

LET'S SUPPOSE THERE'S A GOD.

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Views and Opinions.

Let's Suppose There's a God.

Let us suppose there is a God. That is rather a big assumption, but it is made by so many millions of people that we cannot be called unusual in it. It is true that we may be called illogical, but that is another matter. Here, again, we should be in a very numerous company, more or less distinguished. Besides, if one is going to have a God nowadays, the only way to get one is to take him for granted. Being illogical must not deter one. Some of the finest religious conclusions have no discernible basis in their avowed premises, and some of the least questioned (in religious circles) of religious fundamentals are without any foundation in fact. Parsons lament the decay of an *indestructible* religious faculty; they propound the self-evident existence of a deity, that an increasing number of people do not believe exists; they trust to the power of prayer to cure sickness, while rushing for a doctor to help the sick man along; and they believe in a revelation from God which is always behind the reliable knowledge of the day, and has to be brought up to date every now and then by a committee of parsons who are compelled to appeal to non-religious science and criticism in order to find out just what it is God revealed. So let us join the religious world for once and be illogical. It is the only way we can get hold of a God. It is the only method by which modern man can keep a God once he has got him.

* * *

What Does He Do?

Well, now, after assuming that a God does exist, we proceed to ask what is it that he exists for. Once upon a time the justification for his existence was obvious. He kept things going. He blasted the ungodly with his lightning, and he saved the godly from disaster by a timely miracle or two. He sent good harvests and fine weather. His work was great and multifarious. A very great writer, the famous Bishop Berkeley, propounded the theory that every-

thing—you and I, the stars, the table on which I write, the typewriting machine—which has such an infernal habit of printing the wrong letter, and so leading to an abnormal number of xxxxxx appearing in my script—all exist as so many ideas in the mind of God. On this theory, God became the upholder of everything; for obviously, if he died, the whole of nature would die with him, unless some other God came into existence who could revive it. There was no question in these cases of what God existed for. He had his work to do and he did it. But one after another these jobs were taken away from him. The most "advanced" thought of the Church—that is, the thought that is not more than a hundred years behind the time—agrees that God does not manage the weather, although they still pray to him about it, perhaps just to humour one who had it under his control at one time. They agree that God does not appear to work many miracles to suit his followers, nor does his lightning kill more unbelievers than believers, or strike more gambling hells than churches. So, assuming there is a God, one wonders what he exists for. How does he manage to pass the time?

* * *

Why the Church Exists.

In a desultory sort of a way I have often wondered over these things, but no one has been there to give me an answer. And now I have come across one. It will be remembered that the other week a certain parson resigned his job because he found that his people did not come to church. This created some sort of a sensation because, if every parson who found his church nearly empty did likewise, the result might be a closing of very many places of worship. Besides, the man was getting his salary, and while in other directions men have resigned their posts because they felt they were not earning the salary paid them, that kind of thing is not usual in the Churches. And now the Rev. Desmond Morse-Boycott, who says that the resignation of a parson on such grounds is "pathetic and startling," offers an implied explanation of why God exists. He says:—

To what end theoretically, does the parish church exist? *For the worship of God.* The primary end is attained, then, if there are but two to worship . . . shall we say the priest and one small child. The rest may stop away, but the church is not useless.

Quite seriously, I think that Mr. Morse-Boycott has hit on a very fruitful idea. God exists to be worshipped. Worship seems to group itself under three heads. God is thanked for what he has done, he is thanked for what he is going to do, he is praised for being great and powerful and wise, or told there is none like him in the heavens or on the earth. He is the *only* pebble on the beach. Mr. Morse-Boycott is on the right track.

Praising God.

So, not at all in the spirit of contradiction, but in support of him, I wish to offer a few suggestions that may be useful when he again writes on the subject. In 'early religions you can see man worshipping all sorts of things which he believes can either help or injure him. The tendency which the human animal shows to worship is of a strictly utilitarian origin, for it is always in connexion with what he wants or with what he fears that man starts worshipping. The worship of images or relics by Roman Catholics—"Adoration" is the more modern term—illustrates the same thing. Nature spirits are thanked for what they have done, they are asked to do more, and they receive plenty of palm-oil in the shape of praise. In this, the guileful savage employs the same tactics and the same language he uses to his chief. He tells the chief that he is the greatest of all leaders, that the earth trembles at his frown, or rejoices at his smile, that his enemies shiver when he is angry with them, that he can wipe them off the earth whenever he feels disposed to do so, and that his wisdom and justice is inconceivable and unapproachable. The artful ones may say all this with an internal wink, but the simpler ones say it with all sincerity. The pious man, whether primitive or modern, slavers his god without stint, unconsciously agreeing with Mr. Morse-Boycott that it is what God wishes him to do. I also agree with Mr. Morse-Boycott that this is the main reason why, from the strictly religious point of view, the churches exist. For if we did not have so many churches and so many preachers, it is possible that the worship of God might, in these busy times, be forgotten altogether. And what would happen to God then? Well, as it is just possible that instead of man and his belongings existing, as Bishop Berkeley thought, as so many ideas in the mind of God, God may exist only as an idea in the mind of man, and if this idea is allowed to decay, God himself may disappear.

* * *

The Life of the Gods.

Everyone knows how in *Peter Pan* those present are asked to applaud to show their belief in fairies, because it is the only way to save the dying fairy's life. The fairies are dying because people do not believe in them, and a few only are kept alive by the belief of those children that have not been contaminated by modern thought. I remember reading a fine story by Laurence Houseman, in which the whole point is that the Gods of a certain people are kept in being only by the incense and prayers offered them. In this way, folk-lore, romance, and fact, back up Mr. Morse-Boycott in his suggestive explanation that the primary object of a church is the worship of God. If Mr. Morse-Boycott will look back he will find, in support of his position, that every God the world has known has been fat and strong so long as people worshipped him. He could do all sorts of things so long as people believed in him. But so soon as people ceased to worship him he became thin, and weak, and, finally, a negligible quantity in the life of the world. There is no question that if the worship of Osiris could have been kept going, Osiris would have been as large and as healthy to-day as he was in the time of the Pharaohs. Worship is the very life-blood of the Gods.

If only a priest and one child are found in a church, worshipping God, the "primary end is attained." All else is trimmings. The priest alone will not do, because he is the official. The child must be there as representative of the population, for it is on the worship of the people that God lives, the priest is

only the one who plays the part of an official in a polling booth. The primary end of a church is not to do good to man, but to God. God needs praise, he needs worship; and, although he would like everyone to worship, if he can only get a child along it is something. When praise is demanded, even a child may give it, and it will serve. A four course dinner may be preferable, but bread and cheese is better than nothing at all. God's concern is to be worshipped. He must be told how wise he is, although man is always trying to correct his blunders; he must be told how powerful he is, although all his followers shake with fear at the attack made upon him by unbelievers; he must be told he is the God of truth, although he has always had some of the most robust liars among his favoured followers. Lord Beaconsfield said everyone liked flattery, and when one reached the throne it could be laid on with a trowel. The same rule holds good in religion. You must praise man with a certain amount of discretion. But when God is in question moderation may be thrown to the winds. Tell him he is all-powerful, all-wise, all-good, lay the flattery on with a trowel. No man could stand it for five minutes, but we are not dealing with a man but with God; and the Church with its immense wealth and influence, exists, under favour of God, for the primary purpose of worshipping him. It is true that no man could stand this worship; no man wants worship; a man feels that if he has anything to do he would like to do it, and he would probably kick the fellow downstairs who told him that his primary desire was to be worshipped. But, again, we are dealing with God, not man. If God is to live he must be worshipped. I agree with Mr. Morse-Boycott that this is the primary purpose of the Church, because it is the primary purpose of the Church to keep God alive. Never mind how useless he may be in the world of modern science, he must be worshipped if he is to be kept alive, and if he can be prevented from knowing how useless he has become, all the better.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Sore Labour's Bath.

*I heard at eve a weary farm-hand
sing;
His song I thought was worthy
copying.*

Let me sleep now :
My task is done,
And I need rest :
No more I speed the plow,
For down has gone the sun :
Now sleep is best.

To-morrow morn
The sun will rise,
And I rise, too,
To toil with hands all torn ;
Whilst he lights up the skies :
Both work must do.

The time to sleep
Is at day's close,
When fades the light ;
They need to count no sheep
Who then seek their repose.
Goodnight . . . Goodnight . . .

*That is the song I heard the peasant
sing;
His strange advice I am not copying!*

BAYARD SIMMONS.

The Democracy of Death.

"If we'd think of death as the hand of Nature, it'd be no worse than lying down to sleep in a cornfield. It's when the parsons trick out a natural process with all sorts of common regalia like Heaven and Hell that it becomes something to fear."—*Aloysius Horn.*

NOWHERE is the cleavage between Secularism and Superstition more marked than on the subject of death. Freethinkers view death as an act of Nature; but Christian priests, on the other hand, have ever sought advantage from the fact that man is mortal. They have taught their followers that death is the most dreadful evil. All the terrors that theology could gather from savage nations were added to increase the horrors, and they invariably tried to paralyse reason with the clutch of fear.

The advent of the Christian religion actually deepened this priest-made terror. Never has death been the cause of such craven timidity as in the Christian world. To visionaries like Catherine of Siena, or Emanuel Swedenborg, it may have been different, but to the ignorant and uncultured masses death has been, and still is, the King of Terrors, from whose approach they cower in an agony which Epicurus and Socrates would have scorned with lifted eyebrows. Notice how the grand old Pagans look death in the face without flinching. Epictetus says proudly:—

"Why should we fear death? For where death is, there are we not; and where we are, there death is not."

No less emphatic is Marcus Aurelius, who bids us regard death as a friend. In austere language he reminds us that death is but "the mere work of Nature, and it is childish folly to be afraid of what is natural." This is poles asunder from the attitude of the Christian priests, who luridly present the flames of Hell to the imagination of sinners and saints alike. Indeed, for sensitive souls, this insistence on Hell became almost intolerable, as Cowper's and Bunyan's writings indicate in no uncertain fashion. Even old Sam Johnson, who was not by any means a coward, was obsessed by this pernicious teaching. Indeed, the old-world Stoics invested death with dignity, but Christians fear death as children fear the dark. In Bacon's famous essay on death, it is remarkable that all the instances he gives of its being borne with equanimity are taken from Pagans. For the Christian Religion added fresh terrors to death in the thought of being cut off in sin, and unprepared. Even to-day the Anglican Church, the State form of faith in this country, has a prayer against sudden death, which the old-world Pagans regarded as best.

The Christian clergy have found it very profitable to invest death with horrors. "Prepare for death, flee from the wrath to come," have been their cries for centuries. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the 'living' God," shout the eager evangelists, with throats of leather and lungs of brass. Nor is this a passing phrase. The Christian Fathers, many centuries ago, insisted on a hell of material fire, and to-day the Roman Catholic Church, the most widespread of all Christian Churches, has not abated one solitary spark of its fiery damnation. In this matter, the High Church Party plays the seditious ape to Rome, and still flames the fires of hell over its congregations, whilst Nonconformists generally are damping the fires of damnation. The one great exception is the Salvation Army, which actually perpetrates the old savagery in its trade-mark, "Blood and Fire," and its tambourines are full of money from its dupes.

Christians are mostly credulous folks, and are

easily frightened; but religious faith everywhere seems to combine excess of ignorance and strength of emotion. Superstition takes many forms; but the devotees of one faith appear to be so entirely innocent of the teachings of its rivals. For example, the Moslem believes that after death he will awake among the houris of Paradise. The North American Indians look for the happy hunting grounds. Buddhists believe that after death they will enjoy the complete blessedness of Nirvana, where there is entire forgetfulness. Christians believe that they will walk the golden streets of heaven, and, maybe, play harps in an everlasting concert. No devotee attempts to reconcile these contradictions; in most cases believers appear to be as innocent of such things as Pomeranians snoozing on silk cushions.

The plain, blunt truth is that education in this country is actually in the hands of the priests, and children are only taught the tenets of the Christian Faith. The average scholar leaves school at fourteen years of age, as innocent and as filmy-eyed as a bull-pup. To him the Christian Bible is the only sacred book in the universe, and he is taught to look to the clergy for instruction on these matters. The Koran to him would suggest the name of a race-horse; the Zend-Avesta might even be a new patent-medicine, or hair-restorer. Like the Bourbons, this State-educated scholar "forgets nothing, and learns nothing," and the clergy go on their way rejoicing in the gullibility of mankind.

Despite clerical teaching, most people die as unconsciously as they are born. Physicians notice that fear of death departs with the dying. The nearer the end, the less the apprehension. And even this apprehension is an aspect of the will-to-live which every organism shares. Yet Nature is more merciful than the priests. When we are young death seems distant and incredible; and when we are old it is not unwelcome. Dr. William Hunter, the famous surgeon, when dying, said: "If I had strength enough to hold a pen, I would write how easy and delightful it is to die." That gay, old backslider, Louis XIV of France, said: "I thought that dying had been more difficult." Wise Michael de Montaigne, having met with an accident which was thought to be fatal, said on restoration, "I had sincere pleasure in the thought that I was passing away." Walter Savage Landor, in extreme age, wrote:—

"Death stands above me whispering low,
I know not what into my ear;
Of his strange language all I know
Is, there is not a word of fear."

In the Scottish Highlands people have an old-time proverb: "There is always peace before death." Christians claim that death can only be encountered by aid of their faith. Yet modern Chinese, Hindoos, and Japanese have as great a contempt of life as the old Greeks and Romans. In truth, Christian priests have, for their own commercial benefit, harped on the imaginary terrors of death.

Many men dread dying rather than death, and here science comes to the rescue of mankind with its anodynes and anaesthetics. The clergy, who opposed the introduction of chloroform because they said it interfered with "Almighty God's" curse upon woman, are fond of pointing the feeble finger of scorn at scientists. Did the whole of the clergy of Europe ever do so much for humanity as Simpson? The clergy sought to make death awful and gruesome, but the scientist robbed disease of its pains. As a result, death comes as a tender nurse to patients in cruel suffering.

For thousands of years priests have, for their own sorry ends, chanted the disheartening refrain of death as an enemy, but the Freethinker listens to

other and better strains. The contemplation of death as an act of Nature comforts him. Living without hypocrisy, he dies without fear, "ceasing upon the midnight with no pain."

"Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

MIMNERMUS.

A Heathen's Thoughts on Christianity.

(Continued from page 52.)

MORALS, ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL.—(Contd.)

ANCIENT Greece attained a wonderful culture, and was developing scientific knowledge which might have led to results as notable as those of modern times, had it not been checked by Christianity. The morals of ancient Athens were undoubtedly better than those of the modern, Christian city. As for the Romans, they would seem to have been a somewhat "rougher" type, but under their Stoic emperors, who reigned over a period of 150 years, the moral and humanitarian progress of Rome was not far short of what we have to-day. But, when we come to Papal Rome . . .!

We have no reason to believe that those old civilizations at their best were much behind our own in these respects; they were certainly far better than Europe in the Dark Ages. The Western world, in fact, sank down from civilization into a barbarism out of which it is only just beginning to climb up again.

The Christian Fathers give us a strange picture of the moral conditions of Christendom in the early centuries. I have no space in which to quote them, but if what they say be true, the first Christians must have been as bad as the worst of contemporary pagans. The historian Lecky says: "The two centuries after Constantine were uniformly represented by the Fathers as a period of general and scandalous vice."

We get an idea of what was to come in the account of the murder of Hypatia at Alexandria in the year 415. Hypatia was the most remarkable woman of her time, of great learning and ability as a lecturer and teacher, and of most blameless character. Christian hatred of real knowledge, that later destroyed all the science of the ancient world, was beginning to flame into action. A howling Christian mob, under the Father, Cyril of Alexandria, seized Hypatia, stripped her naked, gashed her with shells until she died, and burnt her remains. This for no offence that she had committed, but simply because she taught the old philosophy and the old learning of the schools. Hypatia may be taken as a figure of the old era, Cyril of the new. The Christian mob burned the Alexandrian Library, with its great store of books, containing the accumulated knowledge of the great civilizations of the past. What may we not have lost here, and what might we not have known had these treasures been preserved, say, in Heathen India, Ceylon, or China? Alas! They fell into Christian hands!

As the Church grew in power, similar scenes were enacted in every town and city round about the Mediterranean, such as never disgraced the great civilizations of the older paganism, or of China and India, in all their history. Thus knowledge and learning were stamped out, and the black fog of ignorance and superstition began to rise.

In the fifth century, a priest named Salvianus wrote a book *On the Providence of God*, in which he

says: "Besides a very few who avoid evil, what is almost the whole body of Christians but a sink of iniquity? How many in the Church will you find that are not drunkards or adulterers or fornicators or gamblers or robbers or murderers—or all together?"

Bishop Gregory of Tours wrote the *History of the Franks* of the sixth century, of which Gibbon says that "it would be difficult to find more vice and less virtue," and Hallam, that it shows "the extreme wickedness of every person concerned." Dean Milman says, in his *History of Latin Christianity*: "It is difficult to conceive a more dark and odious state of society . . . Christianity has given to barbarism hardly more than its superstition and its hatred of heretics and unbelievers. Throughout, assassinations, parricides and fratricides intermingle with adulteries and rapes." J. Cotter Morison, in *The Service of Man*, says: "The Ages of Faith were emphatically ages of crime, of gross and scandalous wickedness, of cruelty, and, in a word, of immorality."

I have quoted these opinions rather than express them in my own words, but I may add that, from what I have read of the Middle Ages, and it is a good deal, they do no more than express the moderate truth. The violence and crime which characterized Christian Europe during the Middle Ages have no parallel in the history of the Heathen East. Irremediable injustice and outrage seem to have been the rule. Burnings, mutilations and torturings, such as would have shocked the Red Indians, were of every day occurrence. "The brutality of life in those days was incredible. To extract confessions, hot eggs were put under a prisoner's armpits, his feet were dipped in salt water and then licked by goats; he would lie on the ground whilst water dripped, drop by drop, from a great height upon his naked stomach. There were racks, thumbscrews, and all kinds of fiendish mechanisms. The European mind had become so gross and callous that even the most exalted saints and the most sensitive scholars made no protest against these horrors which filled Europe with groans and curses for 1,000 years." Even as late as 1741 prisoners were pressed to death with heavy weights in English gaols.

Fine ladies and gallant gentlemen thronged the windows and galleries of the market-places to see men, women and children burned alive, and doubtless laughed as the victims writhed and shrieked in their mortal agony; whilst the brutal mob in the space below gloated over the shocking spectacle. It is said that as late as 1757, fashionable ladies went to see the would-be regicide, Damiens, slowly tortured to death in Paris; and we know they witnessed the public flogging and hanging of criminals in England not more than 100 years ago. Negroes are burned alive in Christian America to this day.

The cruelty that distinguished Christian Europe has no parallel in the history of the Heathen East.

The moral tone of every class of society during the Middle Ages we find, from contemporary records, to be on a level with its standard of humanity, that is, almost as low as it is possible to conceive human degeneration.

E. UPASAKA.

(To be continued.)

Handel was an esthetic pagan through and through, temperamentally if not chronologically belonging to the Renaissance. Indeed, that is his great charm to us nowadays, and explains incidentally the surprisingly Italian nature of his best operatic music.—Francis Toye.

Outside man is no salvation.—Fueerbach.

Protestantism and Catholicism.

ANOTHER weighty contribution to the everlasting debate between those two viragoes, Catholic and Protestant, has just fallen with a mighty thud from the press. It is entitled *Catholicism and Christianity*, by Cecil John Cadoux, Professor of New Testament Criticism at the Independent College, Bradford. (Allen and Unwin, 21s.). In terming the work "weighty," we are not speaking figuratively, but in terms of avoirdupois.

We noticed lately that Mr. H. L. Morrow, the literary critic of the *Daily News*, in reviewing Upton Sinclair's long novel *Boston*, tells us, as an indication of the size of the work, that it "weighed just over one and a half pounds on (it is true) a pair of not altogether accurate kitchen scales." What would he say then to this youth, of over 700 pages, which weighs a solid three pounds on our kitchen scales, which, like Cæsar's wife, are above suspicion!

Speaking personally, I always prefer to hold the book I am reading, so as to get the best light, and also to save bending over a book on the table, being quite round-shouldered enough as it is; but in this instance I had to capitulate within a quarter of an hour, and retire to the table. In this instance, at any rate, the Christian can boast that he has defeated the "infidel" by the weight of his work; and no doubt he would be as pleased as Berlioz was, when informed that the exceeding loudness of the volume of sound in a certain part of one of his compositions, had, at a first performance, caused a lady to swoon. As a lethal weapon of offence, it would doubtless prove very effective.

Professor Vernon Bartlet—another professor of theology—in contributing a "Foreword," remarks of the book: "That it is a work of wide learning, even a superficial inspection will reveal." (p. vii.) Certainly, the pages are crammed with notes and references, denoting great industry, and there is a list of books quoted from, numbering ninety-eight (excluding journals). But, upon examining this portentous list, we find that seventy-nine were published during the present century, mostly during the last few years; and nineteen during the last century, the oldest of which was published in 1845, only eighty-three years ago. There are no scientific or historical works; for the most part they consist of controversial works connected with the dispute between Catholics and Protestants.

For his knowledge of the Middle Ages, Dr. Cadoux relies upon Coulton, whose learning is wide and deep; and Lecky, the Freethinker, whose *History of Rationalism* he puts under heavy contribution. The author has done no research work himself, or if he has, there is no sign of it in this book. We should not have drawn attention to this but for the claim made by Prof. Bartlet for its "wide learning." It may pass for wide learning among "Independent" and "Free Church" congregations, but such industrious compilations do not impress others as either learned or scholarly, and we fancy Prof. Bartlet was governed more by the desire to say something pleasant about his friend, than by strict accuracy.

In the opening chapter, Dr. Cadoux states the object of his work, as follows:—

The basic question is, whether the affirmations on which the distinctively Catholic appeal is based are true affirmations, and whether the things which Catholics set forth as the realities on which their characteristic tenets rest are true realities. That is the question which will be discussed in this book, and the discussion is offered to readers interested in

these matters, as an answer to the Catholic challenge, particularly from the view-point of the Free-Church mind of to-day. The book is primarily an answer to the claims of the Roman Church. (p. 11.)

The work joins battle all along the line. There are twenty-eight chapters dealing, among others, with "The Authority of Scripture," "The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment"; "Catholicism and Morals"; "Persecution"; "Catholicism and Truthfulness," etc. The Freethinker will find much useful information in this voluminous compilation, but nothing new or very startling to those already conversant with the subject. We do not remember reading of the following atrocity before:—

It must have been about 1556 that Joseph Scaliger, then in his middle teens, saw, in Guienne, a man who had been condemned by the Church, burnt so gradually that he was half consumed before he died. The use of a slow fire in the burning of heretics was apparently habitual in certain districts: and zealous theologians sometimes bitterly complained when they saw a heretic strangled instead of being slowly burnt. (p. 567.)

The Protestantism portrayed and defended in this book is a very different article to the Protestantism of the middle of the nineteenth century. The Protestantism we were brought up in, and the belief of the vast majority of the Protestants of that day; the holders of that belief are now derided as Fundamentalists, and are now confined to the Salvationists and the ignorant and uneducated. Among the Protestants of that day, Dr. Cadoux would have been denounced as an Infidel; as an Atheist in disguise; as a follower of Tom Paine; and, as a matter of fact, his beliefs are exactly the same as those put forth in the *Age of Reason*.

We were taught in those days that the Church of Rome was the "Scarlet Woman," the "Whore of Babylon." Steeped in sin herself, she accumulated wealth by selling indulgences to her superstitious followers all over the world to commit sin also with impunity. We were taught to look upon Luther, the poor uneducated monk—which he was not—as the great hero who overthrew the power of the Pope, and by the Reformation inaugurating a new era of freedom for human thought and worship. Luther transferred the faith in an infallible Pope to faith in an infallible Bible, which he took out of the hands of the priest and placed in the hands of the people.

Nothing of all this is to be found within the covers of Dr. Cadoux's book. The infallible Bible has gone. The heroic Luther defying the Pope has disappeared. The book knows nothing of the new era for freedom of thought inaugurated by the Reformation. All has gone by the board.

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

REFORM OR PUNISHMENT?

We must not take our criminals away from Society; we must give them society, and by that means restore to them the sense of citizenship, which either they may have lost, or, through adverse circumstances, never had a real chance of acquiring. We must choose between punishment and reform as our main objectives. We cannot have as much punishment as people of revengeful minds would like, if we choose reform. We cannot have as much reform as the wise must wish for, if we choose punishment. Let us get rid, then, of that maliciously sentimental desire for revenge, which is at present the main hindrance to real prison reform. Get rid of that, and some day we shall get rid of our prisons.

Laurence Housman.

Man paints himself in his gods.—Schiller.

Acid Drops.

In the *Freethinker* for January 20, we quoted a daily paper which said, concerning the Lord's Day Observance Society, "I think it a pity the law of England does not make the people who constitute this Society stay in their own homes or places of worship, and mind their own business instead of other people's." In reply we have received a long letter from the Secretary of the Society (far too long for printing) in which he makes us responsible for the sentiment expressed, and says that, "Having helped in trying to get members of the Lord's Day Observance Society incarcerated, you turn round and proceed to accuse us of interfering with the liberty of other people." We can assure this gentleman that we have no desire to see him or his friends incarcerated for carrying on a foolish campaign of Sabbatarianism. If it were proposed to lock them up for that, we should be the first to protest. We do not like either bigots or fools, but we have never proposed they should be locked up.

It is the Lord's Day observers and their fanatical friends who want to use the law to prevent people spending their Sunday in a perfectly rational and healthy manner. And we do very strongly object to the law being called in to perpetuate so stupid a superstition. The Secretary does not make his case better when he says that they are "seeking to save multitudes of our fellow men from becoming seven-day working slaves." But that is not honest. It is not labour saving they are after, but the preservation of the Lord's Day, which is a different proposition. It cannot, for example, be claimed that Sunday games in all public parks will turn "multitudes" of people into "seven-day slaves." But the Society opposes this as well as the opening of cinemas. All the Secretary has to say about a day of rest is so much eye-wash. Will the Society agree that so long as men do not work seven days a week, taking any day off that may be arranged for, the Society will be content? Everyone knows it will not. It is the Lord's Day that is wanted, and to pretend that the Society is animated by concern for labour, only adds dishonesty to intolerance.

We are getting on! Take this from an article in the *Christian World*, by the Rev. L. D. Weatherhead, of Leeds:—

Let us try and face facts. Does prayer deflect a bullet? Does piety save you from sunstroke? Does God protect you from a railway accident if you say your prayers? Must one not say that if one had been in the train which recently met disaster near Hull one would have been just as likely to meet death if one had said one's prayers as if one hadn't? If you fall down a cellar steps, are you not just as likely to break your neck whether you are a Christian or a pagan?

Well, it is quite good to face facts, and we are glad to note that Mr. Weatherhead has been so far influenced by Freethought as to say what he does say. But all the same we should now like to know just what prayer is supposed to accomplish; does he really believe that, in dealing with life, what one believes about God does not matter to the value of a brass button; and if he does believe this, what is he going to do about it?

It is quite a good thing to try and talk sensibly, but it is an even better thing to act sensibly. Will Mr. Weatherhead stop all prayers in his church for health, for recovery from sickness, for protection from perils at sea, etc.? When thanks are returned to God for the recovery of the King, will he be honest enough to tell his congregation that it is all balderdash, that God had nothing to do with it, that the dozen or so doctors who were called in did the trick, and that some of these men were actually Freethinkers? We get quite a lot of talk nowadays from a number of clergymen on the line taken up by Mr. Weatherhead, but when we look a little closer we usually find that they in their churches go through all the old forms, and act as though God does interfere in those circumstances where we are told it is stupid to believe that interference takes place. Even Christianity

cannot prevent every parson saying something sensible, but Christianity does manage to prevent them acting with a reasonable amount of consistency and of even honesty.

A Bristol reader of *The New Chronicle* (of Christian education) writes to that journal: "The religious outlook of our forebears is not good enough for our descendants. Civilization, as it is understood in Christendom, simply could not survive on it." We fancy the good man doesn't quite realize the truth of his latter statement.

The National Conference on the Welfare of Youth has come and gone. A legacy of its activities is a book entitled *The Citizen of To-morrow*. In this book Canon E. S. Woods discusses his vision of the citizen of to-morrow. He says:—

To complete my picture—and the addition is vital—I must add that my citizen is one who is not unfamiliar with what I call things of the Spirit, with a sense of God and a sense of the divine in man which would run like a golden thread through all his thinking, all his work, and his relationships.

From this we gather that what the Conference was vitally concerned about was the Welfare of the Churches, and the best means of nobbling youth to ensure that welfare.

A reader of the *Daily Sketch* says he is not in favour of cinemas being open on Sunday, but he thinks it is "a sin to stop all forms of healthy recreation." If this were allowed, he thinks "nobody would play games for longer than three or four hours, so that there would remain quite enough time in which to go to church." This lover of games and a little religious dope has missed the essential point in the "Sunday question" argument. The non-religious majority are quite capable of deciding what they shall do with their Sunday leisure, and they have a right to the widest opportunity, and to freedom of choice, in that matter. What prevents them exercising that right? The Churches and Chapels—enforcing an ancient Hebrew taboo!

In a religious weekly, a writer mentions that a daily paper has been criticizing the fishermen of Devon and Cornwall for their custom of not fishing on Sundays. When the fisherman refuses to work on Sunday, he does not leave port on Saturday night or Sunday, and so he loses two days. The argument of the daily paper was that, the season being a short one, use should be made of every available minute while the season lasts. Otherwise, the fishermen may be in distressed circumstances when the present herring season is over. The writer mentioned above thinks the fishermen are "splendid Christians." He says:—

Granted, from a purely material standpoint, the men who uphold the sanctity of the Sabbath (many of them Methodists) will suffer financially, but they will have the approbation of a clear conscience, and the respect of a great body of fellow-Christians. Those who have any personal knowledge of the Western fishermen know that in their ranks are men of the finest Christian type, and one is glad to know that, even in these mercenary days, such men are willing to stand by their convictions, even at the expense of their great personal loss.

But the fact of the matter is that it is the usual unreasoning sailor superstition that keeps the fisherman from sailing or working on Sunday. They believe that working on an unlucky day will result in disaster or poor catches. It is a Christian engendered superstition, no doubt. The men abstain from working on the Sabbath not because they love God and respect his commandments, but because they fear the retribution of God if they break one of his taboos. We presume these piously superstitious fishermen will not object to cadging for charitable relief when they get into financial difficulties due to their childish superstitions.

According to Lord Yarborough, "One object of the savings banks is to foster the habit of restraint in spending." If that is so, we have a suggestion to make to the bankers. What about distributing a few million

leaflets with the following wording: "Those pounds you waste on churches and missions to the heathen—why not save them for your children, or your home, or your old age?"

Mr. Alfred Johns says that quite nice people are no longer shocked by the word "damn." This is very regrettable, of course. But it is counterbalanced by the fact that quite a lot of nice people are shocked by the Christian dogma of damnation.

Dr. Hewlett Johnson, Dean of Manchester, very kindly does not object to young couples holding hands in the pews of his church. He would, he says, much rather they came to church and held hands than paraded the streets. Thousands of young people will no doubt be properly grateful to the dean for his interest in their welfare. But they may retort that, if the churches and chapels had not reduced them to boredom by suppressing wholesome recreation and amusement on Sunday, they would not be obliged to parade the streets.

We have often commented on the manner in which stories of the supernatural are swallowed without the least exercise of critical ability. So soon as the subject of religion is mentioned, a person's critical qualities appear to be ruled out, and tales are swallowed with closed eyes and open mouth. This is specially the case where Spiritualism is concerned. In the recent articles in the *Daily News* on that subject, we had the usual evidence from men and women of proofs they had received of messages from the dead, and given in the usual manner. A or B told the world that he, or she, had received the most convincing proofs that they were in touch with a dead relative; and, once this was said, the religious-minded never seemed to be sufficiently awake to ask just what were these wonderful proofs, how were they received, and was there any reason to question the story told? The lack of ordinary common sense displayed in handling stories of spirit intercourse leaves one marvelling at the soporific power of anything which has the remotest connexion with religion.

Among those who wrote an article for the *Daily News*, was Mr. Dennis Bradley, who has been very loud in his assertion that he has had the clearest proofs that the dead live. Mr. Bradley said that he had had, and had given others, unmistakable evidence of "direct voice" communication with the dead, through the mediumship of a ghost merchant, George Valiantine. Among other things, he said that at certain seances the direct voice had spoken in about thirty languages, "archaic Chinese" was among them, and nearly all of which were quite unknown to those present. No one appears to have wondered how anyone knew there were thirty languages when most of them were quite unknown to those present, and how they discovered one to be archaic Chinese. Presumably the spirit voice must have told those present it was. But I fancy that I could myself produce several unknown languages at any time—that is so long as no one queried whether they were actually languages or not.

But in the *Daily News* for January 25, there is an article by Lord Charles Hope that illustrates the trustworthiness of Mr. Bradley. Lord Hope says the seances took place in his room, and Mr. Bradley has been giving his name as witness to the truth of the yarn. But Lord Hope says he is surprised to learn that records contain all these languages, there were only "several," and that of these "of all the languages spoken, a few words only of Italian could be understood." The medium was not controlled in any way, and the seance took place in the dark. Lord Hope says that, in his opinion, the seances were a failure, except so far as they went to prove that the voices were not "hallucinatory." So goes Mr. Bradley's wonderful experience, and the value of the witness cited. A gathering in the dark, a medium allowed to do as he pleased, a few undecipherable sentences or words, the only words understood Italian, which become absolute demonstration to Mr. Bradley and the type of mind to which he appeals. We

venture to say that a careful examination of other evidence would produce similar results. Now what is Mr. Bradley going to do about it? And when will the *Daily News* get an article on Spiritualism by someone who really understands it?

A reverend gent recently preached an eloquent sermon on the power of Christ and his gospel to cast out fear. Nevertheless, thousands of people nowadays are dispensing with this power for that work. By staying away from the Churches they escape being inoculated with the fear with which the priests attempt to infect them. Escaping the disease, they don't trouble about the Christian remedy.

Beyond doubt, says the Rev. J. C. Bacon, Ph.D., the organized Church has lost the ear of the youth of to-day. This distressing fact had better be kept from the B.B.C. It fondly imagines it has induced youth to take an interest in the broadcast service.

The same Mr. Bacon declares that Christian education of adolescents must include a re-stated doctrine of Redemption. But, he adds, "there is a danger that in rejecting views of redemption that are impossible for youth to-day, the idea of redemption will be got rid of altogether." But we thought that the trouble in Sunday schools is to get the redemption idea to take root at all, since the notion of "original sin" has become a standing joke with both adults and youth.

Wireless licence-holders last year numbered 2,628,000. The interesting fact in connexion with this is, that the majority of these persons simply crave for their broadcast dose of religion, and would be very unhappy were it not forthcoming. At least, so the inspired pages of the *B.B.C. Handbook* would lead one to believe. Alas! the B.B.C. will never know how many listeners switch off when the religious dope begins to trickle through the ether.

A *Radio Times* reader desires to have no secular entertainment broadcast on Sunday. The reason given is that "to the vast majority, Sunday is still a sacred day, in spite of the modern tendency to regard it otherwise." This pious reader must walk about with his eyes shut, or else spends his Sunday in a church. If he will take the trouble to visit the highways, the seaside resorts, and the towns where entertainment is to be had in the summer on Sunday, he will see the "vast majority" treating the Sabbath as a holiday. The belief that Sunday is a sacred day is now held only by a dwindling minority.

Bishop Charles Fiske has written a book called *The Confessions of a Puzzled Parson*. According to a review in a religious weekly, the Bishop tilts at America's moral uplifters and the multitudinous social and other movements with their battalions of paid secretaries and last-detail organization. He protests against the notion that "you can legislate people into paradise." He declares that: "America has become almost hopelessly enamoured of a religion that is little more than a sanctified commercialism. It is hard in this day and land to differentiate between religious aspiration and business prosperity. Our conception of God is that He is a sort of Magnified Rotarian." The Bishop says he is weary of "the pernicious activity of the paid uplifter." The religious weekly which reviewed the book heartily commends it, "for though English circumstances may differ from those he outlines, Bishop Fiske's message is as timely here as there." Hear, hear! Will the B.B.C. and various other "uplift" mongers please make a note of that?

Dear Inge: "It is not easy for Catholics and Protestants to lie in the same bed unless both are asleep." *John Bull* comments: "Un-Christian. Mutual tolerance and respect for one another's feelings would keep any number of religious sects from quarrelling." As the religious sects never have, throughout history, kept from quarrelling, one is safe in asserting that the Christian religion doesn't breed or encourage "mutual

tolerance and respect for one another's feelings." Intolerance is quite Christian. The Great Exemplar was well versed in it. He always had some choice epithets for those who dared to differ from him in religious opinion. And in this respect, "imitation of Christ" has been the rule rather than the exception among his followers ever since.

A correspondent recently drew attention to the announcement that even missionaries like to read *Punch*. We learn from a pious American contemporary that even the most puritanical fundamentalist relaxes at times. We heard of a missionary who taught East African natives to read English—and "he chose some Lectures by Ingersoll as being at once amusing, poetical and well-phrased." A letter received from a Baptist missionary—a very young one let us add, recently attached to the Persian Missions at Baghdad surprised Headquarters in New York by reporting: "I am reading for the first time *The Arabian Nights*, which I find very exciting, stimulating, and recreative after a day's work amongst Native Christians."

It is the "free mind" that is necessary in industry to-day, declares the Headmaster of Bideford Grammar School. True; and it is quite as essential in every department of social life. Perhaps, too, there is more chance of getting it nowadays, since the Churches have a more limited opportunity of breeding the fettered mind, and of discouraging the independent.

Here is some quite good advice given by Dr. Temple, the new Archbishop of York:—

I am quite sure it is the duty of every intelligent citizen to read each day a newspaper with which he does not agree.

It is extremely difficult, and calls for great moral courage, for an individual to oppose the views of the moment.

If Democracy is to maintain itself, it must be by our endeavour to foster real independence of thought. Hear! Hear! Quite good advice, but we wonder whether the Archbishop would apply these principles to religion? Would he, for example, advise his Christian followers that every one of them out to read a Free-thought book or pamphlet or paper once a week? Or tell them that it requires greater moral courage to be an avowed Freethinker in a Christian country than it does to profess the beliefs of the majority? We have our doubts. He was speaking with political opinions in view, and from that we gather that his own views are just a trifle unpopular.

An old lady had to be led out of Westminster Abbey the other day. It appears that she interrupted the preacher by calling, "Be quiet you old granny." This was very wrong. It is the kind of thing one may be able to think when in church, but it is not considered proper to say it. One must try and look as though the parson is saying something sensible, even though it may be something of a strain.

It is stated in the press that General Ludendorf has renounced Christianity, and is to devote himself in favour of a campaign to bring back belief in the old pagan gods of the Germanic people. Well, we do not see that the old gods will not be quite as good as the new ones. Presumably, Ludendorf thinks that the Christian God ought to have helped Germany win the war, and as he did not he is going to have some gods of a more helpful character. If we are right in this supposition, we congratulate the general on having a little more backbone than most Christians, who the more their God goes back on them, the lower they grovel to him and thank him for what he hasn't done.

Mr. Philip Guedalla gives the world some useful advice. Says he: "Have the courage to say that nonsense is nonsense." The advice is excellent for general consumption, but the parsons will agree that it is eminently unsuitable for church congregations. Even a little congregational outspokenness on the lines suggested by Mr. Guedalla might start clients on the road

to unbelief. Inside a church everybody must be prepared to believe that nonsense is sense.

A town hall recently completed near Potsdam has been paid for by money collected as fines from motorists. The principle implied here might be adapted in another direction. If every parson were fined 5s. for each Christian lie or half-truth he told in the pulpit, the money collected could supply a large number of Sunday playing-fields. This scheme, if practicable, would have on the parson an astonishing effect in the way of "uplift."

Says Dr. F. W. Norwood: "If you and I are followers of Jesus, it ought to be a better world for our cats, dogs and horses." Ought it? The Doctor's conclusion doesn't necessarily follow. When nine-tenths of Christendom followed Jesus it ought to have been an ideal world for animals, if one accepts Dr. Norwood's suggestion. But animals didn't find it so. The rights of animals were not even recognized during the first eighteen centuries of the Christian age, because the Bible gave no inspiration in this direction. What is curious is that recognition of such rights coincides with the waning of Christian beliefs.

Many of our readers will remember the yarn of the Mons angels, how it was invented by Mr. Arthur Machen, and how the Bishop of London and many other clergymen swore by all that was blue that it was actual fact, and produced a number of witnesses who had seen the angels. Something of the same kind recently occurred with the *Daily Mail*. On January 20 that veracious and Christian paper made a star piece of the discovery of the mummy of King Solomon's favourite wife. The mummy was found in a golden coffin, and it was surrounded with all sorts of gold and other ornaments. There was also a Hebrew parchment, believed to be in the writing of Solomon, telling the manner of the wife's death. Nothing was spared in the way of what Pooh-Bah called "corroborative detail," as was to be expected with the paper that has made itself famous with so many yarns in the past. But alas, the whole thing was taken from a Palestine paper, where it was published as a piece of pure fiction. The *Daily Mail* has not corrected its account of this wonderful discovery, and we do not see why it should. It knows its public. And we shall be very much surprised if we do not find this tale circulating in religious circles as a discovery in proof of the truth of the Bible. Have we not recently had resurrected the story of the whale that swallowed a seaman? And does not the old Egyptian folk-tale of the Two Brothers come to us in the Bible as the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife?

The Rev. Geo. McNeal is touring America touting for cash to repair Wesley's Chapel in the City Road, London. This is surely not the best and most economical way of raising the wind. What's the matter with simple Prayer? It cost nothing, and it has, we are assured, worked wonders in every conceivable direction. It has even prevented, seven or eight times, the premature arrival into heaven of Mr. James Douglas. Still, perhaps Mr. McNeal has been praying for a holiday tour in America free of expense, and this is God's answer to the humble petition.

A Plymouth man promised 10s. each to 5,000 boys, if they would attend a special religious service. And, of course, the boys came. Now, someone will be able to prove how strong the religious "instinct" is, inasmuch as 5,000 boys were found clamouring to get in to a religious service, and the police had to regulate the crowd of eager worshippers. It is an idea that might be worked in other places. For instance, one would undertake to fill St. Paul's with adults at 5s. per head. In fact, if the Dean and Chapter will give us the contract, and allow 5s. per head for attendants, we would undertake to fill the building once a day, and finance the *Freethinker* on the profit we could make. We could safely deduct a twenty-five per cent commission, without seriously affecting the size of the crowd,

National Secular Society.

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

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

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

Any information concerning the Trust Deed and its administration may be had on application.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

THOSE SUBSCRIBERS WHO RECEIVE THEIR COPY OF THE "FREETHINKER" IN A GREEN WRAPPER WILL PLEASE TAKE IT THAT A RENEWAL OF THEIR SUBSCRIPTION IS DUE. THEY WILL ALSO OBLIGE, IF THEY DO NOT WANT US TO CONTINUE SENDING THE PAPER, BY NOTIFYING US TO THAT EFFECT.

- FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—J. Latham, 15s.
- W. COLLINS.—We said at the time that the *Manchester Evening News* would not be permitted by its religious "bosses" to repeat the experiment of giving Freethought a show in its columns. Thanks for cuttings.
- J. R. HOLMES.—Thanks for corrections. Duly noted.
- H. GAUNT.—It is rather difficult nowadays to get a newspaper free from the silly features you name. It is a question of getting large circulations, and that means playing to the lower order of intelligence.
- J. R. DAWSON.—We endorse your own explanation of the attitude of men such as Sir Oliver Lodge in relation to Spiritualism. There is really nothing unusual in finding men who are brilliant in one direction taking up quite foolish attitudes in others. Probably we all have our sane moments if we can only discover them.
- H. RAMSAY.—We are never inclined to go frantic over a "great" man who is a Freethinker. It is a species of tuft-hunting and an exhibition of an "inferiority complex." It is the man who matters most all the time, whether he is "great" or not matters very little. Some great men are really very small.
- J. LATHAM.—Thanks for good wishes. Shall hope to see you again one of these days.
- The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.
- The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.
- The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.
- When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Mr. F. Mann, giving as long notice as possible.
- Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.
- All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."
- Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—
One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

Sugar Plums.

MR. COHEN'S new booklet, issued by the Secular Society, Limited, *Four Lectures on Freethought and Life*, will be issued in the course of a few days. The work covers about 100 pages, and will be sold at 1s. These are the first lectures of Mr. Cohen's that have ever been published, and those who have not heard him speak may be interested in knowing what he is like on the platform.

A correspondent wrote the other day that, in view of the very many and various things to which we have to give attention, an article on "A Day in the Life of an Editor" would prove interesting. We have no intention of writing such an article, since it could not present a true picture of all days, and any one day would mean it was selected with a particular end in view. So with the mere mention of the fact that the day's work often varies between trying to adjust the domestic difficulties of some reader or member to getting up a scuttle of coals from the cellar, we pass on to something else.

But we do not mind meeting our correspondent's request by saying something for which he did *not* ask, perhaps on the principle that Charles Lamb offered to make up for coming late to the office by getting away early. This something else takes the form of advice to letter writers. Constantly we have to return letters, or to refuse insertion, because those who write them have either got it into their heads that the Editor of the *Freethinker* is a very simple person and quite easy to get round, or that because the name of this paper is the *Freethinker*, any and every topic is admissible, and on any and every occasion. For example. The other day a letter appeared propounding the very useful proposition as to the extent to which Freethinkers believe in the end justifying the means, and suggesting that if the principle of utility was accepted there seemed no other criterion of the morality of actions than their conduciveness to certain ends. Straightway that was taken as a justification of a lengthy letter criticizing vivisection, with which the query had no logical connexion. Another writer sent a long letter criticizing militarism. The standpoint of both writers being plainly that because they did not believe in the things criticized, therefore the utilitarian principle broke down. Both letters were returned, very much to the disgust of the writers who thought that the paper was not, therefore, living up to its title.

But the most dangerously attractive things to talk about are sex and economics. Sex and economics are ever the most dangerous words to use. Let the writer of any article use sex relations, or certain economic facts, as mere illustrations of his main arguments, and it is about 100 to one that we receive long letters propounding theories of Communism, or dilating on all sorts of sex matters. Mainly, of course, these letters emanate from one-idea people, who must drag in King Charles' head on every occasion, and who wait with all the vigilant tenacity of a cat watching a mouse-run, for a chance to pounce. To be quite fair to these writers one ought to remark that there are others just as King Charles' head on the other side, and who jump in with a letter against Communism, or Socialism, or Sexism, also on the basis of a chance remark or a casual illustration. There are still others, on the religious side. The most noticeable of these is the publicity department of the Christian Science sect. The slightest reference to this peculiar and fantastic group is enough to bring a communication telling us all about it. (We hasten to warn the C.S. folk not to write a letter on the strength of what we have just said.)

The amusing thing is that these folk afterwards write us personal letters complaining that the subjects they dealt with is of pressing importance, and that the paper

is not living up to its title if it shuts out anything—a "Do-you-call-yourself-a-Freethinker" type of argument. Of course, they do not mean all they say; nor do we think they really believe that the editor of the *Freethinker* is quite so simple as not to see through the aim that lies behind the letters. They are trying to get publicity for their opinion, and we do not in the least blame them for trying, only they should cultivate a sporting spirit, and if they do not win the round, keep good tempered about it. We do not in the least dispute that the subjects on which they write are of very great importance indeed; their work may be of far greater importance than ours. The only point is that we do not think so; and the *Freethinker* is not maintained for the support of anything and everything that anyone may think of importance. It stands for free opinion in every direction, and it has never failed to speak out when this has been threatened—even in the case of opinions with which it had no sympathy whatever. But this does not, of course, mean opening its columns to all sorts of subjects at all sorts of times. As Spencer says, all knowledge is of value; the question is, what knowledge is of most value at the time. So if correspondents wish to give us a kind of negative help in our work, they will do so by bearing in mind what we have said. Nevertheless, we do not expect that we have seen the last of King Charles' head. Occasionally the Headites will win, but the dice are loaded in favour of the Editor, and if each learns to smile when the other scores, no great harm will be done.

The Swansea Council has again refused to permit the inhabitants of that holy city to be exposed to the demoralizing consequences of bands in the public parks. The bands that do not demoralize are those controlled by the Salvation Army. We suggest that a volunteer band might be formed to play in the streets on Sunday, and then fight against any action that might be taken by the police—under the prompting of the Churches and Chapels. We note in this connexion a well written letter, in the *South Wales Daily Post*, protesting against the action of the Council, with special reference to the conduct of the Labour members of the Council, from Mr. W. Moore, the Secretary of the local branch.

The Secretary of the Manchester Branch writes in high praise of Dr. Carmichael's first appearance on their platform. We are not surprised, and we should feel pleased if his professional duties left him with more time for platform work.

The Manchester Branch is holding a Social and Dance on Saturday, February 2, and we expect this paragraph will be in the hands of local readers in time for it to be effective. There will be dancing, and other forms of entertainment. The function will be held in the Milton Hall, Broad Street, Pendleton, and admission is free. There will be a collection towards expenses. This is the first Social of the season, and a good gathering is anticipated. A Pendlebury or Swinton Tram will land visitors at the door.

The West Ham Branch is holding another of its popular Socials on Saturday, February 2, at the Earlham Hall, Earlham Grove, Forest Gate. The proceedings commence at 7.0, and there will be the usual varied programme of music, songs, and games. Admission is free, and all members and their friends are invited.

Mr. George Whitehead will be lecturing in No. 2 Room and Saloon, City Hall, to-day (February 3), at 11.30 and 6.30. We hope to hear of good meetings. Mr. F. Mann was the lecturer on Sunday last, and we are glad to hear that in spite of many counter attractions his meetings were good ones.

We are obliged to hold over several letters till next week owing to want of space.

The Worship of Wells and Streams.

FROM the remotest ages pastoral and agricultural peoples have commemorated the blessings conferred on the blowing clover by the falling rain. The seemingly magic transformation effected by the fertilizing showers which refresh the arid earth has served to endow water with innumerable mystical properties. The sacred water of the well of life has long commanded a cult of world-wide distribution. Many are the ceremonial charms employed to ensure a copious supply of water for the growth of vegetation upon which man and beast alike rely for the maintenance of life.

Not only so, but water is commonly regarded by primitive races as possessing the power to dispel diseases, particularly those that affect the health of the skin. In the Old Testament, the miraculous cure of Naaman (2 Kings v. 10) suggests an ancient Semitic faith in the remedial effects of water in cases of leprosy.

Thousands of years ago, in ancient Babylon, the festival of Tammuz was celebrated. The image of the deity was purified with clear water, just as in a later age, at Alexandria in Egypt, the image of Adonis was washed in the sea-waves at the summer solstice. In Greece itself the famous gardens of Adonis were watered to secure an abundant fall of rain for the coming harvest.

It is still customary in several countries in South-Eastern Europe to command the rain to fall by deluging with water a youth or maiden arrayed in a garment of grass, blossoms, or corn. This use of water as a rain-charm to ensure the fertility of the crops is clearly symbolized by the various customs of adorning the god or the representative of the god in flowers, leaves, vines, etc., before pouring water over him. A custom which prevailed in our own Islands until quite recently, points to the same conclusion. In some English counties water was sprinkled over the last sheaf cut at harvest time, to procure rain for the crops of the coming year.

As we have already indicated, magic and religion blend in the rites and ceremonies of Nature worship. The lonely and mysterious well, the silent lake, and the running waters of the river are almost invariably regarded as the dwelling places of spiritual beings, both baleful and benign. To these eerie creatures, especially the baleful ones, offerings are presented. It has been truly said that what serves as poetry to the cultured, passes for philosophy with the uncivilized. Yet, even to cultured Hindus, the Ganges remains a sacred river, while in early Greece the Scamander had its appointed priest and was appeased with sacrifices.

The pilgrimages and alleged wonders of Lourdes in our own day began with a miraculous vision of the Virgin. But this miracle-shrine owes its permanent popularity to the discovery of a spring, whose spurious healing powers attract hundreds of thousands of the credulous multitude annually from all quarters of the globe.

The ritual of baptism appears ubiquitous. In this ceremony water is regarded as a purifying agent which cleanses the new-born babe from sin. Most Christians vainly imagine that baptism is special to their creed. Yet it flourishes among Indian tribes in Guiana, the Harvey Islanders and various tribes in New Zealand, while ancient Hebrews and Norsemen made it part of their religion.

In Ireland, at Stoolie, near Downpatrick, there are three wells said to possess virtues of a most remarkable character. On midsummer-eve these wells are visited by crowds of "halt, maimed or blind, press-

ing to wash away their infirmities with water consecrated by their patron saint, and so powerful is its efficacy, that many of those who go to be healed, and who are not totally blind, or altogether crippled, really believe for a time that they are by means of its miraculous virtues perfectly restored."

Evidence was given before the Crofter's Commission, so late as 1888, that a lake in the Gairloch district in Scotland had been trawled and quick-limed not many years before in a vain search for the water kelpie—Melusine—who haunted the loch. Even in Shropshire the observance of "well wakes" survived until the nineteenth century. It is recorded that at Tissington and other places in Derbyshire, offerings of flowers were made to the deities of the wells and springs. Many were the water-shrines in North Lancashire, Staffordshire and Westmoreland, where ancient nature spirits were adored and worshipped under a Christian saint's name. The Church frowned upon the pagan prayers of the peasantry and endeavoured to suppress them. In 1102 the Canons of St. Anselm severely condemned the worship of the fountains, but the custom flourished hundreds of years later. Near Jarrow, at the well of St. Bede's, the curative powers of the water were utilized for sickly children. In Banffshire the Fergan Well water was infallible in healing running sores and skin complaints.

Some sacred wells cured love-sickness, while others cured warts. In Lancashire, at Sefton, there is a divining well, into which girls throw pins to ascertain the time of their wedding, and to test the loyalty of their lovers. The leading "cursing-well" in Wales is St. Eilian's, in Denbigh, where one's enemy may be made to pine and die by dropping a pin and a pebble with his name inscribed on the stone into the water. The most celebrated well in the British Isles is probably that of Holywell. A few years ago the present writer listened in a Lancashire village to amazing stories of the marvellous powers of its waters to save the sick.

Sacred fish, in which the spirit of the nymph or saint is supposed to dwell, are frequently associated with wells and streams. Many are the stories relating to these aqueous spirits, who resented any interference.

In her *Ancient Legends*, Lady Wilde gives several examples of holy wells and their guardian fish. There is a well in Sligo, "a beautiful spot shaded by trees," and according to tradition, a sacred trout had dwelt in its depths from remote times. A man, blind at birth, one day asserted that he could see the holy trout swimming in the water. "One day an adventurous man, who watched the trout until it was asleep, caught it and carried it home and put it on a gridiron. The trout lay patiently until one side had been grilled, but when its captor proceeded to turn it on the other side, it jumped off the fire and made its way back to the well, where it lives and can be seen by those who have done proper penance and paid their dues to the priest; one of its sides is all marked and streaked by the gridiron, which can never be effaced." (Eleanor Hull, *Folklore of the British Isles*, p. 114.)

It appears probable that many of the most ancient divinities of Britain were aquatic. In any case, their Celtic names suggest this. Stream sprites long haunted the picturesque glens of Scotland. River-hags and semi-human water steeds abounded among the running waters of the North. Judging from their names, weird and witch-like deities were in the majority. Among the early Celtic peoples on the Continent, names such as Ritona (the Aisne) who is said to have been a ford-goddess; and Matrona (the Marne) point to the ancient goddesses of these rivers.

Streams were urged to curb their pride; they were beseeched to reward the faithful, and sometimes answered prayer.

Not only were waters worshipped, but sacrifices were offered to them. The river Spey is regarded as a female, and is familiarly spoken of as "she," and she claims at least one victim each year as a right. The river Ribble is presided over by a spirit known as Peg O'Neill, and every seven years, on St. Peg's Night, she demanded a living sacrifice. Peg was appeased if a cat or dog, or even bird was drowned in her stream, but if her claims were neglected she insisted on a human sacrifice. Henderson in his *Folklore of the Northern Counties* mentions Peg Powler, the water-goddess of the Tees. "The water-sprite of the River Forth," we read, "was 'the Deaf and Soundless One,' because the Forth is a quiet-flowing river; the sprite of the Clyde is 'the Purifying One,' for it carried the clay and mud out to sea. Here we have instances of qualities in the river itself being personified as water spirits."

A widespread superstition survives in rural retreats that every river exacts its toll of death. This probably explains the strange fact that many peasants doubt the piety of any attempt to save a drowning creature. Trustworthy observers state that in present-day Western Ireland, the rustics are so dominated by superstition that they hesitate to render assistance to a drowning man lest the angry river should avenge itself on the rescuer.

In the Hebrides the belief is common that the ocean will search the whole world to discover the graves of its children. Therefore, a stranded corpse must be laid where the high tides reach so that the sea "may recover her own."

The natives of West Uist still speak of a body which was left stranded on the shore some generations since. They solemnly state that in the deepening twilight a strange vessel swept into the bay, and three of the crew strode in silence to an ancient Temple, there exhumed the remains of the departed and bore them away, vanishing in the direction of the sea. Thus the hungry ocean recovered her lost child.

T. F. PALMER.

Thomas John Thurlow.

A TRIBUTE TO HIS MEMORY, BY HIS DAUGHTER.

THE passing of Thomas John Thurlow, a member for sixty years of the N.S.S., marks the removal of one of its oldest bulwarks.

He was born eighty-six years ago at Hull, the son of a weaver. His earliest haunts were the banks of the Humber, where he made friends amongst those who followed the call of the sea, and it was from one of these friends, at about the age of seven, that he received his first swimming lesson. The method was drastic, the teacher throwing his pupil into the swiftly flowing Humber and diving after him! A few such lessons and the boy was able to "swim like a fish," an accomplishment to which he owed his life on several subsequent occasions, and by which he was enabled to save the lives of others. When about ten he formed one of a Sunday School Choir gathered on board a vessel on the Humber, to take part in the ceremony of launching. The vessel, released from her moorings, reeled out into deep water and turned turtle! But for the boy's clever diving he would probably have been reckoned among the many dead in that disaster.

His natural taste for adventure does not seem to have been damped by this experience, for at the age of eleven he secretly enlisted in the Royal Navy under the name of Johnson, his mother's maiden name, which he adopted to divert scent till he should be well away. He received his training on H.M.S. Victory, and he recalled, as his most thrilling experience of that period,

an occasion when hundreds of boys, stripped, dotted about the vessel, were awaiting the signal to dive. Another moment, and, but for the keenness of the look-out man, many might have leaped to a ghastly fate, for instead of the expected signal came a shout of warning—the sea was alive with sharks!

About 1860, he went to America and was there when the Civil War broke out. The Abolition of Slavery being a cause which naturally appealed to him, he joined up with the Federal Forces and served under Generals Meade and Grant. He saw Lincoln and heard him deliver his famous speech at the Cooper's Institute, and recalled with great vividness, only a few months before his death, seeing the meeting of Lincoln with the coloured Chief when the two men shook hands. He revisited America some twenty years later, and always retained a great admiration and love for that country.

Returning to England at the close of the American Civil War, he settled in London, and this led to his first meeting Charles Bradlaugh, an incident which affected the whole of his after life. On his way to a religious service which, having been nurtured on the usual theological beliefs, he was in the habit of attending, he was lured from his course by an announcement that Charles Bradlaugh was to speak on "The Impeachment of the House of Brunswick." He stayed to listen and was so impressed by "the calm, judicious reasoning of the speaker," that he was impelled to attend further of his lectures, which lectures inspired him to a personal investigation of all evidence bearing upon the Inspiration of the Bible, the truth of which, till then, it had "never occurred" to him "to doubt."

Beyond the rudiments of education he was entirely self-taught; but he had a passion for study, a marvellous memory (he declared that he could remember an incident which occurred when he was only eighteen months of age) and an inexhaustible fund of application, all of which he brought to bear upon his subject, his favourite hunting ground being, perhaps, the Guildhall Reference Library. His investigations resulted in his conversion to Secularism, and he was duly enrolled a member of the N.S.S., becoming one of Bradlaugh's most faithful followers, and later an ardent worker and lecturer in the Cause he had espoused.

About this period he used sometimes to meet Bradlaugh at the house of his future father-in-law, where Bradlaugh was in the habit of calling to borrow a stool, from which humble rostrum he (Bradlaugh) used to discourse in Bonner Fields (a space now occupied by the Victoria Park Chest Hospital) encircled by a few of the faithful, with, sometimes, a hostile crowd beyond.

Of his work for the propaganda of Freethought, which, especially in the early days, exposed his person to risk, and his character to vilification, space permits but the briefest mention. Physical fear, he never had even a nodding acquaintance with, and tales of slander were received only with amusement. Often, a lecture would come to a premature end, drowned in a chorus of bellows and hootings, sometimes accompanied by a shower of brickbats, tangible evidence of the presence of Christian opponents. Against such onslaughts the law many times volunteered its protection, but he never sought redress in law, and only once figured in a summons case as defendant, the occasion being one when, the plaintiff, after being particularly provocative and offensive, put his face within too near reach of his victim's itching fingers and received a chastisement more wounding to his dignity than to his person. I can remember my father returning from the court bubbling with amusement. The plaintiff under cross-examination had so well revealed himself that both plaintiff and defendant had been bound over to keep the peace!

In debate or opposition he, at various times, crossed swords with certain clerics, who later became leading lights in the Church, and he liked to remember that his leave-taking with more than one of these was marked by expressions of mutual respect.

Although theological investigation occupied most of his earlier studies, his intellectual pursuits ranged over a very wide field: Mythology, Science, History, Astronomy, International Politics—in all these he was well versed; whilst as cream he partook freely of Shakespeare, Sheridan, Goldsmith, etc., and the Ancient

Classics—he memorized many passages from these last, which he loved to roll off to a sympathetic ear. And of modern languages, he could read and speak both French and German, and had a fair knowledge of Italian. This last was his latest love apropos of which a brief reminiscence: In an unlit thoroughfare in the latter days of the war he was knocked down senseless by a cyclist, who did not stay to render assistance. Although this cost him days of suffering, with temporary blindness, no word of recrimination escaped him for the culprit, but he deplored the incident inasmuch as it had impaired his memory for Italian, with which he had, at the time, been "making strides."

His chief characteristic was, perhaps, that of extreme modesty, with its natural accompaniment of selflessness. Had he chosen a motto at the outset of life, it should surely have been "I serve," for he was ever ready to serve a cause, a comrade, a friend, a dog. He loathed war because he was a Humanitarian, a lover of all races, and abhorred that form of sport which has killing for its pleasurable object; hence, reports of casualties in the hunting-field left him cold—were not the victims there to deal out pain and death?

A most modest man, he yet harboured one conceit, one in which he posed as a successful prophet. It was this: he had early discovered the genius of the present President of the N.S.S., and, moreover, had recorded that discovery in a letter to the late G. W. Foote!

He was singularly lacking in personal ambition, was never more than poor by the accepted standards, yet always rich, inasmuch as he always had something to give away. He never coveted wealth, for was he not already rich in the joint possession of splendid libraries, beautiful parks, comfortable carriages in which he might travel to any place he desired! These were his sentiments.

When, with advancing years, he slipped quietly into the background of the Freethought Movement, he still counted it a duty as well as a pleasure to attend its meetings, and to participate in its conferences. To that end no journey was irksome or too long.

In the wider public tolerance and the rational employment of the Sabbath, which he lived to enjoy, he saw the fruits of those past agitations for reform to which it had been his privilege to contribute.

Nine months before the end of his life he lost the use of his legs, and when that calamity befell him life, for him, lost its attraction. Far from fearing death he welcomed it, and was ready to meet it as he had met life—unflinchingly: and it came to him kindly, as he dozed.

He died on December 23, 1928. He leaves a widow, a son and two daughters.

Nothing more beautiful was ever hewn by sculptor's art than those features as they lay in their last repose. High ideals, long years of patient delving amongst all that is greatest in the annals of mankind, and an innate sweetness of disposition had left their seal. His remains were cremated: the ashes have been temporarily preserved: their final destiny has yet to be decided.

ADA T. HAGUE.

Do You Know Him?

Did he in pomp go down the aisle
With the collection-plate?
And take the dubs with bow and smile,
Obsequious and sedate?

Into the vestry did he walk?
And did his dial expand?
And did he talk small Sabbath talk?
And squeeze the "Reverend's" hand?

Sigh like a saint at all such sins
As hockey and gold on Sunday?
And hush the prurient yarns he spins
So glibly on the Monday?

And did he sing about "The Lamb,"
His unctuous voice in blend?
And it is—"Right, sir!" "Just so, Ma'm!"—
All for some selfish end?

H. BARBER.

Correspondence.

THE "BON SENS" OF THE CURE MESLIER.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I was pleased to see Mr. Mann's article on the above work, as a copy of this book came my way some nine years ago, and I have been somewhat curious as to its authorship.

The copy I possess also does not state the date of publication—the publisher is the same, namely, B. D. Cousins, but the address is given as 18 Duke Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields. It is bound in good strong boards, published at 2s., and in addition to an Author's Preface, contains an introduction to the Publishers over the initials "N.T.," but there is no date or address. It has a list of "Books now Publishing," which contains such works as Volney's *Ruins of Empire*, all Thos. Paine's and Robert Owen's Works; *Life of the late Wm. Cobbett*, partly written by himself, and continued by Benjamin Franklin; *Zadig*, by Voltaire; *Don Juan and Vision of Judgement*, by Byron, etc. It will appear from these publications as if *Bon Sens* had been issued early in the nineteenth century.

"N.T." had apparently been given the task of correcting the American Translations, and in addition supplies a translated index which covers the whole 206 sections of the work referred to by Mr. Mann.

"N.T." mentions that "many of the sentiments remind one of Diderot—indeed we know from a letter of Grimm's that Diderot assisted d'Holbach in the *System of Nature*. He is also aware that Barbier gives credit to the latter for the writing of *Bon Sens*, though Barbier leaves all persons to form their own opinion on this subject, in view of the diffuse style of the *System of Nature* as opposed to the concise style of the *Bon Sens*."

"N.T." states that proof of Meslier's existence is given in the formal account of him in the *Dictionnaire Universel*, Paris, 1810, which states that Meslier was the Curé of Entrepigny, a village in Champagne, and that he was a son of a Serge Weaver of the village of Mezerni. He is well known by a writing published after his death, under the title of the *Testament of John Meslier*, a declamation against all the Doctrines of Christianity. The style is such as one might expect from a country Curé. The work may be found in the *Evangile de la Raison*, in 8 vo., and in the *Recueil Necessaire*, 1765 in 8 vo. Meslier was always a man of pure morals, and every year gave the poor parishioners the surplus of his income. He died in the year 1733, aged fifty-five.

Anacharsis Clootz proposed to the national convention that a statue should be erected to this Curé, and although the proposition was agreed to, nothing to that effect was carried out.

I hope these further particulars may be of some assistance to Mr. Mann in his efforts to trace the date of publication in this country, and possibly to definitely settle the authorship of what "N.T." describes as the "strongest Atheistical work he has ever seen."

I would like to give extracts from the Author's preface, but as it would take up too much space, would suggest that Mr. Neuburg's suggestion in this week's *Freethinker*, for some early cheap reprints of these older Freethought works, should be earnestly considered.

H. BLACK.

THE TARDY RECOGNITION OF THE RIGHTS OF ANIMALS.

SIR,—In your issue of January 27, Mr. A. J. Braine says: "In my view, vivisection is cruel, immoral, and useless."

If vivisection is useless, that disposes of the matter. Obviously it is monstrous to inflict pain unless something is gained by it.

Suppose, however, Mr. Braine's view should be a mistaken one regarding the utility of vivisection. A few months ago Lord Dawson of Penn maintained in the House of Lords, that vivisection had been extremely useful. There has been an astounding advance of medical and surgical science in the last twenty years, and the vast majority of competent physicians and sur-

geons believe that it has been aided by vivisection. If their view is right, what then?

Mr. Braine tells us that "the end does not justify the means if cruelty is involved." The trouble is that "cruelty" is a question-begging epithet. Lord Dawson would not for a moment admit that vivisection is cruel. If Mr. Braine were to say: "The end does not justify the means if pain is inflicted," that would be a lucid and intelligible statement. Is Mr. Braine willing to pin himself to that?

I ask these questions, not in the interest of vivisection, about which I know very little, but in that of intellectual honesty, which Arnold Bennett says "has been denied by heaven to all Anglo-Saxon races." I should like to know whether Mr. Braine, or any other Freethinker, would think it wrong to save a large number of human lives by the infliction of pain on a small number of rats, monkeys, or dogs. A definite answer to that question would be very helpful as an exercise in straight thinking.

R. B. KERR.

"BUDDHA, THE ATHEIST."

SIR,—Belief certainly is an accommodating thing in Buddhism, and this is what seems to puzzle Mr. Dodds. For him, evidently, religion is primarily a question of beliefs, whereas it is one of conduct from the Buddhist point of view. It does not matter in the least whether a man believes in one god or three, or thirty thousand, or none at all, he may still consistently claim to be a Buddhist.

The Buddha certainly did not deny the existence of "the gods." My comment on this, in *Buddha, the Atheist*, was: ". . . whether he understood, as we do to-day, the power of resistance of these ideas against direct attack; or whether he believed that his . . . very different mode of thought would prove a solvent, we do not know." The gods in question were those of the Hindu mythology, and the Buddha did worse than deny them. He held that they were of no importance, and that praising, praying, and offering gifts to them, was mere waste of time. In the suttas (sermons) they are introduced, not as objects of veneration or worship, but merely as familiar figures to illustrate a parable.

Personally, I do not believe in the existence of any god, or gods, but this would not disqualify my claim to be a Buddhist. But, in my case, this means no more than that I have a profound admiration for this particular school of ancient thought, and that I consider Gotama the Buddha to be one of the greatest intellectual figures in history.

I knew the late Professor T. W. Rhys Davids personally, and I retain an affectionate regard for his memory. He was a consummate Pali scholar, as is also Mrs. Rhys Davids. But, although their translations are excellent, I am not alone in regarding their independent expositions of Buddhism as leaving much to be desired.

The Buddha accepted—or at least he did not deny—the then prevalent view that there are, or may be, other spheres than this of earth, inhabited by finite and perishable beings of a higher order than man. These are "the gods," as the term is translated into English. Whether there are such spheres and beings, I do not know, and therefore cannot believe, since real belief must necessarily rest upon knowledge.

When King Asoka described himself as "the darling of the gods," or was so described by those who carved the rock inscriptions, he may have believed it, or it may only have been a popular figure of speech.

Mr. Dodds objects to the Buddha being termed an Atheist. Well, he was certainly not a Theist. Perhaps we may compromise and call him a non-Theist. He has been described as a super-Theist, which may be a better term, since, as Dr. Paul Dahlke remarks, his thought wheels above all gods and all heavens. I quite agree, however, with the criticism of the Buddha in respect of celibacy. It was, to my mind, the one, great fault in his system. It is an impossible ideal—as mischievous as impossible, yet it was customary among those who aspired to be "religious" at that time. They would not have been regarded as such otherwise. But the Buddhist monk is a perfectly free agent in this respect. He is under no compulsion, and may leave the Order and marry whenever he pleases. In passing, I may observe

that, although "monk" is the nearest word we can get to "bhikkhu," it is not exact. The bhikkhu is not under vow of obedience to a superior, nor does he possess any sort of priestly authority.

By *Buddhavasas*, I presume *Buddhavamsa* is meant. This is a comparatively late, Pali work, a commentary, compiled in Ceylon. For my comments in this connexion, see pp. 15 and 16 of *Buddha, the Atheist*. It is said that other Buddhas, "enlightened teachers," have appeared from time to time, and will do again; but whether the list of twenty-four is fanciful (as I believe), or not, is a matter of complete indifference. No one questions that the Buddha accepted, and adopted, a good many ideas and rules which he found ready to his hand, and which he considered to be sound, just as other thinkers have done, and do. But this does not invalidate their claims to originality in other respects; nor does it detract from my statement that the special characteristics which differentiate Buddhism from all other systems were original.

As regards the condition and habits of the bhikkhus, what I know of them is derived, not from books, but from first-hand observation; and I can say, with confidence, that whosoever describes the bhikkhus of Siam, Burma and Ceylon as dirty and verminous, is not speaking the truth. As a corrective, I recommend Mr. Dodds to read Fielding Hall's *Soul of a People*. E. UPASAKA.

Obituary.

MRS. ELIZA BULLOCK.

ON Friday, January 25, a Secular funeral service was conducted at Bath Cemetery, in connexion with the death of Eliza Bullock, the wife of Mr. A. F. Bullock, who has been a Freethinker for many years. The deceased was aged fifty-nine, and the final cause of death was heart trouble, although for a long time Mrs. Bullock suffered from asthma. She was exceptionally self-denying, helping others to the neglect of herself, and she bore her troubles without complaint. She was deeply loved and venerated, not only by her husband and three daughters, but by others who were acquainted with her kindly nature, and there was a generous display of floral tributes. We extend our deep sympathy to the bereaved family.—G.W.

National Secular Society.

EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JANUARY 25, 1929.

The President, Mr. Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Mrs. Quinton, Miss Kough, Messrs. Clifton, Gorniot, Hornibrook, Moss, Quinton, Wood, and the Secretary.

Minutes of the previous meeting were read, approved, and signed.

Apologies for unavoidable absence were received from Messrs. Neate and Rosetti.

A report was received of the death of Mr. T. Thurlow, and the following resolution was passed: "That the Executive learns with profound regret of the death of Mr. T. Thurlow, and desires to place on record its high appreciation of his many years' valuable work for the Freethought Movement."

The Monthly Financial Statement was presented and adopted.

A report of the Society's Annual Dinner was received. Correspondence was received from the Birmingham, Bolton, Chester-le-Street, Glasgow, Liverpool, South London, and West London Branches.

The Executive decided to re-engage Mr. G. Whitehead for propaganda work during the Summer of 1929.

The Executive considered the question of holding a Social at an early date, and the Secretary was instructed to make the necessary arrangements.

The Executive decided to meet on February 22, at 7.30 p.m.

The meeting then terminated.

FREDERICK MANN,
Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin—"The Phallic Element in Christianity." Lantern Illustrations.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Station): 7.15, Mrs. Janet Chance—"Is Belief Necessary for the Religious Spirit?"

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): Free Sunday Lectures at 7 p.m. R. Dimsdale Stocker—"The Professional Spirit in Social Life."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, H. W. Nevins—"More Writers I Have Known."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (The Orange Tree Hotel, Euston Road, N.W.1), 11.0, Mr. Van Biene—"Lessons to be Unlearned." On February 7, at 7.30 p.m.—A Carnival (Social and Dance) at 101 Tottenham Court Road. Admission 1s.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Earlham Hall, Earlham Grove, Forest Gate): 7.0, Social. Admission free. Members and friends invited.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Eclipse Restaurant, 4 Mill Street, Conduit Street, W.1): 7.30, Mr. W. P. Campbell-Everden—A Lecture.

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, Mathé and others.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12 noon, Mr. James Hart. 3.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. Every Wednesday at 7.30, Mr. W. P. Campbell-Everden. Every Friday at 7.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. The *Freethinker* is on sale outside the Park at all our meetings.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Still's Restaurant, Bristol Street, opposite Council Schools): 7.0, General Discussion. Lecture at Council Schools cancelled.

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S.—7.15, Mr. F. S. Houghton—A Lecture. Chairman: W. Jeffreys.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, Albion Street): 11.30, Mr. George Whitehead—"What Religion Has Done for Scotland." (City Hall, Saloon): 6.30, Mr. George Whitehead—"How Man's Physical Environment has Affected Progress."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. E. F. Wise, C.B.—"The Finance of the Reparations."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street): 7.45, Mr. John V. Shortt (Branch President)—"What Think Ye of Jesus Christ?" Admission free. Questions and Discussion.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.—Saturday next. Social and Dance at Milton Hall, Broad Street, Pendleton, at 6.30 p.m. Members and friends cordially invited. Light refreshments provided. Collection towards expenses. Take a Pendlebury or Swinton Tram from Deasngate to Frederick Road. Fare 1½d.

OUTDOOR.

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

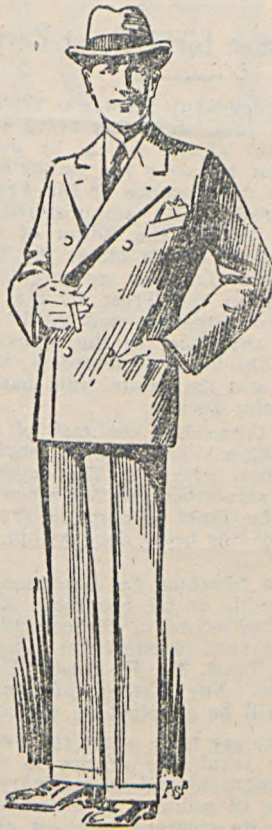
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