

SUPPOSE WE ABOLISH CHRISTIANITY?

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

Views and Opinions.

Suppose We Abolish Christianity ?

Up to the time of writing I have had no reply to my offer to the *Liverpool Weekly Post*, that if the editor really desires his readers to judge whether the world can do without Christianity or not, instead of employing a writer to set out the Christian claim, and leaving it there, I would supply him with a series of articles, "free, gratis, and for nothing" setting out my case, leaving it for his licensed defender of the faith to reply. Up to now no advantage has been taken of my offer, and seeing that in the criticism of the Liverpool debate my name is not mentioned, neither is the name of the *Freethinker*, nor that of the National Secular Society, it is quite evident that the usual rule of newspaper offices is being maintained—my name, the name of the paper I control, the name of the Society of which I am President must not be mentioned for fear some Christian readers of the *Weekly Post* are led to enquire into matters. They must, so far as is possible, be fobbed off with a one-sided statement, and left in ignorance of the fact that there is any other side worthy of consideration. I commend the situation to the writer of the letter in another part of this issue who thinks I am hard when I talk of the humbug of present-day journalism, and who is under the delusion that the work of newspapers is to provide news, not views. Their work is to provide such news as promotes the purpose for which the paper exists, to publish views of which the proprietor approves, and to suppress all views to which he is opposed.

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Christianity's Victory.

The writer of the *Post* article signs himself "Scrutator," and his text is my recent debate with the Rev. Mr. Pughe. The article, he says, is "My answer to the question 'Can we do without Christianity?'" and he leads off thus:—

Broadly speaking the answer of the human race has always been in the negative, because Christi-

anity has gone from victory to victory. It conquered practically the whole world, except Asia and savage Africa. A religion with such a record, with an appeal that overleaps the barriers of race, language, and social class, must have in it something vital, something necessary and indispensable to the deeper needs of mankind.

Agreed! A religion that has done this would be worthy of attention, only Christianity scarcely fills the bill. What is meant by saying that Christianity has gone from victory to victory? Of course it grew once upon a time, or it would never have had the control of Europe it once had; but its greatest European triumphs were gained by the exercise of force and were perpetuated by the same means. In point of numbers and allowing for the growth of population, there are fewer Christians in Europe than there were three centuries ago. There is not a church in Christendom that is holding its own. Most of them openly lament their decline in numbers and in influence: while a favourite form of defence against attack is that Christianity cannot have failed because it has never been tried. But phrases once learned exercise a strange tyranny over certain minds, hence the familiar cry that "Christianity has gone from victory to victory." It has lost in numbers, it has lost in influence, it laments that the evils in the world is due to the fact that men turn their backs on its teachings, a very small proportion of people in every civilized country attend its worship; but never mind, it has gone from victory to victory. I wonder what defeat or failure would be like!

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Man is a Reasoning Being (P)

The answer of the human race, says "Scrutator," is that we cannot do without Christianity. But more than half the human race, considered in blocks of peoples or nationalities, do not even profess to believe in Christianity. Look at India, at Japan, at China, at the Turkish Empire, etc., etc. And in those countries that are formally Christian, there are millions who repudiate the name of Christian, and of those who claim the name at least half would be repudiated by the other half as having no right to the title. I am not surprised that "Scrutator" likes to offer his championship in a newspaper that will protect him against a too stringent criticism. Here is another gem. Mankind "will pursue its ideal by the paths of goodness, beauty, and truth." Splendid! One can hear the roll of the rhetorical drums, loud enough to silence the voice of one who meekly murmurs, "yes, but what is goodness, beauty and truth?" The reply "Scrutator" makes to this query is, "The Christian religion . . . is surely the champion and advocate of all that is good, true, and beautiful, in God's vast universe." Magnificent! The evidence that we are agreed as to what is good-

ness, beauty, truth, and also that Christianity is the champion of these things is absolutely conclusive—to a Sunday school or a church congress. If that does not carry conviction what about this:—

To-day, all over the world, the most truly Christian people are the flower of the race, the foremost in all the ways of benevolence and humanitarianism . . . Christianity has uplifted every nation that has adopted it.

(Who said Abyssinia?). If I did not know better I should conclude that "Scrutator" was either the Bishop of London or James Douglas, there is such a family likeness in their reasoning. All over the world the "truly Christian people" are in the forefront with everything that is good. Of course, if Christians are not in the forefront, then they are not truly Christian, and if those in the front do not call themselves Christian, then they are Christians without knowing it, that is they are "truly Christian." The American Christian negro, when he is not permitted to ride in the car or train in which the white Christian rides, sleep in the same hotel, attend the same theatres, worship in the same Church, or deal with the same bootlegger as his white brother, is being oppressed by those who are not truly Christian; none of the people who rob, or murder, or lie, or get drunk, who make wars, or preach hatred, none of these are true Christians, all of them belong to us. We are permitted to be a power in the world, if only to relieve the "Truly Christian" of some inconveniences. One can see the wisdom of "Scrutator" sheltering himself within the columns of a friendly newspaper.

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A Critic in a Fog.

In the course of the debate in Liverpool I said that of all the great religious books in the world, I knew of none in which the intellectual level was lower than that of the New Testament; and I went on to explain that by this I meant the neglect of a teaching of intellectual rectitude or the inculcation of some kind of intellectual discipline. This is Scrutator's comment:—

What was our friend looking for? A learned history, a treatise on astronomy, or a text book of electricity, or a geological classic? He was evidently looking for a mental stimulus, and was disappointed to be told to love his neighbour as himself, to return good for evil, to love justice and mercy, and to walk humbly before God. No intellectual value in these pearls of ethical wisdom! But even so, goodness is of more value than scholarship; character is the greatest of human possessions.

After reading that, as a reply to what I said, I am inclined to bank on Scrutator being either the Bishop of London, or his double. It is exactly the way the Bishop used to answer me nearly forty years ago. Who but either an occupant of the pulpit, or a candidate for Holy Orders would take the command to love one's neighbour, or to return good for evil, as an example of a teaching of intellectual rectitude or a sample of intellectual discipline?

Why, "Scrutator" doesn't apparently, understand the meaning of the expressions. If I must explain more simply I may say my complaint is that the ideal of intellectual conduct held up by both the New Testament and by the Christian Church through the whole of its history is that of simple faith and unbounded credulity. The impulse to study, to criticize, to prove, and to suspend judgment where proof is not to be had, is wholly a product of the scientific spirit, and it has become general just in proportion as Christianity has become weak. The sin which the Orthodox Church has

always attributed to Satan and his angels is that of intellectual independence. It is the one offence for which the Christian Church has never found a form of salvation, apart from its renunciation. Moreover, if "Scrutator" cares to take, under some competent guide, even a casual glance at history, he will find that the most far reaching evils that have afflicted society have come not from men who were filled with evil towards their neighbours, but to want of that intellectual culture and discipline which I am told is wrapped up in loving justice and mercy. Plato would have taught my critic better, even the Koran in this matter would have been a better guide.

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The Utility of Christianity.

One more passage from my critic, a quite illuminating one:—

We will not make the mistake of confusing Christianity with the conduct of individuals or communities professing to be Christians, nor with the mistaken interpretation of the Scriptures in the past with often unfortunate consequences. (And as to wars, slavery, murder, injustice). Undoubtedly many of the horrors named have been perpetuated by so-called Christians and in the name of Christianity, but they have no sanction in the gospel of love as preached by the Prince of Peace.

Well, it is something to get the admission that individuals calling themselves Christians have been guilty of murder and many other offences, from which we may certainly gather that the march of Christianity from victory to victory often halts very sadly. Naturally this does not affect one's sense of the value of Christianity, since when Christians do good they do it because of the religion, and when they do harm we must not put it down to the influence of Christianity, it is only a misinterpretation of its teaching. So when the Bible taught people to buy slaves, or kill witches, or exterminate heretics, the true interpretation was that slavery is an offence in the eyes of God, that witchcraft is a delusion, and that we should be tolerant with each other. It is also true that the establishment of the more liberal interpretation was usually the work of heretics, but that is, again, only proof of the power of God who uses the energies of those who disbelieve in him to work unto his glory. So that in any case the Christian simply cannot be wrong. How, then, can the world do without a teaching which however inaccurate is bound to be right, and whatever its influence, is certain to be good? How could the clergy do without it? How can "Scrutator" do without it? I can only plead in extenuation, that what I had in mind when I dealt with the question "Can we do without Christianity?" was the world in general. I admit that I do not see how certain types could do without Christianity and retain their position in the world.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

TOWARDS HAPPINESS.

People would do well if they practised more contentment; if they did not drift with circumstances, did not trust entirely to external sources of pleasures, but manufactured their joy from their own resources; if they practised the art of minimising difficulties, and did not look at obstacles with a magnifying glass. They would do better if they cultivated the art of living with themselves as they are, and with the world as it is; if they widened their field of vision and broadened their sphere of interest; if they took up new lines of study—and if they thought more of what they could do for others.—Dr. Bernard Hollander.

Should a Curate Tell?

"By the grace of God, defender of the Faith."

Inscription on coinage.

"Christianity has never lost the instinct of universal dominion."—*Bible Society Report.*

CURATES, in spite of their alleged sacred calling, are usually regarded with amused tolerance. Dramatists and music-hall song-writers have made them the butt of their satire, and the British public seem to tire of the jest. It is all very ironic, for these hatchet-faced young men take themselves so very seriously as heaven-sent individuals commissioned by Omnipotence to reclaim a saucy world from naughty ways. Styling themselves "reverend," these green, young parsons have always endeavoured to keep their caste separate from the big world of ordinary men and women. And now, fallen on evil days, these "sons of God" are the cause of laughter to the "gods" of the gallery, and hazard their sanctity in the company of the red-nosed comedian, and the dwarf saxophone player.

Worms are said to turn, and at long last a curate has unfolded himself in the columns of a contemporary. In the *Daily Mail*, November 18, the Rev. Austin Lee, M.A., Curate of Kew, discusses the question, "Should a Curate Tell the Truth?" and judging by the correspondence that followed, he appears to have annoyed a number of quite worthy people. Whether these critics thought that the impulsive young "son-of-God" might essay the part of an *enfant terrible*, and blurt out the names of those whose pew-rents were in default, or the paucity of the "collections," is difficult to determine. Anyhow, the Rev. Mr. Lee apologized for asking the question, and has once more subsided into his native obscurity.

Perhaps the curate of Kew has been reading the life of George Washington, who has the credit of being the only perfectly truthful American. Indeed, if old George kept it up in after life he must have been, not only the bravest American, but the most courageous man the world has ever seen. That honour has been credited to a gentleman who sent an offer of marriage to a lady who had murdered two husbands, but, in view of her subsequent execution, he may have been merely a humourist. Washington had to tell the truth in a country where every man carries a gun, and where people are so very sensitive that a new fancy religion is born every week of the year.

The trouble is that curates are, in the last analysis, but simple tradesmen. That they sell "the bread of life" instead of baked potatoes does not alter the argument. They are just as much tradesmen as hairdressers are. One I know well has so great a regard for the truth that he seldom utters it. For instance, if a Sunday-school teacher slithers into the operating chair, this hairdresser inquires after the welfare of the dear children. But, should a bookmaker imperil the stability of the same chair he inquires if "Steam-roller" has a chance in to-day's racing fixtures. This hairdresser does not really care if the dear children were decimated by measles, or all ran away to sea. He desires, however, to be pleasant to his customers, and, incidentally, to keep his job and his bank-balance.

"Aye, there's the rub," as Shakespeare puts it. A curate has to hold his job. Not being an imbecile, he must be aware that he is living in the twentieth century and not in the sixteenth century. As a curate he has just subscribed, in the most solemn and pretentious method possible, to the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England, as by law established. To-day these articles make most curious reading. They include the belief that Christ, who is said to be a third part of God Almighty, went bodily to "hell," a place

which so many clergy declare has no existence. They include the belief that a spirit can be at the same time a father and a son, and also proceed from itself as a ghost. They include the belief that "Adam" was the first man, and that he ate forbidden fruit, in consequence of which death was brought into the world, and countless millions are damned to everlasting torture. They include the belief that the Roman Catholic religion, which is one of the older forms of Christianity, is a vain invention of man, and that the Protestant form of religion, a comparatively modern invention, is the real goods. They include the belief that the Christian Bible is the only one that matters in a shelf-full of the sacred Books of the East. They also include the further belief that the present tenant of Buckingham Palace is the head of the actual Church of Christ.

To these Articles of Faith, among others, every Church of England parson subscribes, from the curate of Kew to the two Archbishops of York and Canterbury. We know that great numbers of them do not believe in them, or observe them; that they are taking money by false pretences. Their main reasons for remaining in the Anglican Church are "purple, palaces, patronage, profit, and power," as a former cheerful dean of St. Paul's Cathedral happily expressed it. The right to appoint clergymen to benefices is sold for money in the open market, as if it were so much coal or wheat. Parliament, including so many shades of theological opinion, makes the religion, and the landlords appoint its professors, or barter the appointment to the highest bidder. Is it not a sorry trade?

The ecclesiastical canons are still in force, except they conflict with the laws of the land, and the Law Courts have decided that they are binding on the clergy, of whom there are about 20,000 at the present time. The first dozen canons are aimed at Nonconformists, and all but one ends with a curse, a distinguishing mark of this religion of Love. If you deny the Royal supremacy in Church affairs you are cursed. If you deny that the Protestant Reformed Church teaches the true doctrine of Christ you are cursed. If you say that the Prayer Book is out of harmony with the Christian Bible you are cursed. And so on, and so forth, in the true spirit of Christian charity. But that the law of the land overrides these ecclesiastical canons, everybody who refused to attend a parish church would be cursed, and the names read out in public. This is no matter of antiquarian interest. Recently a farmer was actually committed to prison without trial for a breach of a Church agreement, the sentence being passed by the Ecclesiastical authorities.

All this is an affront to the spirit of the age in which we live. We have a Socialist Government, whose watchwords are "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity." Yet the State Church of this country still teaches through its 20,000 catspaws that millions of English men and women are unclean and outcast. It is an insult to Democracy. For no one can be a loyal Churchman without renouncing his mental and moral freedom, and placing his civil loyalty and duty at the mercy of a priest who has sworn to uphold the Thirty-Nine Articles of his religion. Priests, from curates to archbishops, all claim to be sacred persons and entitled to reverence and support. Unless a citizen accepts them and their preposterous dogmas without doubt he shall perish everlasting. That is Christian teaching for the masses, tempered with the politest of reservations for the classes. How can a curate, or any other priest, tell the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, concerning such a religion? As well expect a burglar to leave his visiting-card at a house he intends burgling the same evening.

MIMNERMUS.

Eggs of Lightning.

If a man had a hen in his backyard that laid eggs of lightning—explosive eggs that went off with a roar and a bang when least expected, and blew the house and all the family therein to pieces—would a wise man stuff that hen to bursting-point each day with corn, or would he wring its neck?

This is the master-issue to-day before the British Empire. For the Roman Catholic Church is the religious fowl which lays the deadly eggs, and the passion of John Bull for encouraging such a hen, whilst howling at Russia as the seat of all evil, is being pushed to an unreasonable extreme. From an unknown friend at South Johnstone, in the tropical sugar-country of North Queensland—a country that has practically become an Italian sub-State—I have this day received the issue of the *Freethinker* for August 11, 1929, containing, on pages 506 and 507 Mr. P. Murphy's direct and veridical article, "The Pope's Green Island." Everything that Mr. Murphy has said there—and he has said it very well—applies in some degree or other to Australia. Rapidly, this country of mine, nominally Protestant, is passing into the hands of the imbeciles who grovel before the so-called "Sacred Heart": and Sydney, every whit as much as Dublin, has become a priest-cursed, nun-ridden city of slums and slavery.

In September of last year, we witnessed here the monstrous infamy of a piece of dough being hauled through our streets, amidst incredible pomp, whilst thousands upon thousands of the stupefied victims of Rome knelt down in the dust and hailed it as the veritable living Jesus. From that instant, we were told, a beautiful regime of pure and unalloyed, seraphic peace was to pervade all things in Australia. But what are the facts? From the very moment that the last stinking vestige of Eucharistic incense had died away, and the last gem-encrusted "prince of the Church" had pompously blest and quit these shores, our country has been filled with an unspeakable spirit of hate, industrial woe, strikes, starvation, political chaos, and human misery. The eggs of lightning have gone off with a roar, north, east, south and west; and the Anglican Church, which is nominally representative of a large majority of the Australian people, instead of wringing the neck of that Roman hell-fowl, is engaged in a mad *jehad* at the present day against the alleged horrors of Communism in Soviet Russia.

I am myself a fairly well-known journalist, reaching perhaps a million readers a week through the columns—when I choose to use them—of the Sydney *Labor Daily*. For certain reasons, I am taking no part whatever in the discussion of the present insane egg-burst or boil-over in our political affairs that is miscalled a Federal election. Because a large proportion of its shares are held and exercised by Roman Catholic priests, it is utterly impossible for any writer connected with the *Labor Daily*, no matter how influential, to speak his mind. That is, within the columns of that newspaper through which, over many a thousand miles, he is accustomed to reach his daily audience. But I have charged, consistently, through the *Labor Daily*, during the past few months, that the so-called Christian Churches are responsible for the conditions of industrial chaos and veiled slavery, now existent in Australia; and a tremendous volume of public opinion, measured by the quantity and the geographical extent of the correspondence that I have received, has backed me up in that contention.

Personally, I am neither a Communist nor an anti-Communist. I have been actually chained, myself, to Chinamen and to snotty-nosed Russian Finns: but

I believe that I am a man relatively free from colour-prejudice; and, as I have lately said in the columns of the *Labor Daily*, if I were a Chinaman I would stand up for China, and make no apology to any living person for being a so-called "yellow" man. I have learned, myself, in chains, fastened to Ah Fat and Ping Yan in the most effectual way, which is the way of a fellow iron bondage, to overlook all distinctions of caste, colour and creed; and to deal with men as cosmic forces—some pedestrian, and others veritable shooting stars.

My only exception to this sovereign rule is in the case of the unholy, hellishly-false, hypocritical, lying Roman Catholic Church. The whole of my bias against that Church, I should explain, rests upon a very singular incident. Some years ago, the Rev. "Father" Lockington, the then head of the Society of Jesuits in Australia, whom I knew personally and esteemed as a very clever and courteous man, asked me to go and have a talk with Archbishop Mannix, the world-notorious Home-Rule episcopal advocate, of Melbourne. In due course, through "Father" Lockington himself, an interview at the Palace attached to St. Patrick's Cathedral was arranged. Whilst I was talking with this lean, cadaverous Mayo-nouth zealot—a man with the painful, ascetic face of a Jerome gone sour—a woman knocked, outside, at the Palace door. Mannix could see her and hear her voice, just as well as I. To a horse-faced female servant, the woman, who was agitated and in tears, asked for an interview with "his Grace." "He's not in!" snapped the menial. "His Grace has gone to Ballarat. From there he is going to Echuca and Deniliquin, an' after that his Grace will not be back for a week."

With that, she slammed the door. Now Archbishop Mannix personally sat there, in that rich and splendidly-furnished Palace apartment, with dozens of holy paintings of Jesus and the Virgin Mary hung upon its walls, and listened to those lies. He knew that they were being told. He heard them being told. He—a vast financial beneficiary through the cult of Jesus, fed by Jesus, and trading upon the credulity of mankind as an alleged exponent of the beautiful charitable idea of Jesus, ashamed to stand up and tell his own lies, like an honest flunky, hired that menial through whose lips the lies were told. The woman, outside, went away weeping. What her personal trouble was, I shall never know. But I do know that Archbishop Mannix himself sat there, a partner and a silent participator in those lies, and that he made no apology to me, whatever, for the occurrence of such a disgraceful and—from a purely honest and veridical Christian point of view—immoral scene.

It is from that instant that my hatred and dislike of the Roman Catholic Church takes its date. Prior to that time, I had feasted much with priests, had drunk their wine, smoked their cigars, enjoyed their company without in any way discussing religion, and had done their swearing for them—or some of it—whenever we had a break-down, during some of our pleasant motor-tours. I am a famous hand with the bottle, I must confess; a great carver of ducks and turkeys; most massive in body, and anything but an ascetic in my tastes. But, from that moment, I assert, in which I saw the fox-faced Mannix listen like a God of stone to the cry of the distressed and humble, I began to be repelled by the Roman Catholic Church. Not half an hour before, I had seen half a dozen richly-bedizened Roman Catholic society females leave the self-same Palace. I had seen Archbishop Daniel Mannix personally conduct them to the Palace door, and I had seen them kneel, as if he were the living embodiment of Jesus, to kiss his hand. But, when poverty knocked, what a difference! No ponti-

fical smiles and flatteries then. Oh, no! Just plain lying—vicarious lying, it is true, but still plain lying. That, and a slammed door—such was the Vision of Daniel that I saw, on the one and only occasion that ever I entered that theological Beshazzar's Palace; and it was and is because of that most singular interview, and its most unexpected results, that I am Cyrus now, upon the track of Rome—with the sword.

I have done ten years of reading and thinking in the interval. I did not turn to McCabe or Ingersoll or Voltaire for guidance. In fact, I do not think that I have ever read one whole volume of Ingersoll yet. But I took hold of the official and orthodox, endorsed literature of the Roman Catholic Church itself. For a start, I bought a complete, up-to-date set of the Roman Catholic Encyclopedia, and read the whole damned thing from start to finish. This took time. Then I followed up all the precious "Lives" of those accursed, swindling frauds that they call the "Saints." Then I masticated, seriatim, Hilaire Belloc, my fellow fat man, G. K. Chesterton—in fact, and to save time, the whole of the holy pro-Catholicizing bunch. I did not leave out that precious religious acrobat, "Father" Ronald Knox; neither did I miss any of the current periodical literature of the Mick Church, from the best stuff that is turned out in the *Dublin Review*, etc., to the kind of bunkum served up in *Ave Maria*, and the like servant-girl-doping publications, from Sydney to California and Michigan.

What is the upshot? Why, the upshot is, as I have stated in my first paragraph, that I now see the Roman Catholic Church as the diabolical flying reptile of the universe—the Holy Hen which lays the explosive eggs. And I thought that I would say so. I thought that I would convey, briefly, to Mr. P. Murphy, a little of my thanks for his luminous world-flash of an article—"The Pope's Green Island." I thought that I would also thank my unknown Queensland correspondent—the man in the Dago-haunted sugar-country at South Johnstone—by saying just exactly where I stand, myself, upon this Ireland-murdering question. I am an Irish-Australian myself, born of a family wholly Catholic, and from my earliest days I was accustomed to the sight of the so-called "Sacred Heart," with half a score of butchers' knives and cleavers stuck through it, upon my bedroom wall.

But I have seen the world since. I have escaped from that monstrous fog of ignorance, folly and superstition in which the mind of the average Irish-Australian child in the Bush is poisonously steeped. I have taken stock of Zyburá—that cunning American vixen of an epistemological hell, who is slowly but craftily preparing the official Roman Catholic mentality for an absorption of the original medieval Thomist doctrine into the later Thing-in-Itselfism of Immanuel Kant. There are, I believe, many scores of thousands of good Australian men and women, chiefly Laborites, for whom John McCrashan's voice is the voice of true courage and Olympian truth. Definitely, then, I say to such and for such, in all lands whatsoever, that Australia is another "Pope's Green Island." But I, for one, am not willing that the soul of this gigantic continent of ours should—in Algernon Charles Swinburne's immortal phrase—"squat down in the flesh" for the benefit of Rome, "Like a tinker drunk in a ditch."

JOHN MCCRASHAN.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

Manners and Customs of Lowly Cultures.

IN modern Europe the rites of baptism and confirmation serve to remind us of our inheritance from savage times. Ceremonies of initiation are almost universal in primitive societies. These occupy the place of the educational training of youth in civilized communities, and represent the earlier stages of many of our most cherished institutions.

Generally considered, the term initiation is synonymous with "training" and "instruction." Anthropologists, however, usually restrict the term to designate admission to religious or magical ceremonies and traditions. Many of the communications conveyed to novices in the course of their initiatory training are secret. Others take the form of instruction from wise and venerated veterans whose authority is everywhere acknowledged. Mystery, nevertheless almost invariably surrounds the ceremonies, and the secrets disclosed are carefully concealed from the vulgar mind. In practice initiation means an introduction to a mystery, and those best acquainted with the esoteric significance of magic and religion inspire reverence and dread among the common people. As Count Goblet D'Alviella reminds us "initia" was a generic term for mysteries with the Romans of old.

With each sex, the ceremony is associated with the period of puberty. At this critical stage the tribal ceremony serves to break the links that bind the adolescent to women and children, and qualifies him to share in the lives of men. Among the aboriginal races of North and South America, in Fiji, in savage Australia, Polynesia, Melanesia, Hindustan and other lands, this institution is established, and its vestiges survived among the cultured communities of antiquity.

Initiation has been admirably defined as the oldest form of public instruction. In the words of D'Alviella: "Its function is to confer on the adolescent the rights and obligations of an active member of society; it enables him to take part in war; to lay the foundations of family life, and to observe the customs and rites necessary for the well-being of the tribe."

These solemn ceremonies are staged in a sanctuary which, under severe pains and penalties, must never suffer desecration from the presence of the profane. The grey-beards of the tribe reserve to themselves the office of ministrants and custodians. They are the appointed guardians of the native traditions, and submission to the ancients and their instruction is the highest of duties, while disregard is an unpardonable sin.

With girls, as with boys, the leading ceremonies relate to the age of puberty. Crawley contended that this striking fact is connected with the fear of the opposite sex. Physical danger accompanies the physiological phenomena of puberty. So far as males are concerned, it is certainly true that an important feature of the confirmation ceremony relates to the boy's liberation from the woman's apron-strings. Male independence must be asserted, although the demands of the procreative passion subsequently compel his return to female companionship.

Legion are the customs concerning confirmatory rites. Various primitive races count a man's years from the date of his circumcision, his earlier life being disregarded. At initiation in some tribes the mothers symbolically renounce their rights over their sons. This happens in New South Wales and elsewhere.

The circumstance that a certain sexual aversion appears to pervade uncivilized societies induces Crawley to suppose that the numerous taboos imposed

The entire theory of the Church is antagonistic to any concentrated or consistent scheme of raising the earthly conditions of the suffering masses.—W. R. GREG.

are intended to ward off the perils of sexual contiguity at puberty. At this period boys and girls are strictly segregated. Assuredly, the marked changes of puberty were certain to arouse the curiosity and wonder of early man. And with nude or flimsily clothed races these transformations are more noticeable than in heavily attired communities. The Waniki smudge the bodies of the novices with earth during initiation, which is afterwards ceremonially cleansed. Also, at puberty, the name is frequently changed, on the principle that a newly-born creature requires a new name.

The complexity of the problem of the true meaning of many savage customs is illustrated by the remarkable regulations of sexual life in Eddystone Island. While the strictness of married conduct is puritanical, the liberty accorded the unmated girl verges on license. At puberty, if not before, defloration takes place, and the virgin is available on payment of a fee to her parents. But once she enters into wedlock the utmost strictness is enforced by public opinion, and lovers and mistresses are forbidden.

In native Australia the artificial rupture of the hymen usually takes place at puberty, although it sometimes occurs in infancy. In Eddystone Island defloration appears to have been originally a universal custom, and despite European influence largely remains so. The man who is to perform the operation sometimes makes terms with the parents prior to the advent of the menses by presenting them with a ring. Sometimes there is an element of choice, and the girl selects her partner. The full charge for this rite is ten arm-rings, and the lover is entitled to share her slumbers for twenty nights. In his realistic essay, *Sexual Relations and Marriage in Eddystone Island*, Dr. Rivers has described several native observances kindred in character to the above, which to the average insular Englishman must appear as more than passing strange. Still, as the sophisticated songster says:

"The wildest dreams of Kew are the facts of Khatmandhu,
And the crimes of Clapham chaste in Martaban."

Prior to the semi-cremonial of defloration, sexual congress was by no means unknown, despite the public frown. Dr. Rivers, whose studies were made on the spot, remarks that, "It was quite clear to us that even at an immature age children were perfectly familiar with sexual matters, and the names of the genital organs were frequent in their conversation. This seemed to be recognized as more or less illicit, and these words were used in some measure in a purient sense. For adults there is a strict taboo in the use of such words, and it would seem that they were allowed to be spoken by children, because what children said was not regarded as important. So with actual intercourse before puberty: it might be regarded as of little or no importance because the children were not responsible members of society."

Dr. Rivers also ascertained that in New Guinea native opinion views with comparative indifference the sexual play of children, and in one instance the parents obviously encouraged intercourse between their own offspring. Yet after the age of puberty incest is regarded with horror and disgust, and is one of the most heinous crimes in the native calendar.

Here we encounter the, to us, astounding fact that acts wicked and unseemly when committed after puberty are condoned and even encouraged before that stage is reached. There appears much truth in Dr. Rivers' suggestion that the apprehensions so common among savages concerning sexual phenomena in the more mature stages of life do not arise in relation to children whose sexual antics are regarded as a species of play.

Curiously enough, these early manifestations of the germinal instinct seldom or never appear to bear fruit. Children born before marriage are almost unknown. The most searching inquiries failed to reveal any recent instance of this. One such case was alleged to have occurred some generations earlier. Still, even if an unwed woman became pregnant the natives would not necessarily assign this to its real cause. "For, according to the beliefs in the Island, pregnancy may occur quite independently of sexual intercourse."

This rarity of births before marriage owes something to abortion. And a religious rite called *egora* is also held responsible for barrenness. Leaves, with the bark of trees mixed with the scrapings of stones are eaten with nuts, accompanied by a solemn incantation. The power of suggestion may serve to inhibit the generative processes. Dr. Rivers, however concluded that the medicinal herbs used in the rite contained substances possessing pharmacological properties.

"It would seem probable," he says, "that the efficacy of these rites is assisted by the regular use of some substance or substances which either prevent conception or produce early abortion. Any such substance might act by producing some pathological condition of the uterus, which when often repeated might produce permanent sterility. This sterility does not exist merely as a belief of the natives. The pedigrees show a very large number of childless marriages." This strange method of prevention is sometimes utilized subsequent to marriage, where the husband, at least, favours family limitation.

Although mixed bathing is customary in Eddystone, it is decidedly improper for men to gaze upon, or even glance at the women when engaged in their ablutions. When Rivers was in the Island a native was in bad repute after being caught spying amid the bushes on bathing females. While it is allowable for a man to make facetious remarks about the male genital organs, any mention of those of women is strictly taboo.

Courtship, love charms, and other coupling customs prevail much as with us. Bachelors and maids adorn themselves with what are considered things of beauty. After marriage, however, these ornaments disappear. The native theory is that were a wedded woman to decorate her person she would justly incur the suspicion of a siren's desires, while a resplendant husband would be suspected of amorous designs on unsophisticated females.

Objects associated with courtship are cherished by the married couple for luck. These charms possess the power of perpetuating the passion of love. Marriage is usually monogamous. Polygamy once prevailed, but is now confined to the chiefs and those great warriors who have taken ten heads. These are permitted the dubious privilege of two wives. One chief was credited with having secured twenty enemies' heads and possessed a harem of eight spouses. When a man had more than one partner the wives resided in separate villages and were visited in rotation. Doubtless, many discords were thus prevented. As recognized institutions, polyandry and concubinage were unknown in the Island. Yet, human nature is everywhere the same, and in Eddystone Island, as in places nearer home, *tertium quid* lurked in the shadows of an ostensibly monogamic life.

T. F. PALMER.

THERE is no absurdity so palpable but that it may be firmly planted in the human head if you only begin to inculcate it before the age of five by constantly repeating it with an air of great solemnity.—SCHOPENHAUER.

Acid Drops.

The Secretary of the Lord's Day Observance, who does not live in Manchester, says he is convinced that there are more contented happy faces in Manchester than there are in Brighton. That is because in Manchester there are no picture palaces, no concerts, no entertainments—nothing, nohow, but churches and chapels. So, says the pious Snivelkins, "I do not mean to suggest that Manchester is exactly heaven, but I do say in all seriousness, that a larger proportion of the people here seem to show signs of longing to get to heaven." We are not sure that the people of Manchester are longing to get to heaven, we had an idea it was Blackpool or Buxton. But we do feel that if we had to spend all our Sundays in Manchester we also should show signs of wanting to go somewher, and even heaven might possess some attractive features. It would take us out of a Manchester Sunday, and that would certainly be something.

On Armistice Day a fierce storm raged from South Wales to East Anglia. The fishing fleets that had put out from Yarmouth and Lowestoft felt its full force. But it hit hardest the Scottish fishing fleet, which refused to fish on the Sabbath and had not put out until Sunday was past. The Secretary for Scotland describes the losses as a disaster. The fishermen lost 31,000 nets, which cannot be replaced for less than £150,000. In the case of the Scottish fleet, piety and prayer would seem to confer no advantage.

The Hollywood correspondent of *Film Weekly* is responsible for the following:—

AIMEE'S LITTLE TROUBLE.

I am sorry to report that our friend Aimee Semple MacPherson, the super-heterodyne evangelist, is in a bit of trouble these days. She has an indefinite date with the Judge to explain certain strange discrepancies in the accounts of her Angelus Temple. These, it seems, are full of items entered as "Love Offerings." And the way some people look at it is that, towards herself at any rate, Aimee must have the love that passeth all understanding.

This seems to be a common malady among popular evangelists.

The Rev. Eric Southam, of Bournemouth, appears to be what Dickens would have called an "artful codger." The other Sunday was "police Sunday," in Bournemouth, and a great many policemen were marched to Church to listen to the Rev. Eric. So he assumed himself to be in the dock, and asked himself a number of questions. Of course, he answered them quite satisfactorily—to himself; for they were framed as only a clergyman would frame them, and answered as only a clergyman would answer them. One wonders what would happen to the gallant Eric if he found himself placed in the position of being cross-examined by a real unbeliever and how he would come out of the ordeal? We should be pleased to arrange for the questions to be asked, if only he would undertake to give the answers.

America is the land of queer things where religion is concerned, and quite recently there has been a great deal of comment concerning the decision of a judge—Judge Barnhill, North Carolina, to accept the evidence of a woman because she was an Atheist. The reasons given were, first, that the law of North Carolina, dating from 1777, stipulates that a witness must believe in divine punishment to qualify, and second, his own personal opinion that "if I believed that life ended with death and that there is no punishment after death I would be less apt to tell the truth"—and judging from the portrait of him, published in the *Literary Digest*, we should be inclined to believe him. Still, it is rough on other people for the assumption to be made that they are such naturally

born liars as Judge Barnhill says he is, and so require a God to compel them to conform to the standards of ordinary truthfulness.

American papers have naturally been much agitated about this case, and most appear to have disagreed with Judge Barnhill, and ask for the repeal of the Act. But from the Christian point of view there does seem a great deal to say for its retention. If it is admitted that in courts of law and in the ordinary affairs of life men are to be judged irrespective as to whether they believe in a God or not, there is bound to be suggested the question as to what is the social or ethical value of the belief? Earlier generations of Christians were more reasonable. They said that a man could not be a good citizen in the absence of a belief in God and they framed their laws accordingly. The modern Christian has exactly the same theory, but in practice he is inclined to say that religious belief is of no consequence whatever. Judge Barnhill, is, therefore quite a good Christian, in the orthodox and straightforward sense of the time, and in all probability no great slouch as a liar. At any rate as he, on his own confession, needs threatening in order to tell the truth, we should not feel inclined to trust him very far.

Mr. Ramsay Macdonald appears to have made some sort of a promise to Roman Catholic leaders in return for the votes of their flock, and many of the candidates also made promises of support to Roman Catholic claims over increased grants. Nothing has been done yet, but Dr. Downey, Archbishop of Liverpool, says that it is time something was done, and if nothing is done to satisfy Roman claims, the Catholics will not remain quiet much longer. The archbishop jeers at the statesmanship exhibited in saying that if the different religious bodies can agree upon some plan the government will act. That means that on this question the government have no plan, no policy, and no principle. It will act so as not to sacrifice votes. The Roman Catholics will not wait, the Nonconformists threaten revolt if the Catholics get what they want. We expect the government, if it cannot stall off to the end, will give each a little and throw all principle to the winds in the name of "true religion." Politicians and parsons make a lovely combination.

Whilst religious interests are deploring the lack of worshippers and indifference to all and sundry denominations, we wonder what they will have to say to the following report by Sir Robert Wallace, K.C. :—

Speaking with twenty-three years' experience as chairman of the licencing authority of London, I say that the drunkenness that was so prevalent twenty-three years ago has largely disappeared. Anyone who knows London to-day knows that it is quite exceptional to discover drunkenness.

It would appear that the more religion declines, the more commonsense prevails.

Mr. D. J. Treasure, coroner at Bassale, Mon., at an inquest proved to be a very discreet man. A child had died through, it is stated, lack of medical treatment. "Nobody believes," Mr. Treasure said, "in the efficacy of prayer more than I do, but not to the exclusion of medical treatment." Perhaps, after all, the medical treatment without the prayer might have been more effective and saved Mr. Treasure the privilege of having it both ways.

There is perennial talk about class warfare and what is known as society has no one but itself to blame. A newspaper announces that "Society sees Carnera at the Stadium Club." Here, society goes to see a prizefighter, the biggest ever; mob on top. To balance matters, Dean Inge goes for the under-dog, and a sensible scale of values, the providing of which is the duty of a class

with leisure, can go to blazes. A few clerical big guns might give the poorer classes a rest, and aim at those who can only gobble privileges without responsibility.

What are called "outspoken comments" by the Bishop of Norwich, appear on examination to be only an admission that religious training is not a blessing or a help to clear thinking. In his pamphlet, he writes:—

... It would scarcely pass the wit of man to devise some scheme of marriage which would ensure that the marriage became in all cases a civil matter, while the Church only blessed subsequently, but immediately, the unions of which it approved.

This is a statement as straight as a corkscrew, and obliquely meaning, that the Church is unnecessary.

H. D. A. Major, D.D., F.S.A., Principal of Ripon Hall, Oxford, in the *Daily Mail*, is fighting on the retreat. He writes, "It is, of course, very unfortunate that the Church authorities have attached such importance to miracles, and have even taught that Christianity depends on them." This will be good news to the "last ditchers" of Freehought, and it will show how gracefully things can be dropped by clerics when they can no longer be held.

Why don't the spirits do something useful? They could have foreseen and foretold the floods in Rhonnda Valley, and thus saved the misery of human beings. Instead, they prefer to produce a second-class performance of Maskelyne.

Whilst thousands of the clergy can tell us so much of the other world, Sir Thomas Neill admits that the scourge of influenza would seem to baffle all attempts to arrest it. That is the worst of wanting two worlds at a time.

Our contemporary, the *New Age*, November 28, has a brief note entitled "Friend and Mankind" translated from an article by Arnold Zweig in the *Psychoanalytical Movement*. It may be summarized in two words, individual responsibility. Throughout history, the weakest and the most cunning have remanded a scapegoat. The idea still obtains in the present. The idea of Christ is nothing but that of a scapegoat, and the myth is now used for various reasons. In other words, self-reliance, self-knowledge, and a freedom to face the facts of life have grown, in spite of the efforts of vast numbers of paid preachers who sapped the strength of mankind with false teachings. To say that God knows is to say that nobody knows, and the name of God stands for lack of thinking—and passes the problem on to him. From the article mentioned above we extract the following: "He (man) doesn't need a god to guide him, or to flee into a spiritual world which becomes more and more remote and mysterious in proportion to the fears of his own unreason." The great Catholic Church punished independent thinking with death, and bred a type of mental weakling that lived in the glory of the dark ages. The so-called beauty of the dark ages persisted until Professor Coulton came along and sent its apologists flying. As a hideous criticism of this we now have a Protestant who recommends the sterilization of the unfit. It would seem that the choice scoundrels of Catholicism, and the good moderns are totally unqualified to touch the human race at any point. That Freud is a subject of buffoonery by Catholic writers is understood by those who value the dignity of man standing upright without the moanings of a priest. And nothing that the Catholic Church can do will atone for the wrong done to the human race when it established policemen of the mind.

The Bishop of the Guildford Diocese says that he does not wish to live in a palace at Farnham, but he realizes that a bishop gains more in spiritual influence if he lives in a castle than if he saw people in a smoking room of a suburban villa. We agree with the philosophy

that underlies the bishop's remarks. Something must mark the parson being different from other people. He cannot be marked off as being more intelligent than other folk, better looking than other folk, or knowing more than other folk. So he must dress differently from others, talk differently from others, and live differently from the mass of the people. Besides tradition is on the side of the bishop. From the most primitive times the medicine-man has disguised himself with paint or feathers or queer robes. All that is left to-day is the queer clothing and a perfectly horrible way of speaking English. Make the parson dress like an ordinary man, talk like an ordinary man, and live like an ordinary man, and the dullest among us will recognize that he is an ordinary man. And what will the parson do then poor thing?

Dr. Henry Townsend states in the *Christian World* what he considers to be the position of the Free Churches on the Education question. He says:—

As Free Churchmen their fundamental position was that the State had no right to interfere in any way with a man's religion... No public money should be devoted to sectarian and dogmatic education... If people desired to propagate religion in which they believed, surely nothing could be fairer than to ask that they should pay the bill themselves.

Admirable! But that must mean that the State must leave religion alone, and if the Nonconformists, or the Catholics, or the Anglicans want religion teaching, they must do it in their own way, in their own time, and at their own cost. But we soon discover that what Mr. Townsend means is, that if the Nonconformists and the rest of the religious crowd can agree upon what sort of religion is to be taught by the State, then, never mind the non-Christian bodies, it is quite right for the State to teach religion, and to make everyone pay for it whether they agree with it or not. It makes a devil of a difference to the argument whether the man putting on the screw belongs to this or that religious crowd.

Dr. Townsend says, quite correctly, that applicants for posts in provided schools are not asked what is their religion, as is the case with applicants to Roman Catholic Schools. They are not asked, *publicly*. But we would ask Dr. Townsend what chance of promotion, or even appointment, would an avowed Atheist stand with regard to a school where Nonconformists had the power of appointment? Dr. Townsend knows, every teacher knows that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, if a Freethinking teacher wishes to get on in his profession he must play the hypocrite. He dare not let his employers know what his opinions are. The only distinction between the Roman Catholic and the Nonconformist in this matter is that there is less humbug about the Roman Catholic. He is acting in accordance with his avowed principles. The Nonconformist says one thing and means another. He adds hypocrisy to injustice.

Who says Europe is not civilized? At the forthcoming marriage of the Crown Prince of Italy there will be held over the heads of the bridal couple during the ceremony, the identical shroud in which the body of Jesus Christ was wrapped after the crucifixion. The shroud is being brought to Rome by the express permission of the Pope. We understand that the original chunk of light, which was preserved when the Lord separated the light from the darkness, will not be used to illuminate the Church during the marriage ceremony, nor will some of the wine manufactured by Jesus at the marriage feast of Cana, and which is miraculously replenished as used, be served to the wedding guests.

Eighty working girls weeded, last summer, the Bishop of London's garden. Eighty philosophers couldn't weed the Bishop's mental garden. The Bishop's God is the patron saint of mental weeds, with "Be fruitful and multiply" as His motto.

National Secular Society

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

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

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

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

T. F. GREENHALL.—We noticed the number of Manchester friends present at the Liverpool debate. Pleased they all enjoyed themselves so much. Thanks for cuttings.

H. HERBERT.—Mr. Cohen's four lectures on Materialism, delivered at Leicester, will not be published. They were not, of course, a mere repetition of *Materialism Re-stated*, but the main outlines of the lectures are in that work. We are pleased to be able to say that the book still sells steadily, and Mr. Cohen is highly gratified by the letters he continues to receive from all parts of the world testifying to the help the work has been in clarifying ideas on the subject. The book is serving its purpose well.

DR. R. K. NOYES.—Thanks for compliments and good wishes. We have very pleasing memories of our last chat together and hope to repeat the experience soon.

H. HERBERT.—We have heard nothing from the *Liverpool Weekly Post*, concerning our offer to state the case against "Scrutator" in its columns, nor do we expect to hear anything. A contemptible creed is apt to breed contemptible behaviour, and preachers of Christianity know as well as we do that it cannot stand against informed criticism.

T. WILLIAMS.—There was no contradiction in the two dates. Clemenceau died at the age of eighty-eight, but his book was completed two years earlier. His age at the time his opinions were written down was, therefore, approximately eighty-six.

J. CLAYTON.—Hope you will have successful meetings.

A. HEATH.—We are always ready to insert brief notices of the activities of Branches of the N.S.S. They should be made as interesting as possible to the general reader of the paper.

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 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."

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

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

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.

To-day (December 8) Mr. Cohen will lecture at 11.30 and 6.30, in the City Hall, Glasgow. In the morning his subject will be "Morality Without God," and in the evening, "Can we do Without Christianity?" If the audiences are up to their usual level the hall is certain to be well filled, but all the same we hope that the local saints will see what can be done in the way of inducing their attendance of their Christian friends of the more hopeful type.

Stratford was not quite so full as usual on Sunday last, although the hall was comfortably filled to listen to Mr. Cohen's lecture. Mrs. Venton occupied the chair, and filled the position with strength and dignity; but she was powerless against the ravings of a local religious maniac who attends these meetings, as would have been anyone in similar circumstances. The lecture was followed with evident appreciation, and a strong appeal was made from the chair for general support to the Freethought movement, we hope with success.

Our congratulations to the Irish people of the Free State. Sometime the Irish Dail passed a measure setting up a Board of Censors with power to suppress any book or newspaper thought to be against morality. The measure was brought about entirely by clerical influence, and everyone knew that against morality would include a great many things such as discussions on Birth control and any really drastic criticisms of religion. We should be surprised if the *Freethinker* would not come under this ban. But the Minister of Justice is finding great difficulty in finding men whose judgment would command the slightest respect to serve on the Board. The journalists, novelists, and lawyers who have been approached have all declined. It will be a step in the right direction if Mr. Fitzgerald-Kenny finds himself compelled to staff the Board entirely with priests. The world will then take the Board at its true moral value. Again, we congratulate the Irish people. Here we should be able to fall back on "Jix," and Jimmy Douglas and the like. But there will be created a real hardship if the Board of Censors does not materialize. So many "good" people will be unable to gratify their salacious feelings in the name of "morality."

What are things coming to? Here is Mr. Richard Aldington, in the course of an article in the *Daily Express* slipping in the following passage:—

But nothing could be more alarming to an anti-communist than the idiotic methods by which communism is being persecuted into power. The strongest government which ever existed, that of the Roman Empire, once persecuted an obscure sect of religious communist fanatics. Europe is still paying for that blunder.

I like the summary that Europe is still paying the price for the Roman Government having inadvertently preserved Christianity. The history is not quite so sound as it might be, but the sentiment is quite all right.

And while we are on this matter, what about this from Mr. Sean O'Casey, the well-known Irish writer. Mr. O'Casey was written by the Catholic Poetry Society asking him to attend one of their meetings. He declined on the ground that he was neither a Catholic nor a Christian, and therefore had no place among the members of the Catholic Poetry Society. Evidently that revival of Christianity is coming along.

HOCUS PORKUS.

With the bones of a porker the witch-doctors say,
Many wonderful cures they can make.
Provided their black art is used the right way,
It's as good as the holy saint fake.
Both the pigs and the saints are reputed unclean,
But are cure-alls for those who believe
And if pigs are not holy, they often have been
Poor long suffering "martyrs" I grieve.

S.SODDY.

Testimonial to Mr. Chapman Cohen.

EIGHTH LIST OF ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

Previously acknowledged, £1,302 11s. 7d.; H. Courlander (S. Africa), £3 3s.; H. Myers (S. Africa), £3 3s.; B. A. Millichamp, 5s.; Swansea Branch N.S.S. per W. Moore, £1 3s. 6d.; T. C. Kirkman (2nd Donation), £2; Edward Snelling, £1; H.C., 10s.; 34 ——— Street, Glasgow (Letter unsigned), £1 1s.; J., 5s.; Fulham Branch N.S.S. Friends, per A. J. Mathie, 10s.; A. W. Freer, 2s. 6d.; F.H.S. (Co. Down), 5s.; Old Age Pensioner, per R.H.R., 2s. 6d.; G. Shambrook, £1; A. L. Bell, 5s.; Wm. Collins, £1 11s. 6d.; Mr. & Mrs. O. Melton, 10s.; N. London Branch, N.S.S., £1 1s.; A. Hanson (China), £1; Total to December 2, 1929, £1,321 9s. 7d.

Our list is neither so long nor so heavy as it was last week, but we are still full of hope!

Will the friend at Glasgow, who omitted to sign his (or her) letter, kindly send me his (or her) name.

This Fund will close on December 31.

W. J. W. EASTERBROOK,
Hon. Secretary,
"Hillfield," Burraton,
Saltash, Cornwall.

I hope the Editor will find space somewhere for the following extracts from letters received:—

E. Royston Pike says: "Mr. Cohen is a sterling fighter in the cause of Freethought, and has put the whole movement in his debt."

Thomas Griffiths writes: "He is the one man who brought me to the right 'attitude of mind'—to be a Freethinker."

Arthur B. Moss, sending his second donation, says: "As an old colleague, I entirely agree with all the kind expressions of appreciation of his long and valuable services to Freethought."

Harold Elliott writes: "No reward would be too great for such work as Mr. Cohen has put into the Movement, and whatever sum is eventually raised, it will not be anything like enough to show our appreciation, our affection and fraternal regard."

Henry A. Lupton says: "I have thought it my duty to subscribe to many funds for Freethought and Freethinkers, but never more than the present occasion."

C. H. Grönn wishes Mr. Cohen would take a lecturing journey, for health and profit, through America, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa, and is sure it would be a triumph all round. [Some of us would like to go with him!]

B. A. Millichamp writes: "I became personally acquainted with Mr. Chapman Cohen about thirty-six years ago at Birmingham, and was the first to meet him when he came to lecture for us at Baskerville Hall. I have been away from Birmingham about twenty-five years, but in all these years I have watched, with admiring interest and growing wonder, his progress in the Movement. There never was a Freethought advocate quite of his stamp, and his individuality is most striking."

H. Courlander, sending his greetings through us to Mr. Cohen, says: "There is no doubt he deserves the thanks of the whole Freethinking public."

A. W. Freer, who is eighty-one, hopes Mr. Cohen "may live for many years to instruct us."

F.H.S. says: "I have only been a reader [of the *Freethinker*] for a very short time, but already I feel the benefit of that weekly blast of fresh air."

A. J. Mathie, referring to "the debt we owe to so clear-sighted a leader as Mr. Chapman Cohen," hopes "he may be long with us."

W.J.W.E.

Clemenceau the Atheist.

IN the early morning of November 25, died, without benefit of clergy or any spiritual assistance, Georges Clemenceau, Premier of France during the later part of the Great War, when France appeared to be on the point of collapse, under the strain of the enormous losses she had sustained, and the seeming hopelessness of ultimate victory. There was open mutiny in the army, and the defeatists were clamouring for a negotiated peace, a drawn game, that could only have led to a resumption of hostilities in a few years time, as it would have left the German War Lords still in control of the German Government. In their extremity the nation turned to Clemenceau, the "Tiger" as he was called for his fighting characteristics. Under his rule confidence returned, and with it came the victory.

Fourteen years earlier he had achieved a victory over the Army, when he championed the cause of Dreyfus. It was he that gave the title "J'accuse" to Zola's famous letter, which appeared in the *Aurore*, of which paper Clemenceau was Editor. To-day every lover of progress and free thought bows in homage to this great Frenchman. The *Times* (November 25) in its leading article, while noting that Clemenceau was "materialist and anti-clerical by inheritance and training," concludes that "to manliness in the full sense he nobly and splendidly attained." The *Daily Telegraph* (November 25) in its leading article, declares him to have been: "the greatest Frenchman of his generation." The *Morning Post* (November 25) observes: "Jacobin to marrow of his bones, dogmatic Atheist, Radical, who when he came to power fought the Radicals, he was yet a man of rigid justice," and concludes: "But the man who had renounced his faith in God and personal survival retained a passionate faith in France and her destiny. When his Rationalism has been forgotten as an irrelevance, his heroism will be honoured still." Foch's Catholicism, of course, is not irrelevant, and always worth remembering.

Only a few days before his death his book *In the Evening of My Thought*. (2 vols., Constable, 30s.) was published here. It is an astonishing work for an old man nearing ninety. It consists of two bulky volumes of over a thousand pages, and constitutes a complete defence of the Atheist position, and a downright repudiation and denunciation of religion, of belief in God, and of a future life. No such formidable attack against religion has been issued for many a long year, and never by a great leading statesman of Clemenceau's standing. The knowledge displayed is encyclopaedic, he is equally at home with the latest scientific discoveries and theories, as with the poets and orators of ancient Greece, and Shakespeare, Newton, Darwin, and many other writers of our own country. We cannot do better than give our readers a few extracts from this voluminous and expensive work, which few will be able to obtain for themselves. Dealing with creation, he observes:—

"In the beginning," there was nothing, and at the same time there was God. And God, who was perfect in every respect, made the world imperfect. Grieved at his mistake, he created hell in order to punish his creature, who was wholly innocent of the divine creation. Such are the great secrets that are offered us instead of scientific fact to which our sensibility responds both emotionally and intellectually. (p. 433.)

What are all the magnificences of the Bible when compared with our positive fragment of infinity? When the God of Moses bethought himself creating the universe, what an odd plan it was to begin with

the smallest planet and make it the centre of his creation! (p. 464.)

We are told that having one god is "progress." Is it? How can we find "progress" in the shift from divine oligarchy to divine autocracy? In either case does not absolutism with all the resulting forms of slavery remain? The conviction of Anaxagoras and the death of Socrates are set down to the account of "pagans." . . . Those same Christians, alas, were to be responsible for similar crimes, but on a much greater scale. Theirs the responsibility for tortures, for massacres of heretics, for war of religion, for burnings at the stake, for a total, indeed, of murders so formidable that it escapes all estimate. Was not Jeanne d'Arc burned as a heretic by the very persons who to-day have the audacity to exploit her? Through the work of a God of Love, Christianity must answer to us for Giordano Bruno, Berquin, Dolet, Servetus, Vanini, and for how many others! And what after all do wars of religion amount to in comparison with the tortures of eternity? (p. 374.)

Alas, it is only too easy to manufacture gods by the hundred, and magically to confer upon them that universal power under which the last remnant of human dignity falls to ruin in its slavish relation to the absolute. As the sculptor of the legend exclaimed in wonder over his statue, we exclaim over the fabrications of theology. How can we comprehend the incomprehensible, or admire and "love" what escapes our senses? We truly admire the universe when it yields to our penetrating analysis and to our partial syntheses, and then rewards us with lightning flashes of reality. (p. 470.)

Although the bard and the metaphysician are always trying to bring about an apparent reconciliation between themselves and the scientist, they nevertheless differ from him hopelessly. How can it be otherwise? The bard is on the stage, the metaphysician is in the clouds, and the scientist is in his laboratory. The bard holds us rapt, and the metaphysician dazzles us. Only the scientists succeeds in enlightening us. (p. 426.)

The metaphysician, intoxicated with the sound of his own voice, boldly makes living—that is, unstable—entities out of words; he creates a transcendental jargon incomprehensible in its abysmal complexity, and consequently loses himself in an imaginary world of his own creation. (Vol. 1, p. 292.)

Our metaphysicians, whom nothing frightens, explain all mysteries by the greater mystery of primordial principles, of essences, of entities, and of other quiddities, all of them forms of a certain transcendentalism, the magic virtue of which is to explain everything by vocal sounds that mean nothing definite. It is like opium that induces sleep by its "dormitive power." Mere tautology. Thus, simultaneously with the first wail of ignorance, metaphysics was born in a thousand forms, assuming the shape of an explanation which consists in answering the question by eliminating the question mark. To explain a movement by a power which causes it to move is a *petito principi*; it amounts to answering a question with the question itself. (Vol. 1 p. 243.)

Faced with death the Atheist has no fear:—

Weigh all things well and see whether you can conceive of a more beautiful outcome of the raging torrent of emotion than the perfect peace of a night of sleep that knows no dreams and no awakening. What madness it is to expect the joys of a passive eternity without labour and without fret; . . . Peace-giving death, which seems dreadful only because of our childish fear that it means increase of misery, so perturbed the stern genius of Pascal that it caused him quite logically to suggest that we live for death, when the natural problem that haunts us, and that we even find hard enough task, is to live for life. (Vol. 1, p. 282.)

"Ah! wait till you come to die." Sneers the charitable Christian, "you won't be so brave then."

Well, here was an Atheist, face to face with death at the age of eighty-six—when this book was first published in France—and he looked forward to death with perfect composure, more composure indeed than many Christians, who can never be certain as to whether their destination is heaven or hell. Clemenceau looked upon death as the perfect peace of a dreamless sleep, after the toil and fret of a long day spent in altruistic labour for the betterment of mankind. In the words of Shakespeare of whom he was such an admirer.

"After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well."

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

Can we do Without Christianity?

A FINE wintery afternoon darkens into a cloudy evening as the hour approaches for the debate between Mr. Chapman Cohen and the Rev. Mr. Pughe of London. By seven o'clock the streets are lashed by a heavy down-pour, and it is thus inevitable that the speakers take the platform at eight o'clock before an audience of moderate proportions. Mr. Pughe, a stockily built man with a jolly demeanour and an air of latent pugnacity, waves to some familiar face in the audience, and we gather that he is not without support this evening. Mr. Cohen appears very much at home and anxious only to begin. The chairman has finished his introductory remarks, and at a final gesture from him Mr. Cohen rises, amid hearty applause, to open the debate on the question, "Can We Do Without Christianity?"

He commences by informing us that he is not concerned with what Christianity ought to be or what it might be, but only with what it is, and goes on to say that the question this evening is fortunately answered for us already by the Churches and the public. As regards the Churches, we have the Anglicans telling us that they can do without the Roman Catholics, and vice versa; the Nonconformists declaring themselves able to dispense with the Anglicans; the Wesleyans capable of managing without the Baptists, and the Baptists without the Wesleyans; and so, as we follow up the process, we find ultimately that the whole ecclesiastical world has efficiently cancelled itself out, leaving Mr. Cohen himself as the sole party in agreement with everybody, for he can do without all. What now of the public? Ninety per cent are outside the Churches. And here he quotes a remarkable passage from Bishop Southwell confessing to the ravages of Freethought among the fold. But a mere categorical answer is not sufficient for to-night's debate. We must proceed to understand why this changed condition of things exists. There are roughly, says Mr. Cohen, four causes of the dwindling influence of Christianity in our lives, and all deal with the broad fact that, as a religion, it gives us nothing of what we need. It does not give us the truth; it yields nothing to the intellect; it is devoid of contribution to Sociology, and lastly, almost as a corollary, it originates nothing in morals. Brushing aside the first of these causes, because men will argue that a thing may be desirable even though it is false, Mr. Cohen sets out to elaborate and develop the other three aspects of the matter. Time is passing rapidly, but he is now wading ahead and packing a great deal into short passages and pithy aphorisms. Intellectually the Bible touches the lowest level reached in religious literature. It is not only non-scientific, it is anti-scientific. Sociologically Christianity tackles no problems, primarily because it envisaged none. The world to the early Christians was a going concern only in the sense that it would soon be gone, and Christian doctrine was moulded round this conception. Now the speaker traces the re-awakening of sociological thought about the time of the French Revolution, and, following the work of Voltaire, Paine, Robert Owen and other pioneers, he puts a strong historical case to show that scientific Sociology owes its birth to non-Christian sources, and he deals with morals along similar lines. Finally he puts it that Science develops all the concepts necessary for a healthy social

existence, telling us, in a characteristic aphorism, that what we need is education not conversion. He finishes on a strong note by saying that those who *can* do without religion are not only the better for their abstinence, but are steadily humanising and redeeming those who think they *cannot*.

He takes his seat amid enthusiastic applause, which has hardly died down before Mr. Pughe is on his feet and ready for the fray. He begins by demurring to Mr. Cohen's notion of Christianity. It is too nebulous. It falls to the speaker, then, to find us a definition. It is the teaching of Jesus Christ as revealed in this life and personality. To Christians we owe a great intellectual debt, not in the way of any specific contribution to Philosophy or Science, but rather because of a spirit of inquiry and truth-seeking; of high ideal and mental aspiration; a kind of intellectual dynamic that is inherent in Christ's teaching, and exemplified in his life. Christ is conceived by the speaker as the climax of the evolutionary process, which he traces from primitive forms, through sentient life, (the animal) to self-sentient life (Man) onward and upward to morally sentient life, which is Christ. A study of Christ's life gives us the clue to all that is best, most helpful and most progressive in human life. Sociology and morals derive their "dynamic" from him. Christianity is the only solution to the problems of the Universe. That is its vindication, intellectual, sociological and moral. Descending a little from these abstractions, Mr. Pughe goes on to refute the low intellectual level ascribed to the Bible by the text "Prove all things and hold to that which is true." The Testament is now presented as an advocate of Freethought. Western Europe owes its emancipation not to the products of the Revolution, but to the everlasting spirit of Christianity. Mr. Pughe proceeds with categorical pronouncements in this strain, finishing on a rhetorical note by telling us that Christianity gives to men what Secularism cannot give, namely another life and another chance; and that it gives to ethics a new tone, in so much as it establishes a Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God. He takes his seat amid a deal of applause.

Mr. Cohen is rising for his second speech, and we are wondering how he is going to "lay" Mr. Pughe's "dynamic." He opens, however, gently with a little humour. He is perfectly aware, he says, of having spoken of Christianity in a nebulous fashion; but that is not his fault. The blame for being nebulous rests on the nebula. If you want to experiment on the character of Christian conceptions, place a score of denominationally representative Christians on the platform and ask them, "Do you believe in Christianity?" With one voice and with one heart they answer "Yes." Now ask them, "What is Christianity?" and you will have to send for the police. Mr. Pughe tells us that we are to go right to what Christ taught. Quite. But what *did* he teach? That is what all the trouble is about. And it is useless to hide behind airy generalizations. Mr. Pughe seems to think that by repeating a thing three times, after the fashion described in "Alice in Wonderland," it becomes a fact. It may do—to Mr. Pughe, but not necessarily to a critical audience. What is all this about Christ being the climax of evolution? What is this "dynamic"? Where are these "forces" and "influences" and "inspirations" to be found by the sober student of European history? But Mr. Cohen is not satisfied with denials as vague as Mr. Pughe's assertions. He now takes us through a survey of the historical connexion between Christian dominance and Social depression, and leaves us feeling that, if Mr. Pughe would refute this array of fact and logic, he must do more than repeat himself twice.

Rising for the second time, Mr. Pughe does not appear quite so comfortable as at first. At a loss for a historical defence of definite character, he returns to the "dynamic," varying the theme a little by alluding to it as a "fund of altruism," on which the ages had been able to draw. Europe is the most progressive and also most Christian portion of the world. Mr. Cohen chides Christianity with accomplishing nothing, but 2000 years is not a long time, from an evolutionary point of view, in which to bring about great changes. What has Mr. Cohen done in his fifty or so years, anyway? He be-

littles the Christian concentration on belief as opposed to knowledge, but what is this "belief"? It is not merely credulity. It is something more; it is "betting your life that God won't let you down." And that is an intellectual fact. If Christianity is vindicated by nothing else, adds Mr. Pugh, it is vindicated by its power to redeem men. Mr. Pughe *knows*, for he has worked among the prisons. And he would remind Mr. Cohen that Howard, the Christian, did more for prison reform than all the Freethinkers put together. They talked; Howard *did* the job. To Mr. Pughe's personal knowledge Christ has saved 1,000 men, that otherwise were doomed to degradation and despair.

Mr. Cohen rises for the last time. He thinks it is rather unfair of Mr. Pughe to compare his efforts with those of the Christian world. After all, fifty years working with the aid of humble mortal intellects cannot justly contest the field with 2000 years of endeavour backed up by God Almighty. But what, as Mr. Pughe asks the question, *has* Freethought done? It has taken away Hell; taken away Witchcraft; made Christians ashamed to voice the doctrine of damnation for disbelief; made them ashamed to profess belief in literal revelation. The battle of Freethought is a battle for *this* world. It is a battle, not to save 1,000 men, but to prevent them from being ruined in the first place in the environment of a Christian community. And what Freethought is striving after is to pave the way for a scientific system of life, which in the end will provide mankind with remedies instead of words.

Before he finally takes his seat, we are treated to a little banter on the question of Mr. Pughe's interpretation of the Testament. When he sees "Slaves obey your masters," that is the brotherhood of Man. In the subordination of the wife to her husband we see the equality of the sexes; and, in the exclusion of women from the more important and responsible activities, the emancipation of Woman. In the pronouncement that unbelievers will be damned, we see the spirit of Freethought, and lastly, when Mr. Pughe reads that a blow on one cheek should be met by an immediate presentation of the other, he rushes off and joins the Army. Mr. Pughe makes of the Testament what every other Christian makes of it, namely, just what he likes.

Mr. Pughe's last speech does not achieve much to recommend his Cause, for it was a mixture of religious rhetoric and repetition. He adds unconsciously to the force of Mr. Cohen's remarks by attempting to interpret his quotations. "Slaves obey your masters" merely emphasizes the solemnity of a contract. "Wives obey your husbands" does not mean inequality. The word "damned" means only "worthy of condemnation." But surely now he must be jesting, for he says, with a defiant flourish of the hand, that it is Ecclesiastical Freethought that has accomplished all that Mr. Cohen spoke of. He finishes in a typical strain, telling us that, whereas Mr. Cohen is engaged only on bettering the world, he goes one better than this: For, after having performed that task he is not finished, but would fain hitch his wagon to a star and toil to Heaven.

It is all over. Votes of thanks, followed by pleasant words exchanged in the anti-room. Finally I wend my way home convinced that every such debate is simply a clash between "Rationalism" and Rationalization."

MEDICUS.

When Streams Awake.

WHEN streams awake to the glamour of spring,
And a bright sun shines o'er meadow and lea;
There's a rose in bud, there's a bird on the wing,
And a tryst with you—for me!

When lonely clouds drape the crimson west,
And the falling flow'rs drink the evening dew:
There's a haunt of love, there's a leafy nest,
And a home with me—for you!

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

The Season's Muse.

WE dread the Winter, and lo, as we visualize cold and dreary days between us and the Spring, we are half-way through them; and even as we are in the midst of them, we may find ourselves loving and enjoying them, in those vital illusions of our nature, according to the poor and needy, rich and replete, satisfactions of our varying state. How little pleases the poor man, more movingly the poor bairn, the adolescent half-wit who, in his rags and simplicity, and all the limitations of his Providence, salutes me in the street as Mr. "So and So"—what a compliment, even from such as he to such as I! God has been unkind to him—or is it more blessed to be an idiot?—and we would fain make good his deficiencies. The boy prattles at my side and tells me he has got "another new suit," an old one from a relative (one hopes "Uncle" will not get it before it is enjoyed a while) this is hopeful, we give him tuppence for wood-bines, and feel virtuous, it is a fine frosty night, and two people are made happy: Oh, patient poverty! vain pomp and circumstance of glorious war, largely the cause of it, and all the other imbecile vanities of men and nations, what "physic" will purge the world of these?

Earlier, in a blink of sunshine on the same short November Sunday, we had sought to improve the shining hour by a visit to the Mount of Meditation and the Cairn of immemorial stones. The lonely summit attained and the usual ritual observed, on the lower slopes, on our return, we chanced upon the profound reflection that, after all, while Parnassus may be the lure, the glory is often to be found on the way to it, even by such as never reach it. Wisdom, purity, content, happiness are to all accessible altitudes, and can be truly Delectable Mountains, with a wider vision than those of Bunyan. The rough brown herbage of the lower slopes was powdered crisp with snow, with smooth, green, close-cropped oasis in between and meandering tracks of "the wild flock that never needs a fold," as though Nature and the sheep were, slowly and unaided, redeeming the wilderness. There were lone rivulets also of faintly tinkling sound, the green-fringed pools, miniature cliffs and glaciers, green banks by the hedgerows of stunted thorn, green knowes among the dead whin, and little hollows more vividly green where withered thistles grew.

But how shall I finish? What is the nexus between the savage outer scene and the inner subtle alchemy; the mind of man and the material world? Anyhow, the correspondence was there and I was made very happy; I shall come again and again, even if the loftier Parnassus remain an unascended heaven.

ANDREW MILLAR.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

THE "FREETHINKER" AND JOURNALISTS.

SIR,—As a young and atheistic journalist who has worked for the big dailies in Fleet Street, and known what it is to be half-starved in pursuit of a profession which is more intriguing than any other, I must protest against an attitude of mind which is all too prevalent among Freethinkers.

For one reason or other the journalist has become the Freethinker's scapegoat. (Though the journalist is hardened to this, having been scapegoat in general for everybody with a grievance for some years now). The Freethinker cannot find words vitriolic or personal enough to express his withering contempt for the newspaperman.

The article by Mimmermus entitled "Jazzy Jesuitry," is typical. "Journalists," he says, "are becoming more religious than the clergy." He talks darkly of a "conspiracy against Freethought."

I doubt if the average journalist bothers his head

about either Freethinkers or clergymen. He has his job. He does it. The only similarity he has to the clergyman is that he works on Sunday. Certainly he has no cause to love him seeing that half the clergy in England seem bent upon writing for the Press.

Newspapers are not primarily the handmaidens of the Church. They are primarily machines for the gathering and dissemination of news and *not* views. Almighty God is not merely so Almighty in Fleet Street as is the Almighty News Editor. If the Pope had to work in Fleet Street he would rapidly become disillusioned as to his infallibility. People would even turn their backs upon him.

I will admit that the journalist might have a greater freedom of "conscience." In this respect I am glad to say that in six countries: Germany, Roumania, Czechoslovakia, Jugoslavia, Hungary and Austria, the journalist's "conscience" is legally protected. One day it may be so here.

But why should the Freethinker expect the journalist to bring Freethought into his daily business of earning his bread. His job entails a greater nervous strain than most, and is more precarious than any other.

The ordinary working man can air his atheism, if he has any, with as much impunity as his wife airs his washing. It does not affect his living. With the journalist it does.

Freethinkers must remember that for all of us the alpha and omega of life is not in Freethought. I subscribe to the good old phrase: "Heaven, here and now." But though God may be very good to the dear little water-lilies and the birds of the air who neither sow nor spin, I shall not get much of a heaven here or elsewhere by writing Freethought articles. I can't remember that God ever gave me a tolerable time even when I believed in him.

Writing is my living. Freethought is not.

There seems a danger of Freethought falling into that attitude of mind, a narrow bigotry, a short-sighted fanaticism, which it should be its avowed object to attack.

A friend of mine, between whom and the Freethinker is due my conversion from a dream-wrapt agnosticism to a hard-bound Atheism, sells books and newspapers. Is he a hypocrite, a humbug, because he does not display a *Freethinker* contents bill? Does "Mimmermus" display one in his front window?

"GRUB STREET."

(P.S.—Possibly Mimmermus has been in Fleet Street himself. If so, it was some time back. May I correct his impression that the reporter still does fourteen hours a day. Thank to the N.U.J., all that is changed.)

SHOULD ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS BECOME PARENTS?

SIR,—Considering that, out of any given number of genuine Christians, only a very small proportion can hope to rear a family, all members of which are sure to enter heaven at death, surely it is a terrible risk to bring them into the world at all! Even amongst the most conscientious and punctilious of these, there must always be a great doubt whether, seeing that "all have sinned," their repentance and conversion have been sufficiently sincere to ensure a happy resurrection and admission to Paradise. And yet, the certainty that, failing this assurance, their fate of eternal damnation is so obvious that no one, who has the slightest regard for the eternal welfare of his children, would dare to expose them to it, would dream of running so awful a risk.

EVACUSTES A. PHIPSON.

Society News.

THE series of indoor meetings held by the South London Branch N.S.S., at its new hall, at 361 Brixton Road, S.W., is proving a popular feature among local Freethinkers, and is also attracting many people who have hitherto been strangers to the Freethought Movement.

All the meetings during the past month have been very well attended, so much so that it began to be feared(?) that more commodious accommodation would have to be acquired. The success of the meetings may be attributed partly to the recent extension of the out-door activities of the Branch, but mention has also to be made of the efforts of Mr. Raphael, who has lately been almost indefatigable on the Branch's behalf.

Only a brief reference to last Sunday's meeting is possible at present—owing to lack of space—but we hope to be able in future to present a more detailed report of the meetings.

Mr. Capper was unable to attend, but kindly sent a very capable substitute in Mr. H. Hawkins, whose address on "Religion in the Schools" was greatly appreciated, although his proposed line of action for dealing with the problem did not seem to meet with unanimous approval.—A.H.

The Morning After.

NIGHT leaves her sandals on the beach of dawn
And slips away beyond the western wave.
The curtains of the east now widely drawn
Reveal fair Phœbus coming his cave.
With ardour now he mounts his chariot
And drives his steeds toward the noontide hot.

What part have I in this stupendous act? . . .
I would not, if I could, the gods deceive;
I state the sober and distressing fact,
My head doth ache, because at yestereve
I drank much wine with two or three good friends.
Tell Hygeia that I will make amends.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

Miscellaneous Advertisements.

WANTED.—Volumes 1-8 and 23-45, or full set of *Secular Review and Secularist*, continued as *Agnostic Journal and Eclectic Review*.—Write stating price to N. E. HIMES, 121 Holden Green, Cambridge, Mass., U.S.A.

Rationalist Press Association (Glasgow District)

Grand Hall, Central Halls, 25 Bath Street,
Sunday, December 15th, at 3 p.m.

Dr. C. DELISLE BURNS, M.A., D.Litt.,

Lecturer in Citizenship, Glasgow University.

Subject:—"Frontiers of Experience."

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Readers, especially T.Bs., will see in the above few lines more wonderful news than is to be found in many volumes on the same subject.

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.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (The Orange Tree, Euston Road, N.W.1): Thursday, December 5, at 101 Tottenham Court Road, Dance 7.30 to 11.30. Admission 1s.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road, S.E.): 7.0, Mr. Arthur Goncear—"Kin," by Rudyard Kipling.

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (The Orange Tree, Euston Road, N.W.1): 7.30, Debate—"Would Socialism Remove Existing Economic Evils?" Affir.: Mrs. Taylor; Neg.: Mr. T. F. Palmer.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (361 Brixton Road, near Gresham Road, S.W.): 7.30, Mr. R. B. Kerr (Editor, the *New Generation*)—"Should the Teaching of Hell-Fire to Children be Prohibited by Law?"

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8, near Marlborough Road Station): 11.15, Mr. G. Spiller—"Trial Marriages." 6.15, Dr. C. W. Saleeby—"How to Live Through the Winter."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Prof. C. Rosselli—"Political Persecutions in Italy."

OUTDOOR.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.30, Messrs. Charles Tuson and James Hart; 3.15, Messrs. E. Betts and C. E. Wood; 6.30, Messrs. A. H. Hyatt and B. A. Le Maine. Freethought meetings every Wednesday, at 7.30, Messrs. C. Tuson and J. Hart; every Friday, at 7.30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. The *Freethinker* may be obtained during our meetings outside the Park Gates, Bayswater Road.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury; Liverpool Street, Camberwell Gate, Friday, 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. Chapman Cohen (Editor of the *Freethinker* and President of the National Secular Society) will speak on December 8, at Seldon Hall, City Hall, Albion Street, at 11.30, on "Morality Without God," and at 6.30, on "Can We do Without Christianity?"

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Lecture—Mr. W. Kent—"Mark Rutherford, a Religious Realist."

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Top Room, Royal Buildings, 18 Colquitt Street, off Bold Street): 7.30, Mr. Otto Baier (Liverpool, Pastor, Temple of Humanity)—"Divine Humanity."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. F. P. Corrigan will lecture in the Co-Operative Hall, Courtney Street, Plymouth, on Sunday, December 8, at 3.0—"After Death, What?" Evening at 7.0—"Where Did God Come From?"

CHESTER-LE-STREET BRANCH N.S.S. (Club Room, Middle Chase): 7.0, Mr. F. Price will lecture on "Celtic Religion." Chairman, Mr. T. Birtley.

MR. J. CLAYTON will lecture at Burnley, St. James Hall, on Sunday, December 8, at 11.0; and at Co-operative Men's Guild, Burnley, at 6.30, Subject—"Religious Experience."

OUTDOOR.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH.—Friday, December 13, Mr. J. T. Brighton will speak in the Bigg Market at 7.0 (weather permitting).

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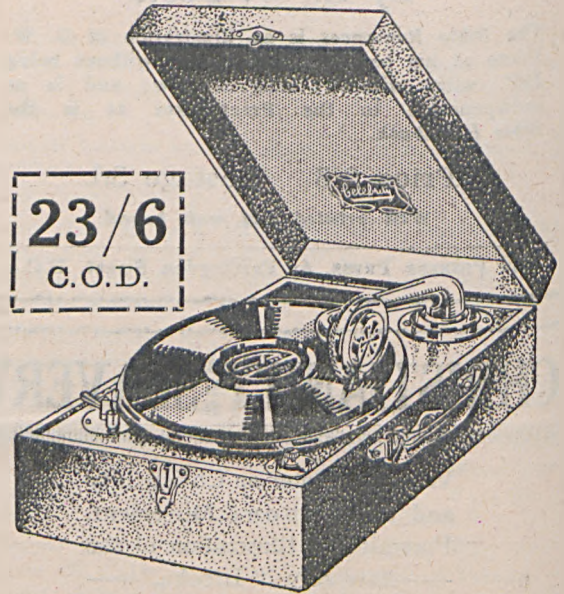
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