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Views and Opinions.

The Press and the Public.

From time to time I have said things about the British press which have been far from flattering. My only excuse for saying them is that I believe them to be true, and as I do not look to the press for either praise or employment, I see no reason why I should not say them. And they have been said because they needed saying. I quite agree with all that is said concerning the power of the press; indeed, I do not think there was ever a time when it was quite so powerful. Education—in the sense of being able to read and write—is general, and this has created an enormous army of readers, and men like the late Lord Northcliffe were not slow to perceive the advantage thus offered. The extension of the franchise has placed enormous political power in the hands of the people, and this has given the newspaper greater power than it ever before possessed. If the press had risen to its opportunities for good, all would have been well. But has it? What it has seen is the opportunity of larger and larger circulations, the condition of obtaining which has been to play to ignorance rather than to work for its removal. Stunts—whether it is the daily movements of an evangelist like Mrs. McPherson, or the elaborate chronicling of a murder trial—are the order of the day. Pictures, which for sheer inanity almost defy description, take up a large part of the space available. The leading article is fast disappearing to make room for short paragraphs which call for no mental effort on the part of the reader. And even that is apparently too much, for in most cases the news has to be given in headlines, for fear the average reader should find the strain of even a thirty line paragraph too much for his, or her, intelligence. The newspaper of to-day spends fabulous sums in order to tickle the palates of its patrons. It is better produced than newspapers ever have been. But in the better aspects of a newspaper it is poorer than ever.

The Path of Least Resistance.

Now this contains the gist of what I have been saying of most English papers; and I repeat it here because I received the other day a long and not unkind letter from a working journalist, who protested that I am unjust to the army of writers for the press. He says that journalists are not so foolish as I appear to think they are, that they are doing the best they can in a trying situation, and that if they wrote as I would have them write many of them would not be permitted to write at all. He also reminds me that the press does not create the public, it is the public that creates the press, and I am no more justified in expecting newspapers to print what the public does not want than I should be to demand that a shop-keeper should stock his shop with goods that the public will not buy. I do not know that I seriously disagree with this, nor do I see that an admission of its truth actually contradicts anything I have said. It is the same truth from another angle.

Mr. Augustine Birrell once said of newspapers in general that "If they had been allowed to tell more truth, it is only credible to suppose they would not have told so many lies." That puts the situation very fairly, at least it is put as favourably as possible to the press, and it expresses a vital truth. Taking men and women on the average, I do not think they will go out of their way to tell a lie. Neither will they go out of their way to tell the truth. It is too much to expect the average man or woman to speak with strict accuracy, but if people were allowed, or encouraged to tell the truth, there would be considerably less lying. In most cases people lie for a purpose—to escape inconvenience, or to reap a profit, and whether the lie leads to profit or loss is determined by circumstances. As things are, the inducements to mental crookedness are very powerful. The letter before me is evidence of this. It is an admission that many journalists are as dissatisfied with the part they play as I am at seeing them play it. But in our religion-soaked society, mental honesty is an expensive luxury. Lying is lamentably common, and the suppression of truth commoner still. And the man who will have the truth at all costs has no better epitaph written over his grave than "Here lies a crank."

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The Exploitation of Credulity.

Now I am far from believing that newspapers created this state of public opinion. I do not charge them with this, but with exploiting it. Generally speaking, the object of the proprietors of newspapers is to sell their wares. It is only a paper such as the *Freethinker* which makes sales a secondary consideration, and the consequence is chronic poverty. Mr. Birrell's remark above cited was made during the war, and apropos of the Government censorship of



the press. But whether the censorship is that of the Government or the public, the statement that if writers were permitted to tell the truth they would not tell so many lies holds good. But if they told the truth—about religion, for instance—what would become of their gigantic circulations? Newspaper writers are not, I admit, different from other people. The unsigned article, or the editorial "we," usually covers a quite ordinary, often a commonplace individual. But like most others, whether the working journalist is quite honest in what he says, whether he says all he believes, or what he believes, largely depends upon what the public and his proprietors allow him to say. In saying this I am not inferring that journalists are different from other people; I am saying they are similar to other people. Certainly no one who reads critically the yards of sentimental nonsense that certain of our prominent journalists turn out can readily believe that they take a delight in doing it, or that they really believe all they say. It would be an insult to their intelligence to assume either of these things. They are writing for a particular public, the papers are printed to sell to a particular public, and so long as this public make the path of the panderer to prejudice and the exploiter of sensationalism smoother than the path of straightforward, earnest and independent speech, things will remain as they are.

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#### Christianity and the Public.

Now I know it will sound to some very much like a King Charles' head touch, but I think it is impossible to dissociate this state of things from the general influence of Christianity. For it is precisely the faults of the press indicated that are characteristic of Christian methods of education and influence. No religion has ever shown a more complete indifference to truth, a greater determination to suppress facts inimical to its own claims, or to disseminate information of a misleading character than has Christianity. The Roman Church has its official index, and the Protestant Church, while lacking this, has an unofficial index of extraordinary efficiency. The conduct of the *Daily News* and of Messrs. Cassell & Co., with regard to the "Where are the Dead?" controversy may be taken as one good example of this. At the moment, the press all over the country is liberally sprinkled with articles on religion—too much so for us to attribute it to anything but the underground operations of the various Christian bodies. It is too much to ask us to believe that quite suddenly journalists have become alive to the tremendous importance of Christianity. No one who knows journalists will accept this as the explanation of the existing state of affairs. It cannot be either that they are seriously concerned in finding out the truth about religion, for the exclusion of articles that unfavourably criticize Christianity is still practised. It is that the press in its craze for huge circulations has, on the one hand, to play to the lower order of intelligence, and on the other hand it has become alive to the fact that a profitable field of exploitation is offered by purveying a particular type of religion. It may or may not be true that a people has the government it deserves. It is certainly true that in existing conditions it will have the newspaper press it desires. The press is largely a reflection of the mental attitude of the public. The mental attitude of the public is reflected and strengthened by the press. Action and reaction, here as elsewhere, are equal and opposite. If we would have a different press we must try and create a different public. In other words, we must do away with the occasion for so many lies, and make it possible for the dissemination of a greater measure of truth.

#### Religion's Crowning Crime.

I am convinced that when the history of Christianity is impartially and scientifically written, its ill-effects in the world of mental life will be found to be one of its greatest evils. It commenced with a theory that damned people for wrong belief and so made the critical use of the intellect the most dangerous of occupations. And so soon as it gained power it added terrestrial punishment to celestial damnation. It burned, it tortured, it imprisoned, it slandered, it boycotted. It suppressed truth and circulated lies. It made heaven secure for the fool, and promised hell to the thinker. The thousands who died at the stake or in Christian prisons for heresy deserve the world's sympathy, and they have had it. But the millions who remained alive deserve it still more. For the evil that Christianity caused did not end with the people it killed. So far as they were concerned the wrong ended with their death. But they who were left alive were fully exposed to the influence of a creed which exalted the worst intellectual qualities and ostracized the better ones. Christianity created and perpetuated an environment which lowered the level of mental life, and it is the effects of this heredity we are experiencing to-day. We can have a better press when we are strong enough to demand it. We can have journalists more conscientious than they are when we make it possible for them to be so. But to accomplish these things we have to break the official and unofficial control of a Church whose rule has been one of the greatest blights in the history of the race.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

#### A Christian Editor.

MR. JAMES DOUGLAS is the Editor of the *Sunday Express*. He attained fame, or rather notoriety, a few weeks ago, by a violent attack upon Miss Radclyffe Hall's novel, *The Well of Loneliness*. A work that had been reviewed with praise and approval by practically all the leading literary periodicals of the day.

The publisher of the work in question, frightened by the roaring of this literary *poseur*, foolishly submitted a copy of the work to the Home Secretary, who at once declared that it was, in his opinion, unfit for public circulation. Accordingly the work was withdrawn.

The Home Secretary might say, we expect he would say—now that his action has aroused so much publicly expressed indignation—that he was only expressing his personal opinion; but mark the sequel. Another edition of the book was printed, but this time in Paris, to supply the orders that came flocking in from America, Germany, and other countries. Copies were ordered from England. They were sent, but they were confiscated by the Custom House officials.

Did these officials seize these copies by order of the Home Secretary? If not, what authority had they for their action? It had not been condemned in any court of law. This is a question that will have to be cleared up; and at the same time we should like to have some light thrown upon the subject of who is the censor who controls the passing of books through the Customs. Or is there a black book, a sort of *Index Expurgatorius*, containing a list of books to be excluded, or confiscated? And if so, who is responsible for placing any particular work on it?

We may say that our very Christian Editor, Mr. James Douglas, is taking his spectacular victory very modestly. He is not vaingloriously boasting, "Alone I did it." In fact he has, so far as we are aware, maintained a stubborn silence ever since; not-



withstanding the avalanche of hostile criticism to which he has been subjected. His attitude seems to be that of the little boy who has thrown his brick and, alarmed at the result, is lying low hoping the affair will blow over and be forgotten. We do not think that will be yet. Things cannot remain as they are; the affair will have to be fought out to a finish; writers and publishers will want a decisive answer to the question whether their works have to conform to the procrustean bed of a man of the mental calibre—which can be estimated by a glance at the trashy paper he edits—of Mr. James Douglas.

In the meantime, it will not be amiss to examine the mentality of this pinchbeck Jupiter. In the *Sunday Express* for October 7, there is an article by the Editor, Mr. James Douglas, entitled "Christianity can Never Die"—which sounds like a parody of the hymn we used to sing at school-treats, "Kind words can never die." No doubt the Egyptian priests declared the same of their religion, which lasted twice as long as the Christian faith; yet it is dead, along with unnumbered other creeds and religions.

Christianity is dying. Millions of the educated and cultured classes in Europe, America, and every civilized country, reject it to-day as a mischievous and evil superstition; and what the cultured think to-day the masses will think to-morrow. All the new Republics that have sprung up since the war are definitely secular. Even Turkey has abolished the Caliphate, the bogey before which our Government so often shuddered with apprehension, lest it should proclaim a Jihad, or holy war. The Turkish Republic found no difficulty in abolishing it at all. Even the converts the missionaries made in China—converts mostly for the sake of education, and learning English—are now found fighting against the Christian powers. Even the famous "Christian General," Feng, has rattled.

However, Mr. Douglas is not of that opinion. He says:—

I do not believe that Christianity is either dead or dying, because its truth is not in any one basket. It lives in the hearts and minds of men. Its power is not confined to any institution or organization. Its vitality is not dependent on any set of dogmas or doctrines or any forms of worship. I can imagine a Christianized world without churches and without creeds, for the view of life revealed by Christ is not the monopoly of any sect, and this is proved by all the sectarian disputes over its interpretation. The very fact that they differ in their presentation of the truth shows that the truth is greater than their vision of it.

What drivel! Because Christianity is divided into a multitude of differing sects, each contending that it alone possesses the truth, that is a proof that Christianity is true! Of course, if other religions are found to be equally torn by contending sects, that does not prove that they are also true. Oh no! That proves they are false. It is only Christianity that can be proved true by this method, and we suppose that if all the Christian sects were to sink their differences and unite in one church, then the truth of Christianity would not be so evident, and we should have Mr. Douglas bewailing the good old times of contending sects.

Mr. Douglas looks forward to "a Christianized world without churches and without creeds," and governed by "the view of life revealed by Christ." Very well, let us judge Mr. Douglas by his own standard. There has been a series of articles appearing in a London paper under the title, "If Christ came to London." Well, suppose he came, and somebody handed him a copy of the *Sunday Express*, from which we have just quoted, with an in-

timation that the Editor was a follower of his. What would he think of it?

Two whole pages are devoted to financial affairs, what to invest your money in; what shares to buy, and what to sell—in spite of the dictum of Christ that it is impossible to serve God and Mammon. There is a page devoted to advertisements of houses, ranging from £700 to £1,495. If Christ had possessed a fraction of this amount he would never have gone on tramp. There are several pages devoted to sport, racing, football, billiards, etc. One to film-stars, and one to the theatre. One page is devoted to the latest fashions, and on another page is a selection of ten fur-trimmed coats at six and a half-guineas each, and televisions from £20 to £40. For the rest it consists for the most part of tittle-tattle of men about town, police and society news.

Throughout the whole paper you may seek in vain for any elevation of thought or feeling. Of the revelations of science there is not a word; or any aspiration after art or literature.

Does Mr. Douglas think that Christ would approve of all this hectic, luxurious life of sport, of the theatre, and of jazz? If Mr. Douglas has ever read a page of the New Testament, he must know that the Christ depicted there, would condemn every page of his paper, and if he came to London to-day, would probably denounce the Editor as a hypocrite for professing to be a Christian.

Since writing the above, we learn that things are beginning to move. The French publishers of the new edition of *The Well of Loneliness*, have engaged a firm of London solicitors to raise the question of the legality of the action of the Customs officials in seizing the books.

Mr. G. B. Shaw, Mr. H. G. Wells, and Mr. Arnold Bennett, have all added their protest against this backstairs attack upon the freedom of the press. Mr. Arnold Bennett, referring to the Bible and Shakespeare, points out that: "If either of them was issued as literature to-day for the first time, Sir William Joynson-Hicks would suppress it in no time as a menace to the purity of home life in this great country."

Mr. Alfred Tresidder Sheppard, the novelist and critic, declares that if Sir William Joynson-Hicks is to judge whether any novelist's work is or is not to be published, British literature may look forward to an era of 'Sandford's and Mertons,' 'Jessica's First Prayers,' and dissertations on Dora, Night Clubs, Jixis and Prayer Books."

But the most telling blow yet delivered in this contest, was the meeting organized by the Labour Party at Hounslow, Sir William's own constituency, on October 9, to protest against the Home Secretary's backdoor censorship. The meeting was addressed by Mr. George Lansbury; Mr. Wm. Mellor, editor of the *Daily Herald*; Mr. W. A. Peacock, editor of the *Clarion*; and Mr. T. J. Mason, the prospective Labour candidate. Mr. Lansbury, whose speech was punctuated with hearty rounds of applause, said:—

Sir William Joynson-Hicks had used the power of the State at the bidding of a newspaper to stop the circulation of a book which was the work of an author who had devoted much time and thought to her study of a grave problem. Men in that newspaper office had put upon her all the pruriency that was in their own minds.

Mr. Lansbury also remembered that: "Sir William Joynson-Hicks seems to think that God has given him a double dose of wisdom." That pious pair, Mr. Douglas, and Sir William, are now beginning to feel the draught. The hope that their despicable action would blow over and be forgotten, has not been realized. The case has got to be fought out to a



finish, and we have little doubt but what the victory will in the end rest with freedom.

We would also like to call attention to the attitude of that pious organ of Nonconformity, the *Daily News*; it has not uttered a word, or printed a letter, in condemnation of the suppression of this book. The editor is all for the liberty of the press. Yes, for the liberty to express Nonconformist religion and morality.

W. MANN.

## A Cathedral Popgun.

BESIDES being a Canon of the Cathedral, Mr. G. C. Richards, D.D., is a professor of Greek and Classical Literature in the University of Durham, and from that dizzy height he has addressed an open letter to a miner, anent the activity of certain secularists who propagate the faith which is in them throughout the domain of the County Palatine. There has been, at one time and another, some noble literature produced in the precincts of Durham Cathedral, but this emanation does not rank with the *Philobiblon* of Bishop Bury or the writings of Butler. It is rather a feeble echo of the eighteenth century Bishop Warburton, a writer of "presumptuous and ineffective treatises," as Dean Kitchen aptly describes him. There is a feminine, old-womanish strain running through it, a petulant venom peculiar to disgruntled churchmen, and, as ever in the case of Christian apologists, a reliance on the ignorance of the laity on the subject of Christian history to establish or renew the supremacy of the Church.

The late Sir George Otto Trevelyan, the historian, once spoke to a friend of mine, a pitman, of his admiration for the immense range of Mr. J. M. Robertson's learning; the Canon takes his pitman friend aside and tells him that J.M.R. is "no scholar," and not even an authority on theological matters. He is "prejudiced and lacking in the historical sense," and given to accepting everything propounded against Christianity. He tells the pitman that having mentioned some of Mr. Robertson's ideas concerning the historicity of Jesus to an eminent college friend, that gentleman laughed heartily. He suggests that there is a white streak in this particular Atheist; tackling, as he does, men of the calibre of Loisy and Schmiedel rather than the podgy warriors entrenched on the rock above the Wear. And so our parson goes on, battling for his tithes and a return to the dark ages. He squashes the author of a score of works on religion and kindred subjects by triumphantly pointing out that he dare not use the letters A.D. in denoting time, "for fear of acknowledging Jesus as Lord." What a pæan of praise would go up in the Cathedral if the Canon knew that Robertson has actually used the letters A.C. in this same connexion. It would balance the horrified silence into which the parson collapses at the suggestion that the cross has a phallic significance.

His open letter is entitled "Jesus Christ Existed—and Exists," and he proceeds to prove it by putting Suetonius, Pliny, Tacitus, and a few others in the witness box. They are all somewhat removed from the time of the supposed Christ and a good deal has to be read into their evidence before it is even worth considering. Suetonius, says the Canon, refers to disturbances at Rome about 52 A.D., and says they were "incited by Chrestus," and that scholars think this is a reference to a belief in Jesus as Messiah. But there are many students who think that it might refer to a Christos cult, with no necessary connexion with Jesus. There was a large number of Messianic Jews in the City, and one might reasonably infer that they

were inclined to neglect the political, as against the religious, sphere for their deliverance. The Canon quotes the letter of the younger Pliny—and no letter in the records of mankind has had so much responsibility thrust upon it—"The Christians sang hymns to Christ as to a god," and because there was a body of citizens who worshipped the Emperor Augustus as a god, how can anyone deny the historicity of Jesus, who, as Pliny says, was worshipped in the same way? I fancy there are few Chester-le-Street pitmen who are impressed by that sort of reasoning. The Annals of Tacitus are used in somewhat similar fashion. There is a passage about the persecution of Christians, written about the year 100 A.D., which no more proves the existence of Jesus Christ than the Canon's open letter. Naming half a dozen Professors who believe the Annals to be genuine, does not add to the value of the evidence; it is adding an element of confusion to a statement already cloudy enough. The forger is admitted to have been at work in the pages of Josephus. The passage which has stood in the forefront of Christian evidences for so many years is put aside and another which, in style, bears all the marks of an interpolation, put in its place. This new evidence from Josephus was not quoted by the Christian Origen; enough to damn it without anything else, and it is phrased in a manner similar to the Gospels.

The case for the non-historicity of Jesus rests on much more important evidence, however. He bears all the marks of myth, and his like can be duplicated from the records of a score of religions. And even if it were true that the Gospel Jesus lived and taught as the New Testament relates, it is a life and teaching that, as a prominent prelate of the Canon's Church put on record, would wreck any people who practised it, in a week.

The Canon snivels about his duty to prevent the miners reading the works of Mr. Robertson. There is "no good in them." "Surely," he says, "the successors of sincere Christians like Keir Hardie, Thomas Burt and John Wilson, are not going to be seduced by the kind of writer I have been describing to you." The Church knows all about seduction, and no one has suffered more by its activities in that way than the mining communities. The peculations of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in the coal field of Durham, and the operations of a financial system fostered by Christian doctrine, has robbed the Durham pitmen of much of the good red blood which is their due, but there is surely enough left in the very least of them to reject this piffing son of the Church and his scurvy creed.

H. B. DODDS.

## The Stronger.

I WONDER why I turned aside when I might enter in,  
For neither you nor I, sweet lass, have ever held it sin  
To take delight in love and youth; to yield and yet to  
win.

When borne along, most willingly, on passion's rising  
tide,  
When all my being craved for that which life had long  
denied,  
I turned—ah, me! strange things men be—I turned, I  
turned aside.

I turned aside: I wonder why; because I cannot say  
Why this emotion over that should wield tyrannic sway:  
I only feel a stronger will than mine has had its way.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

A good deed is the best prayer. A loving life is the  
best religion.—Ingersoll.



## Modernism and the Day of Judgment.

It is extremely interesting to watch, from time to time, the devices by which Modernists contrive to transform, bit by bit, the Christian Faith into something which they regard as a rational system of belief. Dr. Barnes, for example, boldly affirms that the Biblical story of the alleged fall of man is absolutely opposed to modern science, yet nevertheless gives a new interpretation to the Story of the Atonement by which he can still claim that Jesus Christ by his death upon the Cross became "The Saviour of Mankind." The Rev. Dr. Major, Dean Inge and other Modernists call in question other doctrines of their creed, and still maintain that they are good Christians; while Anglo-Catholics like Lord Halifax on the one hand, and Fundamentalists on the other, bluntly ask: How can any man who denies "The Virgin Birth," "The Resurrection," "Ascension," "The Second Advent," and "The Atonement," recite "The Apostles' Creed," and "The Consecration Prayer" in the Communion Office? And they crown these questions by asking, "Would not any Society revolt from people so repudiating its essential views?"

These are searching and reasonable questions to which the Modernist will find it difficult to give a straightforward answer.

And now we find that the Rev. Geoffrey Allen, Chaplain of Ripon Hall, Oxford, at the Modern Churchmen's Conference at Cambridge called in question the Christian belief in "The Day of Judgment," and said "there was no future *Grand Assize*; no eternal damnation and no reason to expect a return to earth of Jesus in the clouds of heaven." Isn't it shocking? Think of it, no damnation—after all the wickedness there is said to be in the world! Won't the millions of Buddhists, Brahmans and Mohammedans who have been called infidels be glad to escape the horrors of the Christian Hell! And how angry many bigoted Christians will be to learn that "wicked infidels" will not have to suffer an eternity of torture in hell fire in the company of the Devil and his angels. But what about "The Day of Judgment?" What authority has the Rev. Geoffrey Allen for saying that it is abolished? Only common sense; that is all—well, that's all right as far as Freethinkers are concerned. They have never believed in it, because of the absurdities involved in the conception. But Christians have always believed that the end of the world was at hand—when Jesus would come in all his glory—and all mankind would be called up for judgment, and the sheep would be divided from the goats; and though the day has been postponed from time to time, they still believe it will come one of these days. In my boyhood I was constantly reminded of the coming judgment, and told that the recording angel was fully occupied in taking note of all our sins; and in imagination I could see him up in the clouds surrounded with a lot of books turning over the pages and making a mark whenever a sin was committed. But as I grew older I began to ask some strange questions, at least some of my Christian friends thought so. I wanted to know how, when the recording angel was putting a stroke against John Smith's name for telling a white lie, with millions of others telling lies at the same time, he would be able to keep up with them—and what he would do about those he missed. And I wanted to know how long our trial would last if we had to be tried separately for each offence. And whether we should be able to engage Counsel to defend us. And whether "the

Tichborne case" would be tried all over again—and whether it would last longer than it did on earth.

But some of my Christian friends replied that the trial would be very short; that God knew everything and would be able to settle the case in a few moments. But, I asked, would not God allow anything to be said by way of defence? Some thought he would—others were doubtful. At all events, my Christian friends were satisfied that God would be sure to say—"Well done thou good and faithful servant" to them, and tell unbelievers "to enter into outer darkness" where there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth (for those that had any) and every other kind of unpleasantness. And now the Rev. Geoffrey Allen says quite confidently—in fact, as though he was in the know—there will be no trial—"no Great Assize" and above all—"no damnation." But the question is, will there be any Salvation? Ah! There's the rub. If there will be no hell for unbelievers, will there be any heaven for believers? And if there will be no Salvation—then Christianity will have no pre-eminence over Secularism—and all the Christian pretensions will be vanity!

How will good, kind, Christians like that? Some of these Modernists are asking for a further revision of the Bible, and especially of the New Testament. They would like to get rid of some of the miracles. Not only Dr. Barnes, Bishop of Birmingham, but several other Bishops on the side of Modernists. They want to retain their positions and their salaries, and preach a kind of Unitarianism, throwing overboard some of the main teachings of the Nazarine Carpenter.

But will the great body of Christians, Roman Catholics, Evangelicals, Fundamentalists, Anglo-Catholics and Dissenters of every variety, sanction such a change? I think not; at all events not for some time to come. I am of opinion that the matter would have to come before the House of Commons more than once before such a course would meet with approval. The Anglo-Catholics are doing their best to drive their followers over to Roman Catholicism—and Modernism towards intellectual freedom, but how far will they go?

I am reminded of some verses that appeared in a Sunday paper some years ago, when a previous revision of the Bible took place, from which I will quote a couple of verses:—

Examples they themselves have set  
Acting with their advisers;  
But it may happen they will yet  
Be subject to revisers.  
Their revenues, their palaces  
May undergo division;  
They'll have to be content with less  
When comes *their own revision*.

This clique supported by our laws  
By earnings of the people,  
Shall they not be "revised" because  
They work beneath a steeple?  
No, let the people raise their voice  
And give forth their decision—  
They will assist and will rejoice  
To help at *their revision*.

Yes, before the ratepayers consent to a further revision of the Christian Creed, the English Church must be disestablished and disendowed.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

The race of preachers inveigh against little vices, and pass over great ones in silence. They never sermonize against war.—*Voltaire*.

Let truth and falsehood grapple; who ever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?—*Milton*.



## The Conduct of Marcus Aurelius towards the Christians.

MARCUS was in the habit of continuing the policy of his adoptive father, that excellent man Titus Antoninus, and of taking him for a model in every respect. Hence, as Marcus knew that Titus had always treated the Christians with indulgence, he himself might well have been expected to do the same thing, especially as it was in strict agreement with his own disposition. Yet so far from this being the case, his conduct induced the excellent Moshcim to observe :—

If we except that of Nero, there is no reign under which the Christians were more injuriously and cruelly treated than under that of the wise and virtuous Marcus Aurelius.<sup>1</sup>

Bauer, in contradistinction from Renan, holds that under Marcus extensive proceedings of regular form were for the first time taken against the Christians; and he is of opinion that the conduct of the Christians necessitated this course.<sup>2</sup> Eusebius, and other authorities, enable us to follow the events; but the dates are more or less questionable, which, however, is a matter of secondary importance.

After mentioning the death of "Antoninus Pius," and the succession of his son Marcus Aurelius Verus, Eusebius goes on to say that at this time Polycarp (Bishop of Smyrna) ended his life in the violent persecution then excited in Asia.<sup>3</sup> He next proceeds to cite in extracts the greater part of a letter purporting to have been sent from the Church of Smyrna to the Church of Philomelium, and containing a description of the fate of Polycarp and other martyrs. The missing fragments of this document have been traced and restored by Archbishop Usher, and they include an interesting attestation of authenticity made at the end of the piece. Here, one Caius is said to have copied the letter from the copy of Irenæus, disciple of Polycarp. Then, one Socrates of Corinth, declares that he copied the copy of Caius; and one Pionius adds that when this was "almost obsolete," he searched for it, found it by the help of Polycarp in a vision, and duly transcribed it. What more could be asked? From this account we learn that the Christians of the district, having in one way or another excited the hatred of the people, some were cruelly scourged, whilst others, after exquisite tortures, were confronted with wild beasts. The spectators, unsatiated by these horrors, demanded the arrest of Polycarp. He, at the request of his flock, had withdrawn to a neighbouring village. Being pursued, he withdrew a little further, but was betrayed by a servant. Even then he might have escaped, had he not refused. Seeing him, his captors exclaimed, "Is it really worth while to arrest such an old man?" He gave them refreshment, and obtained two hours for prayer. On the way back, Herod, justice of the peace, and his brother Nicetes, meeting him, took him up into their chariot, but after vainly persuading him to use the formula, "Lord Cæsar," and to sacrifice, they became abusive, and threw him into the road, thus hurting his thigh. As he entered the Stadium, "a voice" from heaven, unheard by "many" for the great tumult, said "Be strong, Polycarp, be a man." No one saw the speaker, but "many" Christians heard "the voice." When examined by the Proconsul, he was besought to take pity of his great age, and to save himself through repeating the Pagan

formulas. This he refused, declaring that he would not blaspheme his saviour after having served him for eighty-six years. Then he solemnly declared, "I am a Christian." The Proconsul said, "Persuade the people." Polycarp answered that he willingly addressed his judge, but considered the people unworthy to receive his defence. The Proconsul threatened him successively with wild beasts and with fire. Polycarp remarked that a worse fire awaited the ungodly, and bid him do his pleasure. The Proconsul, visibly embarrassed, sent a herald to tell the people, "Polycarp declares himself to be a Christian." They all, Jews and Gentiles alike, denounced Polycarp as a father of the Christians, and an opponent of other religions; and besought Philip, the high priest of Asia, to let out a lion upon him. He refused, saying the spectacles were over. Then, in fulfilment of a vision previously seen by Polycarp, they clamoured for him to be burnt alive. This being granted, they prepared the pile quickly and bound Polycarp to the stake. He made a stately prayer; and then the fire was kindled. At this point, the writers of the letter proceed to affirm :—

We . . . saw a wonder. For the flame, forming the appearance of an arc as of a vessel filled with wind, was a wall round about the body of the martyr, which was in the midst, not as burning flesh, but as gold and silver refined in a furnace. We also perceived a sweet fragrance, such as arises from frankincense, or some other precious perfume. At length the impious, observing that his body could not be consumed by fire, ordered the confector to approach, and to plunge his sword into the body. Upon this, a quantity of blood gushed out and the fire was extinguished.

They would have liked to get the body; but the authorities, at the suggestion of certain persons instigated by the Jews, refused the permission; and then "the centurion . . . placed the body in the midst of the fire and burned it."

After describing the end of Polycarp, the writers add that "eleven brethren from Philadelphia suffered with him; but he alone is particularly celebrated." Near the end of the account, the event is said to have occurred during the proconsulate of Statius Quadratus. In A.D. 155, there was a proconsul of that name; but, in 167, there was a consul named Urumidius Quadratus; and most critics prefer this date.<sup>4</sup> The notice appears to be an addition, and the writer may well have confused the two officials. Eusebius does not quote it, and if he had known and accepted it, he would have had to place the event in the previous reign. Everyone who reads the above synopsis must be impressed by the fabulous circumstances it contains. To these should be added the flight of a dove from the body of Polycarp, which Eusebius and, after him, other ecclesiastical authors have discreetly omitted.<sup>5</sup> Renan thinks that the writers of the letter believed that they witnessed the miracles which they describe, but this is impossible unless their sanity was affected. Hence, if the letter is, as it claims to be, the production of eye-witnesses, its flagrant untruths prove them to have been either madmen or liars.

In the latter case, the presence of incredible elements does not necessarily imply that the credible ones are likewise fictitious. The ancient historians in describing the actions of generals and other celebrities often provide them with speeches suitable to the different occasions. But the spuriousness of the

<sup>1</sup> H.E. iv. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Eccles Hist. Cent. ii. Part 1 c. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Das Christentum (1853) p. 425.

<sup>4</sup> Supernatural Religion. (1902.) p. 175.

<sup>5</sup> Long. p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Christian Church. c. 23.



speeches does not discredit the historicity of the actions. As regards the letter, the difference is between the invention of principal facts and the invention of attendant circumstances. Still, it seems more likely that the original missive having vanished, the existing one was forged instead of it. The distinguished critic last quoted says of the lucubration:—

This rare fragment constitutes the most ancient example known of the Acts of Martyrdom. It was the model which people imitated, and which furnished the form, and the essential parts of those kinds of compositions.<sup>7</sup>

A close study of the document, however, strongly suggests that it had not Melchizedek's lack of ancestry. Most acts of martyrdom proceed from a time when persecution had long ceased to exist, and were intended to give those in security a pleasant thrill; the details being in accordance with the treatment which the authors themselves would have employed in the case of Jews, infidels and heretics. But some were composed while persecution was still rife, the purpose being to encourage present sufferers by the examples of past martyrs. The Book of Daniel is now regarded as a pious fiction designed to strengthen the Jews in their resistance to the impieties of Antiochus Epiphanes. History is said to repeat itself! Upon concluding his extracts from the above letter, Eusebius states that there were subjoined to it accounts of other martyrs who suffered at Smyrna contemporaneously with Polycarp. He specifies Metodorus, a heretical priest, and, more especially, one Pionius, saying that he had put into his collection of *Martyrs' Acts*—now lost—a letter describing this man's remarkable sufferings and steadfastness. He then mentions the existence of memorials about certain martyrs at Pergamum—not far from Smyrna—namely, Carpus and Paphilius, and a woman named Agathonice. Such was the state of Proconsular Asia. The next reports concern the Metropolis. For Eusebius proceeds to say that Justinus, after again addressing an *Apology* to the rulers of the empire, was adorned with a glorious crown of martyrdom. These rulers are Marcus Antoninus and his colleague Lucius Verus. The superscription of this second *Apology* gives it as addressed "to the Roman Senate," but, although the writer does address the Romans in the first chapter, yet he evidently directed his appeal to their sovereigns, for in the second chapter he reminds the Emperor of a petition granted by him to a woman, and in other places he invokes the two emperors. The work states that a man whose wife desired a divorce, accused her of Christianity to the authorities, and, finding she had appealed successfully to the Emperor for time to arrange her affairs, he caused her perverter, one Ptolomy, to be brought on the same charge before Urbricus (Prefect of Rome), from whom he had already had much to endure. Urbricus simply asked him if he were a Christian, and, hearing him confess, ordered him to be removed for execution.

Hereupon, one Lucius, himself a Christian, protested against the sentence. Urbricus replied, "Thou also seemeth to be a Christian." Lucius confessed, and was immediately sent to punishment. A third shared the same fate. Justinus then declares that he himself awaits some such accuser, perhaps Crescens, with whom he has often disputed, and whose ignorance he has triumphantly exposed. If the Emperors have not heard of the matter, he is willing to question him in their presence, as this in-

quiry is not unworthy of an emperor. Tatian, a disciple of Justinus, affirms that his master's apprehension was realized, for Crescens, who pretended to think death no evil, showed his true sentiments by seeking to have him punished with it.<sup>8</sup> Eusebius infers from Tatian's words that Crescens occasioned Justinus to suffer martyrdom; but he gives no particulars of the event or of the trial preceding it. These, however, are supplied by the *Acts of the Martyrdom of Justinus*, incorporated with his works. There we hear that Justinus and six of his co-religionaires, being brought before Rusticus, Prefect of Rome, were ordered "to worship the gods, and to obey the emperor." They refused, professing their own faith. Rusticus then desired to know whether Justinus thought that, if he were executed, he would go to heaven and be rewarded for his infidelity. Justinus replied that he was sure of it. The Prefect told them they must all sacrifice to the gods. Justinus again refused. The Prefect then threatened him with a cruel death. Justinus said it was precisely through such a death that they hoped to be saved at the tribunal of their Lord. The rest answered to the same effect, daring the Prefect to do his will. Rusticus then sentenced them to be scourged and to be beheaded for not sacrificing to the gods and for not obeying the Emperor. This was done.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

(To be continued.)

### Acid Drops.

The Wesleyan Chapel at Lambeth has been converted into a "Cinema-Church." In addition to the ordinary Sunday gospel-punching, it will provide on every night of the week, films "of a healthy and uplifting character." For many years various pastors have tried to convert the heathen in Lambeth; but, we are told, little impression has been made upon the population of this crowded area. Hence the bright scheme of a cinema-cum-gospel chapel. As £3,000 is owing as a result of the transformation, it will be a pity if the stubborn heathen continue to prefer the amusement they like rather than that which the godly Methodists think they ought to like. But the heathen do have quaint ideas of their own—unfortunately for the peace of mind of pious soul-snatchers.

That wonderful ideal of a Brotherhood of all Christians, with Re-union among the sects as its outward and visible sign, seems to have been indefinitely postponed. At the Church Congress the Free Churches were represented by Lord Sands, Dr. Garvie, and Prof. Lofthouse. According to the *Methodist Recorder*, these persons' clear and firm but considerate statement of the position of non-Episcopal Churches showed how serious were the difficulties to Union. The Presbyterian, Lord Sands, recognized that it was useless to think of Re-union on any basis other than the historic episcopate. Dr. Garvie confessed that the Eucharist was the consummation and not the commencement of the movement towards Union. Dr. Lofthouse emphasized the intermediary position of Methodism between the Anglican Church and the Nonconformist Churches, but frankly stated that if acceptance of the Apostolic succession is necessary to secure the validity of the Sacrament, the prospect of Union is hopeless! The *Recorder* adds: "The word is chilling, but Dr. Lofthouse did well to be frank. As these terms are now defined, the position is as he says. Yet further research may so profoundly modify the meaning of these terms that they may stand for a truth which, far from denying, we should even contend for!"

From all this we gather that Union depends on whether the theologians can skilfully conjure with

<sup>7</sup> *Ib.* c. 23.

<sup>8</sup> *Contra Graecos.* c. 18.



traditional Christian terms, defining them as nebulously as possible and inventing euphemistic names for them, to make them acceptable to various schools of belief. This conjuring ought not to be too difficult to mental thimble-riggers inspired by an increasing threat of losing better educated patrons. But how will they get the re-hashed definitions accepted by the Fundamentalists who comprise the majority in most Churches? That is the rub. For to these every word of the Bible, and every word of the definitions of terms stated by the Early Christians, is regarded as inspired. And while the Fundamentalists stand by the old inspirations, Union of the Churches will remain a pious hope.

Sir Oliver Lodge advises people who are not well balanced to keep off the subject of Spiritualism. The old theological trick is strongly in evidence in this statement; those who are on the subject have yet to prove its value to the living who cannot be caught with words. The young man who committed suicide at least had the courage of his convictions, which leaves Sir Oliver Lodge to say the only thing he can say. In the meantime, the spirits could have done something useful by saving the crew, forty-three in number, of the French submarine that was sunk by a Greek steamer; but apparently they have not yet reached the horse-sense stage.

The Rev. Hubert G. Woodford, of Glossop, Derby, explains in a letter to the *Daily Express* the reason for the failure of Mrs. McPherson's gospel mission. He states that no religious appeal can succeed unless it has a rational basis. The rational basis of the Creation story, the Virgin birth, and the Resurrection require an explanation, and if the reverend gentleman really wants to discourage a genuine competitor in his business he ought to look carefully at his own wares first. Mrs. McPherson is a chip of the old block, a member, in a greater or lesser degree, of the old firm that knows mankind has only a pinch of reason to a pound of passion—and proceeds accordingly.

*Reynold's Newspaper* has been studying "The Church and the People." It thinks that the Church Congress debates showed a growing realization that the new generation will no longer be content with statements about religion which satisfied their forefathers. Our contemporary adds:—

As Canon Streeter truly said: "The masses of people have begun to ask questions." And unless they can get them answered in a way to satisfy their reason, the Church (for it is not only the Church of England which is concerned) will not hold them.

We hope our journalistic friend, when it noticed this much, also noted that the questions people are asking are Freethought questions. We hope, too, that it observed how un-Christian-like is this awkward habit the people have acquired of asking questions about the truth of religion, and of refusing to accept the priest's explanations. What is curious, too, is that the people should want their *reason* satisfied, and that traditional Christian statements and explanations fail to satisfy. All this doesn't anger very well for the Churches.

To *Reynold's*, however, "there are no signs that the people of this country are less religious than they were, say, a century ago. There are, indeed, all sorts of indications that they are more religious. But they are becoming less and less tolerant of what seems to them to be humbug. They distrust mental reservations." First of all we will say that the people who are asking questions about religion are mainly those who are inside the Churches or have just left them, though still religious. But the majority of people—three-fourths of the total population—are outside the Churches and are not interested in religion. They do not take the religious journals; they do not read the religious articles in the popular dailies and weeklies; and they cannot be coaxed to attend open-air religious meetings or church services. This doesn't look as if "they are more religious."

Our contemporary says that people are becoming less tolerant of humbug, and implies that they stay away

from church because they suspect humbug. But if they were religious and really interested in religion, they would see through the humbug, and would either remain in the churches to remove the humbug or get together and form a "church" in which the objectionable features were non-existent. That is what people truly interested in religion have done in the past, and what this generation would do if they were as interested as, or more interested than, their forefathers were. But the mass of the people show no signs of doing this.

*Reynold's* thinks that eventually there will be few persons willing blindly to accept whatever they are told about religion. And, therefore, what will be needed will be religious "teachers who, with courage and frankness, will talk to men and women in a new spirit, that shirks nothing, and works not in darkness but in light." We doubt whether the priests and parsons will take kindly to this new kind of believer who refuses to "open his mouth and shut his eyes." With Bible in hand to confirm their attitude, the priests will insist on people accepting them as God-inspired revealers of God-inspired truth, about which no doubting conundrums must be asked. They will reiterate the age-long priestly contention that it is the priests' job to reveal and teach, and the people's duty to accept. That has always been the way with the Christian religion, starting with Christ and his apostles. And, for the life of us, we cannot see the *Reynold's* new type of "believer" finding a place in any kind of Church of the future that uses the Bible as its guide.

On the question of Sunday cinemas, a referendum at Hove among municipal voters has resulted in a majority of 915 in favour of Sunday opening, the voting being 6,579 for, and 5,664 against. We daresay if the referendum is taken again, twelve months after the cinemas have been open on Sunday, the majority in favour will be larger still.

Middlesex County Council have refused, by 64 votes to 7, permission to open cinemas on Sunday. The bigots have evidently been busy with the Councillors. At the next Council election, Middlesex voters who can see no reason why films are worse on Sunday than on Monday, should return Councillors of a less pious mind.

Preaching at Wesley's Chapel, the Rev. F. I. Wiseman said that perhaps the Christian Church is living below its opportunity and is not manifesting the graces of Christian character in fullness and variety. For our part we are not sorry. The "graces of Christian character," as revealed by most Christians throughout the Christian era, have been narrow-mindedness, love of back-biting, bigotry and intolerance. Modern believers are certainly manifesting these graces a shade less than their forerunners did. The paganism of the times doesn't encourage these unlovely spiritualities.

Writing about the "Church Congress, the Faith, and Modern Thought," the *Methodist Recorder* says:—

Professor Williams, of Oxford, was possibly a little more provocative [than Dean Inge and Bishop Barnes]—some may still shudder a little to hear the Genesis story of the Fall referred to as an "inspired saga." But if modern thought has "caused the whole Augustinian scheme to collapse like a house of cards," Dr. Williams feels that the exact nature of the Fall is not of consequence. "What does matter is the fact of fallenness," which is by no means involved in the ruin. With many others he prefers the expression "original infirmity" to "original sin," and he regards the Atonement as "a satisfaction, not for original sin, but solely for actual sin, individual and collective."

The reader will appreciate what Prof. Williams is trying to do. Freethought criticism and ridicule has forced the Professor and his friends to realize the essential silliness and repulsiveness of the two Christian dogmas. Our Modernist friends therefore are compelled to try their hands at euphemistic re-interpretation. They might remember that a sewer by any other name smells just as sweet.



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FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—J. H. Minett, 10s.

J. HANCOX.—When a Bishop praises free discussion you may safely assume that he is taking credit for permitting a difference of opinion he is unable to suppress.

F. W. STELLA BROWNE.—Glad to have your appreciation of the activity of the Chester-le-Street Branch of the N.S.S.

E. BOTT.—George Bernard Shaw's statement that Christ's teachings have turned out to be good sense and sound economics is only true so long as we read into Christ's teachings what we believe to be good sense and sound economics.

G. F. ROBERTS.—Letter will appear next week.

C. MANNERS—Delighted to learn that you felt repaid for so lengthy a journey to attend the Liverpool debate.

E.L.—There has been a little delay in getting out the third volume of *Essays in Freethinking*, but it will be issued soon.

CINE CERE.—Crowded out this week. Will appear in next issue.

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

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## Sugar Plums.

To-day (October 21), Mr. Cohen will visit Glasgow, and will lecture twice in the City Hall Saloon, at 11.30 and 6.30. We hope that local friends will do what they can to make these meetings known among their friends. Next week Mr. Cohen will visit Darlington. Full particulars in our next issue.

Pembroke Chapel, Liverpool, has a seating capacity of 1,500, but it was packed to the doors on the occasion of the debate between Mr. Cohen and the Rev. J. H. Howard. Mr. Howard proved himself a very capable speaker, and made the best of what we, of course, regard as a bad case. But the discussion on both sides was conducted with good humour and courtesy, while the audience did its part by giving to both speakers the most attentive of hearings. Mr. Morris, who acted as chairman, filled his part admirably, and gained the good will of the large audience from the outset.

There were two very fine meetings in the Chorlton Town Hall on Sunday last, and the Manchester Branch, in consequence, sets off on its winter campaign in high spirits. The afternoon meeting was specially good, being about the best held for some time. Both of Mr. Cohen's addresses were listened to with the utmost appreciation, and a little opposition was forthcoming at the close of the evening lecture. Mr. Rosetti, the President of the Branch, occupied the chair on both occasions. A word of congratulation is due to the Branch for the effective manner in which the advertising arrangements had been carried out. Good meetings cannot be obtained without it, and when the good meetings are there, one knows where to look for a powerful contributory agent.

Mr. Cohen's recent debate with Mr. Joad on the subject of Materialism will shortly be issued in pamphlet form. The price will be 1s.

Dr. Arthur Lynch gave the opening lecture of the North London Branch at the St. Pancras Reform Club on Sunday last. His subject was "The Brain Burners," which resolved itself into a severe criticism of current education and our need for a more genuinely scientific view of the subject. Dr. Lynch never fails to excite the intellectual activity of his hearers, and Sunday's address proved no exception to the rule. Those who did not agree would at least find their minds clarified and quickened by what they heard.

The West London Branch of the N.S.S. commenced its indoor season with a most successful meeting at the "Eclipse" Restaurant, Mill Street, Conduit Street, W.1. There was a good audience, and Mr. Campbell-Everden's lecture on "Evolution" was heard with the greatest attention. Many questions were afterwards asked, and everyone seemed thoroughly satisfied with what was both an interesting and informative evening. A considerable quantity of literature was sold, and a number of applications for membership of the Society were received. It is hoped that these meetings may be continued to the end of April, 1929.

We are asked to announce that Mr. Egerton Stafford will to-day (October 21) lecture for the Liverpool Branch of the N.S.S. on "Evolution," at the meeting place of the Branch, 18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street. The lecture will commence at 7.30 instead of the usual 7.45. We hope to hear of a good meeting. Mr. Stafford usually has something to say that is worth listening to.

Arrangements have been made by the National Secular Society to hold a social evening on Saturday, November 10, at Slaters' Restaurant, 9 Basinghall Street (adjacent to the Guildhall). There will be dancing and musical selections, and during the evening refreshments will be served. The Social will commence at 7.30 p.m. Tickets, including refreshments, may be obtained at the cost of three shillings each from the Pioneer Press, or from the General Secretary of the National Secular Society. In view of the enjoyable evening which Freethinkers spent at the last N.S.S. Social, we would suggest that application for tickets should be made as early as possible. Only a limited number can be present, and those who leave their application for tickets until the last days before the Social may find that all have been sold.

## THE TIMID.

They are slaves who will not choose  
Hatred, scoffing, and abuse  
Rather than in silence shrink  
From the truth they needs must think;  
They are slaves who dare not be  
In the right with two or three.

Russell Lowell.



## An Agnostic's Apology.

THE psychological nature of "conversion" in the Freethought sense is infinitely more measurable than the kind of emotional *mêlée* for which evangelism takes credit. The proselyte in this matter is at least in full possession of his intellectual faculties—never more so—and the process can be retrospected as a ratiocinative one, divorced completely from the canting humbug of a Sunday or a McPherson. The more thoughtful of religionists have themselves confessed often to a doubt of the permanent value of the "lightning" call to forsake the sins of the world and serve Christ for ever in unflinching allegiance to his preternatural control, and in the same way the call to rationalism is never of the "sudden" order. It seems so only because a time does definitely arrive when the mind is sufficiently prepared for free speculation, and the mightiest truths of mankind come upon it irresistibly. This hour of receptivity may have been led up to only through years of toilsome renunciations of long-cherished beliefs, but at last the burden of the Christian falls off, and the mind exults in unshackled inclination to formulate reasonable hypotheses on the cosmic problem, before which all other interests are dwarfed. An inter-venient period of transition may have to be accounted for, during which the neophyte of Freethought finds himself momentarily quavering before the prospect of an intellectual life minus the delusions he has been obliged to drop, perhaps not easily at first, but in the end quite inevitably.

It is probable that most personal cases are met in this general statement. Yet, the crisis that necessarily supervenes to the reflective nature is rarely so severe as to administer more than the most temporary of shocks, for once the gross implications of the vacated theology are taken, enlightenment speedily follows on the surprising realization that the discarded dogmas were not the personal matter supposed but merely stupidities accepted conventionally. There are always, of course, individual factors to be allowed for, or how else should a Shelley be an out-cast Atheist at eighteen and a Tolstoi be torn by doubts to the end? The idea of "conversion" at all proceeds naturally on the assumption that a fairly regular, systematic and orthodox religious training has been received; for many more people, unfortunately, have to be made Freethinkers than are born such.

In this respect, I was certainly not "born free as Cæsar." Brought up to strict observance of "God's law," chiefly reflected and satisfied by a not-too-obviously-bored attendance at the services of our Presbyterian denomination, I entertained no further doubts in youth than the usual query regarding *God's* origin: a thoroughly blasphemous indiscretion, of course. At an early age—fourteen—I found myself a member of the attached Y.M.C.A., but not till I became a student did I discriminate between the puerile or sycophantic essayist and the really earnest debater and truth-seeker. Most sermons at this time came under my critical ban, but as yet there was no thought of basic fallacy. When, however, I came under the sway of a brilliant young Modernist minister—himself finding a way to a philosophy of life—and two clear-minded fellow-students and co-villagers, the first profound questionings crept into my mind. The pious platitudes and soft reconciliements of the Religious Tract Society—plagiarized—essay were no more accorded the customary unthinking congratulations, but were assailed with sincere but quite unexpected vigour of vituperation. Hereabouts the young probationer-minister's fearless expositions secured him a call to a broader-minded con-

gregation, and my unquillible student-friends likewise entered on new, professional spheres of usefulness elsewhere. But they had done their work, for all unconsciously my mind had been developing under their spontaneous example and unsuspected tutelage. At first, however, my fairly outspoken heresies were treated as no more than the fruits of the disparaged but tolerated "higher criticism," indicative at least of deep interest and first-hand reading on Biblical controversy. Probably, by myself even, they were regarded as little more, for I found these studies at this time interesting enough for their own sakes, chiefly by virtue of their utter novelty. In a short time, therefore, I found myself president of the society through my considerable term of membership and my supposed tendency as a protagonist of religion. Actually I was growing more and more incapable of maintaining a decent pretence of belief in the mummeries of the church service, and always I was growing more impatient of the trivial judgments and superficial affectations of the average "Y.M." speaker.

At no time had the communion or sacrament service in any way commended itself to me, and it was over the only piece of crude symbolism retained by the Presbyterian form of worship that I made my first demur against the fatuity of empty attendance at church. The climax in this rising revolt to sacerdotalism and unthinking subscription to utterly vulnerable creeds came when, during a Saturday afternoon stroll in the neighbouring city, I purchased my first copy of the *Freethinker*. I remember it was displayed, opened, on a newsagent's window, and I can remember well my gratification at discovering such a needed auxiliary (for hitherto I had not even suspected the existence of definite rationalistic literature). After that it was an easy matter to get on to the reading of all the great rationalists, and I devoured work after Freethought work with eager delight. The "end" came decisively when Massey, Robertson, Couchoud and others swept away the hollow mockery of believing in Jesus as an historical personage. For a span I was astounded by the immensity of what I had to discredit, and saw a blank yawning before me, like the mourners in Hardy's supreme piece of pathos, "God's Funeral":—

"And who or what shall fill his place?  
Whither will wanderers turn distracted eyes  
For some fixed star to stimulate their pace  
Towards the goal of their enterprise?"

But the anticipated wound was hardly felt and the expected void was never perceived, for the preoccupation for the first time with truly constructive modes of thinking at once made it clear that the vanished "beliefs" had only been taken on trust, and had never been held with real conviction: the easy assimilation of personally-digested opinions amply proved that. My apostasy was then almost complete enough to call for a re-quoting of Quarles' dictum: "He that sits down a Philosopher rises up an Atheist."

A last word, however, must deal with the nature of these new opinions. For my title I have made use of that of Leslie Stephen's great statement of belief—or unbelief—but I have ended on a note of Quarles'. And yet I am one of the fastidious who must still distinguish between "Agnostic" and "Atheist." If the wide definition of Professor Bury in his *History of Freethought* is accepted, then I am at one with "Atheist" in a disavowal of belief in a personal God. But if this term connotes an insistence on a dogmatic, material explanation of the universe, then I am content to be known merely as an "Agnostic." On this final matter I cannot presume to have so positive an opinion, and here, with Montaigne, "I



suspend judgment." The distinction may not be great, but to me it is recognizable; and I count it no shame to say I do not know—nor do I expect to know—the absolute origin of life.

J.A.R.

## Science and Freethought.

### II

THE fall of science in later classical times, and of the early mental freedom and Rationalism, are topics of considerable interest to Freethinkers. Professor Bevan, in his little book, *The World of Greece and Rome*, again raises the question, Why did science decline in Greece and almost disappear in Rome? The writer suggests that the Greeks were too fond of logically expressed theories, and that they had an inadequate idea of the necessity for verification by observation and experiment. In some directions, however, it seems that they went as far as was possible with the instruments at their disposal. But the further question then arises, Why did they not invent the needed instruments? Why, again, did they not invent printing, which would have resulted in a more general diffusion of the extant knowledge and ideas of the time, and gunpowder, which might have enabled the Greeks to withstand the Romans, and the Romans to vanquish and absorb the barbarians?

Dr. Singer, in *Greek Biology and Greek Science*, probably comes nearer to the mark when he attributes the intellectual degeneracy of later Greek times and onwards, to the influence of the less scientific philosophy, and particularly to the *Timæus* of Plato. This curious production was strongly criticized a generation ago, from the more general point of view, by Dr. Jowett in his *Dialogues of Plato*. Here the work in question is characterized as the most obscure and repulsive to the modern reader of all Plato's writings, and yet the one which had the greatest influence over the ancient and medieval world; and the Doctor adds the acute observation that the *Timæus* represents an attempt to conceive the whole of nature without any adequate knowledge of its parts.

Dr. Singer, the well known historian of science, goes further. In the *Timæus*, he writes, we have a "picture of the depths to which natural science can be degraded in the effort to give a specific teleological meaning to all parts of the visible universe. The book and the picture which it draws, dark and repulsive to the mind trained in modern scientific method, enthralled the imagination of a large part of mankind for well nigh two thousand years. Organic nature appears in this work of Plato as the degeneration of man whom the Creator had made most perfect. The school that held this view ultimately decayed as a result of its failure to advance positive knowledge. As the centuries went by its views became further and further divorced from phenomena, and the bizarre developments of later Platonism stand to this day as a warning against any system which shall neglect the investigation of nature. But in its decay Platonism dragged science down and destroyed by neglect nearly all the earlier biological material . . . Pure science was doomed."

Jowett refers to the theological outcome as follows: "In the supposed depths of the dialogue the Neo-Platonists found hidden meanings and connexion with the Jewish scriptures . . . Believing that he [Plato] was inspired by the Holy Ghost, or had received wisdom from Moses, they seemed to find in his writings the Christian Trinity, the Word, the

Church, the creation of the world in the Jewish sense . . . and the Neo-Platonists had a method of interpretation which could elicit any meaning out of any words."

Put in general terms, Plato's doctrine was: The senses deceive us; therefore the philosopher must turn his back upon the world of sense impressions and cultivate his reason. In the result, the great rationalizing discoveries and conclusions of the Greeks were lost.

It is hardly necessary to point out that the turning of the back on the world of sense impressions was followed, not by the increased use of reason, but by the increased play of uncontrolled phantasy, accompanied by the re-establishment of subservience to ancient tradition, and, in general, reversion to the mental childhood of the ancient Orient.

Hence, while we have to thank Plato for the first—and astonishingly good—presentation of educational principle and theory, and for some other valuable work, chiefly in the *Republic*, we have to hold him responsible, in large measure, for the great intellectual debacle which ushered in the Dark Ages of Europe: an age in which ignorance, and a general pride in ignorance, were enthroned; while, on the part of the Church, the fear of and opposition to the advance of natural knowledge became so firmly established that, as late as the seventeenth century, an ecclesiastical writer, Father Inchofer, could pen the following: "The opinion of the earth's motion is of all heresies the most abominable, the most pernicious, the most scandalous. The immovability of the earth is thrice sacred. Arguments against the immortality of the soul, the existence of God and the Incarnation should be tolerated sooner than an argument to prove that the earth moves."

J. REEVES.

## Pages from Fontenelle.

### AN IMAGINARY CONVERSATION BETWEEN SOCRATES AND MONTAIGNE.

MONTAIGNE.—Then, it is really you, divine Socrates? How delighted I am to meet you! It is only just lately that I came here, and, from the moment of my arrival, I have been looking out for you. Now, at last, after filling my book full with your name, and praise, I am able to talk with you, and to learn how you came by so ingenious a capacity, the expression of which was so natural, and whereof there was no other example even in the happy times in which you lived.

SOCRATES.—I am, indeed, glad to meet a ghost who seems to me to have been a philosopher; but as you are a newcomer to these lower regions, and as it is a long time since I had a conversation with anyone in this place (for they leave me very much alone and no one seems to be in a hurry to speak with me) I trust you will have no objection to my asking you what news you have brought with you. How is the world getting along? Has it altered very much?

MONTAIGNE.—Very much indeed. You would not know it for the same.

SOCRATES.—I am delighted to hear you say so. Indeed, I always had a strong suspicion that it must become far better and wiser than it was in my time.

MONTAIGNE.—What do you say? Why, it is madder and more corrupt than it ever was. This is the change I wanted to talk to you about, and I hoped to hear from your own lips an account of the world as you knew it, a world in which honesty of thought and action was the ruling principle.

SOCRATES.—And I, for my part, expected to hear



from you wonderful things concerning the times in which you lived. What, do you tell me that men have not corrected the follies of the classical age?

MONTAIGNE.—I imagine that it is precisely because you are a classic that you speak so lightly of the ancients; but I can assure you that our habits are deplorable, things go from bad to worse every day.

SOCRATES.—Is it possible? In my time it appeared to me that things were already in a bad way; but I believed that in the long run they would get into a more reasonable groove, and that mankind would be the gainer by so many years of experiment.

MONTAIGNE.—Can you say of men that they ever experiment? They are like birds snared by the very same nets that have caught a hundred thousand of their species. There is no one that does not come into life wholly new, and yet the unwisdom of the fathers is of no profit to the children.

SOCRATES.—What? No experiments? It was my idea that the world might have an old age wiser and more regulated than its youth.

MONTAIGNE.—In all ages men have the same natural inclinations, over which reason is powerless. Indeed, wherever there are men you get stupidities of just the same kind.

SOCRATES.—In that case why should you make out antiquity to be better than the present time?

MONTAIGNE.—Ah, Socrates, I am well aware that you have a peculiar way of reasoning, of cleverly entangling those who discuss with you in arguments the conclusion of which they do not foresee, and that you lead them just where you please. That is why you called yourself the mid-wife of their thoughts, a sort of spiritual accoucheur. I confess that I am brought to bed of a proposition quite opposite to the one I had advanced: Yet I am not going to admit defeat. There is no doubt that we no longer find the firm, energetic minds of antiquity, of Aristides, of Phocion, of Pericles, or, for that matter, of Socrates.

SOCRATES.—For what reason? Is nature worn out? Has she no longer the power to produce great minds? And why should she be exhausted only to the extent of not being able to produce reasonable men? Not one of her works has degenerated; why should it be mankind only that degenerates?

MONTAIGNE.—The plain fact is that man *does* degenerate. It seems that in days gone by nature gave us a few patterns of great men in order to prove to us that she could make them if she wished, and then set about making the rest in a careless way.

SOCRATES.—You must use your scepticism here. Antiquity is the only thing of its kind; distance makes it larger. If you had known Aristides, Phocion, Pericles, and me, since you would put me among them, you would have found men in your time who resembled them. What usually happens is that we are predisposed to antiquity because we are prejudiced against our own age. Thus antiquity is the gainer. In order to humble our contemporaries we raise to a great height the men of old time. When we lived we over valued our ancestors, but now our posterity rates us at more than our real value: but really there is nothing to choose between our ancestors, ourselves and our posterity; I have a notion that the spectacle of the world would be very tedious if we could see it without any illusions, for, indeed, it is always the same.

MONTAIGNE.—I had an idea that all was in movement, that everything changed, and that different ages had different characteristics, like men. Surely we find that different periods are learned or ignorant, ingenious or ingenious, serious or flippant, civilized or barbarous.

SOCRATES.—That is true.

MONTAIGNE.—Then why should we not find that

some periods are more virtuous and some more vicious?

SOCRATES.—That does not follow. Clothes change; but that is not to say the shape of the body also changes. Refinement or coarseness, knowledge or ignorance, a higher or lower degree of ingenuousness, a serious or flippant spirit, these are but the outer part of man, and all these things change; but the heart never changes, and the whole of man is in the heart. We are ignorant in one age, but in another age learning may be the fashion; men are self-interested, but disinterestedness will never take the place of selfishness. Out of the immense number of unreasonable men born in a century, it may be that nature has made two or three dozen of them reasonable, and has, of course, to scatter them over the earth. You will agree that in no part of the world are they found in sufficient number as to create a fashion in virtue and justice.

MONTAIGNE.—But is this distribution of reasonable human beings made equally? Some ages may have a larger share than others.

SOCRATES.—At the most there would be an imperceptible inequality. The general order of nature on the whole is pretty constant.

### The Profits of Religion.

MIMNERMUS has often called attention to the appalling waste of wealth which is represented by the costly nature of religion. Mimnermus always points the true moral, but then Mimnermus is a rational thinker. The book which Upton Sinclair has written (*The Profits of Religion*, published by the author at Long Beach, California), would be a far more valuable contribution to the subject if Mimnermus could have edited it.

Upton Sinclair is certainly a Freethinker, in the same sense that Jesus Christ was one. He exposes all sorts of shame and humbug perpetrated in the name of religion. He sees quite clearly that religion is the enemy of every decent attempt at reform in all countries and in all ages. He attacks the Catholics with vehemence, and if he is inclined to credit some of the Protestant clergy with a little more honesty and democratic leanings, he does not mince matters in his arraignment of religious professors of all schools.

There is one thing noticeable about American controversial literature. A century of press outspokenness in America has made journalists less timid than we British are, in personal criticisms of the most devastating character. It is said in the U.S.A., that you can say what you like about anybody except a judge. Actually there is far greater danger of commitment to prison for a very mild criticism of an American judge (or even the expression of an opinion disagreeing with even a minor judicial decision), than there would be if you called the President a thief and a murderer (which indeed he is often called).

The fact that Upton Sinclair has had to publish this book himself, points to the probability that he has gone so far in his statement of the facts, that most publishers, even in America, do not care to face the risks which his frank fearlessness incurs. Sinclair deserves very great credit from all Freethinkers for the publication of a sensational "exposé" of the mercenary basis of religion.

From the Freethought point of view it is necessary to say that the book is weakened by the author's obvious bias against "the exploiting classes." Of course, it is very wrong to be rich, and it proves a writer to be a terribly low type of fellow to find him defending capitalism in any way. While reading Sinclair there is present a feeling that perhaps he would see no harm in any kind of religion which opposed the system of society to which Sinclair objects.

The "brutal" Malthus, naturally, "set forth the ethics of exploitation and supplied for capitalist depredation a basis in pretended natural science." You see that Sinclair is not a Malthusian. But most of Sinclair's book is not concerned with Christian argument



and opinion. He shows how religion exploits mankind, how pious pastors and bishops have cursed human effort, how popes have opposed progress, and more striking than the rest of the book is the story he tells of individual Christian teachers who have been "caught with the goods on them."

Sinclair admits that he is not fighting superstition but is up against "Big Business which makes use of superstition, as a wolf makes use of sheep's clothing." This is quite a proper task for a Socialist to undertake, and we wish the British Socialist Party had a little of Sinclair's frankness instead of hobnobbing with "famous divines." Sinclair succeeds in what he undertakes to do, and this work would be worth a place in our library if only for the exposure of wholesale corruption on the part of the editors of religious journals. These journals are widely read by millions of commonplace well-meaning honest believers, because the editors are regarded as having no other motive than the preaching of a high, if religious, morality. Sinclair's remorseless investigation into the *Outlook's* venality in the advocacy of fraudulent company promotion can never be forgotten. The *Outlook* of U.S.A., about which Sinclair writes so scathingly, has nothing to do with the English journal of that name. The U.S.A. *Outlook*, edited by Lyman Abbott, is the best known and most widely read of all U.S.A. religious weeklies. Abbott's connexion with the New Haven Railroad, whose rottenness was the subject of official condemnation by the Interstate Commerce Commission, is as flagrant an instance as ever disgraced the records of journalism.

Freethinkers will enjoy a quotation from Lyman Abbott's *Ethical Teachings of Jesus*, which reads like a burlesque, but it is to be found in Vol. 94, page 576 of the *Outlook*. The words in italic are printed in bold type in the *Outlook* :—

"My radical friend declares that the teachings of Jesus are not practicable, that we cannot carry them out in life, and that we do not pretend to do so. Jesus, he reminds us, said, 'Lay not up for yourself treasures upon earth'; and Christians do universally lay up for themselves treasures upon earth; every man that owns a house and lot, or a share of stock in a corporation, or a life insurance policy, or money in a savings bank, has laid up for himself treasure upon earth. But Jesus did not say, 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.' He said, 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth *where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through the steal.*' And no sensible American does. Moth and rust do not get at Mr. Rockefeller's oil wells, nor at the Sugar Trust's sugar, and thieves do not often break through and steal a railway or an insurance company or a savings bank. What Jesus condemned was hoarding wealth."

Dickens died too soon. Uriah Heep would have been a richer character had his creator had a Lyman Abbott to draw upon.

Clerical crooks have a bad time under Upton Sinclair's indictment. He is well-informed generally about British clerics and the ignoble part they play and have always played. He may be right too that our clergy are against prohibition! Sinclair favours prohibition! Those who oppose prohibition in England, however, had better not rely on episcopal and nonconformist enmity to that popular American form of "uplift."

"We need a new religion," says Sinclair. We certainly do not need the present forms of religion. Sinclair's declaration makes one pay some attention to his own attitude towards Christ. To quote only from the book under review :—

"This carpenter's son was one of the most unpretentious men on earth; utterly simple and honest—he would not even let anyone praise him. When some one called him 'good Master,' he answered quickly, 'Why callest thou me good? There is none good save one, that is, God.'"

Sinclair forgets that other utterances: "All men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (John v. 23), and the Kaiserian phrase, "I and my Father are one" (John x. 30). It is a dreary job, going through a hundred of Sinclair's references to a Jesus, the man nobody but Sinclair will ever know, "the proletarian Jesus," Jesus the "soap-box orator," Jesus who "chose the career of a revolutionary agitator, and died

the death of a disturber of the peace," the Jesus who "did not believe in war and never could have been brought to support a war."

It is rather amusing, in a way, to find Upton Sinclair singling out for praise Jesus Christ, in whose name, and most often in his very words, the evils Sinclair deplors are perpetuated. Progress is not to be made by zealots on both sides hurling contradictory quotations at each other. If Jesus said all the things he is alleged to have said, not even a Philadelphia lawyer can reconcile their hopeless contradictions of each other. If we are to pick out for ourself the "genuine Jesus" utterances, the churches and the creed-makers are not only as likely to be right as Upton Sinclair, but they have the advantage of long possession and tradition. If Mr. Sinclair wants a new religion, he would be wise to go to Moscow or California or Chicago for it, rather than to Nazareth. Jesus himself warned the Sinclairs of his day against putting new wine into old bottles. But if we are to pick and choose, we must not forget that Jesus was a prohibitionist, and cannot therefore have given this sound advice about fermented liquors.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

## Correspondence.

### MR. PANTON AND THE DEAD.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Apropos of Mr. Panton's little philippic directed against a certain criticism by Mr. Cohen of Professor Huxley's reverent agnosticism concerning a life hereafter, I should like to know whether it is the duty of a man with the intellectual capacity of Chapman Cohen to reply to everyone, and to take heed to the controversial pettiness of persons who do not appear to be able to distinguish between bird and beast? If such is Mr. Cohen's duty, then he will have to reply to Mr. Panton.

If Mr. Panton implies that the two "poles" are the only aspects of the one thing—the world, or that the world is constituted by them, then, presumably, he should not have any objection to believing it if Professor Huxley or any of the protagonists of the modernized savage cult termed "Spiritualism," informed him that in the world of spirits all spirits consisted merely of spiritual heads and feet.

D. MATTHEWS.

Haenertsburg, South Africa.

### CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

SIR,—I dare say I shall differ from the majority of Freethinkers when I say that I am in favour of Capital Punishment for those murderers whose crimes have been cruel, callous, and calculated.

There appears to be a tendency on the part of a good many well-meaning people to have more sympathy for the murderer than they have for the victim. I do not know how they would propose to punish the criminal, if by simple admonition, or by imprisonment for the term of his natural life. Personally I would prefer to be expeditiously put out of my misery than linger hopelessly behind iron bars. It is certainly true that in Italy they have abolished the death penalty, except in one or two particular cases, but they have substituted the "Egastalo," which means solitary confinement in a dark cell, with a diet of bread and water. Generally, in two or three years, the prisoner goes mad.

In France, where they have a daily quota of four or five murders, many of the murderers go scot free, especially if they are tried by a Seine jury, or are charged with what is termed a *crime passionnel*. In fact it is much less risky to take a man's life than his watch; there is no romance about the petty thief.

Ray, the Marseilles murderer, who killed several women for their money, was sentenced to the *Bagne*—which means transportation to a penal colony—but he has not gone yet.

The United States can lick creation for murderers. Chicago alone beats the whole of Great Britain, and even when the assassin is caught (which



occasionally happens), if he has the dollars the lawyers find a way out of the difficulty, and the yellow press work up the sob-stuff, the victim being generally ignored.

Two years ago, while in California, an inspector of prisons at Los Angeles told me the case of a rich widow who was anxious to do some uplift. She came to the prison and selected a notorious murderer for her experiment, and after a while, having some political pull, she was able to obtain his conditional release. She fed and clothed the man and gave him money, until one day he strangled her!

Now, if this wretch had been well and truly electrocuted, the tragedy could not have happened. I don't know what became of him after, but if he behaves himself he may have another chance.

Sentimentalists object to taking human life, no matter what the crime. Vegetarians object to take animal life for food.

Some Hindoos object to taking any kind of life. They won't kill fleas. And now, if the botanical theories of the Indian chemist Bose are correct, we shall soon have those who object to cutting down live cabbages.

All countries have the murders they deserve and, if execution is not a deterrent, it at least prevents the offender from repeating his offence.

If the world is to be made safe for democracy we shall have to be cruel only to be kind. S. SODDY.

Sèvres, France.

**Society News.**

**MR. GEORGE WHITEHEAD AT FULHAM.**

MR. WHITEHEAD'S outdoor campaign for this season ended with a fortnight's campaign in Walham Green. Thirteen meetings were addressed out of fourteen arranged, one being spoilt by the rain. Without attracting as large audiences as some of the provincial towns yielded, all the Fulham meetings succeeded in providing interest for a fair number of people and, considering that they were held in October, they were satisfactory. The pitches in Walham Green are exceptionally noisy and the competition for them is keen. Matters in this respect were made worse by the tactics of the Christian Evidence Society, whose speakers did their best every evening by noisy personal abuse and childish scurrility to demonstrate the loving charity for which the Christian religion is famous. Their speeches being on the intellectual and moral basis of a very inferior tap-room, Mr. Whitehead, of course, ignored their invitations to descend to their level.

Several members of the local Branch lent assistance at the meetings, and special thanks are due to Mr. Mathie for his very willing service.

The season now concluded has been the most successful in Mr. Whitehead's experience, and with further work on the part of Freethinkers interest in Secularism should steadily increase.

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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.**

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8): 11.15, Mr. John Russell, M.A.—"The Heart of 'G.B.S.'"

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.): 7.30, Mr. H. Cutner—"Socialism and the Working Man."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Station): 7.15, Mr. W. Sandford—"Socialism and Malthusianism."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"The Limitations of Contemporary Literature."

THE NON-POLITICAL, METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY ("The Orange Tree" Hotel, Euston Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Mr. D. Capper (of the "Teachers' Labour League and the Workers' Council of Education")—"The Teacher and Religious Instruction." On Thursday, October 25, at 7.30—A Social at "The Orange Tree" Hotel. Admission 1s.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Eclipse Restaurant, 4 Mill Street, Conduit Street, W.1): 7.30—An Evening with Mr. Hyatt.

**OUTDOOR.**

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrolds Road, North End Road, Walham Green): Every Saturday at 8 p.m. Speakers—Messrs. Campbell-Everden, Bryant, Mathie, and others.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. P. Ryan—A Lecture.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12 noon, Mr. James Hart; 3.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. Freethought meetings every Wednesday and Friday at 7.30. Various lecturers. The *Freethinker* is on sale outside Hyde Park during our meetings.

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

**COUNTRY.**

**INDOOR.**

BELFAST (Proposed) Branch N.S.S. (48 York Street): 3.0, Mrs. McCoubrey—"Women and Religion."

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. E. Cook: "Progress of Democracy and its Difficulties." Chairman: G. B. Swinburne.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (City Hall, North Saloon): 11.30 and 6.30. Mr. Chapman Cohen. Subjects: "Why the World Needs Freethought," and "Where Religion Fails." Questions and Discussion. Silver Collection.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street): 7.30, Mr. E. Egerton Stafford—"Evolution." Admission free. Collection.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (4 Swilly Road): Members' meeting. Tuesday, October 30, at 7.30 p.m.

**OUTDOOR.**

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

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