

VAGARIES OF SUPERSTITION.

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Views and Opinions.

Vagaries of Superstition.

A LITTLE while ago it was reported in the press that a servant of the Lord had sprinkled with Holy Water and solemnly blessed a tobacconist's shop at Bath. Whether the blessing and the sprinkling was intended to procure trade, to see that only the best brands were sold, to protect buyers against the seller, or the seller against the buyers, or whether the parson had shares in the business I do not know. But the ceremony was, presumably, expected to do something—if only to give appropriate significance to the expression "Holy Smoke." Maybe, that particular parson hopes to get his own smokes free in the future.

From other papers, I see that some clergymen are busy parading their districts and blessing the crops. There is, at least, nothing unusual in this performance. Looking after the weather and the crops belongs to the oldest functions of the Medicine-man. In primitive societies it is his most important job. His status depended upon his success at it, for things were not always as easy for the religious magic-worker as they are to-day. To-day we are glad if the priest will only leave things alone. In early times he was valued for what he did—or was supposed to do. He conjured the crops into existence, and he conjured evil things out of existence. He was not exactly paid by results, but he was paid and honoured in accordance with what those around him thought he did; and if he did nothing, if in spite of his sprinklings and prayings and blessings, the crops did not come, or the disease did not go, he might very easily find himself deposed, and some other professional magic-worker appointed in his stead. In this respect the savage was not fooled quite so easily as his civilized relation. He judges by results, and when a man performs an incantation to procure plentiful crops he expects the crops to come. If the crops do not come he logically concludes that either the magic is no good, or there is some other counter magic that is stronger, and he is inclined to patronize the stronger power. If he does not pay by results, he judges by

results. It is only civilized man who continues to employ people to bless the crops, or the fishing nets, or to pray for rain, or for fine weather, knowing all the time that the prayers and incantations have about as much influence as a schoolboy blowing through a penny whistle.

* * *

By their Fruits!

What is it that is expected to follow the Vicar of Carlton-in-Cleveland blessing the crops? Is it expected that the fields so blessed will have larger crops than those that are not blessed? Will the corn, or whatever it is that is grown, be of better quality? Is land that is annually blessed by the priest of greater commercial value than land that is left alone? Clearly, there should be some benefit from the performance, and one would much like to know whether land that is owned by the Church of England bears, on the average, better crops than land that is owned by some Freethinking person. In a scientific inquiry every avenue must be explored, and one would really like to know just what it is that these people expect to follow from the parson blessing the crops. Do they really expect that better crops follow from the blessing, and that whether the season be dry or wet, or whether the land be rich or poor, the crops will come as a consequence of the blessing? The gentleman who created religion—the savage—was quite clear on this point. He believes himself to be wholly dependent upon the tribal ghosts or gods for his crops, and he acts accordingly. He goes to the field in which he hopes to grow things, and prays to the attendant spirits for what he wants. He buries objects in the field so that their "souls" may be of use to the ghostly souls whose aid he is imploring. He sends pregnant women round the field so that their fertility may infect the soil. Or he makes a God by killing a man ceremonially, and then scatters bits of him around the field so that his "soul" will see to it that the crops come. Is it possible that men and women seriously believe in something of the same kind when the parson goes round a Yorkshire village and blesses the fields in 1929? I do not ask what it is the parson believes himself, because he is probably satisfied if the people either believe, or do not trouble themselves to even think about it. The priests of every modern religion will assure you they have the gravest doubts about the sincerity of the belief of the priests of the other religion. It does not appear to them possible that rational men can believe what these other fellows profess to believe.

* * *

Wings or Motors?

From another paper I learn that Mrs. Hinchcliffe has been in constant communication with her husband, Captain Hinchcliffe, who was lost during his attempt to fly the Atlantic. She says that he is very happy on "the other side," and is still keenly inter-

ested in aviation. That is very interesting, and in conjunction with the assurance of the Rev. Vale Owen, that sport is still carried on in the next world, that men hunt spiritual animals, and race spiritual horses, one can imagine Captain Hinchcliffe in charge of brigades of angels, marshalling them for races, either in spiritual aeroplanes, or just simply flying races, the competitors using only their own wings. In that case one would need to have handicaps so that inequalities in the length of wing features might be corrected. And if we put with this item of information that supplied by the son of Sir Oliver Lodge, that in the next world we may have ghostly whisky to pour down ghostly throats, and ghostly cigars to smoke with ghostly lips, we may picture ghostly banquets following races, with distribution of prizes to the successful competitors. Mrs. Hinchcliffe's experience, with the revelations of the Rev. Vale Owen, open up endless possibilities. And if only some one could get into touch with G. W. Foote, I feel certain it would be found he was running a ghostly *Freethinker* to prove that the next world is all rubbish, and that God is a mere myth. The prospect is a diverting one; the only thing that tends to gravity is that all these people, the believers in the crop blessers, the faith-healers, the spiritual-sportsmen, etc., all of them have votes. And I am writing this within two or three days of the election!

* * *

God and The Election.

Mention of the election suggest just one other thing. Religious considerations, have bulked rather largely in this election, as I suggested some time back they would. There are quite a number of Non-conformist parsons putting up for Parliament, and some will certainly get in. Cardinal Bourne calls upon Roman Catholics to make a promise to put "Rome on the rates"—more than is the case at present, a test question, and to vote only for such candidates as will promise their help. Never mind any other issue, he says, let this one be decisive. Help the Church first, and let all other things come afterwards. That is all quite usual, so far as talk is concerned, but what part does genuine religion play in it? The Catholic Church has arranged the usual excursions to Lourdes, and brought back its usual batch of "cures." Not to be behindhand, certain sections of Protestants have tabulated their list of miracle cures. The Yorkshire Vicar thinks he can get good crops by praying over the fields. The Bath parson thinks he will help the tobacconist by blessing his shop. But none of these people even claim that the election figures will be decided by similar means. They tell you that it is God's will you shall act in this or that manner, the Archbishop of Canterbury has issued a prayer—at one penny a dozen—which will inform God Almighty what his followers expect from him, but none of them appear to place much reliance upon God in the matter of the election. They seem to place no more reliance upon God than did King George and Queen Mary during the King's recent illness! Yet, surely, if God can help the fishing industry, after the blessing of the nets, if he can boost a tobacconist's business, or procure good crops, surely, he can manage such a little thing as a general election!

Perhaps, the real reason why these political gentlemen do not leave it to God, is that an election is a definite affair, and the result can be seen within a very short time. Recovery from illness, growing a crop, etc., are things on a different footing. The element of uncertainty is present, and where that exists religious opinion has always a chance. Besides, looking after the crops has always come within the province of the medicine-man, and something is to be

said for the power of association. After all, we do not become intelligently reasonable by putting on trousers nor scientific by driving a motor-car. The medicine-man is a medicine-man whether dressed in a black suit with a dog collar, or with a scanty covering of paint and feathers. To say that, means also that his followers, while following him in a change of dress, remain loyal to him in the continuity of their mental outlook. Savagery belongs to no particular time, but runs through all time, in a diminishing quantity, one hopes, but it is there. And today all these primitives have a vote—at least, in this country.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

How to Help Freethought.

"There is no darkness but ignorance."—*Shakespeare*.

"John P. Robinson, he
Sez they didn't know everything down in Judee."
Lowell.

"The lie at the lips of the priest."—*Swinburne*.

THE Freethought Movement suffers from a boycott which is applied by Christians in the newspaper and periodical press, booksellers' and newsagents' shops, and at the municipal and private libraries. With rare exceptions, Freethought publications are ignored in the former, and kept out of the latter. Hence, it becomes increasingly necessary that every Freethinker, besides giving financial help to the Executive, should assist actively in the propagation of the literature of the movement. Christian organizations spend annually hundreds of thousands of pounds in furtherance of their faith, and, incidentally, no small part of their propaganda is the vilification and misrepresentation of Freethought. A glance at the capacious catalogues of such organizations as the Religious Tract Society, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the Christian Evidence Society, the Catholic Truth Society, and the many publishers who cater for the orthodox public, will be sufficient to show how complete are their methods, and how large is their success. These books, periodicals, and pamphlets, are distributed throughout the English-speaking world, and they penetrate into countless homes where Freethought works are never seen.

The clergy are past-masters at circumventing any movement likely to prove dangerous to their profession, and they have rare noses for heresy. The original Sunday schools were initiated by laymen with the sole and laudable idea of imparting education to poor children on the one day in the week on which, in the dark days prior to the passing of the Factory Acts, they were free to receive it. Nowadays, the Sunday schools are not concerned with other than purely theological instruction. Similarly with the public library movement, which was started with the idea of bringing serious, scientific, and informative literature within reach of the poorest citizen. The clergy, of whom there are 40,000 in this country, have great influence on the local committees of these libraries, and that their one and constant aim is to render such institutions, from their narrow and sectarian point of view, entirely harmless and innocuous. So long as the shelves of these libraries are stocked with smooth tales, generally of love, they are quite content. The instant any attempt is made to place before the public works which make for sanity or for ordered thought, they at once display their animosity. The boycott is introduced, and the modern *Index Expurgatorius* contains the names of almost every author worth reading, from Anatole France to Bernard Shaw. None of the "intellectuals" escape, and Thomas Hardy and George Meredith suffered in the company of Eugene Brieux.

With the idea of combating this state of affairs, Freethinkers should ask for Freethought books at the libraries which they use, and see that they are supplied. An excellent beginning could be made with books by Mr. Chapman Cohen, and with Mr. J. M. Robertson's works. In extreme cases, the books might be presented to the library; but care must be taken that the volumes are not placed on a top shelf and quietly forgotten. So far as pamphlets are concerned, it is better to hand or post them to likely readers. Orthodox persons are often interested in controversial literature, and such introductions often mean that regular readers of Freethought publications are obtained. Literature should also be sold at all indoor and open-air meetings, and the sale entrusted as much as possible to the ladies of the Movement, who will thus find an outlet for their energies.

With regard to the *Freethinker*, it is useful to order this paper with other publications, so that the tradesman is faced with the dilemma of accepting or refusing a good customer. Another timely suggestion is for Freethinkers to join in any likely discussion in local papers. These organs often give far more space to readers' opinions than the large London newspapers. Letters should be terse, strictly to the point, and courteous, and should be written on one side of the paper only, and authenticated with the name and address of the sender, not, necessarily, for publication. Back numbers of the *Freethinker* should never be wasted, but should be left in trams, trains, and buses, or otherwise distributed. I first met G. I. Mackenzie, "the Laureate of Secularism," whilst essaying the part of a missionary. We were on a South London tramcar, and fell into conversation, and I offered him a copy of the *Freethinker*. He replied, "I not only read it, but I write for it." "Who are you?" I queried, and I recall his smiling answer. "Mackenzie, if it doesn't mak enzie difference."

It is a saucy world, however, and, in order to prevent an improper use being made of these copies, it is wise to clip a piece from one of the corners, so that they may not be used as genuine "returns" by enterprising newsgents. If these few hints are acted upon by our readers, it should prove of some use to the Movement.

Freethinkers must see to it that Freethought publications are circulated widely. The orator reaches his thousands, but the writer reaches his tens of thousands. Humility is a rare and fragrant virtue, but "intellectuals" cannot surrender their rights at the behests of the clergy, however saintly. Let Freethinkers quietly push their principles, and not only show that they are grateful to the pioneers of the Movement, but that they are determined to extend their principles far into the future.

There is real need for concerted action. A few years ago the leading reviews were largely given over to the discussion of intellectual subjects, and some of the ablest men were engaged in stating the case for and against orthodoxy. Even the great newspapers threw their columns open to disputants on such subjects as "Is Christianity a Failure." All this is changed for the worse, and it is a rare thing to find an article in any of these publications worth more than a passing attention. The rising generation is growing up in absolute ignorance of the aims of Freethought, and it is of the highest importance that this should be altered. Too many young persons are as innocent as the scholar who was asked where Magna Charta was signed. Looking blank for a moment, he burst out triumphantly, "At the bottom of the page, sir."

MIMNERMUS.

Religion in Russia.

THE Daily Press is animadverting again upon the alleged persecution of religion by the present Government of Russia. It will be as well not to take these Press statements at their face value. The Helsingfors lie factory seems to have closed down. It had to, for its lies became so outrageous and preposterous that they became matter for laughter rather than tears. But the White agencies are still active, and put their lies into circulation at every opportunity.

It is said that history repeats itself, which simply means that similar causes produce similar results. What is happening in Russia to-day seems very similar to what happened in France during the first French Revolution. At that time our pulpits reverberated with denunciations of the atrocities committed by the atheistic revolutionists, especially in their treatment of religion, which, it was stated, they had abolished, along with a wholesale slaughter of priests. Probably it is still the belief of the majority of people in this country to-day, a century and a quarter after the event. But it is quite false.

When the French Revolution broke out there was no intention of attacking religion, indeed, many of the revolutionists believed that the Church would voluntarily range itself on the side of the revolution. Marat, the most blood-thirsty of the revolutionists, had the Gospels continually open on his table. Jesus Christ, he declared, bowing reverently when he uttered the name: "Jesus is our Master."¹

If the Church has been content to carry on its services without interfering with the government, it would have been left in peace. But in the midst of their herculean struggle against the armed forces of Europe, the revolutionary government found the vast majority of the priests arrayed against them. The Church was stabbing the Republic in the back. Under these circumstances the government decided to impose upon the priests an oath of allegiance to the Republic. An oath which in no way conflicted with their religious profession. Those who declined to take the oath were deprived of their livings. Those who took the oath were allowed to continue their ministrations as usual. And, in fact, up to the last, the priests entered the prisons and ministered to the prisoners, and accompanied them to execution, without hindrance. This is what Catholics denounce as the persecution and suppression of their religion! Just as the early Christians complained of persecution because they were not allowed to enter the Temples and smash the religious symbols, and upset the services of other forms of worship. The Roman government was tolerant of all religions that kept within the bounds of the law, but it could not tolerate a religion that would tolerate no religion but its own.

When the sober truth comes to be written in after years, probably a similar state of things will be found to have prevailed in Russia. At any rate, the Churches have not been closed, or religion banned, up to the present, and if it is going to be, as the press state, then there probably is good cause for the action, but, as we have said, it will be as well not to put too much reliance upon this press news, the papers have raised the cry of Wolf! Wolf! too often.

That the Soviet government has not suppressed religion up to now is quite certain, in spite of the lying statements to the contrary. Mr. Alexander Wicksteed, who was sent out as a member of the delegation from the Society of Friends, for relief work in Russia during the pestilence and famine of 1917; and also had experience as a teacher of English in school

¹ Lamartine: *History of the Girondists*. Vol. 2, p. 444.

and college, has published his experiences in book form, under the title: *Life Under the Soviets*. Where he tells us:—

it is against the quondam State Church that the "anti-religious" campaign is carried on and not against religion as such, though no Communist may be a Christian. This seems to be shown by the fact that the Baptists have increased their membership by something like two million since the Revolution. Another point that has from time to time struck me very forcibly, is that amongst young people in Russia you are constantly coming across just that frame of mind that began to be common in England in the 'eighties and 'nineties, a feeling of wonderful relief and freedom to find that you didn't "have to be religious." . . . against this State Church the Communist Party has declared a relentless war in all temporal matters. In spiritual matters it is, as far as I know, absolutely neutral. I have never heard of any interference whatever in matters of worship, and there has certainly been nothing comparable to the interference that our own British Parliament has recently felt it to be its duty to enforce on the English State Church. All the stories that one hears about closing churches and converting them into cinemas are pure nonsense.²

The State Church was disestablished, the monasteries were broken up, and articles of historic, or artistic value were collected with great care and consigned to the museums. When State Churches are disestablished their property reverts to the State. And secular education was introduced in schools, but all this was only repeating exactly what the French Republic did to the Catholic Church in France in 1906. Turkey too has recently abolished the State religion, the Caliphate, and adopted secular education; yet our press is singularly silent over this "persecution."

Another competent observer, who had lived in Russia before the war, and since the war, observes: "One paradox we must not forget, in the face of present conditions: the Soviet seems to be more tolerant of sects, cults and creeds than the Czarist Government."³ If this testimony is not sufficient, we have the unwilling testimony of the spy, John Vidor, who was sent into Russia disguised as a member of the Workers' Delegation that visited Russia in 1927, and every page of whose book, *Spying in Russia*, proclaims his violent hatred of the Soviet Government, and his desire to rake up every thing he can in condemnation of it. This spy devotes a chapter of his book to the subject of religion in Russia, which he begins by declaring that religion is an anchor essential to man, and that: "Religion is necessary for ordered government." Which is just what the old tyrannous Czarist Government believed, and acted upon. This pious spy reports: "Though organized religious teaching is punishable by law, it is untrue to say that the churches have been closed down . . . To my surprise I found that the churches were mostly open, and Leningrad and Moscow presented an unexpected appearance on the Sabbath Day. The churches were all crowded with congregations who eagerly attended the services and gave the officiating priests their close attention." Unfortunately, says our spy, this display, "is of only surface value." And why is that? Because, says our spy, with quite unconscious humour, "the doctrine they preach is practically incapable of doing harm to the cause of the Soviet Government."⁴ The only genuine religion, of course, being the kind that would overthrow the Soviet; and which the persecut-

ing government will not allow to be preached. Simple-minded John Vidor, of such are the kingdom of heaven. However, he does let out the truth when he confesses:—

I have to admit that as far as I observed, the Communists have been successful in their endeavour. I attended the service in one of the Moscow churches one Sunday morning. The congregation was numerous, and the priest seemed popular with those present. During the singing, which was very beautiful, I closed my eyes and marvelled at the complex state of affairs in Russia, when I was able to listen to the Mass in the citadel of Atheism. Here in the church the followers of Lenin were worshipping Christ.⁵

We also learn that the Soviet is a great deal more tolerant of other religions than the old Tzarist Government; he testifies that:—

Despite the Communist opposition to and oppression of Christianity, the Soviet is far more tolerant of other beliefs than ever the Tzarist Government. There are millions of Mohammedans within the boundaries of the U.S.S.R., and their religious liberty is untouched. Buddhists, Hindoos, Chinese, all are catered for, the Jews especially enjoying privileges unknown to them since the beginning of Russian history. These latter are admitted to executive positions in the Government, in fact, at one time the majority of the Government were of the Jewish faith, and in the Ukraine and Crimea magnificent colonies have been formed where the Jewish colonists enjoy full religious and personal liberty. (p. 199.)

Here, at any rate, is some improvement on the old Czarist rule.

W. MANN.

The Tactics of the Modern Sophist.

(Continued from page 324.)

2. CORRELATED with the disparaging and belittling of science is the implied antithesis—viz., is the glorification of ignorance. Indeed, the tactical device which we have already discussed may be denoted as the de-glorification of knowledge. What the sophist values is not what is known, but what is *not* known. Without undue exaggeration, it may be said that an ounce of ignorance is far more appreciated by him than tons of knowledge. In his application of ignorance, he travesties the science of logic: he inverts deduction or he makes a burlesque of the inductive process. If, for instance, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, observed facts justify a certain conclusion; but should the inference be unfavourable to the contention of the disputant, he would forthwith repudiate it. But that is only a preliminary step; the uncertainty of the one remaining case is at once seized upon with unfeigned delight and foisted upon his readers as a satisfactory disproof of the verdict of the ninety-nine. Moreover, this negation or nullity is treated as a mass of granite rock whereon to plant his own verbal "tower of Babel." This high-handed operation treats logic with scant respect. The famous syllogism is turned topsy-turvy. Normally, it stands like a pyramid on a broad base—the major premise, and comes to a point at the apex—the conclusion. But the sophist inverts that order; he puts the apex on the ground—the one doubtful instance—and its base sweeps the heavens as a conclusion from it. This sophistic practice of making the apex serve as a major premise takes many forms besides that of doubt about some one or two cases. For instance (a) the sophist may contend that all the instances of

² A. Wicksteed: *Life Under the Soviets* (1928). pp. 140-141.

³ F. M. Newman: *Seeing Russia* (1928). p. 83.

⁴ John Vidor: *Spying in Russia*. p. 194.

⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 195-6.

a certain causal relation may not exhaust all possible cases. Or (b) that the cause of certain established facts is not known—an ignorance he contends that destroys the value of a perfect legitimate generalization based upon the known facts. Or (c) he may argue that some professor who plays the rôle of the devil's advocate against science is of opinion that something lies deeper than observed facts! Or (d) he may launch a gratuitous, baseless statement—indeed it may be a positive inversion of all observed facts—such as to aver that "Life is purposive"! And then proceed to expatiate upon it with the nonchalance of one quoting an axiom. These different forms of the inverted pyramidal tactic agree in being examples of the glorification of ignorance.

Examples of these various sophistic devices are in marked evidence in Chapter I Section (3) of Mr. C. E. M. Joad's book, entitled *The Meaning of Life*. To expose fully these devices, seriatim, would require probably two lengthy articles. The bulk of subsection (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) would have to be quoted at some length before their sophistries could be fully indicated to the reader; and even then few readers would have the patience to wade through the exposure.

If, on the other hand, the exploitation of ignorance as a mode of argumentation, be considered not a pyramidal inversion of syllogistic deduction, but as an example of the inductive process, its absurdity is none the less. To rear a wide generalization upon negations or gratuitous postulates, is the height of the ridiculous. But its absurdity, in the book referred to above, is partially masked by the pages of expatiation which follow; as these give one the idea that they are expositions of established theories, they divert attention from the sophistic premise upon which they are based.

An article of quite the same order appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* for April 3, by a J. D. Beresford, on "Memory," in which the glorification of ignorance was in rare evidence throughout. He made a few tangential references of a most scrappy kind to the teachings of physiology. He just touched upon them, and then dismissed them. There was hardly a sentence in the article in which you could not detect the spirit of a *suggestio falsi*. Then finally on imaginary negations as an "apex" premise, he rests the astounding and daring generalization that "The whole physical body is but an imperfect instrument that relates the true self to the phenomenal world, and that ultimately memory is a thing of the spirit!"

I suppose the same is true in respect to the memory of animals—hence animals must have souls! Are they also immortal? What is to be a sophist! What miracle can't he do? He is by reputation an expert at proving that black is white; but now he attempts to improve on that by showing it to be red, yellow, or green as suits his purpose.

(To be continued.)

KERIDON.

HOPE.

FAT-FACED, with hulking form and little legs,
 She stumbles gaily on through bog and mare
 On a far hill she sets her watery gaze,
 And from each stranger her direction begs.
 Her nose is broken, one poor eye is black,
 And feet from many a tumble swollen high.
 "Victory at last!" at each fall is her cry;
 And she has lost the art of turning back.
 On, on she goes, with tattered silken dress—
 With one eye bright, a forward beacon nose,
 And grin that spreads from swollen ear to ear.
 None knows her destination, fewer guess—
 And she herself seems heedless where she goes.
 "Only," she thinks, "we must be getting near!"

THOMAS WILLIAM LAMONT.

A Plea for Determinism.

ALL human activity is the inevitable result of circumstances preceding that activity, and all our actions and thoughts are amenable to the same laws governing other creatures and inanimate matter. Man thus presents himself as playing his allotted part in the Cosmic Arena, differing only in degree, but not in kind from the other combatants. From nebulae to men, Cause and Effect show no mercy. Nature abhors an exception. To postulate Freewill is to violate this law.

It is admitted by Mr. C. E. M. Joad that "all the obvious arguments point to the denial of the feeling of freedom," but how many people are prepared to admit the implications of Determinism? No man is a born Determinist (exclude here any fatalistic Eastern creeds) because from the cradle onwards we are trained to think on Freewill lines alone, and only mature consideration plus conviction can persuade us to reject an orthodox creed and embrace an unpopular one.

More courage and effort are required in doubting generally-accepted beliefs than are incurred in a feeble acquiescence. Certainly, Freewill has always had the whole-hearted support of priests and theologians who, in all probability, introduced it as a handy method of fixing responsibility for man's sinfulness. Heaven and hell would be obvious absurdities unless bolstered up by the menace of Freewill.

Deterministic theories are therefore handicapped at the outset by an opposite belief firmly embedded in the human mind.

It does not follow, however, that this position constitutes a true reflection of the real state of affairs. A majority of opinion is no criterion—frequently it is the reverse.

Briefly stated, Determinists claim that heredity and environment, or, if you prefer it, Nature and nurture, are the sole factors governing our lives from the cradle to the grave.

By heredity is meant all those influences and propensities which Nature hands on to us from our parents, and from those forebears who preceded our immediate parents, backwards to primitive man and our ancestors, the apes. Beyond this we need not go, although the study of Embryology points to the inference that man is an epitome of an evolutionary record since life originated.

Man starts his career then, burdened with primal instincts, which have continually to be subdued to the exigencies of a civilized community. With just such gifts and hindrances as are thrust upon us we must face the Battle of Life.

Only one factor can modify this heritage—and that factor is environment.

"What strains o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim" there are can be corrected only by subsequent training. Reduced to few words, life is a contest between our heredity and our environment.

What is environment? It is the sum of external influences affecting an organism. It embraces nationality, food, training, education, associations, travel, and so on—in fact, it includes all and every sensory impression that contact with the world about us is capable of imposing upon us. All these impressions are recorded faintly or emphatically in our minds, and it is just because our experiences vary with different individuals that individual conduct is so variegated.

Historians employ the term "geographic control" to explain national characteristics which fill the world

with so many different religions, codes of morality and social orders. It is, however, a mistake to suppose that environment represents merely the surroundings which beset us at any given moment. There are no such limitations. It is an influence in which the past, the present and the future are mingled. The future can be as potent as the past, and in our ignorance of what lies before us we may sacrifice the present to our ultimate disadvantage.

It will be realized, therefore, that these combined forces—heredity and environment—exert a far greater pressure on our behaviour than is generally admitted. If we consider the phrase "I choose to do this," and substitute the phrase, "My heredity and environment choose to do this," we are nearer the truth in our perception of the mental process that is involved. We have in fact reached the kernel of Deterministic theory. To suppose that a man can divorce himself from, or divest himself of these twin influences is tantamount to saying that a man can think without a brain.

The experiences accumulated by our predecessors and absorbed by us individually are translated into the actions of to-day. If we could only shake off the fetters of the past, how gladly would we "grasp this sorry scheme of things entire, and mould it nearer to the heart's desire."

Summing up this brief attempt to emphasize the vital importance of heredity and environment, we can say that our descent, coupled with all those incidents that go to make up our life, provide the clue to those characteristics which emerge as "ourselves."

We are either weak or strong, physically or mentally—nervous or courageous, cunning or frank, good or evil—an admixture too complex to comprehend. We are not one person—we are thousands rolled into one—perhaps millions. Personality is a convenient term to describe a fortunate convergence of natural laws culminating in a character above the average. The same may be said of genius.

Sometimes one virtue or one vice will wane to give place to its opposite. We change at times for the better, at others for the worse.

Natural instincts give way to acquired inclinations or *vice versa*. To understand human conduct we must learn the meaning of physiology and psychology. When the study of Human Nature is reduced (increased is a more fitting word) to a science, then undoubtedly we shall be less misunderstood and less misunderstanding than in this year of grace. The "Spirit of Christ," which the preacher tells us can alone save civilization will manifest itself in our thoughts and lives, not by any miraculous inspiration, but by the surer and more compelling force of understanding, based on knowledge.

It will be objected that if Free-will is a delusion then it is unnecessary, in fact, useless to praise or to blame, to reward or to punish, forgetting all the while that this charge must be laid at the door of the Indeterminist. If you are a free agent, you can, willy-nilly, bend your behaviour to suit whatever circumstances demand. You cannot be compelled to act as you do if your actions are not determined—you do it of "your own free will." What sense is there in praising a man for doing the things he wants to do, or for not doing the things he does not want to do? To praise for the sake of praising, or blame for the sake of blaming is a ridiculous proceeding. Praise and blame, reward and punishment are only appropriate in so far as they encourage or act as deterrents. By giving or receiving approbation or disapprobation we add to our experience, stimuli for future conduct. The approval or disapproval meted out to us becomes part and parcel of our environment.

It is worthy of note that although our legal jurisdiction is based on the assumption that we are free agents, in practice it tends to give more and more consideration to the environmental atmosphere from which a crime arises. We hear of extenuating or mitigating circumstances, and frequently a convicted man is "recommended to mercy." It is not sufficient to say that this is because we are more merciful or humane than heretofore. The true explanation is a recognition of the "force of circumstances"—it is the thin end of the wedge of Determinism.

Determinism cannot be dismissed as an idle or dangerous theory. All theories are dangerous when misunderstood or misapplied.

Not to consider the practical applications of Determinism is to omit its most vital aspect. Will any sane person, for instance, contend we can abolish the slum mind without first abolishing the slum atmosphere that produces it? Human beings are like plants—they are human plants. If the seed is good, and it is tended with care and understanding, we shall be gladdened with healthy, flourishing plants—on the other hand, sickly crooked growths will be all our reward.

Mr. Joad urges the necessity of defending Free-will, but he is allying himself to a cause that is slowly but surely, dying. Free-will is a colossal delusion that has misled and brought untold suffering to the human race down through the ages. An overwhelming case in point is religious persecution. It is inconceivable that the religionists of one country, or even of the same country, would attempt to substitute their particular creed in place of an alien one, except on the assumption that conversion could be effected by a free choice. An acknowledgment of the influences imposed by geographical and local considerations would have prevented such crass stupidity.

All the arguments here advanced are capable of further extension and elaboration, and many points that will occur to the reader are omitted—but space forbids.

MONTAGU COLVIN.

Concessional.

God of our fathers, not so known
As merely guessed and talked about—
If this world were not all your own,
Would you not turn it inside out?—
Lord, God, and Ghosts, be with us yet,
And pay your debt—yes, pay your debt!

The good, the faithful, early dies:
The sane and blest at once depart—
Not, mark, because they've reached their Prize!
No, simply had a broken heart!—
Lord, God, and Ghosts, you ought to sweat
At such a debt—at such a debt!

Forestalled, the honest—duped—decay:
On pedestal they place the liar,
And make the honest victim pay!
The artist they have burnt with fire—
Judge of their actions, make them fret,
And don't forget, Lord—don't forget!

If, slunk from sight of power, you lose
The mild respect we had of Law,
You must judge lightly, and excuse—
Sane folk ask something more than *Jaw*!—
Lord, God, and Ghosts, it's time we met:
Lest you forget—lest you forget!

For foolish heart that puts its trust
In politician, vicar, bard,
In journalism, and such dust,
Let your last Judgment be not hard!—
For when you stayed beyond the blue,
What were poor devils, Lord, to do?

THOMAS WILLIAM LAMONT.

Acid Drops.

When the doctors give God Almighty permission to listen to the King and the Archbishop of Canterbury returning thanks for the recovery of the former, perhaps they might also draw the deity's attention to the fact that a little timely help in the case of the hospital accident in the United States would have been appreciated by everybody. We get plenty of statements of the way in which God interferes to cure one man of a cancer, or helps another to get a good situation, or "calls" this or that man to preach the gospel; just a little attention at the right moment might have prevented that 120 persons, nearly all sick and helpless, from the horrible death which overtook them in the Cleveland Hospital. Not many people, who are not Christians would be able to keep on praising a God whom they believe could have prevented this accident, but did nothing. What a religion.

An expedition is leaving the United States in June for the Belgian Congo, to study the behaviour of mountain gorillas. It is not stated if permission has been received from the Fundamentalists.

Cardinal Bourne has been looking over the fence at politics, and in a speech at a Roman Catholic Rally, he showed very conclusively that he had not read the Bible, or had conveniently forgotten it. Class warfare, he stated, is forbidden by our Lord Himself. "For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," is not exactly holding out the hand of friendship to those who had money, or as Cervantes wrote, belonged to the "haves." Here, from a presumably cultured man, is the sign of an appeal to authority—and a particularly bad shot at that. This from a shepherd—what from the sheep? Perhaps Mr. Belloc will oblige!

As far as we can gather, Mr. Bernard Shaw has not been invited to attend the laying of the foundation stone of the new Roman Catholic Church at Farnham, Surrey. It is dedicated to St. Joan of Arc, who, it will be remembered, had vast and expansive love for the English, and was burned through the agency of the Roman Catholic Church.

It has never been all beer and skittles in the world of science. The scientist, from Roger Bacon's time, and ever before, was looked upon with suspicion—he was a bad lot, and the backwoodsmen of his day were ready with charges of his being in league with the devil, who was one of many experimentalists. A note in a paper tells us that, in Berlin, some kindly disposed friends of Professor Einstein were going to present him with a house. Local jangling over the gift has forced him to decline the offer, and thus the pioneer who caught light bending stands on his dignity; now if he had won a war as so many great men have . . . ?

Liverpool is a noble city, and, having no problems, it could afford a gorgeous cathedral. One criticism, and perhaps one only can be made of this ideal place; the religious folk mark their disagreement with one another by throwing rotten eggs, cement, and mud. The Rev. H. D. Longbottom, received this mixture of argument in addressing a meeting in opposition to the demand of the Roman Catholic Church that sectarian schools should be supported by the ratepayers. And this evidence should convince a visitor from Mars that we really are advanced, and that there is nothing like religion for uniting people.

An Interdenominational Society for the Ordination and full Ministry of Women has just been formed, under the presidency of Miss Maude Royden. We humbly suggest that the Society adopt dear old St. Paul as its patron saint.

A pious weekly journal says that the daily papers do not report at any length the May Meetings in London, for the simple reason that there is not much "copy" in them of a sufficiently sensational kind. We suggest that the reports are meagre because editors know their readers are not interested in the platitudinous claptrap which is a feature of May Meetings.

Professor J. Arthur Thomson says that "No one by scientific researching can find out God." We have said the same thing many times. What we are now waiting for Professor Thomson to realize is, that sound science covers the whole world of knowledge actual and possible, and to say that scientific researching cannot find God, is to say you cannot find him at all. Of course, we exclude the likelihood that Professor Thomson means only that you cannot dig God out of a dissection. That would be simply too silly.

The three Party leaders—Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Lloyd George, and Mr. Macdonald—have informed the Lord's Day Observance Society, that they are opposed to the repeal of the Lord's Day Observance Act, 1780, and the legalization of the Sunday opening of theatres and music-halls. Quite so; it would never do to antagonize church and chapel bigots just before an election. But after? Well, politicians have been known, when strong pressure is brought to bear on them to reverse decisions they professed at election time.

It is not all religion, says a writer, but good religion and true, that makes people happy. As so very few persons are agreed as to what is good and true religion, we should like to make a helpful suggestion. The religion professed by our rabid Sabbatarians must be "good and true." It makes them ever so happy, interfering with other people and trying to make them bored and miserable.

An Oxford reader of the *Daily Mail* wants to know why swimming-baths cannot be opened all day on Sunday. And he rather innocently adds, in support of his suggestion, that swimming is a pleasant, healthy exercise. This is really too bad. On Sunday, as all good Christians know, it is sinful to entertain longings for pleasant, healthy exercise, and very wicked to gratify them. Surely everyone knows that the Sabbath is divinely reserved for unpleasant and unhealthy exercise in churches.

The Rev. Dr. Parton Milum (Wesleyan) says that "God is at least like the best we know in man." Gods generally are like that. Man makes them in his own image. And to judge by the Old Testament, gods are also like the worst known in man. "Progress" in religion consists in reforming the god or gods to fit the best thought of each age.

A preacher said, "there's a lot of things called Church work that are no more Church work than the man in the moon." This out-spokenness is rather deplorable. It may set people thinking. Take away from most churches and chapels their various secular amusements, clubs, and organizations, and most of the congregations would fade away. Religion alone, as most clerics know, is not sufficient nowadays to keep people attached to a church. The "pulling power" of Jesus sadly needs a tonic.

The American people, says Mr. St. John Ervine, are a book-buying people; the British people are a book-borrowing people. No one has yet accused either of them, we note, of being a book-understanding or book-discriminating people. This, no doubt, will follow in due course, when they make the discovery that their schools taught them only to follow print and amass ideas or facts.

A lady visiting a royal palace is said to have exclaimed: "This is a quiet, beautiful, Christian home." Thank heaven somebody has discovered one of these

"homes for heroes" we all heard about just after the war.

In a popular weekly, a writer implores readers to "use their common-sense." But millions of people are doing so. Don't they stay away from churches and enjoy themselves on Sundays?

Writing for Methodists, the Rev. A. E. Whitham says: "There is no deep reason why . . . wanting charity, we should deny others their proper word, or why we should close our minds narrowly to the larger teaching of life or be uninfluenced by the rich and varied experience about us." We have said he was writing for Methodists, and he could have found no better audience for a rebuke of that kind. Methodists of to-day are about two per cent less narrow-minded than their Victorian forerunners. And a few more Mr. Whithams, and a few more exhortations on the above lines, might manage to effect another two per cent improvement in twenty years time.

The following is from a religious weekly:—

We had a Gospel address, and some young people at the secondary school were heard saying: "What twaddle!" So some of us get them to meet us and thrash things out. We asked them what was their difficulty. "Well," said one, "we are taught at school that science says the natural order is fixed, and God cannot change the laws of the universe. Yet in church we hear prayers for fine weather at a Sunday school treat!" My friend went on to give the answer . . .

The wonderful answer, which is supposed to have satisfied the young sceptics, is discreetly missing. This little incident perhaps throws some light on the demand now being made for better religious instruction in secondary schools. But what is really wanted, from the parsons' view-point, is more carefully taught science—something that doesn't unsettle the religion the young people get in Sunday school or church.

"Cornish Methodists," says a writer, "must not get too respectable." It was a Whit-Monday service at Gwennup Pit that prompted the remark. The reporter thought he saw a good many people there who attended for the novelty of the thing or to keep up an old custom—"souls were not greatly or visibly stirred," and there were no "Hallelujahs!" This is very regrettable. The cure for this creeping paralysis of respectability is large doses of red-hot Gospel. The cold ashes of hell-fire must be re-kindled, or all is lost in Cornwall.

We regret to see in a Methodist contemporary, an advertisement with a large photo of a woman wearing a meagre and close-fitting bathing costume. The Lord alone knows how many super-sensitive Methodist males have been demoralized by it. Keeping abreast of the times is all very well. But surely our contemporary need not print advertisements that excite pure young men to sinful thoughts.

The Rev. Isaac Shimmin, of Penzance, thinks that a man may preach all the better for an hour at the tennis-court, and a lot of people would be happier Christians for a good spin on a bicycle. It's wonderful how broad-minded some parsons are getting nowadays. Of course, you must understand that, in the parson's view, a little of Sunday games does no harm, provided the players attend church afterwards. Sunday games become truly sinful only when indulged in to the extent of giving the churches a miss altogether. All broad-minded parsons strongly object to that.

In *Radio Times*, a reader wishes to know what it is in the constitution of the B.B.C. that prevents the broadcasting of plays on Sunday. Oh, it's nothing in the constitution. It's the institution of a committee of parsons which is doing the preventing.

The Secretary of the Lord's Day Observance Society implores the pious to save Sunday from God-dishonouring desecration and exploitation of the rights of others. The mob of bigots who are the Society's supporters

should be the last to talk about exploitation. What the Society is trying to do is to make Sunday so very dull and miserable that the people's boredom can be exploited for the benefit of the churches.

A contributor to a daily paper recently declared that whenever the Churches give a lead to-day, it is only in some petty matter. We wonder who is to blame. Is it that the Lord is to-day only inspiring petty ideas? Or is it that the intellectual powers of modern clerics can only deal with the petty? In either event, prayer ought to be helpful towards an improvement.

The Pope has agreed to the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Vatican and the Irish Free State. That is good news to the friends of Ireland, who desire that unfortunate country to always live in the atmosphere of the dark ages, occasionally lit up with a bonfire or a smile from the Duce.

A Mithraic temple has been discovered at Colchester. This will upset all the calculations of the good people, who have been told that there is only one true religion, and that is the one they have.

Professor Gilbert Murray, in a lecture at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, stated that most people understand only a tenth part of what they read or hear. We, in all simplicity, feel that all pedlars of religion, plain and fancy, will pull up their socks with joy when they have their best hopes confirmed in this manner; if they can only keep the pot boiling, theirs is the kingdom of earth for ever and ever. In Liverpool, where Catholic services are held, the great mysteries are delivered in Latin; what better arrangement than this can you have?

The Bishop of Derby has issued a primary visitation charge to his clergy, in which he laments that the number of the clergy in twenty years have diminished from 327 to 293. We daresay that if the Bishop had not mentioned it, no one would have noticed it. It is really surprising how heroically the majority of people bear this kind of privation.

The Bishop also says that "The Church for a long time, almost single-handed, provided what public education was given in England." That is a capital way of distorting the truth. It is true that what education existed was for a long time under the control of the Church, it is also true that the Church prevented any education existing that was not under its control. But to say that the Church provided it is simply untrue. And for the "common-people," there existed no education at all. This was forced upon the Church, and finally the secular government had to take the matter in hand, because of the disgraceful thing which the Church considered education. And ever since the Church has been fighting, not for education at all, but for its control, or for its own doctrines to be taught at the ratepayer's expense.

Here is evidence of it. The Bishop says:—

In the elementary schools, children can be taught the Bible, the principles of morality, and of a good life; but children need more than that, as we all do. We need to learn the beauty of worship, we want to give some conception of the life of the Church by showing them worship at its best, so that they will continue to be worshippers through the difficult adolescent stage. For this purpose let us make more use of the Children's Eucharist.

Well, that is quite frank. There is no complaint with the quality of the education given. The children are taught the principles of morality and of a good life, they are even taught the Bible. But what is wanted is that they shall be taught the beauty of worship, above all, they must be used, in a mild form, to the brutal and barbaric notion of eating a God. The essence of the complaint is that the schools are not so breeding children that they will become customers of the Bishop when grown up. When one has said that, one has said everything.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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

W.P.B.—Your letter has been forwarded to Mr. Repton, and by this time you will probably have received a reply.

G. SANDERS-BATES (Shanghai).—We greatly appreciate your kindly thoughts. They will be remembered with others that have reached us from all parts of the world. All that friendly sympathy could do has been done.

W. ROGERS.—Thanks for offer, but experience shows that, in spite of motoring, etc., Sunday still remains the best day for meetings. You must remember that our indoor meetings take place during the Autumn and Winter. The Conference is an exception.

J. ROGERS.—Someone has been hoaxing you. Charles Bradlaugh, G. W. Foote, G. J. Holyoake, Charles Watts and Mrs. Besant all called themselves Atheists, and defended Atheism with both tongue and pen. We cannot undertake to explain why certain people choose to change an opinion on that point. We do not set up for "Universal Provider" in the intellectual world.

W. P. ADAMSON.—We are not surprised at your conclusion that the ordinary Parliamentary Candidate is ignorant of the Blasphemy Laws, or the real case for Secular Education. We do not see why it should be otherwise. There is no intelligence test for entering Parliament. But questioning candidates may educate them and also those who listen to them.

D. CELONDER (Melbourne).—Thanks for sight of letter. Press and pulpit run close together where religion is concerned. A question of *preying* and *paying*.

F. SUTHERLAND (Queensland).—Roman Catholics are forbidden to read the Protestant version of the Bible only. We are sending you on a few leaflets for distribution, and shall be pleased to send you a supply if you require more.

C. TUSON.—The reply of the candidates questioned, that they would "wait and see how the question develops," is not surprising. It means they will wait to see which pays them best.

J. STEPHENS.—Much obliged for quotation. We have had many letters thanking us for the Einstein article, and asking for more on Spinoza. We are proud of our readers. We wonder how many other papers there are in the country, whose readers would ask for more of that kind of article.

J. BARTON.—Very useful, but too late for notice this week.

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

"John's Graupa" writes:—

I have just finished reading Mr. Chapman Cohen's *Four Lectures on Freethought and Life*, in which I consider Mr. Chapman Cohen is at his best. These four lectures gave me so much pleasure, that I would like to give as many people as I can afford the opportunity to read same. I enclose herein £1, with the request that you offer twenty copies to readers who wish to have a free copy. My only condition is that each recipient promises to pass his copy on to others to read. If I were rich enough I would distribute thousands of them, and give prizes to secondary teachers who read them to their class. I would like to see many of your readers follow my example.

I hope Mr. Chapman Cohen will give us more of his Lectures.

We shall be pleased to send on the copies on receipt of names and addresses.

We have not been exactly deluged with copies of the replies of candidates to questions set out in these columns a few weeks back. But we know that very many have been questioned, and we hope to receive these replies as early as is convenient.

Freethinkers who have parcels of old books, magazines, etc., for which they have no further use might send them along to Mr. Shaw of 3 Paradise Street, Wolverhampton, to whom they will be of great use. Mr. Shaw is an old Freethinker who is trying to eke out a livelihood by the sale of such things, and every little helps. Paper backed novels and magazines would be of special use, we should say.

Mr. George Whitehead commences a fortnight's lecturing in the open-air in Liverpool, on June 1, and will conclude on Friday, June 14. This week's fixtures will be found in the Lecture Notice column.

A curious phenomenon which requires an explanation, is the number of war books that have recently been published. It may be that the stupendous shock the world sustained has injured the creative faculties, and that writers who should be busy showing us how to live, can now only feebly pluck the strings of memory. Mr. William J. Lamb is the author of a book of verse published by The C. W. Daniel Company, 46 Bernard Street, W.C.1, at the price of 7s. 6d. nett. In some forty-two stanzas, his chief work, "The Monument," is an indictment of the stupidity of war, and although nothing new is said, and no real way out is shown, the reader will be convinced of the writer's sincerity of purpose. Denunciation, fierce and unremitting, is hurled at Mars, and Mr. Lamb certainly knows how to use words in their right place. His sonnet to "The Panama Canal," as also his parody of T. E. Brown's famous lines, "The Garden," which Mr. Lamb entitles "The Jungle," show him in a different and more pleasing vein. Thomas Paine is not forgotten in his collection of sonnets, showing sound workmanship, nor again another Thomas, our own English Hardy, is the subject of some particularly fine and well-wrought lines. He also has one very good sonnet entitled "The Tavern," which, of course, is none other than the Workman's Club. We like immensely his verses "The Thrush," which describes this bird as singing when the summer has gone. From a strictly ornithological point of view, this is incorrect, but Mr. Lamb must have his poetic licence, as well as praise for the following lines:—

"Ay, faded are the lilacs now that bear
The summer's fragrance for a garden fair;
Cold winter came with cruel hand and tore
Laurels from the hawthorn tree, so bare:
But thou, sweet spirit, didst avenge the wrong,
And blessed the ruin with divinest song."

Mr. William J. Lamb is a manly writer, showing independence of spirit and deference to none but the best. The book is a credit to the publishers, and only space prevents us from giving more of the writer's undoubted quality, which is strictly in the line of the best traditional English poets.

Religion: Folkways and Experience.

(Continued from page 315.)

"THE mores have the authority of facts. The mores comes down to us from the past. Each individual is born into them as he is born into the atmosphere, and he does not reflect on them, or criticize them any more than a baby analyses the atmosphere before he begins to breathe it. Each one is subjected to the influence of the mores, and formed by them, before he is capable of reasoning about them. It may be objected that nowadays, at least, we criticize all traditions, and accept none just because they are handed down to us. If we take up cases of things which are still entirely or almost entirely in the mores, we shall see that this is not so . . . Religion was originally a matter of the mores. It became a societal institution and a function of the state. It has now to a great extent been put back into the mores. Since laws with penalties to enforce religious creeds or practices have gone out of use, one may think and act as he pleases about religion. Therefore it is not 'good form' to attack religion. Infidel publications are now tabooed by the mores, and are more effectually repressed than ever before. They produce no controversy . . . The thing to be noticed . . . is that the masses oppose a deaf ear to every argument against the mores. It is only so far as things have been transferred from the mores into laws and positive institutions, that there is discussion about them or rationalizing upon them. The mores contain the norm by which, if we should discuss the mores, we should have to judge them. We learn the mores as unconsciously as we learn to walk, and eat, and breathe. The masses never learn how we walk and eat and breathe, and they never know any reason why the mores are what they are. The justification of them is that when we wake into a consciousness of life we find them facts which already hold us in the bonds of tradition, custom, and habit. The mores contain embodied in them, notions, doctrines, and maxims, but they are facts. They are in the present tense. They have nothing to do with what ought to be, will be, may be, or once was, if it is not now." ²³ Yet "the mores are not so stereotyped and changeless as might appear, because they are for ever moving towards more complete adaptation to conditions and interests, and also towards more complete adjustment to each other. People in mass have never made or kept up a custom in order to hurt their own interests. They have made innumerable errors as to what their interests were, and how to satisfy them, but they have always aimed to serve their interests as well as they could . . . What is traditional and current is the standard of what ought to be. The masses never raise any question about such things. If a few raise doubts and questions, this proves that the folkways have already begun to lose firmness, and the regulative element in the mores has begun to lose authority. This indicates that the folkways are on their way to a new adjustment."²⁴ The folkways are in the end the arbiter of what effect we can exert in opposing religion. "The folkways can be modified, but only to a limited extent, by the purposeful efforts of men. In time they lose power, decline, and die, or are transformed . . . The combination in the mores of persistency and variability determines the extent to which it is possible to modify them by arbitrary action. It is not possible to change them, by any artifice or device, to a great extent, or suddenly, or in

any essential element; it is possible to modify them by slow and long-continued effort if the ritual is changed by minute variations."²⁵ The growing success of militant, insistent, and intransigent metatheism is based upon the fact that it co-operates with a long-continuing and increasing trend in the mores of an enlarging group,²⁶ and on the fact that there is an increasing extensive tendency in society at large to diminish and restrict the application of theism. Metatheism is thus the eventual outcome.

III.

THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.

The congealed religion is a social affair. It is a set of folkways. It is in the mores. It is institutional. In the individual it takes place only as it is derived from the group. Personal religion is merely some partial reflection of the religion of the mass, even though the mass religion is a total of personal religions. For this aggregate religion hangs over and influences the individual. It is impossible to state just what this religion is and just how it works. "The mores are unrecorded. A society is never conscious of its mores until it comes in contact with some other society which has different mores, or until, in higher civilization, it gets information by literature. The latter operation, however, affects only the literary class, not the masses, and society never consciously sets about the task of making mores . . . A society does not record its mores in its annals, because they are to it unnoticed and unconscious. When we try to learn the mores of any age or people we have to seek our information in incidental references, allusions, observations of travellers, etc. Generally works of fiction, drama, etc., give us more information about the mores than historical records . . . The mores are not recorded for the same reason that meals, going to bed, sunrise, etc., are not recorded, unless the regular course of things is broken."²⁷ Church usage enters into this group religion as it is experienced, but so unessentially and indefinitely it may be disregarded. "What we believe" is at once the matter, definition and justification of this religion. Certain habitual catchwords of creed,²⁸ hymnal, and text have been caught up to serve as dogma, little related to Christian, apostolic, patristic, or scholastic theory, upon which such religious sentiments center. At present there is extant no complete religious cosmogeny or eschatology, but only this hodge-podge of surviving catchwords. There is "God the Father," "our Lord," the Christ nebula, the Bible nimbus, the divinely decreed, heaven-hell, body and soul, the distinctively emphasized "this life," the "passing away," the corollary "hereafter," the polemic notion of what is unchristian. These droll figments serve to make up the religious scheme of our "amen" gentry. An extensive description would be required to present this picture in its whole range. But its accidental detail is not important. A recognition of how it works itself into people's lives is sufficient.

It is all a matter of what activities and experiences go to make up the religious consciousness. Whatever can happen can be made religious experience. But to be religious it must happen in a special situation. When, in the course of acting and experiencing, the accustomed way of dealing with men is used

²⁵ *Ibid.* (pp. iv, 87; 80-82, 84-85, 94-96.)

²⁶ James H. Leuba: *The Belief in God and Immortality, A Psychological, Anthropological and Statistical Study.* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1912.) (pp. xi, 172-287.)

²⁷ Sumner: *Folkways.* (pp. 78-79.)

²⁸ Arthur Cushman McGiffert: *The Apostles' Creed: Its Origin, Its Purpose, and Its Historical Interpretation.* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902.)

²³ *Ibid.* (pp. 76-77.)

²⁴ *Ibid.* (pp. 58-59.)

on the objects of the religious belief, the activity and experience is religious.²⁹ "Any impulse, and desire may lead to religious activity, and in it no type of emotion is to be found which is not represented also outside . . . That which makes life religious, in the historical sense of the term, is standing in relation with, or attempting to make use of a particular kind of power. The will-to-live comes to expression as religion when an appeal is made to a class of powers which may be roughly characterized as psychic, superhuman, and usually, but not necessarily personal."³⁰ Certain needs come to be regularly assigned to this anthropopathic way of response, and so regularly made and kept religious. This gives distinct experiences which come to be thought of as making up the psychology of religion. But they are merely selected and specialized outside responses which have been transferred to the religious situation. They belong to the class of religious response without being psychologically specifically religious. These are not religious in themselves, but religious because of this situation in which they are made to occur. "As a matter of fact, religion serves more and more exclusively in the attainment or preservation of that which is not otherwise easily securable, and of that which it is most successful in securing." Still, "it is not the needs which are distinctive of religion, but the method whereby they are gratified."³¹

Religion affords nothing new. It offers nothing distinctive in the way of experience. It makes no special contribution to like. Religious experience is generally accepted as a piece with the rest of experience. "The moment we are willing to treat the term 'religious sentiment' as a collective name for the many sentiments which religious objects may arouse in alternation, we see that it probably contains nothing whatever of a psychologically specific nature." Religious feelings are the ordinary feelings directed to some object." As concrete states of mind, made up of a feeling plus a specific sort of object, religious emotions of course are psychic entities distinguishable from other concrete emotions; but there is no ground for assuming a simple abstract 'religious emotion' to exist as a distinct elementary mental affection by itself, present in every religious experience without exception. As there thus seems to be no one elementary religious emotion, but only a common storehouse of emotions upon which religious objects may draw, so there might conceivably also prove to be no one specific and essential kind of religious object, and no one specific and essential kind of religious act."³² Anything that occurs in response to a religious object, or in a religious situation "is a general psychological process, which may take place with any sort of mental material, and need not necessarily assume the religious form . . . The religious types are only one species of a genus that contains other types as well." The religious is of "precisely the same psychological form of event"³³ as any other religious activity and religious experience are ordinary activity and experience worked into the religious groove.

CURTIS BRUEN.

(To be continued.)

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

MANCHESTER, MAY 19, 1929.

MANCHESTER certainly belied its famous reputation on this occasion. Instead of the incessant rain and dark sky, proudly claimed by Lancastrians as a permanent feature of their capital, perfect weather greeted the delegates as they foregathered last Saturday, May 18, at the Victoria Hotel. The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, held an informal reception of both delegates and friends, and a happy evening resulted. Miss Horne provided some excellent singing, and Miss Morris was responsible for some extremely well-delivered recitations at intervals during the evening. Secularists are notorious for controversy—the present writer sorrowfully pleads guilty in this respect—but everything passed off happily, aided, it is true, by a right word now and then from Mr. Chapman Cohen. Perhaps an excuse can be found in the nearness of the election, when party passion is bound to run a little high.

The real business of the Conference commenced on Whit-Sunday at 10.30 a.m. The large room provided for the meeting was soon filled, the following Branches being represented: H. Collins (Blackburn), F. S. Houghton (Houghton-le-Spring), W. J. W. Easterbrook (Plymouth), J. T. Brighton (Chester-le-Street), I. M. W. Easterbrook (Swansea), F. E. Monks (Manchester), S. Cohen (Manchester), J. V. Shortt (Liverpool), S. R. A. Ready (Liverpool), E. H. Castles (Liverpool), J. G. Dobson (Birmingham), F. Price (Newcastle-on-Tyne), J. Clayton (Nelson), F. P. Corrigan (S. London), R. H. Rosetti (West Ham), A. C. Rosetti (Manchester), H. J. Bayford (Shotts), W. J. McKelvie (Glasgow), O. Z. Seferian (Fulham and Chelsea), G. Whitehead (Darlington), Miss K. B. Kough (North London), W. H. Sisson (Bolton), A. Jackson (Bolton), H. Cutner (Bethnal Green and West London). A large number of members were also present.

The Minutes of the last Conference were taken as read, and the President read the Executive's Annual Report (published in full in last weeks' *Freethinker*), which was adopted unanimously.

A discussion followed the adoption of the Financial Report, initiated by Mr. Monks, and after the President had satisfactorily answered all questions, its adoption was carried unanimously.

On the election of the President, Mr. Chapman Cohen said that as he was in nomination he would ask Mr. A. C. Rosetti, President of the Manchester Branch, to take the chair while that motion was under discussion. Mr. Rosetti said that there was no need for him to say much in asking for the motion to be moved and seconded. They were all unanimous that Mr. Chapman Cohen was the only man for the Presidency, and where all were united there was no need for many words. The motion was then put and carried with enthusiasm.

Immediately after the election of the President, permission was asked to suspend the standing orders to bring forward a proposal concerning the President. This having been granted, the President was asked if he would vacate the chair in favour of the President of the local Branch, while the subject was under discussion. The Conference having agreed to this, Mr. A. C. Rosetti took the chair. Mr. F. E. Monks then said, that at the last Conference a proposal was brought forward from one of the Branches, suggesting that some mark of the Society's esteem should be made to the President. The suggestion was warmly welcomed by the Conference, but at the President's own request, the subject was dropped. He believed there was a very general desire with Freethinkers throughout the country, that something of this sort should be done, and he begged to move:—

"That in view of Mr. Chapman Cohen's valuable and unselfish services to the Freethought Cause during a period of nearly forty years, this Conference of the National Secular Society suggests the formation of a Committee, having for its object the presentation of a substantial testimonial to Mr. Chapman Cohen, as a mark of the appreciation of the Freethinkers of this country."

²⁹ Leuba: *A Psychological Study of Religion*. (pp. 5-9.)

³⁰ *Ibid.* (p. 7.)

³¹ *Ibid.* (p. 8.)

³² William James: *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. A Study in Human Nature. (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1902). (pp. 27-28.)

³³ *Ibid.* (pp. 175-176.)

The proposal was seconded by Mr. W. J. W. Easterbrook, and carried with enthusiasm.

The President returned thanks in a few brief words, and then, on behalf of the Executive, moved Resolution No. 5:—

"That pending the appointment by the Conference of a General Secretary, the Executive be authorized to obtain whatever clerical assistance is required to carry on the work of the office."

He said some words of explanation was necessary. It was an open secret that Mr. Mann had not taken kindly to the routine work of the Secretarial office, and as a consequence the work had not taken kindly to him. Mr. Mann had marked abilities in some directions, but unfortunately the ability to discharge with adequate efficiency the work of Secretary was not one of them. In the circumstances the Executive had relieved Mr. Mann from the necessity of attending the Conference; it would have been unnecessarily painful to him to do so, and as his sole offence was lack of Secretarial efficiency, he felt the Conference would agree with what had been decided in this matter. In the circumstances the Executive had asked Miss Kough to carry out the duties of Secretary to the Conference, and with her usual good nature she had cheerfully done so. It was work she had done for many years quite gratuitously, and the Conference was greatly indebted to her for her services on this, as on previous occasions.

The President then read to the Conference a letter of resignation from Mr. Mann, of which the Executive advised acceptance. On the question of a future Secretary, the President said that no doubt a fitting man would be found, but it would not be constitutional for the Conference to elect anyone to that post without the name of the person going on the Agenda in the usual manner. The motion after some little discussion was carried.

Mr. C. G. Quinton was then re-elected Treasurer, and Messrs. Theobald & Co., auditors. The Nominations for the Executive were taken *en bloc* and carried.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti then moved that in future the cards of membership for Branch members be sent to the local Secretaries for distribution. This was the original plan, but the method of all cards being sent direct to members from headquarters was adopted. Now experience has shown the plan to be unsatisfactory. The resolution was adopted.

Mr. A. C. Rosetti then moved:—

"That in view of the General Election, this Conference appeals to Freethinkers all over the country to question candidates of all parties as to their position with regard to Secular Education, the repeal of the Blasphemy laws, and other law either existing or contemplated for the benefit of the Christian sects of this country."

This was, he said, the most immediately practical motion on the Agenda. A General Election was at hand, and Freethinkers had an opportunity of pressing their claims in public. It was not enough for one Freethinker in every constituency to ask questions, every Freethinker should ask them and press for answers. Mr. H. Black gave the Conference some amusing instances of the ignorance displayed by Candidates on both the Blasphemy Laws and even on Secular Education, and other speakers followed on the lines of the mover of the resolution, which was carried.

On behalf of the Plymouth Branch, Mr. W. J. W. Easterbrook moved Motion No. 11, referring to Church attendance in the Army and Navy. This was a standing protest of the Society against treating men as little children with regard to religious freedom, and in time it is hoped that it will be carried into effect. Other delegates spoke of their experience in the army, and the motion was then carried. Motion No. 12:—

"That this Conference is of opinion that the interests of the Freethought Movement as a whole would be promoted if an official statement were drawn up setting forth the position of the National Secular Society in relation to political movements."

was moved by Mr. Corrigan. He said that this question was raised several years ago, and it was then made quite plain that on political grounds the Society stood neutral. Members of an organization had to unite on

points of agreement. There were all sorts of political opinions in the National Secular Society, and no political pledge was asked from members on joining. He did not see that the Society could profitably depart from its established policy, but he suggested that a leaflet explaining the Society's attitude towards political questions might be written and distributed. The President undertook that this should be done as soon as possible. Perhaps a series of leaflets or pamphlets outlining the whole policy of the Society might be attempted.

Motion No. 13, advocating a policy of Secular Education, and Motion No. 14, proposing that steps be taken to organize a movement amongst teachers in favour of the abolition of religious instruction in State-supported schools was at the suggestion of the President combined. Several speakers pointed out how much the movement would gain if teachers could be brought to collectively take a stand on this question, and were this done, the persecution feared by teachers might be obviated. The President said that, in his opinion, the danger was a very real one. There was very little doubt that each of the three political parties were ready to promise more religious instruction in the schools in return for votes, and if the Churches and Chapels could reach a measure of agreement the new parliament would be likely to introduce a Bill that would give the Churches much of what they desire. In that event he hoped the dose of religion would be a very strong one—the stronger the better. It might create the necessary reaction which would place the whole question on a proper basis.

This concluded the morning session.

On the resumption of the Conference, after luncheon, there was considerable discussion on Motion No. 14, which was amended to read:—

"That in view of the number of meetings organized by the Executive, it is desirable that in all cases where Branches of the Society exist, some agreed proportion of the total expense should be guaranteed by the local Branch.

In reply to various questions and criticisms, the President said that while headquarters was quite ready to assist Branches as much as possible, and by direct grants, provision of lecturers, and help in advertising, was assisting to a very considerable extent, the great thing was to act so as not to sap local effort. This was not altogether a question of money, but if a Branch failed to get financial support in its own district it was also undermining the amount of moral support it was likely to get. There was a very vigorous discussion on this motion, some delegates fearing that some Branches could not guarantee anything. It was pointed out that the word "agreed" covered all such cases. Mr. Brighton (Chester-le-Street) thought the provision a wise one, and pointed out that in his own district, one of the poorest in the country, they had always managed to pay all local expenses. They needed to make the most of local sympathy. The motion was carried.

Motion No. 15, by the West Ham Branch:—

"That this Conference notes with apprehension the growth of police interference with the rights of free speech and free publication, and suggests that in defence of liberties that have been dearly won, the Executive should take steps to form an independent committee to watch all such cases, and to take legal action in defence wherever such step seems advisable."

was moved by Mr. R. H. Rosetti. He said that every lover of freedom of speech and publications must have experienced great uneasiness on noting the ways in which the police and the Home Office attempt to regulate the publication of various works, the issue of certain newspapers, and lay down rules for the conduct of meetings in the open-air. Some of these regulations, he did not think would stand the test of legality, and it was desirable that some organization should exist which could bring to a definite focus those who were interested in preserving the liberties that had been so hardly won. Mr. Black thought the motion was unnecessary, as this kind of work had often been done by the Executive. The President agreed that this was so, but there was something more asked for here, and that was the authority of the Conference to establish a Committee on a wider basis. Mr. Rosetti, in replying to criticisms,

said that the formation of such a Committee would help us to recognize who really was on the side of free speech and publication.

Motion No. 18, on the appointment of an organizer, was discussed by Messrs. Monks, Sissons, Short, Dr. Carmichael, and the President. The difficulty was to see just what an organizer travelling round the country could do. We were not in the position of a trades union, where the potential members were already located. In cases where a number of Branches existed, a lecturer might be sent to that area to do what could be done. Eventually the resolution was passed, leaving the Executive to give whatever shape to it circumstances warranted.

The time being advanced, the last two motions, being of a formal character, were carried without discussion.

The Conference then gave attention to the interesting papers that were presented to it—as usual not the least valuable of the days' proceedings. Mr. R. H. Rosetti's paper on "Freethought and Politics," that of Mr. E. Hales's, on "Heresy in the Scottish Church," and that of Dr. Carmichael's, on "Mistakes in Science." All these will appear in the *Freethinker* in full.

This brought the Conference of 1929 to a successful close, and it was proclaimed on all sides as being among the best of recent years.

Evening Public Meeting.

At Chorlton Town Hall, in the evening, the public demonstration of the N.S.S. attracted a packed and most enthusiastic audience. A large sprinkling of ladies showed the interest women took in the Movement, and the speeches were followed most attentively. The platform offered a rich and varied fare. The speakers of the evening had all won their spurs as Freethought advocates, and it proved extremely interesting to see how thoroughly individual they all were, how splendidly in earnest, how varied in subject, how cleverly were the points made, and how the Chairman, Mr. Chapman Cohen, managed to blend them together in one harmonious whole.

Mr. Chapman Cohen welcomed the audience in an—I was nearly saying *unusually* happy speech—but it would be more correct to say, in his *usual* easy and effective manner. He gave a short sketch of the history of the Society with its two great Presidents, Charles Bradlaugh and G. W. Foote, and said that although it had never had what might be called a huge membership, and great financial resources, no other Society had done so much to influence the thought of the country as had the N.S.S. Its members had been among the foremost workers in many humanitarian reforms, and the existence of a more enlightened Sunday, the dropping out of sight of so many brutal and terrifying Christian teachings, with the growth of a saner and healthier interest in the organization of social life was largely due to its activities. Some time ago the Dean of Manchester admitted that it was Secularism that the Churches really had to fight, and with that we could all agree. The essential issue was that which lay between two opposing views of life, and there was no question as to the direction in which thought was moving.

Mr. F. E. Monks then showed the injustice unbelievers had to face in municipal life, and pleaded for genuine toleration. Books and journals were kept out of libraries through bigotry, and he referred to the splendid fight Bradlaugh made for the publication of the Knowlton pamphlet. His advice was to bombard prospective Members of Parliament with questions on the lines of the Questionnaire published in the *Freethinker*.

Mr. G. Whitehead was in particularly vigorous form, and defined vital and fundamental questions. He showed the large amount of money the Church drew from mining royalties, and were never denounced, and also how the Church, though still receiving money from tithes, never devoted any of it to charity, as was originally intended. Enormous sums of money was spent on education, and wasted—because religion was made compulsory. Dr. Carmichael's speech dealt with the beginning and evolution of intelligence and science, and was impregnated with wise and witty remarks. Science always left room for errors, and could correct them. Re-

ligion was infallible, and never was wrong. It was this attitude of the Church that we were fighting.

Mr. Clayton, the next speaker, used his powerful voice most effectively, and gave an engaging account of how both Spiritualists and Christians had to fly to Freethought for their best arguments against each other.

Mr. Corrigan, an expert on Roman Catholicism, was in excellent form, and his criticism of the 370 questions of the Roman Catholic Catechism were biting in their contempt. He insisted that no form of education could be more baneful than that of Roman Catholics.

Finally, Mr. Chapman Cohen drew all the threads together and pointed the moral. On the one side, the speeches to which they had just listened were a criticism of existing religions, but on the other, they were all a call to service—to the service of Freethought. No work in which men and women could engage would so well repay effort as this. To face life with one's head up and one's eyes open, to work on in the full confidence that what they were doing was producing good results in the lives of all around us, and would brighten the way of those who followed, was to enable men and women to face life with courage and death without fear.

Mr. Chapman Cohen's speech, which was heard in that tense silence which is the best compliment an audience can pay a speaker, was cheered enthusiastically when he resumed his seat.

H. CUTNER.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

AGNOSTICISM AND FREETHOUGHT.

SIR,—The fact that there are many who profess to be Freethinkers, but term themselves Agnostics, is regrettable. The cardinal aim and object of the Atheist is to combat religion and superstition, which is also supposed to be that of the Agnostic. The Atheist disbelieves in a God, and the Agnostic apparently shares this belief with him. Freethought directs its efforts towards destroying the belief in a God, and has marshalled a mass of conclusive evidence to disprove the God-idea. Its arguments are confirmed by anthropological research in particular, and by science in general; hence, what is there to be Agnostic about?

The Agnostic, if he disbelieves in a God, will naturally contribute his quota in understanding the God-idea because he regards a God as nothing more than something born of superstition and fear. How, then, can he be Agnostic about that which he treats as imaginary or as a delusion, and in reference to which he strives to alter the belief of the Christian or Theist? This attitude is one of flagrant inconsistency. It is simply ridiculous to affirm Agnosticism in connexion with that which one does not believe to exist, and tries to convince others to believe that it does not exist. It will, however, be logical and consistent to adopt an Agnostic attitude in regard to something for which we have reasonable grounds to believe that has existence. This is not the case with God and, therefore, Agnosticism in this respect is unwarranted.

The term, therefore, signifies either the desire to retain a certain air of respectability or it implies sheer hypocrisy. It follows further that an Agnostic has no justification for criticizing the believer on the question of his Theism, for the reason that he himself is sceptical about God's being.

Then there are hermaphroditic Freethinkers commonly styled "reverend Agnostics," who are always over-willing to condescend to the demands of the "come let us pray and be holy" class of believer. They are intimidated by the possibility of losing their social caste with their brothers in Christ. This type of Freethinker merits the scorn of all right-minded Freethinkers, because he is an obstacle to the progress of Freethought in so far that he does not assist in demolishing superstition and supernaturalism, but merely garbs them with an appearance of semi-plausibility. He is a friend or foe to neither the believer nor the Freethinker. He is a veritable fence-sitter.

Agnosticism is responsible for such titles of debates as "Is There a Purpose in Evolution?" In plainer words, "Is There a God Behind the Universe?" Many Agnostics are too faint-hearted to confess their attenuated Theism, and consequently disguise their carefully concealed belief by means of a deceptive phraseology, for fear that they might give offence to either their Christian brothers or Freethinkers. Let us be mentally honest and candid about our convictions. Truth harms no one, only those who are afraid of it. An honest and open enemy is always preferable to a false friend.

D. MATTHEWS.

Transvaal.

SIR,—Your reply to me in your issue of March 17, admits of a rejoinder so obvious that I cannot refrain from making it. You were wrong to inveigh against the action of the authorities in stopping the sale of a book countenancing loathsome practices amongst females. You admit that you did not read the book, and you were therefore doubly wrong in blaming the authorities for what you didn't fully understand. But whether you read the book or not, the evidence was plain that it was unfit for publication. Moreover, it was not policemen, as you state in your reply to me, who set up as judges of what was unfit for publication, but legal gentlemen and others well qualified to pass an opinion. In any case, there is no reason why policemen should not be empowered to stop the sale of flagrantly indecent publications. Being picked men they are as well able to judge as others, and can be corrected if they are wrong. It is indeed strange that when the *Freethinker* leaves its métier of disputing religion, it always goes wrong. In the Great War it did its little best to discourage resistance to Germany, and in the Boer War it went against those who were merely fighting for the privilege of managing their own affairs. The *Freethinker* seems unable to realize that to fight in a just cause is noble and praiseworthy. Trusting you will accept this candid criticism in the same kind spirit in which it is offered.

J. E. ROOE.

N. Rhodesia.

Society News.

MR. WHITEHEAD conducted a series of meetings in the Chester-le-Street area, in the course of which he visited Houghton, Sunderland and Stanley. At all three places very successful meetings were held, and the attention of large crowds was arrested in spite of the election fever, which indeed was very mild. At Houghton, a very primitive type of opposition was encountered, the lecturer being denounced because he had not been born again, which drawback it appeared unfitted him for the discussion of the Bible and spiritual subjects in general. A meeting in Sunderland, a place hitherto unvisited by the lecturer, left a large crowd eager for more, after a good crop of questions had been answered. But the meetings held in Stanley, also previously unvisited by Mr. Whitehead in his capacity of a Secularist speaker, were the most promising of all, and should lay the basis of a branch. The crowds were large and sympathetic, and even the platform opposition had none of that virulence which is so characteristic of opponents in new territory. All the places mentioned will be visited again before this report is in print.

From Saturday, June 1 to Friday, June 14 inclusive, Mr. Whitehead will be in Liverpool, details of the various meetings being announced in the Lecture Notices.

PEACE THROUGH A FEDERAL WORLD-STATE.

An enduring Pax is only to be attained by pooling sovereignty in relation to the main causes of stress between the originally separate communities. Every step you make towards peace therefore means a loss of separateness, a loss of independence. Peace and national independence are incompatible—and our world is refusing to see it.—Mr. H. G. Wells (at the Reichstag, Berlin).

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.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (The Orange Tree Hotel, Euston Road, N.W.1): Thursday, June 6, at 101 Tottenham Court Road, 7.30 to 11.30, Social and Dance. Admission 1s.

OUTDOOR.

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

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan; 6.30, Brockwell Park, Mr. F. P. Corrigan; Wednesday, 8.0, Clapham Old Town, Mr. L. Ebury; Friday, 8.0, Liverpool Street, Camberwell Gate, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Outside Technical College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. F. Mann—A Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6.0, Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Messrs. J. Hart and R. G. Lennard; 3.30, Messrs. E. Betts and J. Hart; 6.30, Messrs. B. A. Le Maine and A. H. Hyatt. Free-thought meetings every Wednesday, at 7.30, Messrs. J. Hart and R. G. Lennard. Every Friday, at 7.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. The *Freethinker* can be obtained outside Hyde Park during our meetings.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith), 3.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine and others.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15.—Mr. F. Mann.—A Lecture.

OUTDOOR.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. G. Whitehead will lecture each evening at 7.30 as follows: Saturday, June 1, Islington Square; Sunday, June 2 and Monday, June 3, Queen's Drive (opposite Baths); Tuesday, June 4, Beaumont Street; Wednesday, June 5, Islington Square; Thursday, June 6, corner of High Park Street and Park Road; Friday and Saturday, June 7 and 8, Islington Square.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S.—Ramble to Baldernock. Meet at the "Black Bull" Inn, Milnagavie at 12.0 prompt.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Moor): 7.0, near North Road entrance.—Mr. J. Cecil Keart.—A Lecture.

MR. JACK CLAYTON will lecture at the following places this week as follows: Sunday, June 2, Accrington Market, 7.0 p.m.; Monday, June 3, Higham, 7.30 p.m.; Friday, June 7, Crawshawbooth, 7.30 p.m.

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

Miscellaneous Advertisements.

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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.

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