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Views and Opinions.

Challenging God.

We are all acquainted with the lying Christian story of Bradlaugh pulling out his watch and calling on God if he really existed to strike him dead within three minutes. We well remember the horror with which a Christian told that yarn many years ago, and also the indignation with which some Freethinking friends of our acquaintance repudiated the legend. For our own part we felt neither indignant nor horrified. Bradlaugh knew the belief in a God was mere delusion, and so ran no risk. The Christian certainly did not object to the story because he did not want Bradlaugh, or any other Freethinker, to drop dead. Most would have met that circumstance with the utmost resignation. All we could see in it was that they objected to their faith being put to a clear test. And this despite the fact that it is exactly the kind of thing with which Christian history is filled. In the Bible there is Elijah, who when up against the prophets of Baal challenged Baal to set fire to the pile of wood his worshippers had erected, and mocked that deity in language which in a court of law in 1926 in Christian England would have got him sentenced for blasphemy. In the New Testament there is the case of Ananias who was struck dead because he told the Apostle a lie—a practice probably discontinued because it would have decimated the Christian community. And there is the famous case of Savonarola, who challenged God to send down fire on a particular occasion in Florence. There are hundreds of other cases, proved by sound Christian testimony, of men and women who have been struck dead, blind, paralysed, or otherwise afflicted when they had challenged God to do something or the other, or had offended him in some way. We have good religious assurance that it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God, and it does seem rather a troublesome thing to have anything at all to do with him.

Give God Time.

* * *

All these cases of divine interference date from a time when God was believed to do something. Now that believers seem chiefly inclined to prove that he does nothing at all, a challenge to God is dismissed as ridiculous. That will account for the publicity given to the case of an American novelist, Mr.

Sinclair Lewis, who on hearing some Fundamentalists declare that God had struck Luther Burbank dead because of his Atheism (that is not astonishing since it is the only way in which one can effectually silence an Atheist) went into a Kansas City Church and gave God ten minutes to prove his existence by striking him dead. Mr. Lewis, it will be noted, increased the regular time from three minutes to ten. But even then it does not seem to us long enough. We are told that some of the fixed stars are so far away that it takes hundreds of years for a ray of light from them to reach us. But sound travels more slowly than light, and how can Mr. Lewis expect his prayer to reach heaven, which is alleged to be beyond the stars, in ten minutes? There must be reason in all things, and a Fundamentalist might reply that if unbelievers were not in so much of a hurry a reply might be given. Mr. Lewis may not drop dead within ten minutes, but one day, when the proper time has elapsed, Mr. Lewis will have an answer. Mr. Lewis should learn from the policy pursued by those who pray. No one ever asks God to send rain within, say, twenty-four hours. That would be imposing conditions on the Almighty. They simply ask God to send rain when in his wisdom he thinks we ought to get it. And when rain is asked for in that trustful, and beautifully religious spirit, it never fails to come. Nowhere does God refrain from sending rain *after the prayer has been said in trust and confidence*. But God will not submit to a time limit. It is impertinence to ask it. And if Mr. Lewis had simply asked God to prove his existence by removing him from the earth when it should seem to him fit to do so, there is not the least doubt but that one day the request would be granted.

* * *

What Shall it Profit a Man?

Mr. Lewis's action has apparently shocked the very religious feelings of Mr. James Douglas, the editor of the *Sunday Express*, and he unburdens his soul to the world on this matter. "No Modernist Christian believes," he says, "that God slays infidels, Freethinkers, Rationalists, or Agnostics in order to punish them for their disbelief in his existence." We take Mr. Douglas's word for it, that those people who do not believe in the existence of God are not punished for it. But if they are not punished for their disbelief perhaps Mr. Douglas will tell us what does happen to them? Are they less happy, or less honest? Do they die sooner, or have a greater number of diseases? Do more of them go insane, or do they understand less about the world than believers? Or if none of these things happen to them, if in every respect they are the same as the folk who believe in God, perhaps Mr. Douglas will inform us what one gains by believing in God, and what one loses by disbelieving in him? If Mr. Douglas is correct, it makes no difference whatever—at least, in this world, and we hardly think he would hold that God is so mean as to leave the unbeliever quite alone in this world, only to pile on the agony in

the next. So it really amounts to this—a man may get through life in every respect as well without God as with him. In that case we merely ask, what on earth is the use of believing in God at all? We cannot see that he does anything in the shape of regulating things, and he does not interfere with people who have nothing to do with him. Mr. Douglas's deity is about the most useless kind of lumber conceivable—except so far as he serves to fill a couple of columns in a newspaper.

* * *

Newspaper Nonsense.

Mr. Douglas declaratory is puzzling. Mr. Douglas explanatory is simply funny. He says we do not now imagine heaven as a place, although Jesus went "up" to it, and Christians still believe they will meet their friends there. He explains: "Heaven is no longer a territory, but a spiritual state, and God is a spiritual mystery who is both unknown and known, both knowable and unknowable, both nameable and unnameable." That settles it. A God who is at the same time known and unknown, unknown and unknowable, etc., ought to satisfy the most mystical of religionists. Heaven being no longer a territory, we cannot speak of going anywhere when we die, or even before we die. We are merely in a spiritual state which does not exist anywhere, because if it exists anywhere it must be somewhere, and being somewhere it might be taken as the equivalent of territory. We are not quite sure of this, though, because as Mr. Douglas's god is both known and unknown, it is quite possible that his heaven is both somewhere and nowhere, without the nowhere doing away with the somewhere. A most admirable religion—for a working journalist. He can write at length in this strain, sure of not offending anyone because no one will have the slightest idea as to what he means. If we were a professional journalist, writing with one eye on a proprietor, who confesses that his guides are the big advertising drapers, and with the other on a religion-soaked public, this is exactly the kind of religion we should like. One would really like Mr. Douglas's confidential opinion of it all.

* * *

Why Not Tell the Truth?

Mr. Douglas tells us that "it is impossible for any human being to challenge his God with any certainty that the challenge will be accepted by God.....I cannot conceive the possibility of any human challenge being accepted by God. History is the record of these unaccepted challenges." We agree, but that will not fit in with what the churches have always taught. And if Mr. Douglas believes this to be true, why does he not tell the Christian Churches that for generations they have been misleading, often deliberately misleading, the people, and that they were only stopped continuing to mislead through the activity of unbelievers? Would it not be as well for some of our leading publicists to occasionally take their courage in both hands and tell the people the plain truth about the churches and about religion, instead of toiling along miles behind the best thought on the subject, and ladling out columns of verbiage which serve to raise doubts of their own sincerity? We agree with Mr. Douglas also that "Man has in all ages made God after his own image, and has endowed him with human prejudices and with human bigotries." That is a very old Freethinking gospel. But in all seriousness we ask Mr. Douglas to pull himself together and try and understand what such a statement means. If God has made man always in his own image, what becomes of God as an existence apart from man? Is God ever anything more than

man's own image drawn large on the canvas of infinity? And if man has given the god he made his own passions and his own bigotries what is the use of talking of God leading men along the path of development? It is not God that leads man, it is man that develops God. As man outgrows his own ignorance, his own bigotries and his own prejudices he takes them away from his gods. But always it is the man who develops first. It is the man who leads. And how long is that process to keep on? How long will it be before man recognizes that the personifying of his own feelings and passions and then falling in worship before them, as some actual independent existence, is foolish and useless? It is the awakening of man that is needed, not the discovery of God. And that awakening would come the more rapidly and the more surely if our press, instead of pandering to the ignorance and the prejudice of an ill-instructed public, possessed writers who said what they thought after they had taken the trouble to know.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Bishop of Durham on Robertson of Brighton.

IN connection with the commemoration of the centenary of the consecration of Holy Trinity Church, Brighton, special services have been held and eloquent sermons preached by noted divines. Holy Trinity Church, of which Dr. R. J. Campbell is the present incumbent, owes its celebrity alone to the fact that from 1847 to 1853 Frederick William Robertson—popularly known as Robertson of Brighton—ministered in it. Robertson was one of the most characteristic products of the nineteenth century. His father, Captain Robertson, noticing that Frederick, at an early age, exhibited unusual signs of great nobility of character and devotion to purity and truthfulness, suggested that he should become a clergyman, but the lad flatly refused to entertain the idea, saying, "Anything but that." He was articled to a solicitor, but that uncongenial employment undermined his health in a year's time. Then for two years he was preparing to enter his father's profession, which he deeply loved. Ultimately, however, he followed his father's advice, and matriculated at Brazenose College, Oxford; but the Oxford atmosphere he did not find at all congenial. However, he was a voracious reader, and, as he afterwards said, "Plato, Aristotle, Butler, Thucydides, Sterne, Jonathan Edwards, passed like the iron atoms of the blood into my mental constitution." In 1840 he was ordained by the Bishop of Winchester, and early in 1842 he accepted a curacy in Cheltenham, where he remained for upwards of four years. But all this time he was the slave of doubt, and eventually he retired to the Continent to wrestle with the giant. Writing from Heidelberg in 1846 he said:—

A man who had read theological and philosophical controversy long before with painful interest—a man who at different times had lived in the atmosphere of thought in which Jonathan Edwards, Plato, Lucretius, Thomas Brown, Carlyle, Emerson, and Fichte lived—who has steeped his soul and memory in Byron's strongest feelings—who has walked with Newman years ago to the brink of an awful precipice, and chosen rather to look upon it calmly, and know the worst of the secrets of the darkness, than recoil with Newman, in fear and tenderness, back to the infallibility of Romanism—such a man is not likely to have been influenced by a few casual statements of difficulties which he had read of a thousand times before.

Yes, Robertson's mental conflict was extremely severe, and here the interesting questions are, what prevented doubt from gaining the victory? What enabled Robertson to recover portions of his former creed and return to the pulpit? The answer to both questions is that it was his non-critical frame of mind in relation to the Four Gospels. There was one point which doubt never assailed at all, namely, the credibility of the Gospel records, and his new creed began to grow from and around that one point, or as he put it himself, "the one great certainty to which, in the midst of the darkest doubt, I never ceased to cling—the entire symmetry and loveliness and the unequalled nobleness of the humanity of the Son of Man." Had he studied the Gospel narratives critically and discovered how utterly unreliable and contradictory they really are, in all probability he would have matured into a thoroughgoing Freethinker.

Unfortunately, his non-critical attitude to the Bible allowed him to resume preaching, and, in August, 1847, he started his brief but distinguished career as incumbent of Holy Trinity Chapel. In less than six years he died at the age of thirty-seven. It was that short ministry, and that alone, which made that church famous. What elements contributed to the greatness of Robertson's preaching? They were numerous, but the chief among them was its uniqueness. Robertson stood absolutely alone in the Anglican Church. So utterly unlike the generality of the clergy was he that the bulk of society looked down upon and bitterly denounced him as a dangerous heretic. He suffered savage persecution, and the animosity of the *Record* pursued him to the end. In the nineteenth century the Church of England people seemed to find their supreme delight in hunting down alleged heretics, and their successors are among us to-day. Dr. Simpson, Canon and Precentor of St. Paul's, had he lived in Robertson's day, would have been one of his cruel tormentors, for in his sermon on him in the *Guardian* of April 23, he affirms that in his discourses there is discerned "the absence of a strong word of power, of a central and dominating message," and he makes a most unbrotherly statement about the late Stopford Brooke, Robertson's biographer. The Bishop of Durham, who delivered the centenary discourse in Holy Trinity Church on Wednesday, April 21, is apparently free from partisan prejudices. He says:—

There did exist in England then a large body of educated laity which, though disgusted with the rancour of the religious parties, refused to be alienated from religion, and still frequented the churches, though with mixed feelings and a waxing hesitation. They were neither incredulous of Christian doctrine, nor doubtful of Christian ethics, only infinitely weary of "the strife of tongues and the tumult of" the Churches. These men found in Robertson of Brighton a spiritual teacher, in whose light they could see light, and whose ecclesiastical isolation seemed to interpret and relieve their own religious distress.

At this point Dr. Henson sinks into the slough of despond, saying sadly but truly:—

In the course of the two generations which have crossed the world's stage since the voice of the great preacher was hushed by death, English society has become secularized. The laity who followed Robertson have few, if any, successors. The habit of churchgoing has died out of great sections of public life. Christianity is no longer taken for granted, nor is the discussion of its doctrine and morality marked by reverence and reticence. It is an inevitable speculation whether such a preaching ministry as was carried on between 1847 and 1853 in this church is possible in the present circumstances of English society.

Undoubtedly the Bishop's estimate is entirely reliable. From all sources we learn that the masses of the people are completely non-religious, and no religious revival succeeds in touching them. Christianity has lost its hold upon and influence over them, and only social responsibilities are of interest to them. The fact that Robertson died at thirty-seven leads the Bishop to indulge in some amusing fancies:—

Had his life been prolonged to old age, and he had lived to see the close of the nineteenth century, what would have been the course of his development? It is a fascinating but a futile speculation. We may be fairly certain that he would have stood out boldly against the disgraceful panic which followed the publication of *Essays and Reviews* in 1860; that he would have been in the van of those who welcomed the great advances of the physical sciences which distinguished the last half of the century; that he would have anticipated and outpassed *Lux Mundi* in his acceptance of Biblical Criticism; that he would have gone far with the Christian Socialists in giving to the Christian profession a more direct reference to social obligations. But I do not think that Robertson would have been either a Modernist or a Socialist.

Here again we are disposed to agree with his lordship, but we go much farther and maintain that all such reformers, from Abelard downwards, have unconsciously done their respective shares towards the complete emancipation of the human intellect. In other words, every restatement of the Christian faith in terms of increasing knowledge has for its ultimate outcome, not its improvement and perpetuation, but its decomposition and entire disappearance from the world. Of the truth of this impression we are most profoundly convinced. This conviction is the reason why we so cordially welcome all so-called revivals of religion. The study of their nature and history opens our eyes to the certain fact that they do religion incalculable and endless harm. Theological and ecclesiastical reforms have had the same effect in all generations. They all tend to weaken the belief in the supernatural origin and nature of Christianity. Luther and Calvin were the greatest and most effectual enemies religion has ever known, and we hold that the Catholic Church is fully justified in so regarding them. Such works as *Essays and Reviews*, *Lux Mundi*, and *Literature and Dogma* have rendered the cause of Freethought an enormous service, and so has the publication of countless editions of Robertson's *Sermons*. No wonder the Bishop of Durham has arrived at the conclusion that the Church has been, is, and cannot but continue to be the most colossal failure the world has ever seen. Why is it such a tragic failure? Surely because it is the greatest fraud ever inflicted upon mankind. What we long and work for is its destruction, its total dethronement, which can only occur after it has died and been buried. And this, of course, is only another way of saying that what we long and work for, with all our might, is the rise and triumph of Humanism, which is the only true philosophy of life.

J. T. LLOYD.

A costermonger in Hoxton mentioned to the vicar the loss of a friend and colleague. The vicar made a selection of his impressive comments. "I trust," he said, "that he was not afraid to meet his Maker." "Not a bit," declared the man cheerfully, "not in the very least, it was the other old party he was afraid of coming across."—*Pett Ridge*.

Great men are meteors that consume themselves to light the earth.—*Thomas Hardy*.

Pious Perjurers.

Miching mallecho—this means mischief.

—Shakespeare, *Hamlet*.

The lie at the lips of the priest.

—Swinburne.

Employ your time in improving yourself by other men's writings.—Socrates.

At this season of the year flowers make their appearance; poets burst into more or less tuneful song; and Mormon missionaries arrive in this country. And thereby hangs a tale. According to the American newspapers, the Latter Day Saints expect a goodly harvest of converts this year, especially from Britain and Germany. Why is this? It is because the industrial conditions in both these countries make poor folk anxious to try their fortunes in the New World, and the Mormons are willing to pay the passage money. Hence the delightful spectacle of many hundreds of people paying lip-service to an absurd superstition in order to get bread to eat. It is as certain as night following day that these poor people would never dream of embracing Mormonism unless the pill was gilded with gold. Just as Henry of Navarre turned Papist to gain the throne of France, so do these folk turn hypocrites in order to get a fresh start in life in the United States. Henry said, complacently, that "Paris was well worth a mass." Let us hope that these emigrants will not find Salt Lake too salt for their liking, and too many wives a burden.

This association of "God" and "Mammon" is by no means unique. The Anglican Church, for example, can offer 25,000 jobs, ranging from the £15,000 of the Archbishop of Canterbury to the curate at Dunghill-on-the-Swizzle. In large churches there are paid organists and choristers; and even the vergers get his pieces of silver. Nor does this complete the list of inducements, for worshippers are bribed with Pleasant Sunday afternoons, string bands, soloists, and other secular attractions. Children are roped into the Sunday-schools by means of excursions to the country, or seaside, and by social gatherings, and tea-fights.

To make services more attractive the Christian religion has been shorn of many of its most unpleasant features. Blood and brimstone have almost been eliminated from the vocabulary of the higher and better-educated clergy. Undogmatic religionism is, in the last analysis, but pure and simple nonsense, but it now passes for the religion of Jesus Christ with tens of thousands of people who profess and call themselves Christians. This dilution of dogma, however, has had a disintegrating effect, not only on the Church of England, but upon all the many other varieties of Christianity. Tame Members of Parliament, women preachers, actors and actresses, and all sorts of notorieties, threaten to oust the very parsons from their pulpits. Even Bernard Shaw has been allowed to air some of his theological views in a London place of worship; and certain so-called Labour leaders have become almost as popular with congregations as Prebendary Carlile with his trombone.

This sort of thing is so easy to start, and so difficult to stop. In the long run it means the secularizing of the Christian Religion, which is precisely what Freethinkers have been aiming at for generations. Some time ago, at a leading London Non-conformist place of worship, a well-known actor, and a famous contributor to *Punch*, occupied the pulpit to pronounce eulogiums upon a famous Freethinker. The queue of people outside the church gave the finishing touch of comedy. It was magnificent, but it was not the Christian Religion as taught

for near twenty centuries. It gave one shocks down the spine. It was almost like meeting one's own pet dog in the form of a pound of sausages.

Nor is this all. "The Book of Common Prayer," second only in sanctity to the Bible to large numbers of Christians, has suffered great changes. Drastic alterations have been made in the hallowed volume, and barbarous and indecent portions of the "Psalms" eliminated by special act of the Convocation of Canterbury. The "strong language" of the Church's marriage service has also been toned down. It is all profoundly unsettling, and hard-shell believers might be pardoned for echoing the cry of the old-fashioned Turks: "After us, the deluge." If this lopping and pruning process is not checked, the Holy Bible and the *Pink 'Un* will be the only two publications untouched by the dainty blue pencil of the censor.

This change of opinion on the part of the clergy is worth noting. So far as the Anglican priesthood is concerned, such alteration of attitude is simply perjury. There is no escape from this. At ordination every priest of the Government Religion has to subscribe, in the most solemn manner, to the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion. And the whole of these articles are nothing if not dogmatic. They are as far removed from present-day invertebrate theology as the North Pole from the South Pole. And it is perfectly apparent that numbers of Anglican priests, in spite of their ordination vows, no longer believe in them, nor observe them, and their main reasons for remaining in the Anglican Church are "purple, palaces, patronage, profit, and power," as a former cheerful Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral expresses it. And the right to appoint these successors of the Apostles to benefices is sold for money in the open market, as if it were coal or the copyright of a music-hall song.

The Anglican Church is the State religion, and the hypocrisy of its thousands of priests is no light matter. Although these perjurers no longer believe the dogmas they are paid to preach, they expect ordinary citizens to support them in their injustice and make-believe. The State consists of persons who profess all forms of religion and none. If the State compels its citizens to pay for religious teaching in which they do not believe, it commits a real injustice. This is not a question between Anglicans and Wesleyans, or between one sect and another sect. It is, indeed, unjust to make a Quaker pay for teaching the doctrine of the Sacraments, or a Unitarian for teaching the deity of the Trinity; but it is equally unjust to make an Atheist pay for teaching the existence of God. For fifty years rival factions of Christians have striven for supremacy in State education, and in their long-continued struggles the rights of the children, and the claims of education, have equally been lost sight of. It is high time that Secularists took a hand in this and brought the sectarian disputants back to a sense of realities.

The hypocritical affectation of the various churches with regard to their attitude to labour is only paralleled by the pious pretensions of Labour leaders. Both have an aroma like that of the crowded cabin of a small Channel steamer on a rough day. "God," said one of these worthies recently, "intended the land for the people." If so, it is quaint how the ground landlords diddled the Almighty. The whole conception is crude in the extreme, and unworthy of an educated citizen of a civilized country. But it served "to tickle the ears of the groundlings," and so it was used. It is only worthy of the followers of a creed, who, outraging the spirit of the age, pray for rain and fine weather and for individual members of the Royal Family.

The Christian religion, tempered with hypocrisy, is largely tolerated because there is money in the sorry business. For any purpose connected with the real welfare of the British people, this Oriental superstition might as well be dead and buried—as it will be when people are educated sufficiently to see the truth. Intellectually, this religion is dying. It is only dead men's money that prolongs its dissolution.

MIMNERMUS.

Atheism and Birth Control.

II.

ALTHOUGH, as I have already pointed out in these pages, Dr. Marie Stopes never even mentioned Francis Place in the "historical sketch" of the Birth Control movement, which she published some years ago in the *Cambridge Magazine*—and which, I think, can now be obtained in pamphlet form—yet in the historical part of her *Contraception* he is ushered in with quite a blaze of trumpets. He was the real father of the movement as we have it to-day. He was, like herself, an opponent of Malthus, and he had left lots of manuscripts which, she prided herself, were more or less unknown till she investigated their contents. Let me give her exact words:—

The greatest and most enduring opponent of Malthus (the one whom to-day, nevertheless, all the Neo-Malthusians are actually following!) is Francis Place. His famous book, *Principles of Population*, including an examination of the proposed remedies of Malthus, appeared in 1822. It is the only book to which Place publicly put his name although Place was a worker, collector, and annotator of such immense industry that his commonplace books and manuscripts fill over a hundred huge volumes in the British Museum.....His life has recently been written by Graham Wallas, but I fancy that Prof. Wallas has not seen all the original letters and MSS. that I have had the good fortune to see through the kindness of the British Museum authorities.....Place boldly attacked Malthus and demonstrated the utter futility of the unnatural remedy of deferred marriage proposed by him, and, at the same time, replied to Malthus's opponent, Godwin, and staunchly advocated the necessity for dealing with the over-fecundity of the poor.

It will be noticed in the first place that Dr. Stopes insists that Place was the *greatest and most enduring opponent* of Malthus, and in the last sentence of the above extract actually makes Place advocating the *necessity* for dealing with the *over-secundity* of the poor! Here you get again that typical but rich confusion of the Malthusian position which ever distinguishes Dr. Stopes's work. The average reader not familiar with the history of the movement would naturally conclude that Francis Place was *against* Malthus. The plain and sufficient answer to that nonsense is that it is not true: Place was a thorough Malthusian. Let the reader turn to Prof. Graham Wallas' *Life of Place* and he will find that though the famous "Radical tailor" did not agree with everything Malthus wrote, there is no sturdier or stronger advocate of Malthusianism in history. Indeed, in the little pamphlet on Francis Place written by Mr. St. John Ervine for the Fabian Society, is "until he died he believed in the redemption of the people from poverty could only be brought about by the limitation of families." (Mr. Ervine himself contradicts the "only" a little later on—he finds Place does believe something else is required.) "Laws administered might do much but they would only be trifling with a great problem." Evidently

this does not look as if Mr. Ervine thought Place was an opponent of Malthus. Place laughed at Ensor who was about to publish an essay containing "a refutation of Malthus." "I do not know," he said, "exactly what you mean when you say, 'I have refuted Malthus.'" Professor Wallas points out that "Place was often accused of invincible prejudice on this point." He quotes a contemporary, "On all other subjects but Malthusianism, Mr. Place is a close, candid, and most even-tempered reasoner." I could quote dozens of passages to show Place was *not* an opponent of Malthusianism, but the above suffices to prove my contention that Dr. Stopes is hopelessly at sea whenever she deals with the subject. Of course, what she *meant* was that Place advocated early marriage, and contraceptives, while Malthus' remedy for over-population was *late* marriage. Well, in that we are all opponents of the *remedy*. Indeed, I doubt whether Malthus ever got anyone to agree with him except a few clergymen.

As for the MSS. Place left behind him, I venture to say that our own Joseph Mazzini Wheeler probably had a good look at all he could lay his hands on over thirty years ago. In the article on Place in his *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*, he mentions them, and also one other little fact carefully suppressed by Dr. Stopes—a fact which is my excuse for writing at such length on Francis Place. He is, in any case, apt to be forgotten even by Freethinkers and the splendid and enduring work he did for the poor and social reform generally deserves to be constantly remembered. The precious little fact noted by Wheeler is that Place "always professed to be an Atheist." Now in her constant disparagement of Charles Bradlaugh, Dr. Stopes always insists that it was his Atheism which dragged the movement "into the gutter"—the dear old ladies and sister clergymen who were beginning to take to Birth Control like ducks to water before 1877, could, of course, have nothing to do with it directly Atheism touched it. Yet Place was an Atheist! I ask Dr. Stopes, did he not drag Birth Control "into the gutter"? If not, how can she explain his Atheism? Richard Carlile was another Atheist—at least as far as Dr. Stopes' deity is concerned. She contends that his *Every Woman's Book* was really written by Place. I looked up Mr. Guy Aldred's little work on Carlile to see what he had to say on the matter. Alas, Place is not even mentioned and there is no hint of Carlile's book. Yet that he looked upon it as important, I'm quite certain, as I remember reading somewhere that Carlile's wish was to be remembered, if he were remembered, by his work on Birth Control (known then, of course, by other names). How Mr. Aldred could ignore this side of the great work Carlile did is beyond me to understand.

Though it may seem an ungracious thing to say, I find in Dr. Stopes' *Contraception* very little that has any claim to be either original in thought or even the result of careful research. As far as her description of the methods used in practical birth control goes, she is not any clearer than the little work I translated for Mr. G. Hardy—*How to Prevent Pregnancy*—years before Dr. Stopes published her *Married Love*. She still insists, however, that Dr. Trall's *Sexual Physiology*, published in 1866, ought to be recognized as a great pioneer work because some description of preventive methods are given therein and that nothing better was known between the above date and her own works, published four or five years ago! I think it would be difficult to beat this delightful nonsense if one tried, and I can only express my surprise that such a statement can really be allowed to pass unchallenged by some of the doctors who support her. Firstly, we have

Dr. Trall's own words that he was *not* a Birth Controller: "Let it be distinctly understood that I do not approve any method for preventing pregnancy....." (p. 213, 1st Edition). That is indisputable proof, is it not, that Trall was a "pioneer"? Secondly, his methods are so vague that I challenge Dr. Stopes to try them with any success in her own clinic. Thirdly, Dr. Trall actually gives a clear method of procuring *abortion*. So much for Dr. Stopes' "pioneer."

As a matter of fact, a large number of works giving clear and good preventive methods were always to be had during the nineteenth century, and for those who are interested as well as for the benefit of Dr. Stopes, who probably imagines her book is the last word on the subject, I will freely translate a passage from *Ans den Memoiren einer Saengerin*—supposed to be the autobiography of the famous opera singer, Wilhelmine Schœder-Devrient (1804-1860). She was discussing birth control methods with an Englishman named Ferry, who had with him a valuable work on the subject.

"There are many methods," said Ferry, "but few men and women know them. If you wish to be more fully acquainted with the various preventives, read this book, *The Art of Making Love Without Fear*, which I will give you."

She read it with care. It was written or edited by a doctor, and was practically impossible to procure as it had become exceedingly rare. The writer of the memoirs gives some details from the book and says enough to show that we know precious little more these days about contraceptive methods than she did in 1840 or thereabouts! Indeed, it must be obvious to anyone at all familiar with the sexual question that men like the Marquis de Sade and Casanova, who devoted the best part of their lives to what Ovid calls the art of love, would not have required any lessons from Dr. Stopes' latest work. Of course books like the one referred to by the famous singer were not for the "common herd." The men who wrote popular treatises did so with the fear of heavy punishment, fines, and imprisonment hanging over them, and prisons then were not quite what they are to-day. Dr. Knowlton, Robert Dale Owen, Richard Carlile, Dr. George Drysdale, Dr. H. A. Albutt, and many others all published works which the poorer classes could buy. Yet the curious thing is that among Place's bitterest opponents of birth control, were *working men*. Has Dr. Stopes a generous word for any of these brave and true pioneers? With the exception of Place, she can hardly mention them, when she does mention them, without a sneer.

Yet all through her book, while violently denouncing Malthus and Malthusianism she keeps quoting fervent Malthusians or giving us their names—most of them being, I need hardly add, Atheists. She gives us a long passage from Dr. Forel's *Sexual Ethics*: "If unlimited reproduction is permitted, it is possible that existing space may be insufficient to meet the needs of the enormous multitudes of men which must result. The latter may then fall victims to famine....." and so on—pure, rank Malthusianism. And she actually sends the reader to Adelyne More's *Fecundity versus Civilization* for its "valuable references"—a pamphlet remarkable for its thorough Malthusianism.

But I have said, I think, quite enough to show how confused her book is on this great vital question—to anyone who knows even a little of its history; and the reader will be able to judge how much "new matter both scientific and historical" she claims in her Preface to give, really is new matter.

For the rest, it would be a thankless task to pick out the many slips of carelessness in which the book abounds—such as the one where she mentions "an Arabic manual of the sixteenth century, and calls it "*Les Maitres d'Amour*." She probably means *The Perfumed Garden*—the book which Sir Richard Burton (another Atheist) was translating when he died, the unfinished translation being destroyed by his pious wife.

That Dr. Stopes has done useful work in furthering the Birth Control movement I should be the last to deny. But her work was only possible because of the great Freethought pioneers who, in the very teeth of almost united Christian opinion, forced the attention of the public on a great social question. They drew upon themselves the foulest obloquy but they knew the justice of their cause. That cause has triumphed, and soon birth control information will be given free to all who desire it in the country's welfare clinics. And to no man can greater credit be given for that vindication of his opinions than to Charles Bradlaugh, the Atheist.

Since the above was written I have had the pleasure of hearing a debate on Birth Control between Dr. Stopes and Lord Morris—a Roman Catholic peer. This gentleman relegated everything to authority—his own Church, of course, being the authority. Very little else he said against artificial preventives was of the slightest value, nor did he bring forward a single argument that could possibly have had any weight with a birth controller. Dr. Stopes had a particularly easy task, which she fulfilled quite admirably. For me it was interesting because most of her best arguments looked as if they were taken straight from the mouth or writings of such Malthusians as Dr. Dunlop or Dr. Drysdale or Mr. R. B. Kerr. Certainly she never showed any sign of being against Malthus. Lord Morris's knowledge of the Bible, to which he confidently appealed, can be gauged by his saying that St. Paul not only knew every word of the Old Testament, but of the New Testament as well! While that of Dr. Stopes' is evident from her claiming, not that Jesus was the greatest Birth Controller the world had ever seen—that may come later—but that he really was for and not against Birth Control.

Earl Russell, in a witty speech, could hardly conceal his contempt for the religious nonsense both debaters were responsible for, and the audience filed away delighted at Dr. Stopes' smashing victory.

H. CUTNER.

Man the Master.

For man is the master of things.
Glory to man in the highest!

—Swinburne.

WAS he a god, from whose brow fell that sweat
Like drops of blood, when in an agony
Of dread he prayed, in dark Gethsemane,
That ignominious death, to square the debt,
Might not, if possible, by him be met?
O, martyrs true—a grand miscellany
Of heroes—your illustrious company
Holds none that flinched a jot when sore beset.
But ye were men—not gods—and nobly dared
To teach the gods to take their proper place,
And threw the gauntlet in Convention's face,
Unmoved by every angry bolt she hurled.
Away, god-myths! Man craves not to be spared,
If yielding up his life could save a world.

THOMAS C. FALCONER.

Acid Drops.

It is a commonplace of history that the Church has sheltered some rare criminals. One of the most hardened has just been discovered in the Tabernacle Church, of Blaengarew. He was actually found selling Sunday newspapers. Had he been caught stealing, or lying, or some other trivial offence of that kind he might have been forgiven. But to sell papers on Sunday! That exceeds the limit. So the newsagent has been excluded from the companionship of the Tabernacle Church. That is the one benefit the newsagent may count to his credit.

The minister of the church, a Mr. Moses Evans, said he was bound to take a stand against Sunday labour "when it was the cause of affecting church attendance." The confession has at least the merit of frankness. Mr. Evan's objection to the newsagent is that he is interfering with his trade. On the other hand the newsagent might object to churches being open on Sunday as it may affect his business. The claims appear to be equally strong on either count. Mr. Evans further explains "that when people get the Sunday papers they stayed away from chapel to read them." With trade so bad we have a certain sympathy with Mr. Evans. That gentleman also explained that he had "seen children overburdened with quantities of Sunday papers, and they protested against it." Of course if the children had been carrying heavy loads on a week-day, that would be a different affair. But on Sunday! And keeping people away from Church! What else could a minister of religion do but protest?

It is one of the misfortunes of the human make-up that a new thought seems to set up an instructive reaction against it; mankind has always been singularly unreceptive to new ideas, declares Mr. E. R. Thompson, M.A. That is true. But is this antagonism instinctive to the extent many observers believe it is? The Christian Church, we know, has stressed the unchanging nature of religion, and has alleged it to be the sum of all we need know about morality, social relations, and so forth. It has preached the infallibility of priestly authority. It has declared to be wicked the questioning of accepted beliefs. It has persecuted, tortured, and butchered people who advocated new ideas. When one comes to ponder on these things, need one be greatly astonished if men have sub-consciously absorbed the notion that new thought is harmful and is emphatically a dangerous thing to dally with? We fancy a pretty strong indictment could be drawn against the Christian Church for making men unreceptive to new ideas. It was Pagan thought, rising again after its Christian crucifixion, which sets men's minds to new ways of looking at things.

An evangelical crusade lasting nearly a month has recently been enlivening Portsmouth and district. The area was flooded with posters, window-bills, and leaflets, and 60,000 copies of a four-sheet crusading newspaper were distributed. Besides all this there were meetings galore, conducted by a small army of preachers, lay and professional. The net result, we learn, was 1,200 "decisions for Christ." The conductors of the crusade, however, do not seem any too pleased with the results of their efforts. It appears that about nine-tenths of those who signed decision cards were adherents of the churches already. One chapel had forty-nine cases, and of these eight belonged to other denominations. Only four of the cases were outsiders. The crusaders lugubriously confess that the campaign almost entirely proved to be an appeal to adherents. "Despite the most generous advertising and publicity, the outsider was scarcely reached.....The secret of winning him eluded us; the outsider remained outside."

This is indeed sad news. It is all the more puzzling since we have been assured by several eminent clerics

and pious laymen, as well as the *Daily Express*, that there is a widespread and growing interest in Christian matters and a sure prospect of a religious revival in the near future. Our clerical and journalistic optimists would appear to have been a trifle out in their reckoning. This Portsmouth crusade is a good criticism of how much the average man is interested in the "Glad Tidings." He evidently thinks the gladness is not all it is cracked up to be.

Sir Hubert Parry relates that while walking with Tennyson the conversation turned on religion. Tennyson talked about hell, and said that when talking to the new Bishop of — he said he did not believe in it. The Bishop whispered back, "Neither do I." That is the trouble with too many of the Bishops and public men generally. They whisper their doubts to confidential friends when they should be shouting them from the housetop. If their religious training had encouraged them to speak the truth there would be less whispering and greater honesty in the world.

The Bishop of London has just completed twenty-five years in his office. The *Daily News* says of him that he has never carried much weight in the House of Lords, his interventions in the deliberations of the Church have always been that of an inspired amateur rather than those of a great theologian; upon the burning controversies, ecclesiastical or political, of his generation he has never delivered himself of judgment worth listening to, or even a phrase that anyone has remembered.

Few Bishops of London could have had such a damning tribute paid them. Bishop Ingram will always stand as the very incarnation of mediocrity, and as a living proof of the intellectual decadence of the Church. But the *Daily News* finds that he has popularised religion, and has always shown sympathy with the forlorn and miserable. All that can be meant by the first phrase is that his religion has been such as was on a level with that of the more ignorant, and the second can only mean that he is not a brute. No one has ever said that of him. He is just a very unintelligent person, with energy, a certain amount of good nature, and friends in high places.

We have a class for Boy Scouts and for Girl Guides, the Rev. E. A. French, of Tooting Wesleyan Mission, tells an interviewer. By this means we endeavour to capture the *esprit de corps* of these movements for the Church. What our readers may understand from this is, Mr. French's church, like other churches, is exploiting for its own ends the Scout and Guide movements. Apart from gaining clients the parsons have no real interest in Scoutism and what it stands for. There is one thing we notice, they never have made any protest against its glorifying of the fighting-man which doesn't blend well with the Man of Sorrow's pacifism.

Not so many years ago large numbers of earnest Methodists believed the Bible was all the literature a Christian need be acquainted with, and that to employ one's leisure reading secular books was a sure sign of a worldly mind. We are not certain that this Puritan notion has yet disappeared, and we fancy Mr. Arthur Hoyle, of the *Methodist Recorder*, thinks so too. Anyway, he believes it is necessary to address his readers thus:—

The delight of high literature is about the best investment any professional man can make—since literature is the epitome of life, the noblest expression of the noblest things. To put oneself into a section and decline interest in all outside that section is a mere mutilation—an invitation to bankruptcy. The wider one likes and loves, the more one is able to appreciate to gather for concentration, to sympathise, and to understand. Width of intellectual curiosity is a noble preservation and insurance against manifold errors.

That is well said. But to have to remind Methodists

at this time of day about the value of fine literature and of wide reading seems none too great a compliment to pay to Christian mentality. If the intellectual curiosity of the majority of Christians could but be stretched wide enough to allow them to discover Mill's essay on Liberty, and to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it, what manifold errors, not to mention stupidities, the world might be saved from!

At an Industrial Fellowship meeting, a speaker declared that there is no doubt about the interest in social problems. The churches would do well to give increasing attention to the social expression of the Gospel. This is evidently a gentle hint to the churches to exploit the Labour movement. But we fancy the more alert Labour leaders are too well aware of how in the past the churches have opposed or been indifferent to Labour operations for the churches' sudden interest to be taken as genuine. One thing we may as well point out. The churches have waited until widespread interest was aroused in social problems before they discovered the Gospel had such a thing as a social expression. They have been too busy ensuring happiness in the other world to trouble about happiness in this as achieved by better economic conditions.

The shortage of candidates for the ministry is worrying the Wesleyan Methodists, and so they appointed a commission of ministers and laymen to consider the matter. Our good friends seem to fancy the Lord is not aware of the trouble. Hence they have appointed the Sunday before Ascension Day as a day of prayer concerning this important subject. The people are requested to pray "that the Lord of the Harvest will send forth labourers unto His harvest." Now that sort of invitation to the Lord seems to suggest two things. (1) That his Celestial Majesty has been neglecting his job; or (2) that he has wilfully been keeping back the necessary labourers. Hence the prayer will be in the one case something in the nature of a reprimand; and in the other case, a criticism. Which ever way the Lord regards this prayer of his faithful people, he is hardly likely to be pleased with it. We shouldn't be surprised if he ignores it altogether.

The Conference which issues this call to prayer has, however, another fault to find. This is, the Lord has been sending an inferior quality of labourers. The Conference declares that though the ministry is recruited from all classes, "nevertheless, it is disappointing that in these days of educational progress and facilities the intellectual standard of our candidates is not higher, and that so few, comparatively, of the more gifted and cultivated of the sons of Methodism find their way into the ranks of the ministry." There is but one conclusion to be drawn from this, and that is, men of some culture and education find nowadays in the dogmas of the Christian creed an affront to their intelligence and intellect. If that is so, then the churches will have to be thankful for what they get in the way of candidates. Still, there is one consolation for the churches, the intellectual quality of the ministers will be a good match for the intellectual quality of their congregations.

Dean Inge cultivates the polite art of "blowing the gaff" on religion with the assiduity that the late Dean Hole cultivated roses. It would appear that Dean Inge is slowly becoming a convert to Voltaire—we would hasten to add—in one respect only. "The consolation of this life consists in saying what one thinks," wrote the old cynic, and the Rev. Dean, in his book of lectures, states: "A religion succeeds, not because it is true, but because it suits its worshippers." This is a brilliant aphorism, and only requires the addition of the truth that the worshippers have been caught young and fashioned to suit it.

Shakespeare's religion refuses to be classified, and it may be that he regarded this question as a matter of

geographical insanity. At the Stratford-on-Avon celebration the Russian representatives brought a magnificent wreath for the tomb. The card accompanying it was inscribed: "A tribute of love and respect from the Union of Soviet and Socialist Republics to the world's greatest poet and literary genius." Our Christian brothers prate a lot about the unifying effects of their particular goods, but here we have an example of contrast where a secular genius can take under his wing a mighty nation who appears to be at present the scapegoat of Europe.

"Newsmen," writing in the *Daily News*, is puzzled about the persistent misrepresentation on the stage of curates and journalists. If either class could be misrepresented it would be an act of providence and would logically be to the credit of both. But unfortunately the curate belongs to a class that orates to stifled opposition, and the journalist writes on the assumption that the public has forgotten what he wrote yesterday. Both classes should pray to be misrepresented.

For stating that he would send every young woman whose name was Dull to see Nellie Farren and Kate Vaughan, we are told by F. G. Bettany that the late Stewart Headlam lost his curacy. The bold fellows like Dean Inge and the Bishop of Birmingham may one day acknowledge their debt to Freethinkers who have let a little fresh air in the dusty corridors of theology.

The Rev. Dr. O'Reilly, of Sydney, recently laid before the Catholic Truth Society particulars of a campaign for converting Australians to the doctrines of the Roman Church. One suggestion was the introduction of a Catholic paper into every home, for "education, excitement, and incitement." We can imagine the kind of "education" provided by such a journal. Its keynote will be stupefaction, equivocation, and obscurantism. Another suggestion was the establishing of a reference library by means of which recourse might be had to "undiluted truth" in regard to history as written by Romanist authors. "Undiluted truth" is a pretty phrase. And, moreover, as this special Catholic milk for the faithful and others is watered very sparingly with actual facts, we should say the phrase is apt enough. But for honesty's sake it should read—"undiluted Catholic truth."

Mr. Harold Begbie, honorary press agent to "General" Booth and the Bishop of London, has published in book form a series of newspaper articles on varieties of Christian opinion. The book is entitled *Broken Lights*. This sounds like something good for cats. Christians will no doubt snap it up with avidity.

In the kingdom of the blind the man with one eye is king. We notice that Professor John Bailey has produced a book entitled *The Roots of Religion in the Human Soul*. When the roots are begged and the soul is added with them, the word spinning goes merrily on. Mesmerism of this kind is responsible for the appearance of what are called "problems" in the world, which to ordinary people do not exist. The high priests of words are in the line of succession to the incantators of barbarism, and swallowing the title of the Professor's book is easy if you "catch 'em young."

In his will, the late Professor Edward Granville Brown, Professor of Arabic in Cambridge University, makes an unusual bequest. He leaves £2,000 for the furtherance of sound learning and scholarship, and a further £2,000 to the University of Cambridge for the promotion of the study of the languages, literature, history, and religion of the Arabs, Persians, and Turks or other cognate Asiatic peoples. This is a small £2,000 nail in the coffin of Christianity, and a proof that if Christianity has any monopoly it is solely that of bump-tiousness and egotism.

To Correspondents.

A.S.D.—*Freethinker* Endowment Fund, £2.

J. MCKENZIE.—Your notice for a meeting on the 8th should have reached us in time for our last issue.

W. H. SISSON.—We hope the distribution of the *Freethinker* will lead to good results. Shall hope to see some local friends at the Birmingham Conference.

M. THOMAS.—If Freethinkers will not insist upon their legal rights we must not expect Christians to go out of their way to see they get them. A Freethinker in a law court has nothing to with the want of preparedness of officials to administer the affirmation. The more trouble he puts them to the better. They are the more likely to have the affirmation ready in future.

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.

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

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

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

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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 present issue of the *Freethinker*, with the exception of some of the paragraphic matter, was set up ready for printing when the strike occurred. We were unable to get the paper machined, and even if we could have got that done, there existed no method by which we could have distributed it over the country. We were therefore compelled to suspend publication, with the exception of getting out skeleton copies for official purposes. We are sending this issue out—dated to cover two weeks in place of one—on Friday, and subscribers will, therefore, receive their copies either on Saturday or on Monday, May 17. Next week the paper will appear on the usual publishing day.

It is not within our province in this paper to deal with the political or economic aspect of the Strike, but we cannot refrain from paying our tribute to the admirable behaviour of both police and public under peculiarly trying conditions. It would have been so easy for widespread, if sporadic, disorder to have broken out, and that this did not occur generally is a compliment to all concerned. And if all concerned can meet each other and deal with each other with good temper and the desire to do justice, some good may result from a thoroughly deplorable situation. It is a satire upon our civilization that no better method of settling industrial disputes can be found than one which inflicts wholesale suffering upon the community.

Arrangements for the N.S.S. Conference at Birmingham are now complete. There will be a good array of speakers at the evening meeting, a full programme of which will appear in our next issue. The business meetings will be held in the Imperial Hotel, Temple Street,

and a lunch for delegates and friends will be served in the same hotel between the morning and afternoon meetings. We are hoping that by Whit-Sunday traffic conditions will be nearly normal, and that there will be a good attendance of members and delegates. The evening demonstration will be in the Scala Theatre, the Town Hall being closed for re-decoration. Members and friends requiring accommodation in Birmingham over Whit-week-end should write at once to the Secretary, Miss S. Dobson, 6 Daniels Road, Little Bromwich, Birmingham.

Mr. George Whitehead will be visiting Plymouth for an open-air campaign on behalf of the N.S.S. His lectures will extend from May 17 to May 30, and he will be lecturing in various parts of the town. The local friends will be glad of any assistance that can be given them by sympathisers, whether moral or financial, or both. We hope the response will be a good one. Secretary's address, J. Mackenzie, 4 Swilly Road, Plymouth.

Light on the Bible, by F. J. Gould (Watts & Co., 6s.), provides a pleasantly written and useful outline of the Bible story for all who wish to gain a bird's-eye view of the subject. The first portion, dealing with the old Bible, gave us the most satisfaction in the reading. The various chapters dealing with the Hero tales of Early Times, Folk-lore, Kings and Prophets, etc., suggest the general affiliation of the Bible stories and legends to the world's stock of mythological tales, and so manage to produce the right kind of "atmosphere" for the subject. The latter part, dealing with the New Testament, is inclined too much to take the Christian story for granted, and would bolster up the impression that we are reading an historical narrative. The supernatural is there reduced to a minimum, whereas it is only when we picture the all-pervading and moulding supernaturalism that one properly appreciates the New Testament writings. Mr. Gould is not writing a critical history of the Bible and the New Testament, or we might dwell upon the readiness to take for granted the Christian story of the Roman persecutions, most of which we are convinced is myth. The Romans did not persecute for religious differences, and the Christian accounts of martyrdom are wild exaggerations. But *Light on the Bible* will provide useful and suggestive reading for both Christian and Freethinker.

Two small, but well produced booklets, cloth bound, and published at the very low price of one shilling, reaches us also from Messrs. Watts & Co. *The Stream of Life* consists of the series of wireless talks given some time ago by Prof. Julian Huxley, and the subject and the author are sufficient commendation. It is an admirable outline of evolution with some speculations on the application of scientific knowledge to the development of Society.

The second volume is by the Hon. John Collier, with the title of *The Religion of an Artist*. There is not the same occasion for a title of this kind as there was when Sir Thomas Browne wrote his famous *Religion Medici*, when it was commonly said that with three doctors one could count on finding two Atheists. And Mr. Collier's religion turns out to be, in the end, a belief in the importance of good conduct, based upon a rational conception of man and society. His position can be best stated in his own words:—

My religion is really negative. Most people assume that some kind of religion is necessary. I do not see the necessity; some of the best people that I have ever known have no religion at all. No thoughtful person can deny that great evils have been wrought in the name of religion, but it is generally assumed that great benefits have been derived from it. The object of this essay is to point out that these benefits are independent of religion, and can be attained by other means which are less conducive to strife and which put less strain upon the reasoning faculties.

Both books deserve a wide circulation.

Christian Conceptions of the End of the World and the Kingdom of Heaven.

THERE is no doubt but that the early Christians expected an early end to the world,¹ and the establishment of a heavenly kingdom on earth. Christ was to make an early return to the earth, triumph over his enemies, and reign for a period of one thousand years in a restored and beautified Jerusalem. Irenæus, Tertullian, Lactantius, Papias, Justin Martyr, Montanus, and Cerinthus, all prominent Christians of the early church, were enthusiastic millennialists.

Tertullian wrote (A.D. 150 to A.D. 230 *circa*):—

A kingdom is promised to us upon the earth, though, by heaven, only in another state of existence, for as much it will be after the resurrection for one thousand years, in the divinely built city of Jerusalem let down from heaven.

Irenæus, when describing the resurrection of the dead, the reign of the righteous, and the new powers of nature, traces back to the elders who were personally acquainted with St. John the assurance that the days were coming when vines should have ten thousand branches, each branch ten thousand twigs, each twig ten thousand shoots, each shoot ten thousand clusters, and each cluster ten thousand grapes; and when, if any saint were about to pick one of the clusters, another would cry out amid the profusion, "Take me, I am a better cluster."—*Paganism and Christianity*, J. A. Farrer.

Justin Martyr in one of his treatises also admitted that he and many of his fellow-Christians were looking forward to the rebuilding of a beautified Jerusalem, and the reign therein of the saints for a thousand years.

It is not surprising, when one considers the political and social degradation of the times, that men should have sought consolation and hope in the belief that the coming of a deliverer of mankind was at hand, and that he should lead the people of the world into new ways of peace, and justice, and happiness; and that others, turning in despair or disgust from the world of realities, should have set their hopes upon a beatific hereafter, in a world of splendour and glory. It is significant, at any rate, that these early Christian conceptions of heaven are grossly sensual, and their authors seem to exert all their powers of imagination to depict a place where wealth and material comforts are lavishly displayed. Take, for example, St. John's description (Revelation, Chapter xxi.):—

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even a jasper stone, clear as crystal. And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates

¹ The Christians held a notion that the world would be destroyed after an existence of as many thousand years as it had taken days to form. "In six days," declared Irenæus, "created things were completed; it is evident, therefore, that they will come to an end in the six thousandth year," *i.e.*, the end of the world must have been expected somewhere about the time when the Roman Empire was falling to pieces.

thereof, and the walls thereof. And the city lieth four square, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man; that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

This gross materialism (in varying forms) seems to have continued right through the Middle Ages. The following anthropomorphic tale, quoted in an abridged form by Herbert Spencer from a collection of folk tales by the brothers Grimm, strikingly illustrates this:—

God, having one day gone out with the saints and the apostles for a walk, left Peter at the door of heaven with strict orders to admit no one. Soon after a tailor came and pleaded to be let in. But Peter said that God had forbidden anyone to be admitted; besides the tailor was a bad character, and "cabbaged" the cloth he used. The tailor said the pieces he had taken were small, and had fallen into his basket; and he was willing to make himself useful—he would carry the babies, and wash and mend the clothes. Peter at last let him in, and made him sit down in a corner behind the door. Taking advantage of Peter's going outside for a minute or two, the tailor left his seat and looked about him. He soon came to a place where there were many stools, and a chair of massive gold and a golden footstool, which were God's. Climbing upon the chair, he could see all that was happening on the earth; and he saw an old woman, who was washing clothes in a stream, making away with some linen. In his anger, he took up the footstool and threw it at her. As he could not get it back, he thought it best to return to his place behind the door, where he sat down, putting on an air of innocence. God now re-entered without observing the tailor. Finding his footstool gone, he asked Peter what had become of it—had he let anyone in? The apostle at first evaded the question, but confessed that he had let one in—only, however, a poor limping tailor. The tailor was then called, and asked what he had done with the footstool. When he had told, God said to him: "O, you knave, if I judged like you, how long do you think you would have escaped? For long ago I should not have had a chair or even a poker left in the place, but should have hurled everything at the sinners." (Quoted in *The Study of Sociology*.)

A pleasanter, and less gross conception, of heaven is contained in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of England* (seventh to eighth centuries):—

While he [an angel] thus led me in open light, I saw a vast hall wall before us, the length and height of which, in every direction, seemed to be altogether boundless. I began to wonder why we went up to the wall, seeing no door, window, or path through it. When we came to the wall, we were presently, I know not by what means, on the top of it, and within it was a vast and beautiful field, so full of fragrant flowers that the odour of its delightful sweetness immediately dispelled the stench of the dark furnace (hell), which had penetrated me through and through.

So great was the light in this place that it seemed to exceed the brightness of day, or of the sun in

its meridian height. In this field were innumerable assemblies of men in white and many companies seated together rejoicing. As he led me through the midst of these happy people, I began to think that this might, perhaps, be the kingdom of heaven, of which I had often heard so much. He answered my thought, saying, "This is not the kingdom of heaven, as you imagine."

When we had passed these mansions of blessed souls and gone farther on, I discovered before me a much more beautiful light, and heard therein sweet voices of persons singing; and so wonderful a fragrant proceeded from the place that the other, which I had before thought most delicious, then seemed to me but very indifferent, even as that extraordinary brightness of the flowery field, compared with this, appeared mean and inconsiderable.

The angel then explains to the visitor to these celestial regions that:—

This flowery place, in which you see these most beautiful young people, so bright and gay, is that into which the souls of those are received who depart the body in good work, but who are not so perfect as to deserve to be immediately admitted into the kingdom of heaven; yet they shall all, at the day of judgment, see Christ and partake of the joys of his kingdom; for whoever are perfect in thought, word, and deed, as soon as they depart the body immediately enters into the kingdom of heaven in the neighbourhood whereof that place is, where you heard the sound of sweet singing, with the fragrant odour and bright light.

The fervid faith of the early Christians in the imminence of the end of the world, and the rule of the saints on earth burst forth again with almost pristine fierceness during the religious upheavals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In particular, in this country, those fanatics, known as the Fifth Monarchy Men, held firmly to this belief, and made it the foundation-stone of their political ideals. At the Restoration of the Stuarts, Harrison, who would neither acknowledge the king nor leave the country, was hanged, drawn, and quartered at Charing Cross. So firm was his belief in the nearness of the second advent that, according to Pepys, he looked

as cheerful as any man could do in that conditionIt is said that he said that he was sure to come shortly at the right hand of Christ to judge them that now judged him; and that his wife do expect his coming again.

Scott's *Woodstock* contains an excellent picture of these grim old fanatics, with their gloomy religious beliefs by means of which they were prepared to justify their political actions.

Opposed as the spirit of our times is to gross, anthropomorphic conceptions, ideas such as those I have already referred to, linger on. I can still recall, when a boy, reading a little volume given as a prize at a Sunday school, in which a good deal of talk about "Pearly Gates" figured. The heroine of the story, a good little girl, born of godless parents who kept a general store, died of consumption. Apparently there was some subtle connection between her death and admission through the pearly gates and the sinfulness of her parents in keeping their shop open on the Sabbath. Perhaps my youthful logical powers were too immature to follow the reasoning whereby this was established; at any rate, the moral tale, far from making me see the vileness of selling commodities on Sunday, and making me long so to live that I, too, might pass through the pearly gates, as the sick little girl did, only filled me with melancholy and a mild horror. I always believe that the book first made me associate evangelical Christianity with gloomy winter Sundays, when a dank, thin fog is stealing through the streets,

and somewhere in the distance an itinerant hawker is faintly crying his wares, or a professional beggar is singing, with long pauses between each few words, a hymn. Probably, therefore, its effect was exactly opposite to that anticipated by the author, for it must have prepared me emotionally for the intellectual conversion to Secularism and Agnosticism. But, in many cases, such gloomy apologies must have exercised a harmful effect upon childish minds and imaginations; and must have tended to deepen the shadow of melancholy over dull, colourless lives.

W. H. MORRIS.

National Secular Society.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

IMPERIAL HOTEL, BIRMINGHAM.

WHIT-SUNDAY, MAY 23, 1926.

Agenda.

1. Minutes of last Conference.
2. Executive's Annual Report.
3. Financial Report.
4. Election of President.
Motion by Bethnal Green, Manchester, West Ham, South London, and North London Branches:—
"That Mr. C. Cohen be re-elected President of the N.S.S."
5. Election of Secretary.
Motion by the Executive, West Ham, North London, South London, and Manchester Branches:—
"That Miss E. M. Vance be re-elected General Secretary."
6. Election of Treasurer.
Motion by the Bethnal Green and West Ham Branches:—
"That Mr. C. G. Quinton be re-elected Treasurer."
7. Election of Auditor.
Motion by the Executive:—
"That Messrs. H. Theobald and Co. (Incorporated Accountants) be reappointed Auditors."
8. Nominations for Executive.
SCOTLAND.—Mr. James Neate, nominated by Glasgow Branch.
WALES.—Mr. Gorniot, nominated by Swansea Branch.
N.E. GROUP.—Miss K. B. Kough, nominated by Newcastle Branch.
Mr. A. B. Moss, nominated by South Shields Branch.
N.W. GROUP.—Mr. H. R. Clifton and Mr. R. H. Rosetti, nominated by Liverpool and Manchester Branches.
S.W. GROUP.—Mr. G. Wood, nominated by Plymouth Branch.
MIDLAND GROUP.—Mrs. C. Quinton (Jnr.) and Mr. J. G. Dobson, nominated by Birmingham Branch.
SOUTH LONDON.—Mr. E. Coles, nominated by South London Branch.
NORTH LONDON.—Mr. S. Samuels, nominated by North London Branch.
EAST LONDON.—Mr. H. Silverstein, nominated by Bethnal Green and West Ham Branches.
- 9.—Motion by Birmingham Branch—
(a) "That bearing in mind the many opportunities which present themselves for propaganda through the medium of the press this Conference is of opinion that arrangements should be made for the appointment of representatives who would act as publicity agents in the interests of the Freethought movement."

(b) "That the attention of Branches be called to the many opportunities which exist for introducing Freethought views into new quarters through the arrangement of debates and friendly Conferences with other Societies."

10.—Motion by Glasgow Branch—

"That the place of meeting of the Conference be decided by vote taken at the preceding Conference."

11.—Motion by R. H. Rosetti—

"That this Conference, having in mind the high rate of taxation which prevails, and the desire of the Government to discover new sources of revenue, calls attention to the vast amount of property in the shape of churches and chapels that are relieved of rates and taxes, and suggests that by compelling these buildings to bear their fair share of the taxation of the country a new source of revenue will be opened up, and a manifest injustice to the whole of the population removed."

12.—Motion by Hull Branch—

"That in view of the great value of the *Freethinker* to the Freethought movement, this Conference is of opinion that the Executive should take steps to advertise the paper wherever Branches of the N.S.S. exist."

13.—Motion by Executive—

"This Conference regrets the fact that the fictitious offence of Blasphemy still remains in the Statute and Common Law of the country, and calls upon Freethinkers everywhere to do their utmost to secure the support of Members of Parliament for the Blasphemy Laws Amendment Bill at present before the House of Commons."

14.—Motion by Mrs. R. H. Rosetti—

"This Conference calls attention to the danger to Education and the injustice to teachers involved in the recent arrangements that have been set up by various educational bodies for denominational instruction in schools supported by State funds, and urges upon all interested in securing the best education in State schools the importance of insisting on the policy of complete Secular Education as the only plan by which justice can be done to the community."

15.—Motion by North London Branch—

(a) "That the declaration of membership shall make clear the fact that such membership does not involve the advocacy of a particular programme of political reform."

(b) "That for the words 'Immediate Practical Objects' there shall be substituted the words 'Manifesto of the National Secular Society,' followed by 'We aim at the following immediate practical reforms.'"

16.—Motion by Mr. George Bedborough—

(a) "That Clause 15 in the statement of Immediate Practical Objects be recast so as to read 'To eliminate the idea of punishment in the treatment of offences against the law. To aim at the avoidance of prison sentences wherever it can be done without immediate danger to the public. To prohibit corporal punishment in all prisons, reformatories, and other places of detention.'"

(b) "That the 4th clause of the Immediate Practical Objects be amended by the addition of the words, 'To humanise the treatment of the insane and those convicted of offences against the law.'"

17.—Motion by Newcastle Branch—

"That in order to enlist a larger number of supporters for the National Secular Society arrangements be made for a standing appeal in the *Freethinker* dwelling upon the need for closer co-operation between those who are in accord with the aims of this Society."

The Conference will sit in the Imperial Room, Imperial Hotel, Temple Street, Birmingham: Morn-

ing Session, 10.30 to 12.30; Afternoon Session, 2.30 to 4.30. Delegates will be required to produce their credentials at the door; Members, the current card of membership. Only members of the Society are entitled to be present. A public demonstration will be held at 7 p.m. in the Scala Theatre, Smallbrook Street. Luncheon for delegates and visitors at 1 p.m. at the Imperial Hotel, price 3s.

During the Afternoon Session a paper on the "Historicity of Jesus" will be read by Miss F. Macaulay, and one on the "Soul of a Secularist" by Mr. G. Bedborough. Both papers will be followed by discussion.

By order of the Executive,

C. COHEN, *President.*

E. M. VANCE, *Secretary.*

Correspondence.

THE SUN AND THE SOLSTICES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—“Keridon,” in his article on the “Cycle of Energy,” in your issue of April 25, incorrectly states that: “At four points of this orbit the “pull” of the central body is at right angles to the direction of its uniform motion.....These points are the solstices and the equinoxes.”

The earth revolves in an elliptical orbit, and the sun is not at the centre of the ellipse, but at one of the foci. The angle, between the direction of motion at any point of an elliptical orbit and a line drawn from a focus to the same point, is such that its tangent is infinite; that is, the angle is a right angle in an ellipse only when $x = a$, or, in other words, when the planet is at either extremity of the major-diameter. Hence the direction of motion is at right angles to the pull of the sun only at aphelion and perihelion.

We can now ascertain the dates of these two events by reference to *Whitaker's Almanac*. The greatest semi-diameter of the sun is 16 minutes 18 seconds on January 5, and the least 15 minutes 45 seconds on July 5, these being the dates when the earth is in perihelion and aphelion respectively, or nearest to and farthest from the sun. Put in another way, we may say the earth is at the extremities of the major diameter of its elliptical orbit on these days. And on these days only, at the present time, is the direction of motion at right angles to the pull of the sun. In another sixty years it will be July 6 and January 6.

A further reference to this almanac will show that the sun is farthest north 23 degrees 26.9 minutes on June 22, which is the summer solstice; and farthest south 23 degrees 26.9 minutes on December 22, the winter solstice. So that neither at the solstices nor at the equinoxes is the pull of the sun at right angles to the direction of motion of the earth. The difference from a right angle is not very great, but this difference is of importance in astronomy and navigation.

The earth takes 365 days 6 hours 9 minutes 9 seconds to revolve around the sun; that is, to come directly between the sun and any fixed star twice successively; this is termed a sidereal year. Owing, however, to certain movements of our planet the time from one summer solstice to the next is 365 days 5 hours 48 minutes 46 seconds; which is called the tropical year; that is, it precedes the sidereal year by 20 minutes. This is the precession of the equinoxes, or, if you like, the precession of the solstices, because from vernal equinox to vernal equinox is exactly the same time as from summer solstice to summer solstice. Further, the major axis of the ellipse is changing its direction owing to the pull of the other planets, and for the earth to travel from aphelion to aphelion takes 365 days 6 hours 13 minutes. This is called the anomalistic year, and between it and the tropical year there is a difference of 24 minutes, or one day in every sixty years. As our present winter solstice is near perihelion then in 21,600 years it will occupy relatively the same position, but in 10,000 years hence our winter solstice will occur when the earth is farthest from the sun or in aphelion.

This fact gave birth to Croll's theory of the Glacial epoch. He said: "Ten thousand years ago the sun was farthest from the earth during winter in the northern hemisphere, hence it was very cold and we had a glacial epoch, and in another ten thousand years we shall have another glacial epoch." From this reasoning it would follow that there should be now a glacial epoch in the southern hemisphere. Unfortunately for his theory glaciers in both hemispheres are receding and diminishing. It was also shown by astronomers the difference between the greatest and least distances of the earth from the sun could never be sufficiently large to cause a glacial epoch in either hemisphere.

WILLIAM CLARK.

THE LAW OF POPULATION.

SIR,—Readers and contributors of the *Freethinker* being completely rational beings, ought to agree on questions of fact and the logical consequences of facts. Well I have several times read the *Essay on Population*, by Malthus, and I am utterly at a loss to understand how Mr. Cutner can think so highly of it. The most just estimate, I think, is Mr. Bertrand Russell's: "It is not his conclusions that are valuable, but the temper and method of his enquiry—if the behaviour is not quite what Malthus supposed, if the consequences are not quite what Malthus supposed, if the consequences are not quite what he inferred, that may falsify his conclusions, but does no impair the value of the method." The truth that Malthus based his conclusions on is the tendency of all forms of life to increase faster than subsistence. This may be accepted as axiomatic in the animal and vegetable worlds, but is very debatable with regard to man. Mr. Cutner says that the proposition that population tends to increase faster than subsistence has never been refuted. It has always seemed to me that Henry George subjected this to some very destructive criticism. Malthus, accepting the truth of this, was, I think, more self consistent than Mr. Cutner, for if this is so, poverty must be the lot of the majority of the human race. Here, then, was an inexorable, pitiless natural law that explained the abject misery of his times. It was useless for social reformers or others having any social ideals. Any very great improvement in the lot of the people was impossible, for to every eight parts of food produced there would be always sixteen mouths. The gradual improvement in the lot of the workers culminating in the luxuries and comforts enjoyed to-day demonstrate the falsity and absurdity of this belief.

Faced with these facts, Malthusians of the type of Mr. Cutner, like Prophet Baxter, foretell the terrible consequences of this law for the future. The law of Malthus quite possibly does operate with savage peoples and others in a low state of social development. But where the arts of cultivation are advanced and society is well organized it is highly doubtful. In the nature of the case to be as just and even generous to the Malthusians, a verdict of not proven is only possible. For there are other causes present that would be adequate to account for the effect of poverty, etc. If the people were not allowed to cultivate the land or to labour at the production of those things essential to life food would then be insufficient. If twenty millions is the limit of the population capacity of this country when it stood at that, social conditions ought to have been much better than they are to-day, but the facts are they were very considerably worse. And that here, as in America, the condition of the people has improved with increased population. Canada is not nearly so wealthy as America. Mr. Cutner attributes all things to the working of the geometrical law of Malthus, even the geographical impossibility of not being able to grow rice and bananas in this country. He seems to imply that if only there were a world where food would, and not mouths, increase in geometrical ratio, there would be no social problems then. No problems of production, of distribution, of finding new markets, of labouring to build houses, and to wrest from nature by experiment her secrets. Why, if we reduced our population to twenty millions to-morrow by emigration, there would still be poverty, slums, and distress under our present social

organization, for the eliminative process would still operate. The practice of birth prevention will lessen the total amount of misery and distress, but the problem of wealth production and distribution will still remain. The possessing reactionary aristocracy and church party want no better defence against the attacks of the Communists and Socialists, and all reformers than this pseudo-scientific law. Things are as they are because it is natural for them to be so as well as hold them responsible for these conditions as for the progress of the seasons. The truth is, we do not yet know enough to pronounce definitely on this question of population. There is a balance between birth and death rates. Societies are corporate bodies, organisms and like, as such they obey the law of growth and decay. If populations increase in one locality they tend to decline in another; it is as absurd for Malthus to argue that population will tend to increase indefinitely as to reason that a baby will be of unlimited height and weight because it grows so rapidly the first few years of its life.

SCIO.

ORGANIZED HUMBUG.

SIR,—The two first "Acid Drops" in your issue of the 2nd inst. reveal a vision of thought that may well send feelings of horror to all lovers of human freedom of mind. That "the Great Lying Church," as well as the Anglican, should babble about the love of God whilst those institutions can and do use their organizations for vile political propaganda is a distressing commentary on human progress and emancipation.

As your journal is the only one in which correspondents may get a free expression of opinion, I desire to express the conviction that, apart from the mediocre and ignorant priests, the hierarchy of the churches are not so ignorant of scientific facts of nature: they therefore must be condemned as intellectual defrauders.

It is a sad reflection on human life that bodies of men can band together in the pretence and make-believe of soul-saving (after death) whilst all the time their energies are spent in misleading and deceiving people less informed than themselves, whilst in life.

When will the intelligent portion of the churches be honest enough to cease their humbug? Not until the State is ready to pension them off, and if compensation must be paid by the State for vested interests, and of compensation for the drink trade, the colliery owners, miners, or national ownership of any kind, the abolition of the priests is the most pressing.

Your journal is not a political one, but may I express the hope that Labour leaders will cease to hob-a-nob with Christian associations, for by so doing they will earn the respect of those who desire to see national progress, if that be possible, by any party in the State

SINE CERE.

FOX-HUNTING CRUELITIES.

SIR,—The fox-hunting season has ended in a perfect crescendo of cruelties. I will only mention three.

In South Devon a hard-pressed fox entered an hotel yard, sprang on the roof, jumped through a window, and sought refuge under a bed. He was driven out and promptly killed.

In Ullswater an "unequaled" kill was effected. After a three hours' run over "some of the hardest ground in the Lake district," the fox sought sanctuary at Pattendale Hall, the seat of the Master, however, he was "despatched" on the doorstep.

At Penfan, Glam., a third victim was killed in the church tower, after running through the doctor's surgery.

When is the common humanity of the people going to rise to stop this organized cruelty?

HENRY B. AMOS.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE.

SIR,—I have before me a batch of some twenty-four newspaper letters in which Mr. Frederick Dixon, Mr. Algernon Harvey-Bathurst and myself sought to amuse a northern public a few years ago. These two gentlemen were the official spokesmen of the C.S. Publication Committee. And in looking over this correspondence, and

comparing their replies with the letter of Mr. John F. Fellowes in the *Freethinker* of May 2, it would seem that the advancing movement of Christian Science, as represented by the Parent Church of the New Generation, has taken over the whole of the stock arguments of the older and "outworn" organization of the "Mother" Church of Mrs. Eddy. Of course, if the teachings of Christian Science can only be apprehended through some faculty of "spiritual perception," then all argument, I will take it, is at an end. It is the same old refuge of the Christian who used to maintain that religious truth could only be "spiritually discerned." I once said to a Christian Science friend of mine that, according to his metaphysical "principles" it would not be necessary to eat to live. "Yes," he said, "that is so," and added, quite seriously, "we are coming to that." This of course would solve all the economic troubles of production and distribution. But this happy consummation would still leave unsolved the vital problem of the cats' meat!

Let me suggest that some Christian Scientist be deprived of food and drink for, say, three months, to put to the practical test the claim that life and thought are independent of material support.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON APRIL 29.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair. Also present, Messrs. Clifton, Neate, Quinton, Rosetti, and Samuels, Mrs. Quinton, Miss Kough, and the Secretary.

Minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed. The annual balance-sheet, duly audited, was read, discussed, and ordered to be printed.

New members were received for Hull, Manchester, and West Ham Branches, and the Parent Society.

Miss Kough and Mr. Clifton were elected to represent the N.S.S. on the National Council for the Abolition of the Death Penalty, the Society having recently affiliated to this Council.

The vote of the Branches having decided that the Conference be held in Birmingham this year, the Scala Theatre, Smallbrook Street, has been engaged for the Public Demonstration on Whit-Sunday evening, the business meetings, morning and afternoon, to be held in the Imperial Room, Imperial Hotel, Temple Street, Birmingham. Messrs. Lloyd, Rosetti, Bedborough, Willis, and Williams, Mrs. Rosetti and Miss Macaulay have accepted invitations to speak at the evening meeting.

The meeting then proceeded to construct notices of motion for the Conference Agenda, those received from the various branches were discussed and all remitted to the Agenda Committee, composed of the President, Miss Kough, and Mr. Rosetti.

It was reported that Mr. Cohen's lecture at the R.P.A. Headquarters had been well attended and that a successful meeting had been held at Essex Hall by the Society for the Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws. This being the last meeting of this Executive, a vote of thanks was passed unanimously to Miss Kough for her assistance at the office and to the Cause generally.

E. M. VANCE,
General Secretary.

But nothing is sweeter than to occupy the high and peaceful temples of the wise, well fortified by learning, whence you can look down upon others, and see them wandering hither and thither, and seeking the path of life, straying in all directions.—*Lucretius*.

The world is his who can see through its pretensions. What deafness, what stone-blind custom, what overgrown error you behold, is there only by sufferance—by your own sufferance. See it to be a lie, and you have already dealt it its mortal blow.—*Emerson*.

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.

SOLID Leather Hat Case for 3 hats; Bramah lock; good condition; 12s. 6d.—M., c/o *Freethinker* Office, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

SOLID Cowhide Leather Expanding Travelling Bag, by J. Pound & Co.; in excellent condition; £2 10s.—M., c/o *Freethinker* Office, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

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.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, R. Dimsdale Stocker, "The Leisure to Live."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, Right Hon. J. M. Robertson, "Lord Bacon as Politicians."

OUTDOOR.

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

NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park): Every Tuesday and Thursday at 7.30; Sunday at 11, 3.30, and 6.30; Lecturers—Messrs. Hart, Howell Smith, B.A., Hyatt, Le Maine, and Saphin.

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

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 3 and 6, Mr. F. P. Corrigan will lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (outside the Technical Institute, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7, Mr. G. Whitehead, a Lecture.

THE DIRECT 'TAX-PAYERS' ASSOCIATION. INCOME TAX SPECIALISTS.

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THINGS DONE WELL, and with a care, exempt themselves from fear. Conscious that our work is good and truly worthy of the noble cause whose organ we support, fearlessly we appeal to you, week in, week out, to give us that trial which our persistence merits and our performance justifies. Write to-day for any of the following:—Gents' A to D Patterns, suits from 55s.; Gents' E Patterns, suits all at 67s. 6d.; Gents' F to I Patterns, suits from 75s.; Gents' J to N Patterns, suits from 104s. 6d.; or Ladies' Spring Fashion and Pattern Book, costumes from 60s., frocks from 52s. 6d.—MACCONNELL & MABE, New Street, Bakewell, Derbyshire.

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NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

President :
CHAPMAN COHEN.

Secretary :
MISS E. M. VANCE, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Principles and Objects.

Secularism teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

The Funds of the National Secular Society are legally secured by Trust Deed. The trustees are the President, Treasurer and Secretary of the Society, with two others appointed by the Executive. There is thus the fullest possible guarantee for the proper expenditure of whatever funds the Society has at its disposal.

The following is a quite sufficient form for anyone who desires to benefit the Society by legacy:—

I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society.

Membership.

Any person 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

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

This declaration should be transmitted to the Secretary with a subscription.

P.S.—Beyond a minimum of Two Shillings per year, every member is left to fix his own subscription according to his means and interest in the cause.

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