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Views and Opinions.

Religion and the Press.

The latest recruit to the army of press agents that is busy advertising religion is the *Morning Post*. I call this an advertising campaign because it is impossible to believe that all at once the Newspaper Press has awakened to the value of religion as an attractive item of news. Still less can we believe that it is in response to the conviction that men are hungering for more religion in the Daily and Weekly Press. There was never a time when there was so much unbelief as there is at present, for not alone have the churches depleted congregations, but it is found difficult to even man the pulpits sufficiently. That is a complaint which comes to us from all the churches with the solitary exception of the Church of Rome. And there are many indications that behind the interest which the proprietors and editors of papers profess to be taking in religion is the organized power of the churches. For one thing it follows the publicly expressed and semi-official avowal made a few years ago, that in the attempt to reach what is called "the man in the street," enough use was not being made of the press, and the influence the churches can bring to bear on the press is familiar to anyone who knows anything at all of what goes on behind the scenes. The present eruption of religious articles is an attempt to make the man in the street believe that he is interested. And the people are such sheep, mentally, that the mere fact of seeing religion discussed in so many papers is enough to persuade many of them that they themselves are interested. There are some keen students of mass psychology behind the movement, and we should not be surprised if it met with a measure of success among the least reflective. And in the struggle for existence the churches at present are making a bid for quantity, quality does not matter—is, indeed, unobtainable.

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Only One Side Allowed.

The *Morning Post* is not running any risk in its advertising campaign. It announced from the begin-

ning that all was not well with religion, but it intended opening a discussion on religion so that it might be set right. And from that discussion anything that really questioned the truth, or the necessity of Christianity, has been most carefully and most rigidly excluded. I know of several who have made the attempt, but they have been hopelessly defeated. Some of the articles and letters were written by men already on the press, so that no fault could be found with the style of their writing. But they were either declined or ignored. It is a discussion about religion, confined to those who believe it. It is like a man discussing with a Turkey the advisability of eating him for a Christmas dinner. The question of plumpness or size may be admitted, but whether the Turkey is to be eaten or not is ruled out as of no moment. And at the end of the "discussion," the man might say that inasmuch as nothing had been heard against eating the Turkey the killing might proceed. That, in a nutshell, is the policy of the *Morning Post*, as it has been the policy of other participants in the advertising campaign. If the only voices permitted to be heard are those which declare that religion is, of all things, the most important, and that it rests with all right-minded men and women to set religion in as strong a position as is possible, the world may be induced to return to its old state. It may persuade people that there is, after all, no real doubts about the truth of religion, but only some mild dissidence concerning certain doctrines that do not matter very much. The policy is artful enough, and it has just that element of crookedness and imposture about it that would attract the ordinary clerical mind.

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Evading Facts.

To a really unprejudiced student the reason for the present position of religion it might well be found in the nature of the articles and letters which the *Morning Post* has seen fit to publish. The majority might well be summed up as mere piffle. In no single case does a writer ever come within speaking distance of a careful examination of the cause of the present state of religion. Confronted with the fact that men and women are increasingly inclined to throw all religion overboard, nothing better is offered than unconvincing talk of the disturbance caused by the war, the inextinguishable need of man for God, the call of Christ, etc., etc., which forms the usual unmeaning twaddle of the pulpit, and which can only serve, at best, the purpose of making a few contented who might otherwise become discontented. Here and there one does come across a rather interesting statement, but its interest is due to considerations which were foreign to the mind of the writer. Thus, the Rev. Francis Woodcock prides himself on the fact that his Church—the Roman Church—is efficient, and declares that the men at the front during the war looked with "a

kind of wistful envy" at those who seemed to have an answer quite ready for all the problems that presented themselves. The picture of the ordinary soldier envying the Roman Catholic because of his superior ability to grapple with mental problems will be interesting news to those who know the type of the average Roman Catholic soldier when compared with those of other denominations and of no denomination at all. This picture, for veracity, may well go along with that of the Bishop of Bury, Bishop of Europe, who says that when he asked soldiers if he was not right in saying they believed that the most accomplished artist who came out to entertain them had nothing like the same pull as the parson who spoke straight to them about God? The soldiers all answered, yes. The same authority also says that after Neuve Chapelle he was told that the chapter he read to the men—John xiv.—was exactly what they needed. It is not for me to question the truth of what a Bishop has to say. But one is bound to assume that this type of soldier was bred abroad and killed during the war. They certainly did not come home. Perhaps they were taken by God to act as a bodyguard for the angels that served the British Army so well at Mons.

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#### Education and the Church.

To return to Father Woodcock. The efficiency of the Roman Catholic Church he puts down mainly to its "solicitude at all costs for the instruction of the young. 'Catholic schools for Catholic children' has been its slogan, and as a result it is probably true to say that an average child in a Catholic school, twelve years of age, has a more complete, real, and consistent faith than an average undergraduate who has passed from a 'gilt-edged' public school to a university." Well, I should certainly be the last to deny the solicitude of the Roman Catholic Church for the education of Catholic children in Catholic schools. Nor is it quite right to say that the Roman Church has ever neglected education. If it could prevent ordinary people being educated so much the better for it, as is the case in Spain, or elsewhere where the Church has no serious rival. But if education could not be prevented, if the secular power insisted upon all receiving a certain measure of instruction, then the Church did not neglect education. All it took care to see was that the education of Catholic children must be under its control, and that they must not get a whisper of there being any other views of religion than the ones they were being taught, or that all others were wicked and false, to be shunned as they shunned the devil. And that is not, in the proper sense of the word, education at all, it is instruction only, and of no higher ethical or social value than that received by a young recruit in a thieves' kitchen.

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#### Exploiting the Child.

The following passage from Father Woodcock's article unconsciously exhibits the value of the teaching children receive in a Roman Catholic School. He says:—

Believing itself to be Christ's infallible messenger, it is no wonder that the Catholic Church is dogmatic in tone and intolerant of heresy in its members, and that it anathematizes and excommunicates any who rejects even one of her defied dogmas. To reject even one is to reject her authority, to deny her right to teach in Christ's name.

Now, I do not deny that so far as any children are brought up in a denominational school they are educated under the same kind of influence. And if the Protestant Churches cannot be so exacting and so definite as the Roman Church it is solely because

the opportunity is lacking. But let anyone consider the social value of a citizen that has been trained to repeat a number of dogmas as being not merely infallibly true, but the mere questioning of which will be followed by eternal damnation. So far as religion is concerned the Catholic child repeats his beliefs as a result of much the same kind of education that teaches a dog to walk round on its front legs or a horse to climb a flight of steps. It is not really education at all. It is the art of producing atrophy of the mental functions for the sake of Christ and him crucified. Quite recently in these columns we had the Rev. Morse-Boycott claiming that it was a jolly thing to be a fool for Christ's sake. And we have no doubt that for the same reason Father Woodcock thinks it a quite admirable thing to stultify the mind of a child in the interests of the Roman Catholic Church. But a Church that has not hesitated to slaughter thousands upon thousands of men and women to keep the faith pure may well feel justified in cramping and crippling a child's mind to the same end. Others will see in the policy the most cowardly and contemptible attack that any adult can make upon the innocence and helplessness of a child.

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#### The Christian Ideal.

I hasten to say that in this respect the Roman Church is not, in substance, worse than other Churches. Whether the aim is to turn out a child a Roman Catholic, or a Methodist, or anything else of a sectarian character, matters little. It is the curse of sectarianism that is over all, and the degree of its application is dependent upon opportunity. But when one realizes that it is children trained in this way who go into the world, and then for the first time hear from others something of the truth about religion, is it any wonder that the boldest of them, those that have escaped the brain-deadening effects of religious education, throw off religion altogether. That is the real question which *the Morning Post* ought to have discussed. Why are men and women giving up religion? But to have put the question in that way would not have suited the squint-eyed policy followed on these occasions. It might have made too many realize that religion was losing ground. It might have opened their eyes, it might have made them think. And that would certainly have been dangerous. "Ye are my sheep," says the New Testament Jesus. And that is the ideal of the Christian Church. A congregation of sheep. And if men and women are to live up to the character they must be herded like sheep, they must think like sheep, they must live like sheep, and it is only a natural corollary to find that in the end they are sheared like sheep. That is one of the chief ends of a sheep's existence. It is thus he glorifies God, and makes great his mouthpiece on earth.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be continued.)

#### Among the Tombs.

Was it a lofty spirit overwrought  
That found repose where lonely shadows creep;  
And that the dead, and they who smile and weep,  
Are one—and one enduring aspect caught?  
So Life and Death are tempered with the thought  
Of holy brotherhood—that one broad sweep  
Of solemn eloquence, and silence deep,  
With a diviner touch of being taught:  
But, lo! a lonely singer in the bough  
Pours forth his tenor carol merrily;  
The overflowing gladness of a day  
That swells in tide of soothing melody:  
A breath of the Eternal—and enow,  
With Life triumphant, even 'mid decay!

W. J. LAMB.

## Secularism versus Christianity.

THE definition of Secularism found in the dictionaries is usually not only inadequate, but false and misleading. As an example, take the one supplied by the New Standard Dictionary, which is as follows: "Secularism is the character of being Secular; regard for the affairs and interests of this life, and neglect of matters pertaining to a future existence." As a matter of simple fact, Secularism cannot justly be charged with neglecting that in the existence of which it does not believe. Secularists are people to whom the present world alone is real. Thus Secularism excludes supernaturalism. Nature is all, and this is the belief which is slowly capturing the human mind everywhere. The Rev. John Bevan, M.A., writing of the British people in the *Christian World* of December 23, said: "As a nation we have for years been swinging free from religion," which is only another way of affirming that we are becoming Secularists. We are in total disagreement with Mr. Bevan's view of the unspeakable evils which inevitably result from the abandonment of religion, and like most ministers lie forgets that religion and morality are two entirely different things, and that the loss of the former may be a solid gain to the latter.

Let us glance for a second at the main doctrines of religion, in order to realize how unjustly and hurtfully they treat man. The Saviour of the world is Jesus Christ, the second Person in the Holy Trinity made flesh. Now in St. John's Gospel, we are told that as the Second Person in the Trinity, he created the world and all within it; "all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that hath been made." Thus we see that, according to the Bible's own direct teaching, the Saviour of the world is also its Creator. He made us, and he made us so badly that we stand in sore need of being made over again, and in order to undertake this stupendous task he became man. Is such a conception of the world's Redeemer reasonable, or even believable? In the first place we are introduced to a Divine Being who committed an unpardonable crime when he created the human race, and another when he became man and lived and died to recreate it. Is not the scientific theory of evolution infinitely more acceptable to all thoughtful people? In the evolutionary process curious things have happened, beautiful and offensive forms have appeared, and all along the line, there has been inconceivable waste. Here is man, representing Nature at its best, as many regard him; but what is he here for? Nobody can tell. Innumerable religions have been invented to attempt to answer that question; but it remains as dark and mysterious as it ever was. In a famous sermon which appeared in the *Christian World Pulpit* for last November 25, the Rev. Thomas Phillips, of Bloomsbury Chapel, said:—

The Apostle (Paul) had seen fragments of the divine righteousness in conscience, law, and history as we have all done. I have no coherent explanation of the world unless I see the righteousness of God in every scrap and shred of goodness that gleams around me. But my difficulty, the difficulty of the Apostle Paul, the difficulty of everybody, is that these scraps are no more than scraps. The law is august and majestic, but it is made up of rules which I can obey without obtaining any intimacy with the Law-giver. Conscience is wonderful, but it is something created by God, and I want God himself, "God's very self," as John Henry Newman puts it. Conscience, law, retribution, human virtue, they are all broken arcs, and I want the perfect round, and the perfect round, the final word, is Jesus Christ.

Mr. Phillips does not lack pious fervour, but we turn to him in vain for a coherent explanation of the world.

The Divine Government of the world is another prominent theological dogma. Dozens of times we read in the Psalms that "God is the king of all the earth," and that individuals often exclaim: "Thou art my king, O God." The Church has always taught that the Lord sitteth on his throne and rules the universe. How often have we heard people in trouble comforted with the assurance that it is their loving Heavenly Father who wields the sceptre of authority, and that he will not forget them. Secularists hold that doctrine in derision, because in all history they cannot discover a single event that can honestly be characterized as Divine. Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, thunderstorms, and gales that from time to time have put to death countless millions of human beings, who can reconcile these with the belief that the God of love occupies the throne? Secularists do not hesitate to hold and declare that providence is a myth and that a Divine Provider is equally a myth. Nature irresistibly takes its way, and all its laws are absolutely inexorable. In Nature there are no values, no higher and lower. In its sight a man possesses no greater importance than a grasshopper, and its treatment of both is identically the same. Nature has no sense of right and wrong except in so far as the one helps and the other injures the part of itself concerned.

Now, we have been informed that seventy-five per cent. of our population have lost all interest in religion, and we know positively that many of them love and study science and have a strong desire to serve their fellow-beings in every way they can, and we are not aware that any of them are ethically worse off than they would have been had they stayed on in the churches. What they have learned is that the God of Jesus is not enough, that what they need is knowledge which they were not getting in the churches.

We are deeply convinced that before Secularism lies a bright and brilliant future, and all we require is a burning zeal in the effort to make that future present. Let the new year be one of special devotion to that glorious mission; and in the doing of this work it will come home to us as profoundly true that we are serving, seeking the highest good of our neighbours. As Mr. E. A. Ashcroft says in his *World's Desires* (page 438):—

The spread of humanitarian instincts; powers of self-control; lofty ideals; and even self-sacrifice and pure altruism; becomes apparent, contemporaneously with the spread of education and sound hygiene. These principles, clung tenaciously to, by men, all through the chaos of the dark ages, have risen to a fuller life to-day; and we may reasonably hope that they will now rapidly accelerate to a still more adequate expression as time goes on. Many who least suspect their own altruism are daily practising its dictates. In modern life, whilst many will imagine that the principle of pure altruism is wholly chimerical, yet in reality it is not so. Every true lover is the purest of altruists; every mother is an altruist; and every decent father is an altruist; every true friend is an altruist. Everyone who unflinchingly does his duty at any post is an altruist.

J. T. LLOYD.

If we think honestly, our thoughts will not only live usefully, but even perish usefully—like the moss—and become dark, not without due service.—*Ruskin*.

And, best beloved of best men, liberty,  
Free lives and lips, free hands of men free-born.

—*Swinburne*.

## Thompson's Tribute.

That same gentle spirit from whose pen  
Large streams of honey and sweet nectar flow.

—Spenser.

It is the part of a wise man to have preferences, but  
no exclusions.—Voltaire.

AMID thousands of obscure and unloved graves at Kensal Green Cemetery is one with the arresting inscription, "Look for me in the nurseries of heaven." This is the last resting-place of the unfortunate Francis Thompson, who was buried there nearly twenty years ago. He was then almost unknown, and during his lifetime he had suffered the hardships of lonely poverty to a degree not surpassed by any of the most unfortunate poets of the world. He had sounded the gamut of misery and privation. Many nights he slept upon the Thames Embankment, and under carts in Covent Garden Market. He hawked matches in the Strand, and was a bookseller's porter, staggering through London streets with a heavy sack upon his back. When he was carried to his grave, only a few friends who had looked after him for the last sad months of his life were present to mourn. Now Thompson is acclaimed a genius, and the proud garland of laurel decorates his tomb which was denied to the living man.

It is possible to overrate and to underestimate Thompson's merits, but few would contend that he was other than a genuine poet. A very unequal writer, he sometimes soared to the ether of the great singers, and at other times fell to the lower slopes of Parnassus. Against his faults, however, must be placed his unbalanced, imaginative, reckless nature. There is hardly a sadder story than his in the whole history of literature, though Chatterton, Villon, Poe, James Thomson, and Paul Verlaine are among them. To be at once a genius and a drudge, to live in direst poverty, and to die of a lingering disease, is as sad a lot as can be imagined. Nor would he deserve less pity if we denied his genius. His faults and weaknesses injured himself alone; but genius he most certainly had.

Thompson is a poet's poet, like Blake, Rossetti, Keats and Shelley. His kinship with these singers is far nearer than to Crashaw and other pious poets. Assuredly, he calls for a meed of praise equal to that accorded to Maeterlinck, D'Annunzio, Rostaud, and other Continental writers for whom so many British altars have flamed in worship. Thompson's genius was somewhat Oriental, exuberant in colour, woven with rich and strange textures. His poetry was mainly a splendid and sonorous rhetoric, imaginative and passionate, as if his moods went by robed in imperial purple in a great procession. His masterpiece, "The Hound of Heaven," is molten with passion. Listen to these lines in which the alchemy of the poet's genius transmutes the dross of theology into the fine gold of poetry—

I dimly guess what time in mists confounds;  
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds  
From the hid battlements of eternity,  
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then  
Round the half-glimpsed turrets slowly wash again;  
But not ere him who summoneth  
I first have seen, enwound  
With glooming robes, purpureal, cypress-crowned;  
His name I know, and what his trumpet saith.

Now hear the stately valediction which concludes  
his "Anthem of Earth":—

Now, mortal, son-like,  
I thou hast suckled, mother, I at last  
Shall sustentant be to thee. Here I untrammel,  
Here I pluck loose the body's cerementing,  
And break the tomb of life; here I shake off

The bar of the world, man's congregation shun,  
And to the antique order of the dead  
I take the tongueless vow; my cell is set  
Here in thy bosom; my little trouble is ended  
In a little peace.

How fine, too, is his charming vision of the woman  
sleeping in the child, like a dainty dryad hiding  
amidst the lush leaves of early summer:—

Thou whose young sex is yet but in thy soul,  
As, hoarded in the vine,  
Hang the gold skins of undelirious wine  
As air sleeps, till it toss its limbs in breeze.

The closing stanza of "Daisy" is dangerously  
near perfection:—

She went her unremembering way;  
She went and left in me  
The pang of all the partings gone,  
The partings yet to be.

There used to be a tradition in common literary  
circles that poets cannot write good prose. It was a  
silly theory. To look at the prose of Byron,  
Coleridge, Meredith, Shelley, and Wordsworth, to  
mention but a few, is to perceive its absurdity.  
Shakespeare wrote wonderful prose, as in *Hamlet*.  
In Thompson's own case, his prose is even finer than  
his verse, and it is seen at its very best in his essay  
on Shelley. Remember, Francis Thompson was a  
Papist, and Shelley was an Atheist. Hundreds of  
men have written on Shelley, including such well-  
known poets as Browning and Matthew Arnold, but  
Thompson's essay is, far and away, the finest ever  
written. This is what Francis Thompson says of  
the *Prometheus Unbound*:—

It is unquestionably the greatest and most prodigal  
exhibition of Shelley's powers, this amazing lyric  
world, where immortal clarities sigh past in the  
perfumes of the blossoms, populate the breathings  
of the breeze, throng and twinkle in the leaves that  
twirl upon the bough; where the very grass is all  
a-rustle with lovely spirit things; and a weeping  
mist of music fills the air. The final scenes especi-  
ally are such a Bacchio reel and rout and revelry of  
beauty as leaves one staggered and giddy; poetry  
is spilt like wine, music runs to drunken waste.  
The choruses sweep down the wind, tirelessly, fight  
after flight, till the breathless soul almost cries for  
respite from the unrolling splendours.

A noble and true passage on Shelley's wondrous  
imagination is the following:—

For astounding figurative opulence he yields only  
to Shakespeare, and even to Shakespeare not in  
absolute fecundity, but in range of images. The  
sources of his figurative wealth are specialized, while  
the sources of Shakespeare's are universal. It  
would have been as conscious an effort to speak  
without figure as it is for most men to speak with  
figure. Suspended in the dripping-well of his  
imagination the commonest object becomes encrusted  
with imagery.

What a superb tribute from one poet to another!  
Especially, as the tribute came from a Roman  
Catholic poet to the Atheist singer. It was not, how-  
ever, "roses all the way." Thompson sent his  
eulogy of Shelley to the *Dublin Review*, whose editor,  
scenting heresy, rejected. After Thompson's death,  
when it was known that his reputation was growing,  
the essay was unearthed and printed by the very  
periodical which had previously turned it down.

Artist that he was, Thompson's admiration of  
Shelley's genius had triumphed over his intolerant  
Catholicism. For literature, like music, is wider  
than opinion, broader than dogma, as limitless as the  
humanity to which it appeals. At the height of  
Bradlaugh's struggle to enter Parliament, when  
Gladstone passionately addressed his speech on the  
Oaths Bill to a hushed and expectant House of Com-  
mons, he quoted some lines from the old-world

Atheist, Lucretius, as daring an iconoclast as Bradlaugh himself. The majesty of the language was its justification, and the sonorous Latin rounded off the great statesman's greatest oratorical effort. Gladstone's brain and taste persisted in being independent of his heart, like the French soldier who fought in the last war, and, when killed, was found to have in his pocket a well-thumbed copy of Heine's poems. Catholic though he was, Francis Thompson deserves a few words of praise in a Freethought paper. He never did weak or puling work in prose or verse. Although he waged an unequal war against Fate, he was at least a happy soldier. When his turn came, he yielded up his broken, but not dishonoured, sword with a brave heart.

MIMNERMUS.

### Books and Life.

In some fabled future, when it will be considered indecent to seriously discuss the backwash of primitive savagery with solemn faces, the mind may have time to turn over questions of phenomena that now have to be placed on the shelf. The snow was falling in Melton Mowbray on a wintry day in January, about five o'clock in the afternoon. A schoolboy was whistling in the street the music of a seventeenth century Slumber Song. It was Dryden who said that one whistled for want of thought, but it appeared strange that a boy should have chosen for an exercise of his art, this particular song. We passed on, and from his pursing of a pair of lips and a disturbance of the wintry air, our mind went off busily on a train of thought about motives, causes and meanings. There might be, there might not be, any meaning. Lost in thought up a side street in London, we heard a small boy with a truck amidst a mass of boxes and straw in a dingy warehouse; he was whistling a few bars from Nicolai's "Merry Wives of Windsor." He had, like his unknown brother in Melton Mowbray, good taste; but, as we have already stated, the question agitating our mind was, why should these phenomena appear in unlikely places? And the answer is, that they must remain unanswered—they must wait until cruel and revolting beliefs are decently interred, and the green grass of oblivion has suffered them no more to remind us that savages walk among us, who, for two pins, would bring out their tom-toms to beat to their incantations. It was a heroic saying of Beethoven, and the idea in it was shared by Gissing: "He who understands the meaning of my music shall be free from the miseries that afflict other men." St. Augustine, Thomas à Kempis, or R. J. Campbell, who has either come up or gone down to the level of the *Daily Sketch* to advertise—are any of them worth while? If ever we wished to wrestle with a mystery let it be worthy of the struggle, and to those creative forces who can enwrap us in the vesture of bliss we shall, when time hangs heavily on our hands, turn our attention and with fiercest endeavour seek to penetrate the meaning of harmony, and in seeking the meaning we may find a reward worth our search.

Mr. Rathmell Wilson is the author of a book entitled, *The Wandering Gentile*. It is good value for four shillings (The Caxton Bookshop, 28 Victoria Street, London, S.W.1); there is full and generous measure of grave and gay writing, and the author has no high and mighty ideas about writing. He has matter in abundance, and his style reminds us of the story of the *dilettante* who insisted on talking of the "Muse"—pen and ink you mean was the rejoinder of the practical man. There are travel stories, epigrams, monographs and free verse, and a smile almost on every page. A few samples from a well-packed case may show the bent of our author's mind:—

Overheard at a Theosophical Congress at Kensington: My first husband always said I had been Cleopatra in a former life, but Lionel feels quite sure I must have had something to do with Henry the Eighth.

Unable to get into the pit after a long wait to see Tchekov's "Uncle Vanya," at the Duke of York's Theatre, I heard a German exclaim, as he went angrily away: "Dammit! Zese English become too intelligent."

Epigrams:—

Birth Control motto: "Discretion is the better part of squalor."

Modern Christianity suffers from the fact that the Bishops have become "lions" instead of being thrown to them."

"One has to live with Life so it is wise to be in love with her if possible."

We are also told by our author that Jeanne D'Arc discovered the "shingle" for ladies years ago, but we believe Flaubert goes back to a more distant date. Was it not in the Temptations of St. Antony that a sect of women cut their hair short when they had found Jesus? We recommend *The Wandering Gentile* for it is conspicuously human.

In the good old days of the Czar's reign in Russia comparatively little was known of the literature of that country, able to produce within its vast confines, whalebone, tea and oranges. Russia had to make itself a terrible nuisance before any important number of readers could be interested in books by native authors. A new novel by Maxim Gorki is announced as being in preparation, entitled *Decadence*. Gorki is a fairly old man, and his autobiography is the odyssey of pain having its root cause of ignorance. There is something more than fascinating in the power of this author as displayed in his novels. We have read a fair number, and for personal preference, *The Individualist*, *The Mother* and *Fragments of My Diary* take first place. He had evils to bring to light, and colossal injustices to indict that we think would have appalled Dickens, Gissing or Smollett. Yet through all his writings there is hope in abundance, when this virtue would have disappeared with an ordinary man. The naive use of Russian proverbs, used also by one of the first writers, Poushkin, throws light among gloom, and they are in most cases compressed irony from the mouths of slaves. Even the *Volga Boat Song* is an expression of intense sorrow that has eaten into the bone. And, like a supreme artist who is never satisfied with his creations, there is a characteristic remark in *Fragments*: "What end does it serve to remind humanity of something which should disappear as quickly as possible? It is an ugly task to record and to expose only the ugly things of life." On a major note he concludes in the hope of joining all the world into one. From a dry-as-dust record of Russia, we learn that "persistent persecution of all who differ from the 'Orthodox Church' is a serious blot on the religious and civil administration of the country." With Siberia and a hell in the life to come there was the sign of a bountiful hand, four fingers of which belonged to the priest; there is testimony in Tolstoy, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Nekrassov and Gorki that their national brood of priests in the midst of misery were doing nothing to alleviate it.

Fine thoughts are like jewels; they sparkle on the page so that when remembered, they are, in the mind's eye, on the top left-hand page or on the middle or bottom of the right-hand page. We were on the top of a bus reading about some foolish metaphysical wild cat scheme in which the name of Einstein was invoked. The problem was how to get a left-handed glove to fit the right hand—your pardon—we shall not dilate on the subject—and perhaps we should have been better engaged in reading about the virtues of somebody's toothpaste as advertised. But we were rudely awakened from our speculations by a man sitting down heavily next to us. He apologized; we looked up, and he ran his hand along the back of the seat in front. He was blind. He left his seat and sat in the vacant one in front, and at that moment my left-handed glove slumflam went through the window. He took out a pipe, and then a box of matches. He ran his thumb and forefinger up and down the match to find the head and was soon contentedly puffing away. And when the conductor

came up to take fares, he was blind also. Here was my nonsense answered. "Physics," wrote Anatole France, "is thick *puree*; metaphysics is the *puree* that has been strained through a sieve, thin, slushy and as clear as water. Metaphysics differs from Physics in that the best part of it has been left behind in the strainer." In another part of *Under the Rose*, he writes: "The things we understand never engender difficulties or strife," and, as a demonstration, "Look at the Nicene Creed. Men slew one another wholesale over the sentence, 'Being of one substance with the Father,' which cannot possibly mean anything at all."

There has been the usual tonnage of talk this season about inns and stables, but the place of real interest for living beings who have any sense of responsibility to their own species will be the wayside inn, where M. Briand and Herr Stresemann met in Geneva to discuss differences. This is thick *puree*, and the taste of it should make mankind as lyrical as Carlyle was over his supper of bread-crumbs boiled in milk, in *Sartor Resartus*, where we see a tender heart dictating words without pain in the chapter "Idyllic." And later, the old warrior in ideas comes uppermost. "Have not I myself known," he asks, "five hundred living soldiers sabred into crows'-meat for a piece of glazed cotton, which they called their flag; which, had you sold it at any market-cross, would not have brought above three groschen?" And no one will grudge the honour to Sir Austen Chamberlain to share with the two above statesmen the proud privilege of helping Europe to get up from its position of being on all fours in the mud of prejudice, into which our own brand of medicine men have flung it. The birth of the United States of Europe might interfere with armament concerns, but then it is merely silly that men should kill each other to live. But this logic not being in the Athanasian Creed is too profound. It is high time that something was born in the head, and the other matter given a long rest by those, who, if called upon to clear out a stable would be as much at home as a cow with a pitchfork. But, a few minutes truce. The shortest day has gone. Later on the feet of the sun will soon be treading lightly on the cover of our battered volumes of Pascal, and Ingersoll's Lectures. The same rays will be wooing the crocus-spikes to come above ground to see what we have been up to during the winter, and then the lilac bushes will be impatient to show us that they can make a better job of life and, on the whole, the season of Christmas, as well as being a period when children of all ages inform us that they believe in Santa Claus, is a season for rejoicing. We would not willingly part with the Sun, although we begrudge him his long rest.

WILLIAM REPTON.

## Acid Drops.

The impertinence of the Christian in office almost passes belief. Here is an example, or as they are so numerous that perhaps one ought to say, the latest example. The Vicar of Ellistown, Leicestershire, applied to the Coalville magistrates for permission to perform a religious play at a theatre on January 16. The application was refused on the opposition of Police-Superintendent Dobney. Said this prize bigot:—

This Sunday opening is growing. These performances tend to keep people away from places of worship, even though they are held after the services. If this application is granted, there will be others. The regulations say there shall be no musical performance on Sunday, and if this is held the regulations might as well be removed.

The only gleam of humour about it is that a Vicar is, in this case, feeling some of the effects of Christian teaching, and we trust he enjoys it. But the impudence of a mere policeman objecting to a performance on the ground that it keeps people away from church is staggering. Such an impudent bigot would, we expect, have no objection whatever to locking people up who stayed

away from church or chapel. The remark that regulations forbid musical performances on Sunday exhibits only ignorance. If the Vicar has any courage he will hold his musical performance in some other hall, send the Superintendent a complimentary ticket, and tell him to go to the devil. At any rate, we should be quite prepared to run a musical performance in Coalville on Sunday and invite both the Superintendent and the magistrates to visit the same personage. The probability is, however, that they would go to heaven. They appear hardly decent enough for the other place.

"Woodbine Willie," in seasonable eruption, tells us that, "They have a way of putting truth which makes it falser than falsehood. They are often honest men, and yet they lie more deeply than liars." He is not, as the reader might fancy, indicting his brother clerics, but some political extremists he happens to dislike. Another discovery of his is that much Christian charity does harm—it is too indiscriminate; and a good deal of it has been and still is humbug. The blame for this, "Willie" should place on the creed he propagates. The Christian religion stressed the practice of charity-giving as a means to an end—to insure escape from hell-fire and to ensure a seat in the ridiculous Christian heaven. The natural outcome of such teaching was indiscriminate charity and charitable humbug.

A pious paper runs a "prayer circle." The unsolicited testimonials from participants, cured from all kinds of physical and nervous complaints by the circle's magic, read like patent medicine advertisements. We note, however, that no one testifies to having been cured of those typical Christian afflictions—childish superstition, credulity, and ignorance. Nor does any believer declare his or her sudden acquisition of intelligence or of ability to reason logically. Yet, if prayer can work the one kind of miracle, why not the other?

Mr. Sidney Dark recently emphasized the value of a sense of humour in religious work. We are not so sure about that. It may, of course, help a doubting priest to get through his duties with some degree of pleasure as he smiles to himself at the gullibility of the ignorant mob. On the other hand, a lively sense of humour in a worshipper has lost the churches many a customer. To him there suddenly comes the notion that all the solemn dogmas and the ceremonial are really amusingly childish. At that moment the carefully inculcated religious belief dies in him, and another damned soul is booked for the Holy Grid!

Readers of certain pious journals are thoughtfully reminded, we note, that Blank's Pills will counteract the bad effects of the Christmas over-eating, restore digestion, stimulate the kidneys, and stir up the liver! Vendors of patent pills evidently appreciate the fact that the Christian has a pretty habit of celebrating the birth of his Saviour by a hefty bout of gluttony.

The Sudan United Mission solicits your prayers and your help. The financial principle of the Mission is that in carrying on the good work no debt shall be incurred. Hitherto, we learn, God has graciously supplied the means to meet all liabilities. To clear this year's expenses £3,000 will be required. If the Mission owes this amount, its principle appears to not square with its practice. Although we are assured God supplies the needful, the Mission nevertheless finds cadging from the pious a necessity. Evidently prayer is a good thing, but advertising brings in the rhino!

Parsons preach, but it is not often they know what they are preaching about. They talk in the air. They live in an unreal world, and nobody seems to mind much what they say. One of our smart young publicists says all that. He has just discovered it—about thirty years after the *Freethinker* said it. Another discovery of his is that once the Church and the State were one;

to-day they are very much in antagonism. If only we can evolve a method of bringing the two together, "in whole-hearted endeavour to run civilization on civilized lines," that will be the most colossal step forward which could be made. "The future of civilization," he says, "depends on a speedy and effective union between the two." Now this is merely what many parsons have been saying for the past ten years. But nobody—except young publicists—seems to mind much what they say. You see, they talk in the air. It is not often they know what they are preaching about.

Christians, says the Rev. R. J. Campbell, replaced the Pagan festival devoted to feasting and enjoyment. Christmas is pre-eminently the season of love, tenderness and brotherly kindness. Charles Dickens, he tells us, was the finest interpreter of the real spirit of Christmas; and the pictures he drew are all pictures of simple, homely, human fellowship, of warm affection and harmless joy. The reverend gentleman is suggesting that love, tenderness and brotherly kindness were non-existent before the Christian creed arose. The truth of the matter is that these are ordinary human, not specifically Christian, qualities. Mr. Campbell virtually admits that to be the case when he describes Dickens' pictures as being of simple, homely, human fellowship. But it doesn't suit the parson's book to point out that. He has to pretend that Dickens would not have been the kindly humanist we know so well but for his acquaintance with the silly Christian myths.

Various well-known people have contributed to a symposium on "Broadcasting as a National Asset." Among these are the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, and the Moderator of the United Free Church of Scotland. They all are grateful to the B.B.C. for giving their decaying industry some cheap advertisement. They hope the broadcast service will reach the indifferents. The last two gentlemen cherish a more ambitious hope—that the service will prepare the ground for a national revival of religion. We are afraid they are unduly optimistic; for the indifferents have a habit of "switching off" when the service is announced. And, we may add, these listeners are not at all pleased with the parsons for having prevented broadcasting while Church services are being held.

The Broadcasting Company has now become the British Broadcasting Corporation, with a new constitution. For the future the Corporation, and not the Postmaster-General will determine what is to be banned or otherwise. There is announced the possibility of "greater freedom for dealing with political and religious matters." We do not know exactly what that means, but we are not hoping for much. Up to the present the B.B.C. has given the public a sickening dose of religion, and the Sunday dose, which began in a rather mild way, has now taken a full service. It probably means that the B.B.C. will now be able to give certain churches freer play than they have had hitherto. For where religion is concerned notions of justice are likely to be strange and peculiar.

The peculiarity of the B.B.C. is that it treats religion as a non-controversial subject. In practice that only means that the B.B.C. will not allow religion to be controverted. In actual theory there is no subject quite so deeply controversial as is religion. Right through history men have been fighting and butchering each other in the name and on account of religion. Controversies on religion have lasted for centuries, and cities have been decimated in consequence. At the present day the country is split up into warring sects, and there is not a single subject of Christian beliefs that is not the subject of fierce argument among even Christians. Different bodies of Christians cannot worship in the same church on account of these differences, but the B.B.C. decides it is not a controversial subject, and therefore cannot allow a Freethinker to express an opinion.

The situation is deliciously absurd, for when one comes to boil it down, it amounts to saying that people must not be permitted to controvert religion on the wireless because it is not a controversial subject. We do not know why people want to dispute if it is not controversial, or why the B.B.C. should decide that you cannot discuss a subject that is not discussable. But one is not surprised when absurdity turns up in connection with religion.

The Church of England year-book records a decrease of 7,675 confirmations, and of 12,693 baptisms for the year 1925 contrasted with 1924. Our heart bleeds with pity at the thought that all the un-confirmed and un-baptised are due for special singeing treatment in God's torture chamber.

Out of the mouths of bishops and parsons cometh forth wisdom. The ecclesiastical big-wig of St. Albans, says: "Children aren't nearly such fools as we are." The bishop, we suppose, has just discovered that youngsters don't suck in all the pious fairy-tales related from Holy Writ.

People above a certain age fall into grooves, says the Bishop of Southwell. What he omitted to mention is that, into the grooves of childish superstition, intolerance, and unreason people don't merely fall but are pushed—and the parson does the pushing. He likes to push people into these grooves before they have learnt to think for themselves. And the certain age which suits his business is when the child is lisping.

Mr. James Agate, whose special job is enlightening *Daily Chronicle* readers, will get himself disliked by his scribbling friends. Says he: "To make a little knowledge go a long way is the rule of all journalists, though few confess it." This frankness borders on the brutal. It may have disastrous effects if the reader's pathetic faith in journalistic omniscience is undermined. Mr. Agate's statement enables one to see how superior to the journalist is the parson—the man of God not only makes a little knowledge go a long way but makes a lack of knowledge go even further. But then he has the advantage of being God-inspired.

The C.E.M.S. laments the fact that the Society has had to face accumulated deficits of £400,000 in recent years. £300,000 has been paid off, but £100,000 deficit remains. The Society has had to reduce work, close down institutions, discharge native agents, keep back recruits and missionaries, and to economise in every possible way, at home and overseas. This is a very sad state of affairs. Perhaps the Society hasn't told God often enough that it wants more money. You have to keep pegging away at God with a request in order to secure results. Surely the Society realizes that? Why, we shouldn't have a royal family if it were not for the fact that hundreds of thousands of prayers go up every Sunday for its preservation. It is reiteration that does the trick and enables the petition to penetrate the celestial ear-drums.

The Health Committee of the League of Nations is trying to find out how the deadly activity of the measles microbe can be checked. We wonder our Fundamentalist friends haven't indicted the Committee for blasphemy. God must have had a good reason for introducing the microbe into the world, and now the Committee are seeking to interfere with God's plan! We feel sure no good will come from this interference. Indeed, the scientific procedure of investigation and experiment strikes us as being anti-Christian. Prayer is the remedy to try first. God, we are assured, is ever willing to grant the requests of his faithful people. Hence, if all the Christian congregations would but set aside a day for concerted petition and ask God to remove his measley microbes from the earth, there could be little doubt that so reasonable a request would not be ignored. If it were ignored, then we should know that God means

that the microbes are to stay, and all scientific investigation should then cease. That would be a consistent Christian way of doing things. But Christians nowadays, we regret to say, are anything but consistent. It is very difficult to get them to act in accordance with what they profess to believe in.

Mr. Caradoc Evans, the Welsh novelist and playwright, has a pretty wit. He affects to believe that the Scottish race has an eye for money-making keener than that possessed by the other British races. After a sly dig at the whisky-distilling industry, he remarks: "The Scots are a pious people, and the sign of their piety is that they flourish on the sins of others." Mr. Evans, we fancy, must have been taking a census of Scots prominent in ecclesiastical and allied organizations. Our fancy becomes almost a certainty when we read what he says later. The Scot, he declares, is not a snob and is heedless of tradition and family. The Englishman goes to a university to be told how to conceal his lowly birth, but "the Scot goes to a university to learn the commercial value of theological literature."

From the *Universe* we learn that several members of the French Academy, including Paul Bourget, Louis Bertrand, and the poet, Pierre de Nothac, took part in the "Catholic Writers' Week" in Paris. The "week," at whose meetings Cardinal Dubois and several other prelates assisted, was chiefly concerned this year with the "war" of anti-religious books against Catholic thought. Catholic writers are to start a campaign against such books by means of articles, conferences, and libraries. They have invoked the support of librarians, booksellers, and other authors.

Religious intolerance, says a *Chronicle* writer, is rarely met with nowadays among English people. Would it were true! What has happened is that the intolerance is not so blatant. It shows itself less openly because there is to-day a large number of people outside the Churches who ridicule it as soon as it shows its ugly Christian face. And this fact indicates that Free-thought has achieved something in its endeavour at educating public opinion. What has been said, however, refers to sectarian intolerance. When we come to religious intolerance directed towards Freethinkers we find this diminished but little, and ever on the alert to manifest its malignity. Public opinion in this respect has not yet declared itself. The average man indifferent to religion, being Christian trained, has some sort of feeling that Atheism is a bad thing and that Freethinkers are not deserving of fair play and tolerance. The bigots know this and act accordingly. The moral is that, if Freethinkers desire to be treated tolerantly and fairly, they must set to work in the new year to spread Free-thought. We need hardly add that discussion is a good means of doing this and it costs nothing; and our popular leaflets and pamphlets cost little. Why not slip one in every paper you leave behind you in a train? That is an excellent way of going about the Free-thought job.

A correspondent in the *Morning Post* objects to Herod in an opera hat in a "Bethlehem" play; he prefers the ancient story neat. It would be interesting to compute the number of religious wars since the birth of the Prince of Peace, and also to estimate the good created by the story even as a myth. The copyright, however, is in questionable hands, and for our part, Herod can appear in plus-fours and a monocle. As a practical illustration and criticism of the futility of Christianity, the next letter to the one above is from a correspondent who deplors British weakness in the air, and that is a test how far Christianity has succeeded as a world doctrine with other countries and our own.

A Christmas plum may be taken out of a leading article in the *Morning Post*. A journalist "does" Christmas in the same way that he does the events of

the day, with perhaps one exception; at Christmas he uses the loud pedal. Here is the plum: "It was true then, and it is true now, that in the practice of the ethics of Christianity resides the only remedy hitherto discovered for the troubles of this world." We have no criticism of this. Love your enemies comes in the category of Christian ethics. In a leaderette next to the above extract, the *Morning Post* belabours the Government for the coal shortage, when it ought to be very pleased to be put to inconvenience. It also ought to present the Government with a bound volume of *Morning Posts* out of consideration for the romance derived from cooking a sausage with a candle.

The sun showed his noble face on Christmas Day. A blackbird piped a few notes. Soon King Sol will mount higher each day and his gentle warmth will cause seeds to grow, trees to burgeon, and wives to ask their husbands about new hats. Would it not be in the nature of the end of all things if this simple story about Christmas Day became universally accepted? It would. It is necessary to hold tenaciously to the Bethlehem story because parsons and priests will have nothing to do for the coming year when once their story is not accepted. The awful consequences of sun worship are too apocalyptic to contemplate. It would be worse than an epidemic of commonsense against which our Christian medicine men have almost innoculated the nation.

When the gospel, straight from the shoulder, with hell thrown in, was the fashion, the public had it hurled at them, and it was made uncomfortable for the minority who dissented. As a sample of adaptation to changed conditions, the weekly articles of Dr. T. R. Glover in the *Daily News* are invaluable. In a column he covers Homer, Socrates, Plato, Browning, John Bunyan, Defoe, Herodotus and Aristotle. What for? Simply to work in a little Christian particle, that, without the names mentioned, would not make an article.

Avoid the risk of infection, advertises a manufacturer who has individual Communion cups for sale. We know a better and cheaper way than this—keep away from the churches altogether.

Most of us, says the Archbishop of Canterbury, are in far greater danger of thinking too little than of thinking too much. The very reverend gentleman's flock, we fancy, are in greater danger than those outside his care. That is the result of their following a creed which was thought out two thousand odd years ago, and which has gently discouraged active thinking ever since—with faggot, rack, prison-cell, boycott, and suppression. We don't suppose the Archbishop will ask God to remove the aforesaid danger, since his Church has benefited so greatly from it in the past.

Morrison, an early missionary to China, was asked in derision (says a pious contemporary), whether he expected to make any impression upon the people. He replied, "No; but God will." By the look of things in China just now, God has had to register something suspiciously like a failure.

As a confession of admiration we must record our appreciation of the presiding genius who designs the placards for *John Bull* each week. He adds a zest to life and casts a romantic halo over the prosaic doings of people who require unmasking, exposing and revealing. Bloomsbury Central Church is running *John Bull* very close, and an announcement of the subject could be seen in the following terms: "The forward look to the backward pull." There's a catch in this somewhere. We have heard of the "ten-pound look," and "pull devil, pull baker," but it would appear that our pious brethren are getting gravelled for matter. We may yet live to see the day when they will be giving balloons away.



## The "Freethinker" Endowment Trust.

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £758 17s. 2d. Fyke in Partibus, £19 19s.; V. H. Smith (4th sub.), 5s.; J. Wearing (4th sub.), 3s.; G. R. Baulkes, £1; W. Howard, 5s.; T. R., 2s. 6d.; G. J. Finlay (2nd sub.), 10s.; J. Almond, 3s. 6d.; S. H. Waite, £2 2s.; C. F. Small (Fiji), £1; J. Latham (S. Africa), £1; Javali, 5s.; J. Dicey, 2s.; W. E. Pugh (Quarterly subscription), £5; W. Howard, 5s.; D. Wright, 5s. Total, £791 4s. 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.

A. A. (Paris).—Thanks for good wishes, which we reciprocate.

W. H. HUNT.—We are obliged for cuttings. No space to deal with the matter this week.

S. L.—We have not yet had the time to go carefully through your MSS., and the death of our shop manager has thrown so heavy a load of extra work on our shoulders that correspondents must exercise patience. But for the loyal help of one friend in the emergency we hardly know what we should have done.

Mr. C. S. DANIELS writes us that he intends placing sixpence per week, which amounts to 26s. per year, for the benefit of the Sustentation Fund, in place of his customary 10s. 6d. per year, and wishes that others would imitate his example. We have also to thank Mr. Daniels for securing a new subscriber. That is the kind of New Year's gift we fully appreciate.

W. PUGH.—Thanks for quarterly subscription to Trust Fund. Some have promised regular subscriptions till the Fund is completed, but not so many as we would have wished.

*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.*

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

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

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

### Sugar Plums.

The present is our last opportunity of reminding those interested of the Society's Annual Dinner, at the Midland Grand Hotel, on January 12. The tickets are going very well, and we advise those who wish to be present to apply as early as possible. Early application is advisable because it gives more time for the

proper arrangements to be made, and there are endless details to be gone into in a function of this description. The tickets may be obtained at either the *Freethinker* or the N.S.S. office. The price is 8s. Mr. Cohen will preside, and there will be the usual toasts, speeches, and—also as usual an excellent concert.

Mr. Cohen lectures to-day (January 9), in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester. His subject will be "The Making of Man." The lecture commences at 6.30.

We hope that many of our friends are taking seriously what was said last week about making January a month during which each would try to get at least one new subscriber to this paper. It does not seem a herculean task for anyone to attempt, and it would form a most valuable kind of help. A new subscriber means, apart from other considerations, a more active recruit to the army of Freethought, and we cannot have too many of them. Another aspect of the matter, and one we have been seriously considering, is the possibility of getting the paper back to its pre-war price of twopence. We feel certain that if all set to work to increase our circulation, we should be able to start 1928 with a twopenny *Freethinker*, and that would be something worth having.

Members of the National Secular Society should note that all subscriptions are due on January first in each year. These should be all gathered in before January is out. The nominal subscription is a very low one, but all are invited to make their subscriptions what they can to help the work of the Society. All members will by this time have received notice, and we trust these will not be neglected.

Every little helps, and we are glad to see that at the recent meeting of the Teachers' Labour League, held at the Caxton Hall, a resolution was passed: "That all forms of religious instruction should be removed from the schools and left to the activities of outside bodies." We are wondering when the National Union of Teachers will pluck up courage to make a stand on this matter, and by boldly plunging for Secular Education help their members to escape from the petty tyrannies of church and chapel. It cannot add to the value of a teacher's influence for him or her to be going along day after day afraid to let his opinions be known for fear of injuring his professional prospects.

The Birmingham *Town Crier*, the editor of which is a member of the Society of Friends, publishes in its issue for December 31, a two-column article by Mr. Clifford Williams, on "An Explanation of Secularism." The article is frank, simple, and comprehensive, and is preceded by an editorial note which states the editor's strong opposition to the recent bigoted action of the Birmingham Education Committee. The last has not been heard of this, and we congratulate Mr. Williams on having made a notable contribution to the controversy.

The Editor of *Foreign Affairs*, Mrs. H. M. Swanwick, M.A., a member of the British Delegation to the League of Nations, writes:—

The only practicable alternative to private war is the universal acceptance of all-in arbitration, involving (1) Abandonment of the "right" to make private war; (2) Willingness to revise treaties that have become inapplicable or a danger to peace; (3) Recognition that the world is one and that co-operative organization of world-trade and access to raw materials is urgently needed.

After a surfeit of pious blather about Brotherhood, Christ *versus* anti-Christ, and all the rest of the Christian "Peace" palaver, this clear-cut statement of alternatives is as refreshing as a glass of water on a hot day.

## The Making of the Gospels.

### II.

(Concluded from page 12.)

#### THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION.

LIKE all the main events of Gospel "history," the stories of the alleged resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ were based, not upon fact, but upon "prophecy": this and nothing more. The so-called predictions of these fictitious events are the following:—

Psalm xvi. 10.—"For thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption."

Psalm cx. 1.—"The Lord saith unto my lord, Sit thou at my right hand."

The first of these passages was regarded by the early Christians as an incontrovertible proof of the resurrection of their Lord and Master. Had not the Lord God, who could not lie, declared through his servant David that he would not suffer his "holy one" to see corruption? Jesus was his "holy one"; consequently God, in fulfilment of his promise, had raised Jesus from the dead before his body could "see corruption." Furthermore, the prophet Jonah was a "type" of Jesus; it followed, then, that "as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea-monster, so should the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. xii. 40). Could anything be plainer?

In accordance with these ideas the apostles Peter and Paul were each represented as making a long speech to imaginary Jews, in which, of course, the passage in Psalm xvi. was specially referred to (Acts ii. 24-32; xiii. 34-37). In the first of these addresses Peter is reported as saying of Jesus:—

"Whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden by it. For David saith concerning him..... Because thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption," etc.

In the foregoing passage attention is called to the words italicised. It was impossible that the body of Jesus should remain in the grave, because the inspired Psalmist had said that God would not allow it to see corruption. Reading between the lines, the statement ascribed to the reputed Psalmist David was the only foundation for the Gospel stories of the resurrection of Jesus.

In the same fabricated speech put in the mouth of Peter the second passage in the Psalms is also referred to.

Acts ii. 34.—"For David ascended not into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand," etc.

Thus, the Lord God, having invited Jesus to come and sit beside him upon his throne, that favoured individual had ascended to heaven "and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mark xvi. 19). The Gospel stories of Jesus rising from the dead and appearing in the flesh to his disciples are, it is needless to say, pure fiction. In the latter case the Gospel-makers had no "prophecies" to guide them, so the narratives of the alleged appearances differ in each Gospel. Anyone who takes the trouble to compare them will soon perceive that they flatly contradict each other, and that, like all the other incidents of the Gospel "history," they are nothing more or less than pious fabrications.

#### THE HISTORICAL JESUS.

In bringing these papers to a close it may not be out of place to briefly refer to a matter respecting

which opinions are very much divided. This is—the identity of the historical Jesus. The Gospel Jesus is, of course, from beginning to end, a purely imaginary personage, founded only on "prophecy." Was there, then, anyone—that is, one who rejoiced in the name of "Jesus"—to whom, at a later day, the fictitious Gospel events were falsely attributed? Well, taking all the known facts into consideration, there can, I think, be no reasonable doubt that there really was a Jesus who had done something to cause his name to be remembered by the Jewish people of his time. Assuming such to be the case, we might naturally expect to find some mention of him by the Jewish historian Josephus. Now, after looking carefully into the accounts of all the historical Jesuses named by this historian—and these number no less than thirteen—I can discover only one that is at all likely to have been the individual we are in search of. This is the crack-brained fanatic whom Josephus calls "Jesus, the son of Ananus, a plebian, and a husbandman" (War., vi., v., 3). The Gospels, it must be borne in mind, were written many years after the death of Jesus, when nothing was known respecting him. Still, a few notable facts may have come down to posterity, such, for instance, as his bearing no rank or position in the world, but merely one of the "common people."

According to Josephus, this Jesus, impelled by "a sort of divine fury," came to Jerusalem about A.D. 62, when Albinus was procurator. He then "began on a sudden to cry aloud: 'A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house.....and a voice against this whole people.'" This was his cry "as he went about by day and by night, in all the lanes of the city," and for seven and a half years he kept it up "without growing hoarse or being tired therewith." Often he was commanded to desist and was severely beaten, but he "went on with the same words which he cried before," and nothing had power to stop him. He was brought before the Roman governor, who asked him who he was? whence he came? and why he predicted disasters upon his nation?—just as Pilate is represented as questioning the Gospel Jesus—but to all such questions he made no answer—like the fictitious Jesus. He was then scourged—like the imaginary Jesus—but still continued to cry "Woe, woe, to Jerusalem," and being at length dismissed as a madman, he went again through the city uttering the same doleful cry.

Such a harbinger of evil must have made a deep impression upon the superstitious people of the time. After the capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple by the Romans, the long and persistent cry of this monomaniac would be remembered, and the man himself would be regarded by many as a prophet. We can easily imagine the words which are put in the mouth of the centurion in the Gospels being applied to him—"Certainly this was a righteous man," or "Truly this was a son of God" (Luke xxiii. 47; Matt. xxvii. 54).

According to the account of Josephus, this plebian Jesus was within the holy city, and cried against it, during the siege, and was slain by a stone from one of the Roman engines; but upon this point that historian must, I think, have been misinformed. It is not at all likely that the Jewish cut-throats who had gained the upper hand in the beleaguered city, and did little else than slaughter the most rational, religious, and peaceable of the citizens, would allow this fanatic to continue his woeful vaticinations until nearly the end of the siege, as recorded. It is far more probable that he, like hundreds of the other besieged Jews, attempted to escape from the city, and, being caught by the Roman soldiers, suffered the same fate as his captured countrymen. We

know that all caught when thus trying to escape were nailed to crosses round the city in the sight of their friends and fellow-citizens within the walls.

We learn, further, from Josephus, that about the time of the death of this Jesus "the eastern gate of the inner court of the temple" was "opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night," and that on another night the priests when entering this inner court "felt a quaking and heard a great noise." Similarly, at the death of the Gospel Jesus it is recorded that "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake" (Matt. xxvii. 51). Clearly, then, the death of Jesus the fanatic and that of his Gospel namesake are in some way connected. Furthermore, both are described as of the plebian class; both were religious enthusiasts; both wandered about the country penniless, and were fed by people charitably disposed; both took upon themselves to predict the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. The latter is, in fact, the one great prediction of the Gospel Jesus (written many years after the event), and it occupies a whole chapter in each of the Synoptic Gospels.

The Jewish author of the Book of Revelation, who never saw any of the Gospels, calls his Jesus "the faithful witness," and says that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." This may fairly be regarded as applying to Jesus the fanatic, who, having for seven long years done nothing else than cry "Woe to Jerusalem," was certainly a "faithful witness," and his "testimony," such as it was, may be called "the spirit of prophecy." Josephus does not say to which of the three Jewish sects this Jesus belonged; but it is more probable that he was an Essene than a Pharisee or a Sadducee. Moreover, only members of the first-named sect are recorded as having set themselves up as prophets (Antiq., xv., x., 5; xvii.; xiii., 3; War. i., iii., 5).

The historical Jesus here suggested did not, it is true, live in the times mentioned in the Gospels; but this matters nothing, for those books can be proved to be works of fiction. The original Gospel-maker did not know when his Jesus lived; he knew nothing of his birth, and he made him make his first appearance on the scene as a preacher "in those days" (Mark i. 9). Again, assuming the Epistle to the Galatians to be authentic, James, John, and Cephas, who had been companions of Jesus, were contemporaries of Paul; but there is nothing in any of the Epistles to show when any of the four lived. Setting aside the unhistorical Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, the Jesus named in the other New Testament books might have appeared as a teacher at any time prior to about A.D. 70.

ABRACADABRA.

### Glasgow Secular Society.

On Sunday, December 26, the Glasgow Secular Society held an Open Debate on "Prohibition," the Leader being Mr. F. Mann, Secretary of the Society. The Chairman allowed more latitude than is usual on lecture nights, with the result that a wider range of opinion was expressed. The majority of the speakers were opposed to Prohibition by law, even those who were abstainers and opposed the use of Alcoholic Beverages, and the failure of Prohibition in Canada and U.S.A. was stressed. Incidentally, that Blessed Word, "Education," gave rise to more varieties of opinion than some thought possible. Certainly a very interesting and informative night, and the vote of thanks to the Leader was as deserved as it was cordial. On Sunday, January 9, Mr. James W. MacLean ("A. G. Nostic") will lecture on "From Plymouth Brethrenism to Rationalism."—E. H.

### Mainly Concerning Spooks.

THE *Sunday Chronicle* Ghost entertainment has run its course, and if crowded houses rejoice the souls of proprietors they have reason to be satisfied, and happiness should be theirs. It should be confessed, though, that at first interest was somewhat lacking, but the Evans affair gave just the wanted fill-up. The British Public loves sensation, revels in a spicy divorce or an old-fashioned murder, but when these are not forthcoming it will content itself with a football management scandal or the exposure of a medium. So when the Misses Moore were announced anticipation was on tip-toe, so to speak. The silence was almost uncanny in its intensity, and all eyes were focussed in the direction in which it was confidently expected something further of a startling nature might at any time burst in view. The artists as they appeared were accorded a reception worthy of the occasion. They were pleasant young women, somewhat shy, and it is said, are the proud possessors of a testimonial from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. He is an acquaintance of Sherlock Holmes, and when music-hall artists, pardon, mediums were meant, secure references from famous authors who are intimate with equally famous detectives, everything is quite all right—Yes!

The ladies specialize in performing with spirit dogs and claim to own a fine troupe that can usually be relied upon to provide a very entertaining "turn," and this being an important occasion much was hoped for. Alas! in vain. The canine wonders awed, perhaps, by the distinguished presence of Sir William Arbuthnot Lane, Professors Julian Huxley, and A. M. Lowe developed stage fright and refused to materialize. The trainers called and coaxed but all to no purpose, the dogs remained behind "The Veil." Perchance they were chasing spirit cats, or gnawing spirit bones, or were they catching spirit rats, with Raymond an interested onlooker. Be that as it may, the footlights presented little or no attraction for them, and as a seance without spirits is not unlike the play of Hamlet minus the prince, the performance bid fair to be reverse of a success. Interest began to flag, the attention of the spectators began to drift, people fidgetted in their seats, men strolled to the refreshment bar, women held whispered conversations, and a group muttering something that sounded like "washout," proceeded to the pay-box and demanded the return of their money. In short things looked ominous, to quote the press.

But, "when things are at the worst they sometimes mend," said Byron. He deserves to rank with the prophets, for Professor Lowe seeing how things were going, did a little furious thinking, and then announced that "something that felt like a dog's tail was wagging against his leg." Immediately the mediums "spied strangers," or to be correct a stranger, a little Pomeranian dog. Did the professor know it? He did, "it was a small, brown dog, very, very fat for a spirit dog."

"Very fat," the medium agreed, "and its colour is a dirty brown."

"With a yellow spot on its back, rather like the yolk of an egg," ventured the professor.

"It had," the medium declared, "she could see it clearly." Hopes now ran high, but, unfortunately, doggie, had caught sight of a spirit butcher's boy it was friendly with and ran across behind "The Veil" to greet him.

Here was a pretty go. Still something must be done, so the professor again gallantly came to the rescue and spied "a luminous cloud floating about near the ceiling."

Again the medium spied also, she "could see it plainly, it was a psychic cloud." "Professor Lowe was psychic."

But alas! and Alack! Professor Lowe is a champion leg-puller, and dearly loves a little joke, and this was a chance he could not miss. He had only "been having" them. He saw no little fat Pomeranian with a yellow spot on its back, rather like the yolk of an egg. Neither did he see any other spirit things.

So hopes are dashed again, and it is whispered that in the Spiritualist camp, there are many long faces and loud wailings.

What is to be done? Matters cannot be allowed to rest here. The Misses Moore will most likely find their reputation somewhat damaged, or worse their professional careers ruined. Circus and Music-hall proprietors may refuse them engagements. What will they do? Will the professor's little joke have to be paid for in hard cash? Will the sisters Moore sue him in a Civil Court and claim damages?

It is too early yet to say, but let it not be supposed that the little fiasco has disposed finally of Spiritist claims. Truth must prevail, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, seconded by Professor Lodge and Raymond's assistance, will see to it that it does.

Now is certainly the winter of their discontent, but let the sceptic remember, that spring invariably follows all winters. Spring in its turn is succeeded, even in Britain, by Summer, "with light and heat refulgent," as the poet hath it. Let them keep light hearts under their waistcoats for behold I, even I, will assist them.

About twenty-five years ago I went to a bachelor's party and drank too freely of some very good whiskey. When the time came to return home, I discovered I was psychic. True I did not see Pomeranian dogs or luminous clouds, but many lamp-posts which stretched all across the footpath and half across the horse road.

Last autumn, wife and I spent a Sunday gathering blackberries. When I returned home, and retired to the bathroom to wash, I saw blackberry bushes, loaded with clusters of ripe fruit in the direction of the water tap. My wife tells me she had a similar experience.

A friend of mine, a booking clerk at one of our large railway stations, tells me that on August Bank Holiday, present year, he was busy for many hours issuing excursion tickets and taking and counting money. On returning home and retiring to bed, he found he couldn't sleep, because the moment he closed his eyes, money and excursion tickets appeared in front of him.

I have previously thought that this phenomena was due to the nervous system being somewhat deranged, some organ was not functioning properly. Perhaps the retina of the eye was indulging in a little practical joke. No! I am psychic and saw spirit things.

Be of good cheer then, keep the faith. Beyond "The Veil" is not too bad after all. It is established that lamp-posts, money and railway tickets, blackberry bushes laden with luscious fruit, will be found; man's faithful companion, the dog, will be there, too. If dogs, we may assume bones for them to gnaw and rats for them to catch. Why, then, should it be considered far-fetched, if I also suggest the possibilities of hares, stags and others, so that they may not lack suitable employment, and noble British sportsmen their favourite sport.

"Don't doubt too much."

W. J. R.

## Peter Charron.

### II.

(Concluded from page 7.)

WITH a scarcely veiled contempt for the religions around him, Charron insists that certainty in religion is a matter of impossibility. The greatest argument for truth, he says, is the general consent of the world; but, then, there is nothing in which people do agree, and, as "the number of fools doth far exceed the number of the wise, how should that general consent be agreed upon by corruption, and an applause given without judgment and knowledge of the cause, and by the imitation of someone that first began the dance." The majority of people "do not deliberate and consult; if anything, they suffer themselves to be led like oxen, or carried according to the times, company, or occasion, and then know not how to give a reason why they are rather of this calling than another, except it be that their fathers professed the same." Nor is there any subject on which people disagree more than religion. The world is full of contending creeds, and these:—

To win them credit, that they may be received, they allege and furnish themselves, whether in deed and in verity, as the true, or by imposture and fair semblance, with revelations, apparitions, prophets, miracles, prodigies, and saints. All have their beginnings small and humble; but little by little, by the imitation and contagious acclamation of the people, with some fictions as forerunners, they have taken footing and been authorised, inasmuch that all are held with affirmation and devotion—yea, even the absurdest among them. All hold and teach that God is appeased and won by prayers, presents, promises, and the like; all believe that the principal and most pleasant service of God, and the powerfulest means to appease him and to obtain his grace, is to punish, to cut themselves—to impose upon themselves some painful and difficult labour.....all of which is founded upon the opinion that God taketh pleasure and is pleased with the ruin of his creatures, which opinion is founded upon the sacrifices that were universal throughout the world before Christianity.

There is not much sympathy with Christianity evidenced in this and many similar passages that might be quoted, and still less in a passage in which he asserts that religion is based more or less upon human imbecility. Nothing discovers human weakness more than religion, he says; "yea, the very intention thereof is to make man feel his own evil, his infirmity, his nothing.....First it preacheth it unto him, it beats it into our memory, it reproacheth man, calling him dust, ashes, flesh, blood, grass." He follows Montaigne, repeating almost the same words, in asserting that our religion is a sheer geographical accident. "The nation, country, place, gives the religion; a man professeth that which is in force in that place and among those persons where he is born, and where he liveth. He is circumcised, baptised, a Jew, a Christian, before he knows that he is a man, for religion is not of our choice or election; but man, without his choice, is made a Jew or a Christian because he is born in Judaism or Christianity; and if he had been born elsewhere, among Gentiles or Mohammedans, he had been likewise a Gentile or a Mohammedan." The result is a hollow profession of faith, leading to intolerance and misery, but meaning nothing honest. "They say they believe it, they make themselves believe they believe it, and they will make others believe it too; but it is nothing."

The fifth chapter of the second book, from which these expressions are taken, contains also a remarkable view of the evolutionary nature of religion—

remarkable for being propounded at so early a date. After pointing out how much all religions hold in common the same virtues and the same vices, he goes on to argue that religions grow naturally out of one another. "The younger doth always build upon the more ancient and next precedent, which from top to bottom it doth not wholly condemn and disprove, but only accuseth it of imperfection; and that, therefore, it cometh to succeed it and perfect it, and so by little and little overthroweth it, and enriches itself with the spoils thereof, as the Judaical, which hath retained many things of the Gentile Egyptian religion, the elder, the Christian built upon the verities and promises of the Judaical—the Turkish upon them both.....But yet the elder and more ancient do wholly condemn the younger, and hold them for enemies."

His view of the relation of religion and morals was no less remarkable. He declared, as Coleridge did long after him, that "Atheism cannot lodge but in a very strong and bold soul," and that "it requires more strength and stiffness of soul to reject and lay aside the belief in a God than constantly to adhere to him." And of those who base morality upon religion, he says:—

They pervert all order, and trouble all, confounding honesty, religion, the grace of God, whereby it comes to pass that they have neither true honesty nor true religion.....They think that religion is a generality of all goods and of all virtues.....whereby they acknowledge no other virtue and honesty but that which is opened with the key of religion. Now, it is quite contrary, for religion is a special or particular virtue, distinguished from all other virtues, which may be without them, and without probity, as hath been said of the Pharisees, religious and wicked; and, as in many philosophers, good and virtuous, but yet irreligious.....They desire that a man be religious before he be honest.....this is an inverted order. These men assert that a man be an honest man because there is a paradise and a hell, so that, if they did not fear God or fear to be damned, they would make a goodly piece of work. Oh, miserable honesty! What thanks deservest thou for what thou dost? Oh, cowardly and idle innocency! Thou keepest thyself from wickedness because thou darest not be wicked, and thou fearest to be beaten; and even therein thou art wicked. Now, I desire that thou dare, but yet that thou wilt not. I desire that thou be an honest man, not because thou wouldst go to paradise, but because nature, reason—because the general policy of the world, whereof thou art a part—requireth it.....He that is an honest man by scruple and a religious bridle, take heed of him, and account of him as he is. And he that hath religion without honesty, I will not say he is more wicked, but far more dangerous, than he that hath neither the one nor the other.

One can well realize that sentiments such as these must to orthodox Christians of that date have sounded like inventions of Satan himself. Like Montaigne, Charron founded no school, and left no avowed disciples. But a book like the one we have been examining could not exist without exerting a growing influence upon thoughtful minds, and even an unconscious influence upon thoughtless ones. Every work of this kind plays its part in the development of thought, and in the creation of a spirit of critical liberalism, before which superstition and credulity has to give way. Buckle says that Montaigne and Charron were the two writers who first taught Frenchmen to *think*; and even though this may be deemed over-praise, yet there is no doubt that it was these men who helped considerably to give French thought that tendency which expressed itself so fearlessly and so usefully in the later portion of the eighteenth century.

PETER SIMPLE.

## Obituary.

### DEATH OF MR. W. G. VAUGHAN.

It is with the very deepest regret that we have to announce the death of our shop-manager, Mr. W. G. Vaughan. Mr. Vaughan left business on December 24 feeling unwell, and was later found to be suffering from congestion of the lungs and pleurisy. He appeared to make some improvement on December 27, but on the following day pneumonia set in, and in spite of every attention died on the morning of the last day of the old year.

Mr. Vaughan had been with the *Freethinker* for over twenty years, the first half in the composing room, and the latter part as shop-manager. He was absolutely loyal in his work, scrupulously honest, and gentlemanly in his manner. He won the respect of all with whom he came into contact, and his loss will not be easily replaced. For my own part, I found him always a good friend, never sparing himself additional labour if he could save me either time or worry or annoyance. I was able to leave him in charge of the business with absolute confidence, and his knowledge and experience in the practical side of the printing work was of great value to me when I first assumed control, as, indeed, it has been ever since.

Mr. Vaughan leaves a widow and a boy of about 19 years of age, and they have my deepest sympathy in the loss of one of the best of husbands and parents.

C. C.

## Where Poppies Never Fade.

As we move about among the Saturday night crowds of our country town, in the street or at the bar, without being priggish or superior, with charity, sympathy, humanity, but little hope for all, we make what friends we can of the material available—material we reflect, ignorant but inflammable, quite irrational mostly, earnest, noble, generous in a way, but instinctively savage in religion and war. We meet one a little more intelligent than the rest, who reads a little, whose favourite book is the Bible—his hat comes off to it—his deep-seated reverence for it exalted by a little alcohol, ennobled, enriched, by the many affective ties, atmospheres, sweet illusions of Home Sweet Home. We readily agree there is grandeur in this, and noble passages in the book to support and inspire it; but, one of us suggests, Home Sweet Home over-done is that mere sentimentalism, which is so worked to death by the Christian clergy. The talk goes on; philosophy wars with religion; we quote our favourite poets and prose men: Our friend is a gardener and looks forward to a life in a land where flowers never fade. But, he is reminded, no pleasure anywhere is lasting, indeed passes at the very moment of grasping: Burns had expressed it once for all in four of his finest lines:—

But pleasures are like poppies spread,  
You seize the flower its boom is shed;  
Or like the snowflake on the river,  
A moment white then melts forever.

What! said the logician amongst us, you a gardener and lover of Burns, and expect a land where pleasures and poppies will never fade! that denies your understanding of Burns' lines, and the knowledge of your ancient trade.

We parted amicably after such a hoary and happy talk, reflecting that, after all, the lines of Coleridge would best suffice for all such simple, kindly souls:—

.....'Tis sweeter far to me  
To walk together to the church  
With a goodly companie.....While each, etc.

We thought of the morrow, and our friend's family walk to church, with the poet's deathless picture of

that idyllic scene, remembering, envying a little, this peaceful goodness and docile discipline, comforting the mind, cementing society—if in the most parochial way, in that blest asylum of the semi-imbecile, precluded from it even by that “patent held immediately from Almighty God,” that perception of the Truth a universe more wide. The Logician was less magnanimous, and prided himself, like the conceited Freethinker, on having caught the gardener in his impossible garden, where poppies never fade! Vain man; but we knew he also was a modest soul, cultivating his own little immortelles in his own home garden; and in this way, as in our own poorer case, proving the profound truth of a recent casual but pregnant observation by Mr. Cohen, *i.e.*: “On the other hand, it may really be more helpful to deal with man as a natural product, to believe that the feelings that centre round the group and the family are a far safer guide to a better life than professed faith in a number of nonsensical religious teachings.” The whole experience of our whole life says Amen to that.

A. M.

## Correspondence.

### THE HISTORY OF BIRTH CONTROL.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE “FREETHINKER.”

SIR,—I wonder if your readers would be willing to co-operate with the undersigned, a Fellow of the Social Science Research Council in America, in collecting scattered material, such as books, pamphlets, and other literature relating to the history of the Birth Control Movement in England since 1820. The movement owes such a debt of gratitude to English Freethinkers of the nineteenth century that I feel that perhaps your readers may have such books on hand and be willing to help me by either loaning or selling them. Material relating to events before 1880 are especially desired. It will be recalled that some of the names associated with this movement were Richard Carlile, Robert Dale Owen, Charles Knowlton, Charles Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant. Early editions of Robert Dale Owen's *Moral Physiology* and Knowlton's *Fruits of Philosophy* are especially desired.

I should appreciate it if any of your readers would advise me as to what materials they may have.

25 Gower Street, W.C.1.

NORMAN E. HIMES.

### SECULARISM AND FRENCH FREEMASONRY.

SIR,—I noticed in your issue of December 26 that our friend, “Alpha,” had again come along with his annual, and very appropriate, propaganda letter recommending a closer intellectual co-operation between British Secularism and French Freemasonry, which have much, though not everything, in common. You, Sir, were good enough to put a footnote to your correspondent's letter indicating the address of the Secretary of a London Lodge of the Grand Orient of France. My sole object in writing is to say, for the benefit of any Freethinking Freemasons whom it may interest, that in Paris there is one Lodge, under the auspices of the Grand Orient of France, which works in English. It meets every first Thursday of the month, at 8.30 p.m., at the General Headquarters, 16, rue Cadet, and visiting Freemasons are welcome. Freemasonry apart, visiting Secularists will receive from the writer, in his private capacity, a fraternal welcome. All interested are invited to note the following address: President of the Shakespeare Lodge, Grand Orient de France, 16, rue Cadet, Paris (9<sup>e</sup>), at which all communications will reach me.—A. A.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON.—INDOOR.

ETHICS BASED ON THE LAWS OF NATURE (Emerson Club, 1 Little George Street, Westminster, S.W.1): 3.30, Lecture in French, by Monsieur Deshumbert, on “Comment ne pas être malheureux.” All invited.

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, Mr. F. Verinder, “Is there a Cure for Unemployment?”

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Kennington Oval): 7, Discussion on “How can we best oppose Superstitionists in Public Life?” To be opened by Mr. Baker.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit., “Doing Good and Doing Business.”

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (101 Tottenham Court Road): 7.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin, “The Virgin Birth” (Lantern Lecture). Thursday, January 13, at the same time and place, Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., “Readings from the Poets.”

### OUTDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan, a Lecture.

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

### COUNTRY.—INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (At the Empire Café): 6.30, Mr. Dobson, a Lecture.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, “A” Door, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. James W. MacLean, “From Plymouth Brethrenism to Rationalism.” Questions and discussion cordially invited. Silver Collection.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, “The Making of Man.”

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—Archbishop Whately.

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Miss E. M. VANCE, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

**Principles and Objects.**

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

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

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

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

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