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Views and Opinions.

The Control of Opinion.

FOR several weeks we have been noting letters which have been sent to the British Broadcasting Company protesting against the use of their machinery in the interests of religious propaganda, and have dealt with some of the replies given. In the first instance, the Company took the ground that this being a Christian country, there could be no reasonable objection to a Christian service being broadcast. In reply to objections, the next plea was that, so far as they were aware, very few people objected to the religious services. The quantity of letters received soon proved that statement to be unwarranted, so the excuse was made that the licence received by them from the government prohibited the broadcasting of controversial matter. To this the very obvious reply was forthcoming that there is no subject so controversial as religion, indeed, it is so controversial that in many clubs and institutions the subject of religion is distinctly barred, not merely because of its controversial, but because of its highly inflammable character. Indeed, so notoriously inflammable is it that one of the grounds on which the maintenance of the Blasphemy laws is justified, is that there must be special regulations because many men cannot hear their religion attacked without being provoked to a breach of the peace. That is where the matter stands at present, and when it is borne in mind that some time ago the head of the B.B.C. declared that he regarded the broadcasting of religion as among the most valuable things done, we need enquire no further as to the motive underlying the handing over of the machinery of the company to the churches.

* * *

Creating Echoes.

Under the title of "The Control of Public Opinion," the *Church Times*, in its issue for March 2, raises the whole question in a form with which I find myself in substantial agreement, particularly as the general principle laid down is identical with what I have

stated over and over again in these columns. It must be borne in mind that Broadcasting in this country is not a private affair. It is a government monopoly. No private person is allowed to broadcast, no Society would be permitted to broadcast news or lectures of its own. The government can transmit what it pleases; rightly or wrongly it did this during the general strike; and it can forbid what it likes. That is a power against which we can imagine there would have been a very strong protest from the radicals of a half-century ago, who rightly regarded the control of news, or the control of opinion, whether by the government or by any other body of people as the gravest danger that could face a community. In their opinion the duty of a government was not to direct or to control opinion, but to see that all opinions got something like fair play. They believed, and in this I quite agree, that in a democracy the only safeguard against tyranny, open or disguised, was the free play of critical opinion. And the larger the area over which political power is spread the greater the desirability that public opinion shall be informed, critical and freely expressed.

* * *

The Deification of Authority.

To-day the face of affairs has changed. To begin with, we had for four years war on a colossal scale. During that period, under cover of national danger, the government of the day took enormous powers to itself. It invaded every avenue of liberty possessed by the subject; it not only laid down regulations for his eating and drinking, his playing and working, but it made any criticism of the war a punishable offence, and for the first time in English history a war was carried through to which no opposition was permitted. Censorship was the order of the day—and night. The necessities of war time covered everything.

As I pointed out during the war—the *Freethinker* was the only paper in Britain that dared point out such things—the remarkable and disquieting feature was not that during the war certain liberties were lost; the significant thing was that very few of the masses of the people appeared to be conscious of having lost anything that mattered. And when war had ended, the principle of authority, which had been growing before the war, and was enthroned during the war, emerged from the war enormously strengthened. People had become habituated to doing things to order. In politics the "machine" ruled everything. In trades-unionism the principle of authority was unquestioned. Even in the ranks of the capitalists, one would have thought the hardest to drill in this way, the same principle exercised a growing power. It was called organization, or discipline, but in essence it meant the submission of the individual to established authority. Nor is this state-

ment the less true because revolts of various kinds broke out. For they who revolted were as ready as others to yield to authority, and the more revolutionary the body the more the principle of authority was worshipped.

* * *

Censorship.

The control of opinion was another stage in this process. Those who aimed at directing social movements were soon driven to recognize that the most powerful social solvent is the force of opinion. The Roman Church had recognized this long before, and had made it its policy to control it, a policy from which it has never departed, however much circumstances have compelled it to modify its conduct here and there. In secular affairs the growth of education, that is, the ability to read and write, the development of the cheap newspaper with its power to manipulate popular prejudices, are steps in the same direction. Even the provision of schools by the State helped the process, for here the education received is largely standardized, and independent views are reduced to a minimum. There is thus considerable force in a comment by the *Church Times*, that "while kings and aristocrats may wear their crowns and coronets unceasingly, the school inspector, the tax collector, and the policeman of the secret service branch can view the future with equanimity. • No Bolshevik revolution, no 'white' reaction will shake them from their thrones."

The stage censorship is professedly exercised in the interests of morality. It is to keep indecent things off the stage. In the film world a new principle has been introduced—that of disallowing pictures which are not advocating the right kind of opinions. A religious film may serve up any kind of rubbish, any kind of distorted history so long as the distortion or the rubbish is in the interests of Christianity. But if they are not, then the censor steps in. Sir Austin Chamberlain objects to "Dawn," because it is calculated to excite ill-feeling against Germany, and makes the peace of the world more difficult to achieve. On the other hand, all kinds of war-films may be produced, although they serve no other end save that of making militarism more attractive and so making war in the world more certain.

The wireless is a still more serious move. If the government is to maintain a monopoly of this, and to say just what shall or shall not be broadcast, then we have a danger before us of a very real kind. To-day, a Conservative Government is in power, and the people are fed on what that government thinks the people ought to have, if not in detail, certainly in general outline. To-morrow, a Socialist Government may be in power, and if it acts on the same policy it will give to the people an entirely different class of entertainment, always with the same eye on its own interests. And absurdity could hardly go farther than for the B.B.C. to arrange for discussions by certain public men while laying down the rule that controversial matter must be avoided. There is little wonder that Mr. Churchill was moved to comment, while others who had some sense of self-respect refused to be associated with such an absurdity.

* * *

A Protest and a Principle.

The use made of the wireless by the Christian Churches is not merely unjust, it is ridiculous. Again, let it be remembered that the wireless is a government monopoly. It gets into millions of homes, and is listened to by all sorts of people. If you wish to listen to anything you must pay a licence,

and may be prosecuted if you do not. Views against religion are prohibited on the ground that they are controversial. But Roman Catholics may preach Catholic doctrines, Churchmen may state theirs, Nonconformists may have their fling, and even Mrs. General Booth is at liberty to voice her ignorant religion, and insult the intelligence of educated men and women with vapid and disgusting talk about the "blood of the Lamb." But if you do not believe in religion, then your voice must be silent. On this head I may let the *Church Times* speak as one not likely to be prejudiced in favour of the position of the *Freethinker*, and because those newspapers on which there are Freethinking writers seem afraid to say as much lest their heretical opinions shall be discovered by their employers. Says the *Church Times* :—

In a country where religious toleration is the law, is it equitable that the Secularist should not be broadcast by a government that claims to be impartial between the faiths and the unfaiths? It is a grave question and one that would be exceedingly practical should a Communist Party allied to Russian Bolshevism ever attain power.

That is a consideration worth bearing in mind by all. Danton replied to those who complained that some of the revolutionists behaved like beasts, that if for centuries the people are treated like beasts, it is idle to expect them to act otherwise when they break loose. If the government and the press, the film, and the wireless give the people constant lessons in the legitimacy and the morality of controlling opinion by every means in their power, there should be no surprise if another party acts in the way in which their education leads them to act.

Again, as during the war, the unfortunate thing is not so much that those in power strive to control opinion—that has always been the case, more or less. The churches, the press, the government, have all striven to do this, and their efforts have become more strenuous with every advance in popular education and with every extension of the franchise. The most serious thing to-day is that so few people see the danger of it, and hardly any party in the country recognizes the evil. On the contrary, there is a struggle to exercise the same influence on behalf of this or that opinion in politics or in religion. It is not that, as was once said, a man's opinions are his own concern. Broadly, they are never exclusively that. If opinion is a modifying force in Society, then the opinions of each are the concern of all. But it is, at the same time, everybody's concern to see that opinions are formed in the right manner, and held upon adequate grounds. And the only way for this to be done is to see that the opportunity for forming an independent opinion is there for all. It is not unanimity but variety of opinion that moves Society onward. A gramophone may repeat, but it can never create.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

We note, since the above was written, that the government has withdrawn its ban on the broadcasting of controversial matter. We have no expectation that this will lead to any alteration so far as religion is concerned. The overdose of religion given on the wireless is, I believe, entirely due to an arrangement between the B.B.C. itself and the churches.—C.C.

Since Baal and Moloch have been overthrown,
You say, Jehovah comes into his own;
But, pardon me, I think that only gammon:
The real ruler of this world is Mammon.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

Salvation Syrup.

"The Salvation Army beats the big drum till it sounds like a German invasion. But it turns out to be only the awkward squad on a beanfeast."

George Foote.

"It is waste of time crying over spilt milk; it only makes the milk more watery."—H. J. Byron.

My correspondence is not so extensive as that of a Member of Parliament, but, small as it is, there are some days when it is almost exciting. This morning it is unusually varied. There is a circular from a tailor, offering a beautiful black coat and vest for a paltry forty shillings, and reminding me in very heavy type that funeral orders are promptly executed. There is a more cheerful looking communication, largely in red type, informing me that, unless £1 3s. 8d. is paid within three days, some worthy members of the Plumbers' Union will disconnect the water supply. There is also a packet of stationery, price twopence, left by "an ex-service man," who has, apparently, fallen on evil days. I saw that old soldier from the bedroom window, and noticed that he was about sixteen years of age. This sad fact reminded me how very young some of the soldiers were who fought in the Great War. And then I took up an envelope with a brief message from General Booth, who, by the way, is not a military man at all.

Writing from Queen Victoria Street, London, the dear General wants some of my money. Not pence, mark you. Oh! dear, No! There is a space for pounds and shillings as well as for what Shakespeare calls "the beggarly denarius." He wants this cash for the Salvation Army's Self Denial Fund; but if I give anything it will be my own self-denial and not the Army's. However, let that pass. And the brave General points out that "The Salvation Army is representing to the people of many lands the highest things in life. It is showing the power of true sympathy with those in sorrow or misfortune. It is holding out a helping hand to multitudes, young and old, who have no other help in life." And the "Army" is doing all this "not only among the Western peoples, but among the millions of Asia and Africa." It is almost as thrilling as Hinkler's flight across the world.

In order that there shall be small room for scepticism, there is a picture of the Salvation Army in Kenya, East Africa. There are about thirty persons in that picture, including the crowd looking on in wonderment. The crowd appears to be a woman with a washing basket on her head, but, on reflection, I think it may be a small man with a large turban. Anyhow, there does not appear to be much sign of a religious revolution in that corner of the Lord's vineyard.

Mind you, the dear General is modest as generals go. There are bigger martinets to be found at Aldershot, or on the sweet shady side of Pall Mall. And the real "brass hats" are apt to bark, if they do not actually bite. Not so the Salvation "General." He does not assert positively that these things are absolutely so, but that he sincerely believes so. Of course, theoretically, England is a free country. You can hold whatever terrible opinions you like, so long as you keep your tongue between your pearly teeth. So the head of the Salvation War Office is entitled to think that his own "Army" represents "the highest things in life." If so, he errs in excellent company. The Sultan of Zanzibar considers his army as the last word in military efficiency, and believes that all criticism is prompted by envy, hatred, and jealousy.

General Booth declares that the Salvation Army "is lifting up Jesus Christ as the Saviour who delivers from sin," which is his flowery way of describing the hard-shell orthodoxy of his organization. Indeed, the Salvation Army is the most reactionary religious body in England, save the Roman Catholic Church. Booth's trademark, "Blood and Fire" proves it beyond dispute. It means that all must wash in the blood of Christ, or fall into the fire of everlasting hell. This may be Christian teaching, it may even be the quintessence of the teaching of Jesus, but most certainly it is not among "the highest things in life."

As for the "Army's" social work, the figures supplied make my poor head swim. The General tells us that just on ten million beds "were supplied to the homeless during the year." This is hard to reconcile with the Government's official figures regarding unemployment, and the returns of the Relieving Officers. But the Salvation Army's statistical department always had large ideas, and liked big totals. Look, for example, at the figures concerning converts in any issue of the *War Cry*, and then add them together from the time this periodical first added to the gaiety of the nation, and disputed with the more serious *Punch* the position of a comic paper. The grand total amounts to millions, showing that the whole population has been converted to Christ—bookmakers, burglars, and policemen alike. Which, as old Euclid puts it, "is absurd." Despite the seriousness of General Booth's appeal, those ten million beds make me feel sleepy. And I only wish that I had the income resulting from letting those dormitories throughout the year.

The Theology of the Salvation Army is as jazzy as that of the coloured Christians of Carolina, U.S.A. It hurts educated people like the wallpaper on a seaside lodging house. You know the sort of thing I mean. A number of blue sea-serpents chasing lumps of pickled cabbage, with a rainbow background. As for the social work of the Salvation Army, it is apparent that its value is exaggerated out of all proportion. Salvationists have all to be teetotalers? What real effect has that on the country's drink bill? Brewers were never so wealthy. Salvationists have all to be abstainers from tobacco. The sale of tobacco and cigarettes was never so great as during the past few years. The "Wild Woodbine" flourishes in every street and alley, "Marcellas" flaunt their red bands everywhere. As for the alleged restoration of tens of thousands of women and girls from lives of vice, statistics show that prostitution is as rife as ever it was. General Booth may boast of the Christian charity of the Salvation Army, but Hadleigh Farm Colony has never excited the admiration of Trade Unionists. There is no "charity," Christian or otherwise, in the extremely business-like Emigration Department of the Salvation Army. The emigrants pay the fares and the Army officials take an emigration agency's usual commission from the railway and shipping companies. The so-called "Suicide Bureau" of the Salvation Army is almost as farcical as the delightful "Suicide Club" described by Stevenson. It is supposed to have saved thousands from self-murder, but it does not appear to have affected in any way the statistics concerning suicide.

The Salvation Army claims that it took religion into the slums. Just so! And the slums are no better for it. If it were not for the police, there are plenty of men in "Merrie England" who would kill anybody for a ten-pound note, and who would cut anybody's fingers off their hands to get their gold rings. There is a section of the population that is work-shy and that likes easy money, and the big drums, trum-

pets, and tambourines of the Salvation Army are as useless in stopping them as a jazz band would be in stopping a typhoon in the Pacific Ocean.

I must decline to give real money to the Salvation Army to fight an imaginary devil. If I must fight, I will fight the greedy, and probably Christian, landlords, slum owners, and profiteers. They have dominated this country too long. If the Salvation Army officials are in earnest, let them stop playing at social reform. It is a bad joke to confine its energies to the working-classes. Let the Salvationists go to the West-end of London, and tell the idle folk there the truth that it is immoral to draw rent from slum property. Let them go to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and ask them if Nature made coal for them to draw royalties. Let them tell their Royal and titled patrons that the drapery and tailoring trades are among the worst-paid industries in the country. Heigho! I must not go on, for I find I am ranting.

On reflection, I regret that I cannot send a donation to the dear General. I am not in sympathy. Besides, those Water Company plumbers must be thought of. Plumbers are far more substantial than the devil of the Christian Religion.

MIMNERMUS.

Mind and Matter.

(Concluded from page 150.)

PROF. HUXLEY points out that a child of three is conscious in the same way as ourselves, so is even a child of one. But, he asks, what about a child of one month, or at birth, or as an embryo before birth? Where is consciousness then? If mind is a spiritual entity above and apart from matter, why does it not manifest itself in the child at birth? The fact is that consciousness and mind are non-existent at birth, but they gradually evolve with the growth of the child. That is, if the brain and nervous system are normal, if they are defective then the child becomes weak-minded, an imbecile, or an idiot, according to the state of the brain.

Again, we can trace the growth of consciousness through the ages, from its commencement in low life, until its culmination in the brain of man: "There is no escape," says Huxley, "from the conclusion that, since this planet was once in a condition in which living matter could not have existed upon it, *ergo* life must have evolved from non-living matter. The material elements of which living matter is chemically composed are all familiar in the inorganic world. The energy-transformations of life and the laws controlling them are no different from those of lifeless matter. Are we to suppose that the mind-like properties of life form the one exception to our principle of continuity? I believe not."

We can trace the growth of consciousness through all the animal series, from its beginning in the lowest animals, up to its full-grown capacity for thought in man, and every advance in higher consciousness is attended by an increase of nervous organization. If the mind is a spiritual entity, why does it have to await the evolution of a complex nervous organization before it can manifest itself?

In sponges, says Prof. Huxley, "the most lowly-organized of all multicellular animals, no one has ever succeeded in demonstrating either nerves or receptor organs in any member of the group" (p. 14). In a slightly higher type, such as sea-anemones and jellyfish, begins the evolution of a rudimentary nervous apparatus. There is no central nervous

system, only "an irregular network of nerve cells and fibres spreading, now more, now less thickly, just below the surface of the body" (p. 11).

Then another step is taken, in worms and the lowest vertebrates, with the commencement of a central nervous system, but without a vestige of a brain. Continuing the evolution, ganglia of nerves, emanating from the central nervous system, begin to form in the region of the head, and the first step in the evolution of a brain has commenced. Prof. Huxley sums up the process as follows:—

The evolution of nerves was the first step: the passage from nerve-net to central nervous system built on the reflex system was the next. But both these steps were doubtless more important in giving greater motor precision than in raising mental intensity. Next came specialization of sense organs, raising the organism from its primitive "dim and windowless existence," and putting it in touch with more of the outer world's happenings—more in quantity, more in quality, more in accuracy, and more in range of distance. But to make use of this information, a co-ordinating mechanism is needed; and from the need of this co-ordination arose the brain. The more complex the animal's existence, the more needful that this co-ordination should extend not merely through all parts of the brain at one instant, but through time as well. Hence the elaboration of those nervous structures which underlie memory, association and learning . . . When brain-machinery is evolved, whose function is not wholly exhausted in directing immediate action, then the mind, it seems, passes its first critical stage and becomes of direct and primary biological importance, no longer secondary and accidental.²

The process has been: "no nerves to nerves; nerve-net to reflex-arc system; no association to association." All the great men, like Galileo, Michelangelo, Edison, including Gautama and Jesus, says Prof. Huxley in conclusion, "such men and all men, mind and all, are but particular arrangements of the universal world-stuff, built up into their special form as the last and most remarkable achievement of a thousand million years of evolution" (p. 50).

The second lecture in the book is by Prof. R. J. S. M'Dowall, professor of Physiology, King's College, London University, and is entitled "Physiology." "To a physiologist," says Prof. M'Dowall, "the problem of the mind is essentially a material one concerning the functions of certain parts of the body. To him the process of thought by which the mind expresses itself is a function of the nervous system, and as such is not appreciably different from any other part of the nervous system, except that it is more elaborate. Now the position of a physiologist is briefly this. He believes that thought, as known to the ordinary man, depends on the brain." "Thought" in fact, "is a response of the nervous system brought about by nervous impulses passing along certain pathways determined by the past environment and heredity of the individual" (pp. 51-52). This, of course, is also the position of the Materialist. The lecturer proceeds:—

The nervous system of man consists of a fore-brain, a mid-brain and a hind-brain, which is continuous with the spinal cord. From this brain and spinal cord, nerves carry messages out and nerves carry messages in. The whole arrangement has been most aptly compared with a telephone system, where the nerve fibres correspond to wires and the brain and spinal cord correspond to exchanges. This does indicate in a very real way the function of a nervous system (p. 55).

¹ J. S. Huxley: *The Mind* (p. 4).

² J. S. Huxley: *The Mind* (pp. 47-48).

And further, we now know "that certain parts of the brain are definitely related to certain activities, and we can indeed now allot a function to a very large amount of brain surface." Thus, the occipital region for the perception of light. The parietal region for general sensation. The temporal region for sounds, and so on.

Then again, our mental powers are at the mercy of a multitude of chemical and medical substances. Bromides slow down mental action. Strychnine in small doses has an opposite effect. Everyone is familiar with the action of alcohol. Chloroform will abolish mental action altogether. Similarly, says the professor:—

The sluggish mentality of those whose thyroid is deficient must be accounted to be due to the slowing down of the oxidative processes in the brain as elsewhere in the body. In the case of cretins, *i.e.*, children whose thyroids are deficient, the mind may remain completely undeveloped and the individual remain an idiot. All such individuals rapidly become normal persons by the administration of thyroid extract, which we know increased oxidation generally throughout the body. Children who otherwise would be idiots, become useful members of society; simply because of increased oxidation they become capable of forming higher associations which would otherwise be impossible (p. 66).

Consciousness itself, which has been made such a mystery of by philosophers and metaphysicians, turns out to be a by-product of oxidative processes, for, we are told, "it is evident that, for an adequate response to environment, the oxidative processes, upon which consciousness depends, are necessary. As indicated above, it is proved beyond all shadow of doubt that consciousness does depend on the oxygen supply of the brain" (pp. 71-72). The brain itself consists of "some ninety hundred million odd cells which may be connected together in an infinite number of ways," and "when we consider the uncountable combinations and permutations of the millions of cells which may be connected together in certain ways in the cerebrum, and consider the possibility that a synapse [a junction] between any two individual cells has its resistance altered, we begin to realize the possibility of a physical basis of mental processes" (p. 75). Man himself is "supreme among the animals because he is possessed of a nervous system which can form associations much beyond those of the lower animals."

In conclusion, Prof. M'Dowall says that he has not the slightest chance of getting the support of professional psychologists and philosophers steeped in classical lore. On the other hand, he believes he will carry with him all those who have had any training in natural science; and he hopes that those who have studied neither will be influenced by the stimulus of his presentation.

W. MANN.

Exeunt Omnes.

WHEN in the ear of Summer whispereth
Her new-come sister Autumn, she must go
The selfsame path that Spring had trod; and so
We, too, must pick our way to wintry Death.
Upon that path Old Age still lingereth,
Creeping from year to year with footsteps slow,
Whilst Sickly Youth comes panting by, as though
He sought in haste the funerary wreath.

What shall console us when our time is come?
The thought that others pass that way as well;
That generations yet unborn must die?
Ask not the heavens for the gods are dumb:
On earth there is no aid, no aid in hell,
Nor all the starry mansions of the sky.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

Damn the Theatre!

THE recent storm in a tea-cup over the production of "Maya," at the Gate Theatre, has prompted these few notes on the censor and the theatre.

Take the theatre seriously.

The two great forces, sometimes working together, sometimes conflicting; Art and Religion. Of all arts, drama being the nearest to life has the widest appeal. Therefore, broadly, we have our two influences in the church and the stage.

The importance of the theatre as an instructive medium. The danger of a corrupt theatre. The example of the Victorians, narrow-minded, ignorant of all matters concerning life and clean healthy living. The reflection and reaction in the cramped music-hall obscenities of the 'eighties. Then the introduction of an open, broader, cleaner form of thought, the theatre always in the lead. The plays of Ibsen and Shaw.

The proof of the leadership of the theatre lies in the perhaps curious fact of censorship; the mere existence of censorship showing the power of the theatre. There is no banned play of fifty years ago which would be considered at all out of place by the most narrow-minded to-day. "Mrs. Warren's Profession," recently produced at the Strand Theatre, was amazing for its lack of any form of offensiveness.

Notice the closeness which exists between censorship on "moral" grounds and on "political" grounds. Thus, plays dealing with birth-control, a social problem, do not escape censorship. Notice also the less obvious, but more active, censorship of the "press and the purse" acting upon plays of political or religious value. "Scrapped," a new play by Miles Malleon, produced by the Independent Labour Party, but boycotted by managers; "R.U.R." and "The Insect Play," removed after short runs, owing to the boycott of the Press.

All this to show the importance of the theatre to the individual and to the race.

To those who feel that censorship is necessary for a cleaner theatre, I would point out that indecency on the public stage is subject to police interference, while I defy them to mention one play that during the last few years has been censored purely because of obscenity.

Malleon's "Black 'Eil" was banned because it was anti-militaristic, Marie Stopes' "Our Ostriches," because it advocated birth-control. Brieux was forced off the stage because he brought to light the dangers of disease; Ibsen, because he satirized the State; Strindberg, because he attacked the marriage system; and scores of others, because they ridiculed existing religious beliefs.

Music-hall jests on Fatty Arbuckle and Mrs. Russell were allowed to remain, while O'Neill, Shaw, and Strindberg, as advanced thinkers, had plays under the ban of censorship.

Yet this increase of censorable plays is a happy omen of a tendency to take the stage seriously; showing that the theatre has become something more than an arena where the English Gentleman, always anxious to kill something, can quietly and comfortably kill time.

W. L. G.

Woe to the philosophers who cannot laugh away their wrinkles! I look on solemnity as a disease. It appears to me that Morality, Study and Gaiety are three sisters, who should never be separated.—Voltaire.

In general, we observe that those become most eminent in the sheep-fold who partake most eminently of the qualities of the wolf.—Bishop Butler—Bagehot.

MEDIOCRACY: The Ravings of a Thirddrate Mind.

PROLOGUE:

The following are a series of monologues inflicted upon Mary, the wife of Joseph the Carpenter, by Rachel, the wife of Isaac, their nearest neighbour. They are pieces of Rachel's mind concerning the doings of Jesus, Mary's eldest son. The author challenges any psychologist or student of human nature to prove that they are not authentic.

MONOLOGUE No 7.

CONCERNING DISRESPECT.

I say Mary, is it true that Jesus was extremely rude to you in public?

Well, I suppose you would say "no," even if he had been. It isn't to be expected that he should turn out well after your dreadful upbringing.

Really? Well then, how did the story begin to get about? There never is smoke without a fire you know, and people say (I'm not saying I believe them mind you, I'm only telling you what they say) that he said "All the World is my mother and my sisters and my brothers," and right out loud in front of everybody too!

Well, if you don't consider that rude, what would you consider rude? I call that real disrespectful.

Oh, "it doesn't mean that he loves you any the less—merely a widening of interests to embrace all Humanity?"

Nonsense, my dear. That's what he tells you. It's real disrespectful. If any of my children said such a thing there would be ructions, I can tell you. I expect to come first with my sons, after all the trouble and worry and expense I've had bringing them up and with one thing and another. Yes I expect to come first, and if you don't believe me, ask my daughters-in-law if I don't.

MONOLOGUE No 8.

CONCERNING AN INDISCRETION.

My dear Mary, I have come to talk to you very seriously, because you are my friend, and it's a thing you really ought to know. Otherwise you might be the last person to hear of it, and so I consider it my duty to tell you; you know how I am when it's a question of duty.

Really the thing has gone too far, of course we all know what men are, but there are limits. Had you heard anything of the way Jesus is getting himself talked about with Mary Magdalen?

Well you know it really won't do, a thing like that is enough to ruin any man's career, if he's so shamefully open about it. Of course she made a dead set at him in the first place—she would, the disgraceful creature! She pushed herself right into Simon's house, a most worthy man, I can't imagine how she got in, and she created such a scene! And of course she is beautiful, though I never could see why anyone likes that kind of beauty, it doesn't appeal to me at all. She poured some most expensive ointment over his feet—what a wicked waste, even if its price was exaggerated—and dried them with her hair. Well, have you ever known any man resist flattery? He has been meeting her ever since, and quite openly too, he doesn't seem to know what shame is!

Really, you should speak to him, Mary.

"I don't understand his motives"? Bosh, that is just what I do understand!

Oh, well have your own way, it may have been all right, I'm not saying it wasn't. I only say that it does look queer. Everyone knows that she is . . . well you know what I mean, don't you? What good motive could he have for talking to a woman like that? At the best it's indiscreet and gives rise to a lot of talk.

What! He asked you to meet her? He introduced her to you? To his Mother? But my dear Mary, it's the kind of thing that isn't done. It absolutely isn't done. You must have been mad to have permitted it. I always did think you were a fool, but this beats anything I ever heard. I really don't know what the World is coming to!

MONOLOGUE No 9.

CONCERNING AN UNPLEASANT HAPPENING.

MARY, dearest, I've come to say how very, very, sorry I am for you in your great affliction.

Well, I must say I do admire your courage. If one of my sons had died I would have had hysterics for at least a month, but then you always were one to take things calmly, and it doesn't do in this World to be quite so sensitive as I am.

Such a vulgar death too. Crucified like a common thief, I should just hate to have a thing like that happen in my family. But there, we won't talk about that.

You know I always did say that you made a mistake in letting him get such an idea of his own importance, and you see I was right. I always am right in things like that. You see it went on and on until he actually thought he had a message from On High. Now if The Lord sent me with a message from On High, I should expect Him to give me the best equipment, stand's to reason, doesn't it? If he had such wonderful powers why did he walk from place to place like a beggar or a tramp, getting all dusty and footsore and tired, when he could easily have created horses or camels or have wished himself from one place to another? Don't tell me that any man could have the power to work miracles and not benefit himself by it—I know better! Think I'd deliver the Lord's message unless He made it worth my while?

"He has been driven from this World, has he?" I could have told you he would be—and just as well too. We are all quite happy, why should anyone try to stir us up and make us lead better lives? Naturally, folk who will try to Reform the World have got to be suppressed. One simply can't take people like that seriously—it would make life so dashed uncomfortable.

ETHEL BREE.

Acid Drops.

A survey of Church attendance in a London area was recently carried out by the *British Weekly*. The population of the area is 80,000. Comparing the figures gained with those of forty years ago the Church of England attendance in the morning has dropped from a total of 2,975 to 620, and evening from 2,975 to 720. With the Free Churches, the attendance has declined in the morning from 2,667 to 360, and in the evening from 3,357 to 1,010. It really looks as though that revival in religion is about due.

The Rev. T. Nightingale says that the figures of attendances at the Free Churches are "heartbreaking." Nor will things be any better till the Churches get back to the "primitive simplicity" of Christianity. That means, we presume, that Mr. Nightingale wants to get back to the demonism of the New Testament, to a literal hell and heaven, damnation for unbelief, etc. If he does not mean that, one would like to know just what is meant by the primitive simplicity of the Church.

From another direction we learn that the revival has come. It has broken out at Oxford, and from what we know of the psychology of adolescent university students, we are not greatly surprised. The new sect gets its inspiration from America, the country which sends us so many freak religions, and its leader is a Dr. Buchman. Members of the new sect sit in circles, holding hands, and its ritual appears to consist in confessing one's secret feelings—we presume they call them "sins"—to one another. They have special inspirations to do this or that, and there is the usual tale of the wonderful results following. And we have no doubt whatever that when a number of young men and women sit down in anticipation of getting an inspiration direct from God, that many of them get it. Inspirations are like miracles, they invariably come to those who expect them.

The authorities, we learn, are opposed to the movement, and are doing what they can to discourage it. We are not surprised at this, although we question whether it is being discouraged for the right reasons. To begin with, there is nothing that offers such a fine opportunity for inartistic religious lying than does this public confession of "sins." The man who has none to confess soon manufactures them, and the bigger and more picturesque the "sins," the more important the man becomes in the eyes of his fellows. One half the tales told by converts are sheer lies, and the rest are magnified. Any one who has studied these stories knows this full well. In the next place, the prospect of a number of adolescent males and females confessing their faults, which are certain to take on a more or less pronounced sexual aspect, is one of the most vicious things in which either can indulge. It suggests far more evil than it is capable of removing. Following all large religious revivals, there is an increase of sexual offences and irregularities, and this is sometimes on so marked a scale as to call forth official notice. There is a sound psychological reason for this. In short, the Oxford outbreak is only one more instance of a phenomenon that has dogged Christianity throughout the whole of its history. We are not astonished that the authorities are alarmed at the outbreak. But the fault lies with the Christian atmosphere in which these men and women have been reared.

Of the 40,000 animals daily slaughtered for food in this country, complains Major Lionel Harrington, nine in ten are done to death by barbaric methods. As St. Paul says: What does God care for oxen? The student of the Bible would answer—"devil a bit." Animals have been slaughtered for food barbarically for thousands of years, but God has said nothing and done nothing. It is only in these late days when man is becoming nearer to a rational being that he is starting to think barbarism in the slaughter-house is not essential.

Ill-natured gossip, thinks a Gloucestershire vicar, is the curse of his parish. He might well have said, of every parish. We hazard a guess that the gossipers are chiefly to be found among habitual church and chapel-goers. For church-going seems to make each Christian think himself (or herself) a little better than his neighbour, and consequently his egotism urges him to indulge in criticism of his fellows in terms of ill-natured gossip.

The Rev. Dr. R. J. Campbell says:—

The number of people who arrogate to themselves the right to criticize, censure, and control others, and to make a nuisance of themselves generally by interfering in matters that do not concern them, appears to be increasing.

The reverend gentleman would appear to have been reading the manifestos of the Lord's Day Observance Society. If that be so, his conclusions may be excusable. We think he has mistaken volume of sound for increase in number. We believe that Sabbatarians (the rabid kind) are decreasing rather than increasing. Though there are still far too many who "make a nuisance of themselves."

The Rev. Cheyne Craddock, of Newcastle, looks like getting himself into trouble. He told a Wesleyan meeting that he would rather sit down and read Shelley's lyrics than some of the rubbishy tracts that are distributed. Whereupon some of his hearers cried "shame," and a Baptist minister, the Rev. Palmer Black, left the platform. Evidently Mr. Black thinks that any tract is better than no tract at all.

What a funny people are the Afghans! When they greet their king in the street they do not cheer him in English—probably they do not even speak English. This, we gather is the thing that strikes the *Daily News*, which reprints the characters which stand for the greeting of the Afghans to their king. And they do look strange. They are not in English. Of course,

someone may reply that our characters might look equally strange to the Afghans, but then ours are English, and that makes a difference. Which makes us repeat, what a funny people are the Afghans! We can imagine the amused tolerance with which the good reader of the *Daily News* will look down upon a people who, when they greet their king, do not know enough to welcome him in plain English.

On March 8 was celebrated the 230th anniversary of the foundation of the S.P.C.K., which specializes in "Christian education"—one of the several kinds of educations in the world that do not educate, that furnish the mind with knowledge (of a sort), but neither train, develop nor improve the intelligence.

According to a parish magazine, "Mothering Sunday" is being revived (by the parsons, of course) in many parishes. The custom is this: each boy and girl coming home on mid-Sunday in Lent, brings a present to their mother. She, in turn, has ready a mothering circle cake for them. The whole family then goes together to the Parish Church to give thanks and to pray for their mothers. It is one of the Church's bright wheezes for "getting 'em there."

Sir Frank Dicksee wishes that some power would banish the hideous toys and dolls now foisted on innocent children. The objection to these things is æsthetic. So, too, we object to priests despoiling the minds of children with the stupid dogmas, hideous tales, degrading superstitions, and primitive notions enshrined in the Christian religion. Our objection is based on æsthetic, moral, ethical, and rational grounds.

Someone thinks that the meagre salaries paid to clerics in the Church of England is a disgrace; yet blame is attached to the reverend gentlemen themselves. So long as they remain silent, we are told, they will suffer. The silence of the clerics on this point is not, we think, particularly marked. We seem to remember hearing complaints almost weekly for the past twenty years. The suggestion is made that the clerics should form a trade-union and compel better wages. We hope such desperate measures will not be adopted. A strike of parsons is horrible to contemplate, inasmuch as it would mean the suspending of a key industry. Everything turns on the Church; and a strike of parsons would hold up the whole community. Let us pray to God that it shall never happen.

A parson says a well-spent Lent is a great power for good in the life of both the individual and the community. There are, however, a number of mistaken ideas about Lent, he says. To some it means being miserable; to others it is a time when one gives up some things that make life worth living. What keeping Lent ought to do is to direct attention to the more serious side of life, but that is not the same as being made miserable; it means, says the parson, that one has to get down to the realities of life. That, we presume, is why the Church urges a semi-starvation diet, and why the Lenten sermon invariably dilates upon matters concerning the unrealities of a next world.

Sir Robert Baden Powell has suggested a form of ceremony for a Scout to undergo when admitted to the Rover Scout brotherhood. The ceremony, which appears based on that used by medieval Christian knights, has a vigil and an investiture. For the vigil the initiate is required to sit for half an hour in a church, to meditate. The implements for the investiture consist of a table with a St. George's Cross flag on it (a blessed Christian emblem!), a jug of water, a basin and a napkin. The candidate puts his hands in the basin, a Rover pours water over them, and another wipes them. The candidate then holds a Union Jack or a Troop flag in his left hand and makes a mystic sign with his right hand. He then assures the company that he will do his duty to

God and the King, will help other people at all times, and will obey the Scout Law. A little more ceremony then follows. The conclusion one forms of all this is that boys and youths of the Scout Movement have characters inferior to that of other boys and youths. It would appear that they cannot be depended upon to keep a simple promise simply made. The promise has to be jumbled up with a lot of solemn, semi-Christian, medieval ceremony, similar to that used to overawe (*i.e.*, scare) Christian Knights into promising to be moderately decent.

Does Sir Robert really believe his boys, as the ceremony would imply, have such poor intelligence and indifferently characters that they cannot be trusted to keep a simple promise unless it is accompanied by primitive ceremonial?

Excavators in Babylonia have opened the burial-place (3,000 B.C.) of Queen Shub-Ad of the Sumerians. After describing various treasures discovered, a contemporary adds:—

But about the Queen are relics of the most cruel superstition. Six sentinels to guard her on her way to the Kingdom of the Dead lie at the entrance of the tomb. The Queen's ladies, eleven in number, had been killed so that they might accompany her and testify to her importance. There are many others who were sacrificed at this frightful entombment. It is a sight to move to pity and to wonderment.

It is. One cannot help wondering why the Christian God permitted this sort of thing to be started, let alone to be continued for many thousands of years. One speculates as to why he neglected to teach the peoples of those days less cruel notions, and less pitiless religious rites. According to Christian teaching, he was about at that time of day, and one wonders why he did not instruct men in the proper way to worship the President of the Immortals, and that it was unnecessary for a Queen to be accompanied by lesser folk. The fact remains that God did nothing. And one speculates on why this should be so. Perhaps he knew no better himself, but like man, has learned to be more humane by slow degrees. There may be "progressive revelation" for gods as well as men. Maybe for some inscrutable reason he preferred not to interfere at the moment; or perhaps he was preparing his wonderful plan of sending a bit of himself to teach men different 3,000 years later. There seems little likelihood of our getting answers to these queries. God's ways are not our ways, say the pious. And perhaps it were better so. We dislike to think of men being like gods—the gods revealed by the religions of the world.

A letter in a weekly paper, presumably from a curate, says:—

How can the country curate be expected to sympathize with his poorer parishioners, when he himself is in such dire circumstances? The sooner the Ecclesiastical Commissioners get to work and remedy the grave injustice which is being done, so much sooner will the Church become a living force in the country.

The writer has *our* sympathy. We can quite see how hard it must be for a curate as poor (or nearly so) as the Gospel Christ to appreciate the feelings of poverty-stricken parishioners. It is a good fat stipend (that Christ never had) which engenders that "fellow feeling, wondrous kind." If the Commissioners really want to see the Church as a living force, they had better increase the curate's salary—he's not keen on this kind of "imitation of Christ."

The Rev. H. W. Blackburne, a vicar in Kent, thinks that parents do not realize the value of teaching in Sunday schools as they used to do. In his town he says the Church ought to be training hundreds of children to be "keen, devoted Church people of the future." He wants every reader of his parish magazine to encourage children to attend his Sunday schools. We gather that youthful clients are not so plentiful as the rev. gent.

would wish for. Still, he sees one hopeful sign—"the number of small children, who, thanks to our Baptismal Roll, so excellently organized, are joining the Infants' Sunday schools as soon as they are four or five years old." The Baptismal Roll is a good wheeze. The way to ensure a good supply of devoted Church people in the future is to catch the young as they drop out of the cradle. There is little hope of inoculating them once their intelligence has begun to mature. Then, they have an ungodly habit of sensing "difficulties" in regard to Christian teaching; and what is worse, of becoming indifferent. As the vicar sees, the ideal time for getting Christian beliefs to "take" is when the child is leaving the cradle—the beliefs so wonderfully accord with the immature mind. Haven't our vicars keen insight?

Frankly, we are unable to understand how it comes about that one following the teacher who commanded them to "Sell all and give to the poor," should leave any sum behind on this wicked earth. The Rev. W. A. C. Atkins left £22,780, and when church organizations have swept a little of this kind of materialism off their own doorsteps they might be in a position to listen to a statement of real materialism by their opponents.

It is announced in the press that at St. Aldan's Church, Mansfield:—

The Rev. H. W. Quarrell opened the first subject—future life and the doctrine of purgatory—whereon Mr. F. G. Phillips, a local grammar schoolmaster, interrupted him with comments and questions from the second pulpit, and the sermon proceeded in dialogue form.

So that the church now is hunting in pairs. As the Rev. H. W. Quarrell is supposed to understand mysteries, we will present him with one: there are two sides to a plum pudding, the inside and the outside, but both sides of his arrangement are only one side. With the charming logic of a clothes horse, the public is expected to believe that this method removes the reproach that the pulpit is the coward's castle. This should be told to the marines for—and here is another mystery—the church represented by the Rev. H. W. Quarrell has always the Brawling Act up its sleeve.

In connexion with a murder at Titson, near Bude, we only make one comment on the extract herewith taken from a newspaper—the Rev. A. R. Johnson should be the last person to criticize the wisdom of creation:—

The Rector, the Rev. A. R. Johnson, commenting upon the attendance, said: "I am surprised that an event that has created a sensation throughout the length and breadth of the country has not stirred the people of Scotter. It is strange that the originator of all this commotion remains unknown. We don't know who did this terrible thing, but it would have been better had he never been created."

This may be so, but a church is not the place in which to call attention to God Almighty's blunders.

Pity the poor editor of that daily paper who permitted the following letter to appear. By this time he has been deluged by letters of remonstrance from the pious:—

It has been said that an effort is to be made by all Christian people to pray for peace. I can but quote Omar Khayyam:—

"And that inverted Bowl they call the sky,
Whereunder crawling coop'd we live and die,
Lift not your hands to *It* for help—for *It*
Impotently moves as you or I."

Nothing will be gained by praying. We must be up and doing, not wasting time on our knees. Surely it is time we relied more on ourselves and a little less on prayer.

We feel sure this piece of common-sense will prove unpalatable to that daily paper's readers. If it should set just a few of them thinking, something will be gained in this world of potted opinions, which are sold over the counter at a penny a day.

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.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—T. Edwards, 2s. 9d.; J. H. Saunders, 6s. 3d.

R. HARDING.—Crowded out of present issue. Will appear next week.

CATHOLIC SCIENTIST.—A discussion on the Blasphemy Laws with one who holds that it is blasphemy to dispute the existence of God, and who would justify the suppression of blasphemy on that ground would be too hopelessly medieval to serve any useful purpose. We must keep Christians—in these columns—within a couple of centuries of 1928.

S. B. SAVILL.—You will see that the decision of the government not to ban the broadcasting of controversies on religion alters somewhat the ground of the discussion. We must now see what new excuse the B.B.C. will make.

J. BARTRAM.—Your postcard was not delivered at this office until the morning of Wednesday, the 29th. It bore the postmark of the 28th.

H. BLACK.—Glad to hear that the sales of the *Freethinker* have increased with your agent as the result of constant display of posters. We wish that others would exert themselves as you do to make the paper better known. We should much like to see someone in each district take the matter up.

F. D. EVANS.—It is one aspect of the world-wide custom of initiation. All primitive peoples have these, and it has come down to civilized times. The use of water is as a symbol of life. Hardly any religious person does understand the meaning of the service in which he takes part. Your friend is no exception to the rule.

SUNER RASLIE.—Unqualified pessimism or unqualified optimism are, in our opinion, equally unreasonable. They are far more expressions of temperament than a philosophizing on facts.

M. J. STAUNTON.—We think it very probable that the Hebrew speaking people, refers to some language in which Hebrew is an ingredient, something the same as is the case with Yiddish, which is very largely German. But we have no information on the subject and cannot speak with certainty. Thanks for paper.

S. SAYLE.—The question as to the artistic value of the film is so much a matter of taste, that it would hardly serve as a profitable subject for discussion in these columns.

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

To-day (March 11) Mr. Cohen will lecture twice in the Engineers Hall, Rusholme Road, Manchester. The meetings will be at 3.0 and 6.30. Next Sunday, Mr. Cohen will visit Plymouth.

There was no questioning the enjoyable nature of the Social and Dance organized by the Executive on Saturday, March 3. The musical part of the programme carried on the tradition established by the Executive for excellence and variety. Messrs. Rall and Tando with their humorous musical entertainment, and Mr. Alec Hardisty vied with the ladies, Miss Lilian Morgan and Miss Violet Stevens, in securing the applause of the audience. And one could have listened much longer to the delightful singing of Miss Lilian Myers, who, with her remarkable purity and tone, and range of voice, won the admiration of all. Dancing filled up the larger part of the time, and with an excellent orchestra the evening passed away only too rapidly for most of those present. There were many enquiries as to similar functions in the future, and these will probably be arranged.

Some time ago Mr. Cohen was asked to write a letter to be read at the Annual Congress of the American Rationalist Association. He did so and the letter was published in a recent issue of the *New York Truth Seeker*. We reprint it in another part of this issue of the *Freethinker*.

We mentioned some time ago the report of a sum of fifty thousand dollars that had been left to the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism. We now learn that the will has been set aside owing to some legal defect. We regret to hear of this, although, provided a will is properly drawn, we are safe from this kind of thing, now, in this country. It is always as well for those who desire to benefit the Freethought Movement to ask the advice of those in a position to say just what should be done.

We deal, in "Views and Opinions," with the use made by the churches of the wireless, but just as we go to press we learn that the government has decided, in view, we presume, of the agitation that has gone on, to withdraw its ban on the broadcasting of controversial religious and political subjects. So far, good; but we have not any great hopes that the B.B.C. will permit anything in the nature of a straightforward criticism of Christianity to be broadcast. Any discussion on religion will be restricted to perfectly "safe" speakers. And we mean by safe speakers such as will confess their sorrow that they do not go to Church, and will blather about the beauty of pure Christianity and the figure of Christ. In this way Christian listeners will turn away more than ever satisfied with themselves, and full of sympathy for the poor unfortunate unbeliever. Still, as we believe that the bombardment we have incited has had a hand in securing the concession announced, it will be just as well for our readers to keep it up.

Another mosque is to be built in London, which is the heaping of coals of fire on the head of the west by the east. The Nizam of Hyderabad has promised £40,000 towards the building, the total cost of which is estimated at £100,000. In this respect, however, we notice that the sordid element of money enters into the transaction in just the same way that it applies to any western body dealing in faith.

Still may you guide into your fold
Flocks with fleeces of pure gold,
Shepherding through this world of ours,
Truth, Justice, Laughter, and—the Flowers.

Sylvia Lynd.

The Quest for the "Unknowable."

READING the letters of Lafcadio Hearn is a sheer delight. He was in tune with the East, and his delineation of the Oriental and his philosophy is marked by intense sympathy and well-nigh perfect understanding. In his philosophical outlook, Hearn was a disciple of Herbert Spencer, and found support in the Englishman's "Synthetic Philosophy" for the metaphysical doctrines of Buddhism. He was well acquainted with the religion of the people, and wrote about it with the knowledge gained by deep communion with the common folk, but his most brilliant work was done in the higher phases of Buddhist thought; in the quest for the "Absolute," the hunt for the permanent reality or the substance of things.

This quest for the "Unknowable" goes on unceasingly. It is in the nature of man to stretch out his hands to the Unknown and be curious about the "why" of things. "If one could only imagine some explanation of the why!" wrote Hearn, "The question of the whence and whither are much less troublesome, since the Present assures us, even though vaguely, of Future and Past. But the why!" And Spencer himself encourages the seekers when he says that owing to everything, every feeling and thought, every object amid which life is passed, being transitory, "we learn that the one thing permanent is the Unknowable Reality hidden under all these changing shapes." And it seems to me that underneath the common denunciations of Materialism in the works of scientists and philosophers, this desire to have knowledge of the "why" is the dominating factor. In one of Benn's sixpenny books, for example, that by J. Rice on *Relativity*, the author has a slap at scientific materialism on his first page. He speaks disparagingly of the "mechanical view" of science in the middle of the book, and finishes up with the statement that "the biological and social sciences have followed the philosophers in their search for a view of life which will recognize that man is not the mere product of natural forces which go on blindly." That in a book whose object is, as far as I can understand it, to state some hitherto undiscovered conditions under which certain phenomena occur. The whole question is argued out on deterministic lines. Step by step, the author relies on conditioned factors to present his idea of Einstein's theory. He rejects Newton's theory of absolute time and space; the argument for which, or rather the argument leading up to it, that as an instant of time is thought of as having no duration, and a line in space as having no breadth, the step from an infinitude of instants, each having no duration, to that of absolute time, is logical and necessary; the same process regarding a line with no breadth takes us easily to absolute space, is stated to show its absurdity. Einstein's theory apparently took away the necessity for Newton's idea, and Mr. Rice says so, plainly, yet he casts scorn on a scientific principle which insists on the conditioned and denies the need of going on to the unconditioned.

He wants, I imagine, some basis on which to rest his inborn faculty of wonder. Speaking of those fitted to appreciate the more subtle doctrines of Buddhism, one of the holy books says, "they shall be endowed with the highest wonder," and this capacity to absorb the Unknowable is backed up by Hearn with a wealth of argument, brilliant in its presentment. Most of the argument used to support the idea of the "Absolute" is simply vituperation of the Materialist position, but Hearn is far removed

from the anti-Materialist in this respect. Like many of them, Spencer and Buddha, for instance, he is Materialist right up to the moment of jumping across the border between the known and the other thing. Hearn argues that the high doctrine of Buddhism anticipated the principles of modern science and asserts that both support the logical necessity of going from the Known to the "Unknowable." So that the philosophical basis for the belief in a supermundane power hasn't shifted much during the last two thousand years; the adherent of the "Unknowable" takes his stand on airy nothing now as he did when Gautama expounded his doctrines.

In this region where the unconditioned rules, man domiciles his gods; there is no other habitation since materialistic science drove them from "high Olympus." As a home it is immensely safer than their former abode, for none but the faithful can enter, and they are blindfolded ere they start. No one but a Buddha, who for some millions of years has been engaged, in a myriad of worlds, shedding the dross of the illusions which prevail in this one, can tell what lies behind the outward show of things, and he won't. But the modern spiritist philosopher can tell us why it should be so, and apart from the value of knowing the truth about anything, he might be allowed to have his way, were it not that his "other world" is the fruitful source of much of man's agony and woe. This particular frame of mind is the forcing ground for the noxious plants of bigotry and persecution.

Hearn states the case for the "Unknowable" in an essay on Nirvana in "Gleanings in Buddha Fields." One need not consider the fantastic medley of ideas concerning the evolution of a Buddha or the remarkable analogy with modern science in the Buddhist idea of the Cosmos—"Incomprehensible anticipations of modern scientific discovery," as the author puts it, or even the facility with which the "Absolute" burdens itself with hampering conditions. They are presented with wonderful plausibility and, in good faith, always with an appeal to the human capacity for wonder. But he comes back boldly to the modern scientist for confirmation of his central theme; the existence of an underlying reality. "Unconsciously dwelling," he says, "behind the false consciousness of imperfect man—beyond sensation, perception, thought—wrapped in the envelope of what we call soul, is the eternal and divine, the Absolute Reality." And again, "we know nothing whatever of the ultimate nature of substance and motion: but we have scientific evidence that what we call matter and force are but different manifestations of a single and infinite Unknown Reality." Many scientists subscribe to statements such as these, and see in them a philosophic basis for their spiritist beliefs, but it is not done in virtue of their scientific knowledge. It is purely arbitrary: There is no scientific sanction, so far, for the "thing in itself," for the something apart and distinct from that which comes to us through the medium of the senses. When science states fully the circumstances under which a thing happens, it has given a scientific explanation of it. When the spiritist goes further and asserts that something more is needed he has left the domain of verifiable knowledge, and entered a region conditioned by the far away illusions of primitive man. The belief in the "Absolute Reality" is, at bottom, motivated by human vanity. Man is but an incident in the eternity of time, but, being risen a little above his fellows and full of fear, he wishes for a continuance of life after he has departed hence. The argument for the "Absolute" is, in effect, an argument for a supernatural personality who can

make this possible. Just as fear made many of the pagan gods, so it has made this pseudo-scientific one. The author of *Relativity* is fiddling with the same idea when he stresses the contention that man has a peculiar importance in Nature. From the standpoint of natural law, he is no more important than a tadpole. Allowing for poetic license the satirist is much nearer the truth:—

Existence as we know it, spins
A fatal warp, a woof of woe.
There is no place for God or soul,
Works, hopes, prayers, sacrifices, sins
Are jokes. The Cosmos happened so:
Else what were man's appointed term?
To feed God's friend, the coffin worm!

H. B. DODDS.

Masterpieces of Freethought.

3. LA VIE DE JESUS.

By Leo Taxil.

II.

THERE is no need, of course, to go as far as Leo Taxil and declare that the history of Jesus is merely a tissue of stupid and immoral fables. Modern scientific investigation of the history of religions and the legends and myths of nations, together with what is known as the textual criticism of religious documents have all done their work in dissolving Christianity into its proper elements. But the purpose of the French writer was to satirize the solemn nonsense of the Gospels, if it is asserted that the stories as narrated actually took place. Half the mystery of religion lies in its archaic form. The prose of the Authorized Version, so different from that in use today, has just the necessary solemnity required to keep the believer assured he is on holy ground when reading it. A modern version reads as secular as a novel, and the "mystery" vanishes. *Macbeth* in ancient costume is a deep tragedy. Played in modern military uniforms, silk stockings and knee dresses, it is ridiculous and not even Shakespeare's majestic verse can save it.

Taxil retold the story of Jesus in French slang. Only those acquainted with the delicious absurdities and diverting turns of phrase which form the basis of *argot* can appreciate the effect of such language on the holy story. Some of the captions used in genuine American films as examples of comic English, give a faint idea of the kind of French Taxil employed in writing his work. It would require the knowledge of both languages possessed by Sir Thomas Urquhart, as shown in his edition of Rabelais to do full justice to *La Vie de Jésus* in translation. Moreover, Taxil packed the book with the funniest anachronisms he could think of. His description of the Pool of Bethesda reads exactly like one of the bathing establishments on the Seine. Let me roughly translate a passage:—

Jesus decided to visit the Pool just at the time when a paralytic was pitying himself there.

The Word was accompanied by a multitude of nosy people. They roared with laughter at the aspect of the aforementioned invalid, who was well known in the district.

"What's the joke?" asked Jesus.

He was immediately told the history of the paralytic, which caused everybody to chuckle again and made the invalid turn blue with rage.

Never had such a splendid occasion presented itself to Jesus, to prove once for all to the people of Jerusalem that the Dove was really his authentic Papa.

He walked towards the poor chap, who couldn't

move more than his little finger, so paralysed was he, and said: "Do you wish to be cured?" "What a question!" grumbled the paralytic, "Why I've come here for thirty-eight years for that!"

"And it doesn't look as if you've succeeded, does it?"

"Succeeded! I can't manage a step even. But what do you expect? Every time the water is moved by the angel the others make a hole in it before you can say Jack Robinson!"

"Do you mean to say no one helps you then?"

"Rather—there's always some idiot who helps me so that I'm just too late. No one's sporty enough to give me a good push first. I wouldn't bear a grudge against any one who did though—on the contrary!"

"Um, you *are* to be pitied."

"I am that—but why the blazes are you just pitying me then? If you really care a brass button for my fate, wait here till the water's moved again and shove me in . . .!"

Jesus shrugged his shoulders and then said: "Get up, take your bed and march!"

The invalid thought once again that the Son of the Dove was joking. He was just beginning to kick up a row when suddenly he felt the blood coursing through his veins. "Lumme," he whispered awestruck, "my finger is moving!"

And he moved it easily from side to side.

"And there goes my leg!" In fact, his left leg started to caper about followed by the right.

"Crikey, there go my arms!" And he jumped like a cat whose tail has been pulled. The spectators gasped. The bath attendants were dumbfounded. The seven apostles stood proudly by as if they had helped in the miracle. As for Jesus, he looked on with evident satisfaction. "By gum!" cried the ex-paralytic, who was dancing about with joy, "you're the finest healer I've ever met!" On which he gathered up his pallet, put it under his arm, thanked the Word and rushed into the street.

He had hardly got out of the place when he was pounced upon by two policemen.

"Here, hold on!" they shouted, "how do you manage to run like that?"

The ex-paralytic stopped. "Golly," he said, "I'm dying to tell my family how well I am."

"Of course—can't we see that? But don't you know it's Saturday to-day, and you are not allowed to work?"

"I'm blessed if I see how you make out looking well constitutes work?"

"Right oh, mate—it's not a question of your health, but of the bed you've got under your arm."

"What about it?"

"Don't blither, man—you know quite well Moses has expressly forbidden flitting on the Sabbath day!"

Though I have tried to introduce some slang into the above extract, I must confess I have not managed to get quite the verve, the joyousness, the utter abandon of the original. It is as coarse as you like. It mocks the sacred narrative in language which must have caused pious Catholics' hair to stand on end. It probably overshot the mark, but it is absolutely unique in its attack. Indeed, its author claims that in some cases at least, the original Gospel is far sillier. He quotes the fifth chapter of John as a case to point and reproduces most of it as an example of drivel, so that the reader can make a fair comparison.

"You must admit," says Taxil in a note, "that it requires some pretty strong faith to disentangle even a scribble of reason in this rambling budget. If anybody were questioned on a matter of law and replied in the same way, there would be no hesitation in sending him to an asylum." Another point. Taxil insists that if Jesus lived and moved and talked, it is quite probable he also *snored*. Imagine the horror of the Orthodox Catholic who is

told that his deity was subject to such an undignified breach of good manners! The occasion was when Jesus and the apostles took a little trip on the water. (Mark, Chap. 5.)

Neither the great storm nor the waves awoke Jesus.

And Jesus continued snoring. Terrified, the apostles threw themselves on to him and pulled his arm.

Jesus yawned, stretched himself and wanted to know why he was so rudely awakened.

"Can't you see, Master, the boat is about to be shipwrecked? Let us save ourselves!"

"I say, for a little matter like that you wake me up . . . come, come, that's not sporty."

"But, Master . . ."

"Oh, you people of little faith, what are you frightened about? How can even the least harm come to you while I'm here?"

"Expect you're right, Rabbi, but the water is pouring into the boat, the pumps are useless, and in a few moments the boat will be submerged . . ."

Then Jesus got up and warmly remonstrated with the wind. "What about it, Sir Wind? You allow yourself to bellow and jostle this boat to frighten my disciples! It's a bit hot, isn't it? Besides, who authorized you? Let me tell you it won't do! I don't know what stops me from thoroughly punishing you!"

The Wind replied with some extra strong whistles. "Here, stop it," said Jesus, "That's enough. It is I, the Word, who order you!" And the wind did as it was told.

Now, seriously, is this really much more humorous than the text in Mark: "And he arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased and there was a great calm"? The picture of Jesus rebuking the wind is swallowed by millions of Christians as Gospel Truth, but it would be extremely difficult to invent a more ludicrous episode, and Taxil exploited the whole incident with the utmost effect. Space again compels me to close, but though this particular *Life of Jesus* may be unknown to most of the readers of this journal, I hope I have interested them in a small way in one of the masterpieces of Freethought, perhaps the only one of its kind ever written.

H. CUTNER.

Freethought in England and America.

A LETTER FROM MR. CHAPMAN COHEN, READ TO THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAN RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION.

NOTHING would give me greater pleasure than to be with you at your Conference and to convey personally the good wishes of British Freethinkers to their American brethren. But as that is not possible at present I must ask you to be good enough to convey to your members the most fraternal greetings from myself personally, and from the National Secular Society, of which I have the honour to be president.

I can assure you that we in this country watch with the keenest interest and the heartiest appreciation the fight you are all making against the historic enemy of progress and humanity. In this fight distance sets up no barrier. We are all engaged in a common fight against a common enemy, and we are animated by ideals which we hold in common. We both have to fight an enemy entrenched behind the barriers of unreasoning conservatism, established privilege and vested interest, and buttressed by the inertia and the mental cowardice of the mass of the people. We have both to fight against the weapons of slander, misrepresentation, blind prejudice, and the influence of legislation designed to place an embargo on freedom of thought and speech. And both British and American Freethought have been moulded by descent from the same intrepid band of fearless fighters in the cause of mental emancipation.

The differences that distinguish the two are super-

ficial, not fundamental. It is true that the cruder forms of the Christian superstition, as represented by the Roman Catholic Church on the one hand, and the primitive intellectuality of Fundamentalism on the other, appear to be more strongly aggressive with you than with us, but we have them both here. The difference would appear to be due to the existence of an Established Church, which has managed to keep the less developed forces of religion better under control, and had so far compelled a more decent presentation of religious forms in both the churches and in the arena of social and political life. This, again, has its disadvantage, and the comparative freedom of the American Constitution from religious partisanship—more theoretical than actual, it would seem—makes it a more difficult matter to contest the political side of religion in Britain than it should be in America.

But I do not think that either with you or with us there is cause to feel anything but proud of the advance made during the past two or three generations by the Freethought cause. Many of the doctrines that were universally held by Christians a couple of generations ago, are now denounced as stupid, savage, and brutal by thousands of clergymen in the churches of England and America. The scientific and ethical teachings denounced as untrue and immoral are now being openly taught by these same people. They are lisping the teachings that only yesterday they sent men and women to prison for expounding.

It is perhaps in this direction that the most striking effects of Freethought work is to be found. I do not believe that any Freethinking organization that declares its message in a clear and uncompromising manner will ever have a really large membership. The dislike of men and women to identify themselves with an unpopular movement will prevent this. In this matter Freethinkers must make up their minds as to whether they will be in front or fall in with the crowd. But they cannot be in front with the crowd. They must choose whether they will be pioneers or followers, voices or echoes.

For this reason it is outside the ranks of our declared membership that we must go to note the full effects of our work. There is not a heresy within the churches to-day that was not born of the Freethought activity of past years. Highly placed Christians, with a reputation for scholarship and liberality, may damn all Freethinkers from Paine to Ingersoll, or from Spinoza to Bradlaugh, but their liberality is the fruits of their heresy, and the watered down criticisms of religion with which they startle the primitives of the Christian world are the feeble echoes of their teaching. For one man who has the courage to declare himself an unbeliever there are a score who would declare themselves had they the courage to do so. And there are thousands beyond these who feel the good influence of the good work of these Freethinkers without being in the least aware of the names of their benefactors.

I believe that in the near future Freethinkers will have seriously to reckon with the power and policy of the Roman Catholic Church. On your side of the Atlantic that church is far more strongly organized in the political work than is the case here. With us it has to be a little more circumspect than it appears to be with you. But everywhere the Roman Church adheres tenaciously to its policy of dominating the secular power and of stifling to the utmost of its own power the spirit of free enquiry. And the very growth of Freethought is in a way helping the Roman Church, although that help is of a temporary character and one for which it will pay dearly in the long run. We are steadily draining the churches of their best brains, and this, side by side with the rapid growth of Freethinking ideas, is leading many to seek refuge in the Roman Church as the one logical alternative to complete skepticism.

But the enemy we have to fight is not in the churches alone. Quite apart from the organized superstition which meets us in Christian and non-Christian Churches, there is an immense mass of unorganized superstition current which always contains a danger to genuine civilization. The prevalence of crude superstition among the people, arguing as it does the preva-

lence of uncritical and unscientific types of intellect, is a phenomenon that must fill all sociologists with the gravest fears. It was in view of this that Sir James Frazer described the civilization of the world as resting on a volcano which might one day awake to activity and destroy much of that we prize so greatly. The aim of Freethought is not merely the destruction of the superstition of Christianity, but the destruction of all superstition under whatever form it may exist. It is the rationalizing of life that is our ultimate aim.

But withal we can, I think, look forward to the future with confidence and face it with courage. Modern science has placed within our grasp weapons far stronger than any our forerunners possessed. Thanks to developments in comparative religion, to anthropological researches, to the mass of knowledge at our command connected with all branches of human history and experience, we are able to attack religion from a much higher platform than was possible before our day. We need no longer merely deny religion, we can explain it, and that is the most deadly attack of all. It is one to which the churches have been quite unable to find a reply, and I venture to think never will find a reply. Superstition belongs in an ever increasing manner to the past. The future belongs to Freethought.

We are in the line of a great tradition that has been built up by many brave and self-sacrificing men and women. If we show ourselves worthy of that ancestry we shall have done something to repay our dead a part of the debt we owe them, and so to make easier the path of those who are to follow.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Reprinted from "The Truth Seeker." (February 18, 1928.)

American Notes.

"THE SCIENCE OF THE SACRAMENTS."

This is the title of a new book by a bishop. It ought to be rather informing. I had visions of Mr. Chapman Cohen repenting his recent much appreciated replies to Bishop Barnes. The "science" of it all at last! Unfortunately the episcopal author is only a "kind of bishop." He is our old friend, now in America, Bishop Leadbeater, who calls himself a bishop of the "Liberal Catholic Church." If you claim that the "bish" is insane, I can only tell you in return that he is a Theosophist. Who can say that he is any more mad than any other bishop? I, at least, am far too charitable for that. The book is a masterpiece. All those funny duds worn by the amusing bishops have a scientific utility which I never once guessed at, often as I have laughed at them in my youth in church. Now comes Leadbeater, of all people, to explain that these high jesters don't wear their stole, chasuble, alb, and so on, merely to create a very merry bit of fun, like the clowns at other places of amusement. All this remarkable millinery is shown by Leadbeater to be a divinely suggested medium for God to function through. The Grace of God is a sort of electric current which uses these otherwise idiotic garments, just as electricity uses wires. Read what our scientific bishop says about the "Stole," like women wear (a scarf or tippet): "The force which accumulates under the surplice during a service, rushes up through the neck-hole, and is attracted by the metal cross fastened to the middle of the stole. Thence it flows down both sides of the stole to the ends, where it forms a vortex around each cross attached thereto, and it then radiates out upon the people through the metal fringe."

Of the "biretta," our author says: "Its use is that of the same character as a cork in a bottle—to prevent evaporation and consequent waste." Evidently without this hat or cap our bishops' brains would run grave risk of evaporation. But I think Bishop Leadbeater exaggerates the risk. There is precious little fear of the average bishop losing anything noticeable. By the way, can it be that some of them have taken off their biretta long ago? Of course nobody in the diocese would notice that anything had evaporated.

TALKING OF THEOSOPIHY.

Theosophy is pretty widely patronized in the land of the free (I mean, of course, America). I gather from some of their literature that there is a good deal of criticism and very little unanimity in the movement. The new Christ, Mr. Krishnomurti, does not seem, on the whole, to be quite such a fool as his sponsors want him to appear to be. If one may judge by the few utterances of his that have been published here, it almost seems as if he is a simple, honest, well-intentioned young man, not at all likely to suit the ambitions of the powerful gang who want to "run" him. The earlier Saviour of the World was betrayed by one of his disciples. What a jest if the new one betrays (or exposes) his disciples.

PRISONS IN AMERICA.

Prison life in America is a decided contrast to that of England. Patrick C. Murphy is a life prisoner at Idaho State Penitentiary, where he has already served twelve years or more. Murphy has written an autobiography in prison, and he is allowed to sell it direct from the jail! It is a wonderful production, and a marvellous story. He was quite penniless when he entered the jail, and by sheer industry, aided by the extraordinary common-sense of the prison regulations, he has in twelve years gradually made a business which he advertises all over Idaho, and sells the products he manufactures. Beginning by utilizing the waste found in the garbage cans of the prison, at first making the simplest of articles to sell at a cent each, he has at length erected at his own expense in the prison yard, a special building, with seven windows, and concrete floor, and equipped with the latest electrically-driven machine tools required by his big trade demands. Around this shop, he has made a large grass lawn and flower beds, where formerly were only heaps of stones. His autobiography shows him to be a modest man and a Freethinker, with not the least sign of "side." Anybody who wants to write to him will find him always "at home," in Idaho Penitentiary.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Religion in New Zealand.

A TABLE of analysis of the religious professions of the people of New Zealand as enumerated in 1926 census returns has recently been issued by the Government Statistician. This table is somewhat misleading as the system adopted works out apparently in favour of the dominant creeds, but further analysis gives encouragement to friends of intellectual emancipation. For example, the Church of England with 553,992 adherents is credited with having "43.45 per cent. proportion of total of specified beliefs." This statement is perfectly correct as it stands, but it requires some study to find out that this does not mean 43.45 of our population. While those with "no religion" are included in this computation, for some mysterious reason 62,527 persons who "object to state," and 6,973 persons "unspecified" are not included when working out the proportion as given. When these are included (and why shouldn't they be?) the proportion of Church of England adherents is but 41.05 of New Zealand's population. The discrepancy is still more glaring when the totals of all the numerous brands of Christians are added together, as in the table the total proportion is given as 98.88 per cent. of specified beliefs, but when those left out are counted, the real proportion on the community basis is less by 5.12 per cent., and is but 93.76 per cent. of the population.

The table assuredly does show that Agnostics, Rationalists and Atheists have made substantial progress in numbers; and that among the four main bodies of Christians—Church of England, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics and Methodists—only the Presbyterians are nominally holding their own, as each of the other three denominations shows a severe loss when compared with the increase of population, but one has actually to go to the last census returns (1921) to see how unfavourable is the position of the Churches when compared with the previous enumeration. As so nicely served up by the

Government Statistician it cannot be seen from his published table that the total proportion who professed adherence to the various brands of Christianity was 95.41 per cent. of the total population in 1921, but that this proportion has now fallen to 93.76 per cent. Or that in 1921 the proportion of those who claimed no adherence to any of the Christian denominations was 4.59 per cent. and that this proportion has now risen to 6.24 per cent.

Besides, the New Zealander earnestly asks himself—What manner of religious man is the average "census" Christian? How much piety is left in New Zealand to go round nine tenths of our population? Does it amount to more than the thinnest of thin conventional veneer for the great bulk of "on paper" Christians? That our clergymen are rapidly losing their influence in the community is best known to themselves, but it is a matter for congratulation that at last we have reflected in the census figures the unmistakable fact that we are throwing off the clerical yoke.

J. SIM.

Auckland, N.Z.

Obituary.

MR. VINCENT J. HANDS.

NEWS of the death of Mr. Vincent J. Hands was received last Tuesday as the *Freethinker* went to press, and was briefly reported in the paper. Mr. Hands, who died of tuberculosis, had been ill for some years. Those who were personally acquainted with him knew that the inevitable end was drawing near. Those who did not know him, but who realized his interest in Free-thought and noticed with regret the gradual cessation of his articles in the *Freethinker*, were to some extent prepared for the announcement we made last week.

It was in 1922 that Mr. Hands first became known to our readers as a frequent contributor to the paper. His first articles dealt in a general and usual way with Free-thought; but he soon developed a characteristic way of treating his subject matter—a style at once humorous and personal—which made him a favourite contributor with many readers. Occasionally he entered the lists with those weighty writers who breathe the rarified air of the philosophic heights—there was his brush with Dr. Lynch—but while he always gave a good account of himself, he had naturally the more human approach of the light and humorous essayist.

Throughout a long illness, Mr. Hands struggled bravely on, but after Christmas his health rapidly declined, and he knew at last that the end was near. He was only thirty-one.

Mr. Hands' funeral was, as he wished it to be, a Secular one. Mr. G. Whitehead conducted the service. Mr. Hands leaves a wife and a son aged three. We feel we are speaking for all the readers of the *Freethinker* in offering to Mrs. Hands our very sincere sympathy.

Society News.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

MR. J. MURPHY's fine address on "Roman Catholicism and the Modern Spirit," was greatly appreciated last Sunday, many of those joining in the discussion expressing their admiration for the interesting and scholarly treatment the subject received.

To-night we hope for a good audience for Mrs. Ivy Elstob and Mr. Cutner, who are discussing "Socialism."

K.B.K.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

ETHICS BASED ON THE LAWS OF NATURE (Emerson Club, 1 Little George Street, Westminster): 3.30, Lecture in French—"Pasteur devant l'infiniment petit," by Monsieur Manchon. All are invited.

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8): 11.15, Dr. Dixon Kingham—"Eugenics and Progress."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Discussion—"Socialism." Mrs. Ivy Elstob and Mr. H. Cutner.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Station): 7.15, Mr. R. B. Kerr (Editor *The New Generation*)—"Is Britain Over-populated?"

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): Free Sunday Lectures. 7.0, William Brown, M.R.C.V.S.—"Animal Rights."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"The Capacities of the Average Man."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (34 George Street, Manchester Square, W.1): 7.30, Mr. C. F. Ratcliffe—A Lecture.

OUTDOOR.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of North End Road, opposite Walham Green Church): Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8.0 p.m., Speakers—Messrs. Moister, Day, and Mathie.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. S. Hanson—A Lecture. Meetings every Wednesday, at 8 p.m., at Clapham Old Town. March 14: Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12 noon, Mr. James Hart—A Lecture; 3.0, Messrs. Hyatt and Shaller; 6.30, Mr. Le Maine. Free-thought lectures every Wednesday and Friday at 7.30. Various Lecturers.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Schools): 7.0, Mr. P. Sherwin—"Some Future Fights for Free-thought."

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall): 7.0, A Grand Concert by Mr. Jos. Chapman and Party. Also an Address by Mr. T. Brown on "The Principles of Secularism." Chairman: Jno. T. Brighton.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, Albion Street): Mr. George Whitehead, 11.30, "Kings and Gods"; 6.30, "Bolshevism and Religion."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. J. K. Kelly—"Our Ideals and Human Nature."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street): 7.30, E. J. Lamel—"Mind and Matter: Some Ideas from Oriental Philosophy." Questions and Discussion.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers Hall, 120 Rusholme Road): CHAPMAN COHEN (President National Secular Society) will lecture at 3.0 p.m. on "Some Implications of Evolution"; and at 6.30 p.m., on "What Christianity Owes to Civilization." Questions and discussion.

OUTDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Meetings held in the Bull Ring on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, at 7 p.m.

BOOKS WANTED.

G. W. Foote's "Darwin on God" (cloth), "The Bible God," "Prisoner for Blasphemy," "The Book of God in the Light of Higher Criticism."

Bound vols. of "The Freethinker" during Mr. Foote's Editorship.

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