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Views and Opinions.

Missionaries in China.

This is not the place in which to deal with the political aspect of the troubles in China, nor have we any intention of doing so. But there is one feature of the situation, both at present and in the past, worth stressing, because it is not likely to receive full recognition in any other paper. This is, that whenever trouble occurs, and it is a steadily recurring feature, there is always a very strong feeling manifested against the different bodies of missionaries. Some thirty odd years ago, Mr. Alexander Michie said in his book on *Missionaries in China*—a work written after a long personal experience in that country—that "hatred of missionaries is practically universal throughout China," and he added this very significant and important passage:—

Against the easy going assumption of the missionaries that when they are hated it is their Master that is hated, there stands the broad historical fact, in China, of toleration extended to the two great foreign religions, Mohammedanism and Buddhism.....So far as religion is concerned, the Chinese bear the palm among all the nations of the earth for toleration, and the presumption is therefore irresistibly strong that it is never the religious but some other element in the missionary propaganda that rouses the passions of the Chinese.

And to the toleration extended to the Mohammedan and the Buddhist, we have to add the fact that the great native religion, Confucianism—if it be quite correct to call it a religion, rather than a philosophy—is also markedly tolerant. Finally Christianity was originally received in China as other religions were received, with tolerance. It was the action of Christians in China which made the name of Christianity obnoxious to the Chinese, and made it also synonymous with intolerance and exploitation.

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Letting the Cat Out of the Bag.

That the Missionaries in China are a constant source of irritation to the self-respecting Chinese was pointed out very plainly by Lord Inchcape in his speech at the annual meeting of the Peninsular and

Oriental Steam Navigation Company, on December 8. He said:—

I have spent a good many years of my life in the East, including a little time in China, and though some of my hearers may regard me as a heretic—which I am not—my belief is that we have in a great measure brought about the present condition of antagonism to us in China by sending missionaries there to endeavour to convert the people to Christianity.

I ask you how Chinese would be regarded here if they established all over the country a number of mission stations with the object of converting our people to Buddhism? Christian missionary efforts among uncivilized peoples holding beliefs which find their expression in fetishism and inhuman cruelty may be, and doubtless are, fully justified, but the attempt to break down China's ancient faiths, as sacred to the Chinese as Christianity is to ourselves, is, I think, to be deplored. Such efforts, in my judgment, do far more harm than good. I would not support them with a penny.

The money spent on these efforts could be far better utilized in our own country. My opinion is that the sooner some of our well-meaning people give up their crusade in India and China the better it will be for us all.

There are, of course, other causes besides the action of missionaries. Every possible advantage has been taken of the peaceful character of the Chinese by the war-like and piratical Christian nations. Her ports have been taken from her, the control of her customs are taken out of her hands, she has had the sale of opium forced upon her at the mouth of the cannon, and has been denied the right to rule even in her own courts, not merely where foreigners were concerned, but under certain conditions, where her own subjects were in question. Altogether China has been taught the lesson that to guard herself from exploitation by Christian nations there is only one plan that promises success, and that is to make herself militarily strong. The modern Chinese army is one of the marks of the influence of Christianity upon what was the most peaceful nation on the face of the earth.

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Missionaries and Chinese Law.

Look at the way in which the missionaries have used the extra-territorial rights wrung from the Chinese, which means that Foreigners in China are not subject to the Chinese courts or the Chinese law. To begin with, the rights of missionaries to settle in China rests upon a treaty between China and Great Britain in 1859. This privilege referred to the treaty ports only. A French treaty of the same date has the same provision for French subjects. But a year later a supplementary treaty was drawn up by the French, and, without the knowledge of the Chinese, a clause was inserted giving French missionaries the right to settle in any part of the Empire. The Chinese Government protested against



the fraud, but it was powerless to do more than protest. And when this was made known the English missionaries, instead of supporting the Chinese in their protest, seized upon it as conferring upon them the same right. So one Christian group forges a clause in an international treaty, and a second one hastens to profit by it. The missionaries of other nations have not been slow to follow suit. The extra-territorial rights have been still more irritating. So far back as 1869 the Foreign Office reported in a Parliamentary paper that it was the custom for converts to Christianity to assume that when they embraced Christianity they were outside the jurisdiction of the Chinese courts, and were under the protection of the European powers whose religious tenets they had adopted, and it pointed out that the Chinese Government had protested time after time that the missionaries and their converts set themselves above the law. That things had not improved some thirty-five years later may be seen from the statement in a report of the Church Missionary Society, that it was "a very common practice for men whose sole object was to avoid paying their debts, and to escape punishment by the authorities to place their names as Romanists on the register of the Roman Catholic Church. They are then entitled to the protection of the Roman priest or bishop, and of the French Consul, and can, and do commit acts of violence with impunity." The Roman Catholics retort that Protestants do the same, and the reply of the Protestants to the charge was that their missionaries interfere only "where downright oppression and interference with religious liberty are involved." It is the missionary himself who is to judge when the Chinese courts are acting oppressively, and where their own converts are concerned! In its latest report (1925-6) the C.M.S. announces its readiness to forgo special privileges—after profiting from them for 67 years, and when the position makes it certain they must be given up. Is there any wonder that self-respecting Chinese have come to detest the presence of the Missionary Society, or that the cry of "China for the Chinese" should be accompanied by a pronounced anti-missionary feeling? In England the cry of Britain for the British is comparatively harmless, at least we are not faced with the spectacle of Mohammedan missionaries claiming not merely to be free from the operations of English law themselves, but claiming also that their English converts cannot be tried by an English court, but are under the direct protection of Turkey. If Englishmen who are not supporters of the Missionary Societies will consider what such a state of things would mean to them if it existed here, they would be in a better position to understand the feeling of the better type of Chinaman towards these preachers of the Gospel.

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#### Exporting Ignorance.

I have touched on the legal aspect of affairs only, and only so far as it affects the missionaries. But there is another side to the picture. The Chinese are a civilized people. Mr. Lloyd George properly pointed out that they were civilized when this part of the world was inhabited by none but painted savages. In Confucianism and Buddhism they have two well-established systems that are ethically higher than anything that Christianity has to offer. They have always attached a very high value to the intellectual virtues, a feature in which Christianity is notoriously and deplorably weak. They have always been noted for their courtesy, their tolerance in religious matters, and their commercial honesty. To these people we send out a number of missionaries, male and female, filled with the crudest and

most ignorant form of superstition, which cannot but jar upon the better minds among the Chinese people. They approach the native institutions with all the insolence of the fanatical Christian evangelist, and claiming at the same time freedom from the laws of the country into which they have thrust themselves, protecting their native converts from their own law courts, and having at their back the armed forces of the country from which they come. We know what the Christian evangelist is in this country, where he is held in some restraint by the better types of his own church, and by reasoned and effective opposition from non-Christians. Let anyone think of all this, and then ask himself what the missionary is likely to be, and how he is likely to act, when he is freed from the restraints which hamper him at home, and dealing with a people whom he will insist upon looking upon as his inferiors? I do not wonder that Lord Inchcape said it would be well if all these people were withdrawn from China. That might not, of course, end China's troubles with outsiders, but it would certainly remove a source of annoyance and of wrong.

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#### A Chapter of Humbug.

There is much more to be said on this subject, and I may return to it next week in connection with some of the comments made upon the speech by Lord Inchcape. But that such a speech should have been made by a man in his position, and in this country, where public men will go to almost any length in dissimulation rather than say anything that would offend the churches, is alone enough to show how real the evil is. The *Daily Express*, which aims at pleasing the big drapers and the churches, thinks that Lord Inchcape is wrong when he says that the missionaries who go to China do not go to attack other religions. The *Daily Express* knows better than this. Even its friends and patrons the big drapers know better. It cannot be so silly as to believe it. If it does, I would advise the editor to read the reports of the Missionary Societies and he will find plenty of evidence to the contrary. There he will find evidence that Christian preachers do go out of their way to attack other religions. How could they do otherwise? Or do they imagine that denouncing ancestor worship as the stupid worship of dead men, and calling the native religions devil-worship to be compliments? And when the *Daily Express* goes on to refer to the missionaries in China as having "no protection other than their faith, and no encouragement other than their zeal," we may remind the editor that even Lord Beaverbrook's idols, the big advertising drapers, may find their credulity strained to breaking point. Some of my readers may remember that some 25 years ago I went through a very elaborate examination of all the Foreign Missionary Societies in this country. I relied entirely upon their own reports, but I compared the statements made one year with those made in another year. I took their figures of alleged conversions and analysed them. I disentangled their financial operations, and made plain things that were all mixed up in their reports. And the result was what one of the daily papers then called a "most scathing exposure of the Foreign Mission movement, and one which called for an official reply." Of course the reply was not forthcoming. The societies preferred the policy of silence. The missionary agencies have not altered. They are the same now as they were then. But things that may be done with impunity to tribes of Africans, or small defenceless peoples, wear a different complexion when we are dealing with a civilized nation of nearly 400 millions.

CHAPMAN COHEN.



## Swinburne the Singer.

He (Swinburne) was the greatest of our lyrical poets — of the world's, I should say, considering what a language he had to wield.—*George Meredith*.

In power and imagination and understanding, he (Swinburne) simply sweeps me away before him, as a torrent does a pebble.—*John Ruskin*.

THE multiplication of new editions of Swinburne's poetry, and of books relating to the poet himself, goes on apace, and the circumstance arouses mixed feelings. Had they been issued years ago they would have helped to widen the reputation of a very remarkable poet during his lifetime. As it is they will but increase the wreaths upon his tomb. For, by virtue of his splendid lyrical gifts, Algernon Swinburne's best work remains among the brightest gems of a thousand years of English literature, so rich in glorious genius and transcendent talent. Indeed, he was a greater artist than either Byron or Shelley, simply because he had a wider range of musical utterance.

A striking instance of the provincialism of the average English reader was the comparative unpopularity of Swinburne. His books never sold like those of Tennyson's, nor even those of Browning's. Maybe, the greatest bar to Swinburne's acceptance by the reading public was his Atheism and his Republicanism. Less was known of the man himself than he deserved. It is only since his death that the facts relating to his life have been accessible, and the man revealed.

Swinburne's own impression of the sprightly Mrs. Proctor who, when near ninety, "walked like her own granddaughter," is something like that left upon the reader by the various accounts of the poet's life. For Swinburne attracts one as a child, and one likes him from the time he first goes to school hugging a volume of Shakespeare under his arm. Lord St. Aldwyn, who was at Eton College with him, remembered his big auburn head and pasty complexion, but other witnesses are kinder in their recollections.

From Eton, Swinburne went to Balliol College, Oxford, where he drew the attention of Benjamin Jowett, who always had a keen eye for intellect. Oxford, that "home of lost causes," had little attraction for the fiery young poet, who was already a red Republican. He tried his 'prentice hand at a verse, but failed to win the Newdigate with a poem entitled: "The Discovery of the North-West Passage." As an undergraduate he was almost as big a failure as Shelley, for he left the University without degree. Fortunately, he had an excellent knowledge of Latin, Greek, French, and Italian. So fervent was his Republicanism that he hung in his rooms a portrait of Orsini, who attempted to assassinate Napoleon the Third. This alarmed Swinburne's parents, who would not allow the poet to go to Paris until he had promised to do nothing to undermine the authority of the French monarchy, a difficult rôle for the disciple of Landor and Victor Hugo. Swinburne's political views were well known, and he was invited to stand for Parliament by the Reform League, at that time a body of much influence, but, on the advice of Mazzini, he wisely declined to give up poetry for politics.

Politics, however, always interested Swinburne, and he interfered more than once to some purpose. When a proposal was made to bury the Prince Imperial in Westminster Abbey, Swinburne scotched the suggestion with one fiery sonnet in which he pictured the illustrious dead leaving the Abbey in a solemn procession, saying: "Let the dog stay there." Years later, Swinburne caused a question

to be asked in Parliament because of his terrible attack on the Czar of Russia. The poet, roused by the massacre of Jewish people, asked for the removal of a ruler who permitted such horrors. "Night hath but one red star, tyrannicide," chanted the poet in his most resonant notes, and shamed the politicians, and roused the public.

Sir Edmund Gosse says that Swinburne had no ear for music, save that of words, but he emphasises the poet's "rich and flute-like voice." Few men loved children and was loved by them so much as Swinburne. His poems on childhood are among the most exquisite in the language; but his actual experiences were as delightful. Few things pleased him more than his meeting with two ragged urchins, each about the height of his knee, who demanded a h'penny and received twopence, and trotted after him. "Well, what do you want now?" "Want to kiss you." And the poet adds, in a letter describing the incident. "I needn't say whether or not I squatted down and opened my arms, and first one and then the other put her bits of arms up to my neck and kissed me so affectionately that I felt once more how much too good little children are to us."

Swinburne fluttered the dovescotes of Orthodoxy with his *Poems and Ballads*. Indeed, the volume aroused as much excitement as Byron's *Don Juan* had in a previous generation. Robert Buchanan voiced the respectable view in a pamphlet, complaining that *Poems and Ballads* were unfit reading for young ladies. Swinburne retorted with crushing effect: "I do not write for school girls, I leave that to the Buchanans."

*Songs before Sunrise* caused another sensation, and the poet's vogue became extraordinary. Some idea of Swinburne's influence may be gathered from Canon Scott Holland, who says young University men shouted the poems, sang them, flung them about to the skies and winds. Not only the young men at Oxford were affected by Swinburne's passionate verse, for George Foote has told us how the great poet's lyrics roused him like a trumpet blast. One memorable day the future Freethought leader, then a young man, recited Swinburne's *Maler Triumphalis* on the hill outside Edinburgh, while his life-long friend, J. Wheeler, lay on the grass at his feet and applauded. Nor is this to be wondered at, for Swinburne has surpassed all other poets in the ardour of his devotion to Liberty.

The last thirty years of his life Swinburne lived at Putney with his best friend, Watts-Dunton, formerly Theodore Watts, also a poet. Meredith wickedly suggested that Watts altered his surname to avoid confusion with the Doctor Watts who wrote so many hymns. There are, unfortunately, few good stories of the poet's life. One of the best is that of a quarrel with a greedy cabman, who had asked for an excessive fare in bad language. Swinburne shouted: "Come down from your perch, and a poet will teach you how to swear."

Only one love story is recorded of the poet. At the age of twenty-five he proposed to a girl who had given him roses. Declaring his passion too suddenly and impetuously, the girl laughed at him. Afterwards, Swinburne, always shy and reserved, seemed only to care for literary companionship. An interesting story deals with the first meeting between Swinburne and Guy de Maupassant, in which the distinguished French novelist was rowing in the brilliant sunshine off a bay in the Riviera, when suddenly there emerged from the water beside the boat the head of Swinburne, who, while he was a great swimmer, was a great poet also. It was astonishing to Maupassant to make the acquaintance of Swinburne in the middle of a bay.



When Swinburne died in 1909, there was stilled a voice that had sung for half a century with wonderful vigour, melody, and freshness. But for his outspoken views about priestcraft and monarchy, he must inevitably have succeeded Tennyson as Poet Laureate. He was the last of the great poets who dominated the imagination of his contemporaries. The proof that, at his best and bravest, he was a great poet, is simply that at many of the finest, as well as the bitterest, moments of life the great music of his lines comes back to his admirers. Once appreciated, he can never be forgotten. Such influence is part of a man's life, and it is due to Swinburne's enormous gifts as a singer, for he blew everything to melody through the golden trumpet of his genius. The love of liberty has been a common possession of our greatest poets, and hardly any of them has failed to give splendid expression to the feeling. But Swinburne surpassed them all in the ardour of his devotion, and in the rapture of his praise. So impassioned was he, that he felt that he was, in very truth, the trumpet at the lips of Liberty, the clarion that called to battle against Tyranny.

MIMNERMUS.

### Some Reminiscences.

THE supreme Deity, it is said, is no respecter of persons; but maketh his sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust. And he further shows his impartiality by inflicting the small-pox and the typhus-fever on the saint and the sinner alike. But the inhabitants of the lower spiritual spheres only appear to distribute their favours among the faithful. At least, I am led to this conclusion from the following circumstance. A gentleman of my acquaintance, who had been the manager of a firm for a long term of years, was thrown out of employment owing to the death of the proprietor and the selling of the business. He was very much perturbed as to his future; positions of that kind not being easily obtainable, and he dreaded having to take a back seat. But the spirits came to his aid. His wife was a medium, and the spirits informed her that her husband was not to trouble to look for another place. And he never did. By what means the spirits supplied him with the wherewithal to live I do not know; but I do know that for the remainder of his days he acted the independent gentleman. It so happened, that very shortly after I was also unfortunate to lose a berth after thirty-eight years' service, for exactly the same reasons. But somehow the spirits failed to come to my aid. I used to ask my wife repeatedly if she ever heard any mysterious voices in the night, any whisperings of the spirits that I was to retire and enjoy a well-earned rest. Whether it was that her psychic apparatus was not sufficiently in tune with the infinite, or that something was wrong with the delicate adjustment of the mysterious vibrations upon which the successful transmission of spirit messages depend, the fact remains that no spirit messages ever came through. And unless some unknown uncle should die and remember me in his will, it looks as if I will have to die in harness.

It may be that the spirits had some grudge against me on account of some dealings I had with them in former years, and which were anything but satisfactory. The proprietor of the old book shop I used to frequent was one of the leading, and perhaps the oldest, spiritualist in the district, and he was constantly urging me to investigate the phenomena of spiritualism. He invited me to some seances that

were being held at his house, and conducted by a medium of some repute in the movement. As the audience, with the exception of myself, consisted of spiritualists, the medium had quite a free hand. They were what is known as materialistic seances; and I have a distinct recollection of three of the figures that issued from the cabinet—a tall, turbaned Indian, a beautiful lady in a sort of spiders-web drapery, and a little child who moved about freely among the circle of visitors. After the first performance, my friend was eager to know if these appearances did not convince me of the truth of spiritualism. But his notions of what constituted conclusive evidence were altogether different to mine. It is to his credit, however, that at some later seances, he was the first to pronounce the medium a fraud. By the way, I see that the turbaned Indian gentleman and the beautiful lady in white were recently trotted out before the *Sunday Chronicle* Investigation Committee, when the medium, Harold Evans, was caught red-handed in the trickery. These two figures seem to be part of the stock-in-trade of materialising mediums.

My old friend, the bookseller, had been urging the claims of spiritualism upon other of his clients, with the result that a committee was formed, of which I acted as the secretary. We conducted a series of fortnightly meetings for two years, but we were never fortunate enough during the whole of that period to witness any phenomena of a convincing nature. We started off by engaging the medium, previously mentioned, for six sittings, at a fixed fee. Three of these seances were held without any success; and then I was quietly told by the bookseller to cancel the sittings, as the medium was an imposter. This medium was subsequently tested before the Psychical Research Society in London and detected as a cheat. The meetings we held were interesting enough, but mostly because of the lectures we had, presenting the rationalist point of view. I remember once putting an advertisement in *Light*, the spiritualist organ, for mediums who would produce phenomena under test conditions. This paper was a weekly supplement, containing the advertisements of scores of mediums, professing to obtain information from the "other side," and work all kind of wonders. My advertisement elicited one reply, which was perhaps the most illiterate scroll I have ever seen. If anyone has ever been able to get into touch with the spirits, all I can say is, that they have been more fortunate than we ever were.

I once went to hear Sir Conan Doyle in the Gateshead Town Hall. The building was packed. "The great thing in connection with spiritualism," said the lecturer, "is the fact that messages come through. Of course, there are people who object to the quality of these messages; indeed they say they are all twaddle. Well friends, I'll tell you how that is. One of our philosophers has said that these islands are inhabited by some forty million people—who are mostly fools. *It is the same on the other side.*" A little surprised at such a statement, I looked round at the faces of the audience, but they were all as solemn and glum as a Presbyterian elder dispensing the Sacrament. Indeed, I was the only person who laughed. That may be another reason why the spirits neglected me; they must have heard the laugh—and remembered.

Many Northern readers will remember the name of Mr. Newrick Richardson, whose death was recorded in the *Freethinker* some little time ago. Richardson was a good customer of the wholesale firm of which I was the manager, although his business was done through a traveller. Still, I knew him fairly well, as he often used to call when in the town. On one occasion when he had been in, and I had bid him



good-bye, I was surprised to see him return about half-an-hour later, with a quizzical look upon his face. I learned afterwards that after he left, he had paid a visit to my old friend, the bookseller, who had told him of my humble literary efforts. He took me aside, but still seemed dubious of what he had been told; then in a tentative sort of way, he said: "Are you a Freethinker?" I smiled, and said, "A bit of a one." With that, he shook me warmly by the hand: "Man," he said, "we have read your articles in the *Freethinker* for years, and many a time we have wondered who you were. And to think I should have known you all the while. Wait till I go round among the boys; I'll have something to tell them."

The dear old soul was sadly crippled, having had rheumatic fever some nineteen times; but he was as cheerful as a little child. I said to him one day: "How does it come, Newrick, that a man like you has such a wide business connection, when the most of us would be boycotted if our views were known?" He laughed, "Well, now," he said, "I'll tell you. When my first wife was alive, she was a Methodist, and remained one all her days, although we lived happily enough together. The week-night prayer meetings were often held in our house. And the religious people, knowing the good terms on which we lived, and also that I never interfered with the wife's wishes, counted my toleration of her foibles to me for righteousness, and supported me rather liberally. After the wife died, and it was necessary for the daughter, who was at service, to come home, she returned—a spiritualist. She asked if she might hold seances in the house, and I said, 'Of course, honey, the house is as much yours as it is mine.' Well, the vicar got to hear of these seances, and he came down upon me like a thousand of bricks, for permitting such devilry, as he called it, to take place under my roof. I said, 'Vicar, you know that the prayer meetings were frequently held at our house when the wife was alive, and although I have as little sympathy with seances as I had with prayer meetings, I allow to everybody the same liberty in the exercise of their beliefs that I claim for myself. That's where your creed and mine differs. Your religion has always been a persecuting religion, and you mustn't expect a man like me to encourage you in continuing it.' Well, the spiritualists got to hear of my encounter with the vicar, and were in high glee, and they rallied to my support. And so, what with the religious connection, and the spiritualist connection, and my own Freethought connection—well, I don't do so bad." Dear old Newrick! his earnest advocacy of Freethought principles had earned for him the title of the "mad Atheist," but he was the very soul of gentleness and kindness. I often think if there was such a thing as an Atheist's Saints' Calendar, I would like to propose his name for canonization. On one occasion when he was going his rounds, he was met by the vicar of the place, who stopped and chatted. "How is it, Richardson," he said, "that you never call at the vicarage?" "Well," said Newrick, "considering the views that I hold, I thought you might not care for a man like me to be seen about the premises." "Nonsense," said the vicar, "just you call and tell them I sent you for an order." And ever after, the vicarage was one of his regular calls. He was perhaps the most lovable personality I have ever met.

On another occasion when I paid the bookseller a visit, the only other person in the shop was an old miners' leader, at the other end of the establishment, examining the bookshelves. The bookseller dearly loved to see a fight, especially if Christian theology was to come into the scrap. And nothing would satisfy him but he would introduce me to the old

M.P., which he did with the remark, that I was a young man who had left the churches. The miners' leader turned to me with a pitying sort of smile, and said it was a great pity, as the churches wanted all the young men of a reforming tendency to remain in her, and sweep away all the abuses which were hampering her usefulness. I replied that the best thing would be to reform them out of existence. And then he began to tell me of the awful conditions of the miner's life and surroundings, as he had heard them from his grandfather and great grandfather, and contrasted them with their improved condition of to-day. "Wherever the little Methodist Chapel has been set up in their midst," he said, "it has been a centre of enlightenment and improvement." I began to tell him that he could only view such a change by taking into consideration the conditions of English society generally during the same period. I supplied him with a picture of these, as seen in the abominable slave traffic, the drinking customs of the past, the cock-pits of the gentry, the bribery of election times, the state of the law courts, where the magistrates' rooms were filled with game and all sorts of presents, to influence a verdict in favour of the donor. "If," I said, "these things have all been swept away by a growing social and moral consciousness, your miners have only improved in sympathy with the general change: your little Methodist Chapel has had as much to do with the improvement of the miners as ——." But he had abruptly left the shop, without so much as a good-day to the genial bookseller.

Why is it, I wonder, that labour leaders, and particularly miners' leaders, are nearly always either canting religious humbugs or political cranks? No wonder that with two such blind guides as Jesus Christ and Karl Marx, the miners should have been led into a ditch, out of which both these guides proved equally powerless to extricate them.

JOSEPH BRUCE.

## The Philosopher of Walham Green.

WILLIAM MURGATROYD was a man with singularly few illusions. In fact it might be said, with considerably more truth than is contained in most statements that are not axiomatic, that he was a man who had no illusions at all. He would, however, be the first to deprecate such a flattering description of himself. Not that he was conscious of cherishing so irrational a thing as an illusion—the very essence of an illusion lies in our unconsciousness of it—but because he knew, in the ripeness of his wisdom, that the human mind is prone to error, and that the man who asserts his entire freedom from this amiable human weakness is already deceiving himself. He knew that the most detached philosopher cannot entirely escape the influence of the personal equation. Nevertheless, he prided himself on being, within strictly relative limits, a rational being. He had, for instance, no illusions concerning that popular Victorian superstition—Progress. True he was an evolutionist: but to William Murgatroyd evolution did not mean the majestic striving of cosmic forces towards the Good, the True, and the Beautiful—it merely meant one damned thing after another. There was nothing sentimental about William Murgatroyd; he accepted facts as facts; he did not temporize; he did not rationalize his emotions, nor did he feel called upon to justify the depressing reactions a contemplation of the universe awakened in him; he did not palter with the truth when it



became unpleasant, rather did he attack it more determinedly, crying with Hamlet: "I will cross it though it blast me!" He gazed around in scorn at the poor fools who still cherished optimistic dreams. The universe couldn't kid *him*. He had gazed on the naked truth. He was God! He was also forty-eight years of age, and a bachelor.

On what curious combinations of trivial circumstances does human destiny oft times depend. If we could analyse some of the great events of human history we should doubtless find a multitude of minor incidents and accidents which, insignificant in themselves, were yet essential to the major result, and without which the course of history would have made very different reading. How was it, for instance, that William Murgatroyd should, on a particular Saturday afternoon in late November, have found himself colliding with a lady in the midst of a crowd of busy shoppers in North End Road? How was it that that lady should prove to be none other than Mrs. Billing, his own landlady? Why in the eternal whirl of atoms that constitute the macrocosm and microcosm of the universe should these two ego's meet at this precise spot, at the exact time? I do not know. Neither can I conceive any intelligent explanation that would not require a further explanation to make it intelligible. Mr. Murgatroyd, either because of the shock of collision, or because he did not perceive its significance, did not attempt a solution. Mrs. Billing, who still exhibited animistic tendencies, immediately concluded that the meeting was providential—for she had been shopping and was already encumbered with more parcels than she could conveniently manage. Thus it was that the universe presented the spectacle of a stout, rosy-faced woman, clad in a fur coat of inferior quality and carrying a large carpet-bag full of vegetables, walking down North End Road, accompanied by a small, fragile-looking man in spectacles, struggling with a basket of groceries. Certainly not an unusual sight in a London suburb on a Saturday afternoon. And yet it did not escape the eye of Mrs. Brown of Acacia Terrace, who was doing a bit of shopping. In fact it caused her to nudge her companion—also a resident of that delectable thoroughfare—at which they exchanged significant glances and looked exceeding wise.

The divinity that shapes our ends was on duty in Walham Green that November afternoon. In unconsciously carrying out the inscrutable decrees of Providence William Murgatroyd is not the first who has accidentally trodden on a banana skin, and he will probably not be the last. But, -again, he did not dwell on the universal enigma; he simply limped along on the arm of Mrs. Billing, conscious of an intense pain in his right ankle, and a comforting sense of warmth due to his close contact with the fur coat. What a curious smell it had, too—so homely. And as they proceeded slowly along Acacia Terrace, Mrs. Billing's watchful eye observed movements behind the curtains in the windows opposite.

Mr. Murgatroyd, as becomes a complete philosopher, had often pondered on what is vaguely termed "the woman question." Not that there was anything vague about the mental processes of William Murgatroyd—his ideas on women were very definite, and tinged with that tolerant scepticism that marked all his thought. He would not commit himself to an endorsement of the wholesale condemnation of women that characterized the early Christian fathers, but he at least reflected that they were probably not speaking without considerable intimate experience of the sex. But women were rather remote from his life. He had never regarded matrimony as a personal possibility. He only toyed with the idea now; but the truth is that the odour of the fur coat still

clung to him like incense; he recalled vividly the immense sense of warmth and comfort awakened in him by contact with the fur coat and its owner. Its owner! Yes, Mrs. Billing was a decidedly presentable widow—money in the bank—and not a day over forty. Of course, he knew that all the talk about the beauty and virtue of woman was cant. A sexual illusion! A superstition, like the rationality of man. Besides, he was not in love. What is Love? An illusion! He reflected frankly, even brutally, that Mrs. Billing in the nude was likely to be a much less presentable creature than Mrs. Billing in the fur coat—and William Murgatroyd was an artist as well as a philosopher.

On the Saturday night following the incident in North End Road, Mr. Murgatroyd took his landlady to see a performance of *Charley's Aunt* at the Walham Green Empire, as an expression of gratitude for the solicitous care with which she had nursed his sprained ankle. He had never before been to the local Empire. A Shaw play at the Regent was his only theatrical dissipation, except for a visit to the other Empire in Leicester Square to see Miss Sybil Thorn-dyke in Shelley's *Cenci*—his enjoyment of that morbid masterpiece having been marred by a lengthy introductory "sermon" by Miss Clemence Dane. And now here he was laughing quite immoderately at a farce which he knew was neither original nor particularly witty—a really impossible farce, with not even the acting to commend it. But you see he was again in close proximity to the fur coat. And when, a little later, he drank a glass of stout with Mrs. Billing in the bar-parlour of a public house in Fulham Road, he reflected that—like *Charley's Aunt*—she was "no ordinary woman."

Next morning Mr. Murgatroyd came down to breakfast wearing his best suit and a new collar and tie. A close observer would have noticed that he also wore a guilty look. For William Murgatroyd was about to commit a great indiscretion. He—Apostle of Reason and Ultra-Rationalist—was about to do a supremely irrational thing. Perhaps *the* supremely irrational thing. He was about to make a proposal of marriage!

Mrs. Billing did not, however, come down to breakfast. She never would come down to breakfast again. Walham Green had slept, but Providence had not. There had been a swift and silent visitation—some eleventh hour change in the Divine Purpose. And as William Murgatroyd lowered the venetian blind as a token of respect for the dead, he reflected that in doing so he was probably helping to perpetuate another superstition.

VINCENT J. HANDS.

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## Acid Drops.

Mrs. Edith Stanfield was charged with disturbing the service at Holy Trinity Church, Kilburn, and remanded for enquiry into her mental condition. The vicar declared in court that the woman was suffering from religious mania. Now that is not quite playing the game. If all those who made the vicar's creed, and who were suffering from some form of religious mania, had been hauled before a magistrate and sent to an asylum, where would the vicar and his religion be now? It would most probably be non-existent. For, after all, the visions and ecstasies that have done so much to build up the religious consciousness and to keep religion alive were to a very large extent based upon hallucination or some form of mental derangement. The vicar was really saying that the poor woman was in the same mental condition as many other founders and leaders of religions, but in these days for a man or a woman to proclaim this kind of illumination is



to arouse suspicion of their sanity. With that we quite agree. But it gives rise to the question, "Why is religious illumination in the tenth century regarded as insanity in the twentieth?" There is a whole study of psychology and religion in the answer.

Something in the same vein as the above comes to us from Chelmsford. The notorious London evangelist, Pastor Jeffries, has been in that town, and there has been the usual scenes reminiscent of primitive Christianity and Central African savages. The usual tales of marvellous cures have been forthcoming, although none of these cures ever stand independent investigation. But in this case several persons have been certified insane, and their insanity has followed attendance at the mission. That will, of course, not trouble Pastor Jeffries in the least. What these men live on is the excitement caused amongst hysterical or half-demented people, and a public denunciation of this kind of thing would open too many lines of investigation, is too dangerous for the clergy to face, for those responsible in the religious world to venture on. Here and there a half-hearted protest may be made, but in the main the clergy remain quiet in face of what is a crying scandal in a civilized community. The foolish are impressed by what occurs, and the better educated find therein material for semi-insane musings on various forms of religious mysticism.

The *Daily Express* says, rather timidly, that "it is within the knowledge of many persons that it often means a wholly deplorable mental unbalancing, with sometimes grievously ill results. It is fairly safe to assume that an excited revival meeting is no place for the impressionable young, or the neurotic adult." Quite so, but if these two classes are taken away the converts would disappear. It is a fact established beyond dispute that practically all cases of conversion fall under these two heads, and in either case there is grave damage done. The young man or woman is brought under the stress of grave emotional and mental strain at the very time when he or she needs as little of that kind of thing as possible. The feelings that cluster round the years of adolescence are perverted and distorted, until we have a confirmed neurotic on our hands instead of a healthy and useful member of society. These are facts well known to all medical men, but they are generally afraid to speak out because of the power of the religious boycott, although in private most of them will admit that the facts are so.

Some of the Chelmsford folk say that these people were on the verge of insanity when they went to Pastor Jeffries meeting. We can quite believe this. But that does not disprove what has been said, it only enforces its truth from another angle. Men such as Pastor Jeffries attracts the mentally unbalanced, just as a priest of Voodooism would if he were to set up business in this country. It is because they are already unbalanced that many of them go to such meetings, and it is because of the mentally unbalanced that these professional evangelists enjoy their popularity—and their profits. Professor Tylor well called these conversion meetings part of the "Religion of mental disease." If a man were to carry on the same game in connection with anything but religion there would be an outcry for his suppression, and we should see articles in the papers calling for an Act that would make this living upon the ignorance and emotionalism of unbalanced minds an impossibility. We see it in connection with palmistry and fortune-telling in general. But where Christianity is concerned almost any form of imposture, any kind of exploitation of weakness and ignorance is permitted. Dr. Boris Sidis did not hesitate, speaking out of a wide experience of mental complaints, to class these professional evangelists as little better than criminals. Of course, they are often as ignorant as their dupes, but often they know better. And the heaviest responsibility rests with the clergy who remain silent.

As the season of goodwill, fraternity and rejoicing is now upon us, it is fitting that we should have something suitable. Air Vice-Marshal H. R. M. Brooke-Popham, in a lecture at the Imperial College of Science, South Kensington, stated that during the last war, aeroplanes dropped a total of 30 tons of bombs on London; 400 people were killed and 1,400 injured. It was probable, he also stated, that in another war the enemy would drop three or four times that amount of bombs on London every 24 hours. The only consolation to the plain citizens is that exemption to sky-pilots during that time will not be necessary, and that he must take a few lessons from the war. Come let us be joyful, for, according to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the religious depression following the last war has now come to an end, and the tide is turning.

In dealing with the question whether the Church had failed, the Rev. A. Gordon James said that a true indictment of the Church might be made on different grounds from those usually cited. One was that it had failed to explain and to interpret the great doctrines of the Catholic faith. The dogmas of the Church (*i.e.*, statements of principles universally regarded as fundamental to the faith) had been sugared over. They had been robbed of their strength and virility. They had been mis-stated and misunderstood; and for that the Church as a whole was to blame. It is wonderful how fond individual parsons nowadays are of laying the blame on "the Church" for the failure and decline of the Christian religion. Now, "the Church" in the sense used by the parson critics obviously means the leaders of organized Christianity. These leaders, in common with all priests, claim to be in direct communion with God and to be specially directed by him. Yet these leaders have, says Mr. James, misunderstood and mis-stated the Christian principles; and he wishes us to believe that Christianity is something entirely different from what has been taught for nineteen hundred years. If that is the fact of the matter, then what Mr. James is doing is this—he is not indicting the Church, but God. For obviously the God-inspired leaders have been making a devil of a mess of the faith for one of two reasons; namely, God has inspired the false teaching or he has been indifferent to it. Whichever reason be accepted, God is committed.

Sir Thomas Inskip, the Solicitor-General, recently expressed satisfaction at the new lease of life that seems to have been taken by the Lord's Day Observance Society. Sir Thomas, we fancy, would have been a little less ready with his approbation if he had fully realised the import of the Society's golden rule. That is: "What you yourself have no wish to do, prevent others from doing." The Society's watchwords are—Interference, Intolerance, and Impertinence. One would hardly have thought they would arouse the admiration of a Solicitor-General.

The Bishop of Southwark is concerned about the decline of Bible reading, which we can quite understand, although we fancy it is not so much the decline of reading as of believing that is the trouble. The British and Foreign Bible Society says it prints more Bibles every year, so that it is evident that there is no falling off in circulation. It is really the fact that people no longer attempt to guide their lives by the Bible that is upsetting the Bishop. And that is only another way of saying that they have left off looking to him for guidance.

We agree with the Bishop that the fundamental cause of the lack of belief is the changed views as to the accuracy of Bible teaching. And that is a very good reason. He says people found out that the inspiration of the writers of the Bible did not lift them above the beliefs and opinions of their own age. That strikes us as saying in a roundabout way that people were as well off without inspiration as they were with it. It neither made them more sensible nor less stupid. And that suggests—to anyone except a Christian Bishop—the



question of the benefit of inspiration to anyone. In the end the Bishop concludes that the inspiration of the Bible lies in its spiritual and moral teaching. We presume that we may find this in its endorsement of slavery, witchcraft, stoning to death for breaking the Sabbath, etc., etc., etc. We should dearly love the Bishop to tell us what kind of moral teaching the writers of the Bible found with the aid of inspiration they could not have found without it?

A Fundamentalist lay-preacher, Mr. W. Harrison of Hucknall (Notts), is deeply concerned about "Modernism." According to him, it undermines belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures and the doctrine of Atonement. And, what is still more dreadful, it causes many "of our thinking young men and women" to fall away from religion entirely. We cannot quite see why Modernism should be blamed for this sad state of affairs. The root of the trouble is in the fact that the culprits are *thinking* young men and women. As such, first Fundamentalism then Modernism fails to satisfy their intelligence, and so they reject religion altogether. If it is the thinking persons who do this, then a legitimate assumption is that those who hold fast to traditional doctrines are the non-thinkers. We have said as much many a time, but we hardly expected to have our opinion confirmed by a Fundamentalist lay-preacher.

The Vicar of Cromer, we learn, nearly always manages to get his big Church crowded on Sunday. He does this by specialising in a popular and evangelical service. Realising, he says, that his congregation includes persons whose views on doctrine, etc., vary, he designs the service so that it will offend nobody and please as many as possible. The vicar is a clever man if he succeeds in offending nobody and pleasing everybody. He must, too, be a rather peculiar type of Christian; for Christians have always prided themselves on asserting the Church's "truth" no matter if it offended. The vicar has seemingly discovered that the practice doesn't pay. Therefore he keeps the Church's traditional full cream out of sight and specialises in vending skim milk, as being more suited to the palate of the modern church-goer.

A writer in the *Methodist Recorder* has two columns of shop about Dickens, his religion, Christmas, and the Babe of Bethlehem. The gist of it is that Dickens was very religious, that his religion was entirely opposed to that professed and practised by the pious of his day, but that his religion was nevertheless true Christianity. What the Methodist writer's contention amounts to is that Dickens was the only real Christian, and all the pious people were not. That theory is a little too steep for acceptance. The truth of the matter is that the pious were true Christians exhibiting the kind of mentality the Christian creed produces, but Dickens was a Humanist who humanized current Christian notions and practices.

The Kingdom of Heaven, said the Rev. A. G. James in a recent address, could not be brought in by force. If the Church attempted to coerce men it would be disloyal to the very principles for which it stood. Christians could educate, persuade, and appeal, but they could not tyrannise. Assuming Mr. James has the right of it, there must be a large number of pious people acting so that the Kingdom of Heaven cannot be brought in. They evoke the force at the back of the Law to prevent Freethinkers from freely speaking their thoughts about religion, and to prohibit Sunday trading. They coerce weak Councillors and Justices into prohibiting quite harmless Sunday recreation and amusement. And they do such things because they believe their religion urges them to do so. The Christian religion must be a very difficult thing to understand. Mr. James interprets it as being against the use of coercion. Millions of Christians throughout the Christian era and down to the present day, have been and are convinced that coercion is justified. By

the look of things, the Christian creed requires sending back to the maker to be recast into something that believers can all interpret in exactly the same way.

On the second reading in the House of Lords of the Roman Catholic Relief Bill, the Archbishop of Canterbury stated that the reasons for retaining some safeguards were not far to seek. There were occasions, he stated, when the spirit of Papacy had threatened our liberties. A bird's-eye view of history shows that there has been nothing to choose between Protestant and Catholic; there was six to one and half-a-dozen of the other, and we presume that at present his Lordship finds the saddle very comfortable.

If we deal with beliefs instead of evidence there is not much to argue about in connection with Spiritualism. From a report of the case in connection with "Northcliffe Shapes," we see that Miss Louise Owen inserted an advertisement in the *Morning Post* which had been received from a dead man after he had died; here it is:—"Northcliffe thanks all his old colleagues for attending the meeting at the Memorial Hall on Saturday to hear his message of hope to the world given by Miss Owen, his secretary." If there are no terrors when one is dead, some industrious people seem bent on finding some. The clue to all this nonsense may be found in a study of primitive superstitions, and, as it is harder to be a well-informed and intelligent citizen than a gulper of fairy tales, the line of least resistance is taken by the majority who form raw material for the medicine man.

The Vicar of St. Andrews, Stoke Newington, no doubt grateful to the *Daily Express* for an advertisement, is concerned about the parson's dog collar. He writes:—"The only way for a parson to learn the mind of the average man is to wear the average man's collar." It may be that the description of the collar, which the parson accepts is an esoteric symbol of moving among sheep, but the vicar had better be careful. If the collar is thrown to the hounds and intonation pitched overboard, there will be a great danger of the religious business ending in smoke. We warn him; hold fast to the dog collar, for by that sign ordinary people humour them—and sometimes tolerate them, and forbear with them, and never tell them anything seriously as they are a different kind of species.

A fox was run to earth and killed in the close of Lichfield Cathedral. Major G. H. Anson, M.F.H., said that the bishop was not there, but "all the canons and clergymen seemed to be present at the kill." We are not surprised. The element of cruelty inherent in Christianity will find gratification somehow. And we have no doubt the gallant Major went home feeling well pleased with the daring of his troop of "sportsmen." We wonder how many of them would venture on a fight where the animal stood something like an equal chance?

The Rev. Dr. Norwood says the London Policeman will answer any foolish question asked by any fool. We wonder how Dr. Norwood found this out. We always know the London Policeman as one of the most obliging of officials, but Dr. Norwood's knowledge is evidently of a more intimate character.

The "moral welfare of the borough" is the special object of a Council of Christian Congregations, representing seven denominations, recently formed at Stalybridge. The morals of the citizens would appear to be pretty degraded if such a Council has become a necessity. We hope the citizens not connected with the Christian Congregations appreciate the compliment implied by the forming of this Council of Busybodies. The real purpose of the Council is, we guess, to air impertinent puritanical criticism and to interfere with other people's quite harmless activities.



## The "Freethinker" Endowment Trust.

WE do not intend saying much about the Fund this week, save that we are still waiting to hear from the many hundreds of readers of the *Freethinker*, who are quite able to subscribe and who should do so. Our old friend, Mr. A. J. Fincken, remarks that the rank and file of the party never did subscribe as they should have done, and adds, "Nature did not cut you out for a beggar, and I can quite understand your feelings when you have, week after week, to remind those who value the *Freethinker* that a state of emergency exists." We don't know whether we ought to plead guilty to this indictment or not. All we can say is that we never intended to play the part of a beggar and do not intend doing so now. We merely remind Freethinkers of a need and give them an opportunity of discharging a duty. That should be enough, and we like to think of Freethought as being above the policy of "begging." I believe that a very great cause of many not sending is sheer dilatoriness, the feeling that any time will do, or that the help that one is able to give is too small to make much difference. I have pointed out repeatedly that this is not so. If this Trust is to be completed within the next twelve months, it will require the help of all, great and small, and to help towards consummating the biggest thing ever attempted in the history of the Freethought Party ought to be enough.

But I am not begging, and I cannot promise subscribers any reward save that of having carried out a duty and discharged a responsibility. So I am still waiting to hear from the several thousand readers who should, within the next few weeks, become subscribers.

To December 12, £700 16s. 8d. In loving memory of my husband, T. E. Hinley, £1 1s.; V. H. S., 5s.; J. Ralston, £1; R. M., £1; R. V., £1; A. M. Wright, 2s. 6d.; A. J. Fincken, £5; H. Theobalds, 10s.; J. A. White, £1; A. Black, £1; Mrs. E. Adams, £10; H. Parker, 5s.; Mr. and Mrs. J. Shipp, £1; G. Gompertz, £1; J. Wearing, 1s.; W. Graham, 2s. 6d.; P. Dewar, 2s. 6d. Total, £725 6s. 2d.

Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the *Freethinker* Endowment Trust, and addressed to me at 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4. Every contribution will be acknowledged week by week in the *Freethinker*.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### To Correspondents.

Those subscribers who receive their copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN WRAPPER will please take it that the renewal of their subscription is due. They will also oblige, if they do not want us to continue sending the paper, by notifying us to that effect.

G. P. H.—Mr. Cohen has written to your London address.  
 ICONOCLAST (Glasgow).—We do not quite understand what it is you wish to know about Thomas Carlyle. Or is it Richard Carlile you have in mind?

J. RALSTON.—Thanks for your good wishes and your appreciation of what is being done.

S. DOBSON.—Pleased to hear that Mr. Dobson's paper on Secularism met with so much appreciation. Freethought, we know, has no more loyal follower than he.

H. PARKER.—Shall be glad to welcome you as a member of the N.S.S. The books you enquire for are sold out.

S. EVANS.—The best way to counteract the bigotry of which you complain is to join hands with those who are fighting it. It is no use making an appeal to a sense of fair play that isn't there. When Freethinkers make it unprofitable

Christians will cease to express their bigotry. They will not cease to feel bigoted, but it will stop there.

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

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

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

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

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

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

All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd.," Clerkenwell Branch.

Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—  
 One year, 15s.; half year, 7s. 6d.; three months, 3s. 9d.

## Sugar Plums.

The Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society is fixed this year for Wednesday, January 12. It will take place, as before, at the Midland Grand Hotel, St. Pancras. Those who have attended previous dinners need no further assurance of comfort and good service being certain. There will be the usual good programme provided, and we should like this year to see a record established in the number of attendants. And it will help all concerned in arranging the dinner if those who intend coming will take their tickets as early as possible. We are looking forward to seeing many of our provincial friends present.

For the first time for many years there is no article from Mr. Lloyd in this issue of the *Freethinker*. He is suffering from a very severe cold, and found himself quite unable to complete his usual contribution. Every reader of the paper will wish him a very rapid recovery, and we hope to see him occupying his usual place in these columns next week.

Not too soon the Town Council of Thetford decided to place a memorial tablet to the memory of Thomas Paine, "Thetford's most noted son." This roused the ire of a Rev. Father Fitzgerald, who wrote an abusive letter protesting against such a thing being done. We do not know how many famous men Thetford may have produced, but we feel pretty certain that it never produced a more famous one than Thomas Paine, or one who laboured more unselfishly for the good of mankind. Anyone but a parson might have recognised this, even though they disagreed altogether with his opinions. We find men in opposite camps in politics, or science, or art, ready to pay tribute to their opponents when the occasion arises. But the malignancy of religion knows of no restraint, and to vary a phrase of the late G. W. Foote's, the letter of Mr. Fitzgerald was worthy of its creed. The Council had the good sense to merely acknowledge the receipt of the parson's letter and let the matter rest. We hope the parson is pleased with the publicity given to his letter.

Owing to the Christmas holidays, the *Freethinker* dated January 2, must be ready for the press by December 24. Communications for that issue must therefore reach us not later than the morning of that date.



Mr. George Whitehead visits Manchester to-day (December 19), and will lecture in the Engineers' Hall, Rusholme Road, at 3 and 6.30. The titles of his subjects are interesting, and we have no doubt but that the lectures will be equally so. We advise Freethinkers to give their Christian friends a Christmas box by taking them along to at least one of the meetings.

Mr. H. Black, of Manchester, who is untiring in his efforts to gain new subscribers, suggests that an attempt should be made to get the newspaper Kiosks to exhibit *Freethinker* posters, and to keep a copy or so on sale. He has himself been successful in this direction and thinks others might be equally so. We think so, too, and any form of advertising is good. The *Freethinker* needs to be better known.

### Personal Immortality.

As I grow older I am frequently asked by my friends whether I still believe that with the termination of my existence as a sentient being—when the bodily functions of my organism have entirely ceased to perform their office, that I as an individual have ceased to exist for ever, and have no desire for any future life; I invariably reply that I see no evidence in support of continued existence in some other world of *my mind* apart from the worn-out organization in which I played my part on the stage of life in this, the only world in which I have had any experience.

And it must be remembered that when people did really believe in a future life, like Christians, they believed in the resurrection of the body. This belief had for its foundation the story of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and the alleged demonstration given to Thomas, the doubting disciple, who was actually allowed the privilege of personally verifying the identity of the alleged risen person with his Lord and master by feeling the wound prints and placing his hand in the wounded side. But to-day very few Christians, except perhaps the latter day saints, believe in the resurrection of the body; although members of the Anglican Church every time they repeat the "Apostle's Creed," declare they "believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting," but they will tell you that when they talk of the resurrection they mean not that of the terrestrial body in which their souls dwelt on the earth, but with a celestial one—whatever that may mean. But if we ask these Christians or any other persons what they mean by the word soul, to give us some sort of definition—we shall soon discover that their description is either a contradiction in terms or that it conveys no clear idea to the human mind. Of what avail is it to the theologian or the spiritist to affirm that the soul is the "ego" of man, when neither of them can prove the existence of such an "ego" apart from the physical activities of the brain, or in fact, of the functional activities of the whole of the human organization. For, mark you, the theologian, will have it that the soul of man is intelligent, that it is *mind as distinct from matter*. But whoever knew of mind existing apart from matter? And what does man know of intelligence apart from brain? Destroy the brain of the most intellectual man alive, or even injure it and what will become of his intelligence? And if a man cannot be intelligent in this world without a brain what grounds have we for believing that he can be intelligent in some other world without one? Spiritists also believe that the spirits that are said to be hovering about in space and that attend seances at the beck and call of certain so-called "mediums"

possess intelligence; but even when they allege that they get in touch with the spirits of the great dead—poets and philosophers—they cannot get them to talk in the poetic and philosophic language they employed in this world. Moreover, do we not know by observation that the development of the brain of the human being is subject to the same law of growth and decay as the brain of the lower animals? The child possesses but small intelligence at first, but by the growth and cultivation of the brain it develops, until the full-grown man reaches by exercise the limits of his intellectual powers.

In old age the brain undergoes a great change and loses its powers; it gradually shrivels up, until the man in the last stage of senile decay manifests no more intelligence than that of a mere babe. In truth, the intelligence of a man under normal conditions depends largely upon the size, quality and weight of his brain; indeed, the most highly intelligent men have been known to possess brains that weighed nearly sixty ounces, while the brains of idiots, upon examination, have often been found to weigh less than twenty. These are facts well known to every student of physical science. The question then arises, will all men live again? And if yes, will idiots live again, and if yes, will they be idiots when they live again? If they are not idiots when they live again, they will have lost their identity. In other words they will not be the same persons, and they might just as well not live again, for they will not remember themselves in their previous condition. It is claimed by Theosophists that man has always existed as a soul, that he has existed in all the distant past, and they allege will exist in all the distant future, although he has not always been associated with a body. But, as I have said dozens of times in my lectures on the subject, if the above statement is true, I frankly confess that I do *not* remember who I was before I became who I am; and if I do not remember who I was before I became who I am, how am I likely to remember who I shall be when I am somebody else? That is a conundrum I should like to ask any theologian or theosophist to answer. The fact is, if we argue for personal immortality we must take our mental and physical characteristics with us into the next world, otherwise our own identity will be lost. The man of genius must remain a man of genius in the next world, the shrewd man of business remain smart and clever, and the fool remain a fool, otherwise these individuals would not even know themselves, much less others be able to recognize them.

And if it be true that we must carry our physical and mental peculiarities with us into the next life, if such there be, in order to be able to identify ourselves, it is clear that we must remember most of the chief incidents of our lives, our struggles, our failures, our successes, our evil thoughts and our good thoughts, our wicked deeds, as well as our good ones; our pain and our sorrow; and if we can feel as acutely with the soul apart from the body as we could when it was associated with us, there is every ground for believing that we shall not be "happy ever after" as Christians suppose, but shall be subject to the same pain and sorrow, alternating with pleasure, as we experienced in this life. Ah! there's the rub!

But why should men fume and fret concerning a future existence, about which they know nothing and the evidence for which is of such a flimsy and unsatisfactory character that it will not bear a moment's serious investigation? I have never heard of persons, not even Christians, weeping because they did not know what their souls were doing before they were born. Besides, if we really possess a soul that is immortal, we cannot help living again



whether we like it or not. Moreover, is not death perfect rest? The sleep of death as far as we know is undisturbed by dreams—the fear of Hamlet—notwithstanding. Why Shakespeare himself in *Measure for Measure* makes the Duke say:—

The best of rest is sleep,  
And that thou oft provok'st, yet grossly fear'st  
Thy death which is no more.

Or as Prospero in *The Tempest* says:—

We are such stuff as dreams are made of  
And our little lives are rounded with a sleep.

Why then fear? The Freethinker is as well off as the Christian even in the hour of death.

We, however, do know that our present life is a fact, and that our happiness and the happiness of future generations depend upon the manner in which we each use our opportunities. Life at least is a great struggle; it is full of doubt and anxiety, of pain and sorrow, but it also has some pleasure; and by a wise use of the knowledge we gain from day to day, we make clear the path our children—yea our children's children—will have to tread in the march towards human progress in ages yet to come.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

### Burns and the Devil and Holy Water.

We had just heard of a charabanc trip—really a water trip—from our little Ayrshire town to the Holy Well in Carfin, Lanarkshire, and of how the Pilgrims came home refreshed and singing. The Orangeman winked, laughed and grimaced—he, at least, was free from superstition! The Freethinker mused. The Recorder merely beamed on both, non-committally. We had no doubt the waters of Carfin were good, but common and natural springs, only in subjective estimation susceptible to thaumaturgy and transsubstantiation—the priest can still turn water into wine and bread into the body of Christ, or what is equal to that, make himself and others believe he can—impressed, imposed upon when young, even in a priest the child imposes on the man. We mused deeply on all the aspects and implications of this demonology, for, sure, his mythical majesty “the Devil was in it!” As a relief the poet Burns occurred to us, and his stately “Address to the De'il”—a seasonable thought, the glorious Twenty-Fifth of January being near at hand—what would poet, peasant and priest be without his angels, principalities and powers, things present and things to come, all the creatures of the imagination: what would even the Freethinker be without his pantheons? And, devil take it all, what if these myriad imaginations of geographical insanity be after all but the true quartz of the jewel of the soul? Disturbing thought. Even we are not yet emancipated. But we are just emerged from a cool dip in the sea with cooled tissues and clarified mind, drunk, you might say, with external libations—holy water—

The moving waters at their priest-like task  
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores.

What if in our mocking complacency we are yet bound for that eternal bonfire the seven seas could not quench? Ye who sit in the scorner's chair, are you quite sure it is well with your soul? But Burns, next to Milton, was familiar and friendly with the Devil—we fear, the familiarity of contempt, but remaining on the safe side even though his “carnal wit and sense” often scatter all his doubts.

Listen to the grandeur of his “Address to the De'il”:

Great is thy power and great thy fame,  
Far kenn'd and noted is thy name,  
For though yon lowin' heugh's thy hame,  
Thou travels far,  
And faith thous neither lag nor lame,  
Nor blate, nor scaur.  
Ye mind yon day when in a biz,  
Wi' reekit duds and reistit giz,  
Ye did present your smooty fiz  
Maug better folk  
An' sklentit on the man of Uz  
Your spitefu' joke.

And how, in night excursions in lonely Ayrshire fields, the Devil materialised in “hillocks, stanes and bushes,” how we ourselves in these same fields have startled at the dim forms of these same “ghaists and witches,” and peopled the silent plain with the legion phantasmagoria of superstition. Having wandered so early and so long in the atmosphere of supernaturalism we—and Burns—emerged with difficulty, even with reluctance, from this tyranny of the restless, revisiting dead, and the Rhadamanthus of the other world, and the busy temporal and eternal Devil. In these night walks of our predecessor and ourselves there would have been comfort and courage in the holding a little child by the hand, even in the company of a dog; but this loneliness in a land of spirits, this being “alone with God”—or the “Devil”—was something to appal the stoutest heart. No wonder the appeal, “get right with God,” has huddled the human race like sheep all down the ages, and stampedes it in millions still. Burns, like us, emerged, if not to full emancipation. He and we may have fallen into natural and more serious errors—not owing to restraints removed, but to the various legacies and calamities of which flesh and spirit are the heirs: determined things—passions, appetites, ignorances, gropings in the dark, accidents, gravitations; not lines of least resistance merely, but inevitable impulses; the worst of these that promise best; vestibules of exquisite beauty and sensation that lead to aspects ugly and the soul's eclipse; or that highest, purest, unalterable love that ends in unappeasable grief—“For they are altogether wrong,” you remember, says Leopardi, “who think that human infelicity was first born from the iniquities of men and their offences against the gods. On the contrary, the ill-conduct of men first arose from nothing else but their calamities.” A “grateful and comforting” conclusion, but, Alas! it may be but one more of the Devil's wiles! Nor is it necessary to accept in its full significance the dictum of Leopardi to find for mankind a thousand extenuating circumstances. Emancipated at last from the pessimism of religion, we are faced with the pessimism of philosophy—for which there is no cure: but, says Schopenhauer, “under the charm of a beautiful work of art—painting, statue, music—the torture-wheel of the human Ixion pauses.” Or men may find hope in evolution, happiness in helping others. But the Athiest, like the Christian, may remain more or less wicked; while, seeing the sinful Athiest only, the preacher points and cries: See what happens with those who forget God!

In a tour of France you may visit the shrine of Lourdes in all the ceremonial and magnificence of its setting, or you may come upon the merely secular mineral wells in the open, the waters in both of equal virtue, but, as Ingersoll said, baptism is good—with soap. Not “holy waters” are those of the Irvine, Ayr, and Doon; and the Poet's lines to the Devil were obituary—in their whimsical, ironic terror and stately satire Burns finally laughs auld Scotland's devilry away.



So much for the myth: his love for the myth-mongers of his day is tersely expressed in the last two verses of Peg Nicholson:—

Peg Nicholson was a good bay mare,  
And ance she bore a priest;  
But now she's floating down the Nith,  
For Solway fish a feast.

Peg Nicholson was a good bay mare,  
An' the priest he rode her sair;  
And much oppress'd and bruise'd she was,  
As priest-rid cattle are.

One more ingredient to our mixture and we are done: we have but just read the great allegory, *Penguin Island*, by Anatole France, in which myth and miracle, political intrigue, the jugglery of Church and State, are laid mercilessly bare, and trailing through it all the slimy track of priestly pretence and superstition, creeping and crawling amid all the age-long martyrdom of man—the heads raised now and then, and the hands, to bless the people and assure them of a power unto salvation; such blessing and assurance the greatest of curses: we have our healing waters, too; eternally free from miracle and myth and thaumaturgy; the rivers of Burns, Sweet Afton, the Hermit Ayr, the Coyle, and Bonnie Doon. We see them now! their verdant brim, overhung by the sweet, sad, brown thickets of the dear investing, echoing woods: I see them now, and I smile in recollection and anticipation! This also was the cult of Burns, we may be sure, his ever-present bowers of Arcady, peopled by him with the nymphs of reality; the myths of the Above—Before—and After—negligible in his regard beside the common, peerless, country girls of his life and love. There, and among these, he dwells immortal in his affections, his worships, and his Muse..... We can foresee a stately Cathedral at Carfin for the cure, which is the confusion of souls, and for a long time. We look further and see it in ruins; and all the while the natural Pagan shrine lives on, unchanged in all the generations of men.

ANDREW MILLAR.

### On Sunday Schools

THERE were Sunday Schools in America, at least among the barbarous Puritans, so early as 1669, but it was not until 1872, with the adoption of the International Sunday School Lessons, that they became an organized pest. Since that time they have spread to the remotest parts of the country, and that is a rare child, indeed, who does not come under their fire at some time between the ages of three and fifteen. They have a very elaborate machinery for rounding up recruits, and they are greatly favoured by parents, even those of an Atheistic and wicked nature, because they pen up their scholars for two hours on a day when it is pleasant for elders to take naps.

Well, has anyone ever noticed that this rise of Sunday Schools in the United States has been exactly coincident with a general decay of piety? In 1850, fully 15 per cent. of all adult Americans had some sort of formal connection with a church; in 1926, the largest percentage that even the most romantic ecclesiastical statistician claims is less than 50. How are we to account for that blacksliding? Is it due to the influence of Darwin and his accursed hypothesis of evolution? Is the blame to be put upon Nietzsche, the Kaiser, or the Bolsheviki? It is a product of jazz, or golf, or the automobile, or the radio, or the immortal movies that come out of Hollywood, the damned, or smoking by women, or prohibition, or Sunday baseball, or yellow journalism? Is Clarence Darrow at fault? Or Henry Ford? Or the late Luther Burbank?

All of these agents and agencies of the devil have been blamed, and sometimes by eminent experts in the moral sciences. But I choose to believe that the true villain is the Sunday School. Millions of Americans,

sent into it in youth unwillingly, have come out in their teens full of rebellion. Its banal ceremonials have somehow offended them, its theology has revolted them, its consecrated men have aroused their suspicions. So they head for the Bad Lands the moment they are free, and their souls, by premature and injudicious efforts to save them, are only put into peril. I believe that the Old Testament, taught to children, has sent more Americans to hell than even necking or the cigarette.

Here I speak by the book, and out of my own hard experience and that of other highly respectable and virtuous men. My father was surely not pious, but I was noisy in infancy, as in old age, and he liked to snooze on Sunday, and so he apprenticed me to an acquaintance who kept a Sunday School. This Sunday School belonged to one of the evangelical denominations, and was typical of its kind. I sat in it for five or six years and acquired many things of value—for example, a wide and affectionate familiarity with old time Gospel hymns. I know all of them yet, and am glad of it, for they are hearty and amusing, and I believe that if any genuinely American music ever arises among us it will come out of them.

But I was also instructed in morals and theology, and here I soon ran aground. The teachers told off to belabour me were all manifestly idiots, even to the eyes of a boy of ten. Their ethical precepts, if I had accepted them, would have made me a Y.M.C.A. secretary, which I was certainly not eager to be. Their theology was so childish and so full of plain holes that not a boy in my class ever took it seriously. Like the rest, I listened politely, but, like the rest, I let it go in one ear and out the other. The net result of this instruction was that, at the age of ten, I was a violent Atheist, and so were most of the other boys. Hell was not a horror to us, but a joke.

It took me years of experience and suffering in this world to recover my natural human fear of it. Even to-day, I often find myself harbouring doubts about it. And even worse doubts about the rest of Protestant theology. It is hard for me, in fact, to contemplate a theologian with a candid and impartial eye. He is somehow disgusting to me, and when the chance offers to plant a hoof in his pantaloons, I find myself tempted damnably. This is prejudice, and hence offensive to me, a man who loves justice. But I refuse to take the blame. I was poisoned in Sunday School.

As I say, millions of other Americans have been poisoned in precisely the same way. The fact shows itself brilliantly whenever a Sunday School superintendent goes on trial in the criminal courts, which is oftener, alas! than it ought to be. Every lawyer will tell you that it is almost impossible to get a jury that will hear him fairly. On the panel there are invariably men who were sent to Sunday School in their nonage, and remember the adventure unpleasantly, and these men are hot for railroading the poor accused to jail at once without even hearing his defence. The percentage of convictions in America among professional criminals is not above 20 per cent., but among Sunday School superintendents it is at least 95 per cent. Everyone rejoices when one of them is laid by the heels.

In the face of these plain facts, I now hear that fanatics are going through the Republic in summer setting up vacation Bible Schools for the further harassment of the young and to the further damage and scandal of the Christian religion. Could any imaginable enterprise be more unwise? Thousands of mothers who long to go window shopping or the movies will herd their children into these dens in order to get rid of them, and there they will be bored and battered for seven days a week, as they now are for one. What will be the effect upon them? The effect upon them, if the science of psychology deserves any respect, will simply be to convert them into frantic antinomians. They will go in like convicts climbing the gallows, and they will come out ready to burn down the nearest church, even with a prayer meeting in progress. In twenty years, Christians will be as rare in the general population of the country as they are now on the bench of bishops.

—H. L. Mecken, "The Chicago Tribune."



## An Extraordinary Debate.

THE Debate between Mr. Guy Aldred and Mr. George Whitehead, in the City Hall, on "Was Jesus Christ a Socialist?" was not an ordinary debate. Two Atheists debating the question, "Was Jesus a Socialist?" could be nothing but extra-ordinary. The subject was interesting or it must have seemed so to the large audience it attracted. To the present writer the affirmative, Mr. Aldred, or any other for that matter, has nothing to go on. As Mr. Aldred said, the figure in the Gospels is surrounded with myth and forgery and church humbug, that an unbiased student must ask if there is a figure there at all, is it not a composite we get. It is all very well to say, as Mr. Aldred said, that no great person dies without being surrounded with myth. He might have mentioned the infidel death-bed myths invented by Christians about Charles Bradlaugh and Colonel Ingersoll, but he contented himself by, at a later stage, denouncing them for *insincerity*. Julius Cæsar was spoken of, but is Jesus as well authenticated as Julius Cæsar by contemporary writers? That is the question, and it is not answered by saying, as Mr. Aldred said, that from all this humbug and myth and forgery there emerges a Great Teacher and Guide. He proceeded to show us the teacher and guide by quoting the parables of the sower and the wheat and the tares, the new commandments, Love your neighbour and Love your enemies.

Mr. Whitehead countered this, of course. There are other parables. And there is the passage in Luke xiv. 20, commencing "If any man hate not....." Mr. Whitehead described this as clotted insanity but not Socialism.

It did not seem very startling then, when at question time, a Lady asked if all this quoting of the Gospels did not prove them to be mere piffle.

Perhaps some may say there are two Jesuses. Yes, but which is the Christ? It is the Christ that counts with the mass of Christians, the Messiah, not the Socialist.

But Mr. Aldred's Jesus was on the side of the common people, a struggling agitator, not one found in the Courts of Kings or Princes, nay, did not he boast that he had nowhere to lay his head. Agitating against the Scribes and Pharisees, and on the side of the common people. "If he was here"—this in Mr. Aldred's well-known declamatory style—"If he was here now, what class would he be found in?" (The "common people" seemed to be getting overworked on that Monday night, sweated in fact.)

Jesus was sincere! One would like to know which Jesus. "The Love your neighbour" Jesus or the "If any man hate not" Jesus?

Mr. Whitehead's task was an easy one, not so showy, quieter, but not the less effective on that score. There was in the Gospels a great deal of Heaven and Hell. We had it in a famous parable, but the Socialist knew that Hell, if anywhere, is here now. If we want a Heaven then we will have to achieve it for ourselves and here. If prayer is right why is not the coal prayed up instead of sending miners down for it. If Jesus' teaching on prayer is right why is Mr. Aldred a Socialist? This query also went unanswered.

And so home. Sadder? Well, I wasn't. Wiser? Let us hope so. But for either there is this reflection. If that is the best that can be made for Jesus a Socialist—and I believe Mr. Aldred made the most of the scanty material—then the sooner these folk stop talking about Jesus and get on with the work of the day, the sooner will the burden of the common people be lightened.

AUTOLYCUS.

A pleasure which is only for myself is brief and touches me only lightly. It is for myself and my friends that I read, that I reflect, that I write, that I meditate, that I understand and study and feel. I think continually of their happiness. A fine line strikes me; they shall have it. Have I met a noble sentiment? They shall share it. Have I under my eyes some fine spectacle? I meditate the description of it for their enjoyment.—*Diderot*.

## Correspondence.

### THAT JONAH LEGEND.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I was interested to see your comment upon my letter in the *Freethinker* recently, and have only now to re-emphasize the fact that I quoted from a book by a reputable person. I am inclined to think that you have not yet read my article, but are quoting from quotations.....

Of course there are people (as well, I think, as whales) who can swallow anything. Gullibility is an infirmity often met with. You, Sir, have swallowed some taller yarns than that of Jonah's whale, and cough them up for undiscerning readers. I mean, of course, the myth that there never was a Jesus who is the Son of God, as the Catholic Church teaches.

If therefore, the repetition of the whale story is trying to you, remember that you are in a sadder case. Scepticism is as old as the hills, and greener, for all it is a wintry faith.....I wonder you can swallow it.

DESMOND MORSE-BOYCOTT.

### OUR SAVAGES.

SIR,—Our European Savages who wield the destinies of nations, referred to in your leading article of your issue of the 12th inst., must have been having a huge Joke over the number "thirteen." Presumably educated at universities, the money spent on their education has been wasted if they are so helpless and hopeless as to wallow in such gross superstition. One wonders whether they are as superstitious as they pretend to be, or that it is there is method in their superstition—and madness.

Your "Acid Drops" in the same issue administered to a certain noble Lord—it does not matter who, for there are many of his type—reveal a deplorable condition of mind in one who would resent the suggestion that he was a benighted ignoramus; or otherwise, that he was merely playing a game of deceit to bolster up his worldly possessions. Yet, he is either the one, or doing the other. As you say, such men have votes and seats in the House of noble Lords. Is it any wonder that such people are held in contempt by the wild men of society?

Unless these men come from their castles and realise that there is in the community an element of intelligence that repudiates all their superstitious doctrines they may live long enough to see a day of retribution. Let them remember Czarist Russia, and take heed therefrom before it is too late.

It is idle for educated men longer to try to mislead and dope the people by superstition and blind beliefs in the unknown and unknowable; and those who attempt to do so can only succeed at the cost of loss of respect by others who are as well informed on the mysterious speculations in life as the former profess to be.

SINE CERE.

### HELL.

SIR,—One feature of the question of Hell seems to have been curiously overlooked: the most important and conclusive of all arguments, I have failed to see any allusion to it.

In the search by clergymen and others for an excuse for dropping the belief in a "literal" hell, in which all have shown the greatest energy and ingenuity—but not ingenuousness—by a sort of tacit consent, or a conspiracy of silence, the one greatest conclusive argument that could be advanced is birked. It is this:

Jesus Christ, himself, believed in, and frequently asserted, the existence of a "literal hell": it was not good enough for him; he pleasantly, and almost lovingly, asserted Hell, and Hell Fire: he delighted in both: no thought of any other kind of hell, or punishment, than Hell Fire ever seemed to have entered his head.

Not only did he believe in, and assert, this pleasant destiny; he gloried in it. He ascribed the punishment of Hell Fire—apparently with real delight—for such trifles as saying, "Thou fool."



Imagine the drivelling idiocy of a person who could view as quite suitable, by way of punishment, the "sin" of saying "Thou fool"—words nowhere else in the Bible, I believe, regarded with disapproval—the torture of being forever burned in "Hell Fire." It surely was a belief dear to his mind and heart.

Now, educated readers of the Bible are aware of all this. How can we regard all the "scholars" of the Church, who knowing all that I have here written, persistently talk and argue at length on the subject, and deliberately avoid all allusion to the talk of Jesus Christ—the one sure, unequivocal authority on all questions? Can it be accounted for on any theory except that they are thoroughly ashamed of the "Son of God" for believing in a Hell which even they and all non-barbarians are endeavouring to expunge; and therefore, pay to their "God and Master" the compliment of wholly ignoring him, and his silly, ignorant ideas on this subject? PHILIP G. PEABODY.

At sea, bound Norway to U.S.A.,  
November 25, 1926.

### Society News.

#### NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.

The very interesting and instructive lecture on "Poisonous Snakes," delivered by Mr. George Ives last Sunday, was a pleasant break in our usual economic and anti-theological discussions. To-night we finish up our Winter Session with an open discussion and resume our meetings on January 9, when our good friend, Mr. F. Verinder, has promised to give the opening address of our Spring Session.—A. S.

#### GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.

On Thursday, December 9, at too short notice to permit advertisement in the *Freethinker*, Mr. Fred. Mann, the Secretary of the Glasgow Branch, lectured to the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation on "A Secularist's Freethought." The lecture, which was very short, was followed by questions and discussion, which lasted two hours. The organizations concerned disagree completely as to what is the meaning of Freethought, and there were no conversions on either side.

On Sunday, December 12, Mr. J. Grant, a Christian Theist, well known in "advanced" circles in Glasgow, gave a lecture to the Glasgow Branch on "Pagan Christs." Mr. Grant criticised the thesis of the non-historicity of the gospel story in respect of its "natural" no less than its supernatural matter, and poured contempt on "mythists" such as Mr. John M. Robertson. Amongst those who took part in the discussion which followed, were "A. G. Nostic," an honorary member of the Glasgow Branch, and Mr. E. Hale, the President of the Branch.

Next week (December 19) Mr. Hale will lecture on "Christmas B.C."

**TO EVERYTHING** there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the heaven. There was a time for doubting us, a time for seeing whether we should last. There is another season now, and its purpose is to discover *why* we have stood the test. You will find out by writing at once 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.*; *Gents' Overcoat Patterns, prices from 48s. 6d.*; or *Ladies' Fashion and Pattern Sets, costumes from 57s., coat from 53s.*—MACCONNELL & MABE, New Street, Bakewell, Derbyshire.

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### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on postcard.

#### LONDON.

##### INDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road and three minutes from Camden Town Tube Station): 7.30, Open Discussion.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Kennington Oval): 7, Mr. Leonard Ebury, "Freethought v. Secularism."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7, Mr. F. J. Gould, "The Ethical Meaning of Italy."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, S. K. Ratcliffe, "The Conflict of Race and Colour."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (101 Tottenham Court Road): 7.30, Debate, "Have We a Revelation?" Affirmative, Rev. W. H. Claxton; Negative, Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe. Thursday, December 23, at the same time and place, Mr. Jackson, "Egyptian Myths."

##### OUTDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, a Lecture.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park): 11.30 and 3. Speakers—Messrs. Botting, Hart, and Piper.

#### COUNTRY.

##### INDOOR.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, "A" Door, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. E. Hale, "Christmas B.C." Question and discussion cordially invited. Silver Collection.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. J. T. Hardy, "Dramatic and Humorous Recital."

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