemism, the people of the district believed in sorcery and evil spirits; and that there was an attempt to destroy that belief by making the chief spirit into a demon, by the primitive

Christian priests. That appears the natural explanation and evolutionary method of new faiths. In the history of the country, we find that the King of Abyssinia, then a Christian state, was appealed to to assist in suppressing the natives, by various rulers. I should like to know the exact form of worship practised by the Yezidi race. Only by actual visits to their ceremony could this information be obtained, for they have no written ritual, apparently. Everything, therefore, must be conveyed from one generation to another orally. I feel sure that when this knowledge is gained, it will shed a great light upon the early ideas of religious sects, and perhaps explain some of the more puzzling notions of present-day believers in supernaturalism.

ERNEST ANDERSON.

### More Truth Than Poetry.

#### Blazing New Paths.

If you are doing little things,  
Such things as anyone may do,  
The critics will not be inclined  
To cause disturbance in your mind  
By asking what is wrong with you.

Pursue an ordinary course,  
Repeat what often has been said,  
And men will let you plug away,  
And you will never have to pay  
The price it costs to be ahead.

If Caesar had been satisfied  
To travel in a common rut  
No scoffer ever would have tried  
To make him wince with wounded pride;  
He would have missed a nasty cut.

The man who dares to do or try  
To do what never has been done  
Must not expect to hear the praise  
Of those who cling to well-worn ways:  
There will be gantlets he must run.

The Newtons and the Fultons find  
That willing listeners are few;  
The Wrights may fly, but, even so,  
The doubters, seeing from below,  
Will not believe it can be true.

The crowd is quick to "see" the joke  
The clown repeats if it is trite;  
The old stuff goes, but he must not  
Expect to get a hand if what  
He has to say is new and bright.

Not till you earn the critics' blame  
Not till they speak of you with scorn,  
Shall you have any right to claim  
The hope that future men may name  
You fondly with the nobly born.

S. B. KISER, *The Detroit Times*.

### Mute.

As I move through the streets of the painted West,  
Or ramble down alleys that lead to my home,  
I carry the thought that is found in my quest;  
There are lips that are cruel,  
There are lips that are kind,  
But the lips that are kind are the lips I love best.

Though they speak not or move with no words for me,  
Some other is favoured to have their sweet smiles;  
But they without sound have shown this to me,  
There are lips that are cruel,  
There are lips that are kind,  
And the kind lips are those that shall set the world free.

WILLIAM REFTON.

### Acid Drops.

The only people who have no logical ground for complaint about the recent Communist trial are the Communists themselves. Men who openly proclaim their aim of establishing the dictatorship of a class, and who regard it as permissible, given the power, to suppress opinions which they regard as against the State, cannot reasonably complain if force is put into operation to suppress them. It is no more than an incident in a campaign, the conditions of which they have already agreed with. But everyone else will find serious grounds for uneasiness at such a trial taking place. It is quite useless saying that these men were not being tried for opinion, technically that may be so, but the whole conduct of the case, and the atmosphere surrounding it, makes that no more than a technical defence. They were being convicted partly for holding Communist opinions, and, it must be added, the Communists themselves were partly responsible for the creation of an atmosphere which made such a trial possible.

But we are quite unable to understand what is meant by calling the Communist organization illegal. It is not illegal, unless the British Constitution is quite done with, to advocate the abolition of the Monarchy, or of Capitalism, or of Parliamentary government, or of the Army, Navy, and Police force, and to agitate for the carrying on of affairs through the medium of voluntary associations. The only thing that does lay itself open to attack is a threatened breach of the peace, or a direct incitement to the Army, Navy, or Police to disobey orders. But in each case the prosecution must prove specific acts. It will not do to say that this is an illegal association, and anyone belonging to it is therefore open to attack. That is quite absurd. If an association is illegal every member of it is open to prosecution, and Judge Swift knows quite well that this could not be done. Specific acts must be proved. And asking certain of the defendants to sever association with the Communist Party, was quite absurd. That would not alter the programme of the party, and it would not prevent these men doing exactly what they were charged with doing, after they had formally left the party.

We are not in the least concerned with the political side of the question, and we have no sort of affection for Communism as preached by either Moscow, London, or Mussolini. Each is a denial of that genuine freedom of thought and speech which we regard as being vital to the genuine progress of society. But to say that certain opinions are dangerous to the well-being of the State, and therefore they must be suppressed, is to exalt into a golden rule the principle that has been used to justify persecution in all ages. Admittedly Society runs a risk in permitting all sorts of opinions to be proclaimed, but it runs much greater and graver risks in trying to suppress them. The only genuine protection against erroneous opinions is a policy of liberty and public education. The plea that certain teachings must be suppressed because they are dangerous is to appeal to the more ignorant, the more bigoted, and the least important sections of the community. Short of a policy of ruthless and complete extermination the whole lesson of history is that prosecutions such as that which has just taken place have the very opposite effect to that which it is intended to produce.

The trial was symptomatic of a growing tendency in politics, and elsewhere, to which we have called attention more than once. All over the world there has been a tremendous growth in the principle of mere authority. The war accentuated it, but other forces have also played their part. The political parties in the country lean more and more to the policy of drilling its members like so many soldiers—party discipline it is called—but the purpose is to rob the individual of

liberty of action. In industrial matters, workmen are drilled to obey orders in an unquestioning manner, and revolt is punished with as severe a penalty as it is possible to inflict. In Russia, the form of Communism there in power laughs at freedom of thought as a worn-out shibboleth. In Italy freedom of thought and speech is brutally suppressed, and there is now not a single independent newspaper left in the country. In England Communists and Fascists openly exalt the principle of force. Other countries offer illustrations to the same end. The Freethought party is the only one in this country that is prepared to stand for freedom of thought and expression, whether it agrees with the opinion expressed or not. And that is the only assertion of freedom that is worth anything. So we repeat we do not like to see people suffer for holding "dangerous opinions," because we have a suspicion that every opinion is dangerous to someone or to something, and the most dangerous opinion we know of is the one that it is justifiable to suppress an opinion because it is dangerous.

Mr. J. W. Woods writes: "The *Daily Chronicle*, in a leader entitled 'Moscow in the Dock,' says":—

If we are to indict particular persons through the channels of the ordinary law courts, the main charge against them should not be that they have held, or even preached certain damnable doctrines, but that they have been guilty of certain specific acts to the danger of the community.

One wonders, says Mr. Wood, if the editor of the *Daily Chronicle* would repeat this passage on the next blasphemy trial, or would his Christian conscience force him to forget it? We should feel inclined to wager that in that event his Christianity would get the upper hand.

What wonderful people there are in the world? The *Weekly Dispatch*, which is running a series of articles on "When I am Dead," publishes some letters from readers, and one is announced as from a "convinced Agnostic." In 1917 this convinced Agnostic was lying seriously ill in a Sheffield hospital. While lying there he saw a "vision of golden splendour," then he saw a "simple figure." "Christ had revealed himself to a simple soldier.....I saw very distinctly the mark of the nail through the hand, the head crowned with thorns." So this convinced Agnostic now knows all about it. It is a most convincing story.

Professor W. P. Patterson has been selected to deliver the current series of Gifford lectures, and we give a sample from bulk as reported in the *Glasgow Herald*. He said that even though we looked contemptuously at the design argument as presented in the *Bridgewater Treatises*, we were still left to marvel at the "stupendous wonder" of the marvellous adaptation of the environment to nourish and preserve the forms of life which existed. Quite so. We are all left marvelling—if we are good Christians, and live in hopes of becoming Gifford lecturers, at the wisdom which provided that death should come at the end of life instead of in the middle of it, that great rivers should always be made to flow near great towns, and that each time a child is born, "Providence" sees to it that a mother is thereabouts. Professor Patterson offers only the general truth, but that is too valuable not to be enforced by particular illustrations. That must be our apology for offering them.

We are always impressed with the profundity of our journalists. Thus the special correspondent of the *Evening Standard*, who was deputed to report the funeral of Queen Alexandra, was greatly impressed by the fall of snow during the passing of the procession. He asked, "How long ago was it since snow had fallen on such an occasion?" Seeing that Queens are buried every day in the week the coincidence is rather remarkable. But it was so remarkable, that the journalist went on to say that it had a touch of the miraculous. That settled it, and we suggest the following as part of the

instructions to newspaper men who have to attend royal funerals:—

If it snows—A miracle.

If it is sunny—Even King Sol came out to pay his last homage to the Royal corpse.

If it is dull—The sun veiled its face as though to express its joining in the grief of the people.

If it rains—The heavens joined in the tears of the multitude.

If it hails—The hail beat on the royal coffin as though it would recall to life the one who lay within.

If it is foggy—Nature robed itself as though to be in harmony with the gloom that oppressed a nation of mourners.

If it is very windy—The wind howled as though it were a soul in grief over the disaster that had overtaken us.

The guide could be continued through earthquakes, tidal waves, etc. But perhaps, after all, the journalists do not require these instructions. They probably have them already written up for the occasion.

Lord Hugh Cecil asks whether critics really believe that by beliefs based on legend and folk-lore it was possible to create anything like our Christian civilization. Lord Hugh was probably accommodating himself to the Christian Evidence meeting he was addressing, or he would have at once recognized the confused nature of the question. No one claims that civilization is based upon folk-lore and legend, but the doctrines of Christianity are certainly on all fours with the stories that are handed down as legends and which meet us in folk-lore.

In a sermon at Dover Bishop Russell Wakefield remarked:—

Without boasting, I think it may be said that the impress of our Lord has been stamped upon international and domestic policy. This may be tested by noting the attitude of what is far and away the most influential force in world affairs at the present time—the public press.....The Church will do well if she works in harmony with that agency which can best help in making statesmanship God-inspired.

There should be little difficulty in getting a strongly capitalized Church (with its special Lie Bureau for disseminating ecclesiastic fiction to work in harmony with a time-serving press. But whether this harmony will sound sweet to the ears of Progress—ah, that's a different story. Never mind, though, so long as it is "God-inspired!"

"In the controversy which has arisen," says the *Church Times*,

the favourite Nonconformist argument has been used that Council schools were not built to promote either a Church or a Nonconformist atmosphere, and therefore Church people have no right to demand anything different.

The Editor of the *Yorkshire Herald* answers the contention in replying in the following terms to a correspondent:—

The point of the whole trouble is that in the Council schools (built and paid for by Church and Nonconformist alike) only one form of religion is permitted by law. This form goes under the name of undenominationalism, which is acceptable to Nonconformists, but is not acceptable to Church people. Is that fair? It means that throughout the country Church people are being compelled to pay for a form of religious teaching which is not acceptable to them.

Is that fair? asks this purple-coloured Christian journalist of his green-coloured Christian opponents. Well, about as fair as one could expect from a Christian sect which sees nothing amiss in compelling Freethinkers, Jews, Mohammedans, and what not to pay for religious teaching unacceptable to them. But, then, fair play and Christianity never were bed-fellows.

From the *Schoolmaster* (November 27):—

There is a feeling of some unrest in the minds of certain teachers. They sense an ecclesiastical interest

in secondary schools which may result in diocesan syllabuses, diocesan inspection, and other official relations with Church authorities, which, so far, have not existed. They feel also that it is possible to have something which appears ecclesiastically better which is in reality educationally worse. There is, as Dr. Johnson tells us, such a thing as "the contortions of the sybil without the inspiration," and you may have an excellent syllabus and a disheartened and disillusioned teacher.

A good hit, but it would be better if the *Schoolmaster* would only draw the logical moral of this continuous manoeuvring of church and chapel. There will be no peace in the school until religious teaching is excluded.

Says a correspondent in a popular weekly: "There's no doubt the people are losing faith in the Church today; but not in Christianity, for true Christian principles, if accepted, will solve all problems." There's faith for you! A thimbleful would shift Snowdon with perfect ease. What are required, mark you, are only the true Christian principles—the other kind of Christian principles won't do. As, however, the various Christian nations have always had their problems and rarely seem to have effectively solved them (even in the age of faith when Christian principles were accepted—up to the neck!), the assumption is that distinguishing between the true and the false Christian principles is a devil of a job. That is the drawback of having to depend upon an inspired Book for guidance—it never appears to have inspired common-sense.

"Violence, revenge, exaggeration, general falsity," says the *Church Times*, "are the ingredients of cinema entertainments." That seems to us an excellent description of the ingredients of the Old Testament. It might also well serve for a summary of Christian history throughout the ages.

There is something more than a coincidence when Generals are allowed to say things about war in public that could not at one time be whispered in private. General Sir Ian Hamilton, in unveiling a war memorial in Old Ratcliff Highway, invited his listeners to look at the Royal Artillery Memorial at Hyde Park Corner, where they could see the women weeping. If they then came to the conclusion that they did not like war, they need not be ashamed to say so. We gather from this that the wheels of the war chariot, set going in no small part by the clergy, are now out of control.

The secret of starting war was easier than that of stopping it or preventing the cumulative consequences. We wish for General Hamilton a larger audience—an audience as big as that enjoyed by all the churches. When a man after living a long life turns on his profession we listen with both ears.

We may appreciate our liberty at home by comparing it with that enjoyed by others, say, in America. Mr. Poultney Bigelow in his book, *Seventy Summers*, gives us a little snapshot of that country where, on landing from England, the Goddess of Liberty may be seen trusting the scales with bandaged eyes.

As I write, a bottle of Canadian whisky reposes on a near-by shelf.....On this account I might be taken to jail. As owner of deadly weapons I may also be imprisoned. Also I'm a criminal in having some excellent editions of Rabelais, Voltaire, and Boccaccio.

We confess a liking for Mr. Bigelow's humour, for if he reads his book he will be safe from that terrible disease, Fundamentalitis.

Dr. R. T. Glover says, in dealing with criticisms recently passed upon the character of the present-day clergy, that it is great believers, and not great thinkers, that win converts. We are inclined to agree with him in this, at least so far as recent times are concerned.

For great thinkers are no longer in the Church to do the preaching, and if they were, their knowledge of some of the truth concerning Christianity, cannot but rob their preaching of much of its force. On the other hand, an ignorant preacher, with strong emotional powers, is best fitted to make the kind of appeal that the more ignorant section of the population, from whose ranks converts are drawn, appreciate. We agree that there is still opportunities to win converts if the preacher is emotional enough, and the hearers are ignorant enough. And no one who closely studies the type of Christian preacher who wins converts and the type of convert that is won will doubt that.

A witness in a case at Worksop Police Court the other day hesitated at taking the oath, and on being asked whether he believed in the Bible, replied in the affirmative, but added that the biggest of liars handled that Book. The chairman did not contradict this, but he was eventually persuaded to take the oath. The Chairman was, we take it, a Christian, otherwise he would have pointed out to the witness that he was entitled to refuse the oath, on religious, as well as on non-religious grounds. But one can seldom trust a Christian to play the game where his religion is concerned.

Quite a number of people have been writing quite a number of very common platitudes about marriage in the pages of the *Daily Express*. Most of them give us advice such as husband and wife should be gentle to each other, love each other, be patient with each other, and so on through all the commonplaces that every person knows, and the telling of which has never had any influence worth talking about on any marriage that was ever contracted. Miss Maude Royden contributes one on "Religious Differences," and what emerges from this article is the plain lesson that while differences in every other direction may exist without seriously disturbing the relations between husband and wife, if there are deep differences in religion, then, she says to those about to marry, at whatever cost to yourselves forbear. As usual, it is religion that is better calculated to promote ill-feeling between people than any other subject. Of course, Miss Royden does not say this in so many words, but it is the plain lesson of her article.

The daily and weekly newspapers appear to be making the most of religion just now, but up to the present not one has been discovered with the honesty or the courage to invite an expression of opinion from representative Freethinkers. The *Daily Mail* is the last to enter the lists with a series of articles by Mr. Harold Begbie, fugleman to the Salvation Army, on "The Religion of To-day." Mr. Begbie, in a preliminary article, cheers up his readers with the remark that the "average man, so far as I am able to judge, is by no means an Atheist." We can assure Mr. Begbie that the average man never was an Atheist; it requires just a little more than the average intelligence to become one. The average man subscribes to the opinions around him, goes to church, reads the *Daily Mail*, or some similar brain-racking publication, and becomes an easy victim to journalists whose chief aim is to tickle the ears of a badly educated public. But this is probably not new information to Mr. Begbie.

But this interest displayed in religion, and the articles appearing in the papers appears to us to open up fine opportunities for a Freethinker doing a little propagandist work. He can circulate a little literature; he can take an extra copy of the *Freethinker* and give it away, or he can secure a supply of specimen copies and distribute them. It will let many know that there is another view of religion than the one presented in the press, and the *Freethinker* is the only journal in Great Britain that gives it. There is at present a fine opportunity of advertising the *Freethinker* if our friends will only take advantage of it.

## "Freethinker" Endowment Trust.

THE purpose of this Trust is to acquire sufficient funds which, by investment, will produce an income of £400 annually, the capital remaining intact. It is an endowment secured by legal Trust Deed, administered by five Trustees, of whom the editor of the *Freethinker* is one. It means giving the *Freethinker* permanent financial security, and is thus a businesslike and sound scheme, which should commend itself to all supporters of the Cause. A full explanation of the Trust was given in the issue of the *Freethinker* for October 4, and any further information will be given to anyone interested. At least £8,000 will be required, but, considering the number of Freethinkers at home and abroad who value the *Freethinker* and its work, there should be no great difficulty in securing that sum. It should be enough to remind givers that every gift to this Trust equals an annual donation.

We are making progress towards the £4,000 which should certainly be got together in aid of this Fund by the end of the year. Then we shall have got over a good part of the way we have to travel before we cry "Enough." One or two rather useful suggestions whereby the sum required may be raised are to hand, but we leave them in abeyance for the moment. We have never tried to make the assistance given to the *Freethinker* a question of "self-denial," but we note a letter from "Atheist Cordwainer," who says that his postal order represents abstention from accustomed little luxuries for a fortnight. But he says every little mite counts, and he is pleased to do what he can to help the Cause.

With regard to the £50 promised if nineteen others are ready to subscribe a similar amount, we are pleased to say that this week we have a promise of another £50, making three in all. None of these are to be paid unless the whole twenty are forthcoming, so that we need another seventeen if the thousand is to be obtained. There are certainly seventeen who could subscribe that amount, and we again venture to suggest that the possibility of placing the *Freethinker* in a position of permanent security is a worthy object.

Previously acknowledged, £3,383 3s. A. B., £20; L. P., £2 2s.; J. H. Matthews, 2s. 6d.; S. H. Waite, £5; T. Dunbar, 5s.; "North Down" (2nd sub.), £1; "London Atheist," £1; W. E. Hickman, 10s.; J. Muir, 2s. 6d.; "The Atheist Cordwainer," 10s.; J. Robinson (2nd sub.), 5s.

Collected at Mr. Cohen's Lecture, at Stratford Town Hall: Mr. and Mrs. R. H. Rosetti, 5s.; Mr. Walter, 5s.; Mr. F. C. Warner, 10s.; Mr. J. Gallery, 2s. 6d.; Mr. and Mrs. Dixon, 5s.; "O.K.," 6d.; Mr. and Miss Allison, 2s. 6d.; Miss Ring, 1s. 3d.; Mr. W. Hicks, 2s.; Mr. E. Pankhurst, 1s.; Mr. H. Thurlow, 1s.; Miss Baker, 1s.; Mr. A. Warner, 2s.; Mr. F. G. Warner, 2s.; Mr. S. Warner, 1s.; Mr. W. Warner, 2s. 6d.; Mr. A. C. High, 2s. 6d.; Mr. H. Tansley, 1s.; Mr. and Mrs. Bliss, 5s.; Mrs. Quinton, 2s. 6d.; Mr. A. Hyman, 2s.; Mr. F. Perkins, 1s.; Mr. H. White, 10s.; Miss Winterborne, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Quinton, 2s. 3d.; Mr. Larkin, 10s.; Mr. A. Brooks, 2s.; Mr. Goldthorpe, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Bateman, 1s.; W. Scott, 5s.; "Anonymous," 1s.; Mr. C. J. Tacchi (Hong Kong), 5s.; Mr. J. Campbell, 2s.; Mr. Henry J. Kain, 5s.

Total, £3,420 6s. 6d.

Correction.—By an error the total of the Fund was given last week as £3,385 7s. 6d. The correct amount should have been £3,383 3s. The total has been corrected above.

Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the "*Freethinker* Endowment Trust," and crossed Midland Bank, Limited (Clerkenwell Branch). All letters should be addressed to the Editor, *Freethinker*, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## 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.

H. J. ADAMS.—Beyond seeing that a contributor's article is one that we consider suitable to our columns, we are not responsible for the opinions expressed. Personally, we have no objection whatever to simple tombstones, although we have no liking for public displays of grief. Genuine grief seeks privacy, not publicity.

CINE CERE.—Your letter enforces the truth that one aim of Freethought propaganda is to enable Christians to live honestly and speak truthfully. They can only do that when their environment is such that they can speak the truth about their religious beliefs without fear of consequences.

A. W. COLEMAN.—We shall deal with the matter of the article in the course of our "Views and Opinions." Thanks.

A. M.—We quite agree with you that a man may be as fanatical against Christianity as another is for it. Fanaticism is a quality that can be displayed in connection with any subject. On the other hand, it is well, when trying to correct this fault not to run into the other extreme of being impartial on the wrong side, and so finding excellencies in our opponent's case that are not there. Duty is many-sided, and in its conflicting claims one has to strike a balance as best one can. But to gain "economic security" before doing anything in the shape of propagandist work would mean with all but a very few doing nothing at all. Certainly the best work of the world has never been done on that line.

F. BUNTON.—Mr. Manson's *Salvation Army and the Public* was published by Messrs. Routledge & Co., at 6s. There was a cheap edition at 6d., but we do not know if either is now in print.

J. W. WOOD.—See "Acid Drops."

A. H. WAITE.—Thanks for contribution to Fund, also promise to contribute again if possible.

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

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

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

When the services of the National Secular Society in 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 62 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 "Midland Bank, Ltd., 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.

You never need think you can turn over any old falsehood without a terrible squirming and scattering of the horrid little population that dwells under it.—O. W. Holmes, "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table."

## Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen lectures to-day (December 6), at 6.30 p.m., in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester. There will doubtless be the usual good audience provided the weather manages to behave itself.

On Sunday next (December 13) Mr. Cohen will speak in the Town Hall, Birmingham. This large hall, one of the finest in the Midlands, takes a deal of filling, and, in addition to the usual advertising, we hope that Birmingham friends will do their best to make the meeting as widely known as possible. With the daily and weekly papers so busy discussing religion, it is as well to let those interested listen to a point of view they will only get from the Freethought platform.

Mr. George Bernard Shaw lectured the other day on the impossibilities of Freedom, and warned all whom it concerned that while under Socialism grown-up people must find their own religion, with children Socialism would be impossible unless every child is educated as a Communist, from which it would appear that Mr. Shaw rather favours the same kind of thing that is being done now, so long as the change is made to something in which he believes. And he warned everyone:—

If you think that a Socialist Government is going to let the schools alone in the name of religious freedom you are tremendously mistaken. The Socialist Government will say of the Bible, "This is literature, interesting from the artistic point of view, but not to be put into the hands of a child."

We wonder what the I.L.P. will think of that?

We rather like the heading of a leading article in the *Christian World*. It is "Selling the Pass," and is concerned with the action of the West Riding of Yorkshire Education Authority in arranging a deal with the Church schools. We like the expression, "Selling the Pass," because it so exactly expresses the people who first sold the pass on the Education question in 1870. We might have had Secular Education established then, but for the Nonconformists selling the pass and agreeing to a plan of religious instruction which went dead against every principle they had professed. But, naturally, an organ of Nonconformity does not like to remember this.

Mr. George Whitehead will lecture in the Co-operative Hall, Portland Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, to-day (December 6), at 7 o'clock. His subject is "Atheism and Christianity," and admission is free.

We are glad to learn from Leeds that Mr. Whitehead had a very good meeting there on Sunday last. The Branch is highly encouraged by the meeting, and is hopeful that all Freethinkers in Leeds will rally round the Branch in its efforts. The Secretary is Mrs. F. Newell, 13 Oxford Row, Park Lane.

The Dean of University College, Oxford, complains of the nature of cinema pictures. He says, "In the film world the wildest and weakest wickedness can always be undone, not by expiation, but by a hasty dénouement of tearful repentance in the last hundred feet or so of the reel." Well, but is that not part of the historical teaching of the Christian Church? The thief on the cross was saved in substantially the same manner as many a film villain. And with a public that has been fed for so long on the mechanical and instantaneous conversions of the mission-room, there seems no reason why it should jib at the sudden conversion of the film.

We noted at the time of its appearance Mr. F. J. Gould's syllabus of *Britain and her Commonwealth* as

a very useful compilation. It is a handy compendium for all engaged in any kind of instruction, and particularly teachers. There are a limited number of copies of this syllabus which Mr. Gould is ready to send free to all who wish for a copy. The syllabus extends to 64 pages, and is full of useful information.

## Jesus and Freethought.

I CANNOT help but wonder what is going to be the upshot of the discussion on "Jesus as a Freethinker." I am afraid that we have still many Freethinkers who cease to be rationalistic during such times as they are called upon to think of Jesus. By this I mean that such Freethinkers are for the time being incapable of dealing with a given subject—*i.e.* "Jesus"—in the same way that they would deal with any other subject.

Mention Jesus and their one desire is to turn him into a Freethinker; mention any other subject and they are prepared to examine it in the proper way, unless it is beyond their grasp, and then they admit it to be so.

In the *Freethinker* for October 25 Mr. George Bedborough asks, "Why should not Miss Rout call Jesus a Freethinker?" For the very simple reason that there is nothing to prove the Gospel Jesus was a Freethinker. Not only so, in order to make out her case Miss Rout has begged the chief question of the Jesus controversy. She has selected from the Gospels a few sayings which please her, attributed them to Jesus, concluded that Jesus must have been a Freethinker to have said such things, and thereby she has assumed the historicity of Jesus, in spite of that being the main point of attack in modern Freethought criticism of Christianity.

Miss Rout's method of building up a Jesus character, to fit in with her own ideas of what Jesus should have been, is an old one. It is what one might call the picture-block method and, if anyone wants an example of this way of producing a life of Jesus to suit one's own fancy, let him read Channing's discourses on the *Character of Christ*. It is a case of pick where you like, and make what you like, and, having been rather extensively adopted, it has produced some curious results.

Obviously no one should call Jesus a Freethinker when there is no satisfactory evidence that he ever lived, and when there is so much evidence that in varying aspects he was sun-god, vine- or vegetation-god, and phallic god.

Mr. Bedborough also asks, why if Jesus were a myth his alleged character should not be discussed by Miss Rout, just as she might discuss Hamlet? There is no reason why she should not indulge in this little performance, if she makes it clear that in discussing the character of Jesus she is dealing with a mythic character or, failing that, some product of her own imagination.

This is necessary because so many people still mistake Jesus for an historical person, while nobody who matters thinks of Shakespeare's Hamlet as other than a character in a play.

If, however, Miss Rout were to admit Jesus to have been a mythic god, her claim that he was a great Freethinker would be seen to be futile. All its implied force would disappear. It would be no use saying to a Christian opponent—look! your mythic Jesus was a Freethinker. One must leave out the word "mythic" before Jesus when dealing with Christians, or the argument from authority fails to work.

The attempt on the part of certain Freethinkers to bring Jesus into the Freethought movement is

only likely to confuse issues. It is better to treat Jesus as a mythic character until the Christians have proved his historicity. It is no use talking about Jesus as a Freethinker while nobody knows who and what he was, apart from the mythical interpretation. Even if he were historical there is nothing attributed to him in the whole of the Gospels that the Freethought movement is in need of, or that would enhance the movement.

Whether Mr. Bedborough is a Freethought humourist or not, I do not know, but in the *Freethinker*, October 25, he says of Jesus, "I am one of those who regard his history as unproven," and later on, "The fact that Jesus was crucified for blasphemy ought to be sufficient to warrant our calling him a Freethinker." Then comes the finishing touch, "I think Jesus himself was a mass of self-contradiction, which makes me almost think he must have existed."

Here, in a short letter, the existence of Jesus is treated as (1) unproven, (2) a fact, (3) and something which makes one almost think it must have been. If this is the outcome of reading the much esteemed Ingersoll's rhetoric about Jesus, then one is sorry to find Freethinkers who forget to be critical while reading Ingersoll.

The great orator could say, "Back of the theological shreds, rags, and patches hiding the real Christ, I see a genuine man," but that does not produce the "genuine man," nor did Ingersoll ever do so.

Such speaking or writing is no better than that of the Unitarian Channing, who spun cobwebs about the ideal Jesus; or of G. B. Shaw who, in the preface to *Androcles and the Lion*, revealed his great capacity for writing trash about Jesus.

The moral value of the Jesus myths can, of course, be discussed apart from any question of an objectively real central character, just as one might discuss any other myth in the light of ethics. Even the Freethought tendency of teachings attributed to a mythic character may be discussed, provided the god, demi-god, or hero of the myth is not turned into an historic man for the sake of authority.

This, however, is very different from making the assumption that because a few rather pleasing sayings have been attributed to Jesus he *must* have been an historically objective Freethinker, Proletarian Leader, or first-class Advertising Expert, as one may desire.

One wonders when we are to have a two or three volume *Life of Jesus: as the Great Bookie*. Surely some member of the betting and racing fraternity can undertake this. It will be as real as any other *Life of Jesus*.

Unfortunately it is hard to get the Freethinker who is anxious to back up his Freethought with the authority of the name Jesus to realize that if he selects certain so-called sayings of Jesus, as evidence of his Freethinking ethics, others have the right to quote a few other not very moral sayings which are attributed to him. Not, of course, for the purpose of proving Jesus to have been a bad man, but with the object of reminding the idealist worshipper of Jesus that immoral teachings have been circulated as part of the Jesus myths. If Cruden's *Concordance* is used for the purpose of turning the mythic Jesus into an historical moralist, surely one may use the *Bible Handbook* for the purpose of correcting the fallacy. Obviously, the Freethinker who accepts the mythical interpretation of the Gospel Jesus would be indulging in intellectual suicide if he set himself to prove that Jesus was a bad man.

As far as the Gospel data is concerned Jesus is only explainable as a god, with various aspects. His most constant status being that of a secondary saviour-god. Whether he is seen to be, as above

mentioned, the sun-god, the vine- or vegetation-god, or phallic god, all of which are frequently treated as different aspects of the same conception, his main line of business is that of the saviour-god.

Another point which still needs to be emphasized is the fact that if the historicity of someone named Jesus were proved up to the hilt, it would not seriously affect the mythic explanation of the Gospel Jesus. This latter is the only Jesus, however variously interpreted, that matters as far as Christian doctrine and history are concerned.

If you substitute some other merely natural Jesus in place of the supernatural Gospel Jesus, with the kaleidoscopic personality of a saviour-god, then you simply throw to one side the central figure of the discussion and avoid the main issue. Whereas the mythic interpretation reveals to some extent the old god as he was anciently worshipped, and helps to put Christianity in its proper place in the history of religion.

All the documentary evidence in the world will not alter the composite and fundamentally mythic character of the Gospel Jesus. Nor will the fact that some professing Christians take certain texts and proceed to build from them a portrait of an ideal or perfect man-Jesus. In fact, this latter process simply sets aside the god idea of Jesus and, on a sufficiently sparse residue of conceivably human actions and sayings, proceeds to new myth-making by working up, with the aid of the imagination, a character as devoid of historic verification as any member of the Greek mythology.

Evidently it is difficult to get even Freethinkers to realize this and, on top of the ideal Jesus, the darling of barley-sugar-stick Christianity—Unitarianism—we are treated to still another myth, by way of a Freethinking Jesus. Surely, a much less entertaining, if no less substantial, child of the imagination than Puck or Ariel.

If certain Freethinkers, as well as others, would only realize it, the discovery of a complete life of Jesus written in the most natural manner possible, would not alter the essentially mythical character of the Gospel Jesus one iota. It would simply mean the discovery of a different Jesus; and with him we have no concern until he is discovered.

One would like, of course, to be let into the secret of the mysterious method of finding the real Jesus behind all the myths of the Gospels. If such a work can actually be accomplished, it must be the outcome of one of the most wonderful of intellectual processes. Unfortunately, for those who are so anxious about Jesus, the only method with which we are as yet acquainted is the one, as mentioned above, of setting out with a preconceived portrait of what one thinks Jesus should have been like, and then selecting such texts from the Gospels as suit one's purpose of trying to prove the historicity of one's own-made Jesus. A rather curious historico-biographical process when indulged in by those who profess to believe in a divine revelation, which should give the life of Jesus, but not a much less curious one when adopted by those who carry on the search for truth.

So far no satisfactory interpretation of the Gospel Jesus has been arrived at by the old theological method of treating him as an actual god who came to earth and took on human form, or by the less orthodox habit of trying to trick him out as an ideal man, who preached a perfect message to his fellows. Both methods have led to unrestrained self-contradiction and confusion of thought. Surely the Freethinker may be expected to make some effort in the direction of a more enlightened interpretation of the subject in terms of the comparative mythology data which can be had even by the general reader. At any rate

there seems to be little doubt that until the Gospel Jesus and, indeed, the whole body of Christian doctrine and ritual come to be interpreted more generally in the light of comparative mythology, the stultifying influence of Christianity will act powerfully against any advance in our civilization. The average person has yet to be taught to see the Christian religion, in all its variations, as it appears in the general evolution of religion, and the work will not be helped by talking moonshine about a Freethought Jesus.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

### The Curate's Vade Mecum.

*From an Undiscovered Manuscript in Lambeth Palace.*

WHEN thou regrettest that thou art not as other men, recall thou to mind the thought that other men probably may be glad that it be so.

If thou be called in by some of the Faithful to tend the last moments of an avowed unbeliever, be thou mindful of the fact that thy flock expecteth thee to testify that the ungodly one recanteth of his past evilness, crying aloud for pardon.

Thou canst not perhaps work miracles, yet thou canst institute stunts that shall attract the multitude, and so weigh down in plentitude the bags of collection. And this shall be recorded against thee as a miracle.

If thou wouldst prevent certain of thy flock from back-sliding and apostasy, take thou to heart this truism: To the blind believer an equivocation is as satisfying as a truth.

Take a little wine for thy stomach's sake, said the Master. Let it not be partaken of, however, immediately previous to thy visits to the parishioners, lest thy character be assailed by the evil innuendo.

That thy belief shall not fall away from thee, peruse not the screeds of the sceptics, lest thou shouldst hear the voice of the Evil One murmuring, "Perhaps 'tis true."

When thou explaineth the tenets of our Faith, thou shouldst remind thyself that the Lord in His infinite wisdom, hath decreed that the young and the multitude in general shall be immeasurably credulous. *Verbum sapienti.*

If thy tongue be not ready with casuistry, dispute not publicly with the sceptics, lest thou expose thyself to the ribaldry of the mob [mobile vulgus]. Mayhap, though, thou (in thy indiscretion) mayest have engaged thyself in disputation with some infidel. Remember then that if thou canst not fruitfully answer the ungodly one's arguments, thou hast the privilege—Glory be!—of assailing his character, his motives, and even his person. For thus did the revered Fathers of thy Church at all times.

When thy vicar or thy bishop jokes, it is thy duty, if thou beest a wakeful man, to respond with the hearty "Ha! ha!" For such is the way of promotion.

Shouldst thou at times be of sad spirit at thy meagre emoluments and at receiving no call to preferment,

console thyself with the thought that in thy lowliness thou art mayhap nearer to the Master (him that lacked the whereupon to rest his head) than are thy superiors whom thou dost so wistfully regard.

Regret not the "winners" thou hast had to pass by because of thy cloth; but rather do thou so work upon the fears of the successful backers that their winnings shall be purified by entering the coffers of our holy Church.

If thou canst not wholly believe, remember thou then to assume the virtue though thou hast it not. For thy wife hath she not need of thy stipend that she may go forth abroad with all her parts covered bescemingly?

Sample ye not the sacred wine save at the accepted times. To be able to do otherwise is the privilege only of thy superior.

See to it diligently that thy flock loseth not their fear of the Flames. For when there goeth the dread of Hell-fire, there departeth also the power which the Church, with infinite understanding and wisdom, doth exercise over the people.

Discourage thou at all times, and to thy uttermost power, the playing of games upon the Sabbath, that thy pews may not stand untenanted. For if the coffers of thy church are empty they pay only in promises; and, as thou knowest full well, thy wife and other chattels of thy household cry aloud for sustenance.

In thy spare time diligently seek after signs of wickedness in them that wander arm-and-arm about the woodlands and parks of thy parish. And in this thy duty thou shalt need to develop a goodly degree of scoutcraft, so that thou mayest escape the glances of the sinning ones; for the eye of the guilty is everywhere.

Watch ye well the collecting-boxes at the doors of thy church. For thy verger, perchance, may be tempted of the Evil One and contrive an implement which undoeth the locks. And thus wilt thou be robbed of thy rightful perquisite.

In moving amongst thy flock thou wilt encounter the gossip and the backbiter, and thou mayest feel it to be thy duty to administer rebukes. If, however, it so fall that the evil speakers, hath that which the vulgar style "the needful," thou art in thy rebuking called upon to exercise tact of the most infinite quality, lest thou offendest them that provide thy Church with the necessary sinews of war for fighting the forces of evil and for providing thee with raiment and refection.

When thou standest up in the pulpit, lay about thee violently upon the evils of the times, especially the dress and demeanour of the damsels—how their nakedness lureth the eye of thy young men. Then shall the Press echo thy utterances so that the ears of thy bishop shall prick up and he be so inclined towards thee as to call thee to preferment; whereupon thy females shall jump for joy at thy good fortune, and run to tell thy kindred and make haste to pack.

Thou art enjoined to turn the other cheek to him that smiteth the one, yet it shall not be set against thee as a sin that thou dost (if he should be smaller than thyself) stretch forth lustily thy fist against the countenance of the infidel who insulteth thy creed—thou dost but reveal thy righteous indignation. For such is the way of muscular Christianity

Seek not to further enlarge thy understanding by recourse to the pagan philosophers; for doubt ever lurketh at the heels of knowledge—mark thee well how fell Adam—and doubt is the parent of infidelity.

D. P. STICKELLS.

## Correspondence.

### WAS JESUS A FREETHINKER?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I really envy Mr. Bedborough's marvellous facility for writing all round a subject without touching the only points that matter. What I want, with the majority of your readers, is a clear exposition from the teachings of Jesus that he was a genuine Freethinker as we understand the term. The opinions of Miss Rout or Ingersoll or anybody else are mere opinions, and it may be noted here, once for all, *nowhere* (as far as I have read him) does Ingersoll call Jesus a Freethinker. Blasphemer and infidel, yes; but not a Freethinker. Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, Luther, Calvin, Mrs. Eddy, Madame Blavatsky, and hundreds of others were all blasphemers and infidels, and many of them were hated and persecuted by priests and even tortured and burnt, but they were *not* Freethinkers. Ingersoll used these terms loosely and did not mean by them what we mean, and Mr. Bedborough knows this perfectly well, and therefore his "deduction" that a man "persecuted by all the priests" and put to death by them, necessarily makes him a Freethinker, is nonsense.

Mr. Bedborough, however, tells us that the teachings of Christ have "filled the world with intolerable evil," and he also gives us Ingersoll's "evidence"—the cry of Jesus on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" That is, a man whose teachings are thoroughly evil and who appeals to God in his last moments is a Freethinker! Could anything be funnier?

Let us put it in another way. Jesus believed in myth and miracle, in ghosts and goblins, in spooks and spirits, in devils and demons, in witches and wizards, in heavenly mansions and a volcanic hell, he believed not only in Jehovah but also that he was the son of Jehovah and the Messiah. Therefore, says Mr. Bedborough, in a triumphant peroration, "we need not boggle at calling Jesus a Freethinker!"

Well, one gets strange "deductions" in this strange world, but as I have said before, such logic is beyond me. I leave it to readers to boggle or not, as they like. In *About the Holy Bible*, Ingersoll neither minces matters nor uses such terms as "blasphemer" and "infidel" loosely. He shows his supreme contempt for the teaching of Jesus, and that was why I quoted him. And I trust that this little controversy will, if nothing else, lead to the truth.

H. CUTNER.

### PRIESTS OF MEDICINE.

SIR,—The letter of your correspondent, Harold Hughes, is an example that shows the medical priests are as tyrannical as the priests of any religion. But I am not satisfied with the demand he makes for what is called medical freedom, because vaccination can be proved to be a brutal and cowardly crime, and, like Christianity, one of the greatest curses ever inflicted on the world. I should not ask to make the latter a criminal offence, however, because you can't apply ordinary law to religious beliefs. But the evidence that vaccination is nothing but an imposture is overwhelming, and is of such a nature that it could be brought into any ordinary law court with convincing effect on most juries if presented by able counsel for and against. Medical freedom, if it could be obtained, would destroy it effectively enough, but you see by what your correspondent writes about the Railway Orphanage, Derby, and there are many other examples that the opposition is too strong to the obtaining of such freedom.

A. J. MARRIOT.

### WHAT IS A FREETHINKER?

SIR,—Without impertinence may I suggest if the main term "Freethinker" were defined it would be possible to settle the discussion on Jesus Christ? Literally, to "think freely." To do this the mind must be quite free from any dogma which obviously constricts the mind. But Jesus Christ believed in the supernatural, therefore his could not be a free mind. If the fact of opposition to any established religious system is to be taken as the standard of a Freethinker, then every fanatic is such, from Arius to the present Russellites or "Bible students' association." But Freethinking implies a completely sceptical mind, and such is the negation, or opposite, of the believing religious mind. Thus Freethinking and Freethinkers are properly understood to be anti-religious.

DEMEA.

### Of Course We Are "Intolerant."

#### We All Like Ghosts and Hate Geometry.

THE learned Dr. Livingston Ferrand, President of Cornell University, is distressed by the "intolerance" in this country.

He says it is "almost incomprehensible." But it isn't incomprehensible, it's as plain as day. We like our old, easy, superstitious lines of thought. We hate new ideas and exact knowledge.

When you see a dog on the stage, or in the circus, walking on his hind legs, you know that, as soon as possible, the dog will get down on all fours. He has only recently learned to walk on his hind legs, it's a painful operation, and he stops it as soon as his master, with the whip, turns his back.

Thinking, to human beings, is what walking on its hind legs is to a dog.

We have only recently *learned* to think. It's a painful operation, and we stop thinking when we can.

You can interest 999 out of 1,000 Americans by telling them a ghost story, or something about mind reading, or how a spirit came back from spirit land wrapped in sticky ectoplasm. To that they will listen patiently.

Certain reverend clergymen will even tell you "there may be something" in spiritualism; doubtless, demons adopt that method of deceiving poor human beings.

Ghosts, spirits, ectoplasm, fortune telling, all such things appeal to us. For with such things we are at ease, like the dog standing on four legs.

Change the subject from ghosts, to the fact that the sum of the angles of any triangle is equal to two right angles, and you lose half your audience. You lose the other half if you quote Herbert Spencer's wonderfully compact and clear definition of evolution, which runs as follows:—

Evolution is an integration of matter and a concomitant dissipation of motion, during which the matter passes from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity, and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation.

In addition to intolerance, we have here the mob spirit. It is as powerful as it was 50,000 years ago, when our long-toothed ancestors of one breed hunted down a pack of some other breed. Mob hatred is as powerful as it is in the North woods when a pack of wolves hunt together.

Professor Shaler, late Harvard Professor of Geology, shows that in his book, on *The Mob*.

Professor Shaler says, we don't guarantee it, mind you, that the mob spirit could instantly be developed even in a group of clergymen, and send them out determined to lynch somebody.

It is the mob spirit that causes men to be burned alive occasionally.

It is the same mob spirit that breeds intolerance. For the mob hates any opposition to its will.

Take an ugly bulldog, try to make him stand on his hind legs, and he will bite you. You are forcing him to do something unusual.

Take a thoroughly ignorant American, try to make him think along new lines, and if he has the power

and the courage, he also will bite you. When you make him think you are making him do something unpleasant. It isn't really intolerance, Dr. Ferrand, it is just mental laziness.—*The Detroit Times.*

### National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON NOVEMBER 26.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Clifton, Corrigan, Moss, Quinton, Rosetti, and Samuel, Mrs. Quinton, and Miss Kough, who reported the Secretary's absence through indisposition, for which general regret was expressed.

Minutes of last meeting were read and confirmed.

The monthly cash statement was presented and adopted.

New members were received for Ashton-under-Lyne and Plymouth Branches and the Parent Society.

Correspondence received and dealt with from Birmingham, Plymouth, and Swansea Branches, and in response to applications from Bolton, Nelson, and Ashton-under-Lyne for a short visit from Mr. Whitehead for indoor meetings, it was reported that a visit had been arranged for these towns, including a Sunday meeting at Leeds. The action was approved.

Draft circulars re motions remitted from the Conference were received, approved, and ordered to be sent out.

Mr. Cohen was thanked for his offer to devote a certain portion of the *Freethinker* in the New Year to N.S.S. objects.

Arrangements for the Social on December 8 were reported as complete, and the meeting closed.

E. M. VANCE,  
General Secretary.

### North London Branch N.S.S.

Mr. A. Dard was unable to be present on Sunday, but in his stead, Mr. G. F. Malik, of the Ahmadia movement, ably opposed Mr. Ratcliffe in a debate on the "Existence of God," from the theistic point of view. No fresh arguments were advanced, but the opposition was conducted in a courteous and good-tempered manner, which might well recommend itself to some of our Christian opponents. Mr. Malik, however, completely failed to answer Mr. Ratcliffe's criticisms. Tonight, Dr. C. V. Drysdale addresses us as a representative of the Eugenics' Education Society. Dr. Drysdale is an old friend of ours, and we hope that there will be a good rally of North London Saints to welcome him. The subject is "Human Heredity in Everyday Life."—K. B. K.

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

### 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 postcard.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Stanley Hall, Hallam Street, Great Portland Street, W.): 8, Mr. E. C. Saphin, "The Virgin Mary." Illustrated with Lantern views.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Dr. C. V. Drysdale, "Human Heredity in Everyday Life."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, Middle Floor, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham): 7, a Social.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, R. Dimsdale Stocker, "John Masfield—the Poet."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, Right Hon. J. M. Robertson, "The Religion of Charles Lamb."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Small Co-operative Hall, Portland Street): 7, Mr. George Whitehead, "Atheism versus Christianity."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Brassworkers' Hall, 70 Lionel Street): 7, Mr. O. Melton, "Will Superman Evolve?" (Questions and discussion cordially invited. (Collection.)

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. Fred Mann will lead in a discussion on "Materialism." (Silver Collection.)

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Trades' Hall, Upper Fountain Street): 7.15, Mr. J. T. Ashurst, "Freethought and the Church." Questions and discussion invited.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "God and Evolution."

DECEMBER DROPS no weak, relenting tear for our fond summer. And, in fact, tears are quite unnecessary. You can be just as smart and comfortable in December as in June, if loyalty and wisdom prompt your being clothed by your own journal's supporters. Write today for any of the following:—*Gents' A to H Book, suits from 56s.; Gents' I to N Book, suits from 99s.; Gents' Latest Overcoat Book, prices from 48s.; or Ladies' Latest Fashion and Pattern Book, costumes from 60s., coats from 48s.*—MACCONNELL & MABZ, New Street, Bakewell, Derbyshire.

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