

# The FREETHINKER

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### Materialism in History.

The consideration of Materialism falls under two heads. First, there is its historical significance; second, its scientific meaning. It is not easy to separate the two phases, but it is advisable to take the historical aspect first, because that will help us to understand better what it is that Materialism has always stood for. Besides, the logical order is not always the historical one, for it may be only after a considerable time that ideas are arranged in the order to which they logically belong. Nor is it always safe to go to dictionaries for the meaning of leading words. Words are, so to speak, functions of thought, and it is in their evolution that we are most likely to find their real significance. In this case the primary meaning of Materialism is to be found in one of the oldest and most important lines of cleavage in the intellectual history of mankind—the separation of Naturalism from Supernaturalism. Between these two there is no logical middle term, although there have been endless attempts to combine them. But the cleavage is always there. The Naturalistic view gives the faint beginnings of what later becomes science, and it gave the first definite challenge to an all-governing Supernaturalism. At the end of nearly three thousand years this opposition is still with us. The fight for the interpretation of nature still lies between the naturalist and the supernaturalist. It is true that no one to-day gives complete adherence to Supernaturalism. The most confirmed supernaturalist will admit that within limits the naturalistic view is quite sound, but under the guise of mysticism and pseudo-philosophising a diluted Supernaturalism prevails to a very considerable extent. Still these two represent the logical extremes of thought, and it is between them that the essential battle is waged. All else are affairs of outposts. And in this warfare the one constant feature has been the controversy over what is known as Materialism.

### Man and His Illusions.

“Materialism,” says Lange, in the opening of his classic *History of Materialism*, “is as old as philo-

sophy, but not older.” That was an apt reminder to those who concern themselves less with fundamentals than with superficialities. One might put it in another way, and say that if we take philosophy to stand for either organized and systematic knowledge, or the search for a rational principle of unity, then Materialism stands as an indispensable condition of genuinely scientific thinking. The mental life of humanity begins in a world of illusion. The stars, so far away that it takes years for a ray of light to reach us from some of them, are almost within grasping distance. The earth is certainly flat. Dreams are the part of realities, and realities take on the monstrosity of a nightmare. The simple appears very complex, and the complex extremely simple. Caprice appears to govern where later knowledge shows constancy to be the rule. Words take the place of things, and things have no apparent relation to each other. If the world had been created by a deity whose deliberate purpose it was to deceive and confuse man, the situation could not have been better devised. For long ages, so far as men thought about things, their thoughts were radically false. It has been the age-long task of man to release himself from the control of the cloud of gods and ghosts with which early thought peopled the world. In such circumstances the condition of human progress was to gain deliverance from the rule of the gods. Until that power was broken nothing could be done.

### A Starting Point.

It is to the credit of ancient Greece that the first step—so far as we have any reliable records—was taken in that country. A great deal of knowledge existed among other peoples, notably the Egyptians and the Babylonians, but, as Burnett makes plain in his *Early Greek Philosophy*, there is a very substantial difference between the acquisition of knowledge concerning the existence of certain groups of facts and a truly scientific conception of natural processes. It is true that one cannot acquire the scientific conception without knowing certain facts and their relations to other facts, but the mere collection of such no more makes a man a scientific thinker than a collection of pictures by a Chicago meat packer will suffice to make him a specialist in art. The peculiar and valuable contribution of the Greeks to the intellectual development of man is that from the dawn of Greek philosophy Thales, Anaximenes, Heraclitus, and others were searching for the “law” of the change that they recognized as going on everywhere around them. Their great principle was, again to quote Burnett, that nothing comes into being out of nothing, and nothing passes away into nothing. And if all things changed, it followed that there was nothing stable in the particular forms of existence around them. The constant, eternal thing was the original substance that gave rise to all these changes. What was this substance? Various answers were given to this question. It was air, water, fire, space, etc. But whatever the answer the one thing is clear

through them all. The search was for some principle of existence that would explain the phenomenal universe without the aid of the gods. It was a direct attack upon the prevailing supernaturalism.

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#### A Pioneer in Materialism.

A most important step in the history of speculative ideas was taken by Democritus. He is said to have taken his leading ideas from Leucippus, but there is no mistaking either the power or the originality of his intellect. He stands as one of the leading scientific thinkers of antiquity, and deserves a place amongst those of all time. Nothing exists, he said, but atoms, and the movements of atoms. Nothing comes from nothing, and nothing that is can be destroyed. All we see is due to the changes in the number and combination of atoms. Such things as sweetness and bitterness, colour, warmth, etc., exist only as opinion, or as a modern would say, they are sensations. But there is nothing that comes by chance, all happens by necessity. And it was his search, as in the case of the others mentioned, to discover the "laws" of the constant changes everywhere proceeding. It must be pointed out that Democritus only allowed for one kind of atom. The science of chemistry was unborn, and he had no idea of the some eighty different kinds of elements catalogued by modern science. But that was a matter of detail, as also was the fact of his hitting on the atom of matter as the ultimate of existence. The essence of the position of this father of Materialism was the conception of a primitive existence out of which all things came and into which all things went. There was nothing left to chance, and there was nothing for the gods to do. He saw that the causes of phenomena must be found in the existing forces of nature, and whatever criticism might be passed upon the form of his teaching the fundamental matter was there, and his speculations must be regarded as the most fruitful ever made by a single individual in the whole history of science.

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#### Materialism and the Gods.

Once enunciated these principles could not be completely ignored. Henceforth they remained a power to be reckoned with, and the hundreds of times Materialism has been slain, only to be revived with greater strength than ever is eloquent to the impossibility of its destruction. Epicurus gave the teachings of Democritus greater literary expression and applied them to ethics. Lucretius, in one of the most remarkable pieces of literature that antiquity has bequeathed to us, worked out a complete system from which the supernatural is fiercely excluded. His picture of human life

Sprawling in the mire in foul estate,  
A cowering thing without the strength to rise,  
Held down by fell religion's heavy weight—  
Religion scowling downward from the skies  
With hideous head and vigilant eyes of hate,

is a sufficient indication of the trend of his thought. His main object in writing was to relieve men of the terrors inspired by religion, and he did this by marshalling an array of arguments to prove that nature did all things of itself and without the aid of the gods, even though popular ignorance thought otherwise. Like other forms of scientific thought the Materialism of antiquity was overlaid by the return to the more primitive superstitions that set in with the triumph of Christianity. Materialism suffered an eclipse, and Spiritualism was in power. And the barrenness of the latter was never more clearly indicated than it was during the one period in the history of civilized Europe in which it reigned supreme.

#### A World Without God.

Our main point in dealing with the early Materialists is not to champion the accuracy of their statements, so much as to make clear the principles for which they stood, and the governing thought in their minds. Their aim was to establish what has come in our days to be known as the Mechanistic principle of interpretation, the idea that given the existing forces of the universe all else followed as a process of natural causation. It was the principle of Determinism applied to the universe as a whole. The fact that Democritus took the "stuff" of the universe as atoms of matter, must not be allowed to hide this deeper truth. At every stage we may check our conception of "matter" in the light of existing knowledge without disturbing the main principle. In substance, Democritus said, "Give me existence and I will build a world," and that is exactly what sound science has been repeating at every stage of its being. It makes no difference to point out that we know nothing of "matter in itself." (Later we shall have to point out exactly what is or ought to be meant by these terms. But at present I want to emphasize the fact that the Materialism of Democritus was just one of the phases in the long fight between Naturalism and Supernaturalism, and that its essential principle is that of taking all the changes in the world, physical, chemical, biological, psychological, with all their subordinate phases, as so many transformations of one primitive substance.) Our changed conception of the nature of the atom or of "matter" does not affect Materialism in the least. The one thing that would destroy the materialistic principle would be the necessity for bringing in a controlling or directing intelligence at any part of the process. And against that we have the whole history of science. Science has been able to develop only in proportion as it has worked with the principle of Materialism as the guiding conception of its efforts. The essential issue is whether it is possible, or whether it is likely to be ever possible to account for natural phenomena—including mental phenomena—in terms of the composition of natural forces. That is the principle for which Materialism has always stood. By that it stands or falls.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be Continued.)

### Christian Assurance, or Modernism—Which?

THERE lie on my table, staring me in the face, two small documents which are in complete contrast the one with the other, and both of which cannot possibly be true. The one is a report in the *Northern Whig* of December 28, of an address, entitled "Christian Assurance," delivered by the Rev. W. P. Nicholson, before a large audience, in the Y.M.C.A. Hall, Wellington Place, Belfast. The other is an article on "Modernism in the Church," by the Very Rev. W. R. Inge, Dean of St. Paul's, which appeared in the *Morning Post* for December 24. Who the Rev. Mr. Nicholson is I neither know nor care, my sole concern being with what he said at a largely attended meeting. In recent reviews in the *Times Literary Supplement* and in the *Nation* it was positively stated that the Freethinker of to-day "spends much of his strength in killing things already moribund." Indeed, Mr. Gilbert Thomas went so far as to assert that "it is characteristic of the group of Rationalists to which Archer belonged that they seem always to be quarrelling with the mentality of

fifty years ago, as if it were still the prevailing mentality of to-day, and that it is this fact which gives to their writings an air of pathetic fadedness and futility." Now, while it is perfectly true that, as the result of the spread of scientific knowledge, a new religious mentality is slowly creeping into being, especially in the Anglican Church, the fact remains that the prevailing mentality is still that of the Victorian age and before. Can it be honestly maintained that the orthodoxy of the Catholic Church, which is the largest church in the world, has undergone any serious modification during the last two or three hundred years? And is not the Victorian Christianity still the ruling factor in the Church of England? Are not the majority of its bishops as loyal to the Thirty-Nine Articles to-day as they ever were? At any rate, pulpits and platforms still ring with the old party shibboleths that were so popular a few generations ago. Those hackneyed phrases of long ago were repeated with great unction by Mr. Nicholson in his Belfast speech. The address was given in connection with the Faith Mission Christmas Conference, and was really a protest against modern knowledge and culture. It was a plea for what the speaker called a post-Pentecostal experience, that is, an experience of being saved by faith in the risen Christ.

The address was extremely silly, and the speaker rough-tongued, ignorant, coarse, and stupid, who had not a good word to say for anybody who differed from himself. All who refused to accept the old orthodoxy were to be bundled off into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. The same Gospel is being preached, in a more refined language, by such men as Bishop Gore and scores of other clergymen whose sermons are published week by week in the *Church Times*. The only conclusion to which it is possible to come is that Victorian Christianity is neither dead nor moribund, and that to attack it is not by any means to waste our energy. Mr. Nicholson closed his address in the following words:

If they had made up their minds not to go in for the post-Pentecostal experience they would become a reproach to Christ, and bring shame upon his name, and disgrace and dishonour upon his Church. If that was the kind of experience they had been living they need not continue it. Christ could free them from all that nonsense and rubbish, and they could abandon themselves to his love.

In these columns nothing is ever opposed unless it is held and proclaimed as the truth of God at the present time, and the religious books herein reviewed and criticized are products of the twentieth century. The views somewhat crudely expressed by Mr. Nicholson are held by the generality of English-speaking preachers, especially in America, and it is on this score alone that we attack them when enunciated by any distinguished representative, such as Bishop Gore or the Bishop of Gloucester.

I now approach Dean Inge's *Morning Post* article, which is said to be "a plea for a recognition of the new knowledge." The article is really a review of a little book called *Modernism as a Working Faith*, by Mr. W. M. Pryke, a Suffolk rector. Mr. Pryke "pleads earnestly for a recognition of the new knowledge in the pulpit as well as in the study, by the man in the street as well as by the scholar." The Dean says of the author:—

He begins by quoting a rather unworthy jest by the Vice-Principal of a Theological College, that "we have not yet met a Modernist kitchen-maid," which may be matched with another dictum quoted later on, by an Anglo-Catholic teacher in one of our Universities: "I am not sure that I want the

ordinary man to think." Mr. Pryke has no difficulty in showing that a Church which deliberately appeals to ignorance and discourages thought must lose the respect of all classes in an age like our own, and cannot expect to recover the influence which it has already partially lost. Perhaps nothing arouses more indignation in the minds of honest men than the policy which is often advocated: "Get hold of the children, and all will be well."

The new knowledge is already with us, and it offers an interpretation of the universe which is wholly irreconcilable with that authorised by the Bible and the orthodox Church. The question is can the Church honestly absorb the new knowledge and still retain the belief in its own supernatural origin and nature? The Dean himself says:—

A religion must remain true to its type; and the type of Christianity is not a doctrine of pure mysticism or personal inspiration, but an historical faith, having its roots in a Divine incarnation at a definite time and place. Mr. Pryke admits this, and does not plead for undogmatic Christianity, since "dogma is only an attempted formulation of the permanent significance of Jesus Christ." But perhaps he does not quite realize how many there still are among church-goers for whom the idea of miracle forms an indispensable bridge between the earthly and the heavenly, between the seen and the unseen world.

It has been bluntly said that Modernism is true, but does not work, while Orthodoxy (or Catholicism) works, but is not true. There are some, even among philosophers, who tell us that if a belief works, we need not ask whether it is true, since we have no standard of truth except whether it works or refuses to work. This argument, which in philosophy is called pragmatism, is often used by critics whose conclusions are much more subversive than those of the Liberal theologian.

Just here the question naturally arises, does Dean Inge really believe in "a Divine incarnation at a definite time and place"? If he does, on what ground does he declare that the story of the Virgin Birth "must share the uncertainty which hangs over other strange and unsupported narratives"? If in the beginning the Word was with God, and in some mysterious way was God, by what conceivable means did he become flesh at a definite time and place, and dwell among men as one of them? If God ever did become incarnate, he must have done so by some such act as the one related in the Gospels. But if the Dean does not believe in a Divine Incarnation by what right is he an ordained minister of the Anglican Church, whose creed includes the doctrine of the Virgin Birth?

What does the Dean mean by a working faith? Can he conscientiously affirm that Christianity has been and is a working faith? Can he proudly enumerate its achievements, and claim them as convincing evidences of its supernatural power? It is all very well to remind his fellow Liberals that "the origins of Christianity are covered by thick clouds," and to warn them that "a working faith is too precious a possession to be lightly surrendered"; but he does not even attempt to show what this working faith has ever accomplished for the good of the world. Indeed, he has on more than one occasion hinted at the fact that up to the present it has not been a glowing, triumphant success. It was in consequence of his lugubrious outlook on life that he was dubbed the "Doleful Dean." Everywhere he discerned inescapable signs of the lamentable failure of the Churches, and since they are the custodians of the so-called working faith, their stupendous inefficiency signifies that the faith lacks the transcendent power generally ascribed to it. In

other words, the history of Christianity presents the most cogent argument for its purely natural or human origin. Not only it has done but very little good at any period, but it is also demonstrated beyond all possible doubt that it has been the instrument of incalculable evil. Humanism it has always denounced as a diabolical scheme, and whenever any tendency towards it was manifested it was put down with vigorous zeal. Only the disappearance of supernatural religion will avail to give Humanism its proper innings.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Priestridden England.

People swallow falsehood as a cat laps milk.—G. W. Foote.

This mystery of vending spiritual gifts is nothing but a trade.—Jonathan Swift.

More life and fuller that we want.—Tennyson.

CLERICAL control of education is seen clearly in the innocence concerning Priestcraft and its ways displayed by the average citizen. Should you ask Mr. Everyman if this is a priestridden country, he will deny it with many-coloured emphasis. He can see that Ireland is controlled by priests; he is quite emphatic that Spain is in a similar plight. In France and Italy the men in petticoats have to be reckoned with seriously. In England, however, the men who wear dog-collars are regarded as being perfectly harmless. But is this really so?

To answer the question is to expose the filmy-eyed innocence of Mr. Everyman. The fact is that this country of ours is priestridden. The priests here are not so blatant and noisy as those in Ireland, but they are here, and they are very much at home. Quite comfortable, too! There are fifty thousand of them; half belonging to the Anglican Church, and the remainder spread among the various Free Churches, ranging from the Roman Catholic Church at one end to the Unitarians at the other. Do not be misled by mere words. The so-called ministers of the Free Churches are just as much priests as the petticoated clergy of the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches. For, as Milton said many years ago, "Presbyter is but priest writ large." Whenever the vital interests of Priestcraft are at stake, they are all together in the ranks of the Black Army, and their unanimity is wonderful.

The Anglican Church is the most wealthy, and therefore the most powerful. It possesses millions of money, which is safeguarded by Parliament, and controlled by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, whose staff is as discreet as that of the house of Rothschild, and quite as businesslike. Fortunately, what Parliament makes it can also unmake, and some day these millions will be used for more honest purposes than promoting Superstition and safeguarding Royalty. Meanwhile, this powerful Church controls education, influences politics, and everywhere hinders progress. It staffs the universities and public schools, and, with the help of the so-called Free Churches, controls education. Let there be no mistake concerning this vital matter. The whole curriculum of the schools, public and national, is arranged for the special purpose of keeping Superstition in the schools, and in the minds of the rising generation. For instance, the children are taught to believe in a god, so that when they grow up they shall treat the god's representatives with respect. The children are also taught that existing institutions are of divine origin, so that when they grow up and vote they shall support the present régime. The priests are clever, too, in guarding their inter-

ests. The children of what are called the upper classes are roped into the Christian fold just as effectively as those of the working classes. If there were no Freethought Party the priests would have the country in the hollow of their greedy hands.

This is no idle statement. Legislation is controlled almost as effectively as education. The Anglican Church has no less than forty seats in the House of Lords, and this is nearly always sufficient to carry out their wishes in a House notoriously ill-attended. In the House of Commons there are no lawn-sleeved bishops, but there are plenty of clerical catspaws whose interest it is to snatch the chestnuts from the fire for their insatiable employer. The pages of Hansard's *Parliamentary Register* show only too well how the clerical campaign has been conducted, and how progressive measures have been mutilated and rejected for generations.

Priests are astute and far more clever than their dupes imagine. Recall the grave crisis of the Great War. What did these priests do? Remember eight millions of men were forced or cajoled into uniforms for the purpose of fighting. The priests, of whom a large proportion were of military age and in the prime of life, were exempted from service. In addition, able-bodied priests were permitted to act as army chaplains at officers' pay. All know the rest of the story, the compulsory Church parades, the interminable services at the back of the war fronts, and the tons of tracts which the troops lighted their cigarettes with. These ministers of the Prince of Peace blessed regimental flags, christened battle-ships, forgot the Ten Commandments, ignored the Sermon on the Mount, but they controlled the adult troops as they had done the children in the schools. It was awful hypocrisy, it was the last word in dishonesty, but it was magnificent business, from their dirty point of view.

These same priests are trying, and succeeding, in "nobbling" the Labour Movement. It is no use in pretending otherwise. The old Radicals, wise in their generation, knew who were their enemies, and were staunch to their friends. Labourites are very lukewarm towards Freethought, and display no more hostility towards Priestcraft than Sunday school children, which so many of them, doubtless, were. No one hears a whisper nowadays concerning the disestablishment and disendowment of the State Church, two planks in the old Radical platform, but one hears a lot of Labour leaders preaching at Pleasant Sunday Afternoon meetings, and of the sympathy of the philanthropic clergy. Just as if half a dozen disgruntled curates represented adequately the attitude of the fifty thousand priests of this country towards any question whatsoever. If it were not the merest parlour-game, their own vicars would dismiss them instantly, and with no hope of return. Yet men, who profess and call themselves Socialists, are apparently deceived by such means, and imagine that the Socialist Movement is gaining ground when it is being manœuvred into position for the purpose of destruction. "Fine words butter no parsnips," said the shrewd old countrywoman, and the Socialists appear to think that their Utopian Republic can come into being whilst a clerical caste, fifty thousand strong, is bent on their destruction, to say nothing whatever of purely Capitalistic influences scarcely less powerful and antagonistic.

It is a parlous state of affairs. The whole burden of fighting Priestcraft is on the shoulders of the Freethinkers. Fortunately, those shoulders are broad and strong, but it is becoming increasingly evident that Freethinkers must bestir themselves to meet the present grave situation. The only anti-clerical periodi-

cal in the country is the *Freethinker*, and it is necessary that it should be supported so that it may attain to a position of greater influence in national affairs. There is a most lamentable ignorance on the part of the average citizen concerning intellectual matters. This ignorance must be removed, and speedily, and the only way is by the increased publicity given to Freethought propaganda. The Anglican Church, and the Roman Catholic Church, are hereditary enemies of Democracy. For no one can be a loyal Churchman without renouncing his mental and moral freedom, and placing his civil loyalty and duty at the mercy of a petticoated priest. The clergy claim to be sacred persons, a caste apart from their fellows. Unless a man accepts them and their dogmas, they tell him he is damned. This is Church teaching for Englishmen. If an Englishman places his head beneath a priest's foot, he is no more a free and enlightened citizen than a dark-skinned worshipper kneeling before a highly-decorated medicine-man on the outskirts of an African jungle. The silk hat and dog-collar of the white priest makes no real difference between the mental attitudes of the priest and the worshipper. The one is a tyrant and the other a slave.

MIMNERMUS.

### Books and Life.

THERE is an old country saying that may be familiar to readers; it is often used by irate parents to two of the children during a quarrel, and is something in the nature of the miraculous. If the two children will not desist, they are threatened with the punishment of having their two heads knocked into one. At a time when even Mr. A. G. Gardiner may lisp with impunity the words "good European," it would appear that the idea of a United States of Europe is growing, and for better or worse the Locarno agreement has taken a first step towards this event. Nietzsche cherished the idea, Paine could even see over the boundaries of it, and Seeley, in 1871, delivered a lecture on the subject. There are thick walls of prejudice against this, and opposition will come chiefly from antediluvian military men who are unable to think of war in any other terms but those of ships and cavalry. Fortunately however soldiers are human beings; they are average men in the life stream. Following the evacuation of Cologne a photograph appears in a daily paper. Two English soldiers are seen kissing their German wives. Each woman has a child in her arms. Two little good Europeans are visible, and this Christmas as we look around we shall be able to officially forgive the Prince Consort for introducing the Christmas tree in this country. In our mind's eye, we can see John Bull looking very much disturbed, and, in the words of Oliver Wendell Holmes, we can hear him saying: "I find myself so much like other men that it must be a coincidence."

The French Prime Minister was the recipient of a letter from an unknown woman that brought to the conference of national representatives the human note. She wrote: "Allow a mother of a family to congratulate you. At last I shall be able to look at my children without apprehension and to love them with some security." There is human love and affection symbolized in the seals of the Treaties, and these, together with the veracity of good men hold the world together. M. Briand spoke of the European family. The German Foreign Minister's speech was on a lofty level and also mentioned the idea of citizenship of Europe. Like a stupid man who has to be made to feel before he can think, Europe has had to suffer a terrible blow in order to bring forth a truth. Dr. Stresemann said: "Together with the convulsions of the world war emerges the one fact that a community of fate binds us one to another." One can hear the rustle of the prophet's robes in this speech; one can also hear faintly

something in the nature of a requiem that brings all nations to look on a continental cemetery as the last monument to war.

The whimsicality of coincidence and irony has been appearing in our own life like a recurring decimal. At the Scala Theatre we listened with pleasure to our Editor, who wound up the proceedings of the yearly meeting. Our next visit to this theatre was in order to see "The Belle of New York." This relic of musical comedy of twenty years ago was something like cold porridge, but if anyone had asked us the cause of our laughter as the principal girl in Salvation Army attire sang the song "Follow On," our reasons would have been obscure. Also, when the funny parson was pressed into service for the marriage that does not take place, there was the recollection of a small body of serious men sitting on the same stage who contributed speeches from different points of view on the profession which was held up to ridicule free, gratis, and for nothing by the producers of this musical comedy. The trinity of Wine, Women, and Song went with a rattle and a bang. At the Old Vic. the trinity of Wine, Women, and War confronted us in "Antony and Cleopatra." This old story was like old wine; not one of Shakespeare's best, but to see it is like turning over the leaves of an old book where the "Warrior's Woman" made alterations in the boundary line of nations—and settled nothing.

To Mr. Eden Phillpott's book of verse, *A Harvesting*, we turned after reading Mr. Lloyd's article entitled "The Tenderness of God." There is a poem called "The First Gift," that had lodged in our mind. It is a story of a stone man in the palæolithic age who killed a bear and gave away a paw to a fellow man. The tribal law was that the bear was the sole property of the slayer, but this law was reversed and a miracle was wrought—the new born wonder ran throughout the tribe, and the story concludes:—

The young revered the giver for a god  
And shouted praise of him;  
But the old wise ones held the action odd—  
A doubtful, dangerous whim.

Then he who had received, with all his might  
Began to give again  
Until the magic flashed, like morning light,  
Through many a muddy brain.

What has all this to do with Mr. Lloyd's article? It concludes as follows: "All we need to make life worth living, is the confiding love of our fellow-beings which we can only gain by bestowing the same upon them." At this time of the year when people can be seen staggering about with bundles and parcels it reminds us of Voltaire's retort to Pascal to the effect that for every sad man found by the austere religious writer, the author of *Candide* could find a happy one. Mr. Phillpotts and Mr. Lloyd have a similar bent of mind; one in verse and one in prose threw at us another coincidence that is more fascinating to study than Fox's *Book of Martyrs* or journalistic religion.

To our catalogue of vices we confess to reading in bed before the ravelled sleeve of care is knit up and we settle down to rest and the cinema of dreams. With candle in hand we say to the uneven ranks of noble souls, "Good night, you chaps!" Burns has got next to Thomas Hardy; Demosthenes is next to William Hazlett, and Paley's *Natural Theology* is next to *The Trial of William Hone*. What shall we take with us? Out you come, Professor. And when one has stripped off the uniform that custom demands, we settle down to the sugary wisdom of Oliver Wendell Holmes. Life is a great bundle of little things. Life is a little bundle of great things. Life is a great bundle of great things. This jigsaw of words is next door to dreams. Fetch the Professor Cruden's *Concordance*; he wishes to pulverise

the sharp-faced, sharp-eyed, sharp-elbowed, strenuous-looking woman in black. "The boy took a large bite, which left a very perfect crescent in the slice of bread and butter he held, and departed on his errand, with the portable fraction of his breakfast to sustain him on the way." In his book the author takes off his gloves to a subject with which he has only played with in the other two volumes. A mature mind is brought to bear on comparative religions; it is all done with a smile. He has the jokes to help us over the stiles in his country walk round the world—three puffs at the golden flame of a candle after reaching the second chapter—this chain of coincidence still goes on, and we dream of the Serpent of old Nile biting a piece out of the moon.

With the signing of the Locarno Peace Treaty, we appear to also have brought the seasons to a sense of their responsibility. Jack Frost has hung jewels on the fluffy seed heads of grass; he has also put iron clamps on the earth, and hunger has brought the birds to try their sense of trust in us. Book shops are busy and that old custom of greeting cards is as vigorous as ever; that we shall live in the thoughts of our friends at least once a year is a custom that cannot be forsaken. In the signing of a card the recipient comes to view in the mind, and we look at him or her in our mind's eye with the season's indulgence; the sun has turned, another year has begun—we start it—friends again.

WILLIAM REPTON.

### Acid Drops.

In the *Weekly Dispatch* for January 3, Professor J. B. S. Haldane, the well-known chemist, writes an article on the "When I Am Dead" series. Nearly all of it is quite good, but the end provides a very curious anti-climax. He says that at no period of his life has "my personal survival seemed to me a probable contingency." He points out that he has lost consciousness as the result of a blow on the head and from other causes, and thinks it absurd to be asked to believe, knowing that his consciousness depends upon the physical and chemical condition of his brain, the "improbable theory" that "my mind will continue without a brain, or will be miraculously provided with a new one." He dismisses the argument from the teachings of Jesus with the comment that he knew no more about it than other people, and only represented the spirit of his age. He says that the sample of the universe with which we are acquainted is not governed by love nor justice, and therefore the argument of a better land elsewhere has no reasonable probability, and then adds that:—

If we devoted the energy that we waste in preparing for a future life to preventing war, poverty, and disease, we could at least make our present lives very satisfactory for most people, and if we were happy we should not feel the need for happiness hereafter.

But it must be a case of dual personality, for after Haldane the scientist has given expression to these quite clear and definite statements, some other Haldane appears upon the scene, and he says that "if death will probably be the end of me as a finite and individual mind that does not mean that it will be the end of me altogether." But as the essence of the "me" is a finite individuality, the destruction of that clearly leaves nothing of "me" to survive. To survive as "not-me" is equivalent to annihilation. And for sheer mental vacuity it would be hard to beat the following:—

For if my mental processes are determined wholly by the motions of atoms in my brain, I have no reason for supposing that my beliefs are true. They may be sound chemically, but that does not make them sound logically.

That leaves us gasping. We are suddenly transported into a region where sense and nonsense become convertible things, where words lose their significance, and resonance lords it over reason. Why may not our

beliefs be true if the emotions of atoms in the brain are the physical side of mental processes? Truth is a correspondence between ideas and facts, and has simply nothing to do with what thought is, or how it arises. And what is meant by a statement being sound chemically, but not logically? If it is sound it is sound, and there's an end to it. And as Professor Haldane has previously decided that the belief in survival is ridiculous, that the survival of mind in the absence of a brain is absurd, that the belief in a future life is an expression of ignorance, what of the conclusion about a thing being chemically sound, but logically unsound? And what is chemical reasoning apart from logical reasoning, anyway?

We give it up. Only one of three conclusions seems possible. (1) It is a case of dual personality, and after Haldane the scientist has had his turn, he is suppressed and a personality akin to the Bishop of London takes control; (2) Professor Haldane after writing as a scientist is afraid he has gone too far and so, with a hardly concealed contempt for the mentality of the religious person, throws him a paragraph or two that is really insulting to anyone of intelligence; or (3) the editor of the *Weekly Dispatch* was afraid of offending his readers if the article had been allowed to rest at a certain point, and so appointed one of the less intelligent of his office boys to write a conclusion to Professor Haldane's article. Anyway, as it stands, and with its two quite irreconcilable halves, it is the most remarkable production we have seen for some time.

The late Mr. Eugene Sandow left £9,565. He taught perfection of the human body as an aim in life. He dealt with things that could be seen; he was a perfect specimen of a man, and his own body was a glory to behold and a sign that he practised what he taught. Many teachers and preachers have left more of this world's goods whilst professing to embrace the gospel of poverty. Not in an "Acid Drop," but in a book could be shown the Sandow cult as a direct challenge to those who think the body will be a better dwelling place for the soul if they neglect or knock it about.

The old trick of "heads I win, tails you lose," has been picked up by Spiritualists. To an enquirer who asked why spirits always talked in platitudes, the answer was given that spirits liked to talk in platitudes; this form of speech conveyed more wisdom than any other method. Spiritualism appears to be the misletoe on the decaying oak branch of Christianity.

Dr. Headlam, Bishop of Gloucester, is, for a scholarly man, exceptionally and irrationally credulous. This is proved to the hilt in his latest book, *Jesus Christ in History and Faith*, in a review of which that appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement* for December 24 we learn that the Bishop regards the physical resurrection of Jesus as a historical fact, though he frankly admits that "it is impossible to harmonize the accounts given in our four Gospels because, as a matter of fact, they are incomplete and to some extent inaccurate." Thus, in spite of the incompleteness and inaccuracy of the evidence for it, Dr. Headlam believes in the physical resurrection of his Lord and Saviour. How much more logical was the late Professor Denny, of Glasgow, who candidly declared that, so far as the Gospel accounts of the resurrection were concerned, he could never have believed in it at all.

The Bishop of Gloucester is a pure traditionalist, so far as the Christian religion is concerned. He accepts the traditions of the early Church as absolute truths, and declines to consider any arguments against them. In other words, while in the academic sense a learned gentleman, he is yet the blindest of believers. He offers three purely traditional considerations with regard to the Resurrection. First, "the fundamental be-

belief in it in the primitive community," ignoring the self-evident fact that every heresy now wholly discredited was once universally held as Divinely or diabolically true; second, "the fact of the empty tomb," which is not an established fact at all, but an ignorant tradition, not even mentioned by the Apostle Paul; and third, "a considerable number of narratives bearing witness to the fact that the disciples had seen the Risen Lord." Was a belief ever made to rest on so flimsy and so transparently false a foundation as this?

But we are not yet done with the Bishop of Gloucester, who is not only an exceptionally credulous man, but also a ridiculously prejudiced one. We have not forgotten his violent and cowardly attacks upon the Mohammedan religion and upon the Turks as a nation at a time when, one would have thought, a Christian minister ought to have considered it a crime to intensify the popular feeling against an opponent in war. Those attacks were from every point of view entirely unjustifiable. Equally unjustifiable is his wilful misrepresentation of unbelievers in the supernatural character and work of the Gospel Jesus in the volume under review. Take the following utterly fallacious passage as a sample:—

If there were sound critical objections behind the rationalistic point of view, there would be some unanimity of agreement, but there is none; and the reason of this is that the cause of disbelief is not really the criticism, but is *a priori*. The criticism is only used to support a belief already formed on other grounds. The supernatural character of our Lord's life and work is not disbelieved because it contains statements which the Rationalist thinks he cannot accept.

That is a deliberately wicked putting of the cart before the horse.

It is a stupid and unpardonable lie to represent unbelievers in the supernature as dishonest people who allow themselves to be influenced and governed by *a priori* decisions, and who because of such illogical and immoral decisions disbelieve the evidences. We challenge the Bishop to quote a single passage from any accredited Freethought teacher which justifies his accusation, and until he does that he stands self-condemned as a bare-faced libeller of his opponents. Meantime, he is guilty of picturing them not as they are, but only as Christian bigotry, slander, and ignorance have painted them.

Apart from the fact of judicious editorship, it is encouraging to note two letters in the *Express*, both from reverend gentlemen. They both agree that the doctrine of the Virgin Birth is essential, and one of the two writers, the Rev. A. Macaulay, with left-handed or theological reasoning, puts his name to this: "The fact of the presence of natural sin in humanity is all too evident; how soon it is revealed in the child; how easily it develops in man. The doctrine of the Virgin Birth is therefore essential." There is not even the Atlantic Ocean between this sample of thinking and Tennessee. A schoolboy would get the cane for this sky-rocket from a greengrocer's shop—but that way preferment lies, and the dust of words is impudently thrown in the face of the public that is sure of the difference between a chestnut horse and a horse-chestnut.

Below the surface of English life and of life in countries all over the world there are, according to the Rev. J. E. Roberts, of Leeds, strange stirrings, deep unrest, and new aspirations. "Humanity is once more on the move," he quotes. We are glad he says "once more," for by that he implies that for some reason or another its movement has somehow been held up. It has; and by the Christian creed, for many hundred years. Now that Christianity is beginning to centre its attention on the things that really matter and demanding something a little better in this world instead of something perfect in the next. The curious fact is that with this centring of attention on the things of this

world, mankind is everywhere exhibiting more tolerance, more thoughtfulness for others, and increased humane feeling. That ought to please men, although God's deputies are snivelling over the decline in church attendance.

"My cynical friends," declares the Rev. Thomas Phillips in the *Baptist Times*, "taunt me with the charge that evangelical Christians are sadly deficient in honour. They are good saints but poor gentlemen. They lack sportsmanship." Mr. Phillips' friends are right, as anyone who has to work alongside evangelicals knows full well. These good Christians are notorious as adepts at backbiting and underhand trickery. Their chief delight is attributing evil motives to every action of others however disinterested it may be. This evil propensity is thoroughly Christian in its origin. For these good men and women believe that they, because they are members of a particular sect, are better than other people, and that therefore they are entitled to criticise their fellow-workers. And this they do—with the utmost venom that a narrow mind of a follower of a narrow creed is capable of. That is how love of Jesus and the Brotherhood of Man works out in actual everyday practice.

"Force," says Canon Trevor Lewis, of Truro, "may get a man to do things, but it will not be very successful in getting him to be what he ought to be." It is a pity that Christians do not recognize this in the case of the maintenance of such things as the Blasphemy Laws, and in the other forms of force which Christians bring to bear upon such as do not believe in their creed. After all, the difference between the force which imprisons or burns, and the force which boycotts in business in social or political life, is a question of degree only. The man who boycotts today, is the man who would burn under different circumstances. Canon Trevor goes on to say that "force is not rarely a measurement of weakness." Once more we agree with him, and nothing shows the weakness of Christianity more than its dependence upon the policeman and various forms of social terrorism. And we are left wondering whether, after saying this, Canon Trevor would give his support to the Bill for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws? We confess to having doubts on that inatter.

In the *Christian World* for December 31, Mr. David Cleghorn puts in a defence of the religious uses of broadcasting. Mr. Cleghorn is connected with the B.B.C., so one may take it as official. One pleasing thing about the article is the evidence Mr. Cleghorn unconsciously gives to the large number of protests received by the B.B.C. against the use of their machinery for religious propaganda, to the exclusion of anything that would tell against Christianity. Mr. Cleghorn says many hundreds of letters have been sent in by people who are pleased with the services. We have no doubt, but the number of those who have written against it is not stated. And it is pretty certain that anything sent would please some people. If the B.B.C. will start giving tips for horse races we dare swear there will be thousands of letters sent in approving, and if the tips are winners, the number of thankful clients will be multiplied enormously. In the mass, with such things as the B.B.C. the majority of people accept what is given them.

Mr. Cleghorn's defence simply evades the point at issue, which is that the B.B.C. should either leave religion alone, or should give all kinds of religion, including the views of those who do not agree with religion at all. Mr. Cleghorn argues that "religion in the abstract is practically universal" (we haven't the ghost of an idea what religion in the abstract is) that Christianity has been adopted as a form of State faith, and the B.B.C. service "strives to be Christian in essence, but non-Sectarian in outlook." Anything more foolish or more confused it would be impossible to conceive.

If Christianity is a State faith, it is a definite faith as given in the State Church, and the B.B.C. should, on that ground, give Church of England religion alone. It is only otherwise because the parsons that have got the B.B.C. by the ears belong to different sects. Next, Christianity is itself only one of the religious sects in this country, and to talk of it being non-sectarian, when Mrs. Bramwell Booth is permitted to air her degrading and savage talk about the blood of Jesus, is an insult to anyone's intelligence. The next statement is that religion has only been given out of Church hours. All that this means is that while the clergy meant to use the wireless they would not permit to compete with their regular places of business.

The outstanding feature of Mr. Cleghorn's defence is its exhibition of Christian impertinence and egotism. In a nation of which not more than ten per cent. attend church, and which must contain some five or six million non-Christians it is calmly assumed that so long as nothing is done that offends Christians, no one else and nothing else matters. The pleasing thing about the article is that it is considered necessary to make a defence. So far the protests raised by Freethinkers, in which this journal played a larger part than is generally known, has made some impression. And on this we again repeat our advice to Freethinkers to become a little more assertive than they have been in all that concerns their equal rights as citizens. While they lie down Christians will not hesitate to walk over them. They can bring gentlemen like Mr. Cleghorn to heel if they only will. Let them think less about pleasing Christians, and more about themselves.

Christianity has fallen on evil days. Time was when people believed in it because of itself, and people were accepted as leaders and guides because they believed in Christianity. Now it is, at best, treated in the same way as one treats a cure for corns or toothache, the world is asked to accept Christianity because certain prominent men in politics have, for generally unexpressed reasons, written it a testimonial. And the thoughtless are probably impressed by these for the same reason that a lady always used a certain brand of face powder—because all the advertisements spoke well of it.

So, in pursuance of the system of running God Almighty on a system of testimonials, a manifesto has been issued by the Industrial Christian Fellowship, signed by a number of clergymen and about one hundred and fifty "Labour leaders," reminding everybody that "statesmanship will fail, programmes will prove futile as a solvent of social troubles, unless they embody the spirit and practice of Christ." Delightful! The phrase "spirit and practice of Christ" slips down like so much sugar. The manifesto writers do not stop to say what exactly they understand by the "spirit and practice of Christ," because that would have spoiled the whole kettle of fish. And yet one feels that, if these men have any genuine ideas in their heads as to what is the spirit of Christ, and what were his practices, the ideas of such men as A. J. Cook, Canon Donaldson, Ramsay Macdonald, Ben Tillet, and Arthur Henderson, must be of such different kinds that each of them will have a different Christ. We are not surprised that the manifesto does not condescend to say exactly in what way Christ would settle the coal difficulty.

We do know how he would settle the housing question. He dealt with the question of food and clothing when he advised his followers to consider the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, they toil not neither do they spin, but God looked after them, and would certainly look after human beings so much the more carefully, if they imitated the birds of the air. Of course it was sheer ignorance that made the Jesus Christ of the Gospels talk of the birds and the lilies as leading a leisurely care-free life. Nothing works

harder than a bird or a lily. The existence of each is maintained only at the cost of a continuous striving against death, and if the ordinary working man were asked to give as large a portion of his time to the getting of food as does a bird, he would down tools at once. The spirit of Jesus is to trust it all to God, to turn one cheek when the other is smitten (a course of action which would certainly commend itself to A. J. Cook) to take no thought for the morrow, and to believe that faith will move mountains. There is not much doubt about the spirit of Christ's teaching.

Nor is there about his practices. All we would like to know on this head is just what practice we are advised to follow as a way of solving our problems. There is at present a big crusade going on to improve the nation's health. The practice of Jesus was to cure disease by the laying on of hands, and the saying of prayers. If these Labour leaders believe in returning to that practice they would abolish all hospitals and discharge all doctors. We hear much of the importance of family life, but in practice Jesus ignored it. He was himself a celibate, and while he recognized that the children of this world marry and give in marriage, he reminded his followers that they who would inherit the next world neither marry nor are given in marriage. And his behaviour to his mother certainly did not disclose an overwhelming amount of respect for one of the authors of his being. We would give something to see this Christian Industrial Fellowship explain exactly what it understands by the spirit and practice of Christ, and in what way it would solve industrial problems. Perhaps the whole thing might be summed up in saying that the majority of people are always ready to be fooled, and the majority of so-called leaders are always ready to fool them. They may often think they are fooling the people for the benefit of the people themselves, but that does not affect the accuracy of the diagnosis.

A *Baptist Times* reviewer of *Science, Religion, and Reality*, says:—

The book is not for the leisure hour, but for the time of severe study. But our youths and maidens who have a hazy idea that religion is being driven into the deserts by the progress of science, or that it deals with matters incapable of verification, probably unreal, these young people building their scheme of life may well adjust their thinking and fortify their faith by these grand essays.

What is a parson supposed to do? asks Dr. J. C. Carlile in the *Daily Chronicle*, and answers: "He is called to be a forth-teller of the Divine Message." As the parson professes to tell the believer what his fortune will be in the hereafter, we suppose "forth-teller" is a synonym for fortune-teller. Anyway, both fortune-telling and forth-telling seem a comfortable way of earning a living. Later we learn that, "It is given to him (the parson) to offer sacrifice on behalf of the people, to represent them in the Holy Place." Here we can see the primitive medicine-man at his very best. Exactly what this representative of God is saying is said by thousands of his prototypes in Central Africa. Yet this parson, like the rest of his tribe, claims to be educated and to be a civilized member of modern society.

Dr. Carlile and his brother savages in England would do well to emigrate to Africa. There they will be sure of an appreciative hearing, whereas here they are increasingly uncertain of getting intelligent people to listen to their funny "message." What is the parson's job? Why, just this—to reduce the partially civilized European to complete barbarity. And we think no progressive mind will refuse to admit that the parson throughout the Christian era has done his job pretty thoroughly. But every dog has his day, and undoubtedly our wearers of a dog-collar have had theirs. Judging by the tearful condition of our "forth-tellers," we think even they begin to realize that.



## "Freethinker" Endowment Trust.

JUDGING from the following letter from Mr. Pugh, which comes with a cheque for £5, I did not make myself as clear as I might have done with regard to the closing date given—January 31. Mr. Pugh writes:—

I am entirely opposed to the closing of this Fund. We cannot all afford large amounts, but I will find £5 every three months, and I am sure that many others will be glad to forward a periodical subscription until the desired amount is reached.

I did not mean by what I said last week that the Trust would cease receiving subscriptions, but only that this special appeal would close on a particular date. The Trust will be there to receive gifts or bequests until the whole is realized. Others have written urging that there should be no closing of this Fund until all that is required has been contributed, and I am, therefore, not quite certain whether to do as they urge or not. For the moment, however, we will let the matter rest as it is.

I have to thank Mr. Pugh for his promise of further periodical subscriptions. As readers are aware, a number of others have made similar promises, and one friend writes this week, that if a list were compiled of those who are ready to contribute a given sum within one or two years, by regular payments, the whole of the £8,000 might be guaranteed. I can only leave that suggestion where it is, and to say I shall be happy, on behalf of the Trust, to receive whatever promises are made.

Councillor Hall, in sending his subscription, says it will be "a wonderful feat to solve the problem of financing a fighting paper such as our *Freethinker*, and hopes that all Freethinkers will make 1926 'Cohen's year of triumph' by raising the required sum." We confess it would be a proud moment to be able to write "finis" to this task. But we shall see. We have no space for other letters this week, but we confess to a desire to see the sum required mount up a little quicker than it is doing. Probably we shall see a quickening in the next few weeks. But we are still a long way off the £4,000 that should be raised before January 31. That would leave half the total required to be raised next year.

I have received no further promises of £50 to add to the three already announced conditionally on twenty being received. That offer stands until January 31 only.

Previously acknowledged, £3,508 2s. 6d. H. L. Dawson, 10s.; A. B., £2; A. J. Leaker, 5s.; Councillor Mr. and Mrs. G. Hall, £1 1s.; J. Latham, £2 5s.; Mrs. Richards, 5s.; J. W. Theobalds, £1; M. Cooper, £1; H. Littledale, £3; "Vicar's Christmas Box, Postman," 5s.; A. E. G. Graham, 10s.; W. Pugh, £5; Mrs. C. Shepherd, 3s.; E. C. Round, 5s.; G. Gerard, £1 4s. 6d.; W. Milroy, £1; J. M. Robinson Brown, 10s. Total, £3,528 6s.

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. MACKLIN.—We do not understand what is meant by a qualified Determinism. We believe in Determinism without any qualifications whatever.

R. T. PRANKHERD.—We need hardly say that we do not agree with those who say that the fight with religion is over. The Freethinker's quarrel with religion is that it interferes with the proper conduct of life, and it makes no difference whatever if certain beliefs are given up while the harm done by religion continues in the name of a few nebulous beliefs.

J. BREESE.—Only a descriptive report of the debate was taken. That appears, as you will see, in this issue and the next. We appreciate your feeling in the other matter, but don't take it too seriously. It has given us much amusement, and we may just put it down to weakness and have done with it.

E. D. SIDE.—Pleased you so enjoyed the discussion. Will others who have written please take this as an acknowledgment and an appreciation of their letters. We always try to give of our best where Freethought is concerned. The fag end will usually do for other things.

*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 Bural Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.*

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

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

*All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "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.*

## Sugar Plums.

The National Secular Society's Annual Dinner will be held on January 12, and this is the last chance we have of drawing attention to it. It is a gathering together time for London Freethinkers, and for a good number of provincial friends. The dinner will take place at the Midland Grand Hotel, and those who have attended previous gatherings will require no further guarantee as to the excellence of the arrangements. The hotel can be reached easily by bus, tram or train from any part of London, and those who can travel by the Midland Railway can come into St. Pancras, and so land at the hotel door. The chair will be taken by the President, Mr. Cohen, and there will be the usual speeches, with quite the usual excellent musical programme. But tickets must be purchased not later than January 9. That is important. They can be obtained from either the N.S.S. or from the Freethinker office.

We would again draw special attention to the N.S.S. advertisement on the last page but one of this issue.

We want to make January a month for getting new members from the ranks of *Freethinker* readers. Some have already come along, but there should be hundreds more before the month is up.

Every inch of standing room at Stratford Town Hall was taken up to listen to the discussion between Canon Storr and Mr. Cohen, and many were unable to get in at all. We noticed our old friend, Mr. Andrew Millar, who had made a journey from Scotland in order to be present, and there were other friends from different parts of the provinces. Judging from the enthusiasm of the audience everyone felt quite pleased with the course of this discussion, and if the Christians were as satisfied as the Freethinkers were, everyone must have gone away quite happy.

Canon Storr is an easy and effective speaker, and one would imagine used to addressing popular audiences. In our opinion he made as strong a case as could well be made out for the belief in a personal God, but when a man is saddled with a bad case he is heavily handicapped. But he gave us the impression of not being acquainted with the strength of a scientifically directed Freethought attack. A Christian less straightforward, and more artful, might have better concealed, even from some Freethinkers, the essential weakness of the Theistic position, but eloquence cannot take the place of sound reasoning, even though it may be pleasant to listen to.

The Rev. Mr. Merrin, as chairman, played his part admirably until the close of the debate. Then he made one very bad mistake. Probably carried away by his feelings he said he would very much like to speak for half an hour, and proceeded to state a case for Christianity. Such a proceeding might easily have ended the meeting in disorder. So we were glad to see the bulk of the audience make, its protest in a dignified way by rising and leaving the place in a quite orderly manner. Mr. Merrin, we fancy, saw the mistake he had made, and stopped speaking. The blunder was probably unintentional, but it was unfortunate—specially so since Mr. Merrin had acted throughout the debate, and before the debate in a quite friendly and gentlemanly manner.

The North London Branch re-opens its Sunday evening discussions with a challenging subject by Dr. Arthur Lynch, "Are the Bishops Sane?" It is probably just a matter of opinion, but those who know anything of Dr. Lynch know that the handling of the topic will want nothing in brilliance nor daring. Full particulars will be found in our lecture guide column.

We are asked to announce that the Birmingham Branch are holding a Tea and Social at Derricourt's Café, High Street, to-day (January 10) at 5 o'clock. The tickets are 1s. 6d. each, and may be obtained from the Secretary, 6 Daniels Road, Little Bromwich.

## Is This the Real Jesus?

I PROPOSE to write, in as simple a way as I can, two articles about Jesus. My object is to attempt a sketch, if ever so faint, of the real person. As armies of learned Christians and storm-troops of lively Freethinkers have debated this question amid a hell of smoke and a hail of sparks, and settled nothing in particular, I appear on the stage in a most humble mood, almost too timid to raise my voice.

### I.

To this very day, in 1926, the strongest section of the Christian faith is named Roman. In what way, then, did the Romans share in the making of the religion of Christ? The Romans were a very religious

people ("religio" is a Latin word) in the sense of carefully linking all the activities and duties of daily life and citizenship with the Gods; the Gods who presided over heaven, weather, rivers, seas, seed-sowing, harvest, ploughing, navigation, armies, war, peace, government, and the general destinies of their wonderful republic. They were not, however, religious in the sense of being enthusiastic in discussion of doctrines, or eager to carry creeds and modes of worship to foreign peoples. Their genius lay in the effective spread of their political order and law (assisted by a vast network of roads, bridges, and postal services by horse, mule or ship), over many national types in the Mediterranean region, and rough tribes in lands outlying. About 500 B.C. this energetic folk merely held a modest city on the muddy stream of Tiber, and a patch of the surrounding meadows and marshes. Six hundred years later, their camps and their rule extended to Britain, Belgium, Gaul, Spain, Morocco, the North African shores, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Anatolia (Asia Minor), Thrace, the Danube valley, and the Rhine.

We might almost say that the Roman sway covered the main theatre of what was to be the Great War of 1914-18. Many members of the ruder populations wandered into the Roman protectorates, and perhaps enlisted in the Roman armies. Hence, long before the so-called "fall" of the Empire, and before that inrush of barbarians which figures so dramatically in history books, the republic-empire had become the centre of mingled blood and mingled ideas. Crowds of slaves, brought in from Anatolia and other borderlands, added to the miscellany of breed and thought. From the date of Julius Cæsar's death (44 B.C.), for about two hundred years, this immense region had a considerable measure of peace.

A scrap of the Roman territory, the size of modern Wales, was Jewish. The physique and habits of the Jews unfitted them for wars of either offence or defence, though their Bible folk-tales pictured their ancestors as heroes of invasion, fire, and the glittering sword. So far ago as the eighth century B.C. some thirty thousand Hebrew men, women, and children were transported, in a caravan of exile, from Palestine to Mesopotamia; others followed in the same sad line, and only smaller troops dribbled back. Thus, by hard compulsion, the Jews learned to live among strangers. As time passed, they travelled willingly, and, as traders, scribes, and the like, gradually penetrated to all quarters. Two or three centuries B.C. their communities were established in Egypt. For many years they had a temple of their own at Leontopolis, in the land of the Nile; it was destroyed at nearly the same date as the more famous temple at Jerusalem. At this period, a million Jews dwelt in Egypt. Further north, in the second century B.C., a Jewish colony settled in the city (note this with care) of Antioch, on the eastern Mediterranean coast. It was a Syrian Greek king who granted them this seaport privilege. Step by step, the Jews filtered into the Greek cities of Anatolia, often attaining citizen rights, and not only dealing in merchandize, but frequently conversing on themes of religion with groups of the more serious-minded Greeks. The Jewish people may have numbered three or four millions in all.

Everywhere in the Empire, educated persons learned Greek, employed Greek secretaries and lecturers, admired Greek statuary and pictures, and sent their sons to Greek teachers. Naturally, the quick-witted Jews picked up Greek. In the third century B.C., the Alexandrian Jews were reading their Bible in Greek, this version being known as the Septuagint, or the "Seventy Book" (the work of seventy translators). Jews had found lodgement in such Greek

cities (that is, in European Greece) as Corinth or Philippi. Some of the Greek scribes and teachers just referred to were "slaves" in the sense of being bought and owned; but otherwise they held positions of comfort and respect. We may take it as certain that considerable numbers of these well-instructed Greek slaves, in Anatolia, Greece, or Italy, would cherish a certain sense of fellowship with the poorer classes at large—unlettered slaves, artisans, peasants, and fishermen. Leisured and meditative Greeks and Romans, especially those who followed the Stoic philosophy, were looking around the great republic-empire, observing the immense masses of Asiatics, Africans, Gauls, Germans, Helvetians, Kelts, Romans, Greeks, etc., and the Jews of the "Dispersion" (or "Diaspora"), and wondering if, in spite of so many differences of colour, frame and language, there might not exist a secret unity, and all the varieties might truly form "one blood, all nations." Such an idea would readily suggest itself in an empire which the Roman political skill had welded into a sort of whole, with a sort of economic unity in the trade which could be peaceably carried on from Mesopotamia to the North Sea. And the conception of a single God would, in the Stoic and kindred minds, displace the throngs of Gods of sky, air, water, earth, trees, war, love, fury, and hell (Hades, or underworld).

Here, then, was a situation which would encourage lively exchanges of ideas and arguments between Jewish educated men and Greeks and Romans of the upper classes. On a larger scale would occur such exchanges of ideas and arguments between the comfortable slave-types which I have alluded to, and Greek traders, craftsmen, and sailors on the one side, and, on the other, the travelled Jews whose continual intercourse with Gentiles had given them a measure of cosmopolitan manners, and rendered them willing to explain their ancestral faith to folk outside the circle of the "Chosen People" of Israel. Stoic gentlemen, seated in the gardens of villas, might dream of the unifying principle as a divine Reason permeating the universe of Kosmos. The courtier-poet, Virgil, imagined the coming of a kind of supreme, divine Consul, who would introduce an Age of Gold. All such ideas pointed to the fact that very many minds felt that the remarkable success of the Roman conquests in creating a new social dominion and order was leading to a new type of Man. In the nineteenth century similar feelings would impel Robert Owen to construct a New Harmony, or Fourier to collect imaginary families in an imaginary "Phalanstery," or William Morris to sketch "News from Nowhere." But the days of the Christian origins had no printing-press, and had but a very small reading public. Hopes of social betterment must needs be expressed in other modes. And the modes that suited Stoics or Virgils were not dramatic enough for the common mass. Even the ideal of the Gnostics would not satisfy. These Gnostics talked in rapturous tones of a "Second Man," a "Son of Man," a "Christos" (oil-anointed), who should show forth the glory of God. To our own twentieth century have survived in Euphrates-land, a small sect of Mandaean Gnostics, who maintain an ancient vision of a "Great Life," and a "Holy Light," and of a "Life-messenger," John the Baptist; and perchance this belief in John was whispered among Gnostics two thousand years ago. Other men would find a figure nearer to their heart's desire in Plato's book of the Republic. Plato saw how mankind had to endure agony in its wrestling after the Best and Noblest, and he called up the image of a martyr who should be "scourged, tortured, bound, his eyes burned out, and at last, after suffer-

ing every evil, should be impaled or crucified." Just as, in 1926, simple souls in the West eagerly search for truth from the East, in the shape of Theosophy and Hindu poems, so the simple souls of Anatolia, Antioch, and other such Greek-speaking places greedily picked up hints from Asiatics, especially Jews. The Jews had a steadfastness, a loyalty to their faith, a strict discipline in their customs of circumcision of the male sex-organ, of Sabbaths, of fasts, of festivals, of prayer, and the rest, which were strikingly combined with shrewdness in money-affairs, in commerce, and in market-calculations. A fascination invested all that was Jewish. Fragments of Hebrew Scriptures, recited with solemnity, charmed the Greek ear, and seemed to murmur oracles straight from the one God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If Jews dropped a portentous word, uttered with knitting of brow and glowing of eyes, about a prince, a deliverer from sin, a Messiah who should appear in splendour, the Greek listeners were spell-bound. Many people who had but a misty notion of the exact location of Palestine would take in, with tremendous interest, the latest tale brought by sailors concerning a riot in Jerusalem, or a commotion in Galilee, caused by the preaching of a new prophet. Those were not times when reports would be tested by delegates from a scientific society, or a special commissioner sent out by a public "Exploration Fund." The heart longed, the ear gathered a seaman's tale or a gravely-recited report in a bazaar, and faith affixed its seal. One rumour came along to the effect that a certain man, named Theudas, persuaded a mob of Jews that he was a prophet who would, if they followed him, divide the river Jordan by his mere word, and so cut a passage for them to.....the record says not whither. As the Romans squashed the procession by sending a troop of cavalry, and as they took off Theudas's head and exhibited it in Jerusalem, the little revolution spluttered out. But, in an atmosphere of quick and fervent belief, and highly-wrought hope of a grand redemption and happy life for all, it surely would not be long before the right species of report came out, and captured waiting hearts. The slender reality in the report would soon be embroidered with magnificent and sparkling legend.

Does any book of first-century date give such a story of a man whom we may, to-day, in cool reason accept as (perhaps!) the real Jesus?

There is, I think, one such story, and I propose to repeat it.

F. J. GOULD.

(To be Concluded.)

## "Should We Believe in a Personal God?"

A DEBATE BETWEEN

CANON STORR AND MR. CHAPMAN COHEN.

It goes without saying that Stratford Town Hall was packed. When I arrived there was a crowd at the door clamouring to get in, but even standing room had gone. I hope with all my heart the unlucky late ones did get in, for the debate aroused the highest enthusiasm and was punctuated with applause. It is not an easy matter to find a clergyman nowadays who has the courage to challenge the Editor of the *Freethinker* to a discussion on religion. During the nineteenth century, Bradlaugh, Holyoake, and Watts had many clerical opponents, who mostly had the public with them, and who often did not disguise their contempt for "blatant infidelity," as it was politely called. Those great times for Christians have vanished for ever more. The fly in the ointment lies just as much in the fact that the destructive criticism of popular notions of Theism, as well as of the New Testament,

has come from Christian scholars—or shall I say, scholars who still call themselves Christians—as from Freethinkers. Paine could be laughed at, but Colenso had to be listened to. Robert Taylor could be imprisoned, but what are we to do with Canon Streeter? A penny pamphlet by Foote must be ignored or will soon be forgotten, but, thank heaven, a drastic Christian criticism of New Testament documents will cost a guinea to buy and can ordinary people afford that sum?

Listening to Canon Storr, was listening to the case for Theism very well put, but how familiar were the arguments! To me, as well as to some of the audience, it came as a shock to find how little Canon Storr knew of the Freethought side—later so clearly and humorously and convincingly put by Mr. Cohen. The reference to Determinism made by the Canon was particularly unfortunate, as, though he had taught philosophy at a University for ten years, it was apparent he knew nothing whatever about it. Had he read Anthony Collins he could never have made the blunders he did, and no man should oppose Determinism till he has read and answered Collins.

For the rest, the audience listened intently to the two disputants, who were heartily applauded. And we Freethinkers applauded Canon Storr as much for the good case he put up as for his courage under difficulties. For there were some terrible stings under the apparently easy aphorisms and examples in the witty criticisms of Mr. Cohen.

The Canon opened the debate with an attempt to define personality. He found it extremely difficult and eventually had to be content with putting forward the Personality of God as an hypothesis only. Obviously God, as a spiritual being, couldn't have a body like a human being's, but that was not, after all, very important. So long as God had the great moral qualities, truth, love, justice, and the others what did a mere body matter? How truth, love, justice, etc., could exist without a body, or bodies, in a social environment, we were not told, but the Canon didn't worry very much about that.

Of course, he believed in Evolution and science, and even the scientific method, but none of these disproved God. In fact, we were bound to believe in a universal mind. It was perfectly hopeless to imagine the universe without mind. Evolution explained nothing, but simply said how things came about. There was definite progress from a ball of gas to man, and as the progress was orderly, you had mind proved. Chance or blind atoms couldn't make Shakespeare, and mind can only come from mind. Atoms to have mind potentially was nonsense. There was purpose in the universe—from lower to higher and there was creative will. Why did matter take the direction it did? He wanted an answer. The only cause we really know is will. Laws of nature did not cause events. A law does nothing and explains nothing, but, of course, implies a lawgiver. All men everywhere are, and were, religious. They all believed in something. Finally the Canon developed the same line of argument in his effort to show there was a creative will called God.

Mr. Cohen, who received a great ovation, then gave his first reply. He had listened with great attention to Canon Storr, who put forward as strong a case for a personal God as could be put. It had not convinced him, but that was not the fault of the Canon, it was the fault of the case. A personal God is the only one worth believing in, and it is the one that people who understand the case, cannot believe in. If you tried to think of personal and moral qualities apart from physical organization, you would know what you're up against. Either personality means personality or Canon Storr does not mean by the word what we mean by it.

"Higher and lower" have no significance in science. It is we who create a scale of value in natural differences. He was glad to see that the Canon had put forward the personality of God merely as an hypothesis, but it is an hypothesis that does nothing, leads to nothing, and teaches you nothing. There was, said Canon Storr, a plan in nature. What sort of a plan? A plan that had no unity and no apparent end. A plan that built up to pull down. Nature or God for thousands of generations,

red in tooth and claw, producing untold agony and misery, and we are told it was justified because it had produced—us, produced, as Canon Storr said, man, spiritual man!

The Canon actually saw Divine Wisdom in this. The story of science was that finally man and this world of ours would disappear. But man would go—well, to another world! A cause, says Canon Storr, must be adequate to produce an effect. There was no need for the word adequate. Effect was bound to follow cause. The truth was that it was not *adequacy* that the Canon wanted, but *likeness*: intelligence to produce intelligence, for example. This was absolutely untrue. Causes and effects are never alike. There is always something in an effect that is not in any one of its factors. How matter produces mind was the conundrum shifted on to his—Mr. Cohen's—shoulders. There were plenty of things in the universe which we couldn't explain, but an argument from ignorance would not do. What *mind* is, we don't know. We only know mental states.

If God planned evolution to produce a spiritual man, he also planned the germs of consumption and the war in 1914. Everything that was right was, of course, planned by God, but everything that was wrong—well?

Mr. Cohen agreed that man was always religious, *but the more he was civilized the less he was religious*. Primitive man found God in everything, and he was always wrong in everything.

Millions outgrow beliefs, while those who do believe put it forward as a mere speculative hypothesis, which may be wrong.

H. CUTNER.

(To be Concluded.)

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### Freethought Charivaria.

The Black Country is to be electrified, says a newspaper. We are moving. Presently someone will suggest that the Black Army shall be electrocuted, and then we shall see things.

People hate to get a reputation for what they are, says *Eve*. That may explain why Freethinkers are not beloved of the clergy.

The Holy See has negotiated a loan of a million dollars from an American bank. We imagine that while it is easy enough to work miracles with images, and heal with faith, the Vatican would hardly call the turning of Peter's pence into dollars a miraculous event.

"God bless you all in the New Year and bring you jobs," said Prebendary Carlile to three hundred "down and outs." But pious wishes won't find them jobs. For God doesn't interfere in economics.

"The influence of Christ is centred in His personality," says the Rev. Harold Trask. "It was the power of men's love for Him that transformed them; they became what they loved." As Christ had the mind of an uneducated superstitious peasant, we presume it is love of him that is responsible for his followers exhibiting a similar type of mind.

It is inspiration, says the Dean of Westminster, that ultimately settles the course of the world's history. Yes; and undoubtedly it was the inspiration of the blood of the lamb that settled the bloodiest course of the world's history.

Dr. Josiah Oldfield thinks that to revert to the habits of feeding of savages in order to secure sound health would be a wholly retrograde step. And we believe that to revert to the habits of thinking of savages is equally retrograde. That is why we oppose the Christian religion.

"Fascism and Communism have the same fangs with the same poison," asserts an American Labour leader. What a blasphemous thing to say! For has not Fascism got God on its side—per the Vatican? And everyone knows Christ was the first Communist.

Says Mr. Lupino Lane, "Prohibition is a joke in America." It is not the only one nor the best one. There is prohibition of Evolution in Tennessee. And that's a joke which educated people all over the civilized world have laughed at.

Miss Violet Tree says, "Men are more naturally idlers than are women." After a survey of our Black Army, we are inclined to believe her.

Pianos are often bought as part of the necessary furniture of a room, declares a music publisher. There is nothing in that. Many people subscribe to churches because they believe them to be necessary pieces of furniture for the Constitution. Both types of buyers are mistaken.

Says a coroner, it is the moral influence of a coroner which does so much good, more than that of any other court, and has done so for a thousand years. This gentleman has forgotten the sublime moral influence exercised for so long over heretics by the Ecclesiastical Courts and the Star Chamber.

"As far as we know," says Father E. Lester, "Spain is the only Christian country that, like King David, dances for joy in prayer." We feel sure we shall hear before long, if these pious Spaniards dance, like David, in the nude, that the Bishop of London and Mr. Harold Begbie have decided to "winter" in Spain. They never like to miss a good thing.

The greatest asset of youth is imagination, asserts Mr. F. Mitchell-Hedges. And especially, we presume, if you are a parson. But, then, the parson (like Peter Pan) mentally never does grow up. Freethinkers would lose a lot of amusement if he did.

#### LEST WE FORGET.

Some who are especially proud of their Puritan ancestry may be interested in the following, a copy of a letter in possession of the Massachusetts Historical Society. When we see the spirit of worship as illustrated by the Rev. Cotton Mather, we can understand that, while there may be fewer to-day to "do the Lord great service," there are more willing to aid humanity.

"To the Aged and Beloved John Higginson:

There be now at sea a shipp (for our friend Elias Holcroft of London did advise me by the last packet that it would be some time in August) called the Welcome, which has aboard it a hundred or more of the hereticks and malignants called Quakers, with William Penn the scamp at the head of them. The General Court has accordingly given secret orders to Master Malachi Haxett of the brig Porpoise to waylay said Welcome as near the end of Cod as may be, and make captives of the Penn and his ungodly crew, so that the Lord may be glorified and not mocked on the soil of this new country with the heathen worshippes of these people. Much spoil may be made by selling the whole lot to Barbadoes, where slaves fetch good prices in rumme and sugar, and we shall not only do the Lord great service by punishing the wicked, but shall make great gayne (gain), for his ministers and people.

Yours in the bonds of Christ,

COTTON MATHER."

## Correspondence.

### BLACK ART AND "WHITE CARGO."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Let me dissemble my love for friend Repton by aurling another pint pot at his head; an amiable pastime where one seldom hits the mark, but a pastime good for the pot trade. The word "neither," which I ignored, does not absolve Mr. Repton if we reason thus: "White Cargo" and "The Sailor's Return" are photographic art; because they are photographic art neither does anything to assist the coming-of-age of humanity, therefore photographic art does nothing to assist. "Running about with cameras" lends additional hue to this interpretation and saying that the phrase was used metaphysically or metaphorically does not bleach the incarnadine spot. However, Mr. Repton says he didn't mean it, and that ends the matter. I am deeply sensible of Mr. Repton's sensibility. His discontent with present-day drama or with present-day, anything is not a feeling to scoff at. As a feeling it is healthy; as an attitude picturesque. My claims for the worth of "White Cargo" were not extravagant. Mr. Repton pities me, and neatly turns the discussion into one of individual taste, yet he lays down certain lessons which drama worthy of the name should inculcate. Positive virtues he desires in a drama. He will find Mr. Shaw an able ally; Bunyan's hero being Shaw's pattern. "Thy people shall be my people," is a loving precept Mr. Repton would broadcast through the actor's art. All this is being done quite well by the Salvation Army. When it can be shown that this loving message need not be spoken or thought, all condescension vanished, no class distinction, in the meanest of English villages, Mr. Repton may be encouraged in advertising our superiority in his Bible message to the blacks.

I said the stage need not always be used for propaganda. That it is largely so used I am aware. Shaw and Brioux would make a tub of it. There ought to be room for another form of dramatic art. In "White Cargo" we have another form. Here we find almost personified like some grim ogre or "Immanent Will," the tropical heat sapping the mental and physical powers of the unfortunates who through indiscretions in their native spheres have sought sanctuary on the Gold Coast. The conflict is between humanity and natural forces, with the odds on the latter—the fight not so strenuous as to satisfy us fully, but clever artistry withal. When I stress this artistry Mr. Repton replies, "Cocoanuts don't grow at the North Pole," an answer relevant only to a bald geographical statement. If he had followed it up with the query, "What time is the next train?" he would have further proclaimed that he had missed the connection.

You can judge some dramas like an offence against the Blasphemy Laws by the manner, the matter being of secondary importance. In others the matter is all. "White Cargo" is saved by its manner or atmosphere. To say that white womanhood is vilified negatively, is fanciful, just because the only woman—a black one—isn't an angel. All the men, including the parson, are spotted. Largely contributory to Mr. Repton's disgust was the audience who hissed Tondeleyo for trying to poison her white husband—a London audience, I presume. What can you expect? The author cannot be held responsible for the low intelligence of London theatregoers. Up north an audience would watch Lucrezia Borgia poison the whole company and clamour for the stage hands to be done in as well.

"The drama," says my friend, "is in the valley of universal sickness," and sighs for the dramatist who will show us as children of chaos with the world for fatherhood. In that same valley we were, in Colley Cibber's time. In that valley, please God, we shall always be. The brave music of the distant drum when it approaches us, makes us yearn for the brave music of the distant bagpipes, and Mr. Repton's ideal drama would be oatmeal porridge without a cruel stepfather, a wicked uncle, and a supplanter or serpent to wheedle papa World from mother Chaos.

H. IRVING.

## ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

SIR,—I have read with interest Mr. Millar's article on R. L. Stevenson in yours of the 3rd, arising out of his review of the new life of that writer.

Mr. Millar says: "We may infer, also, that the later suppression of Stevenson's early freethinking was mainly due to the fear of alienating a public favour he had so resolutely set out to win."

May I suggest that Mr. Stevenson's attitude was determined by quite other causes? The change was probably due to the fact of Mr. Stevenson's interest in psychological matters. For some time he was connected with the effort to establish in Edinburgh a Spiritualist or Psychological Investigation Society, and was for a time its secretary.

If Mr. Millar will refer the matter to Dr. Gavin Clarke, late Member of Parliament for Caithness, who was associated with him in the matter, I think he will find confirmation.

Freethinkers will quite understand the habitual custom of biographers to leave out all reference to these matters, since they have suffered from the same thing. In the lives of Robert Owen, Abraham Lincoln, and others, we seldom get much mention to their connection with Spiritualism, and fellow sufferers should be kind to one another in such matters.

ERNEST W. OATEN.

## 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.

ETHICS BASED ON THE LAWS OF NATURE (Emerson Club, 14 Great George Street, Westminster): 3.30, Lecture in French by M. Deshumbert, "Une Excursion dans l'Au-Dela." All invited.

NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (101 Tottenham Court Road, 7.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin, "The Faked Bible.")

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Dr. Arthur Lynch, "Are Bishops Sane?"

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, Middle Floor, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham): 7, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, "Monkeyville, Evolution, and the Bible."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Mr. William Platt, "Romance and Reality in Rhineland."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, H. W. Nevinson, "A Walk in Africa."

## COUNTRY.

## INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Derricourt's Café, High Street): Tea and Social; tea at 5 o'clock. Tickets 1s. 6d. inclusive; children half price.

LEEDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Trades' Hall, Upper Fountain Street): 7.15, Mr. A. Haigh, "Do We Survive the Death of the Flesh?" Questions and discussions invited.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, 120 Rusholme Road): Mr. George Whitehead, 3, "Darwin's Views on Evolution"; 6.30, "Some Important Lessons from History." Questions and discussion invited.

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (3 Carmarthen Road, Back Entrance): 6.30, Branch Meeting.

"THE EVERLASTING GEMS" is not only a satire on the poetic conceptions of Masfield, Bridges, Noyes, Chesterton, Belloc, and others, but it is a slashing attack on their religious crudities. You will feel jollier after reading this book. 2s. 6d., post free, from THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

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## SALE AND EXCHANGE.

This column is limited to advertisements from private individuals only. Letters may, if it is so desired, be addressed to the Box Number, c/o "Freethinker" Office. Advertising rates 6d. for first line, every additional line 4d.

## FOR SALE.

ONE H.P. HORIZONTAL PETROL ENGINE, complete; new; £17; £5 goes to Endowment Fund when sold.—HAMPSON, Garden House, Duxbury, Nr. Chorley.

LEATHER SUIT CASE, 26 in. by 15 in.; practically new; exchange for Thomas Hardy's novels to value.—Box 60.

Woman's Mysteries (Talbot), Samuel Butler (Cannan), Baconian Heresy (Robertson), Shelley in England (Ingen), and others; or will exchange for Olive Schreiner's Letters, Maude's Tolstoy on Art, or others.—Offers and enquiries to Box 61.

Proceedings of the Society for Psychological Research, 6 vols., from 1882-1890; good condition; no reasonable offer refused.—Box 62.

Studies in the Psychology of Sex (Havelock Ellis), 4 vols., published 1920, Philadelphia, F. A. Davis Co., third edition; excellent condition; what offers?—Box 63.

History of the Reformation (W. Cobbet); Clarke & Haslam's Letters to the Clergy, Chapters on Human Love (Mortimer); sale or exchange.—Box 66.

## WANTED.

BOUND Volumes of National Reformer prior to 1866; also vol. for 1875; purchased or exchanged for modern Free-thought works.—Box 64.

FOOTE'S Crimes of Christianity, Freethinkers' Text Book, Part ii. (Annie Besant), The Prophet of Nazareth (Meredith), At Random (Saladin).—Box 65.

**BID THE MERRY BELLS** ring to thine ear that thou art crowned; diademed with firm resolve that the Freethinker advertisers shall have at least the chance of your next tailoring. Begin by writing at once 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 & MADE, New Street, Bakewell, Derbyshire.

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# Why Not Join the N.S.S.?

There are thousands of *Freethinker* readers who are not members of the National Secular Society. Why is this so?

Naturally all who read the *Freethinker* are not convinced Secularists. With all who are, and are not members of the N.S.S., there appears only two reasons for non-membership. (1) They have not been asked to join. (2) They have not thought about it.

Well, the Society now asks all non-attached Freethinkers to consider this advertisement as a personal and cordial invitation to join, and those who have not thought about it to give the matter their earnest and serious consideration.

For more than sixty years the National Secular Society has been fighting the cause of every Freethinker in the country. Its two first Presidents, Charles Bradlaugh and G. W. Foote, were the most brilliant Freethinkers of their time, and they gave themselves unstintingly to the Cause they loved. It is not claiming too much to say that public opinion on matters of religion to-day would not be what it is but for the work of these men and of the Society of which they were the successive heads.

Many of the things for which the Society fought in its early years are now well on their way to becoming accomplished facts, and are being advocated by men and women who do not know how much they have to thank the Freethought Movement for the opinions they hold. The movement for the secularization of the Sunday has grown apace, and may now be advocated with but little risk of the abuse it once incurred. The plea for the more humane and the more scientific treatment of the criminal has now become part of the programme of many reformers who take no part in the actual work of Freethought. The same holds good of the agitation for the equality of the sexes before the law. Other reforms that have now become part and parcel of the general reform movement found in the National Secular Society their best friend when friends were sadly needed.

To-day Freethinkers have won the right to at least standing room. They can appear as Freethinkers in a court of justice without being subjected to the degradation of the religious oath. The abolition of the Blasphemy Laws has not yet been achieved, but it has been made increasingly difficult to enforce them. Thousands of pounds have been spent by the Society in fighting Blasphemy prosecutions, and thanks to the agitation that has been kept alive, the sister organization, the Secular Society, Limited, was able to secure from the House of Lords a decision which stands as the financial charter of the Freethought Movement. It is no longer possible to legally rob Freethought organizations, as was once the case. For that we have to thank the genius of the Society's late President, G. W. Foote.

The National Secular Society stands for the complete rationalization of life, for the destruction of theological superstition in all its forms, for the complete secularization of all State-supported schools, for the abolition of all religious tests, and for the scientific ordering of life with one end in view—the greater happiness of every member of the community.

There is no reason why every Freethinker should not join the National Secular Society. There should be members and correspondents in every town and village in the kingdom. The Society needs the help of all, and the help of all should be freely given.

This is intended as a personal message to unattached Freethinkers. If you have not been asked to join, consider that you are being asked now. If you have not thought about it before, think about it now. The membership fee is nominal. The amount you give is left to your interest and ability. The great thing is to associate yourself with those who are carrying on the work of Freethought in this country. To no better Cause could any man or woman devote themselves.

Below will be found a form of membership. Fill it up and forward to the Secretary at once.

## NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

*President:* CHAPMAN COHEN.

*General Secretary:* Miss E. M. VANCE.

*Headquarters:* 62 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

### Form of Membership.

Any person over the age of sixteen is eligible as a member on signing the following declaration:—

“I desire to join the National Secular Society, and I pledge myself, if admitted as a Member, to co-operate in promoting its objects.”

Name .....

Address .....

Occupation .....

Active or Passive .....

Dated this.....day of.....19.....

This declaration should be transmitted to the General (or Branch) Secretary with a subscription.

**When this Application has been accepted by the Executive, a Membership Card is issued by the General Secretary.**

*Beyond a minimum of Two Shillings per year, members of the Parent Society contribute according to their means and interest in the cause. Branches fix their own Annual Subscription.*

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*(Under the Auspices of the National Secular Society.)*

AT THE  
MIDLAND GRAND HOTEL, N.W.

ON  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 12, 1926

Chairman - - Mr. CHAPMAN COHEN

Reception at 6.30.

Dinner at 7 p.m. prompt.

TICKETS 8s.

Tickets will be considered sold, and the seats reserved, unless returned by January 9.

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