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

Views and Opinions.

Fooling with God.

It would be scarcely complimentary to Mr. James Douglas to assume that he takes his writings on religion quite so seriously as do some of his readers. Somehow one is reminded when reading them of a story told of Henry Fielding. The great author of that great book *Tom Jones*, wrote some different work in the shape of plays—mainly of the “pot-boiling” type, and was seated quietly in a coffee house during the first performance of one of them. To him came a friend in great perturbation of mind. The play had been laughed at. “Oh,” said Fielding, quite undisturbed, “have the fools found it out?” Of course, it is not so likely that “the fools” will find one out, when one is writing “flapdoodle” on the subject of religion, as it is when one is writing on another question. For on other subjects men do use whatever critical ability they possess, but on religion, what most believers expect is a dreamy sort of lullaby which piques the ear without exciting the intelligence, and soothes in the same way that a drug soothes in the first stages of its administration.

So when the *Daily Express* announced a special series of articles on the belief in God, care being taken that all who wrote would profess in some sort of a God, one knew what to expect. Some well-known names would be paraded who would all say that they believed in a kind-of-a-sort-of-a-something, which they called God, they would all talk about heights and depths of the universe, the vague yearning that man has for union with the infinite, with all the other verbal tom-foolery with which present-day newspapers befog their readers and try to build up a larger circulation. And, more fortunate than Fielding, the fools never do seem to find out the trick that is being played on them. Perhaps one ought to say that any fool who does find out the trick is not per-

mitted to announce his discovery, so that the other fools remain undisturbed.

* * *

Douglas and God.

The articles were five in all, Mr. Douglas winding up with what the editor—or Mr. Douglas—described beforehand as “a most movingly written contribution.” “A moving contribution” it certainly is, although *how* it moves one depends upon the person. For sheer inanity, and sloppy silliness it out Douglas Douglas. But if I may offer a little friendly council I would warn Mr. Douglas that this kind of thing may be pushed too far. There is a point at which the fool may suspect that he is being fooled, and a suspicious fool is apt to be a very awkward customer. For instance, it is rather dangerous to publish the announcement that Newton has been superseded—presumably by Einstein, although a postcard to Einstein might soon remove that foolish error. Definite statements of this kind are rather risky. It is much safer to stick to the clanking tin-can kind of rhetoric which tells us that even though Atheists and Agnostics “sweep away all the poetic legends of religion, all the symbolisms, all the metaphors, all the parables, all the allegories, all the miracles . . . the living spirit of faith survives and persists,” because no one to whom this kind of thing appeals will ever note that if a thing survives, it must persist, or wonder what there is to persist if everything connected with religion is swept away. Mr. Douglas evidently reasons on the lines that as the less there is of a thing the more valuable it is, if there is nothing at all it is more valuable still. It reminds one of Mark Twain’s story of the pilot who steered so wonderfully while in a somnambulant state, that one of the onlookers observed, “If he can steer like that while he’s asleep, what couldn’t he do if he was dead!”

Modesty is perhaps responsible for Mr. Douglas’s confession that “even after I die the majestic march of science will go on through the centuries,” although after the confession made some time ago that on three separate occasions God went out of his way to save Mr. Douglas’s life, one ought to be prepared for a short period of cosmic disorganization following his demise. But I do not quite fathom the significance of the statement: “My faith in God is fortified by the certitude that this little earth is only a tiny speck in the universe of universes.” Does he mean that his faith would be lessened if instead of a speck the earth was a good-sized lump? I give that up. Mr. Douglas is on much safer ground when he picks up the tin-can again, and writes of everything having its being “In the infinite mystery of a Creator, who is both knowable and unknowable, known and unknown, named and unnameable, divined and undividable.” A man must be a very poor kind of religionist who does not feel soothed by this kind of lullaby;

and as I have always been partial to nonsense rhymes, I quite appreciate this effort of Mr. Douglas.

* * *

Jesus Knows.

Mr. Douglas is again on dangerous ground when he says that faith may be a separate sense, "found in its fiercest intensity in beings who do not possess the highest intellectual powers or the largest stock of learning." It is true that this may be taken by *Daily Express* readers as a compliment to them; on the other hand it may be resented. They may not like their religious sense attributed to want of intellectual development. Mr. Douglas does not doubt that some philosophers would rate Plato and Aristotle above Jesus intellectually, but the tin-can saves the situation, for "in the region of faith, Jesus utterly surpasses them, and the other great intellects," for "we know that he knew more about God than any other son of man or any other son of God . . . He believed, therefore he knew." But how we know that he knew and how he knew that he was right in what he knew, or thought he knew, or how Mr. Douglas is right in thinking that he knows that Jesus knew, only Mr. Douglas knows. Mr. Douglas does not tell us, but he puts a few peas in his tin-can by way of producing more noise and says in this "moving" article of his, that "our spiritual life transcends the sense of touch, the sense of taste, the sense of smell. There is a higher sense which transmits messages to the cortex of the brain, that marvellous recorder and decoder of signals." Perhaps the name for this transcendent sense is non-sense.

I fancy I have read before of some one who looked up at the stars, and were stricken with religious fervour on seeing them. But this experience also befel Mr. Douglas. At sea he and the captain of the ship watched certain of the heavenly bodies, they were too stricken to speak to each other, but could only go their ways to ponder on the mystery—probably over a glass of whisky in the saloon, where spirit communed with spirit, and where the imagination soared higher as the whisky sank lower. To Mr. Douglas "the punctuality of the stars" is a tremendous revelation of God's power. You see, they are never late! It is true they sometimes break up, or die out, but they are, while they are there, never behind time, and punctuality means so much to a journalist. It would seem that anything large or small, anything that we know or do not know, somehow proves a God to Mr. Douglas. Jesus is the supreme revealer of God to man, therefore he believes in Jesus. But as we, so he says, really know nothing about God, one wonders what it was that Jesus revealed, and what kind of a revelation it is that leaves us knowing no more after the revelation than we did before?

* * *

The Ancient Game of "Spoof."

As I have said, it would be a poor compliment to Mr. Douglas to take him seriously. Someone said of a noted Oxford Professor, that no one could possibly be as wise as he looked. I have great doubts as to whether anyone could be quite so silly as some of our religious journalists pretend to be. But they have their jargon, and it must be used. Give them a ceremony in which the Queen figures, and she is referred to as a "radiant lady," a "gracious figure," etc., etc. Give them a royal funeral, and if the day is dull it is nature "attuning itself to the voiceless grief of the nation," if the sun shines, then nature is "draping in golden light the recumbent body of the mighty dead." Give them a religious topic, and one knows before one reads that there will be the usual jargon of the faith that is greater than science, of the

religious intuition that is deeper than the profoundest philosophy. The journalist who could not write a dozen of such articles a day "between drinks," would not be worth his salt.

The worst of it is that the production of this type of article argues a large public to which it is acceptable. The managing staff of a paper—the present editor is little more than a sales-manager—is nowadays not concerned with opinions, but with sales, and sales mean the type of tin-can production I have been noting. Proprietors no more stop to consider what are the private opinions of writers than one troubles about the opinions of one's bootmaker. That they can be so silly as their articles would show them to be, I hesitate to believe. They must know that this peas in a bladder kind of writing ends in nothing but sound. But it pays. There is a market for it, and the supply is there to satisfy the demand. And if one day a strong reaction comes, and the average newspaper reader wakes to a consciousness of the way in which he is being fooled, we can imagine Fielding's "Hallo, have the fools found it out?" once more summing up the situation.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Scott and His Circle.

"New occasions teach new duties,
Time makes ancient good uncount.
We must upward still, and onward,
Who would keep abreast of truth."—Lowell.

"There is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so."—Shakespeare.

At a time when the Secularists had started their modest task of converting the English-speaking world to the evangel of Freethought, a kindly, handsome Englishman conceived the idea of devoting himself to Rationalistic propaganda among what has been called the "hupper suckles" of society. This man was Thomas Scott, of Mount Pleasant, Ramsgate. Possessing charm, he had that chivalry for principle which represents the highest manhood, and he did his work joyously. His memory is kept green for what he was; his memory is treasured for what he did; and the record of his life's work lifts the mind like the sound of martial music.

Thomas Scott had a many-sided and an adventurous career. Born in 1808, seven years before Charles Southwell, he was in his youth a page to King Charles X of France. A great traveller, he journeyed in all parts of the world. Well educated, he knew the world of books, and he knew also the greater book of the world. In the autumn of his life he devoted his leisure, money, and abilities to the furtherance of Freethought, and proved himself a prince among propagandists. During the years 1862 to 1877 he issued from his pleasant seaside home a very large number of pamphlets, printed and distributed at his own expense, the total collection making a shelf-full of twenty stout volumes. The writers he gathered about him were men of outstanding ability, and among them were Moncure Conway, John Addington Symonds, Sir R. D. Hanson, Judge Strange, Dr. Zerffi, Bishop Hinds, and Sir George W. Cox. One lady was included among these contributors. Mrs. Annie Besant published an *Essay on the Deity of Jesus of Nazareth*, by "the wife of a benefited clergyman." This led to a domestic rumpus, for the Rev. Frank Besant insisted on his wife taking the communion, or leaving. Brave woman that she was, she chose the better course, and made an imperishable name for herself. So far as Mr. Scott was concerned, she wrote more pamphlets for him, since reprinted in *My Path to Atheism*, a book well worth reading.

It is difficult to imagine in these latitudinarian days, the flutter caused in numbers of sheltered homes and country vicarages by Thomas Scott's persistent propaganda. In the "sixties" and "seventies" of the past century, Freethought views had a decided air of novelty and wickedness, and the clergy had not then realized that discretion was the better part of valour in their particular case. For Scott meant war, and he levelled his artillery at the clergy, and bombarded them through the post with pamphlets and tracts. One of them was entitled 213 *Questions*, to which answers were respectfully asked. Each single question was well calculated to turn a clergyman's hair white, and curl it afterwards. Great Scott!

The most ambitious work Scott issued was a *Life of Jesus*, which was designed to do for British readers what Renan had done for France, and Strauss for Germany. It was a thunderous weapon of revolt, and was written in conjunction with Sir George Cox, who, being a Bishop of the Established Church, was unwilling to put his name to the volume. In laying down his life-work, Thomas Scott said: "The only true orthodoxy is loyalty to reason." He died at Norwood in 1878, and he deserves a niche in the Freethought Pantheon because, in his day, he did valiant work for human emancipation.

The work done by Thomas Scott and his circle is an important phase in the history of modern Freethought. From that circle emerged the outstanding figure of Annie Besant, who for fifteen stormy years was in the very forefront of the battle. In those far-off days women speakers were uncommon on Freethought platforms, and Mrs. Besant was the foremost woman orator of her generation. Those of us who were then young and ardent regarded her much as the fervent Royalists of France esteemed Marie Antoinette. For nature had cast Annie Besant in a queenly mould, and no cause would have desired a better champion.

Cultured to the finger-tips, she carried her weight of learning gracefully. Brought up amid the ease and luxury of a middle-class home, she never flinched at the call of duty. Matriculating at London University, she took the Bachelor of Science degree, with honours. Her knowledge of French and German was turned to capital account, and she translated Soury's *Religion of Israel* and *Jesus and the Gospels*, and Ludwig Büchner's works. As a debater she had few equals, and she wrote as she spoke. In her magazine, *Our Corner*, she published Bernard Shaw's earliest novels, long before that erratic genius had stormed the bastions of success.

Public speaking is hard work, as any Member of Parliament will tell you. It is doubly hard when the speaker is espousing an unpopular cause. Annie Besant had to face terrible opposition. Lime was thrown at her, sticks broken on her body, the foulest of words hurled at her. More than once she was almost hurled off the platform, but her power of melodious utterance won her a hearing. It was a triumph of quiet heroism, but it must have been a terrible ordeal for a woman delicately nurtured as she was. Sometimes I think that the real secret of her secession from the Freethought Party lay in the fact that she had endured too much. Thrust into leadership by her rare talents, she was forced into a position of real and unmistakable hardship. Fifteen years' constant fighting is almost enough for any man, however strong, and she came to the battlefield from the quiet of a country rectory.

No word of mine shall ever disparage her. Her golden tongue has won a hearing for more causes than one, but the clear fact emerges, that her best and most lasting work was done for militant Freethought. In

estimating her remarkable career, this part of her work looms very largely, and overshadows the smaller interests that succeeded. Paradoxical as it may seem, this high-priestess of a latter-day superstition seems fated to pass through life and leave no trace save that memorable time when she gave fifteen years of her splendid womanhood to the cause of Secularism.

MIMNERMUS.

In My Looking Glass.

It has often been said to me that Freethinkers are not compelled to financially support any religion in which they do not believe, but to that I have always answered that this is untrue. In England, at the present time, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Confucians and Freethinkers are forced indirectly, if not openly to contribute towards the upkeep of premises devoted to religion, the majority of which are Christian. In order to benefit their own pockets, the Christians are bound to allow the others to participate in the spoils.

So much for the riddle. Now, let us come down to bed-rock, and find out just where and how we do support religion in general, and Christianity in particular.

In 1927 there was published by the Registrar-General a list of all buildings owned by the Church of England in which marriages were permitted to be solemnized. The number of such buildings was 16,275, but, mark you, this did not include any of the chapels of ease which are scattered throughout the country. It did not even include the great and mighty Cathedral of St. Paul, in the City of London, scheduled not long since as a dangerous structure. All honour to Wren as a builder, but even the secular authorities do not seem to realize that, even after repair, it is still a dangerous building in the city of human morality and progress. St. Paul's is not registered for marriages, and so doesn't count in our calculations!

The so-called "Chapel List" is more explicit, for it includes every building registered for religious worship, which does not come under the direct domination of the State. Christ Church in the Westminster Bridge Road, the Roman Catholic Cathedral at Westminster, the Mosque at Woking are all included, and from this we may get *some* (and that word is used in a very limited sense) data for our argument. The number of buildings on the "Chapel List" is 30,257, and not one of the buildings on either list pays any local rates or anything towards State taxation!

These two items are interdependent. The Assessor of Taxes utilizes the rate-book as his guide, and if you can hoodwink the one, you stand a good chance of dodging the other. Here we have the root of the evil in that no place set aside for religious worship is assessable for rates and taxes. And, further, there is no limit to what may be described as a place of religious worship. Connect the house of the resident minister with the church itself merely by means of a covered walk, and that house at once becomes part of the church, and consequently pays no more towards rates and taxes than the church itself. Some of the parsons get a bit upset about this when they find that the particular parish to which they have been assigned is not favoured in this way, and then we have the spectacle of the poor padre standing in the dock like a common felon, and being sued by the local authority for its just due.

Church and chapel halls are likewise exempted for just so long as they are not rented from their owners, but that condition is flouted quite calmly and easily. If a church or chapel hall is hired the hirer is informed "We are not permitted to charge a rental,

but the usual gift to our—fund is so much." There you have it in all its barefaced hypocrisy. Quite simple, isn't it?

According to those minimum figures which I quoted above, we have a total of 46,532 churches, chapels, mosques, etc., throughout the country. Of course, the actual figure is well above this, but even as it stands, it becomes sufficiently alarming when quoted in terms of pounds, shillings and pence.

Now, I do not think that anyone will accuse me of erring on the side of severity, if I take an average figure of £50 as representing the annual rateable value of all religious buildings in England and Wales. Again, a fair figure for local rates throughout the country would be 13s. in the £. This gives us a total of £1,512,290 a year lost to local bodies by the exemption of these buildings. With Income Tax, Schedule "A" at 4s. in the £, we find the State losing £465,320, or a grand total of about two million pounds a year, a deficit which has to be met by the remainder of the populace, 75 per cent. of whom do not go into one of the places more than three times in a lifetime.

If any Member of Parliament were to ask for the expenditure of two million pounds a year on, say, additional education, he would be hailed as a disciple of "Squandermania," and told that the Exchequer could not possibly afford such a preposterous amount. If he went further and suggested the rating and taxation of religious buildings in order to raise the money for his requirements, he would be overwhelmed by a storm of execration and abuse. However, I make a free gift of the suggestion to the member with sufficient moral courage to voice it in the national assembly. What a nice little gift for the Miners' Distress Fund!

Out of the 30,257 buildings on the "Chapel List," only 860 of them were registered for worship prior to the year 1852. If all the lot were rated and taxed, the number used for worship would soon be the same as it was in the year mentioned, and the remainder would be freed and utilized for sane and useful purposes—schools, libraries and the like.

You who have been re-assessed for the benefit of distressed industry, you whose hospital has had its figure value doubled under the provisions which follow the De-rating Act—just remember that you are bearing the burden. The "Little Bethel" over the road that keeps you from having a quiet sleep on Sunday afternoon, owing to the caterwauling inside, is getting off scot-free. Justice is truly blind.

A PLAIN MAN.

Lebanon.

As slowly went I dreaming by,
Beneath a blue transparent sky,
I passed a tope of mango-trees,
Low whisp'ring words like these—

"At Lebanon awaits you there
A Hebrew maid with raven hair;
Beauteous is she to outward view;
And beats her heart for you!"

So passing by at set of sun,
My homing thoughts found Lebanon;
Till in a chamber cool and sweet
I knelt to kiss you feet!

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

The one enemy we have in the Universe is Stupidity,
Darkness of Mind.—Carlyle.

The Prayers of The Wicked.

MAN is a praying animal. In all countries of the world when a man has reached a certain stage of intellectual development, and is unable to understand the causes of natural phenomena, he is down on his knees in fear, appealing to the unknown powers of the universe, which he considers to be spirits or gods of some kind or other, to shield him from danger in the hour of trouble. He prays for safety, and is always prepared to propitiate the gods with gifts to gain his ends. When he develops what is called his religious nature, his prayers become more regular and systematic. The bad man prays just as constantly and fervently as the man who strives to the best of his ability to be good according to his lights. It is interesting to study the lives of some of the leading characters of the Bible, to see how they illustrate these points. Take, for instance, the life of Jacob, the son of Isaac—and the grandson of Abraham. Old Jahveh, the God of the Bible, took delight in being called "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." Yet, although Jacob was a very pious man, he was nevertheless a despicable kind of character. He was cowardly and unscrupulous, a liar and a cunning trickster of the worst order. And yet he was beloved by the Bible God.

When Isaac lay on his death bed he called his two sons to him and promised to pronounce a blessing upon Esau. But Jacob came with a lie upon his tongue and deceived his poor old father and stole away the blessing intended for his brother. Esau, on the other hand, was magnanimous and just. Even when a chance of revenge was possible he forgave his wicked brother and fell on his neck and kissed him. What noble conduct compared with that of Jacob! Yet the Bible God had no word of praise for Esau. Jacob, as I have said, was religious, and frequently offered up prayers to his Heavenly father. This is one of them. "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I shall come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God." Thus we see that he had a thoroughly commercial mind, and the whole of his life was one of fraud and deception.

Then, take another Biblical character, the man after God's own heart—David. David was a murderer, an adulterer, and a thief, yet he too was very pious, and frequently prayed to the Lord for his blessing. But when he felt in savage mood his prayers were of a different character. To understand his vindictive character take this prayer to his God, against an enemy:—

"Set thou a wicked man over him; and let Satan stand by his right hand.

When he shall be judged, let him be condemned; and let his prayer become sin.

Let his days be few; and let another take his office.

Let his children be fatherless; and his wife a widow.
Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg; and let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places.

Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labour.

Let there be none to extend mercy unto him; neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children.

Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their names be blotted out.

Let the iniquities of his fathers be remembered with the Lord; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out." *Psalm cix. 6-14.*

Vindictiveness and cruelty could surely find no stronger expression. Yet David committed nearly all the crimes of the Decalogue, and was, to use a Biblical expression, "a man after God's own heart."

Throughout the pages of what is called profane history, some of the greatest scoundrels were pious enough, and no doubt offered up their prayers with unerring regularity, but fortunately for their reputation they have left no record of their prayers, or if they did, they have not been preserved for our edification and comment. Richard III was a villain of the deepest dye, but we have to go to a play by Shakespeare to learn that he pretended to great piety all the time he was conceiving his infamous plots, and prayed with zeal and fervour.

Shakespeare has delineated in his great tragedies, several consummate villains, but they were all ready with their prayers when occasion required. Take two examples: Iago in the play of Othello, and King Claudius in Hamlet. When Iago had decided to put Othello on the mental rack, by suggesting that the pure and beautiful Desdemona had been unfaithful to him with Cassio, Othello, when driven to desperation by jealousy, resolved to murder his innocent wife. Going on his knees, he said:—

“Now, by yond’ marble heaven,
In due reverence of a sacred vow [Kneels.
I here engage my words.
Iago. Do not rise yet— [Kneels.
Witness, your ever-burning lights above!
Your elements that clip us round about!
Witness, that here Iago doth give up
The execution of his wit, hands, heart,
To wronged Othello’s service! let him command,
And to obey shall be in me remorse,
What bloody business ever.”

Othello Act III, Scene III.

And so the cunning villain leads the too credulous Othello on to the terrible and pathetic tragedy.

Then we come to Claudius, the King in Hamlet. He was a crafty and cruel villain. He murdered Hamlet’s father, and married his widow. But he was religious like the rest of Kings, and offered up prayers on special occasions. After he had witnessed the play called “The Mousetrap,” by Hamlet, and suspected that Hamlet knew that he had murdered his father, he offered up a prayer, one of the most powerful ever addressed to any God, ancient or modern. Listen to this! He goes on his knees before an altar and exclaims:—

“O my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;
It hath the primal eldest curse upon’t
A brother’s murder! Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as will;
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,
And like a man to double business bound
I stand in pause where I should first begin
And both neglect. What if this cursed hand
Were thicker than itself with brother’s blood.
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash it white as snow? Where serves mercy,
But to confront the visage of offence?
And what’s in prayer, but this two-fold force,
To be forestalled ere we come to fall
Or pardoned being down? Then I’ll look up,
My fault is past. But O what form of prayer
Can serve my turn? Forgive me my foul murder,
That cannot be; since I am still possessed
Of those effects for which I did the murder,
My crown, mine own ambition and my Queen,
May one be pardoned and retain the offence?
In the corrupted currents of this world,
Offences gilded hand may shove by justice,
And oft ’tis seen the wicked prize itself
Days out the law; But ’tis not so above,
There is no shuffling, there the action lies
In its true nature; and we ourselves compell’d
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults
To give in evidence. What then, what rests?
Try what repentance can. What can it not?
Yet what can it when one cannot repent?
O wretched state! O bosom black as death,
O limed soul; that struggling to be free
Art more engaged! Help angels make assay
Bow stubborn knees! and heart with strings of steel
Be soft as the sinews of the new-born babe;
All may be well!

Rising. He exclaims:—

My words fly up, my thoughts remain below,
Words without thoughts, never to heaven go.

Hamlet Act III, Scene III.

This may be said to be a cunning method of expressing his unworthiness to offer up prayer; but how beautifully the poet has expressed it. But did Claudius try to reform after this effort? Not so. Shortly after, he conceived the plot of having Hamlet killed in a duel with swords with Laertes—Laertes to use a poisoned sword—but in the encounter Hamlet knocks the sword out of the hand of Laertes, and they exchange swords, and in the next bout Laertes gets killed by his own poisoned sword. The king has also arranged that a cup containing poison shall be set aside for Hamlet, when he shall require drink during the encounter. The Queen, in mistake, drinks the poison. And thus she dies. Hamlet now sees his opportunity for vengeance, and rushes towards the king and kills him with the poisoned sword; and thus Nemesis overtakes the villain after all.

Shakespeare with a learned spirit understood men. His characters are real, and we can find their counterpart at various times, in every civilized country in the world. Hamlet said, “A man may smile and smile and be a villain, at least it may be so in Denmark.” And a man may pray and pray and be a villain in any other conceivable part of the globe.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

American Masonry and Religion.

A CHANGE for the worse has come over Masonry in America. The order has degenerated into a Christian Church.

At first the free or “operative” Masons were organized as a European trade guild of builders. Later, others unconnected with the trade were admitted and were called “accepted” Masons. Hence, the title “Free and Accepted Masons.”

The first Masons were not Christians, nor was the Bible regarded as “the Great Light.” But religion crept in. In time, the lodges of the Continent of Europe became more liberal. On August 10, 1849, the Grand Orient of France declared: “Freemasonry has for its principles the existence of the Deity and the immortality of the soul.” On September 14, 1877, it replaced that statement by these words:—

“Masonry has for its principles mutual tolerance, respect for others and itself, and absolute liberty of conscience.”

It has since chiseled the phrase “the great Architect of the Universe” from off the walls of its temples. That declaration of tolerance was ill-received by English-speaking Masons, who had become more religious, or at least, more hypocritical. Grand lodge after grand lodge withdrew recognition of the Grand Orient. The degradation of the order in the United States has gone so far that only a few States, of which Alabama is one, have full masonic intercourse with the Grand Orient. Many States, however, have lodges called “clandestine,” which operate under charters granted to them direct from the Grand Orient. The Atlantide in New York City is such a lodge. All the religious, i.e., regular, lodges in this country now require of each candidate an expression of belief in God. The applicant is asked, “In case of difficulty and danger, in whom do you put your trust?” The prompter whispers in his ear, “In God?”

The Grand Lodge of New York, which a few years ago severed all connections with the Grand Orient, has become so religious and Christian that the preamble to its constitution, dated January 1, 1927, sets forth “the Masonic belief” as belief not only in God and immortality, but also in “the Holy Bible” as the “rule and guide for faith and practice,” and in “prayer” as “helpful.” It is a church. It opposes the 4A’s. The Right worshipful Joseph Rosbottom of New York City has re-

peatedly, in the course of the historical lecture delivered by him on "third degree nights," inveighed against our Association, particularly condemning our efforts to have the name of God removed from United States coins and our campaign against the use of the Bible in American public schools. He enjoins the newly made master Masons to join a church, if they are not already church members. He has especially denounced "The Bible in the Balance."

So superstitious are the grand lodges of the United States, that one of their "landmarks" is the Bible on the altar, upon which all obligations are taken. At all of their meetings that book must be open, even though it may be at the page where the Bible God gives the infamous command, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Ex. xxii. 18), or the hellish decree that a master may beat a slave to death and yet be guiltless if the slave is a day or two in dying (Ex. xxi. 20). No regular Mason may lawfully sit, even as a guest, in a lodge which does not open the Jewish-Christian Bible upon its altar. The refusal of any lodge or grand lodge to insist upon this requirement is regarded among regular Masons as *prima facie* evidence of "clandestinism."

The Supreme Council, 33^o, of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry of the Southern Jurisdiction, U.S.A., with headquarters in Washington, D.C., in its bulletin for December, 1928, published an attack on the propaganda of the 4A's, just as if the Consistory were a church.

Further evidence of the decline of moral integrity among New York Masons is found in the fact that the members of one of the lodges knowingly performed their religious rites over the defenceless remains of an avowed Atheist. At the funeral of the late James I. Elliott, chairman of the board of directors of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, members of the Springfield Garden Lodge, F. & A.M., 1057, after hearing the address by President Smith (printed on the inside of the front cover of this report), recited the religious funeral rites of the Masons, containing frequent reference to "God," and "soul," and including the Lord's prayer."

Freemasonry was first banned by the Catholic Church in a bull issued by Pope Clement XII, April 18, 1738. To-day Mussolini in Italy, and Primo de Rivera in Spain, at the bidding of the Catholic Church have suppressed Masonic lodges in those countries. But American Masons are so removed from Rationalism and Liberty of Conscience that they are more opposed to Atheists than to the Knights of Columbus, with whom they even fraternize, and whose co-religionists in Europe have suppressed Masonic lodges.

THE HOWELL S. ENGLAND HERESY TRIAL.

The outstanding instance of Masonic degradation during the past year was the trial for heresy of Master Mason Howell S. England of Detroit, Michigan, by the Wolverine Lodge-Church, No. 484, F. and A.M. of that Masonic jurisdiction, of which lodge Mr. England was the founder and first worshipful master, Mr. England was accused in twenty-one charges, found guilty in all, and expelled. The depth of the present degradation of Masonry is revealed in the character of the charges, which are as follows:—

1. That he (Howell S. England) protested at Masonic banquets against giving thanks to God for food.
2. That he "ridiculed God's goodness, saying, 'A bird would devour a worm, a cat would devour the bird, a large animal would kill the cat, and a man would kill the animal,' or words to that effect, using said statement as argument against the goodness of God."
3. That he said, "A man could worship a stone and that stone would be his God."
- 4 to 10. That he was connected in various ways with the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism and distributed its literature.
11. That he requested the Governor of Michigan to omit from his annual Thanksgiving proclamation the name of God.

12. That "he declared his allegiance to the principle, 'Sunday as a religious Sabbath shall no longer be enforced by law.'"
13. That "he declared his allegiance to the principle, 'Christian morality shall be done away with. In its place shall be natural morality, equal rights, and impartial liberty.'"
14. That "he declared his allegiance to the principle, 'In God We Trust' shall be taken off coins."
15. That "he declared his disbelief in immortality."
16. That he condemned the Bible as immoral and unscientific.
18. That "he requested the Mayor of Detroit not to ask business places to close on Good Friday." (Whither, O Masons, has your reason fled!)
19. That he remarked to his fellow pallbearers at a funeral that he did not want any such "monkey shines" (Episcopalian funeral services) made over him when he died; and also that he did not want a Masonic funeral.
20. That he referred to a "very beautiful prayer" by Joseph Fort Newton as "that thing."
21. That he was engaged by the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism as attorney to bring suit to stop week-day religious instruction in the public schools.

In his defence to charge 16, Mr. England called the attention of the worshipful lodge to 300 had Bible passages, showing clearly that "the Great Light of Masonry" is not a safe guide to faith and practice.

Mr. England has taken an appeal to the Grand Lodge of the State of Michigan, which meets this year at Pontiac in May. Masonry, not Mr. England, is on trial. The outcome is eagerly awaited.

From the Annual Report of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism.

Reasoning.

Besides the want of determined ideas, and of sagacity and exercise in finding out and laying in order intermediate ideas, there are three miscarriages that men are guilty of in reference to their reason, whereby this faculty is hindered in them from that service it might do and was designed for:—

1. The first is of those who seldom reason at all, but do think according to the example of others, whether parents, neighbours, ministers, or who else they are pleased to make choice of to have an implicit faith in, for the saving of themselves the pains and trouble of thinking and examining for themselves.
2. The second is of those who put passion in the place of reason, and, being resolved that shall govern their actions and arguments, neither use their own nor hearken to other people's reason, any farther than it suits their humour, interest, or party; and these, one may commonly observe, content themselves with words which have no distinct ideas to them, though, in other matters, that they come with an unbiassed indifferency to, they want not abilities to talk and hear reason, where they have no secret inclination that hinders them from being tractable to it.
3. The third sort is of those who readily and sincerely follow reason, but, for want of having that which one may call *large, sound, round-about sense*, have not a full view of all that relates to the question, and may be of moment to decide it. We are all short-sighted, and very often see but one side of a matter; our views are not extended to all that has a connexion with it. From this defect I think no man is free. We see but in part, and we know but in part, and therefore it is no wonder we conclude not right from our partial views . . .

The faculty of reasoning seldom or never deceives those who trust it; its consequences from what it builds on are evident and certain, but that which it oftentimes, if not only, misleads us is that the principles from which we conclude, the grounds upon which we bottom our reasoning, are but a part, something is left out which should go into the reckoning to make it just and exact.

John Locke ("Conduct of the Understanding.")

Acid Drops.

The chief significance of the case of Mr. John Henry Stevens, who is at present in Bedford Gaol for contempt of court, through refusing to carry out an order to repair the chancel of Hauxton Church, has been missed in the newspaper reports of the case. Mr. Stevens bought some land charged with the maintenance of the Chancel of the Church. For some years this clause had been allowed to lapse, but a new vicar called upon Mr. Stevens to carry out the terms of the deed. Mr. Stevens refused, and he was cited before a Consistory Court. The Ecclesiastical Court ordered him to repair the chancel, and this not being done, an appeal was made to the High Court, and the Lord Chancellor ordered his arrest for contempt of (the Consistory) Court. Mr. Stevens is at the time of writing in prison "purging" his offence.

Now there is nothing startling in the land bought by Mr. Stevens being charged with some curious obligations. Land in England is charged with many amazing things, such as hardly any other people than ourselves would now tolerate. The surprising thing to some people is that a Church Court with power to try and condemn an ordinary civilian, should still be in existence, and that the Civil Court should honour and enforce its decision. There is also the object lesson of the way in which the Church still secures its revenues by what is virtually a tax levied without regard to the religious opinions of those who are called upon to pay. It is monstrous that the special Act under which this case has been tried does not date back further than the reign of William IV.

Such powers as the Ecclesiastical Courts possess are, of course, mere shadows of their former authority. But it is well to note that in substance it is not only in such cases as that of Mr. Stevens in which the civil courts carry out the behests of the Church—and Chapel. The whole of the Sunday laws are nothing more than the decree of the Churches that their taboo shall be observed and people punished if they do not. The Blasphemy laws is another instance in point. In each of these cases it was the Church that decreed and the civil power that obeyed the order. One day, when people become sufficiently civilized, these things will be altered. At present it is well to remember how much of Medievalism we still have with us.

The following is from a letter to the *New Chronicle* :—

Dr. Gray makes a moving appeal that "Fundamentalists" and "Modernists" (what ugly words!) should allow none of these matters "which are not really essential" to divide us. "Not really essential"—but most of the "matters" that the Modernist holds are the very life-blood of his brother Christian, the Fundamentalist. Has not Dr. Jones, of Bournemouth, said the very last word on this subject when he remarks, that if Modernism is the all of Christianity, there would have been no Christianity at all. These are not his exact words but the sense.

In other words, the squabbles between Christians are likely to continue, world without end, Amen! What a deuce of a mess God made of the Bible, when he omitted to say whether every sentence in it must be taken literally, or be interpreted according to one's fancy. If only he had stated one way or the other, the Christians of today would be consolidated into one precious lump of Love. Had the Christian God really loved mankind, he would never have given them a Bible in the form he gave it.

Writing on Sunday Observance, in the *New Chronicle*, the Rev H. C. Carter cordially says :—

Pious people used to cry out loudly about the obligation to keep Sunday sacred from work, and did it in

the name of the working masses, while they cared not at all that men, women, and children were labouring for wickedly long hours at hard employments for the other six days in the week.

This will serve as a timely reminder to Labour politicians, angling for the good-will of churches and chapels, as to what small assistance was forthcoming from the pious to Labour pioneers of former days. We infer that, for some queer reason or other, Jesus had failed to register his sympathy for the Labour Party in those days. It's a recent discovery of some popularity seeking parsons.

The same Mr. Carter says that "we go on frightening our consciences and other people's by the idea that in this matter of keeping Sunday, there is a rule which God has set us, and if we do not keep it we shall some day be found out and get a whipping like naughty schoolboys." Mr. Carter evidently sees that the old game of trying to scare people into observing the Sabbath is played out. So he jets out some candid truth. He says there is no commandment for the Christian; he can do what he likes on a Sunday. But (of course) to do what he likes wisely, he must love God. In other words—do what the parson tells him! More candour from Mr. Carter is that the Christian is not being virtuous when he keeps Sunday as a day set apart for quiet and worship. "He is only following a path of wise expediency." This is a happy phrase. It suggests many nice Christian benefits, such as escaping the "wrath to come."

A final piece from Mr. Carter is too good to lose. It is :—

And of all our thoughts about keeping Sunday, none can be further from the mind of Christ than any thought that we ought to put the yoke of its observance by any kind of enforcement upon our fellow-men.

We commend this to the Lord's Day Observance Society fanatics. They should copy it out and pin it in their hats. By the way, is Mr. Carter prepared to openly support any move to repeal the Lord's Day Acts? Following the "path of wise expediency," he will probably not be prepared.

According to Mr. A. Wyatt Tilby, "few people say what many people think." There is nothing surprising about this. It is quite usual in Christian-trained countries. The Church for many generations systematically penalized or suppressed the fearlessly outspoken, and encouraged the breeding of the mentally timid. Consequently, the emergence of a mentally fearless person now and again must be regarded as an accident—a deviation from the Christian normal, a biological "sport." That such accidents are so very infrequent, is a reminder of how thoroughly the Christian Church did its divinely inspired work of encouraging the "herd-mind."

That the Church in the country makes no official use of broadcasting astonishes a reader of a daily paper. What he really means is, that he is surprised at the Church not making more use of the ether. He suggests that the Church should "insist" on being allotted a special wave-length, and should keep this busy day and night upon the Church's "business." We regret to say this suggested arrangement would not be half so valuable to the Church as the present one, particularly on Sunday. At the moment, all other broadcasting of a secular kind is held up while the parsons are busy. If the Church was broadcasting all the time on a different wave-length, the secular items would be continuous. And would the average listener switch over to listen to parsons? Not he!

Dr. Fred Eastman, who occupies his first appointment of a Professorship of Religious Drama at Chicago University, told an interviewer that: "Protestantism is

only just finding out the value of the appeal to the emotions. Its chief appeal hitherto has been to the intellect, when its appeal has not been mainly sentimental. This has led to the creation of 'emotional slums,' to which there has been no outlet." What the Doctor could have more truthfully said is that Protestantism only appealed to some emotions and neglected the esthetic. And now that the masses are more esthetically sensitive, Protestants are beginning to wonder whether, by exploiting this improvement, the masses can be enticed back into the Protestant churches.

A Congregational minister of Coventry, the Rev. H. Frost, purposes to give a cinema show at his church after each evening service. A happy thought! The parsons having suppressed rational amusement in the city on Sunday, the citizens of Coventry ought to be duly grateful to Mr. Frost for his brotherly attempt to rescue them from boredom. We hope he will not omit to explain to those who come to gape at his show, why Monday's secular pictures become wicked on Sunday.

A weekly paper appears to be indignant because the wealthy Church of England is begging for money with which to train 500 young men a year as clergymen. Why worry? This game of separating rich "mugs" from as much money as possible is a very ancient one with the Church of England. In the name of God it is done quite legitimately and respectably. And if it enables rich Christians to squeeze through the "needle's eye," ought it not to be encouraged?

Canon Sinker, of Blackburn, is naturally—of course, quite disinterestedly—anxious that people shall not miss attending church. We are equally anxious they should not miss getting their weekly copy of the *Freethinker*. He enforces his desire by saying that he has never known anybody come to want who was a regular Church-goer. Now that is really the kind of argument calculated to fetch a genuine Christian. What am I going to get out of it is his first thought, and often enough his last. What's the good of behaving if there is no after life to get rewarded, what does it matter what I gain if I lose my soul, etc., etc. And as we cannot doubt a Christian Canon's word, we must assume that in some villages where nearly everyone goes to Church, it is only the recalcitrant one of two over whom the shadow of poverty hangs. Why not start a campaign round the country on the lines of, "Do you wish to end want and poverty? If you do go to Church—Canon Sinker's Church for preference."

There are two sides to every question, and it is a relief to find someone appealing for a reduction in his assessment because the presence of a Church near by lowers the value of his property. Mr. Harold Hamilton, High Sheriff of Somerset, appealed against the assessment of his residence, Enmore Castle, on the grounds of disadvantages owing to the neighbourhood of Enmore Church. He said it was impossible to play tennis on Sundays, because the people in the Church could look through the windows and watch the players. The Church bells were also very trying. The court allowed the appeal, with costs, and assessment was reduced. We suggest that others should attempt the same plan. It is well for the churches to know that the public noises they make when they talk and howl at their Joss are very offensive to some sections of the population.

Sir Percy Jackson, says a religious weekly, told the Conference of the Association of Education Committees quite emphatically, that Cowper-Temple teaching is the reverse of Secularism, and that the Bible must be kept in the schools because that is now more than ever the will of the people. Sir Percy Jackson professes to know what the "will of the people" is. If the "people" are

really so fond of the Bible as to insist on having it in the schools, how is it that four-fifths of them are outside the churches, and never trouble to read the Bible either themselves or to their children.

Dr. R. C. Gillie says there is no hint in the Gospels that Jesus would have had the least sympathy with the multitude of Sunday pleasure-seekers who insist on their freedom to enjoy whatever recreation and entertainment they desire, careless as to the labour they demand from the less fortunate, who must forfeit their own day of rest in order to minister to others' pleasure. We don't mind telling Dr. Gillie that his deep concern for people who work on Sunday because of pleasure-seekers, is sheer cant. If our politicians should ever muster up courage to allow all shops, etc., to open on Sunday, provided every worker had one day rest in seven, Dr. Gillie would still denounce people who have the disgusting affrontry to manage their lives without churches and parsons. Throughout the ages, ignoring the priest has always been visited with denunciation. Priests have always had the instinct of self-preservation in full working order. And it has inspired many a taboo, many a "thus said the Lord," and many a woeful prophecy.

The Wesleyan Missionary Society describes its annual report as "The Message of the Cross." And an advertisement states that "it thrills," "it stimulates." We daresay it does, to the type of intelligence that likes pious fiction. After all, isn't it published as a "catch-penny"?

The Rev. J. P. Bacon Phillips, who specializes in writing to newspapers, objects strongly to reform in men's dress. He says:—

Let men adhere to their civilized habits of modesty, and not imitate those women who appear to esteem all clothing to be superfluous.

The rev. gent.'s measure of modesty is by the yard of clothing. According to his way of thinking, men and women made in the image of God become modest only when they hide as much of the image as possible. Since anything bare gives him the shudders, we direct his attention to a well-known painting of S.S. Peter and Paul, as reproduced this week in a religious journal. St. Peter reveals a nude leg and foot, a bare chest and arm, and a naked crown to his head. This surely indicates that St. Peter was a Christian pioneer of immodesty. How thankful we all ought to be that modern clerics don't want to imitate him!

Strange and Sweet and Beauteous One.

So strange, so sweet your beauty is to me,
As day by day fresh loveliness I see;
So strange, so sweet, so wonderfully sweet
Upon my heart the light fall of your feet.

Your cool white hands, your lips, your hair, your eyes,
Each bear to me an ever-new surprise;
But sweetest joy—that I alone have won
Your love, my strange, and sweet, and beauteous one!

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

A well known peer was visiting a school devoted to the instruction of young girls. At the request of the Matron, he asked a variety of questions, to which he received very satisfactory answers. Just as the noble lord was about to take his leave, he addressed a girl somewhat older than the rest, and among other things inquired, "Who made your vile body?" "Please, my Lord," responded the unsophisticated girl. "Betty Jones made my body, but I made the skirt myself."

Drafts on My Memory, Wm. Pitt Lennox.

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.

T. OSBORNE (Glasgow).—Thanks for copy of paper. But if the editor wishes to have an article from Mr. Cohen on the subject named, he need only ask for it. Mr. Cohen has neither the time nor inclination to write articles in the hope that some editor may graciously be inclined to publish them.

T. WATTS.—Many thanks for your appreciation. The paper is being sent to the address given.

R. BROWN.—We do not think for a moment that the B.B.C. will meet your criticism. It is too saturated with Christianity at present to act with honesty towards non-Christians. Still, it is well to let them know that "there are others."

M. ROACHE.—Thanks, but regret not quite suitable.

S. THOMAS (Bombay).—Very pleased to hear from an old friend of the Victoria Park days. There have been many changes since then, and some for the better. We hope the world has gone well with you.

D. BOSTWICK.—Your difficulty appears to be due to not having a proper conception of the Scientific meaning and function of "Matter." To say that "matter" is the cause of all phenomena is an unscientific and unphilosophic way of putting the point, and leads to grave misunderstanding. It is very crude, to say the least of it, and we are not surprised that anti-Materialists seize on this mode of expression as the subject of criticism.

A. H. HILDER.—We take no interest in palmistry. Successes are scored by counting the hits and forgetting the misses. Telling fortunes by tea leaves is just as scientific.

L. CORINNA.—Sorry to hear you have been unwell. Hope your holiday will have done you good. As you say, a few earnest men in a town who make up their minds that Freethought shall be heard will soon make their influence felt. Let us know how things shape.

B. H. HASSELL.—We have great difficulty in believing that any man who can write that Jesus Christ was "a Socialist insisting on the organic conception of Society" can really believe in what he is saying. There is no indication in any part of the New Testament of any such thing. The nearest approach to it is in St. Paul, and then the idea, taken from Plato, is narrowed down to the Church. It is surprising that Socialists do not protest against such an open insult to their intelligence.

J. HAYES.—We quite appreciate the difficulty you have to get newspapers to display the *Freethinker*. The boycott is still severe. Still, every protest you make helps to break it down, and we thank you for what you are doing.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

One of our readers, Mr. F. Sharp, of Birmingham, has adopted a good device for advertising the *Freethinker*. He has had a rubber stamp made bearing the impression, "Have you read this week's *Freethinker*?" and impresses this on the back and front of every letter he sends out. We thank Mr. Sharp for his interest, and commend the idea to others. We may adopt it for some advertising on our own part.

We desire to call the special attention of our readers to the advertisement on another page of the two booklets by "Keridon," on *Mind and Reality* and *Life, Mind and Knowledge*. The two are being sold for 1s., or by post one and twopence halfpenny. Readers of this paper are quite aware of the quality of "Keridon's" writings, and there is no need to say anything now upon that head. He is always suggestive and thorough, even when one does not quite agree with his conclusions. There is only a limited number of copies for sale at this price, and we advise all who would like them to write at once.

We are glad to see that something like a revolt is setting in among teachers, with regard to the subject of religious teaching in schools. An indication of this is seen in the publication in the *Glasgow Evening Times* from a secondary school teacher—unnamed—a protest against the teacher being compelled to inculcate religious views with which he does not agree, and which embody an "enlightened orthodoxy." He asks why the teacher should "be compelled to make the plastic child-mind embrace traditional truths which often, from the first, can impress no conviction, and which time will invariably shatter?" The only reason is that the clergy are, in this respect in power, and our politicians fear the influence of their votes. We heartily wish that teachers would openly protest against their continuance as cats-paws of the parsons. Something would then be done on the right lines. Even in this instance, and with regard to a well written and temperately stated article, no name is appended. The power of the boycott is still there. It is quite obvious that when teachers, whose chief and most important influence should be in the direction of moulding character, are compelled to go through life wearing a mask, and afraid to openly avow their opinions, the influence on their own character is bound to be bad, and on others less effective than it otherwise might be on those committed to their care.

We are asked by the Glasgow Branch of the N.S.S. to insert the following:—

Any Freethinker wishing the services of the Glasgow Secular Society Visiting Committee for burial services or bedside visitation may have same by applying to the Secretary, Mr. J. C. Mackay, 88 Eastwood Avenue, Glasgow, S.1. The Committee consists of four, Mrs. Weir and Mrs. Galbraith, and Messrs. Currie and Lancaster.

Deserved tributes have been paid to Mr. C. P. Scott, who is retiring from the editorship of the *Manchester Guardian*. The *Guardian* was certainly one of the most independent papers in the country, and far less under control of the man whose only claim to publicity is that he has made money, and either bought or commandeered a title, than our London papers. The papers speak of his independence, and here, again, we do not dissent from them. But there is one thing that Mr. Scott, with all his independence dare not do. He dare not face the combined displeasure of the Churches by giving publicity to anti-Christian articles. Any other power in this country may be defied by a newspaper, but there is not a paper in the country that dare face the combined disfavour and active enmity of the Churches. That fact may enable some to realize the kind of fight this journal has waged for nearly fifty years.

Fables of our Feathered Friends.

THE part performed by birds in folklore, legend and religion is very striking. Birds are also conspicuous as national emblems, as the Imperial eagles of Pagan Rome and modern European states amply testify. The most popular emblem of France is the crowing cock, while the great Republic of America adopted as its sovereign seal the bold eagle grasping in one claw an olive spray as a sign of its dovelike disposition, and clutching in its left some Indian arrows to suggest its truculent propensities.

All nature-lovers are attracted by the plumage, melodies, and nurseries of birds, and the poets have ever been enraptured by their charms. Tennyson's tributes to the songs of the lark, the linnet, and the blackbird; Keats' immortal *Ode to the Nightingale*, and Shelley's inimitable *Ode to a Skylark* immediately leap to remembrance. The lark, as he soars into the blue vault of heaven becomes at last "a sightless song" to Tennyson, while Shelley in an attitude of adoration beseeches the ascending songster to:—

"Teach us, sprite or bird
What sweet thoughts are thine:
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panteth forth a flood of rapture so divine."

* * *

"Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?"

The poets in fancy, and primitive man in sober reality credited the fowls of the air with powers of intelligence equal at least to their own. The common saying, "A little bird whispered to me" is a survival from a hoary past. The wide world over the gods have been associated with winged bipeds. In rural Sussex, and elsewhere, where the birds' nesting box abounds, the eggs and nests of the swallow and robin are usually spared, as these birds are said to be under God's special protection.

In the Deluge legend, Noah sends forth the raven and a dove to determine how far the flood had abated. The raven failed to return, but the dove flew back with an olive branch in her beak, which proved that the waters had subsided. According to an Arabian embellishment of the story quoted by Baring Gould, when "Noah had left the Ark he passed forty days on the mountain until all the water had returned to the sea. Noah said to the raven, 'Go and place your foot on the earth, and see what is the depth of the water.' The raven departed, but having found a carcass it remained to devour it and did not return. Noah was provoked, and he cursed the raven, saying, 'May God make thee contemptible among men, and let carrion be thy food.'"

Many are the superstitions concerning ravens which are commonly regarded as birds of evil omen. As Lady Macbeth says: "The raven himself is hoarse that croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan under my battlements."

In Rome, the so-called science of bird divination was religiously observed. A state functionary attended to the well-being of the sacred chickens, and the augurs or bird diviners endeavoured to discover the will of the deities by watching the behaviour of the holy fowls. "If," states Ernest Ingersoll in his *Birds in Legend Fable and Folklore*, "the chickens came too slowly out of the cage, or would not feed, it was a bad omen; but if they fed greedily, so that some part of their food fell and struck the ground, it was deemed an excellent omen."

Cocks and doves are prominent in Christian tradi-

itions with the crowing of the cock. In Luke's version Jesus says "the cock shall not crow this day before that thou shalt twice deny that thou knowest me." And Peter, during the evening when Jesus was arrested, twice denied his discipleship "an immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew."

Cocks long served the purpose of clocks, and in past centuries were thought to consciously proclaim the hour of the night. A cock was said to have crowed at the precise moment when the Saviour was born. At one time, in Devonshire, it was almost an article of faith that the cattle fell on their knees to pray on Christmas Eve. The cock was long credited throughout Christendom with continual crowing on the eve of the nativity. This belief has been commemorated in Hamlet, where Marcellus says:—

"Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long;
And then, they say, no spirit can walk abroad;
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time."

To this Horatio drily remarks: "So I have heard, and do in part believe it," and promptly turns the conversation.

Ghosts that wander in the night hastily disappear at cockerow. In fact, the Devil himself and his imps of darkness, lose most of their malevolence with daylight's return.

The dove has legendary associations with the birth, baptism and death of the Redeemer. This bird was the attendant of Venus, and was long the symbol of love. We read in the Gospel of Matthew, that at Jesus' baptism, the heavens were opened and the spirit of God descended like a dove. This is rendered more realistic in Luke, where it is stated that at the baptism "the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove."

The close connexion between the dove and the divinity constantly appears in sacred art. In old paintings a golden nimbus encircles the head of the divine dove. The dove was often placed on the covers of fonts, and some are still extant in several parish churches in England.

In her work on *Christian Symbolism*, Mrs. Jenner informs us that in fifth century art, the dove is depicted descending to the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation. The Holy Dove commonly appears in later Christian art in company with the Virgin and Child. The dove is also portrayed in pictures of the Creation, when "the spirit of God moved on the face of the waters."

In Christian cemeteries the dove is more conspicuous in monumental art than any other bird. The white domestic dove was universally regarded as an emblem of purity—almost as pure as the driven snow.

Among the Jews, those who were unable, or unwilling to sacrifice a lamb to Jahveh in the Temple, seem to have substituted a pigeon or even a goose. The mother of Jesus offered doves at her purification. The traders who profaned the Temple in Jerusalem dealt in doves, and for this, among other misdemeanours, they were expelled by the angry Jesus.

In the legends of the Crucifixion swallows, owls, goldfinches and robins appear. One touching tradition tells how the robin, "pitying the pain of the cruel crown pressed on the Saviour's brow, plucked away the sharpest of the thorns; and some say, that before that moment the bird was all gray, and was bound to remain so until it had done something worthy of its having a red breast."

One Scandinavian story relates that the robin or ruddock carries a drop of water in its bill each day to souls suffering in the flames of hell, and that the

bird's breast became red when scorched with the fiery heat. Whittier's poem refers to this legend:—

"He brings cool dew in his little bill,
And lets it fall on the souls of sin;
You can see the marks on his red-breast still
Of fires that scorch as he drops it in."

Another tale tells how the robin's breast retains the marks of the blood spurted over it when the compassionate bird sought to staunch the Saviour's wounded side.

God's bird of the ruddy breast covers the bodies of the children with flowers and leaves in the world-famous story of the Babes in the Wood. Collins was inspired by this theme when he composed his *Dirge to Cymbeline*:—

"The redbreast oft at evening hours
Shall kindly lend his little aid,
With heavy moss and gathered flowers,
To deck the ground where thou art laid."

Horace, in ancient Rome treasured a similar story, where a child overcome with fatigue on a mountain was tended by doves, who covered it with choice evergreen plants.

In the homesteads and hamlets of Northern Europe the robin is always welcome at Yuletide.

A Teutonic observance of great antiquity consists in placing seeds of corn on the roofs for the robins at the Winter solstice. At this dark season the birds become remarkably trustful, and sometimes enter the farmhouses and buildings. A time-honoured Swedish custom was to reserve an unthreshed wheat sheaf, which was fixed on a pole for the robins' repast.

Again, the diminutive wren forms the subject of numerous legends. Jenny Wren was present in the stable at Bethlehem when Christ was born. The curious custom of hunting the wren at Christmas survived until recent generations. It is evidently an extremely ancient observance, and appears originally to have possessed serious religious significance. The various popular traditions purporting to explain its meaning are inconclusive. On the whole, it seems associated with a primitive sacrifice of a divine animal to serve as a scapegoat for the sins of the people.

T. F. PALMER.

Religion: Folkways and Experience.

(Continued from page 379.)

THE part mere words play of themselves in religion is all-encompassing. A recent analysis account of how language works⁴⁷ provides a direct one-step approach to what words alone do for religious experience. A word is used either to show us something or to work something up in us. It either points something out to us or arouses us in some way. It either signifies something or sets up some emotion. Though it may look as if a word were used to refer to something, it may actually refer to nothing at all, but only serve to start some feeling or activity going. The relation between words and things is indirect. To speak of something is to refer to it. The thing is what you want to refer to. The word means only that you are referring to the thing. But the word itself is taken to stand for the thing it only points at. But making an empty gesture, pointing to nothing at all, naming a word for which there is no corresponding thing, can take place. The word itself is then taken for the thing. This is all that makes the religious world

possible. Theology is a lot of words. They do not and cannot refer to anything at all. But they are involved in the religious sentiments. Religion depends on obscuring "the division between the symbolic use of words, and the emotive use. The symbolic use of words is *statement*: the recording, the support, the organization and the communication of references. The emotive use of words is a more simple matter, it is the use of words to express or excite feelings and attitudes. It is probably more primitive . . . Under the symbolic function are included both the symbolization of reference and its communication to the listener, *i.e.*, the causing in the listener of a similar reference. Under the emotive functions are included both the expression of emotion, attitudes, moods, intentions, etc., in the speaker, and their communication, *i.e.*, their evocation in the listener . . . It is true that some element of reference probably enters, for all civilized adults at least, into almost all use of words, and it is always possible to import a reference, if it be only a reference to things in general. The two functions under consideration usually occur together, but none the less they are in principle distinct . . . This disparity of function between words as supports or vehicles of reference and words as expressions or stimulants of attitudes" ⁴⁸ is necessarily concealed in religion. "A poem or a religion—though religions have so definitely exploited the confusion of function which we are now considering, and are so dependent upon it, as to be unmistakably pathological growths—has no concern with limited and directed reference. It tells us, or should tell us, nothing. It has a different, though an equally important and a far more vital function—to use an evocative term in connexion with an evocative matter. What it does, or should do, is to induce a fitting attitude to experience." ⁴⁹ Religion is a poor poem taken for the truth. "Besides symbolizing a reference, our words also are signs of emotions, attitudes, moods, the temper, interest or set of the mind in which the references occur. They are signs in this fashion because they are grouped with these attitudes and interests in certain looser and tighter contexts." There are "two sign-situations. One is interpreted from symbols to reference and so referent; the other is interpreted from verbal signs to the attitude, mood, interest, purpose, desire, and so forth of the speaker, and thence to the situation, circumstances and conditions in which the utterance is made." ⁵⁰

The use of words by religion where there are no things gives the clue for evaluating religious experience.⁵⁰ In religion we are dealing, not with experiences occurring directly, but with experiences keyed to religious folkways and customs, religious collective representations, and religious emotional words. In religious experiences our impulses are fitted only to these. "The value of it depends upon the level of organization at which it takes place, upon whether the "resulting" impulses are adequate or inadequate." In the case of religion there are in fact no adequate impulses. "Only for those who make certain conventional, stereotyped maladjustments instead, does the magic work.

"The nature and source of these stock conventional attitudes is of great interest. Suggestion is very largely responsible for them. The normal child, under the age of ten, is probably free from them, or at least with him they have no fixity or privileged

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* (pp. 149-151.)

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* (pp. 158-159.)

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* (p. 223.)

⁵⁰ I. A. Richards: *Principles of Literary Criticism*, second edition. (London; Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Company, 1926.)

⁴⁷ C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards: *The Meaning of Meaning. A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism*, second edition revised. (London: Kegan, Paul Trench, Trubner and Company, 1927.)

standing. But as general reflection develops, the place of the free direct place of experience is taken by the deliberate organization of attitudes, a clumsy and cruder substitute. 'Ideas,' as they are commonly called, arise. An . . . 'Idea' . . . is an attitude, or set of attitudes, of tendencies to act in certain fashions rather than others. Now reflection, unless very prolonged and very arduous, tends to fix the arduous, by making us dwell in it, by removing us from experience. In the development of any attitude there are stages, points of rest, of relatively greater stability. These, as we dwell in them, become more and more difficult to pass, and it is not surprising that most people remain all their lives in various halfway houses.

"These stages or levels of emotional adjustment seem, for the most part, to be fixed not by any special suitability to circumstances, certainly not to present circumstances, but much more by social suggestion and by accidents which withdraw us from actual experience, the one force which might push us further." Religion must be given the lead as "an influence of the first importance in fixing immature and actually inapplicable attitudes to most things.

"The losses incurred by these artificial fixations of attitudes are evident. Through them the average adult is worse, not better adjusted to the possibilities of his existence than the child. He is even in the most important things functionally unable to face facts: do what he will, he is only able to face fictions, fictions projected by his own stock responses."⁵¹ The strongest objection to the religious experience is that the person who employs it, through the very organization of his responses which enables him to employ it, is debarred from the free direct genuine experience of many ranges of life. The point is that anyone who depends upon the religious sentiments is necessarily so organized that he will fail to respond to authentic living. There can be no doubt that the value of the experience which results from it is small.⁵²

CURTIS BRUEN.

(To be continued.)

Freethought and an International Language.

PERHAPS to no one more than the Freethinker, who may be said to have emancipated himself from the bonds of the past, is the question of an international means of communication of great importance. The fact that he is one of a still small body of pioneers, with the necessity of making use of every bond of sympathy that he can find with his fellow-thinkers is the greatest factor in inclining him to the claims of such a means of communication. To-day, there can be no dispute about the matter, the international language of Dr. Zamenof, Esperanto holds the place of such a means of international communication, and in these few notes I wish to show how it is helping the Freethought movement of the world, and not enter into the pros and cons of a dispute about its "worth-whileness" to our movement. In the year 1906, an international congress of Freethinkers adopted Esperanto as the means of future international co-operation, but it was not until after the Great War that any great work was done in Esperanto. For Esperanto much work was done individually, and an organization "Internacia Societo Esperantista de Liberpensuloj" was created, and even issued a monthly gazette. The war put an end to its activities, and afterwards, when the peace brought better communications, an "Internacia Ligo de Liberpensuloj" was founded, with the aim of putting Esperanto at the service of Freethought. The bi-monthly journal of this organization appeared for four years, when the league was closed

down. But much work had been done, and the non-esperantists were paying attention to the language, and now the following journals carry a caption on their leading page to inform readers that they correspond in Esperanto: *Le Materialist of Belgium*, *Atheist of Ussr*, *Der Proletarische Friedenker of Essen, Germany*, *De Frijdenker of Amsterdam*, *Atheist of Charkov, Ussr*, *Der Friedenker of Vienna*. The Polish *Zycie Wolne* publishes its contents list in Esperanto.

The first Congress of Proletarian Freethinkers (Jpc) accepted a resolution in favour of Esperanto in Vienna, 1924. The Freethought Association of Austria also accepted Esperanto as method of cultural progress. The proceedings of the fifth Congress of the Polish Freethought Association were in Esperanto, and the meeting decided to agitate for the introduction of the language into the schools.

Freethought literature in Esperanto is not very great (ordinary literature, however, is multifarious) but sufficiently strong and growing. There is Renan's *Life of Jesus*, *Crimes of God*, *What is Monism*, *Against God*, *What the Bible Hides*, and other pamphlets. To-day the Freethinker-Esperantists are increasing the list through their organization, "Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda," in which they have a strong Freethought section. Each month it has a page of Freethought news in the official journal *Sennaciulo*, and publishes a news bulletin every fortnight. The Congress at Leipzig, during August 4-10, will see a strong contingent of Freethinkers planning a strong programme of future work.

If there is any who say that Freethought has no use for an international language let him look at his enemies. The Catholics have their own "Espero Katoliko," the Christian Scientists issue their slops in all languages including Esperanto, The Bible Students, Theosophists, and practically all other sects are now using Esperanto papers to propagate their ideas, arranging international exhibitions—they have had the Bible translated for some time—and the new Japanese cult Oomoto has its colporters spreading its ideas with the help of Esperanto. Especially valuable is Esperanto for relations between the East and West.

We Freethinkers are fighting against superstitions of the twentieth century, and that of the fixed, imitable, God-given babble on earth is one of them. Esperanto will help in the Freethought Movement to free the world of this superstition.

There are two organizations in England which have the propagation of Esperanto as their aim: The British Esperanto Association, 142 High Holborn, London, W.C.1, and the British Workers' Esperanto Association, of 13 Dewsbury Road, London, N.W.10. They will both be willing to help.

L. CORINNA.

Religious Eugenics.

CAN you beat it? "The Kingdom of this world is," indeed, "become the Kingdom of our God." Here was a world created by the Perfect, All-Wise, All-Powerful Deity! Millions of years ago (a long time even by Christian chronology) God saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good." But to-day He begins to take lessons from Francis Galton.

God and Eugenics! Jesus Christ and the Sterilization of the Unfit!

The American Eugenics Society devotes, in a recent number, to a sort of Christmas Feast, in which the American clergy are invited to prove that Eugenics is perfectly consistent with Revelation. This Christmas Number requires an American phrase to describe it properly. It is a wow!

The Frontispiece is a famous orthodox church, in which the most commonplace of orthodox religion is taught. It is entitled "Science's Interpreter," and has beneath it, as description or explanation, "The average citizen depends on his pastor to put things together for him, and iron out incongruities and philosophical difficulties like harmonizing science and religion."

One of the "Eugenics" writers says that "the microscope has added a new chapter to Revelation." Isn't it funny that the writer in question has never read the book he (or she) so glibly talks about supplementing. Isn't this the Book which says (Rev. xx. 18):—

⁵¹ *Ibid.* (pp. 200-203.)

⁵² *Ibid.* (Cf. pp. 204-206.)

If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. Most of us were under the impression that Eugenics was the science of an improvement of the race on lines of evolution and natural selection, and involving a belief in the paramount importance of heredity. With what contempt then would Galton and the early Eugenists read this fulsome praise of the "biological sermons in the majestic story of Creation in Genesis."

Rev. Kenneth MacArthur, Secretary of the Massachusetts Federation of Churches, writes of Prohibition in a manner calculated not to offend "pro's" or "anti's," and to secure credit for Christianity whether you agree with prohibition or oppose it. It is a very clever bit of foxiness. MacArthur shows that while 30,000,000 voters are Christian opponents of the liquor traffic, and "prohibition is an impassive example of what the Churches can accomplish," he adds that "in Eugenics we have a much more fundamental and permanent reform." He argues that Christians are essentially Eugenists, because from the City of God (another quotation from Revelation) "are to be excluded the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable and whoremongers and murderers," etc. That is your Christian, always! Eugenics, in the hands of scientists, may make mistakes. I would remind the readers that that good Freethinker, Mr. Havelock Ellis, a pioneer of Eugenics, thinks that even in cases where sterilization seems most desirable to prevent the perpetuation of the obviously unfit, he considers that consent from the victim himself should be a condition precedent of the operation. Contrast that with the smug "uplift" of the Christian, who in a so-called "scientific" article, has the effrontery to couple "unbelievers" with his Biblical vituperative list of those to be excluded from his paradise. He wants "the best possible human material"—and he can see no reason to discriminate between a Herbert Spencer and "all liars and unbelievers." No wonder he adds that the "Eugenics" he favours must be "consistent with Christian principles."

"The Church is fighting spiritual illiteracy." How? This American journal says "one institution in Boston alone has 600 students preparing to be professional directors of religious education." It is hardly necessary to remind the U.S.A. public that the murderer, Hickman, was one of these religiously educated gentlemen, like most of the Jukes tribe.

Of course the Hospitals are claimed as a Christian institution! "From the time of Jesus, Christians have felt a responsibility for the sick and infirm." Imagine what sort of "responsibility for the sick" is involved in the conduct of those few who still believe the Bible—and are sent to prison for literally obeying and seriously taking the responsibility of the elders of the Church when anyone is dying of curable diseases.

The finest picture in "Eugenics" is the magnificent group of five healthy young men in khaki, described thus, "A nation's army takes the best," while, in case even this legend is insufficient, a clerical writer says, "Not even the League of Nations or the Pact of Paris will restrain a people from going to war if they are too numerous for their soil." So we must improve the race—especially our own race, to face "China or Japan with their teeming millions."

Rev. Phillips E. Osgood, Rector of St. Paul's Church, Minneapolis quotes with relish the words Jesus used about putting a millstone round the neck before drowning anybody who "offends one of these little ones." He says, "the human body is the Ark of the Covenant." If so, why not call it the human body simply? What on earth has it to do with Noah, or Solomon's Temple?

One of the funniest aspects of the "Sermon" by Rev. Osgood is his plea that "Before long the Church will have to take its stand on the question of birth control." It seems incredible that these sixteen words in a twelve-column article, are the only mention Mr. Osgood makes of this subject. It is not often that so brave a challenge is so discreetly phrased!

The question of the waste of "charity" involved in the perpetuation of the weak-minded is curiously misunderstood by Rev. J. A. Ryan, a director of many Catholic charities. It is a queer comment on the intellectual "fitness" of clerical administrators to find this

Father-in-God imagining that any scientist, Eugenist or other,

assumes that the weaker members of society ought to be left to perish in order that society as a whole may reach a higher average.

Such a statement is interesting as showing the kind of "science" which these men are in the habit of attacking in the safe confines of their "coward's castle" pulpits.

An amusing concluding article traces the ancestry of numerous clergy of the day. It proves that nearly all of them come from Christian families! Many indeed had grandfathers and earlier ancestors who were clergymen too! Unfortunately few of these genealogies go back half a dozen generations: it is quite certain that, if they did, we should find all their ancestors were medicine-men, keeping the wolf from the wigwam by smelling out witches, and proving that their own religion was the only true science, or as Rev. John Roach Straton says in *Eugenics: Religious Number*: "my parents, godly, old-fashioned Christians, would have felt as I do, that there is more real power in one ounce of old-fashioned Bible religion than in ten tons of Eugenics."

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—One of the great daily newspapers is publishing a short series of articles on something about God or religious beliefs. I say great: that is great in circulation and commercial enterprise. I have not read them carefully or studiously, and therefore express no opinion on them.

What I desire to say is that, having read similar articles on other occasions, they have left an impression that these writers frequently open their articles with certain admissions of scientific truth which they can no longer deny or question, and end with a declaration that they still somehow hold to a faith or (blind) belief in a mysterious something which they cannot, and make no attempt to, define.

Their convictions, beliefs and faith are worth just as much as those of the man who knows nothing except that he has to toil for his daily bread, and perforce lives the life of the "harmless necessary cat, or a gaping pig."

Is it any wonder that we are looked upon by foreigners as a pious set of humbugs?

Not until the common people have learnt to cast aside their superstitions, will these educated people cease to dope them with religious untruth and unreality, and their vapourings about their own convictions, the sincerity of which can never be put to the test.

What with the financial interests of the churches and clergy, and the British newspaper press, your task is a stupendous one.

"All else is chaff and dust, which let the wind blow whither it listeth."

FREETHOUGHT AND THE PRESS.

SIR,—An Editorial footnote to a recent letter in the *Daily Herald*, aroused my suspicion. It stated the letter had been inserted in accordance with the usual practise of Hearing All Sides.

Was it really true, or only an official statement? The test came soon afterwards.

A resolution, passed at the Primitive Methodist Conference, was reported in the *Daily Herald*. The resolution protested against Sunday Boxing Contests, and called upon all ministers and members of the Church to combat the evil.

Writing to the Editor, I asked, Were we to understand that every Sunday the whole country should be handed over to ministers and members of the Church? Were ministers and members of the Church the only people to be considered on Sundays?

I was unfortunate, however. The Editor had space difficulties, and could not insert my letter; a printed notice to that effect was returned with my brief communication. I am not complaining. The weighty

matters dealt with in the Postbag columns of the *Daily Herald* in following issues shows how wisely the Editor had selected.

It appears some *Daily Herald* readers like Gadfly's articles, and some do not, and the columns of the paper used to make that known. Then the early swarming of Bees, second in importance only to Labour's victory at the recent election, must have caused a stir in political circles, and certainly should have had preference over the mere matter of the rights and freedom of citizens on Sunday, so I am not complaining.

But for the inspired intellect of theologians, we might have known, that all the discoveries of science are foretold in the scriptures, that the Economics of Socialism are to be found in Christ's teaching, and that the Day-light Saving Bill is based upon the Sermon on the Mount.

There is, however, a very serious omission, no cleric has yet said anything about Sport in the Scriptures. If the Churches have tennis and Cricket sections, Scriptural authority is essential. I suggest, that read aright, the Gospels contain the direct incentive for all kinds of sport, and that Jesus and the apostles had an occasional friendly tussle on the green. R. H. ROSETTI.

STR.—*Freethinker*, June, 23, p. 386, line 25:—

Dr. Barnes replies, 'that God can alter the expression of his will no one doubts, but that he has actually done so is now doubted.' How then does the Bishop know that God can alter the working of things? . . . It is an act of blind and unwarrantable faith.

I don't know how Bishop Barnes knows about his one God, but I know why I believe that any of my quintillions of gods can "alter the working of things." It is simply because I can. And as my own acts are the only ones of which I have first-hand inside knowledge, I regard all others as like them. Your belief in impersonal action and inexorable laws strikes me as "blind and unwarrantable faith." I think I see why you have that faith. (1) You were brought up to believe in Science, and have not struggled free. (2) You are afraid to be a real downright heretic, you wish to keep in touch with scientific orthodoxy, even if not with the Christian sort. (3) You share the usual human wish for something fixed, certain, and infallible. And I suppose, if one has faith enough, "established scientific laws" are as consoling as Roman or Mormon dogma.

C. HARPUR.

Society News.

The second week's propaganda conducted by Mr. George Whitehead in the Bolton district, proved to be as successful as the first. Three meetings were addressed on the Saturday and Sunday at Wigan, where large crowds listened eagerly to the lectures. A local opponent, who never fails to attend, helped to put the audience in good humour with his lop-sided defences of his faith. The Sunday evening meeting, towards its close, witnessed the efforts of a Catholic lady who nearly screamed her voice away testifying to the true faith which apparently did not err on the side of leniency to opponents. The large crowd first enjoyed her intolerance, then got impatient. Wigan has a large body of opinion sympathetic to our doctrines.

The five meetings at Bolton were as sympathetic and attentive as before, and the speaker's pungent comments on a local bigot's attempt in the press to persuade the police to interfere with our meetings were heartily commended as the bigot in question found, when he attempted to justify his intolerance on Mr. Whitehead's platform.

The whole eight meetings were well attended, and were characterized by an appreciative hearing.

We have to thank Messrs. Sisson and Partington, and Mr. and Mrs. Lever, for their assistance at all the meetings. Two recent converts, Mr. and Mrs. Unsworth, are displaying as much zeal in supporting Freethought as they did previously on behalf of religion.

Mr. Whitehead will address meetings on Friday and Saturday, July 4 and 5, on Bolton Town Hall steps; and on Sunday, at 3.15 p.m., will commence a week's mission in Blackburn Market.

MR. J. CLAYTON IN N.E. LANCASHIRE.

DURING the week Mr. Clayton has visited Great Harwood, Sabden, Crawshawbrook, Baierfield and Accrington. At the first-named place strong opposition was offered by a local nonconformist parson, who could not be induced to mount the platform. There was much abusive opposition from others. The parson who would not offer formal opposition waited until Mr. Clayton had concluded, and then addressed the crowd on his own account, but soon fizzled out. The meeting will pave the way for recruits for the future. The other meetings all passed off very well, although some strenuous opposition was encountered. It was altogether a strenuous week from which one hopes for results at meetings later on.—J.C.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD JUNE 28, 1929.

PRESIDENT, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair.

Also present, Messrs. Neate, Moss, Clifton, Wood, Corrigan, Easterbrook, Mrs. Quinton, Junr., Miss Vance, Miss Kough, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed, and the monthly financial statement presented.

New members were elected for South London, West London, Bethnal Green, Liverpool, and the Parent Society.

Correspondence from Newcastle, Liverpool, and Nelson was dealt with. Provision was made for the further expansion of the Society's activity during the present season.

A number of minor matters were dealt with, and the meeting closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,
Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.5, by the FIRST POST ON TUESDAY, or they will not be inserted.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (The London Institution Theatre, South Place, Moorgate, E.C.2): 11.0, Mr. George E. O'Dell (New York)—"The Ethics of Friendship."

OUTDOOR.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Messrs. James Hart and R. G. Lennard; 3.30, Messrs. E. Betts and B. A. Le Maine; 6.30, Messrs. H. Tuson and B. A. Le Maine. Freethought 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, Messrs. H. Tuson and R. G. Lennard.

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

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrolds Road, Waltham Green): Saturday, 8.0; Waltham Green Church, Sunday 8.0. Various speakers.

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

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6.0, Mr. F. Mann.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (outside Technical College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. R. H. Rosetti.—A Lecture.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

MR. G. WHITEHEAD will lecture at Bolton Town Hall Steps on Friday and Saturday, July 4 and 5. On Sunday, at Blackburn Market, at 3.15 and 7.0. Remainder of week 7.30.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Town Moor, near North Road entrance, 7.0, Mr. R. Atkinson—A Lecture.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S.—Ramble to Cathkin Lock. Meet at Burnside Car Terminous at 12 o'clock prompt.

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

Two Books for Thinkers.

MIND AND REALITY

— AND —

LIFE, MIND & KNOWLEDGE

— BY —
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