

# The FREETHINKER

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

### Views and Opinions.

#### Clerics in Congress.

THERE was nothing unusual in the discord at the Church Congress. It was a trifle more pronounced, but beyond a loss of prestige and the risk of losing good "appointments" the clerical heretic has little to fear. In the good old days, the golden age of Christianity, things were different. Many a Church Council finished up with a free fight, and the zeal of the godly was marked by broken bones and dead bodies. We live in tame times. The average man takes a little more interest in the conflicts that take place in a political congress than in one presided over by an archbishop.

And yet the controversial discord at the Church Congress is the more curious of the two. At a Congress of the Labour Party, or the Conservative Party, or the Liberal Party, controversy is natural and proper. There is no divine inspiration in politics. Men and women have to find their way about here as they best can, and blunder into the truth as they may. But with Christianity, we have a religion which comes directly from God. Men had not to find the truth; it was told them, once for all, by one who knew all about it. On the Christian theory, one third of God Almighty came down to earth and got himself crucified so that there should be no mistake about the matter. Yet in all the centuries that have passed since that remarkable event is said to have happened, the Christian Church has never been quite sure as to what the deuce it all meant. In the golden age, the party dominant for the time being killed the heretic, burned his books and damned his memory. Now, a Church Congress can only allow all sorts of opinions, and hope that some compromise will be reached that will hide from the outsider the plain truth that of all the impostures the world knows, this of a revealed religion is about the greatest.

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#### Back to the Cave-man!

First of all, there is the cave-man section of the Church of England, represented by Lord Halifax and

his followers, who will not have at any price the new-fangled views of Dean Inge, Dr. Major, and Bishop Barnes. Their views are—with the addition of ecclesiastical fripperies, reverence for authority, and a vein of clotted nonsense known as religious mysticism—those of Billy Sunday and the Salvation Army. These opinions are expressed in a more polished manner than that of Billy Sunday or Mrs. McPherson, but they are much the same in character. In proof of this one may take Lord Halifax's indictment of the Modernists. Modernism, he says, denied

the resurrection of the flesh and the trustworthy character of Jewish apocalyptic pictures, portraying the future history of humanity on this planet, and the end of the world; it denied the penal character of Christ's sufferings and that He offered on the Cross a propitiation or satisfaction to God the Father, it denied our Lord's omniscience and omnipotence while subject to the conditions of His incarnate life; it denied His Virgin Birth and physical Resurrection and Ascension; it denied that there was any specific apostolic authority for the monarchical episcopate, it denied that the gift of tongues bestowed the power to speak foreign languages, it denied the evidential value of miracles, and that they were capable of attesting a divine revelation; it denied Biblical and ecclesiastical infallibility.

Lord Halifax will have none of these new-fangled interpretations of the Christian message. He wants the whole bag of tricks as in the time of the first Salvation Army of Judea. He does not mind how modern the architecture of the church is, how developed the music, or how refined the language, but he will not have the original ideas tampered with. *Vive la cave-man!*

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#### Divine Action in Spasms.

Dean Inge and the others who stand by him do not seriously object to the cave-man, so long as he will wear a very modern dress and refrain from expressing his ideas in plain understandable language. You may, for example, believe in a God, and also that he is at work in the world. So far, the Dean and the cave-man are in agreement. But you must not say that he does anything directly, nor must you say that you can see his hand directly in connexion with specific events. For if you say this you evoke the demand for proof, and in its absence people are apt to take your opinions at their proper value. It is all, Dean Inge explains, "a question of God's method of working . . . Belief in gradual change is taking the place of the older belief in catastrophic Divine intervention . . . Evolution is only the method by which the eternal God carries out most of his purposes in this world." There is just a suspicion of artfulness in saying that God carries out *most* of his purposes by the gradual method of evolution, instead of by "catastrophic intervention"—a grandiloquent

way of saying "by working a miracle." But why "most"? Either there are miracles or there are not. Either it is a question of the universality of causation or it is not. A miracle is not less a miracle because it occurs once a year instead of every day in the week. The objector to miracles does not base his objection on their rarity, but on their absurdity. And one would like to put the question to Dean Inge: If God accomplishes *most* of his purposes by the gradual method of evolution, what is there to prevent his carrying out *all* his purposes by the same method? Dean Inge is actually telling us that most of the time God lets the world run along on set lines, but occasionally he interferes and gives it a lift. Perhaps when a Church Congress is sitting?

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#### More Brummagem.

Bishop Barnes also enlightened the Congress from the point of view of an "advanced" Christian. We cannot separate mind and body, he said, yet as Christians they must believe in the existence of personality after death. How? Well, says the Bishop:—

I would answer that our belief in the survival of human personality is bound up with our conception of the nature of God. If we accept Christ's view of God we cannot believe that He will allow anything of value in His universe to be destroyed.

So that the reason we have for believing in the immortality of man is the belief in Christ's view of God. Excellent! But nowhere else than in a congress of parsons could such a cock-eyed piece of reasoning pass muster. If you take Christ's view of God, then you will believe in something that is in itself inconceivable. There is, of course, a minor problem as to how one can believe in something that is inconceivable, but these things count for nothing in a congress of cave-men, super cave-men, and semi cave-men. If we believe that Christ was right then we shall believe what he tells us. But if we believe that Billy Sunday was right, then we shall believe what he says. And if anyone asks what reason is there for believing either to be right, a Church Congress would at once rule such a query as quite out of order and calculated to disintegrate the whole system of theology. I do not overlook the Bishop's delicious remark that man may expect to live for ever because God would not destroy anything of value. It is quite refreshing to know that the Bishop has such a very high opinion of himself, although, as the universe managed to get along before man was here, and as it manages to keep going in spite of the removal of each of us, it is just possible that it may survive the disappearance of man as a species. And as to value, well, a congress of jackasses might just as reasonably come to the conclusion that while the universe is thinkable without man, one without donkeys would not be worth preserving. And in one sense, a Church Congress might endorse that.

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#### Sacred Credulity.

I have space for but two or three gems from this Congress of the nation's guides. "Who was Jesus Christ?" asked the Rev. R. J. Campbell, and replied by saying that "in whatsoever terms they restated their thought about Jesus, they must never make Him a smaller figure than the Jesus of Christian thought and devotion." Mr. Henry Ford once informed buyers they could have his cheap cars any colour they liked so long as it was black. So Mr. Campbell says you can think about Jesus as you like so long as you think of him in a particular way. Mr. Campbell, I hasten to add, is not a professional

humourist but a very "soulful" preacher, with eyes and hair that habitually turn heavenward. Further:—

Historical criticism has shown that He was so truly human as to be ignorant like ourselves concerning many things. His knowledge was the knowledge of his time and race. He wondered, mourned, wept, agonized; He grew as we grow, learned as we learn, was tempted as we are tempted, died as we die. How could all this be true of God? The facts only need to be stated for the inherent inconsistency to become open and plain.

How to get over it? Well, as "there must be a harmony and a unity, nevertheless," the only thing is to trust to God and say no more about it. Difficulties form no obstacle to faith. Real Christian faith only notes them to pass them by. As Tertullian said, "I believe because it is impossible."

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#### Still Twisting.

Dr. N. P. Williams, Lady Margaret Professor, Oxford, dealt with the doctrine of the Fall. Every Church had accepted a particular version, based on Genesis. But:—

Educated Christians everywhere have now realized that the Genesiac story on which this theory was based is no more than an inspired saga, which contains no suggestion of a doctrine of original sin; that geology, biology, and anthropology have banished the dream of a primitive state of Paradisal righteousness and perfection enjoyed by our first parents to the limbo of discarded fables.

Could honest Christian candour go further? Well, not *Christian* candour. For observe that little word "inspired" saga. Why inspired? It looks as though, even though the story is banished to the world of fable, it must still be treated as inspired. But if no inspiration was needed for "The Old Woman that Lived in a Shoe," why was it required for the Garden of Eden? Why not say it is a fable, and have done with it? Why not say that the Church Congress would never have listened to a speech of this kind if Thomas Paine and his successors had not made Christians ashamed of taking these fables any longer as historic truth. And there is just a little of the old Adam left in Dr. Williams, for after saying the story is fable, he goes on to point out that it was "intended to explain the interior chaos and disharmony of human nature." In the act of admitting the story to be fable—now that it can no longer be denied—another fable is set up in its place. As though the primitive peoples amid whom this story originated—and Dr. Williams knows the nature of its origin—set out, in the way of a modern Blavatskyite, to explain the interior chaos and disharmony of human nature. These things force one to ask whether professional Christianity and mental honesty are quite incompatible. It looks as though they are. The mental shilly-shallying of the Church Congress, and the antics of the week-ending Mrs. Aimee McPherson, are the flowers of Christian culture! And of such is the kingdom of heaven.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

#### LITERARY TIMIDITY.

There are two kinds of timidity, or rather, it has two different origins, both of which cripple the free movement of thought. The one is the timidity of fastidiousness, the other of placid stupidity: the one shrinks from originality lest it should be regarded as impertinent; the other lest, being new, it should be wrong. We detect the one in the sensitive discreetness of the style. We detect the other in the complacency of its platitudes and the stereotyped commonness of its metaphors.

George Henry Lewes.

## The Factories of Fairy Tales.

"Speedy end to superstition, a gentle one if you can contrive it, but an end."—*Carlyle*.

"Rough work, iconoclasm, but the only way to get at truth."—*O. W. Holmes*.

CHRISTIANS sometimes let the cat out of the bag in the course of discussion. Maybe, this is one of the reasons why believers are so shy of debates. Recently, Mr. H. H. Hardy, headmaster of Cheltenham College, freely admitted the very great and obvious difficulties that face the school teacher and the child when they read the Christian Bible. Some of his remarks are worth quoting:—

If a child is given the Old Testament idea of God, by the time he reaches a critical age he will be inclined to refute the whole of the scriptural teachings.

Turning to another aspect of religious teaching, he said: "I prickle all over when I think of the hymns I was made to learn as a child." These are both remarkably frank admissions to come from a professed Christian, and have additional weight in being the utterance of the headmaster of a famous school. Especially is this the case when the question of the use of the Christian fetish-book in schools is likely to be reopened in the near future.

The fact is that in this country education has been hampered by the desire of the clergy, of whom there are nearly 50,000, to ally Christian teaching with the ordinary school programme. This desire has been further complicated by the trade jealousy among the clergy themselves. Every priest in the country chants the refrain: "Codlin's the friend, not Short." The teachings of the State Church are considered by the Free Churchmen to be wrong and harmful, whilst the instruction given by Nonconformists is pronounced by Churchmen to be heretical and dangerous. Roman Catholics, in their turn, consider that Anglicans and Nonconformists are alike so monstrous that they provide their own schools. State priests and Nonconformist clergymen, however, know which side their bread is buttered, so they arranged an armistice. They agreed that their Bible be read in the national schools, but that no theological doctrines be taught. This is what is called "the compromise," and although it satisfies most of the clergy, who use it as the thin edge of the wedge, it still impedes education and fetters progress. For the clergy realize that so long as their fetish-book is forced upon the millions of children of this country their own position as a clerical caste is quite safe, and their banking accounts in no danger.

There are grave reasons, however, why the Christian Bible should have no official place in the national school programme. Its educational teaching is out of date, as obsolete as the use of bows and arrows in warfare. What do our kindergarten teachers, for instance, make of such Biblical advice as "a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding"; "Thou shalt beat him with a rod"; "Chasten thy son, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." Such Bible injunctions may receive the approbation of 50,000 priests, but they remain the essence of barbarism, and their application merits the attention of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

This, mark you, is only one objection, and many others remain. Large portions of the Christian Bible are really unfit for children. If it were an ordinary volume instead of a fetish-book it would at once be pilloried as immoral, and excluded from every home and every school in the country. For in its so-called sacred pages may be found plain, unvarnished accounts of rape, sodomy, unnatural vice, and all

manner of ancient Oriental "frightfulness," written with all the love of detail peculiar to all Eastern writers. The florid, heated rhetoric of the Bible leaves nothing to the imagination, and the least-lettered reader can appreciate its glowing periods. The average sex-novel is a model of purity and restraint compared with the lusciousness of the Bible. No modern novelist would dare to imitate such writing, for, if he did, he would be imprisoned and his book destroyed. Yet the 50,000 clergy of this country force the Bible, which contains all this abomination, into the hands of millions of children, knowing full well that they dare not read the work in all its completeness to a mixed audience of adults.

There are other indictments. The Christian fetish-book is an encyclopædia of Oriental ignorance, a cold storage for obsolete superstitions. Biblical chronology, for instance, is simple nonsense. Only grossly ignorant, or mentally feeble, persons can believe that the universe was created six thousand years ago; that Adam, Noah, and Methusaleh lived near a thousand years apiece; and that Melchisadech had neither beginning nor ending of days. Philology, for example, gives no countenance to the blunders of the building of the Tower of Babel, nor to the pious perversion of the tongues of flame at Pentecost. The mistakes of Moses would strain the credulity of a Zulu to breaking point. In plain, blunt English there is neither history nor science worth troubling with in the sacred volume. The atmosphere throughout is that of the Arabian Nights and Grimm's Fairy Tales. In the sacred pages a snake talks, a whale has a boarding-house in his stomach, a pigeon acts as a co-respondent, and a donkey makes speeches. In the Christian Bible you will find fiery chariots, unicorns, dragons, flaming horses, giants, satyrs, cocatrice, and many other ancient marvels which, found in another book, would only excite laughter.

Concerning medicine, we find the long-discredited notion of demoniacal possession being the cause of disease. Fevers are rebuked, leprosy cured by a poultice, and blindness removed by expectoration. Some divinely-favoured persons have two funerals, and others, still more favoured, never trouble the undertakers at all. Witchcraft is still insisted upon as being true long after it has been discarded by every nation with the slightest pretence to civilization.

As for ethics, the least said the better. The lives and actions of the Patriarchs, and of the Kings of Israel and Judah, and other Bible heroes, are only paralleled in the Newgate Calendar and Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors. Some of the over-praised Psalms are a further proof that ancient theological ideas are, fortunately, not present-day ideals. In short, the Christian Bible, from the page describing Adam and Eve starting life at full age until the Second Person of the Undivided Trinity ascends into the sky like an aeroplane, is a salmagundi of unrestrained Oriental imagination. This fetish-book is inconsistent with common sense and ascertained knowledge, and, sooner or later, it will have to be so regarded in spite of the 50,000 priests in this country. For Freethinkers have set themselves the task of freeing children from the absurdities, immoralities, and barbarities of uncivilized times perpetuated by this fetish-book.

MIMNERMUS.

THEREFORE this one prayer I breathe—  
That you yet may worthy prove  
Of the heirlooms they bequeath,  
Who have loved you with such love:  
Fairest land while land of slaves  
Yields their free souls no fit graves.

JAMES THOMSON.

## Masterpieces of Freethought.

### IV.—THE AGE OF REASON.

By THOMAS PAINE.

THE *Age of Reason* holds the unique distinction of being Freethought's "best seller." No other book by a Freethinker ever achieved its immense circulation. From the day it was published right down to the year 1928 it has sold in countless numbers—and it has been read. It has probably made more Freethinkers than any other single work. It was at once easy to read, to understand, and unanswerable. It annihilated, once for all, the very centre of authority of Christendom.

It took the Bible, God's Holy Word to man, and from its own pages smashed its dogmas of authenticity and credibility. There were no ambiguous phrases in Thomas Paine's work. Its English is the English of common sense, of clear and logical thinking. The ordinary man and woman who could read at all could read *The Age of Reason* without a dictionary, without a commentary. The book went to the heart of the matter it dealt with, and showed the utter humbug and fraud of Christianity. It knocked orthodoxy into smithereens. So vast was its effect that it frightened even Freethinkers, who made feeble efforts to disparage not the matter but the manner of the book, and therein failed as utterly as did the horrified Christians.

Thomas Paine was a remarkable man. One hundred years after his death in 1809, appeared in most influential journals shamefaced apologies for the foul and blackguardly attacks which never ceased thundering from most pulpits on the great humanitarian. Paine had had a wonderful life in England, America and France. He had done as much (if not more) for the American War of Independence with his pen as George Washington had done with the sword. His *Common Sense* and *The Crisis* are as veritable masterpieces as is *The Age of Reason*. His *Rights of Man* is one of the greatest humanitarian tracts ever published. Paine forestalled dozens of political and social reforms. His mind was a perfect storehouse of great ideas, and he could put them down in that splendid vigorous English which is known as the language of the people among literary critics, but which few of our greatest writers ever achieved so perfectly as did Thomas Paine. That great master of English, Walter Savage Landor, put his criticism in a couplet:—

Few dared such homely truths to tell,  
Or wrote our English half so well.

And the late Elbert Hubbard (those who took his little magazine, *The Philistine*, will agree that the American knew what he was talking about) said of Paine's English: "Ease, fluidity, grace, imagination, energy, earnestness, mark his style." I could multiply by a thousand enthusiastic tributes to Paine's writing, but it is his great work against Christianity that I wish to talk about.

Of course, at the outset, it is easy to assert that the *Age of Reason* is really a mild Unitarian tract. The Freethinker, saturated with the Freethought literature of the nineteenth century, fresh from the work of Robert Taylor and Carlile, Holyoake and Bradlaugh, Buchner and Haecckel, Ingersoll and Remsburg, from countless scholarly articles in the *National Reformer*, the *Literary Guide*, the *Truth-seeker*, and this journal, to say nothing of the damaging admissions made by hosts of Christian scholars in such works as the *Encyclopedia Biblica*, will naturally not find much to learn from Paine. It is not fair to judge him by the standards of Rationalism in 1928. One must go back to 1795 and try and

envisage the belief of the vast majority of people in that benighted age.

No one can read theological literature of the epoch without seeing that whatever other people may have been the clergy then were quite certain they were God's own Chosen. Some sceptical spirits, it is true, divided them into three classes—one, two or three bottle clergymen, it depended on how much they could drink before falling under the table, dead drunk. But on the whole, they claimed to be superlatively holy, and blasphemers like Thomas Paine, the enemy of both Royalty and Religion, were only mentioned with a shudder of horror—a gesture faithfully followed by all the Stigginses of the period. People like the Rev. John Pye Smith, were always engaged in controversy, and "infidels," if mentioned at all in their works, were always suitably baptized as "these unhappy men." Religious controversial literature of early nineteenth century seems to be packed with this phrase. As for Paine, in spite of the law being entirely on the side of Christianity, in spite of the slander and obloquy poured on to the "unhappy" author's back, the *Age of Reason* sold more and more. Every effort was made by the Government to suppress it. Richard Carlile's magnificent fight for the right to sell Paine's works, and any other Freethinkers', is known to all. So is that wonderful letter of the youthful Shelley to Lord Ellenborough protesting at the imprisonment of Eaton for publishing the *Age of Reason*. But we are apt to forget that it was from the Christian pulpits of England and America, from vicar and priest and bishop, that there came the mass of damnable slander and foulness, which for over a hundred years suppressed the splendid greatness of Thomas Paine, one of the foremost humanitarians of our age, from the eyes of the world. If the *Age of Reason* was simply a mild Unitarian tract, why all this slander and bigotry, nay, all this savagery? The clergy were no fools: they knew that this anti-theological pamphlet had hit their fetish a blow it could never recover from, and they were perfectly right. The *Age of Reason* was the beginning of genuine Biblical criticism. Of course Voltaire and the Encyclopedists in France, Anthony Collins, Woolston and the other eighteenth century deists had played havoc with "revelation."

But the stern measures immediately brought to bear upon "infidels" and their work, and also the fact that (excepting perhaps Woolston) many of the deists could not write quite like Paine; the great evangelical missions of Wesley and Whitefield, as well as the many replies and "apologies" by orthodox believers made a good deal of the anti-Christian work ineffective. It was popularly supposed also that Bishop Butler's *Analogy of Religion* had completely answered Deism—though here again one suspects this work of being very little read, in the first place, by either believers or non-believers, and also that believers were none too certain that it put the case for genuine orthodoxy quite in the right way. It could, when all was said and done, make for Atheism as well as Christianity, and anyway its language and style were such as to bore one to tears when understood at all, and merely a haze of words in the other places.

I have no intention of quoting from the *Age of Reason*. The reader of this paper if he has no copy should procure one forthwith, and I envy him the pleasure that will be his on a first perusal. It will be the first, and I am quite sure not the last, for Paine fulfils Lafcadio Hearn's great test of good literature, of being read over and over again.

"Upon this theological treatise," says Elbert Hubbard, "is founded all modern Biblical criticism."

"There is nothing," says Henry Frank, "in the conclusions of Higher Criticism that Paine did not anticipate," and so admit—some very sadly—a hundred critics. His work brought forth, as one could suspect, a crop of replies. Where are they? Who reads them now? Of the lot one can now and then procure Bishop Watson's "famous" *Apology for the Bible*. It is famous only because it survived the others, but is itself as dead as the proverbial door-nail. "Why," asked homely George III, "Why call it *apology* for the Bible?" Why, indeed? Paine compelled the good Bishop, who tried hard not to lose his temper and who more often than not succeeded, to make many damaging admissions. Dr. Conway, in his magnificent *Life of Thomas Paine*, gives a short list of them, and they must have made his religious contemporaries' hair stand on end. They are merely ordinary commonplaces now of genuine orthodoxy, but Paine had to bear the brunt of the religious attack. The fact is, as Conway says, "In a strict sense Paine was never answered unless by successive surrenders." And Watson's *Apology* helped to sell Paine.

It should never be forgotten also that to make Thomas Paine more hated than ever, he was invariably accused of being an Atheist. That was the culminating horror. To his religious contemporaries Paine was an Atheist. His deistic God was not Jehovah or Jesus, but a God no self-respecting Christian could possibly believe in. We know now that the *Age of Reason* was a protest against what Paine took for Atheism in the French Revolution, quite as much as against the Christianity of his day. But Paine certainly believed in a God fervently and thoroughly, and could never have met the protagonists of the *System of Nature*, the work which frightened Voltaire and stands even now as the most complete Atheistic exposition ever written. But for my own part, I am inclined to agree with Paine's enemies. To them he was an Atheist, whatever he actually wrote or seems now to us, and his work made for Atheism, and not as he thought, for Deism.

The name of Thomas Paine, mightier than ever, echoes and re-echoes throughout the century. It was ever defended by the obstinate and despised and hated Freethinkers. We who follow in their footsteps can never express our gratitude too strongly for the fight they made for the honour of a great and noble man. And as for Paine's *Age of Reason*—"It will live," cried Dr. Moncure Conway. "It is not a mere book—it is a man's heart."

H. CUTNER.

### The Sovereignty of the People.

THE people is a beast of muddy brain  
That knows not its own force, and therefore stands  
Loaded with wood and stone; the powerless hands  
Of a mere child guide it with bit and reins.  
One kick would be enough to break the chain;  
But the beast fears, and what the child demands  
It does; nor its own terror understands,  
Confused and stupified by huggears vain.  
Most wonderful! With its own hand it ties  
And gags itself, gives itself death and war  
For pence doled out by kings from its own store.  
Its own are all things between earth and heaven;  
But this it knows not, and if one arise  
To tell the truth, it kills him unforgiven.

TOMMASO CAMPANELLA (1568-1693).

(Translated by John Addington Symonds, 1877.)

Though to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children may be morality good enough for divinities, it is scorned by average human nature.—Thomas Hardy.

### The Doubtful Honour of the Gravestone.

AN elderly neighbour of mine who had resided in our village for a year or two, once asked me as we sat on the wayfarer's bench under the churchyard wall, if I believed that the head-stone of a grave was in many cases a faithful criterion of a person's past worth and virtue. The question seemed enigmatical and somewhat irreverent, and I fear my answer was evasive. My neighbour, evidently, had something occupying his mind, so I allowed him to proceed.

"Has it ever struck you when inspecting grave-stones in a churchyard," continued he, "how many there are of those interred who have died under fifty years of age, included among them being numbers of babes and children of a tender age: those who have reached the allotted span and over being but few in comparison?"

I called to mind that I had marvelled at the early age given on a very large number of grave-stones.

"Then how would you account for so few old people's graves, comparatively speaking," said my neighbour, "claiming the honour of a grave-stone?"

My neighbour was a man well over sixty. He resided in a small cot and lived as one sufficiently removed from want. His habits of life testified that he had been a careful liver, practising economy and self-denial, though his charity to others could not be denied. The nature of his employment during his working career had perforce led him to reside in different parts of the country. An antiquarian in his way, wherever he had resided his hobby had been to visit old buildings and other places associated with the past; the architecture, style, and antiquity of the old church—should there happen to be one—usually claiming early consideration. The service ended, and the exterior of the ancient edifice inspected, he would wander as fancy took him over the burial ground, deciphering and reading grave-stones ancient and modern. In this way, wherever he had been, so he said, he had noticed the large number of graves of middle-aged and younger people honoured by a head-stone, and the comparatively small number of people of patriarchal age claiming a like distinction—hence his last question. I could give no offhand opinion why the grave-stones of very old people were so outnumbered by those of the middle-aged and young. Certainly, I had not given the matter much thought, and I told him so.

"In matters of this sort we can only judge by inference," replied my neighbour. "Our knowledge of other people's circumstances is very limited: we must look into our own family history for enlightenment. Certainly, much information may be gained in our knowledge of the circumstances of the few families with whom we have become intimate. We are, of course, speaking of the common people, and with those we are dealing. It is reasonable to infer that when a young person dies the father is earning money, and is in a position to raise a head-stone to his offspring. The middle-aged are earning money, and the forsaken spouse will see that a head-stone honours the grave of the beloved. But those who have lived to a ripe age, who have been unable to work for years, usually die in straitened circumstances. Few, if any, come forward to bear the expense of a grave-stone—hence the minority in which the aged are placed.

"I have a presentiment," continued my neighbour, "that no grave-stone will mark the spot where I am buried. I am getting old, but being a carefully preserved man in good health, I am likely to live for many years. To explain myself, and to bring addi-

tional light on the question under notice, it is well to have recourse to family history. My father died in his forty-sixth year. He had not been a good-living man, if I may tell the painful truth. He was an inveterate drunkard, a careless spendthrift, and in every way improvident. His habits kept him on the poverty line, his family suffering in consequence. He died a physical wreck, with few sympathizers around him yet, with all his failings, his offspring workers have seen that his grave is honoured by a head-stone.

"One of my brothers died in his forty-eighth year. A ne'er-do-well, with the gambling propensity, his disreputable life cannot be denied. He died as he had lived, on the verge of poverty, yet, after a mis-spent life, a careful, forgiving wife toiled until his grave was honoured by a head-stone.

"To speak of oneself may appear egotistical; but at an early age I saw the folly of my father's ways, and resolved to take a different path. I abjured drink and other vices leading to extravagance and ruin. Practising economy, and following honest, even if lowly employment, I found, at an age when work was no longer offered me, that I should be able to live on my savings. This I have done for some years; but, as before mentioned, I am a healthy, well-preserved man, and there is the possibility that I may outlive my money. In that case, recognizing that I have neither kith nor kin to whom I could turn for support, I should have to take advantage of the poor-house, with the prospect of a pauper's grave, and it is not likely that a head-stone would mark the spot where I am buried. This forecast, seeing that I claim to have lived a better life than my father and brother, brings me to the reiteration of my question: Is the grave-stone in numberless cases a faithful criterion of a person's past worth and virtue? With due respect to all, I venture to say 'No,' and leave it to others to form their opinion. And there is no doubt, were we privileged to pierce the moral history of other families, such history, in numberless cases, would tally with our own."

It is some years since my neighbour's peculiar rumination was disclosed to me. During that time new grave-stones have been erected in our own churchyard upon which he may have moralized. In regard to his own affairs, his premonition came true: he outlived his money and destitution faced him. But a humane law came to his relief granting him an old age pension, which, though meagre in itself, enabled him, owing to practised habits of frugality, to exist in seeming comfort. But when sickness came, and the burden of years rendered his position impossible, the poor-house claimed him. I paid certain visits to the institution up to the time of his death, and saw the corpse, escorted by officials only, removed in the parish hearse, and laid to rest in that part of the pauper's "Potter's Field," where head-stones are not known.

I can fully believe that my late friendly neighbour had led a good and commendable life, and it may be that his record on the scroll of time will bear comparison with many of those whose grave is honoured with a head-stone.

WILLIAM WATSON.

The idea of immortality, that like a sea has ebbed and flowed in the human heart, with its countless waves of hope and fear beating against the shores and rocks of time and fate, was not born of any book, nor of any creed, nor of any religion. It was born of human affection, and it will continue to ebb and flow beneath the mists and clouds of doubt and darkness as long as love kisses the lips of death.—*Ingersoll*.

## Acid Drops.

The Churches may take courage. On the authority of Mr. James Douglas, given to the world through the *Sunday Express*, "Christianity will never die!" "For he himself has said it. And it's greatly to his credit"—as one of our leading purveyors of sentimental slosh and religious nonsense. Not to do Mr. Douglas an injustice we give the reasons for his assertions:—

The permanence of Christianity is based on its contact with truth and reality as they are unveiled. In conduct it is ages in advance of life. No human being can exhaust its moral and spiritual content. And no evolution can transcend its vision. Therefore, Christianity can never die.

We do not ask whether Mr. Douglas means what he says, for one cannot mean anything where meaning is absent. What one would like to have is his private opinion of the men and women who are taken in by his meaningless gabble. Their gullibility must certainly provide him with many a hearty laugh.

Mrs. Aimee McPherson, an ignorant, catch-penny evangelist, receives about £15,000 a year for placing on record unmistakable evidence of the undeveloped intelligence of masses of the people here and in the United States. Sir Ronald Ross the discoverer of the cause of malaria, and a benefactor to the human race, is compelled, in his old age, to sell his books and papers owing to straitened circumstances. For a successful general the country votes £50,000, or £100,000, a stout pension and a peerage. To a great scientist it gives nothing. These are the scales of value existing after nearly 2,000 years of official Christianity! And Mr. James Douglas receives a good salary for telling the public that Christianity is in conduct "ages in advance of life"! Lord, what fools we mortals be!

But we do not think that the Press has been quite fair to Mrs. McPherson. It complains that she has the mentality of a school girl. This may be, we believe it is, quite true, but in this respect she is certainly not worse than other professional evangelists. So far as the analogy of the child is concerned, we would only say that most of this class of Christian preachers add to the mentality of a child, a degree of cunning, and self-seeking and untruthfulness which, in a child, would land it in a home for degenerate children. Look at preachers like Gypsy Smith, or Billy Sunday! What sort of a mentality have these people? Look, also, at the average broadcast sermon, given to millions of listeners Sunday after Sunday. Why, a boy of fourteen who could not put more ability in an essay would be looked upon by most masters as never likely to reach anywhere—but the pulpit.

Dr. S. Parkes Cadman has just been appointed "Radio Preacher" to the United States, at the salary of an archbishop. So a religious journal tells us. His work is to be controlled by a mixed committee of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. We think the committee might have included a few other religions to complete the mixed grill. That would have assured Dr. Cadman's giving forth the correct mixture of religion guaranteed to offend nobody. If he could manage to do that, he would deserve the salary of an archbishop—there is so much in religion to quarrel over.

Three ex-Service men say: "May we suggest that at the Cenotaph Service on Armistice Day the display of martial glamour be dispensed with?" And, since the Cenotaph commemorates the sacrifice of men of all religious beliefs and of no religious beliefs, may we suggest that Christian priests and Christian clap-trap be also dispensed with?

Says Dr. R. J. Campbell, there is no need to ridicule the smug and self-satisfied; no one takes them seriously; no one believes in their kind of goodness, the goodness that is plainly evil because so self-centred and joyless and devoid of love. Dr. Campbell is referring to a certain religious type. We don't agree that there is no need to ridicule them. It is this type of Christian who is so very anxious to reform others or convert them, or to interfere with their liberty of action on the Sabbath. And the average man who feels no urgent need for such reform or conversion, and who resents having his freedom curtailed, thinks that ridicule is a very good thing to keep the smug and self-satisfied in their proper place.

Spain, says a weekly paper, has been celebrating the fifth anniversary of the suppression of her Parliament, and the establishment of a Dictatorship. Much material good, says our contemporary has been done under this regime, but justice is still far from impartial, education is in the hands of reactionaries, and thought and speech are in chains. The truth seems to be that the Spanish people as a whole do not much care either way. They are not particularly anxious to govern themselves, and they do not much mind who does the governing so long as it is not done too obtrusively. Some say, adds our contemporary, that this indifference is the lasting product of the centuries of intellectual tyranny established by the Inquisition. Yes, and maintained and nourished by the priests ever since.

In an article on "Mutton Heads!" Mr. E. R. Thompson says the masses ought to use their brains instead of letting other people do their thinking. Of newspapers, he says they can rush people into war and make them do all kinds of silly things—but only because the people do not think for themselves. "Newspapers are very useful if they used properly. They are the means of getting information, but the wise man takes the opinions expressed in them with a grain of salt. He extracts the facts—and forms his own opinions." This, of course, is good advice, but the drawback for the average man is that the newspapers do not present all the facts regarding matters on which opinions need to be formed. The common practice is to omit facts, distort facts, or manipulate facts to suit the newspaper's particular views or policy. Of course the true facts can be got at often by reading several newspapers, but the average man does not do that.

When you come to matters religious, however, it is quite touching to note the unanimity among editors regarding their refusal to allow facts against the Christian religion to appear in print. Nothing in the shape of a forthright analysis of essential religious ideas and beliefs is given a hearing. It would be much too risky to allow the reader an opportunity of forming accurate and useful opinions on such beliefs. Religion is the one sphere in which people are not to be encouraged to do their own thinking. That seems to be the unwritten law of the journalistic world. The British editor is a champion of free speech and a very fearless gentleman, but he is mortally afraid of offending the parsons and their Bible-banging followers.

Apropos of the latest dog-fight called a "heresy hunt," led by Lord Halifax, a daily paper remarks:—

It is a conflict between two ages and two levels of education. This is the old-fashioned kind of religious education, and what we regard as the modern type of education. It is an educational conflict.

We would prefer to call it a conflict between two levels of culture, neither of which is particularly high. For the basic philosophy of each is the same. And this is 2,000 years behind the philosophy of the foremost thinkers of the twentieth century. Still, let the dog-fight continue. It may start a few intelligent persons thinking about the true nature of things religious—and that may benefit Freethought.

A Committee to consider the subject of religious education in schools has been appointed by the National Free Church Council. This Committee, which includes Mrs. George Cadbury, Mrs. Garnett, Dr. Griffith Jones, Mr. T. R. Glover, and Mr. James Duckworth, will work in conjunction with the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches. One thing we can safely prophesy of this Committee and Council. There will be a unanimous agreement that a nebulous form of the Protestant religion should be taught in the State schools, and that there is nothing objectionable in the practice of using the money of Roman Catholics, Jews and Freethinkers, and of the majority of ratepayers indifferent to religion, to get such religion taught. Needless to say, this agreement of opinion will not be mentioned in the Committee's Report.

Before the war, said Miss Janet Doxsey at a recent Sunday School convention, it was customary to attend Church, and more or less the accepted thing that every child should attend Sunday school. To-day, however, neither habit persisted. If people attend church now they do so because it meets a felt need; if children attend Sunday school, it is, in the majority of cases, because they want to be there—they want to do anything that interests them, and to be with persons they respect and love. Miss Doxsey is not quite correct. Children attend Sunday school because: (1) parents want the children out of the way; (2) parents believe it is "respectable" to send their children there; (3) parents are badgered by pious canvassers to send their children; (4) there are little or no indoor and outdoor recreational facilities available for the children, because of Sabbatarian opposition. When these reasons operate less, as they are sure to do in future, the Sunday schools will experience a very lean time. To-day most of them retain clients by organizing mid-week amusement of a purely secular nature, and this is only available to children who are prepared to take a dose of religious physic on Sunday.

Among the few things for which we can be thankful is the fact that, in hanging a poet you cannot bury his works. Our own brand of medicine-men, after the publicity made over the late Thomas Hardy, might like to bury the following four lines:—

"Peace upon earth!" was said. We sing it,  
And pay a million priests to bring it.  
After two thousand years of mass  
We've got as far as poison-gas.

These were written in December, 1924, but they will be suitable for many years to come as long as anyone takes the ecclesiastical quid-nuncs at their own valuation, and as long as they are allowed to have more say in matters than plumbers, agricultural labourers and sewer-men.

It is amusing to note in the *Daily News*, after the recent fiasco over "Where are the Dead?" the apparent boldness in publishing an article. It is entitled, "What is the Faith of Youth?" and the writer is Mr. E. C. Bowyer. He has some excellent points, but they are only scratching about on the surface of the biggest imposture ever known. He writes:—

Youth calls insistently for truth, for justice, for freedom. There is a new urge towards beauty and happiness which the Churches cannot satisfy.

And again:—

Some alleged Christian folk still talk about the eternal damnation of unbaptized children. That sort of thing makes me laugh.

It might be information to this writer to know that men and women in the history of Freethought have gone to prison to enable him to laugh, and if they hadn't have had the courage of their convictions hell would still be a very real place in the bag-of-tricks known as the true faith.

From a notice in the *Daily News*, it appears that a hundred years ago England regarded as novel imports some ship-loads of hops, beef, pork and ham from America. With the latest importation from America of a new religionist our progress may be measured by walking backwards; is it to be assumed that the supply of credulous fools in this country exceeds that of others?

The gentle art of fighting with bladders in the comedy of Heresy-Hunting, provides a little material for mirth. Lord Halifax steps into the arena and states his view that "an insult is about to be offered to our Lord Jesus Christ." This kind of vocabulary is quite at home among people who have been brought up in a reverent atmosphere, but, tested on practical matters it amounts to theological or fictitious word-spinning. With floods in Belgium, floods in London, over a million unemployed, no culture to speak of, and murders the chief topic of conversation as the result of a depraved press, one wonders if there is any truth in the saying of Voltaire's, that our little terraqueous globe here is the mad-house of the other worlds.

It was Emerson who wrote that you never saw a man in rags in a Protestant Church. Canon Streeter is concerned about the charwoman's (the daily paper says, charlady) doubts on the Bible, as though any importance could be attached to *persons* in a question of truth. It is a sign of the times that the woman with the mop and broom is disturbing the cobwebs of the church, but the kindly patronage of a useful woman in the world is on a level with the superior humour of *Punch* that assumes all members of society outside the professions as congenital idiots.

The Rev. H. R. L. Sheppard writes the section on Religion in the new B.B.C. year book (1929). Now that the B.B.C. has definitely announced that it is on the side of Christianity—having found out by this time that this would be the most financially profitable line for it to adopt—it has evidently decided to give the parsons a quite free hand, and in no wise to curb the clerical capacity for unveracity. Thus, Mr. Sheppard has the impudence to write that in response to an appeal from an anti-religious journal not more than twenty letters were received from all over the country protesting against the religious talks. Now that is not merely a falsehood, but we fancy that Mr. Sheppard knows it is a falsehood. We could show Mr. Sheppard several times that number if he cares to call at this office, and we have not preserved anything like all the copies of letters that were sent to us. And if the B.B.C. cares to put the matter to a practical test, and to have the letters sent to an independent person, we can supply them with many—probably hundreds—of letters within a given twenty-four hours. But we should decline to be bound by the B.B.C.'s account of how many letters were received, for an organization that permits an obviously untruthful statement in its official publication requires careful watching. Anyway, the statement of Mr. Sheppard's is worth preserving as a sample of what Christian preachers understand by intellectual rectitude.

The *Church Times*, by the way, thinks that the popularity of broadcast services "is evidence of there being much diffused religion in the community." Our readers are in a position to judge what is the worth of the testimony of the B.B.C. on this head. When they commit, in their official publication, such a barefaced falsehood that not more than twenty letters of protest against the religious services were received, one cannot trust anything they say on that head. If they will permit the letters to be sent to an independent authority we will soon show how great is the volume of opinion against it. As it is, the people who make the statement as to the popularity of broadcast services are parsons. The B.B.C. counts the votes, and every crank who writes in on the side of the religion is taken as sound evidence on the feeling of the whole community. The tactics of the

B.B.C. is one more evidence that our work is to go on making Freethinkers—with moral backbone, and who simply will not be silenced.

Here is a curious case. It was told by Dame Beatrix Hudson, Lyall, a member of the London County Council, to a Church meeting at Fulham. She was travelling on the Underground railway and was reading the burial service "in preparation of her subject." At Sloane Square the train came to a stop and did not go on again. She inquired what was the matter and the stationmaster told her there was a man under the train "at the very spot where she was standing." The prayer book was open at her hand, "and I felt called upon to read it. By the Grace of God that poor unknown man had a Christian burial service at his death." Now this is really curious. Does Dame Lyall wish us to understand she believes that God, knowing she would have the burial service ready, arranged for the man to get under the train so as to give her a chance of reading it? Or does she mean that God, knowing the man would get under the train, arranged for her to have the burial service ready? If not one of these things, where does the grace of God come in? And if God could do one of these things why did he not prevent the man getting under the train? One is left marvelling at the mentality of Dame Lyall, and of the value of the intrusion of the religious mind into social and political affairs.

One of the speakers at the Church Congress, Dr. Goudge, discovered that in the Englishman the moral sense is relatively strong, and the religious sense relatively weak. We are not quite sure of the meaning of this clatter of words, but presumably it boils down to the statement that the Englishman pays more attention to practice than he does to faith. That may be true; what we wish to note now is the lack of an organic capacity for logical thinking which distinguishes these "Spiritual leaders." For all the time they are insisting that morality is in some way based on religion. And if that were so, the moral sense should never be stronger than the religious one. But when occasion demands we have it put the other way round, and are informed that in the case of the Englishman his moral sense is much stronger than the religious one. What is certain is that all over the world the sense of morality has become stronger and healthier as the belief in religion has declined. That is a phenomenon we should like to see the Church Congress grapple with.

The Rev. Alexander Sharpe says: "He who would reduce the Navy to impotency is no friend of Christianity." Possibly the dear man has in mind the fact that the Churches of the land own a good few million pounds worth of property. Quite naturally he appreciates that a strong Navy is necessary to defend it, since it is no longer the fashion to expect God to do so "off his own bat."

"The Airman's Hymn" has been written by a Miss Rowena Norven. The first and the last lines of the first verse are:—

Give safety, Father, to the men who fly . . .

Preserve, O Lord, our legions of the air!

This hymn provides an opportunity to test the efficacy of prayer. We invite the pious to make a comparison of accident statistics for twelve months previous to the hymn being written, and for twelve months after it was written. We don't anticipate there being any diminution of aircraft fatalities since the hymn impinged on the celestial car-drums.

Here's freedom to him that wad read!

Here's freedom to him that wad write!

There's nane ever feared that the truth should be heard  
But they wham the truth wad indite.—Burns.



## National Secular Society.

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

The following form of bequest is sufficient for anyone who desires to benefit the Society by will:—

I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society, and I direct that a receipt signed by two of the trustees of the said Society shall be a good discharge to my executors for the said legacy.

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H. CARNE.—Thanks, but much regret we are unable to use your communication.

A. HIGHTON (Chicago).—We are very pleased to have the warm appreciation of another reader in the United States. We already have a large number of readers in America, and always welcome more.

W. B. ORME.—Shall be pleased to see you any time you are in London. The *Atheist at Church* was written by George Standring, but has been out of print for some years.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Sugar Plums.

To-day (October 14), Mr. Cohen will lecture twice in the Chorlton Town Hall, Manchester. His afternoon subject, at 3 o'clock, will be "The Meaning of Freethought." In the evening, at 6.30 p.m., "What are We Fighting For?" We hope to be able to report a good start for the winter season of the Manchester Branch.

We desire to call special attention to Mr. Cohen's lecture in the Caxton Hall, on Wednesday, October 17. London Freethinkers will do useful work if they will get this meeting as widely known as possible, and if they will also undertake the distribution of the advertising

slips, a supply of which may be obtained on application to the N.S.S. Secretary. We want as many Christians there as we can get. And as it is on a Wednesday, there should be no obstacle to the clergy attending, save a disinclination to hear the other side.

Next Sunday (October 21) Mr. Cohen will speak twice, morning at 11.30 a.m., and evening at 6.30 p.m., in the City Hall, Glasgow. His subject in the morning will be, "Why the World needs Freethought"; and in the evening, "Where Religion Fails." We should like Glasgow friends to make these meetings as widely known as possible. These are the first meetings of the season, and it is well for the Branch to have a good send-off.

Mr. Mann had a successful meeting at Birmingham on Sunday, when he lectured on "Religion, Life, and Death," although the attendance perhaps suffered to some extent from the weather. There were comparatively few questions, and no opposition; but this was evidently due to the lecturer having secured the agreement of his audience on the points dealt with. At any rate those who listened showed very evident appreciation of what had been said.

The Plymouth Branch made a splendid start on Sunday last. Mr. Cohen's meetings were by far the best he has yet had in Plymouth, and the sight of the hall from the platform argued well for the rest of the course, and showed the benefit of good advertising. The lectures, too, appeared to be thoroughly appreciated by nearly everyone present. We have to except some representatives of the Stone Age who, in matters of religion appear to flourish in Plymouth. Mr. McKenzie occupied the chair in the afternoon and Mr. Churchill in the evening.

Mrs. Margaret Sanger's two books, *What Every Girl Should Know* and *What Every Mother Should Tell*, have been issued in a cheap form, 2s. 6d. each, by R. Witcop, of 85 Shepherd's Bush Road, London. Mrs. Sanger's books are well known to those versed in the literature of sex education, and their author has done much work in the effort to educate the general public on questions which up to very recent times were strictly taboo. The books are well turned out, and should have a good sale.

### THE RELIGION OF THE GREEKS.

The right appreciation and interpretation of Greek religion have been achieved mainly by the work of scholars of the present and immediately preceding generations. They have been greatly aided by the growth of the science of comparative religion, which is the systematic study of the higher religions of mankind; by the science of anthropology, dealing with the religious phenomena of the primitive races; and especially by the discovery of the Minoan—Myceanan civilization that preceded the dawn of Hellenism. It is the achievement of their work that we can now recognize the vital part played by religion in the moral and political life of Hellas, and in the shaping of Hellenic literature and art; that we can discern in it certain distinctive traits corresponding to the distinctive Hellenic temperament, and that we can trace its influence on the later religion of Christendom.

The sources of our knowledge of it are various and in most directions abundant, being literary, artistic, and epigraphic. The mass of inscriptions, bequeathed to us by public and private devotion and revealing cult-practices, cult-invocations and the organization of worship, is already vast and increases yearly. But of the various sources it is Greek literature and Greek art that contribute most to our deeper intelligence of the religious consciousness and ideals of the educated Hellene. And it is the whole of Greek literature, the works of imagination as well as the works of science and learning, that must be ransacked for a full knowledge of the subject.

Lewis R. Farnell, D.Litt.

## The Reproof.

READERS of Mr. Wells's last book will remember that the denizens of the fantastic island called Rampole had a short way with offenders against the social code. To the delinquent was administered the Reproof. Very effectively was the evil-doer reproofed, for he was hit over the head by a club. He, or she, never offended again. The Rampole islanders, being taught by the asperities of nature the virtues of thrift, knew better than to waste the body. Consigned to that primitive *kadaverfabrik*, the cannibal pot, in due course the more succulent portions were served in high festival, appearing on the menu as "The Gift of the Friend." Thus was enterprise stifled and lorancorder upheld.

We British also live on an island: it is natural, therefore, that we too should have our Reproof. Where Rampole had its Ardam, we have our Jix. But there the resemblance would seem to end. The Home Secretary did not nourish his strength for the struggle with the bishops on the bodies of Messrs. Kennedy and Browne. Such "Christian burial" is denied our felons; to the quicklime they go. Christ only is eaten in these days. Also with us the club has fallen into desuetude. A three-quarter inch rope of five strands of Italian hemp, with a suitable drop, will quite effectively jerk a man to Jesus (as the unrefined saying has it) even if, as it sometimes happens, it jerks his head off. Besides which, as any journalist will tell you, "physical jerks" are good for us all.

Let me now admit that in writing of our national beastliness that we so quaintly name Capital Punishment, I find it difficult to keep up the satiric style. I recognize to the full, I hope, the value of satire; to be able to write like Swift, or Shaw, or Voltaire is one of the most useful and enviable of gifts. To chasten morals with ridicule is entirely necessary, and far more effective than inviting tears for the folly of man. The comedic spirit, however, implies an Olympian detachment from man and his ridiculous antics. It suggests that the author is *au-dela de la mêlée*. In wit, too, there is always an element of cruelty. Salt, especially Attic salt, is a fine thing, but rubbed into wounds it heightens torture. Perhaps it is because I belong to the category of the "tender-minded," described by the American psychologist, William James, or, maybe, because I have pondered in a prison cell man's inhumanity to man, I feel something of an inhibition in treating in an ironic vein our society's purgative methods. For the "tough-minded," however, I have nothing but envy and admiration.

A little work of this nature recently come my way has given me such pleasure and amusement, that I hasten to share my good fortune with others. Mr. Charles Duff's *A Handbook on Hanging* (Cayme Press, London, 2s. 6d. net) is a gem of satire. A leading article in an important daily has, I notice, referred to the book as the finest piece of tragic irony since Swift wrote his modest proposal. It is, the paper opines, "a literary work of the first importance." As to that I am not competent to speak, but the polish, the erudition lightly borne, and the sense of the *mot juste*, all impress me with the feeling that Mr. Duff is a great artist. It is all Peebles to a pint of peanuts that the "Handbook" will do more for the abolition in this country of the death penalty than all the publications of that admirable body, the Society for the Abolition of Capital Punishment.

How best convey the savour of this remarkable work? Perhaps it can be done more surely and expeditiously by asking Mr. Printer to follow as closely as he can the setting of the title-page. Here it is,

smacking of the Eighteenth Century, and of that supreme pamphleteer, Dean Jonathan Swift.

# A HANDBOOK ON HANGING

*Being a short Introduction to the fine art of Execution, and containing much useful information on Neck-Breaking, Throttling, Strangling, Asphyxiation, Decapitation and Electrocutation; as well as Data and Wrinkles for Hangmen, an account of the late Mr. Berry's method of Killing and his working list of Drops; to which is added a Hangman's Ready Reckoner and certain other items of interest*

ALL VERY PROPER TO BE READ  
AND KEPT IN EVERY FAMILY

BY

CHARLES DUFF

*"Dislocation of the Neck is the ideal to be aimed at."*

It is truly wonderful how our author keeps up his satire right to the end. The line taken is the perfectly logical one that the hangman, being a public official, is entitled to due recognition and reward for his services. Although Mr. Duff's medium is rare in this country (far too rare, indeed, in English letters) all the useful and relevant facts on the subject are included. Freethinkers will especially welcome the ridicule the author pours on the good Christian churches for supporting so barbarous an institution as hanging. One is tempted to quote extensively, but two or three scintillations must suffice.

Item: "In Italy it [capital punishment] has been abolished except for those who attempt to kill: (a) Signor Mussolini or (b) the King." Item: "Highly complex law such as that which existed in Greece in the time of Solon, in Rome in the time of Justinian, and in England in the time of Birkenhead is indicative of decadence." Item: "Three times he tried to hang John Lee; and three times he failed . . . It was a humiliating position for any executioner. One can well imagine him saying the words used in Matthew xxvii. 46." I looked up the latter and laughed—some may be shocked.

In closing this review a question must be asked and answered. Why does a comparatively civilized and obviously kindly people like the English tolerate this atrocity of legal strangulation? The answer, I think, is to be found in our official faith, Christianity. The Christian may be a brave man, but Christianity is not a brave faith. Christianity continually teaches and inculcates fear and an inferiority feeling. "Fear God and honour the King": "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." But a healthy, sane man cannot be made to fear by merely telling him that that is the appropriate attitude of mind. Very well, then: at him again. Make him feel his inferiority and weakness, then he will fear. "Blessed are the poor in spirit": "Pride goeth before destruction": "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," and so on and so forth. Inferiority feeling breeds fear, and fear, in turn, engenders cruelty.

How should a Christian who despises the body and exalts suffering, the central mystery of his religion being the execution of his god (little replicas of which the more devout constantly contemplate); how should

such a man respect the dignity of the human body? It is the pagan poet Shakespeare who exclaims "What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable!" and it is that other unknown pagan poet who wrote the "Song of Songs," who compares the lover's neck to a tower of ivory. The good Christian, unsusceptible to human dignity, wishes to dislocate that tower of loveliness.

On the day that this is being written there has been published an extraordinary bluebook. It is the report of the Departmental Committee on the use of the "guss" in Somerset coal mines. The guss is a girdle fitted around the waist of boys who pull coal in "putts" or sledges in these mines. The boys, in pulling the putt, move forward in a stooping posture, mainly on their finger tips and toes, but sometimes on their hands and knees. The report mildly states that there have been comments as to the "indignity to human labour involved in the use of the guss." The Miners' Association, that is, the owners' organization, we are informed, did not contemplate the immediate total abolition of the guss. Well, that is what some of us would have gussed—I mean guessed—without the help of the committee. Dignity be damned!

The gallows' pinion is also a broad leather body-belt round the waist, and a Somerset miner in the hangman's hands must feel strangely at home. We wish Mr. Duff and all the other crusaders against hanging a rousing fight and a speedy win. Their chances of success will be the greater in so far as they can create a new psychology, that of respect for human dignity, whether it be in pit lad or prisoner.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

### An Asinine Tale.

WHEN Balaam travelled on his moke,  
It was his fixed intent  
To go to some more lively spot  
Than that where he was sent.  
He rode along the stony road,  
O'er many a dusty hill,  
Until at last, it came to pass,  
The beast stood stiff, and still.  
"Gee up! Gee up!" the rider said,  
"What's in your foolish mind?"  
Then with his hands, and with a stick,  
He smote the ass behind.  
The donkey said, "Why beat me so,  
With cudgel and with fist?"  
His master answered: "Get a move,  
You d—d ventriliquist."  
The donkey turned his weary head  
And said, "I cannot pass,  
There is an angel in the road."  
Said Balaam, "You're an ass."  
Replied the brute in mournful tones:  
"That may be so, my brother,  
Howe'er it be, it seems to me,  
That you must be another."  
At last the prophet's wind was up,  
So saying, "Let us pray,"  
He offered up a fervent prayer—  
The ass, a raucous bray.

S. SODDY.

Common sense is born pure in the healthy human being, is self-developed, and reveals itself by a resolute perception and recognition of what is necessary and useful. Practical men and women avail themselves thereof with confidence. When it is absent, both sexes consider anything that they may desire a necessity, and anything that gives them pleasure an object of utility.

Goethe.

### The Parson on "The Job."

THERE is probably a certain percentage of chronic unemployment amongst professional soul-savers. The *Freethinker* is almost alone in its recognition of the Christian ministry as essentially identical on its economic and social side with every other form of employment.

Amongst all "professional" men there is a rather snobbish idea that *their* organizations are different in principle from the workmen's trade unions. The fact that in most cases a minister has to present college credentials instead of indentures or "tickets" in order to obtain a job, merely places the parson amongst the professionals instead of amongst the artisans. The weighty qualifications demanded in the case of highly skilled mechanics obliterates any definite distinction between professionals and manual workers.

It is a curious world where it is necessary to reiterate so obvious a truth as that parsons seek a job for exactly the same reasons as greengrocers or plumbers do. This is true of present-day parsons. It may be that in earlier centuries the glorious opportunities for active persecution attracted many to be priests, torturers, heretic-burners and so on. Those were the days when priests were "saints." The busy toil of heresy-hunting could be avoided by leading the life of a hermit, or by enjoying the excellent fare and salacious amusements of many of the monasteries. We may quite well regard the current commercialized aspect of clericalism as by far the noblest and most virtuous heights it ever has or ever will attain.

When we glance at those churches and parsons who have combined two businesses, we see very easily the identity of clericalism with commercialism at its worst. As landlords the clerics have been voracious in all countries. They have owned slums, tenements, brothels and every form of property calculated to produce maximum profit-rentals, while encouraging all the evils against which all reformers have fought and protested.

Not only is this true of the old world, such as the familiar examples of Westminster, Chester and Bristol ecclesiastical property, it is characteristic of Catholic properties in Mexico, and Episcopal property in New York. Upton Sinclair tells us that while the papers were ringing with the news that the wife of the Bishop of New York had been robbed of jewels worth fifty thousand dollars, and while the same bishop was raising a fund of 1,000,000 dollars to build an Episcopal Cathedral, *Everybody's Magazine* was simultaneously reporting on the slum property owned by this Bishop's Church. The magazine told of poor houses bought by the church as low as 200 dollars, rented out to the swarming poor for a total of 50 dollars a month, and that these horrible houses were without sanitation, and unfit for the habitation of animals. As Charles Russell said:—

Decay, neglect and squalor seem to brood wherever Trinity is an owner. Gladly would I give to such a charitable and benevolent institution all possible credit for a spirit of improvement manifested anywhere, but I can find no such manifestation. I have tramped the Eighth Ward day after day with a list of Trinity properties in my hand, and of all the tenement houses that stand there on Trinity land, I have not found one that is not a disgrace to civilization and to the City of New York.

The parson does not take his "job" in the right spirit. The rest of the world gives a fair day's work and hopes to get a fair day's pay for it, but we do not regard ourselves as "called" to a sacred profession which we are entitled to magnify by stealing, spoilation, and reckless profiteering.

The clerics as schoolmasters have just as evil a record. If an ordinary human being becomes a teacher, he regards education as his job. There is no tradition of let us say ice-cream-merchants adding a bit of school-mastering as incidental to the interests of their ice-cream-parlour. The clerics, on the other hand, have done their best everywhere to get the control of education in order to make it subordinate to the parson's proper "job" of ministering to ignorant superstition.

Rev. James Conway, S.J., in his book, *The Rights of Our Little Ones*, says:—

Catholic parents cannot, in conscience, send their children to American public schools, except for very grave reasons approved by the ecclesiastical authorities.

While State education removes illiteracy and puts a limited amount of knowledge within the reach of all, it cannot be said to have a beneficial influence on civilization in general.

The State cannot justly enforce compulsory education, even in case of utter illiteracy, so long as the essential physical and moral education are sufficiently provided for.

In England you find most of the Labour members hob-nobbing with clerics, especially those of Nonconformist principles. The whole history of clericalism has been one of strenuous opposition to labour aspirations. To-day there are men like "Woodbine Willie," and societies like the Christian Social Union existing primarily to stultify genuine labour movements by leading off working-class discontent into "harmless" frothy expressions of mild objection to some of the out-of-date forms of capitalist exploitation. In America practically the whole of the clerical profession is entirely pro-capitalist and does not pretend to be anything else. Admirable unitarian and other "humanist" church ministers, like Rev. John Haynes Holmes, are an insignificant minority whose "Christianity" will not bear analysis.

In the unhappily conducted, and just now miserably ended Miner's Strike, every kind of tyranny was rampant, and every form of free speech was suppressed by mining officials, police and the military. Yet the clergy were always favoured by the mine-owners, their missions were welcomed, and there is not a single instance of a cleric being bludgeoned or prosecuted for saying a single word against one of the most outrageous of all recent capitalist suppressions of strikes. My sympathy with the strikers and my wish that they could have won their very reasonable demand is not at all inconsistent with a knowledge of its hopelessness from the start.

The English Evangelist, "Gipsy Smith," was in Los Angeles at the time of the Blouse-girls strike. The girls were starving and they sent a delegation to this evangelist to ask for help. They told him they were mistreated, exposed to insults, driven to sell their bodies by prostitution, because their wages would not support life. Gipsy Smith's answer was:—

"Get Jesus in your hearts, and all these questions will take care of themselves."

The frankness of the evangelist may have been exceptionally brutal, but its sense was characteristic of the clerical view of other people's "jobs." The weekly sermons in myriad of Christian churches take for granted that the "Reverend," by virtue of his "job," regards everybody else's job as a matter of indifference. Listen to what Mr. Whiting Williams (a lecturer at Harvard University, and a Christian and regular attendant at an orthodox church) says from his own experience:—

While the average pastor is perfectly willing to believe that his job is a highly constructive one, the performance of which gives him a spiritual thrill and makes him feel that he is contributing to the well-being of the world, he fails to understand that there is no member of his church who does not feel the same way about his job. He talks to his people as if they were unfortunates, as if they were doing things not worth doing, for the purpose of earning money. This means that he simply cuts himself off from touching the lives of the people where they live—namely, in their work.

I went into church one Sunday and the minister prayed something like this: "Oh, Lord. We know that Thou understandest that during the week we have to earn our living, we have to engage in activities that dirty our hands and soil our souls, but we thank Thee that we can come in here on Sunday and get all fixed up and go through a spiritual laundry for Monday morning."

I nearly threw a hymn-book at him.

Mr. Williams' article in *The Federal Council Bulletin*, concludes with an expression of scepticism as to the fitness of the average cleric to attempt to solve labour problems. The fact is that the parson needs a rude

awakening as to the commonplace material basis of his own "job." He is partly a workman subject to the law of supply and demand, partly a panderer to whatever power is uppermost, and partly a willing weapon in the hands of reaction.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

### Books and Life.

If it were not for the intensive egotism of Western religions the philosophic content of Buddhism would have had a better reception, and its truths when assimilated would have been a real acquisition. There is hardly a commentary on Buddhism that does not, either by suggestion or direct inference, make out a case for the superiority of Christianity over one of the oldest philosophies of the world. Schopenhauer, who could handle truths regardless of their consequences, reserves his highest praise for Buddhism, and, no doubt, could, with a good conscience smoke the best cigars and play the flute. Nietzsche's "Zarathustra" in choosing companions for his cave in the mountains, is kindly disposed towards Buddha, personified by a shadow, and addresses him: "Thou poor rover and rambler, thou tired butterfly! wilt thou have a rest and a home this evening? Then go up to my cave!" An American writer, Mr. Thornton Wilder, has given the world a novel called *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*. (Longmans. 6s. net). The copy before us is the eleventh impression, the first edition being made in October, 1927. After a second careful reading there is still a doubt as to what constitutes its strength, for it is a book fulfilling all conditions on which eyesight and thought are given by the reader. There is the silver twilight of melancholy, but, contrasted with this, there is also the gently defined line leading to good deeds. The reader is drawn into the personal life of each of the five characters who perished when the bridge broke, and Brother Juniper, a little red-haired Franciscan, who was a witness of the accident, made exhaustive research into the history of the five victims to justify the ways of God to man. This novel will be an awkward problem for any who wish to claim a moral from it. The author has played on the theme of renunciation, and in many passages, is, like Matthew Arnold, "deadly with a smile." The effect gained in the following passage through the presentation of a triviality is perhaps reminiscent of Anatole France; of an archbishop he writes: "On one occasion, the iniquities in his see having been called to his notice, he almost did something about it. He had just heard that it was becoming a rule in Peru for priests to exact two measures of meal for a fairly good absolution, and five measures for a really effective one. He trembled with indignation; he roared to his secretary, and bidding him bring up his writing materials, announced that he was going to dictate an overwhelming message to his shepherds. But there was no ink left in the inkwell; there was no ink left in the next room; there was no ink to be found in the whole palace. This state of things in his household so upset the good man that he fell ill of the combined rages and learned to guard himself against indignations." The description of the meeting between Camila Perichole and the Marquesa de Montemayor is a masterly presentation of the conquest of revenge. Brother Juniper's book was condemned, and the little Franciscan was burnt as a heretic. In the fire, he called twice upon St. Francis, "and leaning upon a flame he died." This novel deserves a place in the sun of the human mind, is free from any trace of Americanism, is written in beautiful English, and it is a pleasure to add a word of praise for a book from the land of liberty. That land, although doing its best, has decidedly not succeeded in killing the creative spirit of an author who enters, with this book, into the great brotherhood of the Republic of Letters which, in a very real sense, is bigger than five continents. He has height, breadth, and depth, and there is a spaciousness about the aside on the ugly Marquesa that confides to the listener a secret of the author's craft ". . . her letters were very good, for such authors live always in the noble weather of their own

minds, and the productions which seem remarkable to us are a little better than a day's routine to them."

Hope, in the book-buyer's breast, is Miltonic in its quality. Catalogued in his mind is a list of books that belong to him whether he owns them or not. Two seconds decided the acquisition for sixpence of a nice clean copy of *Jonathan Swift*, by C. Whibley. It was the Leslie Stephen Lecture delivered before the University of Cambridge, on May 27, 1917. Swift lives. His immortality is a denial to the judgment of many critics who have not read him, or to those who do not care for savage criticism. Mr. C. Whibley, in this lecture, has most carefully searched for facts in the life of Swift to prove his good qualities, which is a sound instinct. In our present age of bluster, bladders, and newspaper sensation, it is good to be reminded of one who could write, "that whoever could make two ears of corn, or two blades of grass, to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind, and do more essential service to his country, than the whole race of politicians put together." This lecture reads very easily, and it is illuminating without a trace of dullness. Swift suggested "The Beggar's Opera" to his friend Gay in a question, "What think you of a Newgate Pastoral?" and he was also responsible for the birth of Jonathan Wild. A cynic lives in a world of despair, but a satirist thinks that even his victims are capable of good. A good phrase of Mr. Whibley's, and one that may explain Swift's tenacity in literature is: "The master-passion of his mind was anger against injustice and oppression." The Dean rubs shoulders in Elysium with Voltaire and Rabelais. Gay asked for him before he died, and Arbuthnot sent from his death-bed a last message to him. From the above notice of *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, then, the "noble weather in which such authors live" may be found as a reality to keep bright the sword that the cynic allows to rust in its scabbard. As the world's history goes, from Lucian and Juvenal to Swift, and up to the present day, the satirist is indispensable; the destruction of T.N.T. ruining the oyster trade, 11,343 people killed in street accidents in three years, and the effective protests at Wembley for ill-treating a cow do not argue the arrival of Utopia.

A copy of Mr. Charles Duff's *A Handbook on Hanging*, published by the Cayme Press, Ltd., arrested attention by its jacket, original in design, and sufficient in itself to sell the book. The volume is reviewed in this issue by Mr. Bayard Sinmons. The only reason for noticing it here is that the preceding paragraph on Swift was written before the book was seen, and the giant "Jonathan" would be pleased to know that we have in our age, in Mr. Charles Duff, a true descendant of him, who, on successfully commending Congreve to Harley, said, "So I have made a worthy man happy, and that is a good day's work." Satire is not despair; it is hope for improvement, and until we are civilized, the Dean's shoes will always be ready for any who can wear them.

A book to be recommended, although out of print, is *Talks with Ralph Waldo Emerson*, by Charles J. Woodbury. It was published by Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., in 1890, and deserves a better home than a second-hand bookseller's unsympathetic shelves. Emerson had a universal mind, and efforts to definitely classify his belief or non-belief will be difficult. The compiler of this book, however, relates a visit of Parker Pillsbury to Emerson. He approached him on the subject of religion the winter before Emerson's death and received the reply, "One world at a time." This advice, of course, finds no favour with Spiritualists who can call up from incredible millions of dead some recently deceased celebrity. Our national telephone system will have to look to its laurels.

WILLIAM REPTON.

He is happy who, seeing his duty, can do it.—Seneca.

## Correspondence.

### BEHAVIOURISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In its advocacy of Materialism the *Freethinker* seems to me to have allowed itself to lag behind progressive thought. At one time a regular, now only an occasional reader of your valuable paper, I have yet failed to notice a single contributor who shows in his writing that he is aware of the tremendous challenge to religion, philosophy, and even psychology, including Freudian psycho-analysis, that has been thrown down by the new cult of "Behaviorism as sponsored by Dr. J. B. Watson in America.

Hitherto, psychology has relied almost entirely on introspection, and the subjective analysis of states of consciousness as such. All this has no meaning for the behaviorist who deliberately, and in my opinion successfully, challenges the premises on which it is based. Dr. Watson urges that psychological terminology has effectively prevented the dualistic attitude to life being got rid of, has hindered a thorough going determinism, and has continued to lead mankind "up the garden."

"Behaviorism" works objectively. *Stimulus* and *response* are its fundamental idea. Dualism, and therefore religion, is unthinkable in connexion with it. It is nothing if not thoroughly deterministic, mechanistic, and therefore, scientific. It is a philosophy worth study by the Freethought Movement in this country, for the simple reason that it is in all probability the truest explanation of mental phenomena that has so far been advanced.

H. A. F. M.

[We are quite well acquainted with the Behaviouristic school of thought, and while our correspondent is quite correct in saying that it is a challenge to the older school of psychologists, he is not quite correct in speaking of it as a challenge to psycho-analysis. The existence of mental facts is not at all questioned by Behaviourism even though it is successful in dealing with behaviour in terms of stimulus and response. The category of mental facts remains untouched. We must still deal with a sensation in terms of sensation. Its causation is another question.—EDITOR.]

### THE CHURCH CONGRESS AND SCIENCE.

SIR,—Can Freethought learn a little from "orthodoxy" in the matter of advertising? The answer is "yes," judging from the sensational accounts in the daily press of the Church Congress at Cheltenham.

However, it would be far better if the Bishop of Birmingham (Dr. Barnes) and Dean Inge, would cease to pose as scientists, and content themselves with the work of preaching the gospel of peace and goodwill—the world is sadly in need of both.

The shackles of Semitic mythology seem to hold the minds of these clerics as in a vice, in spite of their cloak of Modernism.

The confusion, by Dean Inge, of evolution and devolution is an instance of the harm they do.

Evolution is progress towards a better state of things, so far as the human race is concerned, and as that it may be described as the revelation of the Divine process.

The prehistoric "monsters of the slime" have disappeared—we may also hope to see disease and noxious insects and animals also disappear.

The advanced clerics are always patronizing science with the statement that there is no barrier between science and religion.

If by religion they mean the jumble of the old and new Semitic mythology, Paulianity—or, as they describe it, Christianity—then they are wrong.

That religion which is higher and nobler than Christianity is the one to which science beckons us.

With its clarity and purity Greek thought still remains the light of the world—if divinity could be claimed for Jesus, still more could it be claimed for Socrates.

The fear of science and its truths peeps out in the address of Dean Inge at the Congress, the poison of his theological ideas taints his remarks—the nobility of the ancient Greek idea—"the Good is the Divine"—is a sealed book to him.

The devil, according to Dean Inge, says—"I am evolving too."

No one will envy the Dean's claims of acquaintance with evil spirits, but he is certainly incorrect, and his view of the attributes of the Absolute represents the savage rather than civilized humanity. All evolution is change, but all change is not evolution.

The old theory of relativity as restated, with the subtle Semitic negation of human intelligence, by Einstein, at once attracts these amateur scientists, and one can but admire the sturdy common sense of Sir Oliver Lodge's attitude towards it, as contrasted with theirs. The theory of Carnot, quoted by Dean Inge, that the whole universe is running down like a clock, is one of those half-truths that are dangerous and misleading.

Possibly, the Dean remarked, it is being wound up periodically by some entirely unknown force. The new discovery of the power of "centrifugal force," to which solar systems owe their existence, explains the continuity of creation. The collision of celestial bodies causes the movement which, in human terms of expression, we call "centrifugal force"—and modern study of this power has thrown entirely new light on the so-called "laws" of gravity and relativity.

These clerical exponents of theology must keep abreast with modern science if their remarks are to have any value.

BARTON SCAMMELL, M.S.C.I.

### Society News.

#### MR. CLAYTON'S LANCASHIRE MEETINGS.

DURING the week Mr. Clayton has visited Great Harwood, Padiham, and Worsthorpe; and good meetings have been held in spite of the darker evenings. There was a good audience at the indoor lecture at the Nelson I.L.P., on Sunday morning, where, as usual, a very attentive hearing was given the speaker. Rain prevented the Sunday evening meeting at Todmorden.

#### NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

AN excellent series of lectures and discussions for the Winter Session was inaugurated last Sunday, by an address from Mr. A. P. de Zoysa, B.A., Ph.D., on "Is Buddhism a Suitable Religion for England?" The attendance was very good and the new Chairman, Mr. Saville, appealed to the audience to make the meetings as widely known as possible. The lecturer must be congratulated on the excellent statement of his case and his clever replies to the hard-headed opponents his arguments brought forward. As they were as obstinately convinced of Freethought as he was of Buddhism, little headway was made, but Mr. de Zoysa proved a very plausible advocate. At the same time his claim that Buddhism was entirely rational while asserting that re-incarnation was an absolute fact, was hotly contested and the question was left unsettled. Perhaps the lecturer may be induced to develop his arguments further at some future time.

On Sunday (October 14), the lecturer will be Dr. Arthur Lynch, on "The Brain Burners."

#### LIVERPOOL BRANCH.

THE Liverpool Branch commenced their indoor campaign on Sunday last, and if the opening meeting is any criterion, the season is very promising.

We have heard something of a revival in Religion, but certainly the splendid attendance at our first meeting suggests there is an increasing interest in the Freethought Movement in Liverpool. So much so, that we will have to seek larger accommodation for our audiences. Dr. Carmichael was the speaker, and chose for his lecture the subject, "Methods of Controversy." Whilst this lecture was perhaps not definitely of interest to inquiring Christians, it was certainly instructive, and provided discussion that was very helpful to Freethinkers—especially in their attitude to possible converts. The Doctor is to be congratulated on his excellent address, and I feel sure his further lectures will be looked forward to by those who were privileged to be present.

To-day (October 14), Mr. J. V. Shortt, President of the Branch, will lecture on the "Rights of Christians."

## 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 p.m., Lecture in French by M. Deshumbert on "Buddhism." All are invited.

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8): 11.15, Arthur Lynch—"The Brain Burners."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Arthur Lynch—"The Brain Burners."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Station): 7.15, Mr. P. Ryan—"Is there a Class-War?"

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): Free Sunday Lectures. 7.0, Professor Salvemini—"Italy and Fascism."

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

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY ("The Orange Tree" Hotel, Euston Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Debate on "Is Christianity True?" *Affir.*: Rev. Father Vincent McNabb. *Neg.*: Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe. Questions and Discussion.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Eclipse Restaurant, 4 Hill Street, Hanover Square, W.1): 7.0, Mr. W. P. Campbell-Everden—"Evolution." Admission free. Questions and discussion.

#### OUTDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. F. Mann—"Religion and Life."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12 noon, Mr. James Hart—A Lecture. 3.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine—A Lecture.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith): 3.0, Mr. W. P. Campbell-Everden—A Lecture.

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

BELFAST PROPOSED BRANCH N.S.S. (48 York Street): 3.0, Mr. F. Nolan—"The Story of Creation."

BOLTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Borough Hall, Corporation Street): 6.15, Every Sunday. Study Circle in Biology (Haldane and Huxley's Text Book). All Freethinkers welcome. Discussion invited.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. R. Parker—"Prejudices and Other Things."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street): 7.45, Mr. J. V. Shortt—"The Rights of Christians." The meeting will be held in the large room on lower floor. Admission free. Collection.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints, Manchester): Mr. Chapman Cohen, at 3.0 and 6.30 p.m. Subjects: "The Meaning of Freethought," and "What are We Fighting For?" Questions and discussion. Teas provided.

#### OUTDOOR.

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

WANTED—Bound volumes of the *Freethinker* for years previous to 1885.—WATTS & CO., Johnson's Court, E.C.4.

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