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# THE BISHOPS IN THE LORDS.

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*Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,  
Letters to the Editor, etc.*

## Views and Opinions.

### The Bishops in the Lords.

THE question of the House of Lords is once again before the public, and with it that of hereditary legislators. With regard to a second chamber, that is obviously a matter of opinion. Whether we should have one or not, and if we have one, how it is to be constituted, is purely a matter of expediency. Neither the maintenance nor the abolition of a second chamber involves a principle. It is wholly a question of social utility, and must be decided by the needs of the time, tempered by what may be regarded as the permanent requirements of the social organism. But to give a man legislative power because he happens to be the son of his father is to-day almost too absurd for serious discussion. There is nothing in science or experience to justify it. Quite commonly we see the philosopher father to a fool, and—although not so commonly—the fool may father a philosopher. In some respects this is inevitable. The profound thinker—particularly if his thinking takes the direction of reform, is to the social organism what a "sport" is in the animal world; extreme variations are not favoured by the rest of the species that moves along normal lines. Every gregarious group is maintained, as a matter of fact by the individuals clustering round a norm. To be too much above or below the normal brings with it penalties. In the animal world it usually means suppression. And in the human world we see in the treatment meted out to new opinions and new methods something of the same kind. Society, as I have said elsewhere, lives on its averages and profits by its abnormalities.

### The Accident of Birth.

These considerations, however, give no ground whatever for continuing the principle of hereditary legislation. Even a paper such as the *Daily Express*

concludes that "the hereditary legislator is one of those relics of a past age that must bow to the winds of progress." Men are no more legislators by heredity than they are clerks, or tailors, or bootmakers, although much of our legislation may appear to be the outcome of individuals, whose preparation for it have been in one of these directions. I agree with the paper from which I have already quoted, that while the man who receives a peerage may have earned it, it is ridiculous to give his son, who may be "a dunce, a milksop, a ne'er-do-well, a philanderer, or a congenital idiot, the power to make new laws, to check legislation, to vote on matters which his mentality is incapable of grasping." Hereditary rule, from the monarchy downwards, is an affront to commonsense. It is true that in the case of the monarchy, the excuse is put forward that a king in a country such as this is quite harmless. He does nothing, save figure at certain functions, social or national, although even here it might be argued that the first representative of the nation should be one in whom we have other sources of pride, save that of a public functionary of this description. But in the case of legislators there is not even this excuse. The king dare not be obstructive, hereditary legislators dare and are. If a second chamber is retained those who are there because of eminence in law or otherwise, might still be there. It would be left for their children to prove the right to their father's power as well as to his title.

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### Our Medicine-men.

It is noticeable that the proposals for the reform of the House of Lords leave the Bishops where they were. And if the retention of the hereditary principle in a legislative chamber is a relic of medievalism, the retention of the Bishops throws us right back into barbarism. Among savage tribes one would expect the medicine-man to be at the elbow of the ruler. For the gods have to be placated somehow or the other, their desires must be ascertained, and for this reason the ruler must appeal to the representatives of the gods for guidance. A reader of signs and omens, a mouthpiece of the gods, the invoker of spiritual help, in all these capacities, so long as we believe in them, the priest has his place. And at that low stage of human culture no one could dispossess them. Even in the earlier centuries of this country, when the English people could be said to have had one religion, there might have been some justification for having representatives of this "estate of the realm" in the legislative chamber. But to-day no one can pretend that there is only one religion in the country. Jews, Mohammedans, Buddhists, Hindus, Christians of every variety, non-believers in religion of any kind, all go to make up the taxpay-

ing and vote-giving community. No one set of believers can be said to represent the people. The Bishops in the House of Lords represent only their own Church, even if they represent that. They are even more of an anachronism than is the hereditary legislator. They are not called upon to guide other members by the exercise of their ancient trade of divination or soothsaying. They are argued with just as though they were ordinary mortals, and there is no indication that the other members of the House have an exalted idea of their intelligence. It is time that the hereditary legislator went. It is more than time that the medicine-man was excluded from the legislative chamber.

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#### Nonconformists and the State.

With characteristic verbosity the late W. E. Gladstone used to argue that the Church represented the corporate religious life of the nation, and, therefore, it had a legitimate place in the House of Lords. The corporate religious life of the nation is pure delusion. It does not exist. The State to-day comprises all kinds of mutually contradictory opinions on religion, and a large volume of opinion that will not have religion at any price. Where is the corporate life in this jumble of conflicting beliefs? Moreover there is a large body of opinion which is definitely opposed to all State patronage of religion. This holds that the State should remain absolutely neutral, having no more to do with a man's opinions on religion than it has to do with his opinions on dress. And if Nonconformists, who by principle are opposed to a State Church could be depended on they would be the first to assist here. But the Anglicans know their dissenters. They know that in the main the opposition of the dissenters is motivated, not by principle, but by envy—envy of the Church's privileges, its wealth, its social position, and they know they can buy off that opposition whenever they care to do so. Already there are suggestions that certain leading Nonconformists should be elected to the House of Lords, and many have nibbled eagerly at the bait. But it is worthy of note that while there is all this talk of having the religion of the country represented—of course, leaving out all non-Christian religions, there is no hint that Art, Science, or Literature should be represented. All of which a country ought to be proud may get there as it will; all of which a civilized people should be ashamed must receive special privileges. We honour the savage in the name of civilization.

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#### The Clergymen the Nation's Guides.

It might be argued, on behalf of a number of the hereditary peers, that they take no part in the business of the House of Lords, and thus do neither good nor harm. It certainly cannot be so argued with regard to the Bishops. Their record is just about as bad as it could be. With rare exceptions they have consistently opposed all measures of genuine reform, and helped to maintain or to pass Acts of a reverse nature. Their votes are not governed by considerations of social expediency, but by thoughts of their own interests or of conformity with religious dogmas. How can one expect from these bishops anything like a rational consideration of questions concerning the land, when the revenue of the Church to which they belong is so largely bound up with the retention of the existing land system? Or with the reform of the Divorce Laws, when the question is decided for them by what "Our Lord" said on the subject; or of Education, when their existence is bound up with

keeping a hold on the child at all costs? But if anything could dispose of the claim of the English bishops to stand as representatives of the better life of the people, it would be their attitude during the war. Had they been so inclined, no body of men could have done more than the clergy to prepare for the peace that was bound to come, even though it were only the peace of exhaustion. For the great problem fronting the nations of the world throughout the whole period of the war was not that of slaughtering each other, but of living with each other. As it was, no one did more to inflame national hatreds, to subscribe to the stupid doctrine that the Germans, because we were at war with them, were outside the pale of civilized humanity, none lent a ready tongue to the dissemination of tales such as are always circulated in time of war about one's enemies, none preached more energetically the gospel of hatred than did the avowed followers of the "Prince of Peace," and of the gospel of human brotherhood. And the consequence of this was that when the war did end our politicians dare not, in face of the hatred that had been aroused, bring about the kind of peace which it is admitted by many of them should have been made. And thus the further consequence that the competition in armaments recommenced; and after four years of carnage to end war, the militarist is as strongly entrenched in the councils of the nations as ever, while men are talking of the next war as an event as certain to come as a calculated eclipse of the sun. As ever, the covering cloak of religion and morality for the exercise of the lower and baser passions of mankind was provided for the people by the Christian clergy. And yet I dare not hope that a reformed House of Lords will see the exclusion of the Bishops. Neither the Liberals, the Conservatives, nor the Labour Party will have the courage to fight the Church. The Nonconformists will be bought, if the price must be paid, by the appointment of a number of Nonconformist Peers. The Hereditary principle may be given up, but the medicine-man will retain his place. The only way to end his reign is to end the belief in the stupid doctrines of which he is the mouthpiece.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

#### The Cause of the Late Eclipse.

"A few, sad, straggling hairs."—Keats (adapted).

What was the cause of the late eclipse?  
Did Luna push her pouting lips  
Across the path where the Sun-God trips?  
Tut! 'twas our parson's whiskers.

And if, under the shade they throw,  
We puny mortals titter so,  
We're only jealous that we can't grow  
Such sun-eclipsing whiskers.

H. BARBER.

Personally, I claim the right of deliverance, free speech, free thought, and what I claim for myself I claim for every human being. I claim the right to attack and to defend. I claim the right to justify the Devil, if I want to. I can be suppressed by wiser argument, by deeper insight, by greater knowledge, but not by the magistrate, civil or literary. I would stand even by Judas Iscariot in the dock, if his Judge denied him a free hearing, a fair trial. The Truth, if she is as great as we assume her to be, must prevail.—Robert Buchanan.

### "Religion Creating Its Own Evidences."

SUCH is the title of a remarkable sermon by the Rev. Percival Gough, M.A., preached at St. Mark's, Hamilton Terrace, London, N.W., and published in the *Christian World Pulpit* of June 16. The title is unique, predictive of an original discourse; but unfortunately the promise of the former is not fulfilled in the latter. Mr. Gough begins by taking religion "in its very limited form of churchgoing." The majority of churchgoers are the slaves of a habit formed, in many instances, by their ancestors, which they follow also because it is regarded as a sign of respectability to do so. Indeed, many are accustomed to attend church who are not even believers. Not long ago a Christian wife asked her Freethinking husband, "Jim, why don't you accompany me to church sometimes?" He answered: "Gladly would I do so, my dear, were it not for the fact that it would be extremely painful for me to listen, Sunday after Sunday, to oracular statements, all of which I entirely disbelieve." His wife retorted: "But only a few of the men who attend are believers; they do so merely to please their families." No doubt there are people for whom churchgoing is not only a duty which they feel bound to discharge, but a distinct pleasure to be enjoyed. For these, as Mr. Gough says, "there is no longer an apathy arising from the desire to 'get it over'; there is an expectancy that demands sincerity in every prayer, and desires a meaning to be given to every word that is uttered." Assuming the accuracy of that assertion, one wonders how it can yield the slightest evidence of the objective truth of Christianity, and this Mr. Gough fails to make clear to us. It is easy enough to deny that the churches are deserted, or to aver that "the sincerity of the modern congregation is itself a revival of the most startling importance," but the preacher forgets that sincerity is by no means synonymous with truth. We frankly admit the perfect sincerity of multitudes of churchgoers, and the genuineness of the transporting joy which the act of worship often affords them; but we strenuously repudiate the notion that their experience, however sincere and enchanting it may be, furnishes one tittle of proof that God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

Mr. Gough's next point is that, "in the larger region of intellectual support for religion, the position is happier than it has ever been." This we emphatically deny, but to be fair we must allow the preacher to state his case in his own words:—

No longer does the thoughtful man set secular knowledge against the Revelation of the Risen Christ. The things with which secular knowledge has to do are continually descending further and further into matter, describing, arranging, and ordering it into shapes and uses for human and material ends; but the things with which man, as a believer in Christ, has to do are continually causing him to ascend, further and further towards a realization of his true spiritual nature in God. This twofold movement, towards the earth and towards God, or the descent of matter and the ascent of life, become reconciled when we realize that in Christ God brings both worlds into harmony by endowing mankind with the responsibility for the moral and spiritual lordship over the things that are temporal.

Such is Mr. Gough's statement of the case for Christianity, which, whilst marked by a certain amount of ingenuity, is yet at bottom as false and misleading as it is possible for any statement to be. It is simply not true to say that "the thoughtful

man," as such, favours the belief in the supernatural. The late Dr. Russel Wallace regretfully confessed that, in his belief in the existence of a spiritual world, he stood almost alone among the scientific men of his day, and we are convinced that the same thing is true of Sir Oliver Lodge in the twentieth century. The overwhelming majority of scientific thinkers are unbelievers in all forms of supernatural religion; but are they on this account to be set down as thoughtless men? Is Sir Arthur Keith to be charged with thoughtlessness because he does not accept the alleged "Revelation of the Risen Christ?" or because he maintains that mankind is of a very humble origin? He tells us that he is a member of a "band of searchers who are busily engaged in tracing man's pedigree," a band which "almost without exception shares the creed and faith of Charles Darwin." It should be remembered that his study of Nature irresistibly led the great Darwin to avow himself an Atheist; and he was a "thoughtful man," if ever there was one. Even Professor Gilbert Murray reminds us that "the working beliefs of the average man are, of course, largely made up of all sorts of unproven and irrational and purely nervous elements," and that "it is these elements that are constantly exposed to danger by the discovery of new facts which collide with them."

Now, Mr. Gough is wholly unscientific when he speaks of "the descent of matter and the ascent of life." These are processes of which science knows absolutely nothing, and of which the preacher himself is apparently equally ignorant. He proceeds thus:—

Taken each by itself, our human powers of thought, affection, and will must plow over barren fields of material ends; but rooted in Christ, they fashion a personality that knows itself to belong to an order of life that ascends to God, and with him continually dwells. Christ, therefore, does not to-day stand in need of the support of human knowledge; but human knowledge does need, and needs imperatively, the inspiration of Christ's spirit to give it a value above its merely worldly and material ends. It is a happy thing that men are beginning to see that unless all things are raised up to God in Christ the human race will be debased by a servitude to the things that perish.

If Christ is above human knowledge, how does Mr. Gough account for the existence of the Four Gospels which pretend to tell the story of his life? How does he himself manage to write articles and preach sermons on or about Christ? Does he doubt that the Gospel Jesus actually lived and taught as recorded? Does he mean that his becoming a historical character was an act of condescension on his part? What on earth does it signify to be "above all human knowledge." We admit that the historicity of the Gospel Jesus is a highly debatable question; but if he lived at all he is of necessity an object of knowledge. To be "above all human knowledge" is certainly equivalent to being, for us, non-existent. In any case, Mr. Gough's Christ, Saviour, Lord, is a non-natural anti-natural, absolutely impossible being. As a matter of fact, we find it utterly impossible to believe in the historicity of the Gospel Jesus. Who can honestly say, "I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended to heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead." Of no one who has ever actually lived can such episodes be related and seriously treated as historical events.

Now does it not inevitably follow that a Church founded on such absurd and impossible miracles is essentially a fraudulent organization? In its nature the Church is an exclusively human institution, which is abundantly proved by its history; but it calls itself the body of Christ, and as in the orthodox theology Christ is defined as super-human, the natural conclusion is that a purely human body has a super-human head. This point is not raised by Mr. Gough, however, his contention being that the "Church is built upon experience." Experience of what? Surely not of the virgin birth, resurrection, and ascension? And yet we are assured that human life is worthless until it is raised up to God in Christ, whatever that may mean. Our conclusion is that the evidential value of Christian experience is positively nil, and Mr. Gough has entirely failed to convince us that our conclusion is not amply justified.

J. T. LLOYD.

### The Priest as Pedagogue.

"The clergy have a good time on earth; they are not crucified."—*G. W. Foote.*

"This mystery of sending spiritual gifts is nothing but a trade."—*Dean Swift.*

"The only true conquests are those obtained over ignorance."—*Napoleon.*

THE English people are only half educated. They may be better educated than the Irish, but they are behind the Scotch, and very far behind Germans and Americans. So slow has been the growth of belief in education among the English people that in numberless instances ambitious young men and women have had to rely upon their own efforts to acquire intellectual knowledge. Every effort to make education compulsory and universal, to raise the age of children before leaving school, to give increased facilities for evening classes and higher-grade education has been sternly opposed by the clergy and the governing class. Even to-day, after half a century's experience of State education, the mass of citizens in this country cannot write a decent letter, and are incapable of distinguishing tinsel from real gold in literature. This was proved during the Great War by the letters of the soldiers and sailors, and by noting the literature in demand. In a few words, the culture of the nation is low, and the prosperity of the charlatan is high.

This distressing result is due entirely to the priestly control of education. The clergy have always been against popular control of education, and are as active to-day as they ever were. In the Ages of Faith the Church was responsible for the elementary education of the country, and the curtailing of this responsibility has always been bitterly resented. That the State Church clergy were not really equal to this responsibility, that Nonconformists, Roman Catholics, Jews, and finally the State itself was compelled to provide teachers and schools for children whom the Church of England could not educate, were facts that had to be admitted. The prime trouble was that the clergy were only anxious to teach their own Anglican formularies, and that they did not care a button for real education. They never for a moment considered the elementary schools as the training ground for future citizens, but merely as a most desirable adjunct to the vicarage and the parish church. So much was this the case that they treated the school-teachers as servants of the rectory, and as mere lackeys. The schools were badly equipped, the teachers terribly underpaid, and the entire school programme so

arranged as to permit purely religious teaching to usurp a very large share of the pupils' time. Their idea of religious teaching was simply that of a petty, narrow, circumscribed denominational system; and the sole aim was the production of young Churchmen and Churchwomen, not of good citizens.

Even to-day, the clerical policy is to restrict national education narrowly. In the "Church" schools, which can still be counted by hundreds, they have an easy task. In the State schools they still keep control by means of their catspaws, for it would never do for the easy-going English people to realize that they were priest-ridden. Hence the education imparted is of a most meagre description. Holidays usurp nearly three months in each year and a goodly portion of the curriculum is devoted to prayers, singing hymns, and Bible reading. The ordinary scholar's educational career finishes at fourteen years of age, and the future citizen is actually trained to be the prey of the first charlatan he meets. Virile intelligences, here and there, may rise above this rut; but the majority of children have been kneeling so often at prayers; have been so awed by their pastors and masters; that they are as docile to authority as the coloured comedians of the cotton fields of Carolina.

Nor is this all of the sorry story. The opposition of the Anglican clergy to throwing open the Universities to Nonconformists, to allowing other than Anglicans to enjoy University emoluments, and to granting any share in the management of public elementary schools to Dissenters, is another discreditable chapter in the history of Priestcraft in this country. Some day, not far distant, citizens will ask whether education, and politics, have not suffered sufficiently at the hands of priests, and whether it is not high time that education was honoured for its own sake.

State education has been in existence for over fifty years and huge sums of money have been spent on it. Great as is the good that has been done in these schools the good might have been much greater had the attention of educationalists not been distracted by the eternal wrangling of the sects to secure control. Hard-working teachers and the unfortunate pupils have both suffered from this rivalry. The school should be one of the freest places in the World. Sinister interests see to it that it is as cramped as it can be made. The teacher is not permitted to say what he thinks on some of the most vital of questions, the children leave school with a false and distorted idea of social values. It almost seems as if the education of the country had been designed for the express purpose of evading real education instead of imparting it.

The only thing that is taught properly in these national schools is respect for authority. In Church schools this is carried a stage further, and ecclesiastical authority is permitted full sway. The ecclesiastical canons are still in force in this country, except they conflict with the laws of the land, and the law courts have decided that they are binding on the clergy. The first dozen canons are aimed at Nonconformists, and all but one ends with a curse, a distinguishing mark of the hypocritical "religion of love." If you deny the royal supremacy in Church affairs you are cursed. If you deny that the Anglican Church teaches the doctrine of Christ you are cursed. If you say that the "Book of Common Prayer" is out of harmony with the Christian Bible you are cursed. And so on, and so forth, in the true spirit of Christian charity. But that the law of the land overrides these canons, everybody who refused to attend Church should be cursed, and the names read out in Churches. These petticoated priests, on whom

the canons are binding, have full control of the Church schools, and partial control of the so-called State schools. They adapt these antiquated and bigoted ideas to the capacity of children. It is a grievous and a bitter thing that boys and girls should be taught such mischievous nonsense in language, which leads them to believe, and is carefully calculated to that end, that millions of their countrymen are outcast. It is an affront to the spirit of Democracy, and an attempt to place the children at the mercy of petticoated priests. These conceited priests claim to be sacred persons—a caste apart from their fellows. Unless a man accepts them and their absurd dogmas, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. That is priestly teaching for children, who will be the citizens of to-morrow. Is it not high time that it was altered?

MIMNERMUS.

### "A God's-eye View of Fletton."

VIEWING things through the eye of the Christian deity should be of interest to the natives of a country whose interpretations of their God's intention number some hundreds. To get behind the God-head, as it were, and look into the minds of the worshippers down below would present a medley something like the vision of one suffering from delirium tremens. And it is probably due to that ability to see the entire pettiness of human nature that keeps God silent; sitting upon the great white throne, utterly fed up. The knavery of politicians, the innate mendacity of newspaper editors, the muddiness of the democracy's thinking, when it does think, and such like things, has probably retired most of the gods from sheer disgust. For gods are unintelligible unless we endow them with human attributes, and the patience needful to endure a complete knowledge of humanity would have to be more than infinite.

The view in question, however, is really not the view of a God; rather it is the impression of an ordinary mortal with an extremely pleasant manner of expressing himself, a way entirely his own. Freezing the village stiff for an instant, he makes each of the inhabitants, from the squire down to the mole-catcher, say just what is in his or her mind at the moment. And at Fletton everyone had some grain of wisdom to dispense, along with a large percentage of what is the mental stock-in-trade of mankind; the piffing small talk and scandal, the jealousies and prejudice that go to make up communities, be they big or little. The author has no constructive idea, other than that of telling the truth, in writing his book. Truth is an uncommon commodity in societies nowadays, and although it may only have for its object a better knowledge of Hodge, the book (*Old England*, by Bernard Gilbert) was worth writing and equally worth reading.

The lord of the manor leads off, and he, in his way, is typical of all the better-conditioned people in the village. A pronounced self-interest; a well developed No. 1 feeling pervades every one of them. The bank account is the tie that binds these brothers in fortune together. Sir Harry Lauder, the comic singer knight, would pass every mother's son of them into the fold; they all have a profound belief that what a man has is the measure of his moral standing—and perhaps it is. Their reaction to their environment is pretty much the same. The Earl works himself to near an apoplectic fit in contemplating old Mogg, whose ancestors probably had squatted on a piece of ground and established a claim before the Earl's forbears could get their clutches on it, and Mogg, a hymn-singing humbug, is consumed with envy over

the disposition of a few acres of ground obtained by a rival. This evil spirit is the bane of rural development along decent lines in Fletton. The Hammonds in *The Village Labourer*, say that the aristocracy in England "destroyed the promise of such development when it broke the back of the peasant community. The enclosures created a new organization of classes. The peasant with rights and a status, with a share in the fortunes and government of his village, standing in rags, but standing on his feet, makes way for the labourer with no corporate right to defend, no corporate power to invoke, no property to cherish, no ambition to pursue, bent beneath the fear of his masters and the weight of a future without hope." In Fletton there is just a faint memory of the past. Billy Bean has heard that the Grange once belonged to the village, but the knowledge is tinged with envy. The Squirearchy having depressed the status of the peasant by stealing the communal lands—the dirty work of which was done by the politicians and the moral justification for it provided by the parson—inoculated them with their own commercial spirit, and polluted the sound mental outlook they once possessed. The men in Fletton now are "gross materialists," and it follows that the womenfolk are "grosser" still. They narrow down their vision to include the members of their own families only, and their vaunted intuition functions within that limited circle. They pursue their biological destiny, conscious or unconscious, with feminine persistence, and if they were in the habit of putting their thoughts on paper they would echo Marie Bashkirtseff in diagnosing their unrest as due to the absence of the male. It isn't merely the women of the working classes, so-called, that exhibit this very primitive feeling; the colonel's lady is, in this respect, at one with Judy O'Grady, and the vicar's childless wife, smarting under the decree of Providence, can harbour vicious thoughts about the fruitful wantons who give the population of the village a lift without the sanction of the Church.

The doctor is frankly pessimistic. The demoralization of the village has reached a stage, from his particular point of view, that makes recovery impossible. Yet there is nothing surer than that mankind has within itself abundant recuperative power, even in a village. The stock is far from being exhausted, and given the opportunity, would again attain the virile, independent position of old. It is noticeable that none of the inhabitants get down to the root causes of the debacle. They see the lack of good things in the actions of their neighbours just as they see prosperity, like labour politicians, or indeed any brand of politician, in terms of penalizing the other fellow. The play of economic law is to them as fixed as a law of nature. The lawyer in the village is an emblem of low cunning; the idea that he is also the agent of a carefully wrought institution for the enslavement of the people is never glimpsed. The banker's manager goes through on his face value; an interfering busybody to embarrassed farmers and tradespeople; someone to beware of by all the others, but never as the symbol of the most active menace of present-day civilization.

Mr. J. M. Robertson, at the conclusion of his *Evolution of States*, dwells on the almost hopeless prospect of peoples reaching a higher state of civilization, in face of the many factors making for dissolution and decay. "A hundred times," he says, has the hope flowered and withered again." But he goes on, "Without such a hope the study of the past would be desolating to the tired spectator. Followed through cycle after cycle of illusory progress and conscious decline, all nevertheless as full of pulsation, of the pride of life and the passion of suffering, as the

human tide that beats to-day on the shores of our own senses, the history of organized mankind, in its trivially long-drawn immensity, grows to be unspeakably disenchanting. Considered as a tale that is told, it seems to speak of nothing but blind impulse, narrow horizons, insane satisfactions in evil achievement, grotesque miscalculation and vain desire, till it is almost a relief to reflect how little we know of it all, how immeasurable are the crowded distances beyond the reach of our searchlight. Alike the known and unknown, when all is said, figure for us as fruitless, purposeless, meaningless moments in some vast, eternal dream." Fletton is a tiny pin-point in that vast cycle of tottering civilizations; a replica of all that has gone before. A survey of the past "yields no sense of fruition." "Rome the dead, and Greece the undying, drift from our reach into the desert distance. Beyond their sunlit fragments lies a shoreless and desolate twilight-land, receding towards the making of the world; and there in the shadows we dimly divine the wraiths of a million million forms, thronging a hundred civilizations. The vision of that vanished eternity renews the intolerable burden of the spirit baffled of all solution. For assuredly, in the remotest vistas of all, men and women desired and loved, and reared their young, and toiled unspeakably, and wept for their happier dead; and the evening and the morning, then as now, wove their sad and splendid pageantries with the slow serenity of cosmic change. Great empires waxed to the power of wreaking infinite slaughter, through the infinite labour of harmless animal souls; and seas of blood alternately cemented and sapped their brutal foundations; and all that remained of them is a tradition of their destruction, and the shreds of their uttermost decay. Not an echo of them lives, save where perchance some poet with struggling tongue murmurs his dream of them into tremulous form; or when music with its more mysterious spell gathers from out the inscrutable vibration of things strange semblences of memories, that come to us as an ancient and lost experience re-won, grey with time and weary with pilgrimage."

There was a charge of pessimism levelled against the author of the above passage, but he is hopeful enough for the future. That hope is based on the idea of "unending betterment" that has grown up along with the materialistic conception of science. Up to our own day science has been mainly concerned with widening man's control over natural processes; it hasn't appreciably broadened his spiritual stature. And man does not live by bread alone. In the past, as now, the young men saw visions, and the old men dreamed of a better state of being, but lacked the fructifying idea of the moderns. It may be that this faith in "unending betterment," this hitching of our hope to the stars, may help our halting civilization over the rough way that leads to the celestial city, but Fletton village is one of the many sign-posts, all pointing the other way.

H. B. DODDS.

#### CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

It is assumed that Society has the right to punish as it pleases all offenders against its laws. The rule which should guide us, however, is not that of doing what the law says we have the power to do, but what reason, justice, and humanity say we ought to do; and these forbid the continuance of Capital Punishment.—*Lord Buckmaster.*

"I do not love a man who is jealous of nothing."—*Goldsmith.*

#### Drama and Dramatists.

THE problem of living with one's neighbours—a universal problem, is not to be solved by words. The biblical injunction flung among Sadducees, Philistines, by those who had nothing was not and has not been a glorious success. It was a doubtful appeal—a beautiful phrase, and required no thought—as all appeals to the multitude must be. Fairplay, justice, equity—these are somewhat on another plane of thought, and Schopenhauer, as a last resort, bids us exchange hope for insight. How Christian Europe loved its neighbours for four years will be known for all time; how foreign news is presented in the daily press is one of those esoteric wonders which dwell in the shadow of the printed word. The black eyes and hatred vortexes of various localities are nothing to the prejudice that can be steamed up against a whole country with one morning edition from the authority of the printing press. We do not complain. As missionaries are a doubtful asset on the Empire's balance sheet, so may newspapers, in these days of space annihilation be catalogued as back numbers. St. George's Channel—one wonders how the bacon contractor dared to own anything so near to Ireland—has been one means of not knowing Ireland, and our newspapers have been another, but now that Mr. Sean O'Casey has given us the "Plough and the Stars," and "The Shadow of a Gunman," no one in England should be excused for not knowing something about one of the most romantic figures in the world—the Irishman.

The latter play is now being produced at the Court Theatre, and, as biting one's nails is considered to be a sign of self-improvement, a much better step in this direction may be made by seeing the play; if this is impossible, it should be read. The curtain raiser "Riders to the Sea" is a morbid affair; there is an abundance of talk about death, and as this only happens once in a lifetime, it seems rather superfluous. Let the dead bury the dead, and let us, in these notes at any rate, seek and find something to chronicle with joy; something to help us to live, something at least that shall help us to understand our neighbours. In this last respect, "The Shadow of a Gunman" supplies us with the raw material for thought.

A poet and a pedlar share the same bedroom, and the play has not proceeded for more than a few minutes before the vendor of braces and hairpins tells the son of the muse what he thinks about him in sanguinary language. Poets are fools, and to illustrate that folly is not confined to one class, the pedlar puts his trousers on back to front after oversleeping for three hours. Mr. Maguire, the pedlar's assistant, turns up late, resigns his job, and leaves his bag under the bed. He is off on a butterfly catching expedition, and takes his farewell of his master with "Good-bye." This moves Seumas Shields to indignation. For nine years he has been teaching the Celtic language and this is his reward from one of his pupils.

The love interest is supplied with the entrance of Minnie Powell, who has come to see the poet (Donal Davoren) ostensibly to borrow some milk, and, as rumour and gossip have been busy, she takes it for granted that the spinner of rhymes is a gunman. In that conviction the curtain falls on the first act; romanticism has made the only rational character a rebel, and the youthful glamour of a girl has put him in a false position, together with other contrivances from his near neighbour. There is, in the bedroom, a constant procession of people, including a visit from the landlord for his rent. This communal feeling, however gratifying for callers, does not give the poet any spare time; we can only conclude that it is a relic of the old Irish custom, as according to O'Halloran, in every house was one or two harps free to all travellers, who were the more caressed, the more they excelled in music. If we substitute the tongue for the harp, the custom is not yet dead. Miss Sara Allgood, with her reiteration of "Am I right or am I wrong Mr. Gallogher?" was rather in the nature of a ly'e of comedy, and there is no doubt that all the characters revelled in rhetoric, verbosity, and the

jingle jangle of saying nothing with an air of importance.

The second act is noisy and tumultuous, and the bathos and pathos are well and truly mixed. To see the pedlar squirming in bed, torn between supplications to St. Anthony and altercations with the poet is a sight not to be missed. The bag under the bed is opened and found to contain bombs; the poet is again compromised, but Minnie Powell takes it away, and following a raid on the premises she is arrested and shot, leaving the pedlar and the poet bemoaning their cowardice, and on this melancholy note the play ends.

In the "Plough and the Stars," the dramatist makes his characters rise above the sordid symbolism of flags and isms; in this play the heroine is the only one who transcends self-interest. If there are women in Ireland who are capable of this, and we do not doubt it, there is hope, for such devotion to an ideal, if directed in a true social sense, is the very quality that stamps a value on life. But the value on life must not be according to the priest who is the parasite feeding on power and authority gained through the exercise of fear. The dramatist, in a few touches in the play, does not appear to take sides in orange or green religion; he is equally unsparing of ridicule to both. One of his characters is made to sing "Onward Christian Soldiers" in bed by the auxiliaries while they drink his whisky. In recounting the incident, the victim's wife asks: "What worse torture than that can you imagine?"

After seeing this play, there emerges one or two problems for the League of Nations, which, according to reports, is not so busy that it cannot attend to domestic matters. The first vital question for settlement is "Should Irishmen sleep in bed in their pants?" and the second is (we will mention no more), "Is it hygienic for a man to wash after he has put on his hat, tie and collar?" The "Shadow of a Gunman" is at present over the whole world, and the maxim of "Live and let live" is in a manner of speaking, the admission that people cannot be altered with the celerity with which St. Paul found the light. In his play, Mr. O'Casey has defined the problem, and stated the thesis; the synthesis, we think will be a human kingdom on earth, in the making of which we cannot spare one romantic Irishman. It would be interesting to have a play produced jointly by Sean O'Casey and W. B. Yeats. For "nine rows of beans" in a garden sounds nearer to the hearts desire than blarney about mansions in the sky.

WILLIAM REPTON.

### Acid Drops.

Sir William Joynson-Hicks is quite a good Christian, a mere glance at his head would be enough to show that nature had determined that much, and he quite lives up to the part. He is, unfortunately, also Home Secretary, and in between times he addresses numerous religious gatherings. The other day he had a turn at the World's Evangelical Alliance, and took occasion to throw a little cold water on those Christians who have got into the habit of believing that decency of life and sound social principles are the only things that matter. What the world wants, he said, are "evangelical principles," because you cannot "regenerate the world on mere social principles or on moral virtues." That is good sound doctrine. It is now only preached by the more ignorant class of believers, but Sir William knows what good Christianity is. Such a man is surely wasted in the House of Commons. Touring with Billy Sunday or Gipsy Smith would find him quite at home. Or he might make a quite worthy successor to the present Bishop of London. For downright stupidity these two would form a combination that might defy the world.

The latest news of the second coming of "Our Lord" is that he is due, at some date unnamed, at Sydney, Australia. A certain "Bishop" Leadbeater is the head of a sect there, that has built a large amphitheatre overlooking Sydney Harbour, and is offering seats at a rather large figure. Jesus will be seen walking across the

waters of the harbour, and will enter the city in that way. From this we may assume that the geographical knowledge of Jesus has been enlarged considerably since he left this earth. While here he had, apparently, no knowledge of the antipodes, nor had his followers. Still, one lives and learns, even in the next world. But Bishop Leadbeater has a serious rival in Mrs. Besant, who has a young man she is carrying round, and who is to be the earthly body in which Jesus will take up residence when he comes back. She says nothing about Australia, although we have no doubt that this might be arranged in time.

Speaking on "Strange Crowds," at Islington Congregational Chapel, Mr. Walter Stoneman, F.R.G.S., said that once he had in his congregation, at Dartmoor, 28 murderers and 800 convicts, and the wonderful story of the Cross had moved them as nothing else would. We quite believe it. The vicious story of the criminal who secured a seat in Heaven by a last-minute confession of faith has a strong appeal to men who have never taken any trouble to live decently.

There is not a town, says General Kentish, that has enough public playing-fields. True. The money that in the past might have been used for providing them built praying-sheds instead. To-day, different notions obtain. The thought of the nation having swung round towards the more wholesome ideal of ancient Greece, the need for playing fields for all is being realized.

The Bishop of Hereford: "The man who knows Shakespeare will handle men better than a man who knows only mathematics." A weekly paper comments: "And the man who knows and practises Christianity will do better than either." We presume the man who practises Christianity imitates the intolerant "gentle Jesus," who always had ready some particularly choice epithets for men who dared differ from him. Happily, that way of practising Christianity, that way of handling men, is going out of fashion.

The parson merits a call only when someone needs a loan, an old suit, false teeth, a "hypothetical" character, or use of china, says the vicar of St. Philipp's, Camberwell. He thinks this rather pathetic. We don't see why he should complain, seeing that the Church has always advertised herself as the premier charity monger.

No man should support war unless he himself is prepared to undergo all the hell of a bayonet charge, says the Rev. P. Carden of Norwich. The reverend gentleman might more usefully have said this while the last war was raging and patriotic parsons were blessing war banners and urging the men to fight.

At Carmarthen Assizes only six persons were brought up for trial, and none at all in Pembroke or Cardiganshire, and none at Breconshire Assizes. Perhaps the pastors of West Wales will explain how this state of affairs comes about, seeing that the masses have become notoriously indifferent to religion, and woeful results have been predicted.

"While millions of poor children lack playing accommodation, God's not in His heaven," writes Mr. John Galsworthy. Seeing that poor children have lacked playing-fields for a good many hundreds of Christian years, God must have been posted as missing from the Celestial headquarters for quite a long time. Still, when the children do get their playing-fields, we feel sure God won't come back even then, unless the bigots are able to prohibit Sunday play.

Gipsy Smith asks, why did God preserve him as a child? He was surrounded by people who drank. Why did he refuse drink? Why is it he never smoked? "Because God had his eye on me," says the Gipsy. There is nothing like evangelical Christianity for pro-

ducing colossal egotism. The Gipsy appears to fancy that he was so important to the welfare of the world that God couldn't keep his eye off him. The ex-Kaiser cherished a similar notion. From the Gipsy's statements we infer that God was so busy preserving the Gipsy that his sinning companions went short of the divine preservation.

Flies are born in filth, says a Religious Tract Society monthly. They feed on it and carry it. The dirt they carry is likely to be laden with germs, which multiply even faster than the flies themselves. And the fly never discriminates between the dustbin and the baby's milk. Fight the fly! We hope the gentlemen favouring the Design Argument appreciate these facts. They should be useful for convincing the unbeliever. Here is a beautiful winged creature, whose purpose in life is to eat filth and to convey germs to babies, thus enabling the germs to fulfil their proper function in life. That there is a Divine Intelligence and a purpose at the back of all this should be obvious to the dullest intellect. The whole scheme is so clearly flawless; these things could not possibly happen by chance. That being the case, the advice to "Swat that fly" savours of impiety; it means interfering with God's plan. And no deeply spiritual person would dream of doing that.

Few opinions are held with such tenacity as religious opinions, says the *Methodist Recorder*, because they are received and held as the truth, and in any way to yield seems to expose oneself to the intolerable charge of treachery or cowardice or ignorance. Our fathers, we learn, were wont to treat all opposed opinions as equally hostile and to "hurl defiance" at a contrary statement as they would "at the gates of hell." But, says our contemporary, in these last years the attitude of Christian people towards creed has undergone modification. It is not that Christian truth is less venerated than formerly. But it is seen to be so much vaster, and has so many facets that it is recognized that expressions seemingly diverse may actually be complimentary rather than contrary. Consequently, variety of view may not mean positive diversity of opinion, but may rather be contributory to the fuller representation of the whole.

Now our contemporary's explanation of the change in the religious attitude is a plausible piece of word-spinning, and Wesleyans who love that sort of thing will swallow it at a gulp. Its one defect is that it is not the true one. Several things have contributed to the change towards improved tolerance among Christians. One is, that so much of what was once regarded as unchallengeable Christian truth is now regarded as doubtful. Christian truth is now seen to be not vaster, but smaller. The findings of science have reduced its bulk to a ghost of its former self. What was certainty to earlier believers appears not only doubtful but incredible or absurd. Christian views are therefore in a state of flux. It is hard for believers to get fanatical about what they have no certainty of. When one is not sure whether the other man has the truth or not, bigotry and intolerance weaken. Again, Freethought criticism and ridicule have affected public opinion generally. People outside the Churches laugh at a display of bigotry, and the better types of Christians are getting ashamed of it. This is a welcome change, but it is not due to anything learned from the Christian Bible; it comes from outside. The proof of this is that the most intolerant and bigoted believers to-day are men and women of the Fundamental type, who are guided by the Bible and by nothing else.

A reader of a contemporary writes: "May *John Bull* long continue to carry on the lines of Tom Paine's 'The world is my country, mankind is my people, and to do good is my religion.'" Our contemporary heads this, "Real Religion." The whirligig of Time brings its many revenges. A saying of a despised, slandered, and hunted Freethinker, Thomas Paine, is hailed as real religion! In the light of what real religion has revealed itself to be in practice, we think the phrase a very doubtful compliment.

Dr. R. A. Torrey, the American evangelist, has decided not to accept the invitation to visit England and conduct revival services during the coming autumn. We are glad to hear this. The Doctor always converts so many unbelievers that we dread to think about what might happen to the *Freethinker* circulation if he started in eruption here. It is probable also, that Dr. Torrey has not forgotten the exposure of his lying campaign against Colonel Ingersoll. This was one of the many things that caused G. W. Foote to be remembered by the religious world—not exactly with gratitude. We should like to know who it was that invited Torrey here. We understood that many Christians were so ashamed of the exposure that they decided he should not come again.

The Chairman of a local Preachers' Association said recently that there is as much idealism among youth as ever there was, but it is being turned into new channels, into non-religious movements. And that seems to be the reason why the chapels have a difficulty to getting the younger men as local preachers. The Rev. C. W. Andrews comments on this to the following effect. Many younger Methodists who desire to do good wish to make some contribution towards producing a better social order. Preaching does not appeal to them as achieving their ideal, it is not, they think, sufficiently practical. The reverend gentleman cites an instance of a man urged to take up some specified religious work. No, said he, "I am too busy getting things done." That meant politics or some kind of public work. The speaker believed he was more likely to uplift man by debating some subject of current interest than by preaching the Gospel. From all this one can realize what has been happening in the past. The Churches have been misinterpreting man's purely social feelings, and misdirecting their energies into socially unprofitable channels. This exploiting business is now becoming increasingly difficult. But over such state of affairs we are not inclined to weep, since the Churches' loss is the State's gain.

America has an association called "The Holy Name Society," which wages war against obscenity, perjury, and blasphemy. According to the *Eagle* of New York, the Society is doing a great work. Since it got active, swearing is seldom heard in New York streets. Even the truck-drivers have largely reformed, and the taxi-drivers "commonly show indignation in other ways, if they have to show it at all." We fancy the wonderful results attributed to this pious Society have their inspiration in the imagination of the Society's Press agent. They remind one of those heard of the achievements of the Salvation Army's comic suicide bureau. They need to be swallowed with a few grains of salt. We should dearly love to hear the reformed American truck-drivers and taxi-men ejaculating a series of "blow it's!" and "dears me's!" instead of the usual multi-coloured expletives.

Says "Woodbine Willie":—

It is said that every man has a right to his own opinion, and that is true provided that you remember that the right carries with it a responsibility. A man's right to hold an opinion depends upon the trouble he takes to form it. How much trouble do you propose to take to form yours? Have you any opinions, or are you too lazy and careless to have anything but a few badly founded prejudices?

"Willie," we think, is rather unwise in thus exhorting people to examine the grounds for their opinions. Most Christians hold religious opinions not because they have taken the trouble of an honest investigation, but because they sucked in what the parson told them when they were young. The Church flourishes on this type of Christian. And if "Willie" unsettles the Church's clients in this wise, and sets them investigating what is to be said against the Christian religion, we fear he will be on the Bishops' black list when preferment is mentioned.



## National Secular Society.

THE Funds of the National Secular Society are now legally controlled by Trust Deed, and those who wish to benefit the Society by gift or bequest may do so with complete confidence that any money so received will be properly administered and expended.

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### To Correspondents.

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

R. H. STANDFAST.—We have considerable sympathy with your suggestion as to the formation of a lending library whereby Freethinkers might be able to obtain on loan the more expensive books they would like to read. But we cannot see our way to launching such a scheme for the moment, although it is a suggestion to be borne in mind. We know what it means to look at a number of titles, and then have to rest content with—looking.

T. YOUNG.—We do not say, nor have we ever said, that we regret not having to live again. On the contrary, we do not regard the promise of immortality as anything to feel pleased about. We hope it is not true so far as we are concerned, still more do we hope it is not true so far as concerns many others we know.

J. T. BRIGHTON.—Glad to know you are getting on so well at Chester-le-Street. Persistent propaganda is the only thing that tells.

W. MOORE.—Will look up the address and let you know at an early date.

G. RICHARDSON.—If you will write our shop manager he will send you a parcel of specimen copies of the *Freethinker* for distribution. Much good is done in this way, and we count a new subscriber as the most important contribution one can make to this journal and to the Cause.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums.

We have had several complaints of late of subscribers who have failed to receive copies of their paper. The fault is entirely that of the post. The list is carefully checked each week, and the possibility of a mistake is reduced to a minimum. But postmen are not always so careful as they might be about the delivery of printed matter, and people, when they find delivered to them a package belonging to some other address, do not always trouble to return it to the postman. With letters they are more particular, but printed matter is often treated with indifference. But we should be obliged if subscribers who fail to get their copies will report at once. We can then send on another copy and report the matter to the authorities. Subscribers will oblige greatly if they will do as we suggest.

Those who wish to have a collection of useful, and, so far as we can judge, inexpensive recipes for whole meal cooking, will find them in *Whole Meal, With Practical Recipes*, by Mrs. Ettie Hornibrook (Heinemann, 1s. 6d.). The book is intended as a sequel to the author's *Native Diet*, and is an enthusiastic advocacy of whole meal food.

Says Mr. Rhys Davies, M.P.: "If Christianity cannot live without the aid of the statute book Christianity will not live at all." Quite a good sentiment, although Mr. Rhys Davies forgets that Christianity never has lived without the aid of the statute book. It was Constantine that gave it its standing, and ever since it has relied upon the statute book to maintain it.

And does Mr. Rhys Davies really mean what he says? Would he be in favour of abolishing religion in the schools, or of giving people liberty to spend Sunday as they please, or to make every church and chapel pay its proper proportion of rates and taxes? And if not, what is the use of talking about not believing that Christianity should be supported by the statute book? We have an impression that all Mr. Rhys Davies has in mind is punishing people for the way they speak about religion. That is only one way in which the State protects religion. But it supports it in many other ways.

Mr. F. Mann, the Secretary of the Glasgow Branch, will be lecturing in Edinburgh, on Sunday, July 17, and will speak on The Mound, a famous place for out-door orators. He would be glad to hear from Edinburgh Freethinkers who are willing to assist in the formation of a Branch in the City. There are hundreds of Freethinkers in Edinburgh, and there should be no great difficulty in forming a Branch there. Mr. Mann's address is 34 Trefoil Avenue, Glasgow.

To all prophecies as to the effects of Atheism on the morality of the future, there is the apt reply that they are prophecies and nothing else. And in this respect it is dangerous for the Christian theist to appeal to history. For while the consequences of Atheism can be no more than a forecast which may or may not be justified, the record of Christianity is before the world. And we know that the period during which the influence of Christian theism was strongest, was the period when the intellectual life of civilized man was at its lowest, morality at its weakest, and the general outlook most hopeless. Religious control gave us heresy hunts, and Jew hunts, burnings for witchcraft, and magic in the place of medicine. It gave us the Inquisition and the *auto da fe*, the fires of Smithfield and the night of St. Bartholomew. It gave us the war of sects, and it helped powerfully to establish the sect of war. It gave us life without happiness and death cloaked with terror. The Christian record is before us, and it is such that every Church blames the others for its existence.—*Chapman Cohen in "Theism or Atheism?"*

## Unreality.

(Continued from page 411.)

WHAT the religious person really wants, is, not a God to dog his actions and deal out rewards or punishments accordingly; but a sort of invisible nurse, or guardian to watch over him and guard him from falling down the cellar; protect him from fire, flood, murder and sudden death; to give him warning, avert coming disaster, and generally to shield him from "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." If he could depend upon such a guardian, then all interest in a creator and sustainer of the universe would fade away; no one would waste a moment's thought upon him, or it. Take that quintessence of the religious spirit, the Psalms; we read: "In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me." (Ps. xlv.) "thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy." (Ps. lx.). "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." (Ps. xlv.). In the twenty-third Psalm, we read: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," and "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me." The hundred-and-third Psalm, generally regarded as the greatest of them all, declares: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits," and "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Now, as Canon Streeter remarks: "It is often said that belief in God is to be explained as a 'projection' upon the Universe of the child's craving for a parent's protection, or of its passionate yearning for affection, surviving in the adult in a 'repressed' form."<sup>1</sup> That is why people pray to, and represent, God as a Father, and not, as the theologians pretend, because God created us.

Of course Canon Streeter will have none of this; he even goes so far as to say that William James, and others, holding similar views: "would have been much better for a course of treatment on psychotherapeutic lines." Under the superintendence of Canon Streeter I presume. Upon this point we should like to have had James' opinion as to the kind of treatment suitable for people holding Canon Streeter's views.

In confirmation of the views held by William James, we may cite the testimony of Professor Delaporte, whose work on Babylonia has just been translated into English. The Jews, as we know, received nearly all their religious ideas from the Babylonians. The historian tells us that in Babylonia: "Every human being was in dependence on a god, his guardian angel, and he called himself the 'son' of that god."<sup>2</sup> In those times, and at the time when the Psalms were composed, it was not difficult to believe in a personal guardian God. For had not God created the earth as a dwelling-place for man; the sun the moon and the stars being mere accessories for the purpose of giving illumination? The earth itself, it was taken for granted, was flat, covered by the sky, not open space, as we know it to be, but a solid vault or firmament. God himself dwelt just above this firmament; not very far away, in fact the Jews would have built a tower up to this firmament, as insurance against another Deluge, had not God prevented them.

Then again, God, having created everything in six days and rested himself on the seventh, had nothing to do now but look down upon the creatures he had

created, listen to their prayers and praise, and snuff up the odour of burnt sacrifices. Moreover, it was only in the Hebrews, "the chosen race," that God took any interest, to all other races he was a declared enemy. Sometimes God would come down to earth, to dine with Abraham, try a fall with Jacob—in which he nearly got worsted—or for a chat with Moses. In those times it was easy to believe that God took a personal interest in men and their doings, but it is not so to-day. Science has shattered the firmament to smithereens, and reveals unfathomable space sown with innumerable stars.

Only about 6,000 stars are visible to the naked eye. With the invention of the telescope this number was greatly increased, and the number advanced with every improvement in the size and power of the instruments employed until, to-day, it is estimated that the number of stars revealed by the 100-inch reflector at Mount Wilson Observatory amount to 500,000,000; and when the end of the capacity of the telescope was reached, then photography was pressed into service, for it was found that the photographic plate was more sensitive than the human eye, and recorded impressions far beyond its range. The nearest star to us is four "light years" away—a "light year" being the distance traversed by light, moving at the speed of 186,000 miles a second, in the course of a year—our nearest star, *α Centauri*, is 24,000,000,000,000 miles away, and it has been found that this is the average distance of one star from another. Our Sun is only a star, and a small and unimportant one at that. *Capella* has a volume 2,000 times greater. *Betelgeuse* is ten million times larger, and the giant variable star *S. Dora* attains to a brightness 600,000 times greater than our sun. If our sun were removed to the distance of the nearest fixed star, it would appear as a star of the 2nd magnitude, from the great majority of them it would not be seen at all.

While metaphysicians and theologians have been arguing, disputing, and spinning their webs, out of their own brains, the scientists have been silently working, recording, probing, gauging, measuring and calculating. Ceaselessly and inexorably they pursue their way, caring nothing whether their results fit in with the petty schemes of theology. The researches of Kaptcyn, Shapley, Hubble, Curtis, Eddington, Slipher, and many others, during the last few years, has resulted in an enormous extension of the visible universe, of which we propose to give a very condensed account. More than a hundred years ago Sir William Herschel, the great astronomer, while studying and cataloging the nebula, with the intuition of genius, spoke of them as "Island Universes." These nebula are now known to be systems of stars like our own galaxy, known as the "Milky way." To an observer situated on one of these nebula, our "Milky Way" would have the appearance of a nebula. Such is the size of this galaxy, that it would take 500,000 light-years to cross it, and, according to Prof. Eddington, contains about three thousand million stars!<sup>3</sup>

Curtis, from a count of photographs taken with the Crossley reflector, estimates that there are fully 700,000 of these nebula, or star systems, within range of our modern telescopes. Hubble finds that these nebula are about 1,800,000 light-years apart, and calculates that the faintest which can be

<sup>3</sup> Since writing the above we learn that Dr. C. G. Abbot, from a count of selected areas, based on photographs showing much fainter stars, estimates the number of stars in our system, or galaxy, the "Milky Way" alone, at thirty thousand million; ten times Eddington's estimate. (See *Nature*, June 18, 1927, p. 903.)

<sup>1</sup> Canon B. H. Streeter. *Reality* (p. 274).

<sup>2</sup> L. Delaporte. *Mesopotamia: The Babylonian and Assyrian Civilization* (p. 159).

observed photographically in the 100-inch telescope is at a distance of 140,000,000 light-years! And considers that within this distance two million nebula must lie. We are confronted not with a Universe but a Multiverse, many Universes.

What part does man play in this stupendous Cosmos? "Man," says Sir George Darwin, in his "Address" to the British Association, in 1905: "is but a microscopic being relatively to astronomical space, and he lives on a puny planet circling round a star of inferior rank." Tennyson voiced the dismay of the Victorians at the revelations of science taking place in his time. He often used to visit the astronomer Lockyer, to look through the six-inch telescope. We are told that "the heavens declare the glory of the Lord." What Tennyson saw there was stars:—

Innumerable, pitiless, passionless eyes,  
Cold fires, yet with power to burn and brand  
His nothingness into man.

There is nothing to be compared to a course of astronomy to take the vanity and conceit out of a man. That is why many people dislike science, it does not flatter them, it seeks only the bed-rock of truth, regardless of human hopes and fears. It is for people who dislike and fear science, and wish to retain the old religious views, that books like Canon Streeter's *Reality* are written.

Canon Streeter has a brand new and original idea as to the existence of God. It was in Philosophical Idealism that our Canon found refuge from the Agnosticism which, in a burst of confidence, he tells us he professed at Oxford, and which, he says: "both intellectually and morally, I think, a healthy stage—through which most who think at all must pass." (p. 127). That is, of course, if they pass on to religion. If they pass on to Atheism, then it is, I suppose unhealthy. But, as he further remarks: "Philosophical Idealism has rarely made much appeal to men of Science; nor have its exponents ever succeeded in stating it in a way that is readily comprehensible to the plain man." The conclusion of the Idealist as opposed to the Materialist, is that the Universe is the expression of Mind, and "philosophers in this tradition," says Canon Streeter, "very frequently tend to conceive of the power behind things as 'The Absolute.'"

And what is "The Absolute"? Mountains of paper, and rivers of ink have been expended upon the subject. "The Absolute" was invented by the Metaphysicians, and has provided a happy stamping ground for them ever since. It is described as the unlimited, the unrelated, the unconditioned, the one existence. The metaphysicians were in the happy position that no one could deny "The Absolute," you could not take it in the flank or rear, for it was everywhere. Infidels and Atheists could not deny it, for they were part of it. Even the stubborn Berkleyans, who denied the existence of Matter, and declared that God was the ultimate reality, were informed that their God and "The Absolute," were really the same thing.

But in spite of the enormous expenditure of paper and ink "The Absolute" has never achieved any popular success as an object of religious veneration. It would be no use going to the Hyde Park forum and begin discoursing about "The Absolute." You would probably be told that you were an absolute well, something very uncomplimentary. For instance, how could you pray to "The Absolute"? You couldn't say: "'Our Absolute' who art in heaven (and on earth, and in hell) give us this day our daily bread." Not that the metaphysicians wished to popularize it. Not at all; they did not

want the common people butting in, asking all sorts of awkward questions, and "wanting to know, you know," and all that sort of thing. No, they had a subject they could discuss until the end of time, and they wished to keep it select, and to themselves.

However, Canon Streeter has, after much profound thought, solved the problem and bound "The Absolute" to the wheels of the Christian chariot in a very ingenious manner. For there was one aspect of "The Absolute" that could not be claimed for a God who existed apart from, and presided over, the universe. No-one could deny "The Absolute," whereas a great many people could, and did, deny the existence of God. That evasive God who, like some giant will-o'-the-wisp, always eluded your demonstration and could never be driven into a corner.

But "The Absolute" by itself, as we have seen, was of little use for religious purposes. There it squatted immovable, for as it occupied all space, there was nowhere to move to; heavy, inert, torpid, it yawned in your face helpless. Now, says Canon Streeter, let us take "The Absolute" and combine it with Bergson's *élan vital*, and behold, as if by magic, we see arise the corrugated but familiar features of the old Bible God Jehova! Lest my readers should think this is an elaborate jest of mine, I will give the Canon's own words, as follows:—

Idealist philosophy has at times seemed to point us to a conception of the Reality behind Appearances as an Absolute of which nothing but negatives can be predicted—changeless, colourless, motionless, feelingless, and therefore, for all that is argued to the contrary, really dead. Creative Evolution, on the other hand, pictures a Universe really alive, but leaves us wondering how far the *élan vital* is, or is not, more than an aimless will to live. Combine the two conceptions, and we are on the verge of that splendid concrete vision of the ancient Hebrew prophets—a Living God.—(B. H. Streeter. *Reality*. pp. 132-133).

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

### On The Irish "Slave" State.

Armed men seized the English newspapers which arrived at Dundalk yesterday morning, and burned them at the station. The Railway Staff were held up by men armed with revolvers, and the papers were placed on the platform, sprinkled with petrol and burned. The blaze was so great that the train had to be shifted along the platform out of reach of the flames.—(*Northern Whig*, May 5, 1927.)

THE above extract casts a lurid light on the state of anarchy and slavery to which a country can be reduced by allowing religion to over-ride the state. In this case the religion is Christian, and the particular brand of it—Roman Catholicism, and its field of operations is Ireland—that particular part of it known ironically as the "Free" State—but what is really a "slave" state with an army and police force costing millions, a President, Ministers and Parliament, and all the outward show of a governing power—but the real Government, the one you never hear about, the most dangerous and insidious foe to freedom, is the priest. He recognizes no authority but that of the Vatican; on its nod he will, without scruple, order his army to slit your throat or lay you out with a sandbag—it is but a bagatelle burning English newspapers. For it was not done by the Free State Army, but by men armed in civil clothes, and they are not punished—Why? Because neither the Government nor anyone else will dare to oppose the priest. He is still in the "Free" state practically omnipotent. Beyond the bare mention of the occurrence, the Press, not only of the Free State, but also of the Northern Government as well as the British, have been wonderfully "silent" in regard to this public

outrage. It shows to what a pitch of cowardice it has reduced, not only Ireland, but the rest of the United Kingdom as well. Verily, the terror—the enemy, as Gambetta called it—has entered their bones. Even Mexico is ahead of us, it has turned, whilst we sit supine paralysed by the closed mind which centuries of clericalism has engendered. It is astonishing that any considerable body of people should struggle by agitation and rebellion for centuries, culminating in a state of war for four years, to get a Government of their own, only to find that their last state is infinitely worse than their first—their Government as well as themselves are in the hollow of the hand of the priest; their sacrifices are in vain; their lives and their treasure have only ended by throwing them out of the frying pan into the fire.

Will they see it? or will the grinding process have to be gingered up still more before they realize that their great enemy is still with them and has not even been scratched. In all her (England) dealings with Ireland—the Irish have played the religious card, the one trump that experience has shown, can disarm the English and make them as putty in their hands. In their own country it is a potent instrument of intolerance and insidious persecution, owing to the great privileges granted to denominations of all kinds, and the boycott of anyone who has courage enough to indulge in criticism; but, that they should be so wilfully blind, when the denomination that is in Ireland—Roman Catholicism—has always shown them that it is their greatest and most implacable enemy, makes one think that some potent madness has been inoculated into them which deprives them of the power of seeing, or helping themselves. England, before any religion, grovels sufficiently, but before Catholicism of the Irish brand, she is in the position of the duck before the serpent.

Now, if the English Sunday newspapers were something that the people of the Free State took little interest in, or did not want, their apathy under the present outrage would be excusable or at least understood, but they are very popular, and are read by a large number, I should say a large majority. As they are people who, in all ordinary circumstances, when they think they are aggrieved, are only too ready to show fight, how is it they take this lying down? Ireland, particularly the Free State, reflects the greatest credit on her master—the Church of Rome. It is a triumph of discipline and blindness, of ignorance and credulity, and it shows the advantage of getting them early, and creating and perpetuating the atmosphere necessary to keep out all contaminating or secular influences. When an organization can rule a State, whilst leaving the authorities of that State under the illusion that they are the rulers, and, at the same time, outrage the most elementary principles of justice, it has achieved a high position in the art of strangling the goose without making it cry.

The Christian religion with its inferior ethics, its bribe of immortality, its aggressive intolerance, its contradictions, egotism and meekness, peace and war, love and hate, its doctrine of infallibility and credibility has no equal in bending people to its will—whilst in keeping knowledge away from the mass, and getting the sufferers to help bind their own chains, it has performed the greatest of miracles. In addition, not only is the vast mass of the population kept in a state of ignorance almost unbelievable, but they themselves are employed and assist in fettering their own chains, and further, those who already have the knowledge are so intimidated and pressure is brought on them in so many ways that never appear on the surface, that they are also dumb, and become tame lions before the arena is reached.

Nothing is so disheartening as to see men who, from their position and knowledge, ought to be in the van in enlightening the people, and dispelling the vast amount of credulity and mental slavery in which we are enveloped—utterly impotent and rendered so by unseen influences—more dangerous that they are unseen.

But while the "Free" State is an outstanding example of the vertebrate turned invertebrate, we see its influence in terrorizing large populations through its

organization, and vindictiveness. Do large numbers of the people here (for instance) want Sunday to be a free or a slave day? Do they want bands or games in the parks? Surely, and why do they not get them? Through the terror of religion. Their blighting hand is on the Wireless, it dominates the Press and controls the films. No other agency has ever done so little good or so much harm, as Christianity in general. Christian feelings crop up when believers tell us how their feelings will be outraged by allowing anyone to do anything that they do not like. But the other fellow—what about him? Oh! he can't have feelings, that is a peculiarity appertaining to Christians only, and not to others outside the pale.

In the meantime, we can point to Ireland, where the Covenanter, the super-Protestant, is watching his rival, the super-Catholic, at the other end, as an object lesson in what Christianity has done for us. To the Catholic of the South, the Protestant of the North is a heretic to be converted or exterminated, whilst the Papist serpent has no place in a Covenanter's Eden. There is only one thing that will make them sing the Frothblowers' Anthem, "When they all go together to persecute the Freethinker—The happier they will be."

ROBERT BROWN.

## Correspondence.

### MATERIALISM AND THE PRESS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The *Freethinker* of June 26, 1927, has an article entitled "Unreality," contributed by Mr. W. Mann, altogether very admirable.

There is a statement, in my opinion, inaccurate. Page 411, half way down left hand. He states:—"There is not a paper in the kingdom, apart from the *Freethinker*, that would allow a Materialist to give an exposition of his views."

If Mr. W. Mann read the *Socialist Standard*, the Official Organ of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, he would see the case for Materialism upheld and defended against all comers.

C. ELLIOTT.

### METHODS OF CONTROVERSY.

SIR,—It was with much interest that I read Mr. J. C. Mullen's letter in last week's issue. Your own reply, Sir, in "Views and Opinions," covered the ground so completely as to make further comment unnecessary. But since Mr. Mullen invites the views of other readers, here are mine.

Like Mr. Mullen, I wish it were possible to deal more gently with the Religionists. But it has been my experience that such attempts are entirely useless in the vast majority of cases. The flood of Tradition and Custom will sweep you away; you will be passed by like a beggar on the Highway. I agree that it is very easy to poke fun at the beliefs of others; and that, consequently, it seems to be a cheap and almost vulgar thing to do. I have found, however, that if I express a gentlemanly doubt on the question of, say, the Ascension, I am merely regarded as we would regard a man who denied the existence of the Atlantic Ocean. The Religionists have never considered the possibility of alternative theories to those which they were taught in their childhood. I am driven, therefore, to use the weapon of ridicule. I place before them the absurd picture of a man sailing away into the vault of the Blue. I ask them what garments he had on at the time, and whether he renews them from time to time. And I have found that if I pursue this course often enough, they gradually become aware of the fact that there may, after all, be room for some doubt on the matter. Having gained this much ground, I can then talk to them seriously and debate the subject in the way in which it should have been debated from the first.

As you yourself pointed out, the Religionists have no right to demand preference for their opinions. A little while ago, a clergyman of my acquaintance wrote me

a courteous letter about some correspondence of mine which had appeared in the Press. He invited me to meet him and discuss the matter with him, so that he might have an opportunity "of removing my doubts." I thanked him for his interest, but pointed out that I had no doubts to remove; they were all removed most effectually years ago. I said that I would be most pleased to exchange views with him; but he must realize that there was as much hope of him converting me as there was of me converting him.

Defence of one's own opinions is not enough. In view of the handicap under which Custom and Prejudice place us, it is not sufficient merely to keep one's wicket intact; one must step out of one's crease and smite the bowling hard and often if one wishes to win the day. Or, to use another metaphor, it is of no use to attack an elephant with a rapier; a battle-axe, primitive and clumsy though it seems, is far more likely to make an impression on its hide.

I am well aware this letter is but an echo of your own most lucid handling of the subject; but I merely wish to do my bit towards the circulation of opinions generally; and as such, perhaps you will deem it worthy of publication if space permits.

B. S. WILCOX.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.

SIR,—In accordance with the desire of a number of Freethinkers, some time ago the West London Branch of the N.S.S. was duly formed; and it has, since, carried on its operations, in Hyde Park, most successfully.

Meetings are being held every Wednesday and Friday from 7.30 to 9.30; and on Sundays from 3 to 9.30, without a break!

We desire to carry the gospel of Freethought further afield, that is to say, to Ravenscourt Park, Hammer-smith, which from my previous experience, I know to be a veritable hot-bed of Roman Catholicism. Certain expenses are inevitable, and local help is needed. I would therefore, like to ask all Freethinkers and Rationalists living in the West-End of London to be good enough to consider it their duty to help the West London Branch, by giving what financial and moral assistance they are in a position to afford.

The *Freethinker* and other Pioneer Press publications may be obtained, at the close of all our meetings, at the office of the branch; but, according to the latest regulations, we are not permitted to make any announcement in the Park to that effect.

B. A. LE MAINE,

Hon. Organizer and Treasurer.

West London Branch, N.S.S.,  
62, Bryanston Street, Marble Arch, W.1.

MATAHARI.

SIR,—In the year 1906, I was staying at Bandoeng, on the Praenger Java, in a small Hotel, the "Phoenix," near the station, chiefly frequented by half castes. In the dining-room there happened to be a copy of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. Bandoeng is a strongly Mohammedan centre, and as you are aware, Mohammedans are very particular as to due reverence being shown to their monotheistic Deity. It must have been the genius loci that caused me to feel an indignation that it is hardly worth feeling at the crude and more or less at times, indecent doggerel with which English Christians pelt their Deity, whether under the serious belief that they are honouring him, or in the hope of worrying him into granting their requests by these scurvy proceedings, I do not pretend to say. Under these circumstances, I parodied and criticized a certain number of the more offensive of these performances, mainly in order to bring into relief their literary shortcomings. Only those hymns were chosen for parodying or criticism, where the vices in them were inexcusable. No hymns were condemned merely because the religious sentiment was at variance with my own. *Hymns Ancient and Modern* contains a certain number of well-written and perfectly inoffensive Hymns, however they may offend Free-

thought sentiment, such as "Hark the Herald Angels Sing," a parody of which is given in your Easter number, the beautiful "Lead kindly light," and a few others. All these were let alone. A few years ago the small collection of parodies, imitations and criticisms, with a most appropriate motto from Cardinal Newman, "Poisoning the wells," was printed under the title of "Matahari." A certain number of copies were dispatched to more or less distinguished individuals, one or two of whom formally acknowledged the receipt of the booklet, and thanked me for it.

The bulk of the edition was sent to England, where no objection whatever was raised to its introduction, and soon sold out.

A small biographical reminiscence may perhaps be permitted here. Many years ago, for a few years, I lived almost as the adopted son of a maternal aunt and her husband, the late Egerton Vernon Harcourt, one of a numerous progeny of a late Arch-bishop of York. E. V. Harcourt had taken a double first at Oxford. He was a good churchman, with a certain amount of literary culture, and, I think, was regarded as a pillar. Being well-off he entertained freely, and some of his guests belonged to the smaller literary fry. His bosom friend was a harmless old Scotchman, Sir David Dundas by name, who kindly invited me to his place near Stirling, where he showed me the spot in his garden, destined to receive his bones. The late Baronet, though without literary abilities, had good literary judgment, and as the two returned home from the boredom of the Sunday services, perhaps to relieve their pent-up indignation at the conventional nuisance they submitted to as a social necessity, pulled to pieces the religious doggerel they had been forced to listen to squalled out of tune quite unmercifully. "Nearer my God," and "Rock of Ages" were two hymns they condemned very severely, which is why I included them in "Matahari." The late Baronet used to wile away the nuisance of the sermon with a pencil and a hymn book. I tried, but did not succeed in getting hold of a copy of a hymn book, with his annotations or attempted corrections of the worst doggerel in it. From the Christian's point of view, "Matahari" renders a distinct service to their religion, and perhaps on that account if I had conceived it possible that a handful of Calvinist bumbailiffs and excisemen could be for a moment permitted, in a civilized country, to seize and put an embargo upon it, I might not have considered it worth while to print and publish it. From the point of public respectability, it can surely not be possible to condemn a person for drawing attention to inherent vices in hymns, which discredit the whole community. These energumens apparently waxed wroth or pretended to, because a quatrain of Anglo-Christian doggerel was honoured by being transferred to the ritual of the cannibal sacrifice in my "Prehistoric Drama of Sacrifice," where it was far more in place than in an English Church, whatever one may think of the latter.

An honest clergyman, the late Baring Gould, wrote a book called the *Book of the Wehr Wolf*. Among other things, he pointed out in it how easy it was to pervert sentiments of friendship and good fellowship, which, given fair play, tend to international peace and harmony. The English Church managed to get the book suppressed, and it is easy to see why. In fact with this example (and others) before my eyes, I am justified in accusing the English Church and its authorities, of deliberately employing this system of decalating in order to develop perverted and murderous forms of patriotism among its youthful adherents, and to transform them into veritable patriotic vampyres, ghouls and Bashibazouks, with its Church drills, its decalated indecencies, its boy scouts and the rest of its military religious paraphernalia. If the English tolerate these methods, the rest of humanity will be more than justified in insisting that they stay at home in their own island paradise, and practise these artificial and perverted forms of patriotism upon one another, and not allow them for the future to discharge them in the slaughter of men, women and children all over the planet. Yours etc.,

W. W. STRICKLAND.

## Society News.

## GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.

It was advertised that Mr. Fred Mann would address a meeting at Alexandra Park, on Sunday evening, June 26. The best pitch at the Park has long been occupied on Sunday evenings by the Independent Labour Party. The I.L.P. speaker did not appear. We had just set up our platform on their pitch when a minister approached. He said his pitch was occupied, and requested us to move along and give him room for his meeting. We pointed out that there was not room enough for both of us, and he went away. The chairman of our meeting, Mr. Mackay, had just started speaking when the minister re-appeared with a harmonium and a number of his congregation. Mr. Mann and the heavenly choir started together. The harmonium was asthmatical, and the singers' voices weak. Mr. Mann has a fairly powerful voice, and by exerting himself drowned the opposition. There was only six or seven feet between the platforms. The contest drew a large crowd, many people leaving other meetings.

At the outset of his address Mr. Mann challenged the minister to debate. This being ignored, and a strenuous attempt being made to drown his voice, Mr. Mann spent half an hour telling the minister and the crowd what he thought of parsons and Christianity. His criticism at last drew the minister, who said he would not debate, but would reply from his own platform to the attack that had been made. There was an exchange of remarks between the speakers, and soon after the minister closed his meeting—leaving the crowd behind him.

The minister proved a splendid asset. The audience was large, questions plentiful, and the sale of literature good. We are praying for a minister for our next meeting.—J. C. M.

## Report of Mr. Whitehead's Mission at Chester-le-Street.

EIGHT successful meetings were held in the above town, the Sunday evening demonstration being particularly good. Audiences, although apparently interested, were exceptionally stolid, and the most strenuous efforts failed on most occasions to elicit questions or discussion. One evening, however, after Mr. Whitehead had finished, a local speaker commenced a few remarks, and the second sentence was interrupted and a very lively interchange took place. This encouraged the secretary to hold forth which he did in an extremely effective fashion. As a sympathizer remarked, this meeting proved we could beat the opposition even with our second team!

The members of the Branch worked enthusiastically in every way, quite a score attending all the series, which rare experience was appreciated by the lecturer. In the Branch rooms each evening, whatever discussion was lacking outside was compensated for as the throat of Mr. Whitehead testified at the end of the week.

Visitors came from Newcastle. Chester-le-Street Branch is among the most promising in the movement, and this mission will inaugurate systematic outdoor propaganda. All the many comrades who helped to make the week both useful and pleasurable to Mr. Whitehead are heartily thanked.

Mr Whitehead will commence a week's mission at Blackburn, on Saturday, July 2nd.

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## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

## LONDON.

## OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Lecture by Mr. Leonard Ebury.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6.0, Lecture by Mr. Leonard Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common, 11.30; Brockwell Park, 6.0): Lecture by Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Wednesday, July 6, at 8 p.m.: Peckham Rye, Mr. S. Hanson; Clapham Old Town, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Hyde Park): 11.30, 3.0, and 6.30, Speakers, Messrs. Saphin, Hart, Baker and Botting; Thursday, 7-30, Speakers, Messrs. Saphin and Botting.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Outing to Kew Gardens. Train 9.30 Bow Road, Underground. Cheap fare 1s. return. Bring lunch, tea will be arranged. All Freethinkers and friends welcomed. Party under guidance of Mrs. Venton.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.0, Messrs. Campbell-Everden and Darby. 6.0, Messrs. Jackson Hyatt and Le Maine. Freethought lectures every Wednesday and Friday from 7.30 to 9.30. Various Lecturers.

## COUNTRY.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH (Assembly Rooms, Front Street): Open daily for reading, etc., from 10 a.m. All Freethinkers and enquirers welcome.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (West Regent Street): Thursday, July 7, at 7.30, Mr. Fred Mann.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Royal Buildings, 18 Colquhoun Street, off Bold Street): 7.30, Mr. J. Farrand, "Christian Mentality." (Islington Square): July 4, 8.0, A Lecture.

SHOTS BRANCH N.S.S. (See local advertisements for meeting place): 7, Mr. Fred Mann.

YOUR READING all of this paper, including these words, proves how much you admire it. Would not your enthusiasm for all it advocates be even more evident if you responded to this appeal? Most assuredly it would. Send a postcard right away for any of the following:—Gents' A to D Patterns, suits from 55s.; Gents' E Patterns, suits all at 67s. 6d.; Gents' F to H Patterns, suits from 75s.; Gents' I to M Patterns, suits from 98s.; or Ladies' Fashion and Pattern Sets, costumes from 60s.; frocks from 47s.—MACCONNELL & MARR, New Street, Bakewell, Derbyshire.

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Registered Office: 62 Farringdon St., London, E.C.4.  
Secretary: Miss E. M. VANCE.

This Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularization of the State, etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.  
The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up.

All who join the Society participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, one-third of whom retire (by ballot), each year, but are eligible for re-election.

Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords in *re Bowman and Others v. the Secular Society, Limited*, in 1917, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

**A Form of Bequest.**—The following is a sufficient form of bequest for insertion in the wills of testators:—

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It is advisable, but not necessary, that the Secretary should be formally notified of such bequests, as wills sometimes get lost or mislaid. A form of membership, with full particulars, will be sent on application to the Secretary, Miss E. M. VANCE, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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