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Views and Opinions.

Secular Education and the N.U.T.

At its Annual Conference, the National Union of Teachers had before it the subject of religious instruction in State schools. This came before it in the shape of a resolution from the Executive of the Union, which ran:—

That this conference records its continued adherence to the vital principle which since 1870 has been part of the law of this country, that no religious catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught in schools provided by public money, and resolves to resist by all means in its power any legislative or administrative attempt to introduce such teaching into council schools, either through the staff or by according a right of entry to representatives of the religious denominations.

That was a resolution which demanded neither courage to move, nor foresight to frame. It involved no principle, because the Cowper-Temple clause itself carried with it no principle. In its origin it became part of the Education Act, because neither of the main Christian groups in this country saw its way to getting what it wanted. Nonconformists, although pledged in principle to the State not interfering in matters of religion, did not object to the State teaching a religion with which they agreed, and the Church of England party agreed to what was called "Undenominational religion"—as though such a thing existed—because it saw that if the quarrel over a particular form of religion was kept up, it would probably end in religion being banished from the schools altogether. Christian sectarianism agreed upon a truce, because it felt that otherwise the public might sweep both bodies, so far as the schools were concerned, out of existence. And the interest of the National Union of Teachers seems concerned less with education than with teachers.

Religion and Fair Play.

The mover of the resolution, Mr. Mander, was very ingenuous in his speech, although he may have been only holding a brief for his Executive. He said:—

Under the Cowper-Temple agreement, teachers in the Council schools were free from the religious test. It was not only unnecessary, but highly improper for any education authority in making an appointment to make any inquiry into the specific religious beliefs of applicants. . . . He suggested to the leaders of all the political parties that in the slogan, "Hands off the Cowper-Temple clause," there is a distinct electoral value.

Speaking strictly by the letter of the law, Mr. Mander is correct so far as the first half of the passage is concerned. Speaking of the actual situation, Mr. Mander is quite wrong, and it is surprising that a teacher with his experience does not know that the facts do not bear out what he says. I presume that any teacher who came before an Education Committee would be justified in replying to a question about his religion, that he declined to answer. But every teacher knows that if he did so he might just as well not have bothered to make his application. It is highly improper for any education committee to make inquiry into religion, it is nevertheless the fact that such inquiry is made, and very frequently so when canvassing goes on before a decision is made. Then whether a man is a Catholic, or a Protestant, or whether he is a Christian in a general sort of a way, or a Freethinker, does make a deal of difference as to the support he receives. The religious preference may not be openly avowed in the Council chamber, but everyone knows it is there, and the National Union of Teachers knows it as well as anyone.

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The Power of Religious Bigotry.

I am speaking of cases within my own knowledge when I say that in many instances, even after the teacher has been appointed, to be known as an Atheist or as a Freethinker who does not hide his opinions, is to say good-bye to all hopes of promotion. If Mr. Mander has never heard of such cases he need only inquire among his own acquaintances to find them. Of course, that is not usually looked upon as persecution. If it happened to be a Nonconformist who was kept back by Churchmen, or a Catholic who was being boycotted by Protestants, or a Protestant by Catholics, the persecution would be plain enough. But if it is only a Freethinker, it is taken as a matter of course—unfortunately, often by the person who is persecuted. Here is another instance which may enlighten Mr. Mander's astonishing ignorance on the matter. Some years ago the Secular Education League tried to get a circular advocating strict neutrality in religious subjects in State schools, signed by teachers. There was no difficulty in finding teachers



who agreed with the policy, but they all refused to sign on the grounds that to do so would prejudice them in the sight of their employers, and would certainly bar all promotion. For anyone, then, to talk of the present arrangement doing away with religious tests, and that no inquiry as to a teacher's opinions on religion is possible under the Cowper-Temple arrangement, is ridiculous. Both the test and the inquiry exist. Look at the action of these little governing bodies with regard to Freethought in other directions! Is it likely that where the education of children is concerned they are not going to bother at all, but will appoint as teachers men and women without the least consideration as to whether they are known as Freethinkers or not? I agree that in very many cases such inquiries do not arise and are not made. But let the applicant be known as a Freethinker, one who is not "wise enough to keep his opinions to himself"—which is Christian for playing the hypocrite—and then note what happens. There is only one way to avoid religious tests and religious preferences, and that is by keeping religion out of the schools altogether.

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#### Fast and Loose.

This alternative was, in a way, placed before the Conference by Mr. Capper. He moved as an amendment, to add:—

Further, the Conference expresses its opinion that definite religious instruction being the function of organized religious bodies should be removed from the curricula of all schools supported by public funds.

I say that this only *indicated* the way out, Mr. Capper did not dare move what I suspect was in his mind. He only suggested that definite religious instruction should be removed from State supported schools. But this was too much for the National Union of Teachers. The members having before them a resolution that Cowper-Templeism should continue—that is, that definite religious instruction should be banished from all schools supported by public money, rejected an amendment rejecting definite religious instruction by an "overwhelming majority," and then proceeded to carry the resolution "almost unanimously." Did ever an educational body present a picture of greater self-stultification than this? The phrase used in the resolution is "no religious catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination," which follows the Act. The language of the amendment was against *definite* religious instruction. If the Conference means anything at all, it means that it will only oppose definite religious instruction so long as the different Christian sects are not agreed upon what definite religious teaching shall be given. They will only champion the Cowper-Temple clause so long as their religious governors do not collectively threaten it. But if the Churches and Chapels will only agree what is the kind of definite religious instruction to be given, then it need expect no opposition from the National Union of teachers. And this kind of shilly-shallying, and mental obscurantism, comes from a body of men and women who claim to exercise a strong influence over the developing mind of the nation. One almost ceases to wonder at the "mind of the nation" being what it is.

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#### Tearful Piety.

A lady, Mrs. Manning, a Vice-President of the Union, opposed Mr. Capper's amendment, and said that "the suggestion of Secular Education was the most repugnant to the religious instincts of the

nation that could be put forward." She "asked the nation to believe that the teachers honestly valued the opportunity given them to teach religion pure and undefiled. England was not a secular country." Poor lady! One can almost feel her shiver at the mere suggestion of an education that leaves out religious instruction. And yet, as a Vice-President of the National Union of Teachers, Mrs. Manning ought to know enough of the Education Acts to know that the money paid the teachers from the State is paid in respect of the secular education only. His Majesty's inspectors have nothing to do with the religious instruction, save in a negative sense, they neither question nor examine on it. More, it is permissive, not compulsory. Any district may do away with religious instruction to-morrow if it will. The Act does not say that religious instruction *shall* be given, it says it *may*, but if it is given it must only be given at the beginning and end of the lessons, and it must not be introduced during the giving of the other lessons, and if any parent wishes to do away with it he may with respect to his own children. Mrs. Manning should get some better informed member of the Union to tell her that the Education Act is an Act for the compulsory giving of secular instruction to every child during certain years, with permission to give religious instruction so long as it is of an indefinite character. Mrs. Manning will not be pleased that the Education Act treats religion in this casual sort of a manner, and says substantially that in the opinion of the government it really does not matter very much whether children get religious instruction or not; but it is the case.

As to the teachers who are so grateful for the opportunity of teaching religion, all we can advise anyone is to get confidential talk with their Christian friends. He will find that many, while religious themselves, dislike religion in the schools because it gives room for so much intriguing on behalf of Church or Chapel. Very many dodge the religious lesson as they dodge nothing else. In some cases where the teacher is of the Salvation Army or strong Methodist type, the religious lesson is made the vehicle of some deplorable stupid and old-fashioned superstition. In a growing number of cases, the better type of teachers turn the lesson on religion into one on ethics, in which everything that is definitely religious and specifically Christian is left out altogether. If teachers could say what they thought about religious instruction in the schools, without loss of position or prestige, Mrs. Manning would have her eyes opened on the subject. I have no hesitation in saying that the majority of the best teachers in the country have no liking for religious instruction. From experience they know how worthless it is.

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#### Secularism and Civilization.

What a pity it is that the National Union of Teachers cannot approach this subject from that of citizenship, instead of from that of a mere trade union mainly careful of protecting the financial interests of its members. All over the civilized world the line of growth is in the direction of the secularization of the State. In the case of the adult the State no longer ventures to say what religion he shall believe, whether it is definite or indefinite. It is here the settled conviction that a man is not a better citizen because he is religious, he is not a worse one because he is without religion. In this country the State declines to decide a man's status on the basis of his religious beliefs. It says that every office in the State shall be open to him without the least reference to his religious beliefs. It says in all directions



that a man may have any religious belief he pleases, or may go without religious beliefs altogether; the State is concerned with his behaviour as a citizen and declines to say anything about his religion. The belief that every child ought to be taught religion is not a relic of the past, that is comparatively modern because it never existed until religion found itself in conflict with living thought, and it was recognized that if Church and Chapel were to secure clients this could only be done by taking hold of the child before it got saturated with modern thought. The claim for secular education is only one further aspect of the universal movement of civilization. It asks for the freedom of the child in the interests of civilization, and in the interests of the child it asks for the freedom of the teacher from the intrigues of Church and Chapel and parson and minister, and that he shall no longer be made the vehicle—very often the unwilling vehicle—for the handing on of teachings and doctrines that are questioned by millions of educated men and women, and deliberately rejected by almost as many. The pity is that the teachers of this country are not to the front in a fight which should be their fight, and which affects their character even more than it affects that of those of whom they have charge.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### Slaves of the Gods.

"Hinduism's worship of the cow is its unique contribution to the evolution of humanitarianism."

Ghandi.

"Celibacy is a vow a man takes that he will enjoy none but other men's wives."—Horace Smith.

"Gold will knit and break religions."—Shakespeare.

OWING to the grip of the clergy upon education in this country, English people are very ignorant of any faith other than that of the Christian Religion. Upon the subject of Christianity the man in the street is often as hazy as the schoolboy who thought, in the innocence of his boyish mind, that Joan of Arc and Noah's Ark were, in some way, related to each other. Leaving school at the tender age of fourteen, trained on a curriculum especially designed to darken knowledge, it is not surprising that Master Everyman is the prey of charlatans, clerical and otherwise. Even the newspapers, the boasted harbingers of light, help to make this mental confusion more confounded. By bolstering vested interests, by suppressing freedom of thought, they hinder progress, and promote the interests of the clergy, ever the foremost of the reactionaries.

The average Christian is very shaky concerning the faith he professes so loudly. One protests that it teaches the immortality of the soul. Another that it proves the resurrection of the body. Still another is emphatic that the Christian "god" is three-in-one, whilst his neighbour shouts that the same deity is one and one only. Smith believes that priestly authority is the final court of appeal, and Jones as strongly believes in the casting vote of the individual. Each one of these pious people is cocksure that he is right, and is ready to go to the stake for his opinions. At least they all say so, and it is unwise to contradict them unless they are smaller than you are yourself.

If Christians are so confused concerning their own faith, they are unlikely to be well informed concerning the other great religions of the world. Hence the success of such a bastard religious system as Theosophy, where its exponents use Hindu terms with the same glib impudence as is used by quack doctors concerning medical matters and the human body. As for Hinduism itself, Mr. Everyman knows as much about it as he does concerning the religion of

the Ancient Druids, or the superstitions of the Incas of Peru, "the place where the nuts come from."

For this reason Katherine Mayo's ruthless indictment of Hinduism in her *Mother India* and *Slaves of the Gods*, will be an eye-opener, not only to Englishmen, but to all who care for the cause of Humanity. For Miss Mayo has taken up the cudgels on behalf of the Hindu child-wife, and the Hindu outcast, in the same wholehearted fashion as Harriet Beecher Stowe castigated African slavery in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Both these noble-hearted women, be it remembered, were reared in a great Republic, animated by the splendid ideals of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity." And if the United States is judged only by the quality of such women, she should be the proudest nation on earth.

Imagine this cultured lady brought face to face with the brutalities and barbarities of the Hindu religion, sanctioned by ages of custom, and actually upheld by the British rulers on the specious plea of statesmanship. Her purpose is frankly propagandist, and her twelve stories in *Slaves of the Gods* are meant to bring before the Western mind the brutalities that pass for religion in India, "the brightest jewel in Britain's crown."

Miss Mayo wants the Western reader to realize:— exactly what it means, worked out in flesh and blood, to be in Hindu India a child-wife, a Temple prostitute, a Suttee, a child-widow, an Untouchable, or a Sacred Cow.

Take the case of the worship of the cow. Hindu apologists pretend that this old-world superstition is veiled humanitarianism. This is how Miss Mayo tears down the veil, and exposes the whole sorry business:—

One hundred and forty-seven million head of cattle in British India, half of them useless. Great cattle-owning areas where no fodder at all is planted. Little children in myriads withering for lack of milk. Cows in myriads milkless from starvation. Cows and children daily multiplying, multiplying, multiplying. Cows, unlike children, sacrosanct to the Hindu world, so that to kill one useless, suffering, moribund skeleton, were a desperate crime.

This is only a part of the terrible story. Cows are worshipped, but little children are murdered without compunction, and without mercy. Infanticide is more prevalent in India than drunkenness in England, and orthodox Hindu opinion does not raise a single squeak of astonishment. It is Miss Mayo, an American, who raises the accusing finger, and arraigns the Hindu religion before the Bar of Humanity.

This courageous woman has made out a case against the Purple East which is unanswerable, because it rests upon undisputed facts. From a Western point of view the whole thing is so ghastly that the imagination boggles at it, for it almost "makes a goblin of the sun." In a foreword a correspondent puts the matter very bluntly:—

Try to imagine what London would be like if in St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, and other leading churches large establishments of prostitutes had been kept for centuries past for the use of the clergy and worshippers.

We know something of caste in this country, and are only just emerging from the first, second, and third class railway carriages of the Victorian era. Aristocrats still hold aloof from the middle-class, and both still look sideways at working-people. This, however, is but the shadow compared to the real thing in India. Miss Mayo, for example, shows an English doctor brought in contact with the caste system. He is speaking to his prospective patients:—



"You are dirty—beastly dirty," he said . . . "At least you could wash.

"May it please the Sahib, we have no well."

"Then bring water from the wells of the village beyond."

"Nay, those are the wells of the caste folk. If we approached their wells, thereby polluting them, they would punish us bitterly. And we, soul-guilty, were eternally accursed."

"Dig wells for yourselves, then."

"Nay, also. For we may neither own land nor control it."

"How, then, do you get water?"

"From mudholes and marshes, when such be. Otherwise our women walk, half a day's journey to the water-station of the railroad and there await the coming of the train. For the engine-men are Muslims, and when they fill their engine's need will also mercifully fill our women's jars."

These "outcastes," these "untouchables," number sixty million, far more than the entire population of England. Yet humanitarians in this country have wasted much of their splendid energy on smaller matters, and hitherto neglected these unfortunate members of the human family. It is well that Katharine Mayo has had the courage to attack this ugly phase of Priestcraft. For that is what it is in the last analysis. Slaves of the "gods," indeed! There are no "gods," only priests, always priests, tens of thousands of them. Like fleas, the more, the nastier, and like flies to be destroyed.

Priestcraft is an evil in this country as well as in British India, and the Britisher has no real reason to assume superior airs in the presence of the despised Bengali. Here, in England, priests control education with an iron hand, with the result that the average English boy and girl enters business life imperfectly equipped. Here, in England, the priests have the controlling voice in legislation, and the Bench of Bishops in the House of Lords has ever been ready to place a stick in the wheels of progress. The record of the votes of the bishops in the Upper Chamber is sufficient to make a bronze statue blush. For many generations these lawn-sleeved prelates have resisted all progressive measures, ranging from extensions of the franchise to the provision of seats for shop-assistants.

It is priestcraft which causes Englishmen to be cheated of their weekly holidays, fifty-two in each year. The Sabbath is sacred, say the priests, and people are not even permitted to see a Punch-and-Judy show on that day. A man may get drunk on that sacred day, but, on no account, may he see a circus, or witness a play. In country places, where the power of the priests is greater, a man may not sell a newspaper or a box of matches with impunity. So, one might lengthen the list of restrictions, but enough has been said to remind Englishmen that, although they sing "Rule Britannia" ever so loudly, they are still slaves of the "gods," and therefore slaves of the priests. Priestcraft is not, like the curate's egg, "good in places." It is an evil thing throughout, from beginning to end. "Which is the Bloody Tower?" asked a nice, old lady from the country of a smart Cockney sentry at the Tower of London. "All of it, ma'am," retorted the soldier.

#### MIMNERMUS.

I regard with horror all those whose business is to keep the human spirit and the human intellect in fetters. I include among these almost all ministers of religion, a large proportion of school teachers, 90 per cent of magistrates and judges, and a large proportion of those who have earned the respect of the community by their insistence on what is called a rigid moral standard.—*Bertrand Russell.*

## Masterpieces of Freethought.

### V.—SUPERNATURAL RELIGION.

By W. R. CASSELS.

#### II.

I POINTED out in the preceding article how very angry Dr. Lightfoot, the great champion of the Faith, who came forward to defend the truth of Divine Revelation, was at the onslaught on Christian origins by the anonymous author of *Supernatural Religion*, and his anger is seen at its fullest in the preface to his *Essays*. Not that he wanted to reply at all. As he says, "When I first took up the book entitled *Supernatural Religion*, I felt, whether rightly or wrongly, that its criticisms were too loose and pretentious, and too full of errors, to produce any permanent effect; and for the most part attacks of this kind on the records of the Divine Life are best left alone. But I found that a cruel and unjustifiable assault was made on a very dear friend, to whom I was attached by the most sacred and theological ties, and that the book which contained this attack was from causes which need not be specified, obtaining a notoriety unforeseen by me. Thus I was forced to break silence; and as I advanced with my work, I seemed to see that though undertaken to redress a personal injustice, it might be made subservient to the wider interests of the truth."

The "cruel and unjustifiable assault" was on Dr. Westcott over a very small matter indeed, which has practically no bearing on the main positions of the book, but which it suited Lightfoot to magnify to the uttermost. He was so angry, however, that he overstepped himself, and it is amusing to read the following, after he read Cassel's reply:—

While commenting on his omission of Dr. Westcott's inverted commas in the extract which I gave, I overlooked the fact that he had just before quoted Dr. Westcott's text correctly, as it stands in Dr. Westcott's book. Though I find it still more difficult to understand how he could have brought this most unwarrantable charge, when the fact of Dr. Westcott's inverted commas was distinctly before him, I am not the less bound to plead guilty of an oversight, which I think I can explain to myself, but which I shall not attempt to excuse, and to accept the retort of looseness which he throws back upon me.

The truth is Lightfoot simply turned his back upon the main issues, and concentrated on an attack upon his opponent's "scholarship." And so successful was he to many who followed him, and who did not read Cassel's *Reply to Dr. Lightfoot*, that even Rationalists talked learnedly about Cassel's deficient "scholarship." At least, so it seems to me when reading Mr. Alfred W. Benn's *Rationalism of the Nineteenth Century*. Mr. Benn, I feel, only grudgingly admits the greatness of *Supernatural Religion*, and calls attention to the fact that its author was not a "trained" scholar. Trained or untrained, Cassel was more than a match for the very finest scholarship the Church of England could bring against him, and in his day she had some fine scholars without a doubt.

This is what Cassel's thought of Dr. Lightfoot's *Essays* on their publication in book form:—

I cannot but think that it has been an error of judgment and of temper, however, to have rescued from an ephemeral state of existence and conferred literary permanence on much of his present volume, which is a mere personal attack on his adversary, and a deliberate attempt to discredit a writer with whom he pretends to enter into serious argument. A material part of the volume is composed of such matter. I cannot congratulate him on the spirit which he has displayed personally, I am profoundly indifferent to such attempts at detraction, and it is



with heretical amusement that I contemplate the large part which purely individual and irrelevant criticism is made to play in stuffing out the proportion of orthodox argument. In the first moment of irritation, I can well understand that hard hitting, even below the belt, might be indulged in against my work by an exasperated theologian—for even a bishop is a man—but that such attacks should not only be perpetuated, but repeated after years of calm reflection is at once an error and a compliment for which I was not prepared. Anything to prevent readers from taking up *Supernatural Religion*; any misrepresentation to prejudice them against its statements. Elaborate literary abuse is substituted for the effective arguments against his reasoning which are unhappily wanting.

It is, as one can see, the same old story. In an age of printing, it is impossible to stop a writer from publishing a work. Let us therefore revile it, belittle it, ridicule it and the author's "scholarship." We can no longer burn or torture, let us do the next best thing.

Lightfoot did his best. He attacked Cassels' translations: "He (the author) is quite unconscious of the difference between the infinitive and the indicative, or in other words between the oblique and the direct narrative." And, of course, Macaulay's "well trained schoolboy" is dragged in to point the finger of derision at the hopelessly ignorant author of *Supernatural Religion*.

Whether Dr. Lightfoot in his heart of hearts actually believed that even if a mistake was made in the translation of a Greek tense that would prove the reality of Divine Revelation, I cannot tell, but it seems incredible. Anyway Cassels corrected a few mistakes—and for a book of 1,000 pages of small print there were precious few—and the arguments remained just as strong as ever. After wasting pages in elaborate attacks in the body of his book, Lightfoot admits, in a few notes, that his opponent in later editions "corrected" the "mistake," and what then? Nothing, as far as Dr. Lightfoot is concerned. Says Cassels:—

It is not too much to say that in no part of these *Essays* has Dr. Lightfoot at all seriously entered upon the fundamental proposition of *Supernatural Religion*. He has elaborately criticized notes and references; he has discussed dates and unimportant details; but as to the question whether there is any evidence for miracles and the reality of alleged Divine Revelation, his volume is an absolute blank.

Cassels' patient examination of all the early writers whose names were always given as proof of the authenticity of the gospels, was not merely needed in his day, but it is just as necessary in ours. Mr. Benn thinks such "an ironclad" will never be needed again. I beg to differ. I am convinced a knowledge of the early Christian documents is just as necessary now as a knowledge of comparative religions. How did Christianity arise? On what is it based? Who perpetuated it? Let us, as Freethinkers, admit that Polycarp, Papius, Ignatius and the other early Fathers were fools, credulous and stupid. We can go so far to say even that they never lived but are names fixed to certain documents. Well, we have these documents and they had to be examined calmly and dispassionately from our side. What is their evidence for miracles and revelation worth? Cassels shows—absolutely nothing.

The elaborate books on the "canon" compiled by great scholars are so much waste paper. There is no "Canon" of the Scriptures. Nobody knows which book is "true." There is no evidence whatever for a single miracle. Indeed, there is no evidence for a single saying or doing of Jesus. Everything is based on unidentified writings written in an age of hopeless ignorance and superstition.

Dr. Lightfoot wanted his readers to believe that if he could only convict his opponent of confusing the indicative with the infinitive in a translation from the Greek, he had proved the truth of the Gospel story. His book is practically forgotten or only read by the curious in the mysteries of theology.

Perhaps it would be true to say that Cassels himself is also not read in these hurried times. Well, that is our loss. Every Easter and every Christmas our national newspapers print versions of the "Grand Old Story," just as if there never had been any controversy on the "records" of "Our Saviour." A generation is springing up which knows not the heroes of the past. Our young people read the story of the Trial of Jesus or his Resurrection as if either of these events had never been questioned. We seem helpless in the matter, but our duty is plain. Let us on all occasions keep alive the memory of our masterpieces. For profound scholarship, for patient examination of every necessary document, for brilliant refutation of orthodox critics and apologists, few Freethought works have ever been written which can stand so high as *Supernatural Religion*. Let us never forget it.

H. CUTNER.

### A Sunday Afternoon.

My friend and I have a fad for poking about the things of the past; an irrational and not very useful fad maybe, but extraordinarily interesting. We pay tribute at the graves of men who have bettered the lot of humanity; we endeavour to endow them with a measure of "immortality," the immortality that is worth having, enshrined in the memory of grateful men and women, and we look upon their work as a legacy of goodness to be passed on to the coming generations as a factor of enlightenment and joy. And we have a tolerant regard for those who went with the stream in a period when men's passions ran more openly than they do at present, albeit pretty much the same in essentials. And further back in time, when mighty Rome was extending her Empire in these northern solitudes, and finding it a tough and thankless job, we survey the scenes of their successes and disasters with serene and understanding vision, seeing much cause for regret, and a good deal of ground for speculation on the operations of their grim god, Nemesis, who keeps an eye on expanding peoples now as in the days of Agricola and Hadrian. But Nemesis—or Time, has a benign demeanour as well as a hostile aspect; over the just and the vicious a mantle is spread which blends in harmonious and peaceful colours the ugliness and beauty, the meanness and goodness of man, and makes the contemplation of their long forgotten activities a healthful occupation for elderly men folk on Sabbath afternoons.

The Sun tempted us along the banks of the Tyne last Sunday. The Tyne at Newcastle is an unlovely sewer; at Ovingham it sparkles between wooded banks, the beauty of which once inspired an artist who was endeavouring to depict the "plains of heaven." And if we could get rid of the pitheaps and the equally detestable pit rows, it would not be a bad place to spend eternity. In the very midst of it a couple of anglers were profaning the day of the Lord, and we stood for a time to see if their skill and patience were going to be rewarded. They breathed contentment, and were a pleasing part of the scene. With an abode on the "plains of heaven," and a stretch of North Tyne, famous for its fresh run salmon, I would risk getting weary of the hosannas and the harping traditionally associated with the life eternal. I don't know if depriving a trout of its life is on a level with the otter hunting and other blood sports which are occasionally denounced in the pages of the *Freethinker*; for my part, it is an essential in any heaven worthy of the name, not the mere killing only, but the appeal to the primitive feeling in mankind, which is so often swamped by the artificialities of civilization, so-called.



We turned into Ovingham churchyard to commune with the spirit of Thomas Bewick, the artist, whose wood-cuts still charm the lover of beautiful things, and who has lain awaiting the last trump now for over a hundred years. He believed in the resurrection morning, but his comparative immortality rests not on the fiat of a god, but on the growing perception of beautiful form among his fellowmen. In one respect a country church yard is a grisly place. The old folk threw death at you; with time glasses and skulls rudely carved on tomb stones, they shout that it is the destiny of us all, and that it is a dread thing to meet the king of terrors. The pity of it. "One fell hour," they say:—

"Hath robbed thee of thine every prize in life,  
Hereat they add not this, 'And now thou art  
Beset with yearning for such things no more,'  
What is so passing bitter, we should ask,  
If life be rounded with a rest and sleep  
That one should pine in never ending grief?"

And as one of our minor poets puts it, in another way: "The worst, the best, they a' get rest."

"Mighty o' name, unknown to fame,  
Slippet aneth the sod.  
Greatest and least alike face east,  
Waitin' the trump o' God."

But there is one rebel in Ovingham kirkyard. He doesn't face East; he has turned his back on the light that "comes through Eastern windows only," and is awaiting the coming, maybe, of some of the glad some pagan gods who flourished in the Western country before the coming of the Christians. We assumed that his unorthodox lying down was a gesture of protest against the Christian interpretation of that which cometh after death, and went on our way reflecting on the probable hullabaloo which will herald the opening of the Judgment Day. It is a circumstance invariably overlooked by the Elect. There has always been a Freethinker about, and the volume of indictment directed against Jehovah on that august morning will drown the "Holy! Holy! Holy!" of the saints.

Prudhoe Castle overlooks the old churchyard from the other side of the river. It belongs to the "Dook," who won't let the passing traveller look over this human falcon's eyrie. It originally was in the possession of the Ufranvilles, a fighting clan, but the present owner lives by "owning"; or so he put it when before the Coal Commission. In one of Dyson's volumes of cartoons there is depicted the shades of a couple of old-time swashbucklers, who are watching the rush of pitmen to the rescue of their comrades in a colliery disaster. One of them comments: "Alack, Sir Galahad, 'tis well we live not in this caitiff day, when all that is of danger and perilous emprise is left to servitors and villains of low birth. How hope they to keep their serfs of timorous and lowly spirit?" The "Dook" is not descended on the male side from the arch-swashbuckler of them all, the Hotspur; he comes from the loins of a Yorkshire merchant, a tyke, and somehow the old-fashioned ideas of chivalry and aristocratic behaviour are taboo in these haunts of ancient feudalism.

It is a steep brae that winds up from Prudhoe Castle and, at the top, we were glad to board a bus for the old royal Saxon town of Corbridge. (I have often tried to imagine just what a Roman Commander of the first two or three centuries of our era would have given for a motor bus. The possession of one would certainly have checked the destructive raiding of the mobile Scots—for a time—and given the sane, tolerant ethic of the Roman people an opportunity to ground itself in the being of the native population. But God, or the Scots, willed otherwise.) Corbridge is the Corstopitum of the Romans. You have to trespass on the ground of a sheep farmer to see what is left of the ancient town, but my companion has a most persuasive tongue when it is a question of permission to view a relic of Mithra or a Roman altar to a long-dead god, and no trouble was experienced in that respect. The ruins are massive, and nothing stands above the foundations. Most of the stones were used to build Hexham Abbey, but what is left is a splendid example of Roman masonic work. The twelfth century tower of Ovingham Church, beautiful and pleasing to the modern eye, in comparison with the forum founda-

tions at Corbridge, shows the extent of the stagnation which overtook the people of Northern Britain when the Roman influence was withdrawn. The whole place is covered with the stalks of the wild humlock that grow between the stones, and emphasizes the desolation which reigns over all. But outside the site the more enduring processes of Nature were going on apace. The farmer was busy among the lambing ewes, and we watched awhile the small doddering things that had just come into the world. That particular process has proved more enduring than the greatest of empires.

H. B. DODDS.

## When I am Gone.

(Written on my seventieth birthday.)

WHEN I am gone, the sky will still be blue!  
The fields be green!  
And scarlet berries still bedeck the yew,  
By me unseen!

When I am gone, the meads will still be pied  
With daisies white!  
Still high o'erhead the stars in heaven will ride  
To gem the night!

When I am gone, the thrushes still will sing!  
The larks will soar,  
And make with joyous songs the welkin ring!  
As heretofore.

When I am gone, the world around the sun  
(Of light the source)  
In empty space, amidst the stars will run  
Her yearly course!

When I am gone, the Seasons will return  
As they have done  
For æons past! Brave youths and maids still yearn  
To be as one!

When I am gone (for I must go ere long  
To my last sleep)  
Invoke no god! chant no religious song!  
No vain tears weep!

No sable garments don! With tongue and pen  
Work bravely on  
To make the earth a happy home for men!  
When I am gone!

J. R. HOLMES.

## Acid Drops.

The Rector of North Meols, Southport, is very much impressed by the duty of giving. But the duty he emphasizes applies to giving to the Church. It ought, he says, to be an obligation to every churchman to give to the support of the Church a regular proportion of his income. We do not disagree at all with the principle that if a man believes in the Church he should support it. Our grumble is that in this country everybody has to give something to the Church whether he believes in it or not. And, after all, there is nothing new in the message. There was never a time when the Church did not cry "Give!" and never a time when it refused to take. The Rector also thought plenty of money ought to be forthcoming for church building in a place like Liverpool. All we have to say is that a city with slums such as Liverpool, ought to be ashamed to build expensive cathedrals and churches for the "Glory of God." If less had been spent on churches and chapels in Liverpool in the past, the slums might be less obtrusive than they are.

Another Southport parson, Canon Morris, is a bit disturbed over the fact of the bathing lake being opened on Sundays. He does not object to Sunday bathing, he says, but one ought to consider the young folk. For if



children went to the bathing lake on Sunday they got out of the way of going to church, and so drifted away from church life. Really, the only way to keep this church-going habit alive is never to let folk get a taste of anything else. And yet we venture to say that boys and girls will get a hundred times the benefit out of a Sunday bathe than they would out of a Sunday sermon. It is the Canon and his kind that suffers. That is all.

A writer in a religious paper says: "Elsewhere, Mr. O'Connor ('Tay Pay') speaks of the great moral change that has come over the streets of London. That change is due in so small part to (the late Rev.) Hugh Price Hughes—a doughty champion of purity. We beg leave to differ. It was not the rantings and crusades of men like the Rev. H. P. Hughes that have improved London streets, but other things such as the spread of education, and the better access to wholesome recreation and amusement, and improved housing conditions.

According to a Methodist journal, a certain Midland Circuit has, at its quarterly meeting, decided to report the same number of members as last year, though keeping a considerable number "in reserve." The aforesaid journal thinks the morality of this position very questionable. A true record of the membership ought to be reported to the Church's Conference. The membership is the basis of the contributions to the various connexional funds, and the fewer reported the less the amounts to be sent will be. But this, says the Methodist journal, is no defence of such a practice. Maybe, we suggest, the "reserve" is non-existent; it consists of men and women who have ceased attending church. And the Midland circuit is conscientious enough not to include them in its returns, but fears to advertise the "backsliding."

A Bristol reader of a daily paper says:—

The freedom-loving Briton who claims to be a free man, and not an inmate of a State kindergarten must, at the coming Election, demand liberation from many of the Governmental enactments to which he is now in thrall.

While freedom-loving Britons are bewailing their lost liberty, the Churches are busy trying to secure more legislative prohibitions dubbed "social reforms." These seem happily inspired, in the way of engendering love for the Churches, and encouraging a "come-to-church" sentiment among freedom lovers!

Before the Barnsley Board of Guardians the Rev. Father Hudson opposed the sterilization of the unfit on the ground that "we have no right to interfere with the creation of God." We are glad to have the Rev. Father's testimony to the fact that the unfit are the creation of God. What many will now be asking is what on earth God created the unfit for? We wonder the parson's objection to destroying God's creation does not extend to the domestic flea, to say nothing of other things.

The Lord in Canada is not very mindful of the safety of his houses; St. Albert Cathedral, Gaspe, near Quebec, has been destroyed by fire.

Someone on the staff of the *Daily News* ought to receive a prize. In a report, it can be read that:—

An agreed educational statement on the Sunday question is to be made at the annual meeting of the Imperial Alliance for the defence of Sunday at the Guildhall on April 12.

Archbishop Lord Davidson is to preside as a representative of the Anglican Church, Dr. J. H. Ritson, the Methodists, Dr. R. C. Gillie, the Presbyterians, Dr. T. G. Dunning, the Baptists, and the Rev. G. Stanley Russell the Congregationalists. Misfortune makes strange bedfellows. Defend Sunday from whom and what? There is not one man in the United Kingdom who would forcibly prevent any person from going to church or chapel on a Sunday. The Movement is in reality an attack on those who choose to spend Sunday as they

please, and we suggest a nice prize for the individual who wrote up the notice.

It shall never be said that the *Freethinker* refused to say a good word for missionaries. The Rev. Bernard Turner, who is home from Northern Rhodesia, has been teaching the natives to make bricks; bravo! the mansions in the skies can wait.

The Rev. Stanley Clark, a young pastor of Seven Kings, protests in the *Daily News* against a seven-day week. He begs the young people of to-day to take a firm stand "that the day of rest for which our forefathers bled and died be not lost as a national heritage." It is, of course, quite understandable that a young pastor just out of his apprenticeship in the ecclesiastical trade should be anxious about the right and proper observance of Sunday. The more secular trading and amusement there is available on Sunday, the less religious commerce to be done. Still, concern for the workers used as a disguise to professional interest is really a little too obvious a camouflage to impress modern people. The fact that has to be faced is that the Christian Sunday is dead. The majority of citizens have declared for a day of rest and recreation—not worship and stagnation. The next step, then, is to secure for all workers one free day in seven, which need not be Sunday, in order that the needs of all citizens can be served without hardship to anyone.

Reviewing *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism*, by Dr. James Bissett Pratt, a Wesleyan writer says:—

It is a rash statement to say that Buddhism's inclusiveness makes it more able to co-endure with the advance of science and philosophy than Christianity or Islam. Than Islam, certainly; but Christianity has met and shown her essentials unchanged by all the progress of European thought since the Renaissance.

The pious reviewer is right. Turning a sheep-skin inside out and claiming that the new outside is perfectly in accord with modern fashion, does indeed leave the sheep-skin essentially the same.

Many ministers having become Freemasons, some Stoke Newington Methodists are asking the Primitive Methodist Conference to set up a special committee to inquire whether the tenets of Freemasonry are in harmony with the principles of the Primitive Methodist Church. We don't see why they shouldn't be in harmony. In Freemasonry is plenty of hocus-pocus, mystery-mongering, and juggling with words. With all this in common with the Christian religion, Freemasonry couldn't possibly be out of harmony. The harmony may be suggestive of the witch-doctor's hut. That, however, should make it all the more tuneful to Primitive Methodists' ears.

Last Sunday (April 7) was "come to church" Sunday, and "safe-guard the Sabbath" Sunday, by which the Lord's Dayers endeavoured "to call back our countrymen to the neglected House of Prayer." Judging by the number of Sabbath desecrators to be seen on the main roads, we gather that the majority of our countrymen refused to hear the "call back," and didn't care a tinker's cuss about the neglected praying-sheds of the Lord. This seemed rather discourteous, since the Lord's Dayers inquired very politely: "Can people better spend the Lord's Day than by assembling themselves together in the Lord's House for the worship of His All Gracious Name?" A very reasonable question, was that, with nothing added in the shape of a threat to suppress all opportunities for secular amusement, for the benefit of the Lord's Houses.

Apropos of the avalanche of preaching, organized last Sunday, to press the claims of the Lord's Day, a religious weekly says it is true that indoor preaching doesn't reach the people "responsible for the destruction of the proper keeping of Sunday." Nevertheless,



our contemporary is convinced that within the churches there is urgent necessity for plain teaching on the subject; for church members are confused as to the best use of Sunday. From this we conclude that within the churches many members see no objection to using Sunday for a purpose other than howling hymns, and telling the Lord what a nice person he is. Therefore, it would seem that the Churches have another task besides that of trying to convince the outsider. They have now to persuade their own flocks to accept Sunday as a day of stagnation; which is a job that gets harder and harder as the world outside becomes more determined to use Sunday as a day of recreation.

A reader of a daily paper appeals to well-to-do residents in remote rural districts to provide clubs, for Sundays and week-day evenings, for the young people of the villages. If this were done, he thinks that there would be less dreary idling about the streets. We commend the suggestion to readers who are philanthropically inclined and have leisure and money to devote to such a project. What philanthropists might particularly attend to is the organizing of clubs for youth to be accessible on Sundays during church hours as well as at other times, and to have a more wholesome atmosphere than is usual with clubs run by churches as means to a certain end—catching clients. It is, however, not only in remote rural districts that a better type of club is wanted for young people; such is an urgent need in the towns and big cities. If a congenial type of club were everywhere available for youth, the young people would be less likely, on Sundays, to be faced through sheer boredom to patronize the client-catching clubs of the parsons.

Dr. Josiah Oldfield, an exponent of fruitarianism, is strongly opposed to Capital Punishment. He has sent to a religious weekly a letter in which he suggests that those who are "suffering from moral and spiritual diseases should not be cast out of life because they are dangerous, but should be handed over to the professors and teachers of Christianity for treatment and cure." Dr. Oldfield needs reminding that he is living in what purports to be a scientific age. The notion that social defectives can be cured by the application of large doses of religion is a relic of Christian barbarism. If "moral and spiritual disease" was the outcome of temptation by a Devil, no doubt Dr. Oldfield's remedy might be the best. But modern psychological science recognizes none of the traditional Christian "causes" of crime, and therefore has more rational cures.

This reminds us of what we read some years ago about the Salvation Army. The "Army" not having been so very successful in curing habitual drunkards by the prayer method, was advised to experiment with a fruitarian diet, the object being to reduce the drunkard's craving by eliminating from his diet thirst-stimulating foods. The results from this experiment were said to be far superior to former methods. In other words, the "Army" tackled the problem in the light, not of religious ignorance, but of scientific knowledge, and therefore achieved success instead of failure. So, too, with the cure of social-defectives. Professors of religion are the last people to diagnose correctly the real causes of the trouble, and to prescribe the true remedies. Only the scientists can be depended on to do that.

The Vicar of Normanton Church advertises, as a method of inducing people to come to church, that the services will in future be short, never more than an hour. Why not make it five minutes? This might suit a large number still better. But what an evidence of the attractiveness of the Gospel. Come to church, and we won't keep you long! What a state of things!

The Rev. C. H. S. Mathews confesses that when he was a boy he did like God, but after he said his prayers to God at night, he used to get out of bed and then pray to the devil. We venture the opinion that Mr. Mathews was more manly as a boy than he is as a man—so far

as religion is concerned. Of the two, the Christian devil is, certainly a more admirable character than the Christian deity—certainly so far as the Miltonic type is concerned. Besides, if God and the Devil exist, what does one want to pray to God for? He ought to be looking after us, without our going on our knees to him. But to get the right side of the devil shows some traces of commonsense. It seems a pity the Rev. Mr. Mathews ever grew up.

Never since All Souls Church, Eastbourne, was built has it been without a wedding at Easter until this year. Other churches have also touched the lowest record in the number of Easter marriages. On the other hand, the Registrar has performed more marriages this Easter than ever. We congratulate Eastbourne on its growth in common sense.

A man walked solemnly into the sea at Lancing, Sussex, reading the Bible. Then he walked out again. He was taken to Shoreham Infirmary and detained. Over devotion to the Bible is recognized in this country as a symptom of insanity.

The Rector of Willingham, Gainsborough, is wroth because, at a recent evening service, five shillings and fivepence was given to the collection by over eighty people. We sympathize with the Rector, but if he will leave it to those who come to his church to fix their own value of the service, he must take the consequences. Why not make a set charge? Then those who objected would then have to ask for their money back.

The *Daily Express* has discovered that the religious significance of Easter was never nearer the thoughts of the people than it was during the past two or three weeks. Now we wonder how the *Express* discovered this? We did hear one motorist, held up by another, ask the one who blocked the way to move up "for Christ's sake," but we did not know that a friend of Mr. James Douglas was taking notes. But one never knows.

Dean Inge thinks that many people stay away from Church because they do not find the service interesting. The *Church Times* disagrees with the Dean and points out that children find the celebration of the Mass most interesting. We do not imagine the Dean had children specifically in mind, and we imagine he would quite agree that children would find the Mass interesting. What child would not like to see a procession of men dressed up in fancy costumes, or choir boys in nice white nightshirts marching along, or swinging of incense, or ringing of bells? Look at children at pantomimes and circuses! There is nothing that delights them more than the performance of strangely garbed men, with queer antics going on all around them. The *Church Times* is quite right. The Mass is quite amusing to children, but we imagine that Dean Inge had in mind the question of adults—not merely those who had reached an adult age, but those who had mentally outgrown childhood. The Dean and the Editor were evidently thinking of different things.

The population, says Sir George Newman, has drunk millions of gallons of drugs and is no better off. It has also doped itself pretty thoroughly with the drug called religion—with similar results. The intelligent minority are beginning to realize that health—mental or physical—cannot be acquired from dope.

From the *Daily Mail* we learn that seventeen persons are killed on the roads every day. Now if the clergy are not too busy about commas in the Prayer Book, we suggest that they be asked to pray for pedestrians, and be dismissed if there is no result.

There is a bewildering report in the *Daily News*; a vicar is stated to have said that the living are more important than the dead.



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FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—J. A. Davies, £2; Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Finney, £1.

J. F. (Glasgow).—Professor Bowman's article on *Religion and the Tragic Sense of Life*, is so full of fallacies and needless assumptions, that it would take an even longer article to reply to it. For that we have not the space. The man who sets out with the statement that no power can save us save that of religion, obviously mistakes a pulpit commonplace for an argument.

J. PLATT.—The two things are connected by the general idea of religious sacrifice. Sacrifice is very often a form by which man bribes the gods to grant favours, sometimes the sacrifice forms the food of the gods; the Jesus sacrifice is probably consummated by the eating of the God which comes down to us in the Christian Eucharist. The eater is thus made one with his deity. The subject passes through a great many changes, sometimes not easy to trace.

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

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## Sugar Plums.

A Demonstration arranged by the Secular Education League, against "The Church Demand for Compulsory Religious teaching in the Nation's Schools," will take place on Thursday, April 18, at the Caxton Hall. The chair will be taken at 7.30, and among the speakers will be Mr. Cohen, Mr. Harry Snell, M.P., Mr. J. P. Gilmour, and Dr. Walter Walsh. We have not to hand, at the time of writing, the names of the other speakers. We hope that London Freethinkers will make this meeting known as widely as possible. It is certain that unless those who are interested in Secular Education make themselves heard, there will be some pretty bargaining going on between the Churches, the Chapels, and the Government that is in power after the election. It is no use Freethinkers acting as though they believe in Providence, and when it is too late complaining at its inattention. They must act while they can.

To-day (April 14), Mr. F. Mann will lecture in the People's Theatre, Arcade, Pilgrim Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne, at 3 and 7 p.m. We hope that Freethinkers on Tyne-side will be present from the surrounding districts, in which case the hall should be packed. Teas will be

provided for those coming from a distance, and those who can would help by dropping a card to say they wish to be present. Address, Mr. J. Bartram, 107, Morley Street, Heaton, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

An appreciative review of Mr. Cohen's *Four Lectures on Freethought and Life* appears in the *Salisbury Times*. That work, we are glad to say, has been selling very well.

*A Fatalist War* (Allen & Unwin, 10s. 6d. Second edition) is one of the few war books that deserve to live. The work consists of the diary and letters of Rudolf Binding, German poet and novelist, and runs from the opening of the war, to the end in November, 1918, when the author died from an attack of dysentery. It is the view of the war taken by a very sensitive and intellectual man, with occasional restrained bursts of "patriotic" feeling, soon to be overcome by the human pressure of events. On the purely military side, it shows that Germany was no better prepared for the war than was this country; and when the pressure came, the arrangements of the Allies were far more adequate, and the men better looked after than were those on the other side. As early as October, 1916, the author noted that while it seemed questionable whether the power of the British Empire would last, it would last long enough to decide the fate of Germany.

But the outstanding feature of the book is its picture of the unintelligence with which the war was waged, and indeed the necessary unintelligence of nearly all war. The chief directions in which intelligence operates in war is that of forwarding supplies—food, clothing, ammunition—the same qualities which on a smaller scale make a large scale excursion a success. Indeed, one feels after reading *A Fatalist at War*, that if the military geniuses had been kept in the background, and the job handed over to Carter Patterson's or Cook's, or one of the big contracting firms, it would have been done quite as well. The popular impression of war being conducted by men of gigantic intellect moving masses of men about with the decision with which a leading chess-player makes his moves, is as fictitious as the glory and chivalry and courage of war in general. What we see in the diary before us are masses of men pushed here and there, with not too clear an idea of why, on the part of those who push, and none at all on the part of those who are pushed; men who soon break under the demoralizing conditions of war, who live for the moment, mostly, and who have not enough self-restraint to avoid the useless destruction of things which they very likely, and their comrades certainly, may need within a very short time. In the pages of Rudolf Binding's diary, men almost cease to be men, and become mere automata pushed here and there by so many concealed springs and levers. Perhaps, says the author, "it is the privilege of helpless humanity to save itself in this way." Perhaps—although it certainly will not be if our politicians and militarists have their way. *A Fatalist at War* should be read with Barbussé's *Le Feu*. The two go well together.

The I.L.O. of the League of Nations has accepted a bust of Robert Owen for its library at Geneva. There are many other great Freethinkers who have worked passionately for humanity and deserve similar recognition.

Christianity boasts of procuring men a happiness unknown to preceding ages. It is true, the Greeks knew not the divine rights of tyrants and usurpers. Under paganism, it never entered the head of any man to suppose that it was against the will of heaven for a nation to defend themselves against a ferocious beast, who had the audacity to lay waste their possessions. The religion of the Christians was the first that screened tyrants from danger, by laying down as a principle that the people must renounce the legitimate defence of themselves.—*D'Holbach*.



## Religion in Savage Africa.

THE Kasempa country is situated in Northern Rhodesia, and adjoins the Belgian Congo on its northern border, while Angola lies to the west. The natives are the Ba-Kaonde who, centuries since, migrated thither from North-Western Africa.

The religious beliefs of these primitive people are mainly represented by the fear, worship, and appeasement of the dead. The spirits of the departed everywhere abound, and haunt the living from the cradle to the grave. Most natural deaths are attributed to the baleful influences of ghosts. All his life long, the native is concerned in warding off the evil and propitiating the benign spirits.

In his informative volume, *In Witchbound Africa*, Frank H. Melland, who spent many years in the closest and most sympathetic relationship with the natives, states that: "Nothing of importance can be undertaken without first propitiating the spirits: nothing can be explained without divining for the spirits concerned. The spirits are all-hearing, all-seeing, all-pervading, all-powerful. Nothing but spirits (and in some cases, prescribed payments) can counteract spirits: none but the witch-doctor can show how this can be effected. Man himself is impotent."

It is noteworthy that the gentle art of lying attains full proficiency among these children of Nature. Veracity is not regarded as a cardinal virtue, for the simple reason that a knowledge of the truth would furnish the ever-listening ghosts with potent weapons for evil. They must at all costs be deceived. And the naïve savage never appears to doubt that these sophisticated spirits are thus completely hoodwinked.

It seems absurd to the average European that a good site for a native village should remain vacant while an inferior site is selected. But the anomaly disappears when we discover that the more convenient site is the abode of diabolical ghosts. Other native customs, apparently irrational, are quite consistently accounted for in terms of savage custom and tradition.

The omnipresence of a mainly sinister spirit-world makes the medicine-man the real master of the people. He alone has power to propitiate, avert, or outwit the baleful spirits. He may postpone death, or may detect the witch who has caused death. Also, he is able to identify the ghost responsible for evil deeds.

All entities possess their *chimbvule* or shadow. When death occurs, the corpse is laid in the grave, but not the shade, shadow, or spirit. The spirit of the deceased still haunts its accustomed habitation. These shades therefore exercise a ceaseless influence over the living community.

Although the sinister spirits are in the ascendant, the souls of departed ancestors invariably lend a willing ear to the supplications of the family. Ancestor worship has special seasons for observance. The blessing of the household gods is invoked before proceeding on a journey, or a hunting expedition, and when serious illness occurs.

An important occasion for prayers to the family ghosts is harvest-eve. A little of the ripened corn is gathered and ground, then mixed with water and deposited at the foot of the village headman's *chipanda*, a rude altar, constructed by thrusting a thick stick upright in the soil. Beer is brewed from unripe corn, and at sunrise on the succeeding day this beverage is ceremoniously imbibed.

Perturbed spirits abound, and their appeasement becomes imperative. These shadowy beings, like Hamlet's father's ghost, frequent the scene of some

heinous happening, and avenge the injury on the guilty.

And then there are more material ghosts. These appear in the ghastly form of a corpse, minus its lower extremities. This legless ghost, which crawls about in the darkness of night, employing its arms as propellers, is an object of dread, for it seeks the dwelling of its enemy, and without disturbing his sleep, pulls a few hairs from his head, and then steals silently away. As a result, a fatal sickness overtakes the slumbering victim of this nocturnal visitor.

Naturally, the only person capable of coping with such ghostly intruders is the witch-doctor, whose position in savage society is thereby exalted and perpetuated. When ill, or in times of misfortune, the people petition the doctor to divine the cause of their affliction. The wise man then discovers the identity of the troublesome spirit, and exhumes its corpse. If its flesh still clings to the bones, it is burnt, and the remains restored to the grave. The bones are removed, and the arm and leg bones pulverized into medicine. The remaining bones are also ground and reserved for future magical use.

When the body has been unearthed, those officiating go back to the village, which is scrupulously swept. All fires are extinguished, the ashes removed, and new fires are lit. The fee for the witch-doctor's professional services is a slave. Before sunrise on the following morning he must depart from the village. In default of this, the entire performance becomes null and void.

In other parts of the country the procedure is somewhat different, but in all cases the motive is the same—the laying of the mischievous sprite.

The doctrine of reincarnation forms part of the native faith, and exercises a very unprogressive power. The dead impose their rule upon the living, for the souls of the quick are born from the dead. The sanctity associated with departed ancestors hardens custom, and obstructs advance.

But much as English Judges reinterpret and modernize the Common Law, so there are, among the Ba-Ila natives, certain prophets who, through their interpretations, may remould customs sanctioned by sacred tradition. Their neighbours, the Ba-Kaonde, on the other hand, possess no instruments for promoting reform. Their tribal customs are never deliberately changed.

The author of *Witchbound Africa* assures us that, "Exercences grow—as with all unwritten laws, ideas and beliefs—but these arise unconsciously, and though the origin of and reason for many laws and customs is completely forgotten, they are implicitly and devoutly believed in, and meticulously obeyed, because they are the customs of the elders reincarnated from generation to generation. The spirits, or souls, resident in the living, or awaiting a new body in which to reside (it is believed), visit sickness, bad luck or other misfortune, on those who depart from the right path. This is the basis of native religion and of native life, and natives tell me that any new religion or law which enforces new ideas or prohibits old ones will never be wholeheartedly accepted by the majority because of this belief."

It is believed that after death the still surviving spirit enters the body of an unborn child. This remarkable spirit is said to be capable of providing souls for several children, or even lower creatures. Curiously enough, this form of reincarnation is sexually indifferent. A man's soul may enter a female child, or a woman's may animate a boy before birth.

In addition to the ubiquitous spirits already considered, the Kaonde and other tribes worship a supreme if shadowy god. *Lesá* is the name of the creator, and some of the Kaonde regard him as a



married divinity. He dwells like Jupiter in the sky, and displays his power in thunder, lightning and rain.

Lesa's wife, Chandushi, resides in the earth, and sometimes shakes it. As earth tremors are common in this district, the myth is easily accounted for. A native informed Mr. Melland that, "one knows it is a woman because she makes a lot of fuss and does nothing."

In his *Worship of Nature*, Sir James Frazer has shown that earth and sky divinities are almost universal throughout savage Africa. But these deities are frequently so far removed from everyday life that they receive scant attention. Although the divine creator Lesa is, in practice, little more than a departmental deity. As the sender of rain he is approached and supplicated in seasons of drought.

The use of the rain charm is unknown among the Kaonde. No medicine-man or chief officiates as a rainmaker. But if rain fails to fall in the *Chiwundo* season (our November) prayers are offered to the sky god for rain. This supplication is never addressed to the local divinities.

Before the peep of dawn a tall pole is erected in the outskirts of the settlement, and all the inhabitants congregate to take part in the ceremony. Men, women, and children arrange themselves in a circle, and the chief occupies a seat of authority near the pole. He then offers the prayer, which is translated into our tongue as follows:—

"Thou God, we are all thy people,  
Send us rain!"

This is certainly a brief, but all-sufficient prayer.

T. F. PALMER.

## The Dean of St. Paul's.

(Continued from page 213.)

DEAN INGE tells us that it was a "staggering surprise" to him when Mr. Asquith offered him the Deanery of St. Paul's. For he had never sought for preferment, and had no suspicion that his name had ever been considered for any great position in the Church. If the choice had been left to his Archbishop, he would probably have been about the last to be chosen; for, he tells us, Archbishop Davidson distrusted men of his type of mind. "He liked those who could be counted on to keep step, and support the government." Naturally, he would do. But Mr. Asquith was not so much concerned about the welfare of the Church. His interests were not ecclesiastical but literary. The Dean tells us that Mr. Asquith said "it was his hope that I would revive the old traditions of the Deanery of St. Paul's as the most literary appointment in the Church of England."

Although Mr. Asquith did obeisance to the religious conventions by which he was surrounded, we fancy he had few illusions upon the subject. Compare his speeches and writings with those of his one time colleague, and later, antagonist for the leadership of the Liberal Party, Mr. Lloyd George. We do not find any of that fervid and unctuous religious emotion with which Mr. Lloyd George sometimes regales his Welsh constituents when he brings down the tables of the Liberal commandments from the Welsh mountains.

We have only to read with what gusto Mr. Asquith, in his book of *Studies and Sketches*, tells the story of Disraeli's indignant repudiation—to a clerical audience at Oxford—of Darwin's theory of the descent of man, in which Disraeli declared

himself "on the side of the angels," and Mr. Asquith's comment upon it: "There was nothing more to be said. The meeting broke up, their faith reassured, their enthusiasm unrestrained. There had been no victory so complete since 'Coxcombs vanquished Berkeley with a grin,'" to see that Mr. Asquith was *not* on the side of the angels; and we cannot help thinking that he was showing the cloven hoof, and if he had had a free hand we should have had more in this vein. But of course an "infidel" leader of the Liberal Party, depending largely, as it does, on the Nonconformist votes, is unthinkable.

There is no reason to doubt Mr. Asquith's statement that his selection of the Dean was governed by his interest in literature. But we cannot help suspecting that he also derived the somewhat malicious joy experienced by the small boy who puts the cat among the pigeons just to see what happens, and expecting some fun.

We seldom get to know the truth about the religious views of a public man in this country until he has been dead a generation or more. In our young days, Ruskin was regarded as a champion of religion, declaring that it was the root and foundation of all Art; and it was not until after his death that the fact was made public that he rejected the religion he had been trained in, and became a total unbeliever long before he died; and it is probable that, even to-day, nearly thirty years after his death, the great bulk of his readers are unaware of the fact.

We fancy that Mr. Asquith's religion was that of the first Earl of Shaftesbury, who declared that, "All wise men are of the same religion"—and when asked what that religion was, replied, "Wise men never tell." (This saying has also been attributed to Disraeli and Samuel Rogers; but no doubt they appropriated the saying from Toland who first reported it of Shaftesbury.)

A critic, reviewing two of Dean Inge's recently published works, remarks that his "exquisite and extensive erudition enables him to quote from almost everybody." It is very true, and constitutes one of the charms of his writings. He cites Lecky, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Huxley, Herbert Spencer, Renan, Havelock Ellis, Santayana and Bernard Shaw, among others; and nearly always with approval. It will be noted that all of them are anti-Christian, some of them violently so. Their very names are an offence to most Christians.

It must be confessed that however advanced and tolerant his religious views may be, his political views are deplorable, not to say exasperating. He compares the position of the scavenger who gets £200 a year with the position of the young professional man whose education costs two or three thousand pounds and receives about the same sum.

In the first place, is it true that scavengers receive £200 a year? I do not know. There may possibly be some borough with a majority of Socialists on the Council, which pays that amount; but to suggest that it is the normal pay everywhere is quite untrue. It is not that, or anything like it; and if it were, I, for one, would not begrudge the scavenger his pay. I should not care to do his job, and I doubt whether Dean Inge would. He should thank God that he so ordained things that men can be induced to work at dirty, toilsome and perilous occupations, like scavenging and coal mining, to enable deans to write tirades about them in ease and comfort. Moreover, he seems to see nothing wrong in spending two or three thousand pounds on a young man's education. We think it is perfectly scandalous.

Again, the Dean declares: "The dole is the most mischievous and ruinous device for buying off revol-

<sup>1</sup> Dean Inge: *Assessments and Anticipations*. p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> *Times Literary Supplement*. March 28, 1929.



ution that has ever been invented." "The habit of honest work is lost, and a vast number of useless mouths is being maintained, who every year become more incapable of making good." The Dean here seems to be under the impression that the dole is a free gift given by a benevolent government. It is, of course, nothing of the kind. The workman has had a certain amount stopped out of his wages every week, which, along with a certain amount added by the employer and the State, constitutes a pool out of which the dole is paid. But even if it were not so, does the Dean mean to suggest that the million unemployed should be deprived of all support and left to die on the street?

Dean Inge also strongly objects to universal suffrage, and complains that "Conservative governments are sometimes false to their principles, as when Disraeli tried to 'dish the Wighs' in 1867, with the inevitable result that his own head soon adorned the charger; or as when our present government enfranchises the flapper, a measure which will probably have the same result."

He also sarcastically remarks: "The power and danger of Democracy both rest on a superstition—an imagined divine or natural sanction. The ballot-box is a Urim and Thummin for ascertaining the will of the Deity. The odd man somehow enjoys plenary inspiration."

But then we must remember that his class has suffered greatly as a result of the war. Their incomes and privileges have been severely curtailed. Many of their estates and beautiful town and country houses have passed into the hands of ignorant and illiterate profiteers, incapable of appreciating their new possessions, but eager to display their wealth by purchasing them. All of which, of course, must be very galling.

There is one political remark, however, which we entirely agree with, and that is when he declares that "Personally, I am a Free Trader because I hold that unless our trade can hold its own without Tariff walls, we shall lose it even with them," which is about the most intelligent observation we have seen on the subject.

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

## A "Solosmic" Fantasy.

WITH evident dissatisfaction Kosmikos surveyed the Solar System. This particular "Music of the Spheres" seemed unfamiliar, and the Planets unceasingly turning and wheeling all about him was irritating in itself. Even Solaris, its central figure, was not still!

Kosmikos realized he was in a section of his Cosmos which really had very little attraction for him, and one which he rarely visited.

"This is the—er—Slower System, is it not?" turning to his followers.

"The Solar System, Sire,"—a correction which only added to the general gloom of the party.

"Is it so long then since my last visit here?" queried Kosmikos.

"Only about 2,000 million years," replied one of his followers.\*

Kosmikos made a rapid calculation—"Just after that blundering 'Wandering Star' narrowly avoided a collision with some 'Fixed Star' hereabouts. I recollect the former passed on, but not before dragging out a mass of incandescent matter from the other, which followed in the wake of The Wanderer.

It was a contingency which I had overlooked at the time. In fact it was my intention to rectify this fortuitous occurrence, but it has apparently slipped my memory." The party murmured sympathetic understanding.

"This, then, is obviously the result," continued Kosmikos, sweeping the Solar System with a glance.

"Yes, Sire, there are four major and four minor Planets, including several Moons—all rotating on their own axes, and all revolving around Solaris. The most important is . . ." An impatient gesture from Kosmikos abruptly terminated the narrator's eager display of cosmographical knowledge.

"Spare me such wearying details. What are those small globular bodies nearest to us?"

"The Planet Mars and the Planet Earth, Sire—two of the minor Planets."

Kosmikos nodded. "Of course their lesser bulk has enabled them to cool in a comparatively short time." He yawned.

The party were now veering in the direction of Earth, and more because it was nearer to them than Mars, Kosmikos decided to humour his followers by making a few idle inquiries.

His Representative on Earth was summoned—rather an insignificant figure when compared with other Cosmic delegates. However, Kosmikos graciously acknowledged his presence.

"Tell me Earthian Representative, is matter self-conscious on your Planet yet?"

"Yes, Sire, but it is a phenomenon of quite recent emergence. Development on the Planet entrusted to my custody has been very slow and irregular. At the moment, the genus Homo—a sort of thinking animal—is in the ascendancy—but hardly justifies his position."

"Indeed, why not?" objected Kosmikos.

"Sire, they are very stupid and un-understanding. For example, it is only within the last few years, that they have discovered the true facts concerning their own origin, and even so the majority can't decide whether to believe them or not. Millions, particularly in the Asiatic countries, have the crudest ideas about the source of their own species. Even in more enlightened latitudes, such as Europe, many still assert that they were specially created by some anthropomorphic Dicty, whom they worship ad nauseam. Many forms of worship are in vogue, too numerous to mention."

Kosmikos turned with dismay to his satellites. "How then will they regard the evidence concerning the genesis of their Solar System and their own Planet?"

"Indeed, Sire, very few ever consider that problem, a problem which to them should be a very real one. Only the merest handful have, for instance, heard of The Nebular Theory—and fewer still of The Tidal Theory and its implications. Here again the most primitive beliefs flourish like weeds. Until quite recently it was a point of honour, even in educated circles, to uphold anthropocentrism. Some slight concession has, however, been made by a recognition of the existence of other Cosmic bodies (Kosmikos nodded). Man, however, still considers he is an unique achievement, and that he and his Planet are the special concern of an ultramundane Being—or more strictly speaking, several such Beings. In fact, not content with a body and a mind, he has prescribed for himself a soul also. So important does he consider himself and his mission, that he refuses to believe that he dies when he is dead."

At this juncture, the party burst into loud laughter, which, however, quickly subsided—Kosmikos didn't laugh. His interest seemed to have been aroused.

\*This is the age assigned to our Solar System by Sir J. H. Jeans, the famous Astronomer.



He asked—"How then do these Planetarians expend their energies?"

"In endeavouring to forget themselves, Sire," was the prompt reply. "It is a problem, Sire, so paradoxical as to be worthy even of your consideration. Their self-consciousness of which they are so proud, is only a burden to them. Their entire lives are spent in endeavouring to forget it. They are most miserable when they are thinking about themselves, and least miserable when they forget to remember themselves. Amongst other delusions is their quest for happiness, which is fanned and kept alive by fugitively forlorn hopings; and this quest for happiness is their panacea to promote self-forgetfulness. In practice their lives are spent in working and thinking; and when they are not working, they are unable to cease thinking. To escape from this vicious circle, they have, for instance, developed a mania for speed, so as to . . ."

Here Kosmikos interrupted—"I can thoroughly appreciate and sympathize with *that* particular mania. Is not all my Cosmic property careering about at incredible speeds?—I mean incredible when gauged by human standards." A murmur of assent emphasized this illuminating analogy.

"It seems then," pursued Kosmikos, "that these Earthians are still inadequately adapted to their planetary existence. Of course they are still young, but . . ."

"Pardon, Great Sire," abruptly exclaimed the Earthian representative, "they suffer under great provocation. May I quote a few lines from one of their poets, which convey much in few words?"

Kosmikos nodded, and his followers drew nearer as Earth's deputy recited with much fervour:—

"Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps  
and fiery sands,  
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships  
and praying hands . . .

a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong;  
Like a tale of little meaning though the words are strong;  
Chanted by an ill-used race of men that cleave the soil,  
Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,  
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil  
Till they perish . . ."

Kosmikos shifted uneasily, almost guiltily, during this recital, and a feeling of disfavour towards this Earthian emissary was apparent on the faces of his hearers.

MONTAGU COLVIN.

(To be concluded.)

## The Conversion of "Mary Magdalene."

MAURICE MAETERLINCK'S play of "Mary Magdalene" was produced for the first time in London at the "Old Vic." on Monday, March 25. It is not a great play for such a skilful dramatist, although it has one or two scenes that are very impressive. Its chief fault, however, is not that of the dramatist; he knew that the Censor would not allow him to introduce his chief character, the Divine Man, Jesus "the Nazarene," on the stage—consequently he has had to make many of the chief incidents occur off the stage, and only spoken about by the other characters as they enter. The story is that of one of the chief officers—a Roman Commander, at Bethany—Lucius Verus, who falls in love with Mary Magdalene, and fain would possess her, although he knows she is a lady of easy virtue—for she confesses to him in unmistakable language that she "knows her true value in the market." Nevertheless, he is very much in-

fatuated with her beauty and charm of manner, and persists in his desire to possess her.

But a very extraordinary event happens. As Mary is walking through the streets of Bethany, she is converted by hearing Jesus, "the Nazarene," as he is called, speaking the Beatitudes. We do not see him, but we hear his voice in the distance. Hereafter, although the Roman Commander protests his love for her, Mary fights bravely against her pleasure loving instincts as a woman of the world, and clings steadfastly to her newly found Saviour, the poor, despised "Nazarene." But there does not appear to be anything in the dialogue to show that there was any religious sentiment in her character that would respond to such an appeal. In another scene, a character rushes on to the stage and says that he has just witnessed the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead; and although Lazarus has been dead for four days and his body so far decomposed that it emitted an unpleasant smell, or to use the scriptural phrase, "it stinketh," "the Nazarene," by crying with a loud voice, caused the dead man to come out of the grave, and show himself to the people. When another Roman character, Annœlus Silanus, hears this, he appears to be doubtful as to the truth of the story, but he declares that "the Conversion of Mary Magdalene is more wonderful" to him than that of the alleged resurrection. In the same scene, Lazarus himself appears clothed in white, probably meant for grave clothes, and beckons Mary to follow him, which, after a little persuasion, she consents to do. In the last act, which is the strongest, "the Nazarene" has been arrested for sedition and blasphemy; Mary is twitted with having sold her master, and the Roman officer, who is still in love with her, offers to set "the Nazarene" free if she will only give herself to him as the price of such freedom.

This offer she spurns with scorn, for she knows that the Master would not accept Freedom at such a price, and in a fine scene she departs to follow her Master to the bitter end. The play, though weak in parts, has some good moments, and the actors did the best they could with such opportunities for fine acting as were afforded by the dialogue. John Laurie, as the Roman Commander, acted with some degree of intensity, and Miss Esmé Church played a very trying part with intelligence and power. Some of the minor characters were also well played.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

[P.S.—It will be observed that brilliant playwrights like Maurice Maeterlinck are allowed to read into the minds of Biblical characters motives and thoughts which do not appear in the text, to strengthen their plots; but after all they do not take greater liberties than theologians who read into the plain language of the Gospels thoughts and sentiments which no ordinary person can find there at all.—A.B.M.]

Philosophy, by carrying certainty with it to a given length, and pointing out real difficulties where that certainty ends, is ever mild in its features and tolerant in its tone; on the other hand, the more implicitly we bow to authority, the less tolerant we become to those who choose not to bow as obediently as ourselves. The mind always seizes with a kind of convulsive grasp those truths for which it can give no very satisfactory account, as though the tenacity with which they are held would go to make up the deficiency in their evidence; and on this ground it is that those who are most ignorant, to prevent the appearance of absurdity, commonly find it necessary to be most dogmatical. On the other hand, an abundance of knowledge and a strength of evidence, as they define more clearly the bounds of the known and the unknown, tend perpetually toward toleration.

Morrell's "History of Philosophy."



## Obituary.

MR. WILLIAM HOLLAND.

WITH deep regret, we report the death of Mr. William Holland, of Greenwich. The deceased, who was sixty-two years of age, died on Monday, April 29. Mr. Holland was a consistent propagandist, and as a member of the Greenwich Borough Council, as Trade Unionist, Shop Steward, and member of Trade Board, he devoted himself to the movement to improve the education and the material conditions of the working classes. The remains of the deceased were interred at Greenwich (Shooters Hill) Cemetery, on Wednesday, April 1, a Secular Service being conducted by the General Secretary of the National Secular Society. To the widow of Mr. Holland, and to his family, we offer our most sincere sympathy.

## Society News.

### MANCHESTER BRANCH.

THE Twelfth Annual Meeting of the Branch was held at the Milton Hall, Pendleton, on Saturday last.

The Reports presented to the Meeting showed that the Branch had held eleven Sunday indoor meetings, in addition to the usual open-air propaganda and lectures to other Societies. The Sales of literature had been well maintained, but financially the result of the year's work showed a deficit. However, as was pointed out, the amount due from members by way of subscriptions would more than clear the deficit, but generous support from local friends was advisable in order to commence the new year with cash in hand.

Mr. A. G. Rosetti intimated that he would be unable to continue in office as President, and the best wishes of the Branch were extended to him for his services in the past. Mr. H. I. Bayford was elected to the position. The following were elected Vice-Presidents: Messrs. Collins, Crompton, Mapp, Monks, Mrs. Ballard, and Miss Williams.

The new Executive Committee consists of Messrs. Bentley, Collins, E. E. Francis, W. R. Francis, McCall, O'Connor, Seferian, and Miss Wilson. Mr. Monks was re-elected Secretary, and Mr. T. F. Greenall, Literature Secretary.

A Social Committee was also elected to arrange rambles, and other activities during the summer months.

The place for the Annual Conference of the Society was voted upon and delegates elected to attend.

Notices of Motion were also brought forward and discussed, and the Secretary instructed to forward them to the Society for the Conference Agenda.—F.E.M.

### NORTH LONDON BRANCH.

MR. SAPHIN's fine lecture on "Sun Worship and Christianity," should have attracted a larger audience, especially as it was illustrated with lantern slides. The lecturer is a master of his subject, and absent members missed a great treat. To-night (April 14), Mr. Saphin is again the speaker, his subject being "Christian Art and Ritual," with lantern slides. Will members do their best to crowd the room?

## Pioneer Press Publications—

A GRAMMAR OF FREETHOUGHT. By CHAPMAN COHEN. A Statement of the Case for Freethought, including a Criticism of Fundamental Religious Doctrines. Cloth bound, 5s., postage 3½d.

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## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the FIRST POST ON TUESDAY, or they will not be inserted.

### LONDON.

#### INDOOR.

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8) : 11.15, Mr. R. O. Prowse—"Is the Good Artist Always a Bad Man?"

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W.) : 7.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin—"Christian Art and Ritual." Lantern Illustrations.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.) : Free Sunday Lectures at 7 p.m., R. Dimsdale Stocker—"The Filthy Rags of Righteousness."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2) : 11.0, John A. Hobson, M.A.—"The Decline of the West."

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

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Earldom Hall, Forest Gate, E.) : Saturday, April 13, at 7, Fancy Dress Social. Songs, dances, games, etc. Admission free. All Freethinkers welcome. Fancy dress if possible.

#### OUTDOOR.

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : 12 noon, Mr. James Hart, 3.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 7.0, Messrs. Hart and Le Maine. Every Wednesday at 7.30, Mr. James Hart. 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. R. G. Lennard.

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY, Branch of the N.S.S. (No. 2 Room, City Hall, Albion Street) : 6.0, Annual General Meeting. All interested are invited to attend.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S.—No further indoor meetings this session. Particulars of outdoor meetings later.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (People's Theatre, Arcade, Pilgrim Street) : 3.0 and 7.0, Mr. F. Mann (Secretary N.S.S.). Subjects: "The Crimes of Christianity"; "Religion the Enemy." Admission free. Discussion invited. Doors open half an hour before each Lecture.

#### OUTDOOR.

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

## Miscellaneous Advertisements.

### BOOKS WANTED.

BOUND VOLS. *National Reformer*. Better price paid for long runs. Can use odd vols. Report anything by Richard Carlile or old working-class periodicals.—NORMAN H. HIMES, 121 Holden Green, Cambridge, Mass., U.S.A.

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# National Secular Society.

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**CHAPMAN COHEN.**

Secretary:

MR. F. MANN, 62 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

## PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

SECULARISM teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

The Funds of the National Secular Society are legally secured by Trust Deed. The trustees are the President, Treasurer and Secretary of the Society, with two others appointed by the Executive. There is thus the fullest possible guarantee for the proper expenditure of whatever funds the Society has at its disposal.

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Occupation.....

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