

NEW YEAR'S NOTES.

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Views and Opinions.

New Year's Notes.

A SINCERE Christian will require more than the usual amount of optimism in his make-up, to find much with which to be pleased in the year that has just come to a close. The discussion over the heresy of Bishop Barnes, while it has borne testimony to the vast amount of crude superstition still current, has also shown the hesitancy of leading men in the Christian church to say precisely and definitely just what it is that Christians ought to believe. The disintegration of Christian doctrines, not merely continues, but it proceeds with unabated, if not accelerated speed. I say Christian doctrines, because Christian institutions, buttressed as they are with a considerable amount of self-interest, show a much tougher vitality. From that point of view the zeal of many of these reforming clerics appears to be expended, not so much in making clear what Christian doctrines really are, as to find some kind of a formula which will preserve the institution while putting quietly on one side the essential things for which that institution has always stood. It is a policy of accommodation, of "reinterpretation," to use a cant phrase, the essential dishonesty of which is overlooked because it is so frightfully common. What we have here is, in the main, not clear appreciation of principle, so much as a commercialized perception of the necessity for concessions to opinions that are now too common to be flatly denied, or even ignored. We are making educated Christians ashamed of the plain meaning of their teachings as a step towards their ultimate repudiation.

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The Prayer Book.

The other day, the House of Commons was engaged in the discussion of the revised Prayer Book. A gathering of Freethinkers, Jews, Christians, and convinced vote-catchers were busy settling what the Church of England should teach as a revealed re-

ligion. The House was "enthralled" by the eloquence of men who appear to be back in the seventeenth century, and who can therefore discuss with passion and gravity so ridiculous a question as the Christian doctrine of the sacrament. If one may judge from the newspaper reports, the solemnity of it was apparent to all; the absurdity of it impressed none. Yet, could there be anything more absurd than a body of men, elected to represent the nation, discussing the question of whether a piece of bread and a drop of wine could be turned into flesh and blood at the command of a priest, with none of them finding the whole question so inherently ridiculous as to break in upon the proceedings with a devastating laugh? The discussion was in the hands of men who were not yet sufficiently freed from savagism to be able to meet primitive beliefs in the spirit of the scientific investigator, or with the genial smile of the completely liberated intellect. No one had the moral courage to ask why in the name of all that was sensible was a Parliament of adults, in the year 1927, spending its time discussing the relevancy of so lunatic a belief as that of Transubstantiation. No, the House was "thrilled," it was "enthralled," it was a "Thank-God-England-is-still-Protestant" occasion. The real moral of it was "Thank God England is not yet completely civilized! There is still hope for Christianity."

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The Church's Dilemma.

Dean Inge remarked that everybody will sympathize with the Archbishop of Canterbury over his defeat. I include myself among the number who at least sympathize with the position in which he is placed. Some found fault with him for trying to placate those who believed in God-eating, and those who did not. What else could he do? To lay down in hard and fast terms precisely what a member of the Church of England is expected to believe, and precisely what a Church of England parson is expected to preach, would certainly disrupt the Church. To say what is heresy is only another way of laying down a new dogma. Nearly every dogma in the history of the Christian Church has arisen in the attempt to dispose of a heresy. And that can only be done with a fair measure of safety, so long as the Church which enunciates the dogma has a measure of power adequate to enforce its decision. But there is not a Christian Church in this country, whether it be established or disestablished, that has the power to do this. If a Church insists, the people who do not agree, simply leave; and what Church can afford to do anything that promises the loss of supporters? It is a case of:—

Folly to drive believers away,
When they're scarcer and scarcer every day,

The Church must perforce submit to sheltering men who, like Bishop Barnes, roundly denounce a doctrine as pure savagery, and those who accept it as the most solemn and the most sacred of God's "mysteries." It must put up with what it can get because it is afraid of what may happen if it looks the gift horse in the mouth.

* * *

Disestablishment.

I am not so sure that this row has brought disestablishment much nearer, save so far as it may help the gradual secularization of politics which has been going on for so long. Nor do I believe that the Non-conformist churches either desire or would help in any measure of genuine disestablishment. Their protest is against any single Church occupying a favoured position, their demand is for *all* churches to occupy a position of equal privilege, and to receive an equal measure of State support. That is, of course, not the Freethought position. Our claim is that all churches shall cease to receive State patronage and State support; that every form of opinion shall be at liberty to express itself at all times and under all conditions, enjoying just that measure of State protection that every opinion should have, and no more. In other words, the claim of the Nonconformist is for the equal establishment of all churches and chapels. The claim of the Freethinker is for the disestablishment of religion as something quite outside the legitimate sphere of the State. If the row in the House of Commons leads to outsiders seeing the absurdity of the modern State having anything at all to say about religion, then the quarrel over the prayer book may help towards genuine disestablishment. If it encourages the half-educated, who form the bulk of the House of Commons, to say what religious beliefs ought to be taught in the country, the result may easily be in the other direction.

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Rome or Reason.

Freethinkers, in any case, can contemplate the situation with equanimity. The most eloquent of them could not electrify an assembly with a "Thank God England is still Protestant" speech, because they could not take it seriously enough. To be eloquent about an absurdity one must be unable to perceive its real character. There is no inspiration in it to one who knows its nature. The two reflections that will occur to Freethinkers when reviewing the whole situation are, first, the mass of superstition which still exists, and, second, the irresistible growth of Freethought ideas. As I have before pointed out, the growth of the cruder forms of Christian superstition involves no more than the gradual withdrawal of the more sober intellects, thus leaving the less balanced ones in control. But this does draw attention to the tremendous amount of superstition current in all grades of society, from the highest to the lowest, and with the vote now, to all intents and purposes universal, there is present a danger of the very gravest description. Nor can there be any question that the Roman Church has made considerable progress in this country, as it was bound to do. And the Roman Church does not change in its aims or in its methods. I agree with those of the Thank-God-we-are-still-Protestant variety, that Rome is a power to be resisted. But it will not be successfully resisted for long by appeals to a religious belief less able than Rome to withstand assault, and which commands a diminishing allegiance from the more cultured sections of society. The only enemy that

Rome has to fear is the steady growth of enlightenment and the humanization of humanity.

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Safety First.

From that point of view the Freethinker may view the past with satisfaction, the future without fear. During the past year we had a very artfully engineered attempt, through the newspapers, to induce the feeling that all was right with religion in this country. A series of articles were written in a number of papers by carefully selected writers, not one of whom was expected, or allowed to tell the whole truth about religion. They were permitted to express doubts, because the fact that there are grave doubts, and in the minds of responsible men and women, could no longer safely be denied. But by the selection of a number of well known names, most of whom included in their articles compliments to Christianity which counterbalanced all they said by way of criticism, it was evidently hoped to induce a feeling that the downright attack on Christianity did not amount to much. I do not think very much profit arose from it; in at least one case the number of letters received from readers, criticizing religion, were such that it was found advisable to stop the discussions and revert to the more usual newspaper "stunts." It was impossible to hide all the truth about religion. A section of the pulpit also took alarm, and thought that it would be a good policy if some of the truth was admitted. And there was the somewhat ridiculous picture of Bishops and Deans gaining notoriety because they said plainly that if they held on to some of the folk-lore of the Bible as historical and scientific truth, they would invite, and meet disaster. It was a case of safety first. The lie had been told so long as it was safe to do so; when it was no longer safe, then it was resolved, with a great show of virtue, to admit just so much of the truth as could no longer be denied.

* * *

The Advance of Freethought.

Without conceit, much of this may be taken as a consequence of the activity of militant Freethought. We have gone on year after year in face of the most serious obstacles proclaiming what we knew to be the truth about religion, and that has had a cumulative effect. There is not a single admission made by the most advanced clergyman to-day that has not been a commonplace with Freethought speakers and in Freethought papers, at any time during the past sixty years. Every effort was made to prevent this truth becoming public. Newspapers and publishers established a boycott, parsons and others misrepresented and slandered, the law obstructed and imprisoned. In spite of all, Freethought gained ground; in spite of all, Christian belief steadily crumbled. In numbers, in resources, in position, Freethought has always looked to be in a hopeless position before a powerfully entrenched and numerous enemy. In truth it has had the finer position, and has wielded weapons of unexceptionable quality. Those early fighters in the army of Freethought might well have taken as their inspiration this from Ruskin:—

There is nothing in the world that you cannot keep quiet save the reason in a strong reasoner's brain. You can keep a child quiet in a room, a tiger quiet in its den, you can quiet the winds with shocks of artillery, you can quiet the sea with mounds and bars, but you cannot quiet the thought in a thinker's brain. And there is nothing in the world you cannot quench except the conviction in a thinker's heart. You can quench the violence of

fire, you can quench the bitterness of strife, you can quench ambition, you can quench faith—yes—and though much water cannot quench Love, neither can the floods drown it, yet under ashes at last you can quench love; but until the time comes for ashes to fall to their ashes, you cannot quench the truth in a strong Thinker's Soul.

Against material aggression, against the application of physical force, the Christian Church may rise triumphant. Divest it of its wealth, and it may well find compensation in the fanatical devotion of its most fervent followers. But against the steady undermining power of ideas that are rooted in the facts of life and appeal to human experience for verification, the spiritual despotism of the Christian Church is ultimately powerless. It is on the plane of ideas that the real battle of the Church must be won or lost, and on that plane the issue is no longer in doubt.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Parliament and a Prayer Book.

"At last the zealot is so infatuated by the serious mockeries he imitates and repeats, that he really takes his own voice for God's. Is it not wonderful that the words of eternal life should have hitherto produced only eternal litigation?"—*W. S. Landor.*

In the ordinary course of events this journal does not meddle with politics, but recent happenings in both Houses of Parliament are of such unusual interest to Freethinkers that an exception should be made. The rejection by the House of Commons of the proposed new *Book of Common Prayer* seems, on the surface, to be a mere matter of interest to laymen of the Church of England, but, in reality, it raises the serious question of the relation between the State itself and the Established Church. Nor is this all, for the present position assumes still greater importance when it is realized that the trend of affairs is to bring disestablishment once more into the region of practical politics.

Indeed, the disestablishment and disendowment of the English State Church may be much nearer than ordinary folks realize. The majority given for the new Prayer Book in the House of Lords was to all intents and purpose, a majority made by the votes of the Lords Temporal, who simply rallied to the support of their own colleagues, the Lords Spiritual, as the Bench of Bishops is termed. The Upper Chamber never has shown so overwhelming a desire to act, except to conserve and protect the ancient privileges of the Upper Chamber.

Consider the position more closely. This proposed new Prayer Book represented the results of thirty years' work of the Romanist party in the Established Church to obtain Parliamentary sanction for their mummeries. All the bishops, except four, were in favour of it. Over sixty per cent. of the Church members supported it. When the Bill is sent to the House of Lords, where the Church's own bishops have votes, a majority is secured. But when the same Bill reached the House of Commons, where priests are not allowed to vote, the result is a heavy vote against the Bill. And, remember, the State Church is a creature of the State, which made it and can also unmake it. Parliament has complete control over the Anglican Church so long as it is a State institution, and how precarious its existence as a natural body is, may be estimated by the fact that Members of the House of Commons include Nonconformists, Jews, Freethinkers, and a Parsee. The votes of Churchmen were not solidly in favour of the new Romanist Prayer Book, but the non-Church vote was the determining factor.

Frankly, Englishmen are not fond of priests. If they tolerate the clergy, they prefer that they should,

as far as possible, be indistinguishable from other citizens, and that they practise their profession as quietly as doctors or lawyers. To the average man, the Established Church is but a branch of the Civil Service, and he would resent any intrusion upon his privacy from a priest as much as he would from a Government clerk. This trait has always distinguished the Anglo-Saxon from the Latin races. In those days when Priestcraft ruled supreme Englishmen were always restless under the yoke, and the worst phase finished with the yellow glare of the fires of Smithfield, and the tortures of the Star Chamber.

Another conclusion may also be drawn from the strenuous debates on the State Church in the House of Lords and the House of Commons. That a State Church can exist at all under modern conditions is an anomaly. Churchmen are a minority of the population, and Nonconformists outnumber them heavily. Only a small percentage of the population attend places of worship, and of that number fewer still attend with any regularity. The bulk of the population is composed of cheerful materialists, who are simply uninterested in religion or priests, and who view them both with an amused tolerance. Priests keep their hold on the country for the simple reason that they are backed by heavy endowments, and because they are clever organizers. By keeping a tight grip on education, priests ensure a sufficient following to continue their sway. But if the State disestablished and disendowed the Anglican Church, the big battalions of Clericalism would shrink at once to the impotence of a corporal's guard, and Anglicanism would be of less political consequence than the Wesleyan Body, and other fancy religions which flourish in our midst.

The Established Church has never done anything for the welfare of the working class of this country. From first to last it has always acted with the aristocratic class, and frowned at the workers. Almost every Parliamentary Bill advocating social improvement has been opposed by the Bench of Bishops, and the records of Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates* proves beyond cavil and dispute how bitter that hostility has been. Indeed, the votes of the Bishops for the past hundred years in the House of Lords is sufficient to rouse the hostility of all right-thinking persons, and their shameful opposition to all progress shows how hopelessly this particular Church of Christ is out of touch with democratic aspirations.

The Lords Spiritual voted against admitting Nonconformists to Universities, and against removing the civil disabilities of Roman Catholics, Jews, and Freethinkers. They opposed the introduction of free education, and voted against admitting women as members of London Borough Councils. None voted for the abolition of flogging women in public, beating women in prison, and the use of the whip in the Army and Navy. Scores of measures for the bettering of the condition of the working classes have been opposed by these ecclesiastics, and their record carries its own condemnation.

The present Anglican Prayer Book itself is, in its way, an impeachment of the Christian Religion. In spite of its beautiful language, it explains nothing, and adds nothing to human knowledge, but leaves the world in the meshes of ancient ignorance and superstition. Christians are to-day surrounded by the waters of Freethought, and stand a bad chance of drowning. And the matter will not be unduly prolonged because a handful of hot-headed and impulsive believers essay the part of Mrs. Partington, the courageous and self-satisfied woman who sought to sweep back the Atlantic with a domestic mop.

MIMNERMUS.

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Spiritualism amongst Pagan and Savage Races and as Revealed in the Bible.

IN approaching any enquiry into the beliefs, morals, customs of man, primitive or civilized, writers in the tremendous majority either accept wholeheartedly or ignore pointedly the existence of God. Those of the former class, who vastly outnumber the other, assume that God made man. In good truth, he did no such thing. Directly contrary to this, man created God, or rather, at one time and another, a whole army of gods. Cush, Cronus, Hea, Thoth, Hermes, Taautus, Mercury, Anubis, Æsculapius, Oannes, Dagon, Nin, Hercules, Serapis, Vishnu, Brahma, Siva, Mars, Janus, Pan, Phanes, Vulcan, Hephaestus, Serapis, Orion, Adonis, Fo, Osiris, Bacchus, Nimrod, Anu, Dis, Pluto, are a few of these man-made gods of pagan days.¹ Each existed as a king or a hero, and after death was deified by a crowd of worshippers. Doubtless Cush swore at his wife; Hercules suffered in privacy from a revolting stomach-ache; and Adonis had amours with the pretty girls of the village. They lived, they died, and were worshipped as gods until the claims of other heroes put them in the background. It is precisely as if the English worshipped as a god Oliver Cromwell, or Lord Kitchener, or Robin Hood; as if the Americans set up as their pet god Abraham Lincoln, or Theodore Roosevelt, or P. T. Barnum, or Jesse James, or Buffalo Bill. Without popular printed lore, and relying for information on legends amplified, emended or bowdlerized before being handed down for public consumption, it is easy to see how a few astute priests or wizards could palm upon a collection of gaping yokels any precise god they wished. Granted similar conditions one could imagine a future generation looking upon Charlie Chaplin as one suitable for ninbustic decoration.

In point of fact it was only with the first dawn of what we to-day call education that the habit of creating and changing gods died its death. There is continual reversion of codes of morality, or rather the interpretation and practical application of those codes; there is continual tinkering, by priests and messiahs, with divine revelation; but no one has the face to attempt any substitution for Jahveh, or Buddha, or Allah.

Standing clearly, amidst a farrago of contending dogmas, is the need, as a vitalizing factor in every religion, of a god. The other essential, either expressed or understood, is the immortality of the soul. The existence of the soul, either in some nebulous visionary world, or on one of the other planets of the universe, or in the atmosphere of this one, is the big point in every religious belief; it dominates the whole thing. Without it there is nothing to stick in front of the rabble. Eternal life is the prize dangled in front of the worshipper; its denial would make of Christianity a worthless husk. It would be like offering to a child an empty nut. There isn't a savage living to-day who does not believe in immortality. There was scarce a pagan walked the earth who was not relatively sure that his spirit would exist after it left his body. For instance, the Chinese are convinced that any bodily infirmity shown in this life will be perpetuated in the next, and in consequence, have a developed liking for mayhem as a form of

punishment; the Mongolians of Siberia hold that spirits, in addition to existent qualities, graft on new ones; the aborigines of Madagascar have a vision of hereafter which very nearly coincides with the "Summerland" depicted by Raymond Lodge, and accepted with gusto by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The Hindu, with his ingrained belief in spirits, finds employment for an army of professional exorcists; the savages of Polynesia and Melanesia take elaborate precautions to prevent the return of spirits of the dead or killed; Zulus, Bantus and the innumerable savage races of Africa have their whole lives domineered by necromantic delusions and practices; the Australian blacks, in common with Mrs. Tweedale, go one better than the rest and affirm that during sleep the spirit has a giddy time of its own, careering off to other places and having chats with the dead, which is very nearly a duplication of the song hymned by Iamblichus and Plotinus nearly two thousand years ago.

Although immortality or survival is the fundamental essence of every religion, it is only amongst pagan idolators, savage animists, Indian and Oriental fanatics, that any clear cut and definite ideas as to the nature of this immortality are shown. In white civilizations the avowed spiritualists stand alone in this respect. The Catholics, it is true, have a dim notion of Purgatory, but it is manifestly sketchy and insecure; while Protestants of all kinds, if they flourish any ideas on the matter at all, are lazy to a degree and to some extent contradictory and anomalous. Take aside any respectable, decently educated church or chapel goer, and in strict privacy attempt to arrive at his precise opinion respecting what happens to the soul after death and he will hedge and fumble, and as often as not, after much mental sweltering advance the idiotically obscure pronouncement that he does not believe in the existence of the definite Heaven and Hell of his schoolboy days, but at the same time he does not think death is the end of everything: that there is some kind of after-life for the soul. Further attempts to elucidate anything more definite than this are very decidedly inadvisable: they invariably lead to loss of temper and mumbled references to religion being one's own private affair. A huge majority will incontinently refuse any discussion at all, or at most content themselves with an insouciant admission of vague possibilities of a future life.

The whole fact is that rarely does anyone, even in the privacy of his own thoughts, search his brain for even his own realization of the truth. Few can honestly say they believe in the doctrine of psychopansychism with the final vast assize on a universal Day of Judgment, and the simultaneous reunion of millions of souls and bodies at the huge General Resurrection.² This miraculous future recreation of the individual was dinned into the ears of congregations by preachers of the brand of Luther, Sankey and General Booth; it is to-day the main belief of the villagers thronging to their Mount Zions and Little Bethels; it is the stand-by of worshippers in

¹ Many of these pagan gods can be traced to one source, being merely different names for the same deity. Similarly the goddess Diana, in consequence of the vast number of names under which she was worshipped the then known world over was spoken of as *Dea Myrionymus*, or "the goddess with ten thousand names."

² It is sufficiently evident that this idea of a General Resurrection as a grand finale, was a later and possibly interpolated idea as a beneficent promise for a new religion, inaugurated after the death of Paul. The popular idea of Christ's time was survival of the spirit and not the body, as shown by the expressed belief of Herod, that Jesus was a reincarnated John the Baptist. In all Paul's writings there is, contrary to the implication of Mark's story of a bodily resurrected Christ, no indication of anything but the survival of the spiritual Jesus. Josephus, practically a contemporary of Jesus, provides evidence of the same belief "The bodies of all men are indeed mortal, and we are created out of corruptible matter; but the soul is ever immortal, and is a portion of the Divinity that inhabits our bodies." (*Wars of the Jews*, Book III. Chapter VIII. 5.)

Tennessee; it was evidently part and parcel of the theology of William Jennings Bryan. But one finds it stagnating in nothing more than desolate and disease-stricken patches in any of the big cities of Europe and America. For although in a spirit of unconscious hypocrisy Christian worshippers pray and conform to dogmas, rules, laws and formulæ, in which they no longer believe, every brand of theology the world over, whether or not it subscribes to the doctrine of resurrection, admits directly or indirectly the immortality of the soul, and coincidentally (except for a few mystics) the non-destruction of the individual. Apart from those who, deprived of the emotional atmosphere of the tabernacle, treat the departure of the body for the graveyard as the end of everything, the popular conception divorced from the old idea of the soul going into the coffin with the body to await the resurrection day, is the departure of the soul to Heaven or Hell according to its deserts immediately on severance from the body. Catholicity tempers this idea with a vision of Purgatory, wherein all disembodied souls await the Last Judgment, the Virgin Mary alone of all earthly inhabitants having entered the portals of Heaven. Here theology and spiritualism practically embrace on common ground, the possibility of communication between these disembodied souls and ourselves being the only disputed point. How the Bible bears out the spiritualistic idea we shall see later.

GEORGE R. SCOTT.

(To be continued.)

The Limitations of Sir Oliver.

THE child lives largely in an imaginary, make-believe world of his own, and fairy tales are very real and possible to him. The majority of people never seem capable of rising above this childish mentality; hence their devotion to religious superstition, and their belief in the fantastic imagining of the "spiritual." Curiously enough, it is not only those of mediocre intelligence of whom this may be said. There are some men, intellectually of the first rank, who are unable to escape from those early prepossessions: and, as age advances, they reassert themselves with redoubled force.

These reflections have been aroused by a little booklet entitled *Modern Scientific Ideas, Especially the Idea of Discontinuity*, by Sir Oliver Lodge, published by Ernest Benn, at the modest price of six pence.

Sir Oliver opens his essay by saying that the fundamental ideas underlying science are Uniformity, Continuity, Evolution. They have a wide application, but possible limitations. We would go further, and say that they have a universal application, and that their seeming limitations are only due to our own limitations in knowledge, observation and experience; that were the whole of the facts before us—could we see the entire picture—there would be no exceptions to the three rules laid down.

It is just the gaps in our knowledge, our ignorance in fact, that give the Theist and the Spiritist their opportunity to drag their imaginary god into the discussion. Not that "god" provides any explanation; rather does he add yet another problem which needs explanation. But Sir Oliver apparently does not think so.

He says that "nature in its completeness contains not only the atoms of matter, together with heat, light and electricity, and other forms of energy which constitute the physical realm. Nature includes also life and mind, and possibly many other things of which at present we may be ignorant. The question

arises whether uniformity applies to them also. . . . Many have tried to see if they could answer this question in the affirmative, and they have done their best to bring vital phenomena into the same general category as physical phenomena, and to treat them all as subject to the law of uniformity. This is the basis of the Materialistic Philosophy. The attempt is entirely justified, but the results have turned out not very encouraging.'

In respect of this last statement we are moved to ask, How? and, Why?

When something happens that we cannot readily explain, the priest says in effect: "Hotchli Potchli did it with a Rimbo Rambo." We expect nonsense from those brought up in a theological atmosphere, but not from a rational man of scientific training. Sir Oliver attempts to answer, but his effort is no more successful than that of the priest. He says that "the present tendency admittedly is to feel that there is something in the universe of a different order—something not calculable by any of the rules of physical science; that the power of prediction is limited not only by our capacity, but by *the nature of things*, and that the uniformity of physical nature can be interfered with by the *real agency* of self-determination and free will." The italics are mine. In a word, Sir Oliver means "god."

There we have it again! What is "the nature of things" save the things themselves, and where is it but in them? Since when was "self-determination" an agency apart, and in what manner is the will "free"? Sir Oliver endeavours to explain by saying that "neither a biologist nor any scientific man can hope to calculate the orbit of a common fly." We reply that he could if he had all the data that govern the fly's movements. He can so calculate to some extent. If there is a piece of meat in the room, it is certain that the fly will settle upon it sooner or later.

Sir Oliver's mind seems, in this respect, still to move in the theological rut; or, at best, he would lead us to suppose that the will is a faculty determined by nothing but itself. The fact of which he appears to be oblivious is that volition is a state of consciousness resulting from the more or less complex co-ordination of a number of states, physical and physiological, which, all united, express themselves by an action or an inhibition. The chief factor in the co-ordination is the character, an extremely complex product formed by heredity, pre-natal and post-natal physiological conditions, education, and experience. Only a part of the psychological activity enters into consciousness in the form of a deliberation. The acts and movements which follow the deliberation result directly from the tendencies and feelings, images and ideas, which have become co-ordinated in the form of a choice. Choice is therefore not the cause of anything, but is in itself an effect. Our judgments weigh the various attractions of several motives, and the stronger proves victorious. It is indeed true that every person believes that his choice has a determining effect upon the end at which he is aiming. But it does not follow that the choice in its turn is not completely determined.

We repeat—only a part of the psychological activity involved in a choice enters into consciousness; and the subconscious processes escape notice. The surface phenomena of one's consciousness may lead to the misconstruction of will-force as generator of energy, and of one's acts of will as uncaused, for the chain of causation is often obscure. To suppose that choice is without a cause would be to admit that the unaccountable and inconsistent actions of the insane form the normal type and standard of comparison.

Deeper reflection always reveals that every act of will is necessarily caused, and that there is no special will-force creating new energy in every act of volition. It is quite unnecessary to make the ego a transcendental entity in order to recognize in it a causality.

Sir Oliver says that "recently philosophers have begun to ask the questions about the nature of time." Why only recently? The old Hindu philosophers were asking questions about it more than 2,000 years ago. Some of them denied that it had any existence. "Time," however, is only a word which expresses the sequence of events, cause and effect, which was going on before the philosophers had any existence, and will continue after this planet which gave rise to them has ceased to exist. The standard, or measure, of time is another matter. To us human beings the measure of time is relative to the rotation of the earth, and its movement round the sun. Outside the solar system it would be relative to other movements—sequences of change—of which we may have no knowledge.

Sir Oliver tells us that "human imagination . . . has supposed a Being sufficiently high in the scale of existence, who could not only perceive the whole of the present in an instant, but could include the past and the future in a comprehensive survey, and that to such a Being the whole of existence would be an Eternal Now." Human imagination, when it lets itself go without the restraint of common sense, not to mention reason and experience, is capable of supposing anything, as we know. All that we can say to this is that no one has any knowledge of such a Being, or of the conditions under which he (or it) could exist. But, allowing the fantasy—how intolerably bored that Being must be!

So also with imagination given free rein, or under the influence of religion, drink or drugs; it may carry us away to some "Cloud Cuckoo Land," where we may "gaze towards the spiritual horizon," and "perceive a region beyond the scope of science, where measurements fail, where explanations cease, and catch a glimpse of an unfathomed glory."

This is mere rhetoric, and it will not do. What is this "spiritual horizon," and all that it bounds, other than a pure hallucination, just as imaginary as the dreams of a hashish eater? The fairy realm of fantasy we revelled in as children; we love, even now, a well told tale about it. But we are not going to admit that the story of Jack the Giant Killer, or the great aeronautical and inter-stellar feat of Jesus Christ, are possible facts: for this is what we shall be asked to believe presently. Old Hotchli Potchli is round the corner waiting to be let in again to the obfuscation of all that we know to be true; and sensible men are not going to allow plausible arguments, based on sheer imagination, to open the door to him.

"There is nothing random in nature," says Sir Oliver; and with this we agree. But speaking of electrons, he says: "They are perfectly obedient to law and order." This is a loose statement, which would be impossible to a really careful thinker. Hotchli Potchli again! The assumption is, of course, that there is a someone, or something, that laid down the natural law and order which the atoms, and other natural phenomenon, observe. But, all the "order" which exists in the universe arises from the simple fact that, when there are no disturbing causes, things remain the same. The observed grouping of things and sequence of events we speak of as the order of the world, and this is the same as saying that the world is as it is and no more. No natural law is the cause of the observed sequence in nature. Every natural law merely describes the conditions on which a par-

ticular change is dependent. A body falls to the ground, not in consequence of the law of gravitation, but the law of gravitation is the precise statement of what happens when a body is left unsupported. A law of nature does not command that something shall take place, but it merely states how something happens. As Professor Karl Pearson says: "Law in the scientific sense is essentially a product of the human mind and has no meaning apart from man. There is more meaning in the statement that man gives laws to nature, than in its converse that nature gives laws to man."

Sir Oliver Lodge, like the rest of us, has his limitations. But, conceding this, there is no excuse for a scientist endeavouring to turn them into loopholes for the readmission of religious superstition. This is really what lies behind the arguments which he introduces so plausibly into the little book under discussion, and he thereby detracts from its value.

E. J. LAMEL.

Drama and Dramatists.

READERS of newspapers who give a few minutes a day to them in order to see what fiction the world is expected to believe, may have noticed that there has been a storm in a tea-cup over "Maya," which is now being presented nightly at the Gate Theatre Studio, 16a Villiers Street, Strand. The play is by Simon Gantillon, paraphrased into English by Virginia and Frank Vernon, and, as the storm was not over the immorality of overcrowding, the annual death roll from motor traffic in London, the decay and death of manners, or the high price of good books, what more fitting tea-cup for it than the House of Commons? The pip-squeaks in the Press also have been busy, and, although there is experienced truth in George Bernard Shaw's remark that a journalist is not paid enough to write anything worth reading, many columns of words have appeared in print to the effect that plays ought to be banned if, for instance, they fall below the level of "Quo Vadis?" or "East Lynn."

There is something wrong with the Drama in London when, before the billposter's paste is hardly dry on the poster the announced play is taken off. We do not think so little of our own species to imagine that "Cyrano de Bergerac" was given enough time to justify itself, and against this idiotic order of things, the logical outcome must be the growth of Little Theatres, where four square inches of the bar is not sold for one thousand pounds per annum. The Gate Theatre Studio, together with many others, is a protest against anti-social influences at work whereby the public, after enduring the east wind of the queue, is invited inside to eat cotton wool.

"Maya" is another name for "maia," and thus we send the adventurous philologist off to the mother of all illusion, appearance of things, and all the subtle metaphysics to be found in books like the Puranas and the Bhagavad Gita. The woman "Bella" is the central character, and she follows her calling at a port in the Mediterranean, and the play opens with a lyrical dialogue between her and a Seaman. This dialogue, by its speed, is, in itself a masterpiece of beauty, and shines with many truths that can only be found in the book of life. Bella is in turn to her woman acquaintances, friend, helper, guide and counsellor, and, in the speech of these, there is constantly an escape of French intuition that carries under its glittering surface the trace of the master who has grasped life by the neck. There is a procession of callers on Bella, brought thither by various motives—weariness, loneliness, fear, sorrow, and despair. To each, the woman of a despised calling has something to give. To the murderer and heartbroken Italian, she is as beautiful as his beloved—a Duchess, to the stoker who only saw the sunlight eight times in forty-two days, she gives him consolation and a new turn in life, to a searcher for his former sweetheart, she gives him the momentary joy of having found her, and, in our mind, we can hear the clang of iron gates being shut when Bella demands something from this world to which she is always giving herself. Equality with an

artist? No. Love from a simple, homely Norwegian? No. A hat and boots to go to the funeral of her dead daughter? No! Her function was giving and giving, even in a larger and more universal sense than the central character in "Mrs. Warren's Profession."

An East Indian arrives and at this point the broken parts of symbolism begin to take shape. His dialogue with the Ukelele Player is tantalizing, provocative, and illuminating. Bella is simply what each of all men have superimposed on her—goddess, fairy, common woman, friend—and mother. And the last scene is the same as the one at the beginning; Bella is making a lace collar for her friend, and we are left with a new view of the eternal recurrence.

There is no moral in the play; there is a part of the world in a sea-port town, and that is how the world goes there, but it is truly a play that, like all good works of art, keeps changing the more one looks at it; the mere fact that a street woman is the central character has less to do with the play than a music-hall light shining on a church clock. Jesus was reputed to have said to a harlot, "Go thou and sin no more." In modern language, any human being would say it is a rotten calling; try and get a better job and leave it. Perhaps, after all, the question of poverty in this world, where the intelligence of a squirrel would savour of statesmanship, is one of the great factors in the oldest profession known.

As usual, Mr. Peter Godfrey has a splendid company, and there is finished work of the players typical of his productions. Miss Gwen Ffranccon-Davies, as Bella, has, by her interpretation, softened the harsh outlines of the character, and given it a touch of elevation unable to be perceived through the horn-rimmed spectacles of poor devils who have to review six plays a week. She has brought the regal splendour of Cleopatra to her work, and the teeth of critics are drawn. Norman Shelley is a joy to hear and behold, and Keith Pyott as a Quartermaster in search of his sweetheart was very human and impressive. The other members of the cast were equally good and, in a venture of this kind, Mr. Godfrey reminds us of a few sane words on life written by W. B. Yeats: "Three types of men have made beautiful things. Aristocracies have made beautiful manners, because their place in life puts them above the fear of life, and the countrymen have made beautiful stories and beliefs, because they have nothing to lose and so do not fear, and the artists have made all the rest, because Providence has filled them with recklessness." To which category Mr. Godfrey belongs besides the last does not matter; he is Cyrano throwing his purse on the stage; we trust that he will soon have his three thousand members—to have and to hold—so that his supper may be more sumptuous than a grape and a macaroon at the banqueting table for all those, who, by art, make people happy. Future productions include "The Admiralty Regrets," "From Morn till Midnight," "The Lower Depths," and "Six Stokers who own the Blooming Earth."

WILLIAM REPTON.

A SONG.

THERE is ever a song somewhere, my dear,
 There is ever a something sings away:
 There's the song of the lark when the skies are clear,
 And the song of the thrush when the skies are gray.
 The sunshine showers across the grain,
 And the bluebird trills in the orchard tree;
 And night and day, when the leaves drip rain,
 The swallows are twittering ceaselessly.

There is ever a song somewhere, my dear,
 Be the skies above or dark or fair;
 There is ever a song that our hearts may hear—
 There is ever a song somewhere, my dear,
 There is ever a song somewhere.

There is ever a song somewhere, my dear,
 In the midnight black or the mid-day blue:
 The robin pipes when the sun is here,
 And the cricket chirps the whole night through.
 The buds may blow and the fruit may grow,
 And the autumn leaves drop crisp and sere;
 But whether the sun or the rain or the snow,
 There is ever a song somewhere, my dear.

—James Whitcomb Riley.

Acid Drops.

Christmas is the season of feasting, present-giving—and religious bosh. However great may be the shortage of the first two, there is always certain to be plenty of the last. The parsons and the religious papers see to that. Here, at any rate, is a good sample from the *Church Times*. Christmas is celebrated because it answers "to deep spiritual emotions implanted in the marrow of our humanity." To look at the ordinary Christian crowd one would never have thought it. To look at Christians settling down to a good feed at Christmas time, with plenty of games, drinks, etc., one would never have thought it. But the *Church Times* ought to know, and so we give way before its superior spiritual discernment.

It is, of course, quite true that Christmas was here for very many centuries before the name of Christianity was heard of. The sun was worshipped as the god of life and light long before Christianity. And when men saw its strength waning they mourned. When they saw it gaining strength they rejoiced. Christmastide marked the beginning of the sun's recovery from the winter cold, and there is no wonder that early mankind made it an occasion for rejoicing. There was a germ of poetry in this and a modicum of truth. Christmas as a nature festival could be appreciated by all, and the childish nature of its mythology would be no more repulsive than one of Hans Andersen's tales.

But when Christianity took this nature festival and converted it into a genuine historic event, it became ridiculous. A God who is literally born as a human baby, who passes through all the infantile stages, who is, presumably, fondled, smacked, physicked through the usual childish ailments, grows up to be put to death in order to carry out a compact he made with himself, and who was after all so far from being killed, that he rose again from the dead—as he knew he would—and then goes straight to heaven, becomes quite absurd. Only long training in the art of keeping one's face straight in the face of the absurd enables people to read this story without laughing at it.

If Christians really believed and actually visualized this story, Christmas would be no season of rejoicing. Man, they would realize, was so bad that a God had to go through all kinds of tortures in order to arouse some of them to a sense of their badness. Such a sacrifice ought to fill a man with sadness. But is the Christian sad about it? Not a bit of it. Instead of sorrowing, he is full of delight. He does not fast, he feasts. Turkeys are slaughtered by the thousand, because it is believed the ancient Jews slaughtered a God. Thousands of good Christians celebrate the birth of their saviour by getting drunk. That, we concede, is not a bad preparation if one wishes to develop a state of mind adequate to believing the story. So we have puddings and mince-pies, beer and whisky, presents and pantomimes—all because God came and was killed. What would Christians have done if he had not been killed? Presumably they would then have sorrowed.

I can quite appreciate rejoicing because a God has been killed. What I quite fail to see is any ground for rejoicing in the fact that he has come to life again.

Still, the *Church Times* is undaunted. Christ's message was "Peace on earth, good will towards men." In that case never was there a message that brought so little response, never a teacher that was so dire a failure. Never was there a people who went in more heartily for war than the followers of Jesus, never a people who trusted each other less. Tell a Christian audience that we could get along without huge armaments, and they will laugh at you, or break your neck in order to show the true meaning of Christian love. The chief churches in the country are decked with war trophies; the leading

exponents of Christianity, the moment that war breaks out, are ready to preach the duty of the good Christian to kill, and to go on killing. And the chief appeal that is now being made to Christians to make war less likely to break out is not on account of its brutality and ineffectiveness, but because it is terribly expensive, and may even lead to the death of a number of civilians. Of one thing we may be sure, if war does come again, and parsons that gets killed, it will be by sheer accident.

The *Daily Telegraph* says that Chicago is resentful to its being labelled as a home of crime, and points out that 90 per cent. of its population are religious and go to church. That fact may not be questioned. All that is said is that it has the biggest crime record in the States. There is nothing discordant, so far as we can see, between people going to church and committing crime. We are relying solely upon experience.

Under the auspices of the World's Evangelical Alliance, arrangements have been made throughout the civilized world for the observance of a Universal Week of Prayer, from the 1st to the 7th of January. Poor God! How the Celestial ear-drums will ache after this grand barrage of prayer has assaulted them! These prayer enthusiasts never seem to think how boring must be to God this terrible bombardment; never seem to ask themselves how they would like to be worried in this way; never dream that the Golden Rule might conceivably be applied not only to humans but to God.

In the *Scots Magazine*, a writer says that church-going in Scotland is mostly a form of social entertainment. If in "church-going" the writer includes the various activities connected with a church, what he says is undoubtedly true, and it applies also to English churches. Take away all the social amusement activities of the churches and leave only the purely religious entertainment, then the larger portion of the churches' supporters would leave the churches. It is the secular amusement, disguised by religious phraseology, that holds their allegiance. The parsons are merely exploiting the peoples' social instinct.

Mr. Angus Watson recently read a paper on "A Business Man's Faith." Mr. Watson appeared to fancy that, having reached the over fifty stage of life, he has made some quite original discoveries about religion and its application. We don't think he has. Most of what he said in his paper is merely a re-hash of the platitudes he memorized as a youngster in Sunday School.

Apropos of Prayer Book revision, the Bishop of Worcester said that he could not divulge the discussions and divisions of the Bishops; but if the figures were published, the prevailing impression of Divine guidance would be dispelled. What may, we suppose, be inferred from this statement is, that the bishops themselves do not harbour the Divine guidance delusion, but they consider it inadvisable to disturb the innocence of the laity.

Lady John Adams gives, in the *Sunday School Chronicle*, a collection of the last words of certain great people. The following is a specimen:—

And Heine consoled himself with the reflection that the good God would pardon him; after all, it was His business.

Holy smoke! Lady Adams must be in the dairy trade—she has turned the crowning jest of a great Freethinker into skim milk. Christian lying takes various forms—this is one of them, and the most contemptible we have come across.

The Rev. W. Russell Maltby has been writing in the *Methodist Recorder*, under the heading, "Lucid Intervals." The rev. gentleman says: "we do acknowledge a certain sickness in the Church, and almost every one agrees that religion in England has had a period of decline." Another statement is: "the sense of God has

not deepened; it has declined." These seem to indicate the most lucid intervals of Mr. Maltby's two-column article. But we fear his readers seeking ministerial cheer will think them lugubrious as well as lucid.

Christianity rarely fails to turn believers into Christian egotists. With these even so broad-minded a cleric as the Rev. R. J. Campbell takes a place. To justify this statement we submit the following piece of his from *Reynolds' Newspaper*:—

Hidden away in the heart of every man is a picture of Christ, a figure of inconceivable beauty, which may or may not be freed from the stone and rubble of materialism, self-seeking, secularity of temper and aim, passion, fear, and greed. For whatever else Christ may be, He is at least our own individual secret conception of the man one would like to be.

Only a Christian egotist would assert that his particular religious hero was imaged in the heart of every man, and that every man's ideal of what a man would like to be like the Christian figurehead. The fact of there being tens of thousands of Freethinkers who do not cherish as their ideal the egotistic praying, superstitious and intolerant Christ of the Gospels, should make even a Christian egotist chary of dogmatizing about "every man."

Religion, says the Rev. F. C. Spurr, is a universal fact.

It belongs to man as man, wherever he is found, whatever be his clime or race. It is the oldest thing there is, ante-dating civilization . . . It has been in humanity from the beginning . . . "Humanity is incurably religious," said Sabatier. All history witnesses to the truth of this affirmation. There is no doubt of the universal human fact.

The reverend gentleman's story is only half complete. If men, in the mass, have always been religious, they have also been noted as being ignorant, fearful and credulous. The more they have manifested these qualities the deeper the hold on them has had religion. As men have become more enlightened, their religion has become more attenuated. Races with the smallest degree of religion have been, and are, those which are least ignorant, fearful, and credulous. Evolution, we would remind Mr. Spurr, doesn't confine itself to the physical, but works also in the mental realm. That explains why to-day an increasing number of people have no interest in religion nor use for churches and priests.

A member of a town Congregational church and a local Free Church Council, makes a drastic proposal in a daily paper. Scrap the village chapels, with their attenuated services and ugly buildings, he says. "The modern young person may not be ascetic, but he is becoming more and more an aesthete." This is apropos of the desertion of village chapels by young people. It doesn't seem to be much of a cure for the trouble. But possibly the statement we have quoted may indicate a cause. The younger generation are becoming more æsthetic, and therefore not only are the little Bethels repulsive to them, but also the religion taught therein.

The Vicar of Barking is concerned about Sunday observance. Anxious to assure the world that he is broad-minded, he admits that there are many worse ways of spending Sunday than by playing a healthy game in the open-air. But the man is fearful about the ultimate evil effect on national character of Sunday games in public places. He hastens to assure us that it is not merely that games are going to hit hard activities of the Church. He is "dreadfully afraid," that if Sunday games are encouraged they will become an organized business which is incompatible with the things of the Christian Sabbath. So the vicar says he would rather be guilty of the apparent injustice of keeping working-class lads from playing games on Sunday, than run the tremendous risk of seeing Sunday afternoon transformed into another Saturday afternoon. Does the vicar of Barking really believe that the public are fools, and cannot see through his silly cant?

To All Concerned.

MEMBERS of the National Secular Society are reminded that all subscriptions become due on January 1st. They will oblige by remitting to the General Secretary as promptly and as generously as possible. The minimum membership fee is quite nominal, and each one is left to fix his or her subscription according to inclination and ability. There is much work to be done by the distribution of literature and otherwise all over the country, and what the Society can do must be determined by the extent of its available income.

This is also the time when unattached Freethinkers might consider the advisability of joining the Society. There are several thousand of convinced *Freethinker* readers who are not members of the Society, and there does not seem any adequate reason why they should not join. We seriously suggest to them the advisability of joining at once. A membership form will be found in another part of this issue.

Finally, we desire to call attention to the fact that the Society's Annual Dinner will take place at the Midland Grand Hotel, on Saturday, January 21. There will be the usual excellent concert, interlaced with speeches, both following the usual first-class meal. Saturday evening has been fixed to give provincial friends a chance of attending, and who have found a mid-week date rather inconvenient. The price of the ticket is 8s., and those wishing to attend should write the Secretary as early as possible. There is nothing like being in good time.

For the rest, a Happy New Year to everyone, the best of fortune to the "Best of all Causes."

"Freethinker" Endowment Trust.

LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

	£	s.	d.
PREVIOUSLY ACKNOWLEDGED	8,043	1	9
In Memory of Sir H. S. M. (3rd Sub.)	50	0	0
Islay Freethinker	0	7	0
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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Those Subscribers who receive their copy of the "Freethinker" in a GREEN WRAPPER will please take it that a 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.

MR. & MRS. WILCOCK.—Thanks for season's greeting, which we warmly reciprocate.

E. S.—We quite agree with you that there is an undoubted move in certain religious circles in the direction of Rome. But we are not alarmed at that. The real safeguard against that is not Protestantism, but Freethought. Rome can generally be trusted to look after the undeveloped mentality of Protestantism. It is genuine Freethought against which it is powerless. We hope to see a good muster of provincial friends at the Annual Dinner, on January 21, yourself and wife among the number. Saturday will give them a good opportunity of being present.

MR. A. E. HAMBROOK sends cheque to the Endowment Trust with many thanks "for very real help received during the past twenty-five years. During this time I have had the pleasure of travelling from the jungle of superstition, as a missionary in Central Africa, to the Alps of reason and Atheism." Another brand plucked from the burning. We are delighted.

E. BARKER.—We did not see that review of *Materialism Re-stated*, but it is pleasing to have so complimentary a reference from so capable an authority. The book, we are pleased to say, is selling very well. Further volumes of *Essays in Freethinking* will follow later.

W. HOWELLS.—Many thanks for your offer to contribute again to Fund if necessary.

E. LECIMERE.—If good wishes would get us all we want, we should need but little. Many thanks for greetings.

MR J. SUMNER, who had kindly volunteered to provide anything up to £50 to complete the £7,000, but who was not called upon, writes on learning that the amount had been subscribed: "It is indeed satisfactory to hear that what you have so earnestly worked for has materialized. Please accept my sincere congratulations." We have had many other letters to the same effect.

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

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

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

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Mr. F. Mann, giving as long notice as possible.

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

We finish this issue of the *Freethinker* on Friday, December 23, owing to Monday and Tuesday being off-days—the first by “divine,” and the second by royal command. Correspondents will see, therefore, the reason why anything that reached us after Friday morning had to be held over until our next issue.

As this is the first issue of a new volume, and the first in 1928, we take the opportunity of again urging the claims of this paper. We have many letters congratulating us on the success of the Endowment Trust Fund, and in truth we have been congratulating ourselves very heartily. But we do not want our friends to let their interest stop with giving money. We want them to carry their interest into other fields, and they are able to give us very real help indeed, if they only will.

We get every now and then new subscribers to the *Freethinker* who give it an enthusiastic welcome, but who have *only just become aware of its existence*. There are, we may be sure, many thousands of men and women in the country in a similar condition of ignorance. They do not know the *Freethinker* exists; or if they do, they do not know what it is like. Most of these are possible subscribers. *Why not get them?* Offer them a copy. Take an extra copy and send it to them for awhile. Send us their names and addresses with threepence in stamps, and we will send them a free copy for six weeks. Get your newsagent to display an extra copy. Send for a parcel of specimen copies and we will deliver them post free. Make up your mind to get one new subscriber during January, by way of a New Year's gift to the paper. Adopt any of all of these plans, work at them with a will, and we should soon find an increase in our circulation and in our sphere of usefulness. Think on these things.

The Executive has arranged a lecture in Croydon, on Wednesday, January 18. Mr. Cohen will be the lecturer. Will any *Freethinker* living in Croydon or neighbourhood, and who is willing to help, please communicate with the N.S.S. Secretary? The help can be given either by way of a house to house distribution of advertising slips, or specimen copies of the *Freethinker*, or both. Those willing to help should write without delay, saying just what they are able and ready to do.

We reprint the following portion of a letter from a Manchester reader, accompanied with a substantial contribution to the Endowment Trust, because we think it will prove as interesting to many, as it is to us:—

I have suffered a lot from religion in the past, and was gradually thinking my way out of it when your article appeared in the *Manchester Evening News*. That, and your subsequent lectures, gave me a start, and I have kept on. It has been a grand experience and has resulted, so far, in four others awakening to think for themselves. I have a great deal to thank you for. Your lectures and writings have done me a vast amount of good. I appreciate it and do what I can to pass it on.

We don't think the *Manchester Evening News* is likely to make the mistake of again asking us for an article on religion. The local churches have seen to that. The first one gave them too great a shaking.

We saw Mr. Peabody the other day, and was glad to see him looking much better than when we saw him last. He had just completed his 111th crossing of the Atlantic, and had experienced a rough passage. But that troubled him but little, and by this time we should say he would know if any one of the Atlantic waves was out of place. He was delighted at the success of the Endowment Trust, and although his undertaking stipulated the paying of the £1,000 thirty days after receiving the Accountant's certificate that the £7,000 has been subscribed, he hopes to settle by January 2, which is well within the stipulated time.

The Wicked Husbandmen.

(Mark xii, 1-9. Matthew xxi, 33-41. Luke xx, 9-16.)

I.

THE THREE ACCOUNTS COMPARED.

1. *The Common Details.*—(i.) A householder planting a vineyard, letting it out to husbandmen, and then going into another country. (ii.) The sending of servants to collect the rent in form of fruits. (iii.) The beating of the first servant sent; and the maltreatment of two others arriving in succession. (iv.) The dispatch of the son in the belief that he would find respect. (v.) The murder of the son on the supposition that through his death the murderers would somehow or other become possessed of the vineyard. (vi.) The threatened advent of the landlord to destroy the tenants and to give the property into other hands.

2. *The Principal Differences.*—Mark and Matthew have the hedge, the wine-press, and the tower; but, whilst Mark specifies the vat, or receptacle beneath the real press, Matthew names the press only. Mark and Luke introduce the servants singly; Matthew introduces them plurally; but, from his description of their experiences, it is evident that, like Mark and Luke, he took them for three in number. Mark and Luke have the second servant “shamefully” used, and Mark, in addition, gives him a wounded head; but Matthew has him “killed.” This tragic fate Mark reserves for the third; whereas Matthew is content with having him “stoned,” and Luke with letting him be “wounded and cast forth.” Mark and Matthew say that after the first three servants, others also were sent. As to these, Mark says that some were beaten and some killed; whilst Matthew declares that they underwent what the others had experienced. Mark classes the son with the servants; but nevertheless he designates him as “a beloved son”; and Luke repeats this designation, which Matthew reduces to the simple term “son.” The three evangelists agree that the husbandmen, perceiving the “son,” exclaimed, “Let us kill him.” Then comes a divergence, for Mark has, “and the inheritance shall be ours”; Matthew has, “and take his inheritance”; whilst Luke has, “that the inheritance may be ours.” Mark and Luke make Jesus answer his own question respecting the future conduct of the landlord towards the tenants, whereas Matthew lets the hearers answer it. Of the differences between any two of the recorders and the other, much the most important are (i.) that according to Mark, the “son” was one of the servants; (ii.) that according to Mark and Matthew more servants than the three whose experience is individually described were afterwards sent forth, and treated like their predecessors; whilst according to Luke, the third emissary was the last domestic; and (iii.) that, according to Mark and Matthew one of the three first sent, and one at least of the others, was killed, whilst according to Luke, some were killed, this fate being reserved for the “son.” Both these last two differences are illustrative of Luke's general method. The second one renders the narrative more dramatic; but it spoils the parable by making it less in harmony with its historical references. Here, as on some other occasions, Luke was too literary.

¹ This is one of the very few parables existing in three versions. As all commentators agree, it is adapted from a similitude in *Isaiah* (v. 1-7); but whoever compares the two will perceive that both in the avoidance of incongruities, and in the exhibition of beauties, the original immeasurably surpasses the adaptation.

II.

THE STORY AND ITS MEANING.

It is clear that many improbabilities spoil this narrative. The vineyard was in its owner's proper country, why then did he not exercise his rights, and fulfil his duty by bringing to justice the shameless ill-users of his servants. If, for some reason or other, he thought fit to overlook the wrong done to the first servant, why did he not take measures to protect the second from similar injury? And, when this was inflicted, why did he send a third without any protection? And, after he knew of the violence suffered by the third, why did he still abstain from punishing the offenders? But these proceedings, however strange, appear natural in comparison with his conduct in sending his son, alone and unprotected, into the midst of the desperate villains who had treated his servants with such brutality. The conduct of the tenants is no less singular than that of the landlord. By ill-using the rent-collectors they added crime to debt; and then they stupidly imagined that by murdering the heir to the property, it would become their undisputed possession. Could the course of madness further go? Surely there is no parallel to this landlord and these tenants; they were created to rival each other in unapproachable folly. The only excuse for such nonsense is that the tale was invented to meet the peculiar requirements of the moral without any care respecting divergencies from the natural motives and actions of mankind. It need hardly be said that the moral in question is purely theological. The landlord is the Jewish God. The vineyard is the Jewish race. The tenants are the Jewish authorities. The servants are the Jewish prophets. The son is Jesus himself. The third of these points has special interest. Mark and Luke say that at the end of the parable, Jesus asked: "What therefore will the lord of the vineyard do?" Matthew gives this question as, "When, therefore, the lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do unto those husbandmen?" According to Mark and Luke, Jesus himself gave the reply; but, according to Matthew, it was given by his hearers. The reports are as follows:—

He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.	He will miserably destroy these miserable men, and will let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their season.	He will come and destroy these husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.
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Thus it is the husbandmen, and not the vineyard, that shall be destroyed. The three evangelists have taken great pains to show that both the people and the authorities clearly understood what this implied.

Mark, who just before describes how "the chief priests and the scribes and the elders" once vainly sought to make Jesus compromise himself in the temple, on the question of John the Baptist, goes on to say that "he began to speak with them in parables"; and then reports the present one. After this and its appendix, he says, "they sought to lay hold on him; and feared the multitude; for they perceived that he spake the parable against them." Matthew introduces the parable under the very same circumstances, naming "the chief priests and elders of the people" as the interrogators of Jesus in the temple, then, at the end of the parable and appendix, he continues, "When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. And when they sought to lay hold on him, they feared the people, because they took him for a prophet." Luke reports the above introduction,

naming, like Mark, "the chief priests and the scribes with the elders." After the parable and the appendix, he says, "and the scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he spake this parable against them." Thus Mark, Matthew, and Luke agree that the Jewish authorities applied the parable to themselves as an insult, but that the people in general were so far from feeling insulted by it, that their influence alone prevented the authorities from arresting Jesus for having spoken it. The truth is that in attacking the religious lights of his people, Jesus was continuing the tradition of the Hebrew prophets, who in olden times had assailed the very same class under the figures of watchmen and shepherds, accusing them of neglecting their duties, and menacing them with expulsion from office by the hand of the Lord. Such conduct naturally pleases the small but offends the great; and some of the old prophets, as might have been expected, suffered imprisonment, and even death, for their temerity.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

(To be concluded.)

On Preachers.

"If you can't edify them, mystify them."

They are varied in character, disposition and intention, for I have seen, heard and talked with them under almost every conceivable condition.

It is perhaps possible to classify them, but the classification would need indexing.

To some the Church is a complicated machine, of which the Preacher is the engineer. His great concern is to see that things run smoothly, and to see that nothing fires for want of oil. To make his church a going concern is his intention; to be a drummer of the Lord. His life aim is to "get there" and he generally does. Generally this type though occupying a large place is a small man, small physically and mentally. His keen restless furtive eyes are the eyes of a man who does not feel sure of his position in the world. His preaching tends to make his people provincial, self-satisfied, and to lower their standard of intellectual requirement. He has a system of scrap books. (Many of which I have examined with interest and amusement). He frames a skeleton, and then from these scraps he covers it—oft-times very indecently—and he calls them sermons. Oft-times his type is destitute of convictions—resembling a gnat dancing in the sunshine. His greatest mistake appears to be that of thinking that new methods will develop life, instead of realizing that developing life naturally creates its own new methods. His delivery resembles the force pump instead of the flowing spring—something which is commonly designated "clap-trap."

Another occupies the pulpit like a circus performer covered with spangles. He does not make severe moral demands upon his people, nor does he overtask their thinking power. He aims to please. He bubbles up with small wit, tries to say funny things, courts a laugh and makes humour a fool. His proper gown should be topped by cap and bells. He tries to keep on best terms with the world. He is too indifferent about most things to take the trouble of forming any opinion about them. He is an intellectual broker. He never minds a new coin of thought. He only serves in putting into circulation the thoughts of other people.

There is the nervy, fussy man, brimful of vitality, impatient of restraint—apt to do good things blindly and knock over everything that comes in his way.

Wherever he goes a tornado accompanies him. He types the man who "forced everybody to become volunteers." He comes with a boom and takes care to vacate when the boom is at its height. He is a hustler who ought to be put on wheels, and being taken to the apex of a steep and dangerous hill, let loose to appreciate what speed means. His work is meagre in value—but none the less does he cackle however small his egg. His type has three elements of power; he is dramatic; he writes and speaks at white heat; and he believes in himself. His passionateness is perhaps the main element of his power, giving to his delivery a hectic appearance. What he does in secret he proclaims upon the housetops. He can bear anything except being ignored. He makes sure of being talked about. His programme is a large one, consisting chiefly of reforming everything. He creates partizanship, and the non-church party of his followers delight to set him upon the church like a mongrel on to a bulldog. He is a member of the "Sensational Order of Spiritual Watchmen." He has a hope for the future, but it is a very dim and distant future. He is an irritant—a blister upon the body. He not only provokes thought but he provokes the people who think. His presentations are lop-sided and unbalanced. His consuming egotism blinds him completely to the other side of the question. All his statements are without perspective. He poses as a martyr, but carefully clothes himself in asbestos before he casts himself upon the altar.

Another preacher appears as the "terror of the Lord." He neither minces matters nor tones down anything unpalatable. He believes in fear. He preaches eternal punishment with evident pleasure. He hands every sinner over to the hands of a jealous God. I don't think he believes what he preaches, for I have gone with him to supper after one of these sermons, and to hear his jokes and stories and watch a hearty supper disappear makes me think.

There is the man to whom the ethics of creed subscription is no trouble. He signs to a creed, but does not say he believes it. He is charitable enough to think well even of the devil. He makes the way of religion a way of pleasantness for himself and others. He "draws" a good congregation. He never evokes the spirit of self-denial, nor will he ever be over religious. He believes in making the best of this world and leaving the other world to take care of itself.

F.

American Notes.

ANOTHER NEW BIBLE.

There are several new Bibles to be published, or about to be published, in America. Moffat's completed Bible, issued by the Chicago University, deserves praise as a sensible attempt to express old ideas in modern speech. Would it help religion if its professors and teachers wrote, spoke, and quoted language of every-day life? Opinions (of Freethinkers) differ on this point. Religions in the past must have gained immensely by the use of pretentious and artificially "sublime" language. It was an advantage to a preacher to use words which were fundamentally different from those applicable to every common act and thought of mankind. Mesopotamia (before the war) always meant far more to the religious mind than Hoxton or Wigan. Calvary, of course, is different—it has associations. Thetford can never sound the same to those who cherish the name, because Thomas Paine was born there. But the "ordinary" terminology of religion is not a question of association, it is part of a plan to create an atmosphere wherein logic, history, ethics and common sense are non-effective. "The mystery we make darker with a name," as William Watson says.

Christians gifted with the instinct of self-preservation are beginning to doubt the current value of this ancient asset. Highly cultured people never were the victims of this artificiality: unfortunately there were and are learned students, professors, and erudite ones who cultivated, encouraged or used this veil of mysticism in speech in order to prevent the exposure of deception. Language was not "given us in order to conceal thought," but language of the kind I refer to has often been used to prevent thought and to conceal truth.

There are, however, signs that the religious world is awakening to the fact that the multitudes are no longer illiterate. The host of popular newspapers, disgraceful as many of them are in pandering to unintelligent tastes, have at least imbued their readers with the idea that the commonest (common in the worst sense often enough) language is capable of conveying "ideas." Now those ideas may be hateful, vulgar and bad, instead of lovely and of good report, but the crowd knows beyond the shadow of a doubt that political ideas, reports of the most abominable murders, and stories of their favourite prize-fighter's amours can all be expressed in language which they themselves understand.

The Woodbine-Willies, the Billy Sundays and others have carried this consciousness to extremes. In order to get anywhere near the meaning of these divines—if they have any meaning—one must not only discard the ancient jargon of the churches, one must learn a totally new dialect—based mainly, I find, on the slang of a decade ago.

The more moderate and sensible methods of the Moffats and others is a justifiable calculation (right or wrong is immaterial) that to make religion acceptable nowadays, the appeal must be in ordinary language. The propagandists and pamphleteers of the past are justified by results.

The Bible in Modern Speech will have to be followed by Prayers in Modern Speech too. The idea of an American Republican addressing God as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords emphasizes the absurdity of using stilted language. In this instance it is quite obvious that the religious atmosphere has paralyzed the 100 per cent. American into denying his republican principles as soon as he enters the House of King God.

Mr. W. T. Stead, seeing the Ober-Ammergau Passion Play for the first time, was impressed most of all with the fact that the part of Jesus Christ was taken quite simply and naturally by a man Mr. Stead met every day at work in an ordinary wood-shed. Mr. Stead says that until then he had never imagined Jesus as an actuality. Anton Lang might have made you and me think of Jesus as a superb actor, but he seems to have convinced Mr. Stead that each one of us can "Be a Christ." Without going so far as to question whether, after all, this would be worth while, one can see that religion gains by transferring its idols from the vapours of heaven to the common atmosphere of the earth where we live.

John Ruskin suggested that religion would gain (I think he said humanity would gain too) by translating "Holy Ghost," into "Honest Ghost," or the "Spirit of Honesty." But that, of course, was too much to expect of the most reforming kind of reformers.

COMSTOCK AGAIN.

Mr. Charles Smith, President of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism (New York) has been convicted of the crime of sending through the mails some anti-Christian literature and a journal called *Sex*. He has been ordered to find bail to the tune of five hundred dollars (£100). Mr. Smith was prosecuted under Section 551 of the Penal Code, which forbids the sending of any communication through the post "with intent to cause annoyance." Like many other laws, this Section seems, on the surface, quite fair and desirable. So it might be in a non-Christian country. Mr. Smith claims (and nobody outside the Christian church would doubt) that his object was the usual one of propaganda. If Mr. Smith had been any kind of Christian, he could have sent tons of propagandist religious pamphlets, with impunity. His crime is being an Atheist—and an euer-

getic one. He sent his pamphlets to the Rev. John Roach Straton. Smith's letters support his claim that he was trying to convert this parson to Atheism—one of his letters ended, "May you yet escape from Bible bondage." Straton declared in court that "the Atheists would be a pack of fools to try converting me." Smith's lawyer's comment was, "Perhaps you are right." It is quite obvious that there is one interpretation of the law for Atheists and another for Christians, or such a prosecution as this would be impossible.

Freethinkers all over the world will side with Charles Smith, and deplore tactics of intolerance and bigotry which make propaganda a crime if it is atheistic. Wise Freethinkers will decline to take the Christian view that Mr. Smith's literature was vulgar, in bad taste, and all the rest of the familiar epithets. I have not seen this literature, but I know that Christian accusations are not to be trusted, and that bad taste and vulgarity are never criminal when Christians are guilty of them. The real point to bear in mind is that Charles Smith sent six pieces of mailed matter in eight weeks, to a professional opponent, whose business surely ought to include some kind of a study of the teachings he is paid to oppose.

It only remains to be added that the prosecution against Mr. Smith was a joint one, the active prosecutors being Dr. Straton and Charles S. Sumner, the successor of Anthony Comstock. Mr. Sumner is described by Mr. Smith quite accurately as a "Professional vice suppressor." Mr. Smith further says of Mr. Sumner (and Dr. Stratton) "They seek to imitate the Eternal Tormentor whom they worship. They would gladly revive the *writ de heretico comburendo* and burn me at the stake."

MR. SUMNER CO-OPERATES WITH FREETHINKERS!

Mr. Joseph Lewis, President of the Freethinkers Society of New York, has started a crusade against certain churches for conducting "draws" at their bazaars, etc. The only instance so far brought under notice was the case of the Roman Catholic Church of the Guardian Angels, where some ten cent (fivepenny) tickets were sold in regard to three small prizes (1st, a gold piece value 40s.; 2nd, a radio set; 3rd, a ton of coal). This, says the Freethinkers Society, is an illegal lottery, and the F. S. has asked the aid of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, whose secretary, Mr. Sumner, "highly commended the work of the Freethinkers —" on this occasion.

It is not for an outsider to criticize the policy of a society whose central aim is Freethought. It is a sort of comment merely to connect the present paragraph with the foregoing one.

I have no doubt that this strange procedure is regarded as good fighting tactics, and that the aim is not so much to insist on the enforcement of law in every trivial detail, but rather to protest against the churches being, as we should say, "on the rates." All our sympathies will be with the last mentioned object.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

The Young Freethinker.

OF course, were there no young there would be no old Freethinkers, although the original Freethinker might be the older man. The child is father of the man, yet quite often the boy is the son of his father! Mr. Foote once remarked on the "charming metempsychoses" revealed in the child's likeness to his father—in his better, of course, not worse characteristics, a pleasing and excusable egotism and one adding value to family life. One would not diffuse the idea in the wide generalization of Pope:—

Tom struts a soldier, open, bold and brave;
Will sneaks a scrivener, an exceeding knave.

Indeed, a "Will" of ours was and is the most magnanimous human being I have ever known, a real and not a fabled Christ, passing away unknown, unheralded, unrewarded, and yet having all he ever coveted of gods or men namely—NOTHING!

But to our metempsychosis, Hugo writes to his Dad (in temporary exile) as follows:—

"Having just returned from the 'Buroo'—for those who have lost work, not for lost souls—the great majority it would appear have no souls to lose, but all have bellies to fill—I thought, till better came my way, I would employ myself with a ramble in the wilds. The idea was suggested by the warm rays of a brilliant sun, piercing at noon the atmosphere of biting cold that shrouded the earth, and so it came to pass I had a day in the wilderness—not forty days, like a (un) certain Personage, who sojourned, with another Personage, in an uncertain legend of 2,000 years date, somewhere in the East. He fasted forty days. The Devil, one supposes, is never hungry—except for lost souls—but what an appetite for these, even to that of the one perfect peasant of Palestine! Having no father in heaven—at least none that I know of—and not even my own old Dad handy, I took with me two substantial morning rolls.

"A winter's day in the country has a strange sober charm of its own—even in the broken, lichened outline of a dry stone dyke, a copse of evergreen firs, with browner colouring, with the naked and fantastic boughs of thorn and other trees limned against the wintry haze. No birds chirped in leafy hedges; instead, a nipping wind crooned dismally in the more prosaic telegraph wires, these stretching away seemingly to eternity. I was now in the midst of the hills and moors, and some harmless denizens of these solitudes gazed at me with mildly enquiring eyes. And now my mind was inspired by the sight of familiar landmarks I had known since infancy—first seen in company with my father, when he brought me to see his beloved Cairn on the summit of Knockjargon (*Vide The Robes of Pan*).

"How peaceful were the cattle and sheep! and yet here were male and female cows—the former menacing, at least alarming, especially a great black bull, who looked at me with the air of a king who sees his realm invaded. There were great rams also, mere silly sheep, perhaps, but with what a noble head of horns circling about ferocious eyes—so I executed a flank movement and reached the rear of the beasts on the summit of the moors!

"Through the wintry haze I could now dimly discern the great shape and pinnacle of noble Goat Fell. Around him some writhing and wreathing shapes of mist seemed trying to woo his stony heart. His wooers pass and he remains, 'sphinx-like, impassible,' while cold stars at night twinkle in his stony embrasures, bearing his 3,000,000,000 years with little change of shape or mein—3,000,000,000, and more than that to come, while Bibles, Creeds, and Gods arise and disappear, even as the mists about the mountains' brow. [Our young friend is modest in his computations: in *Some Dates*, we read recently of life on the earth twenty thousand million years ago, and a habitable earth forecast for as long or longer.] The sun that had shone all day from a clear sky was now about to dip behind the hills of Arran. The creeping mists, like a cowardly army, seemed taking advantage of King Sol's retreat, converged about me where I stood. Barely half a mile from the mount I had to admit I was lost. I met more cows and sheep, and again escaped those ferocious animals, then appeared a well-known sheet of water, and the roadway beside it. I heard an engine whistle from far below; and I whistled too, for, verily, he that was lost was found. . . . Some such lines the foregoing I left in the Cairn. Hope they may attain further immortality in the columns of the *Freethinker*. Come to think of it, immortality is absolute and can have no less or more. And in case some reader should suspect I am an idler, be it known to all whom it may concern, that while I am a baker (unemployed) I am no 'loafer.'"

HUGO M. M.

Wheresoever the search after truth begins, there life begins; wheresoever that search ceases, there life ceases.
Ruskin.

They who command best the ideal, enjoy ever most the real.—Lord Lytton.

There are no boundaries in the world of thought.—Ibsen.

The Truth Seekers.

DR. BARNES :

O, I am the Bishop of Brum,
I seem to be making things hum;
But I certainly think that the time is propitious
For shedding more light on beliefs superstitious.
Modern knowledge may else pass us by
And the time will assuredly come,
When the Christian Church will be left in the
lurch,
And they won't need a Bishop of Brum, of Brum,
They won't need a Bishop of Brum!

DEAN INGE :

O, I am the Dean of St. Pauls,
I deprecate clerical brawls;
But I really must say in the year 'twenty-seven,
I do not believe in a localized heaven.
A mind that is cultured and sane
Such primitive nonsense appals;
And unless I can show I am well in the know
They won't need a Dean of St. Pauls, St. Pauls,
They won't need a Dean of St. Pauls!

DUO :

O, two daring thinkers are we—
Perhaps *daring* is hardly the word,
But we've managed somehow to agree
That certain beliefs are absurd.
And although Bullock-Webster is shocked
And calls for most drastic amends,
We shall go on our way and permit us to say :
We'll continue to draw our stipends, ah—yes!
We'll continue to draw our stipends!

[Dance and Exit.]

VINCENT J. HANDS.

Correspondence.

THE POPE'S "GREEN" ISLAND.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—My attention has just been drawn to an article in your paper for July 3 last, entitled "On The Irish 'Slave' State," by Robert Browne.

It deals with the destruction of the English Sunday papers by the ignorant armed tools of Rome.

It is a pity that Mr. Browne, or someone else, did not collect a list—from the slave press of the "Pope's Green Island"—of the castles, mansions, and estates, which the "poor" clergy are after grabbing from the dispossessed "foreign" landlords; who, with torch and gun, were driven from the land, to make room for the new plantations of foreign monks, priests, and nuns; from France, Belgium; and perhaps from Mexico (?)

When the scales fall from the eyes of the "Free State" "Biddies," they will start to sing "Faith of our Fathers," to a different tune than they sang it in "moral" Limerick a few days ago.

With millions invested and plenty to spare, the priests and nuns are begging for outsiders to feed their duped and plundered flocks.

The deposits in Irish banks reach the colossal total of £178,000,000, and yet the "faithful" are starving from West Cork to the West of Ireland, and Dublin is teeming with chapels, churches, slums, priests and prostitutes; and unmarried country girls are slaughtering their bastards gaily, and daily in this isle of "saints and scholars."

When this country turned from Ireland into the "Slave" State, the priests immediately took the "bit in their teeth"; the police were "dedicated" to the "sacred" heart (?) And the Army is controlled by the "sign of the cross." We have "Pope's Cadets," Catholic Boy Scouts, and perhaps later on we may have the honour of the "Holy Father" coming over and taking up his residence amongst us; on his own dear "green island"—when Italy finally pensions him off.

P. MURPHY.

Society News.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

MR. F. MANN'S amusing lecture on "Woman" was well received, and gave rise to an equally amusing discussion, which revealed a surprising amount of antagonism to women. One had thought and hoped that at this time of day, the subject would have received more rational and reasonable treatment, especially from an audience of Freethinkers. This criticism does not apply to the lecturer—whom we suspect of a certain amount of leg-pulling, which his audience appeared to take seriously!

Our Spring Session opens on January 8 with a debate on the Liquor Traffic, between Mr. Palmer and Mr. Alex. Thomson of the United Kingdom Alliance.

K.B.K.

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.

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Freethinkers should advertise in the *Freethinker*, and that readers of the *Freethinker* should support those advertisers are precepts which are absolutely incontrovertible. Unfortunately, they are precepts which have had but little practise. The firm of MACCONNELL & MABE advertised consistently in these columns for nearly eight years. It was only a small concern, having no capital worthy of the name, and their advertising was necessarily on a very small scale. Nevertheless, they set an example worth following and more than well worth supporting. This new Company, which incorporates and carries on the old firm, will have adequate capital behind it, and its transactions will be on a more dignified plane. Its advertisements will be quite an appreciable asset to the *Freethinker*, and contribute in no small degree to its greater prosperity.

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President:

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Secretary:

MR. F. MANN, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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