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

Views and Opinions.

Christmas and Christian Peace.

FOR reasons connected with publishing, this issue of the *Freethinker* is written before Christmas Day, although it bears a later date. I have not, therefore, had the opportunity of looking through the spate of Christmas sermons that will be let loose on the world on December 22 and 29. Not that this need prevent one writing about them; for all that one has to do is to look back at any previous year, add just one or two matters of current interest, talk largely about the homage paid to the name of Christ by the whole world, dilate upon the value of love and brotherhood with all the inconsequential stupidity of a B.B.C Sunday preacher, and you will have your Christmas sermon up to date. It has been said that sermons can be bought at 7s. 6d. each. That seems frightfully dear. About 7s. 6d. a dozen would seem a fair price. It is not as though sermons were scarce. They are not. One journal, *The Christian World Pulpit*, publishes seven or eight every week for two-pence. Over four hundred a year! Who reads them? I don't know, but I can imagine the face of a good Christian if someone gave him as a New Year's gift, a volume of the *Christian World Pulpit*. I can imagine him falling back upon the biblical "Mine enemy hath done this thing," or re-lettering the volume *Bed-time Stories*.

This year, Christmas has been heralded by a large number of sermons and also by articles in the religious press on the question of peace. Mr. Ramsay Macdonald has also appealed to the Churches for their help in bringing about disarmament, and others have said that if the Churches would only unite on this question they could make war impossible. That may be true enough, but if it is true to-day, with the Churches largely divested of both numbers and influence, it would have been more profoundly true in earlier generations when the Christian Church was

all powerful. If they made no serious effort to promote peace then, why should they now? In 1914, says the Rev. Leyton Richards, the Churches were taken unprepared. Not a bit of it. They were prepared then as they have been prepared on the outbreak of other wars—that is they were prepared to preach either war or peace as it suited their interests to do the one or the other.

Do We Dislike War?

At the moment war is under a cloud; there is great talk of peace, and the Churches are also talking peace. The reason for it is curious, perhaps one might say characteristic of a civilization soaked in Christianity. While wars could be managed on some forty or fifty millions, could be fought a long way from home—our home—and the killed amounted to only a few thousands, the Christian conscience was not seriously disturbed. The army was prayed out to war, when the war was over, the army was prayed back again: God was prayed to when the war began to give us victory, he was thanked afterwards for having granted our request, a few more battle flags were hung up in the cathedrals and churches, and there the matter ended. But this last war was in some respects different. It was not small, so it was called "great," which is an epithet with a moral or intellectual flavour, instead of it being called "large," which leaves moral and intellectual qualities alone. The Christian conscience was unable to see that death and suffering gains nothing from quantity. The death of ten thousand is not different from the death of one, there is more of it, but the quality of it remains the same. Ten thousand men suffering with the toothache, does not give more pain, it only supplies more individuals who are in pain. Then, thanks to aeroplanes and bombs, civilians were in direct danger of having some of what the Bishops described as the "moral uplift" of the war. And to pray other people into war, and then find that He "who rides the storm and directs the whirlwind" had failed to distinguish between soldiers and civilians, was not playing the game—at least according to Christian standards. Then there was the cost, a very important consideration to a religion that had always reckoned morality in terms of an investment with a deferred dividend. The war was costly, and we could not afford such costly purificatory practices: so on all grounds, on the ground of cost, of the number of people killed, and also that even civilians would not in future be immune from explosives and gas, war must be stopped. Or if it cannot be stopped then it must be reduced to "reasonable" proportions. When Upton Sinclair wrote his *Jungle*, detailing the horrors of the Chicago stock yards, he said of its effect that he aimed at the conscience of people and found that he had hit their



stomachs; for the Christian conscience was not alarmed at the beastliness and cruelty of it all, but only at the liability of contracting ptomaine poisoning. Nine-tenths of the present outcry against war does not rest upon the inevitable beastliness and brutality and cowardice of war, but upon its present day danger and expense.

\* \* \*

#### Cant About the Church.

The Rev. Leyton Richards, from whom I have already quoted, does advocate—some years after the war—that Christian parents should show their antipathy to war by withdrawing their sons from the Officers' Training Corps, and says also:—

The frenzied and unscrupulous efforts during the Great War to enlist the support of the Churches was evidence enough of the value which statesmen attach to organized Christianity in time of national crisis; it was in fact, the biggest single factor in maintaining the war-morale of the nation, for it enabled the public to think of the war as a "holy war," and a crusade in which it was a Christian virtue to engage. This very fact, however, lays upon the Church her most solemn responsibility in this matter. Let the Church but withdraw her endorsement of war in as thorough-going and absolute a fashion as she would refuse to approve slavery and the world's statesmanship would speedily find other and better ways of dealing with international disputes than by the customary threat of armed force.

Substantially that "goes," but the illustration of slavery is unfortunate, for the Church never had a thorough-going and absolute objection to slavery. As a matter of fact the modern black slave trade was created by Christians, and the Christian Churches found no objection to it, until causes with which Christianity had nothing to do with made slavery objectionable. It is quite probable that when, owing to causes outside the Churches, war has become distasteful to the world the Churches will come forward and have the same objection to it that it has to slavery.

For even now the Churches are not leading the way in the crusade against war. I have not heard of a single army chaplain resigning his post, or refusing to assist at military demonstrations. It is also worth noting that the testimonies as to the brutality, the filth, the beastliness, and the essential savagery of the war has not come from parsons writing about the war—although there has been plenty of writing from that side—but from civilians. Dramatists and novelists have let out some of the truth about the war. The parsons have kept up the legends about the "Cheery courage," the "deep religious nature," the "simple heroism," etc., etc., of "our boys at the front."

\* \* \*

#### A True Prayer.

I agree with Mr. Richards that the Churches more than any other organization, when a nation engages in a war, can persuade the public it is a holy war. That is the way the Christian priest, the Mohammedan priest, and every other priest earns his bread and butter. When the next war breaks out we shall see the Christian clergy in each country—provided we are at war with another Christian nation—telling its respective public it is called upon to take arms against the enemy of Christian civilization, blessing the guns and battleships and submarines and poison gas, and asking the blessings of Almighty God on their military endeavours. Not that they have honesty enough to tell God exactly what they want

him to do. It was left for a Freethinker such as Mark Twain to put the petition of the clergy into plain words. He did it in the following prayer:—

O Lord our Father, our young patriots, Idols of our hearts, go forth to battle—be Thou near them! Be with them in spirit; in spirit we also go forth from the sweet peace of our beloved firesides to smite the foe. O Lord our God, help us to tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells; help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of their patriot dead; help us to drown the thunder of the guns with the cries of the wounded writhing in pain; help us to lay waste their humble homes with a hurricane of fire; help us to wring the hearts of their unoffending widows with unavailing grief; help us to turn them out roofless with their little children to wander unfriended through wastes of their desolated land in rags and hunger and thirst, sport of the sun-flames of summer and the icy winds of winter, broken in spirit, worn with travel imploring Thee for the refuge of the grave and denied it; for our sakes, who adore Thee, Lord, blast their hopes, blight their lives, prolong their bitter pilgrimage, make heavy their steps, water their ways with their tears, stain the white snow with the blood of their wounded feet! We ask of One who is the spirit of love, and who is the ever faithful refuge of all that are sore beset, and seek His aid with humble and contrite hearts. Grant our prayer, O Lord, and Thine shall be the praise, honour and glory now and for ever, Amen.

That is, I think, pure blasphemy. It must be so, because it is nothing but the cold truth.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

#### The Gilt off the Gingerbread.

"Let us have to do with real men and women, and not with skipping ghosts."—Emerson.

"If all religions but one are certainly wrong, what is the chance of one being certainly right?"

G. W. Foote.

"On looking out of the window this morning I noticed my neighbours were more drunk than usual, and I remembered it was the birthday of their Redeemer."—Thomas Carlyle.

AMONG the subjects which appear to have an ever-green fascination for great numbers of persons, ghosts and haunted houses occupy a very conspicuous position. At this festive season of the year especially people love to gather round the fire at night and attempt to make each others' flesh creep by strange tales of alleged supernatural happenings. To be sure, few of these sensational stories bear much investigation, but the bare fact that the subject is an eerie one helps to keep alive a pleasantly gruesome interest in the matter.

Certainly there are many recorded instances of queer happenings, but the strangest of all ghost stories is that associated with the festival of Christmas. Its accuracy is vouched for by forty thousand straight-faced clergymen, whose solemnity would wrinkle the face of a funeral horse with smiles, and cause an undertaker to turn green with envy. Not only do these men-of-God vehemently protest the truth of this particular ghost-story, but hundreds of thousands of their followers support their pastors and masters in their most extraordinary allegations. It is therefore fitting to account the chief points of such a remarkable legend.

In the year nought B.C., or A.D. nought, a precocious baby with a ghost for its papa is alleged to have been born in a stable at Bethlehem, in Judæa, a province of the then Roman Empire. This infant was considered to be of such transcendent import-



ance that a wholesale massacre of children is said to have been actually carried out in the hope of getting rid of the Bethlehem prodigy. Yet, strangely enough, this massacre, although it would have desolated so many hundreds of homes, failed to attract the minutest notice from contemporary historians. The subsequent life of this ghost-child is one long string of marvellous happenings, quite as extraordinary as the stories in the *Arabian Nights*, the favourite hunting-ground of the pantomime producer. The ghost's son is said to have restored blind people to sight, and even brought the dead back to life. He is also alleged to have fed thousands with a few loaves and fishes, the fragments of the feast remaining being in excess of the original amount. Which, as old Euclid puts it, "is absurd." The Bethlehem magician is also said to have turned water into wine and performed other marvels. At his death a three days' darkness is declared to have overspread the whole earth, although no contemporary astronomer noticed the awful and depressing occurrence. After being condemned to death and executed as a criminal he is said to have reappeared again in ghostly form, and he finally ascended into the ether like an aeroplane and has never been seen since. Indeed, if the original story is true, this phenomenon may be actually "looping the loop," or "nose-diving" somewhere in aerial space to-day. There has never been so astonishing a career. Yet, outside of four Greek manuscripts, manifestly variations of the same tale, there is no corroboration of this most popular and most astounding of all ghost stories. These Greek manuscripts are anonymous. They were written no one knows where, no one knows when, and no one knows by whom. "What the soldier said is not evidence," once declared a High Court judge. In the case of the Bethlehem ghost-story one version is ascribed to "Matthew," who is supposed to have met the ghost's son when he was thirty years of age. Yet "Matthew" ventures to write of intimated happenings of three decades earlier concerning his ghostly friend's mother. To regard such a ghost-story with some scepticism cannot lead us as far astray as to swallow it with too child-like a credulity and too facile a belief.

Nor does this exhaust the inherent incredibility of the happenings. The ghost-son's birth is said to have happened in December. It was not, however, in that month, even according to the legends. For Shepherds do not watch their flocks by night in that most unromantic time of the year. Why, then, are these events said to have happened on the twenty-fifth day of December? The plain answer to a plain question plucks the heart out of the Christian superstition concerning Christmas.

It was in competition with the Roman Saturnalia that this Christian ghost story was fixed in December. It was to counteract the attractions of these popular Pagan holidays that the astute ecclesiastics of the Christian Churches sanctioned the pleasant associations they could not suppress. So many curious things were incorporated. In the far-off centuries white-robed Druid priests cut the sacred mistletoe with a golden sickle, and chanted their hymns to the frosty air. These features have been absorbed in the Christmas holidays, and the mistletoe and the carol-singing still remind us of the Pagan survivals in the great Christian festival. Yuletide is a jumble of Paganism and Christianity, and has as many diverse ingredients as a Christmas pudding. This merry birthday of the Man of Sorrows is a holiday borrowed from an earlier religion, and is a festival of falsehood.

Thus it is that the ghost-god's birthday is associated with feasting and merriment. Why a god, who

is described as eternal and omnipresent, should have a birthday, is a little puzzle that might usefully occupy the extensive leisure of the higher clergy. Many non-Christians, who outnumber Christians, regard Christ as a purely mythical creation, like all the other saviours and sun-gods of antiquity, who were generally born miraculously of virgin mothers, and whose careers, like that of Jesus, were marked with marvels from the cradle to the grave. Whether there was a man called Jesus, who lived and taught in Judæa, is a matter of microscopic importance. The Christian World professes to worship the figure in the New Testament, and not a Jewish workman, and has done so for many centuries.

This Eastern ghost-story, associated with the pharisaical profession of good-will to men, is largely pretence and make-believe. There is no "bogey" there at all, except the tens of thousands of clergymen who make millions of money out of this sacred sham, and who hiss at the "intellectuals" who would free their fellow-citizens from gross superstition. The clergy are not deceived; they are merely pursuing a sorry and an easy profession. The Merry Birthday of the Man of Sorrows is, at its best, but a survival from old-world Paganism. At its worst, it is an organized hypocrisy, a convivial celebration of events that never happened at all. In such matters the clergy are as honest as racecourse thimblegriggers, but not more so.

MIMNERMUS.

## Wordsworth and Religion.

THE pious Victorians regarded Shelley, Byron, and later, Swinburne, as demons from the pit. Byron they drove into exile. Shelley was expelled from Oxford for Atheism, and was deprived of the children of his first marriage. Fearing he would be deprived of the son of his second marriage, he left England for Italy, never to return. Swinburne escaped comparatively lightly, with defamation of character, for by this time the pious Victorians were at grips with a more terrible antagonist in the shape of evolutionary science, as expounded by Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, and Tyndall.

Still, they could boast of two modern poets on the side of religion, Tennyson and Wordsworth; although for the Fundamentalist Bible believers of those days—more numerous than they are now—Tennyson was suspect. That line, for instance, about "Nature, red in tooth and claw," shrieking against the creed, was calculated to inspire more doubt than his heated affirmations of belief dispelled. Then there was his attack on the doctrine of eternal punishment in *Despair*; most subversive and dangerous teaching, for it was well known that if there was no belief in hell for the wicked, every one would murder everybody else, and there would be an end of all things. Then there was that sentiment about "honest doubt," which was almost as bad; for if you were going to admit the honesty of doubt in religion, then the next thing would be admitting the honesty of atheism itself, and you were well on the road to it.

None of these disadvantages attached to Wordsworth, who died nine years before the explosion caused by the publication of the *Origin of Species*, and escaped infection by the new evolutionary thought. His Ode to Immortality is as popular with the pious as it was a century and a quarter ago, when it was written. Those who are acquainted with the modern apologies for religion, will have noticed that in the last chapter they invariably drop into poetry; and, after all the painful dialectic gymnastics involved



in side-stepping, or wangling, the great problems of pain and evil, which still remain like death's heads at the feast, grim witness to a hostile, indifferent, or helpless God; it is a relief for the apologist to fall back upon "intimations" and feelings, which are supposed to be out of the range of modern science.

Now Wordsworth's religion was a religion inspired by Nature. But it was Nature as it is seen in the Lake district where he lived, a beautiful, peaceful, tame nature. The only nature that Wordsworth knew. For good Wordsworthians, as Mr. Aldous Huxley remarks, a walk in this country: "is the equivalent of going to church, a tour through Westmorland as good as a pilgrimage to Jerusalem." But in the tropics, under a vertical sun, and nourished by the equatorial rains, Nature is not at all like the chaste, mild deity who presides over: "the prettiness, the cosy sublimities of the Lake District." He continues:—

A few weeks in Malaya or Borneo would have undeceived him. Wandering in the hothouse darkness of the jungle, he would not have felt so serenely certain of those "presences of Nature," those "Souls of Lonely Places," which he was in the habit of worshipping on the shores of Windermere and Rydal. The sparse inhabitants of the equatorial forest are all believers in devils. When one has visited, in even the most superficial manner, the places where they live, it is difficult not to share their faith. The jungle is marvellous, fantastic, beautiful; but it is also terrifying, it is also profoundly sinister. There is something in what, for lack of a better word, we must call the character of great forests—even in those of temperate lands—which is foreign, appalling, fundamentally and utterly inimical to intruding man. The life of those vast masses of swarming vegetation is alien to the human spirit and hostile to it.<sup>1</sup>

Then again, rivers, plains, and mountains, in our country, generally form pleasing landscapes, and that is how we think of them, but in the tropics, rivers imply wading and alligators. "Plains mean swamps, forests, fevers. Mountains are either dangerous or impassible. To travel is to hack one's way laboriously through a tangled, prickly, and venomous darkness. 'God made the country,' said Cowper, in his rather blank verse. In New Guinea he would have had his doubts; he would have longed for the man-made town." (p. 116.)

What the Wordsworthians do really, is to falsify experience. "Normally, what he does is to pump the dangerous Unknown out of Nature and refill the emptied forms of hills and woods, flowers and waters, with something more reassuringly familiar—with humanity, with Anglicanism. He will not admit that a yellow primrose is simply a yellow primrose—beautiful but essentially strange, having its own alien life apart. He wants it to possess some sort of soul, to exist humanly, not simply flowerily. He wants the earth to be more than earthy, to be a divine person." But Nature is not conscious, and not moral. It is "often hostile and sinister; sometimes even unimaginably, because inhumanly, evil." In his youth something of this appears in Wordsworth's poetry. But by the time he was thirty he had conceived a philosophy, and tortured his feelings and perceptions until they fitted his system. "Something far more deeply interfused" had made its appearance on the Wordsworthian scene. The god of Anglicanism had crept under the skin of things, and all the stimulatingly inhuman strangeness of Nature had become as flatly familiar as a page from a textbook of metaphysics or theology. As familiar and as safely simple."

Mr. Huxley quotes Wordsworth's remarks, as recorded by Haydon, upon the charming classical sculpture of Cupid and Psyche: "'The devils!' he said malignantly, after a long-drawn contemplation of their marble embrace. 'The devils!' And he was not using the word in the complimentary sense in which I have employed it here: he was expressing his hatred of passion and life, he was damning the young man he had himself been—the young man who had hailed the French Revolution with delight and begotten an illegitimate child." And as he further observes:—

The change in Wordsworth's attitude towards Nature is symptomatic of his general apostasy. Beginning as what I may call a natural aesthete, he transformed himself, in the course of years into a moralist, a thinker. He used his intellect to distort his exquisitely acute and subtle intuitions of the world, to explain away their often disquieting strangeness, to simplify them into a comfortable metaphysical unreality. Nature had endowed him with the poet's gift of seeing more than ordinarily far into the brick walls of external reality, of intuitively comprehending the character of the bricks, of feeling the quality of their being, and establishing the appropriate relationship with them. But he preferred to think his gifts away. He preferred, in the interests of a preconceived religious theory, to ignore the disquieting strangeness of things, to interpret the impersonal diversity of Nature in terms of a divine, anglican unity. (p. 128.)

It is a pity, concludes Mr. Huxley, that Wordsworth never travelled abroad: "A voyage through the tropics would have cured him of his too easy and comfortable pantheism."

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

## A Terrible Child.

It's all so puzzling. It really is.

I suppose it's because I haven't grown up yet. I'm still what the French call an *enfant terrible*, because I keep on asking questions at the wrong moment. But truly I can't help it. Everybody seems to know so much more than me, and I do so want not to be ignorant.

First, there was my brother. He said he thought he could help me. So I asked him what is the use of Hell when nobody believes they are going there, and he said the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. But I said that unless he meant that God and Hell were the same thing I couldn't fear God. I told him God is love, and I loved love.

He then said yes, but people who didn't love God went to Hell. And I asked him how did he know, had he been there to see. Then he went all pink and told me to go to—a clergyman.

The clergyman I went to said it wasn't always possible to prove things true even though one might know them to be so. I said: "Such as?" and he answered, "God." Then he said: "Look here—I've got a headache. You know what that is, don't you?" I said, "Yes, rather." So he said: "Well, I can't prove to you I've got one, can I?" I said, "No." "Well," he said, "there you are." I said, "Where?"

Then it all came to me in a flash, and I said: "Oh, you mean God is like a headache!" But he went all pink too, and so to calm him I added: "But about your headache, how do I know you've really got one? You might be telling a story."

Dear, dear! I really can't make it out.

<sup>1</sup> Aldous Huxley: *Do What You Will Essays*. p. 114.



Yet I can't be so frightfully stupid, because I know about God being omniscient and omnipotent and omnivorous (no, not omnivorous, but something of the sort) and immutable and immaterial and immoral—no, I mean immortal—and all that. They're fearfully long words for a boy of my age, who has just had his fourteenth birthday, but I know what they mean all the same. And I do so want to learn more.

Well, one day I read an article in a newspaper. It was called "Is Prayer Answered?" and was by the Warden of an institution which gives intellectual and spiritual help to men. If I wasn't afraid of being put in prison for breach of promise or copyright or something, I would copy it all out, because I'm sure it was full of wisdom. Anyhow, here's a summary of it:

Question: "Does God answer prayer?"

Answer: "Sometimes."

Question: "What times?"

Answer: "Well—er—when we pray according to His will."

Frightfully clever, isn't it. I mean, no one but a really intellectual clergyman could have thought of that, could they. So I said to myself: "Hooray! Here's a clever clergyman who answers questions. He's sure to be able to answer mine." So I asked him: "What difference can prayer make when we are taught that everything must happen according to God's will, and He never changes his mind?"

Well, the clergyman wrote to say he couldn't answer my question because he was going to have all his teeth pulled out. So I wrote quietly again and said, would he please try and answer my question before all his teeth were gone. And I said that if he didn't really know the proper answer, would he please say so.

Then this clergyman went quite pink too. At least, I didn't see him go pink, but he said that he wasn't going to let me "bully" him into an "interminable and acrimonious correspondence."

I must really be a terrible child. Fancy me bullying a poor clergyman with questions. I suppose it must be wicked to ask them—if you're not a clergyman. It really is most awfully puzzling.

C. S. FRASER.

## Religious Conjurers.

THERE is a Reverend Gentleman in Sussex who, at the present time, is engaged in a very remarkable enterprise. His name is the Rev. H. F. Waller-Bridge, M.A., Rector of Worth, and he goes about the country performing conjuring tricks with the object of raising £18,000 to build a new Church, a Church Hall, and a priest's house at Three Bridges, which is in the most populated part of his parish. Apparently he is a very successful conjurer; he not only knows how to perform a number of very clever tricks with cards, but he can also produce from a battered old hat a real live rabbit and other articles, by his magic art, to the utter bewilderment of his village audiences. The Rev. Gentleman says, however, rather sadly that many people "do not like the idea of a clergyman doing tricks"; but one old lady who made such an objection, was soon after convulsed with laughter, when he (the Rector) with the skill of a magician, produced a coin from the tip of her nose. That trick quite satisfied the dear old lady that there was not much harm in such performances. I don't know whether he gave the old lady the coin, or kept it himself for future performances.

However, Mr. Waller Bridge confesses that there is not much life in the country villages of Sussex, and

that "the old days of 'penny readings' as the highest form of entertainment for the villager, are dead." Consequently he (the Rector) has resolved to give them something better and more elevating to sharpen their bucolic intellects, viz., expert tricks of legerdemain. And then he makes this very grave declaration for a clergyman. "All of us," he says, "have got to be human before we can be divine. In my view it is not fair to expect country people to lead the old humdrum village life of a generation ago. That is why I want that hall and why I am conjuring to get it." Well, no good Christian could wish for anything fairer than that, could they? Besides, the *Daily News* of Saturday, November 23, which gave the above account of the doings of the Rev. H. F. Waller Bridge, M.A., also informed its readers that "Besides ordinary tricks Mr. Waller Bridge shows his audience illusions which are generally the greatest 'hits' of the professional magician. He is the only amateur conjurer in the world who possesses the means 'to produce a man from nowhere in twenty-five seconds.' There! what do you think of that? The Modern Spiritualist will have to look to his laurels. But when you come to think of it, it is really nothing very extraordinary to find gentlemen engaged in the religious profession who were capable of performing tricks to the downright amazement of their credulous followers. The Rev. Gentleman has only got to refer to "the Holy Bible" to find that Moses and Aaron were capable of performing tricks of a much more baffling character than any the Rev. Waller Bridge is ever likely to accomplish. For example, we are told in the seventh chapter of Exodus that Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh and did as the Lord commanded; and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent (verse 10), but wait awhile, we find in the very next verse that "Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers, now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments; for they cast every man his rod and they became serpents" (trick honours equal so far); and then we are told that Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods—and that did the trick (see verses 11 and 12) and so the Lord through Aaron won a decided victory!

And then look at the long list of tricks that Aaron did in afflicting the Egyptians with plagues because the Hebrew God *Jehoveh* had hardened the heart of Pharaoh so that he would not let the children of Israel go. First he turned all the waters in the rivers and the ponds and the pools into blood; then followed the plagues of frogs, lice, flies, murrain of beasts, boils and blains, locusts, darkness—all these tricks were done by the invincible rod of Aaron, and nothing like them has been done by magicians since those glorious days recorded in Holy Writ! And Joshua too, he was a great conjurer. At his command the sun stood still and the moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. (Joshua x, 13).

And what was it but a trick that enabled Samson to kill a thousand people with the jawbone of an ass? (Judges xv. 15.) And then turn to the New Testament; and let the Rev. Waller Bridge answer honour bright—were not such miracles as Jesus is alleged to have wrought—only tricks, clever tricks, after all? Such, for instance, as turning devils out of men and sending them into a herd of swine (Matt ix. 28-32), or when Jesus walked on the sea (Matt. xiv. 25). Or again, feeding five thousand hungry people on five loaves and two fishes, and taking up twelve baskets full of fragments after the repast. (Mark vi. 41-44.) Or, opening the eyes of a blind man by spitting on them. (Mark viii. 23.)



Assuredly the Rev. Waller Bridge is following the example of his religious forefathers in becoming a conjurer; a master of the art of Legerdemain. But after all why should he limit himself to such performances as card tricks, and getting a live rabbit out of a capacious hat? He wants £18,000 to build a new Church, why not imitate the fairy in pantomime and by the use of a wand transform his little church into a cathedral? Yes and a Church Hall and Priest's House included? While he is about his tricks why not do one on a large scale? and if he is capable of producing a man from nowhere in twenty-five seconds—why not produce his new Church and everything else he wants in a flash of lightning? If he cannot, he is not a worthy disciple of the great religious conjurers of the past.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

## How To Do It.

### A LITTLE STUDY IN STYLE.

If the late Lord Macaulay were to rewrite his celebrated "Armada," familiar to us in our schooldays, he would doubtless interpolate or substitute roundabout his reference to "The richest spoils of Mexico, the stoutest hearts in Spain," a line or so concerning "The richest tripe of Grub Street, the treacliest brains of Fleet Street"; for it is these, according to their own account, that are "saving" England, God help us all from Atheism, Materialism, realism, jazz-bands, night-clubs, cocktails, and, as crown, climax and centrepiece, "lack of faith."

We are driven to these profound, if bitter, conclusions by a more or less intensive study of an— we should perhaps say *the*—article in the *Sunday Express* of a recent date, entitled "A word of Comfort for the Afflicted." If it *were* a word, it wouldn't matter so much; but it is—alas!—about fifteen hundred words. And such words. They must be read to be believed; and even then we remain doubtful; for they are by our old friend the very, very nearly Reverend James Douglas at his very best and pawkiest. Is it? Does it. Can it. But no! We must really relieve our variegated emotions by quoting from the sermon itself. We start right away, in the true-blue-traditional parsonic method, with "Mystery." Dear old Mystery, friend of our errant youth, our wild maturity, our somnolent age. Oh, my dear friends, Life is a Mystery! Death is a Mystery! Birth is a Mystery! God is a Mystery! (This is true, anyhow.) Apple Dumplings are a Mystery! Thank God, All is a Mystery! Every blinking thing. Thank God, thank God, what *should* we do without that blessed word, "Mystery"? "Mesopotamia" is a fool to it. Give us "Mystery" every time, even though it means mystagogues.

But lo! dear Friends! The hour ripens; and it is meet that we turn to the very words—the *ipsissima verba*—of the Master himself. He wires-in right-away, as might be expected, on "Mystery," thus:—

There are two vast mysteries in the life of man—the mystery of misery and the mystery of evil.

One could say as much, and more impressively at that, in less space; thus: "Misery and evil are the great mysteries of life." This effects a saving in words of over fifty per cent. But bless you! That is not popular journalism. A pulpit style naturally demands excessive wordiness to cover extreme tenuity of thought. Brevity may be the soul of wit; but modern journalism is mainly soulless; and so the proverb does not apply.

After the introduction of these "Mysteries," which are no "mysteries" whatever, save to those who—against all the available evidence—insist upon

it that the universe is "run" as a sort of wholesale emotional business-concern by a Company of Spooks chairmanned by a chap named "God," we get a series of "Whys?" "Why did He ["He" is our old friend, "God"] let woe and wickedness ["Woe and wickedness! There's richness for you] into our mortal [mortal!] life? . . . Why are we not sinless and painless machines?" Why, indeed? Why is grass green? Why is time long? Why do fish swim? Why do flowers grow? We could go on like this all day; but, as Mr. Douglas might say, Why should we? So, all told, we won't but we *will*—we insist upon it—return to our almost reverend Friend. After why?-ing through a pair of paragraphs, of course fruitlessly—for the sly scribe takes jolly good care to ask questions that are by their very nature unanswerable—to our sad amusement, if not our mental edification, he draws us up sharply on a simple "Why?" all by its lonely, lonesome, single, sole self. (How's that for paper-style?) After that, as anti-climax, we get a caption, in large type, that relieves us so much that we almost explode into tears. This is the caption: "How Childish We Are!" Well; some of us *are*; there's no denying that; and it is well for the Editor of the *Sunday Express* that such is the case, or the circulation of that organ of religion and realism would descend with a bang. Well may "religious" journalists thank "God" for running a human wing-factory that must be working overtime in "heaven" seven days and nights at least, every week.

Like all religious scribes (although no two sects agree on the point), James knows all about "God," mystery or no mystery. Here is the Master's definition:—

But God is not a kind of super-inventor in a super-laboratory. He is far more mysterious, far more wonderful, far more sublime. He is the truth and grace and beauty and love that we know in ourselves. He is the spiritual energy in us and in all things. If we yield to His magic He is the centre of our life.

Now we can see all over London. London? Pooh! All over the universe; or rather we *should* be able to see all over the universe if Mr. Douglas's inspired words had any known meaning. But, alas, they haven't. Like all the other theologians, when we fancy that we're getting "warm," this friend of "God" carefully, and almost, it seems, of malice aforethought, lets us down. Mr. Douglas's words refer not to facts, but to fancies; consequently, they have no message for anyone who is capable of doing his own thinking. The fact is that this holy man's readers are hypnotised by such words as "mystery," "God," "pain," "evil"; and they would believe quite blindly if he told them, blandly, that "God" was a synthetic rainbow or an apotheosised chameleon. Any mystagogue finds defenders and supporters, because his appeal is to the passions and the emotions; never to the intellect.

"How childish" we may be; but we are not all so childish as to accept the oracles of this pious and prosperous newspaper-editor. Some few of us are so unreasonable as to demand a definite meaning for words. And it is just here, on the threshold, as it were, of wisdom, that Mr. Douglas lets us down.

A large photograph of the Master (not Jesus; James) usually accompanies his sermon; his massive head overweighted with its high and heavy thoughts, rests on his hand; he is all-complete with silver pencil—symbol of immortality—and wrist-watch—signifying time—evolving those pure and delightful thoughts that are to captivate the fine long ears and the good thick brains of the readers of the Great Sunday Sermon-Grinder.



"It is hard," writes our theological expositor, "to justify the ways of God to men." Here at least, he is right; where the late John Milton notoriously failed, we don't fancy, somehow, that there is much more than a sporting chance for our all-but-reverend editor, style and all thrown-in. In the opinion of our honoured Christian, "it is harder to justify the ways of men to God." And here we have the honour of agreeing with him; indeed, we would go even further than he does; for we can find no justification whatever for the way in which Mr. Douglas treats "God," who, this time at least, has our sincere sympathy.

"There is no evil in life" we gather, "without its joyous and joyful antidote. God always gives more than He takes away." We must ask here where "He" takes it, and what "He" does with it when "He" has it? Perhaps Mr. Douglas, next time the theological frenzy seizes him, will be so kind as to enlighten us. We are also curious as to how "He" gives it; "it" being whatever it is that he does give; sometimes "it" is damnably unpleasant, and, from a merely human and common-sense point of view, "He" might very well save "Himself" the trouble and expense of the gift, to the advantage of everyone concerned in the transaction. By the way, how does "He" "give" it? Is it handed-over, or sent by post or angels? But it is clearly useless to speculate upon a theme that, by its very nature, is insoluble. We are a little sceptical about Mr. Douglas's divine Friend; if only because "He" bears so close a resemblance to Mr. Douglas himself. Beneath all the luxuriant verbiage and inflated phrases, the features of the old Bogey-Man are only too obvious. Every man's "God" is himself magnified and decorated into "Himself," for the confounding and muddlement of the world's mugs. In the case under observation, behold the truth of the thesis: James is a casuist; so is James's God; James is a sophist, so is James's God; James is a leg-puller, so is James's God. Blasphemy? Maybe: but scarcely ours. We will try to prove our point. God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform. So, when he really *loves* anyone, he "sends," to prove his love, blindness, cancer, insanity, bankruptcy, toothache, paralysis, and other blessings in disguise, as Christian cant calls them. All these slight evils, according to our "joyous and joyful" journalist, are actually so many separate and special proofs of the "divine love!" Well may mankind, exclaim, "Save us from our Gods!" This is how Mr. Joyous and Joyful Douglas brings "comfort" to the "unhappy."

The logical outcome of the Douglasian teaching is that evil and pain and poverty are "blessings" in disguise; and therefore the more of them "God" sends us the better. "The alchemy of suffering is one of the glories of God." The devil it is! What are the other "glories of God," Mr. Douglas? May we have a catalogue, please? You seem to know all about it. As our friend the publicist is always saying to us, can you beat it? We can't!

After Mr. Douglas's beautiful words about what he is pleased to call "the alchemy of suffering," we venture to ask him if he would care to be inoculated with typhoid-germs? We are doubtful as to the depth of his touching faith in that fine old chemical "God" of his. We wonder, too, if he would care to give-up his well-paid job in Fleet Street and run a whelk-stall in the New Cut. If he be honest, he should jump at the chance; for "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." We fancy that, despite this revived Jacobite theology, Mr. Douglas would fight-shy of such blessings in disguise as these, such obvious proofs of "God's" love.

If—as we hold—Mr. Douglas would decline these "blessings," all his beautiful words are really nothing but pious humbug. He cannot have it both ways. Either "God" does not "love" him, or he is deliberately scribbling cant at so much a line, professional treacle to smear the brains of the poor creatures who still maintain a pathetic faith in the Royal Family in the skies.

According to the Douglasian cosmogony there are "these four afflictions," wherein "nearly all the misery of life may be found." They are:—

1. Invalidism.
2. Poverty.
3. Friendlessness.
4. Childlessness.

We will venture to add a fifth; its name is cant.

VICTOR B. NEUBURG.

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## Acid Drops.

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This the season of merrymaking and Professor Bethune-Baker, Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge thus adds his quota to current amusements. He said that all the stories in the New Testament about the divinity, the miraculous birth, etc., of Jesus must be taken as poetical and popular expressions, not as being literally true. That makes everything nice and clear for everybody, for one has only to interpret everything troublesome or absurd in a popular or poetical way to make it mean anything one pleases. For what is popular and what is poetical is left to everyone to decide. The man who can find fault with the New Testament on this plan must indeed be clever.

Professor Bethune-Baker is not to get off without scratches from his brother Christians, and one of his hearers thus writes as "A Humble Christian":—

Now the very church in which he lectured, is named in honour of the Virgin Mary. We must at once eliminate fairy tales and poetry, so let us alter the name of the church first of all. Suppose we re-name it, "St. Darwin the Evolutionist at the Tower." Or discard all silly poetical tales about saints, and name it "The Church for Any New Theory, or Old Theory"; but not St. Mary's, nor Christ's Church any more. For we have been making too much of Christ, and not enough of new theories. If the Virgin Birth is poetry, probably every story of every saint is lies and rubbish. Also what authority have we for the Resurrection of Christ and his Ascension in bodily form to Heaven? If the story of His birth is poetry, so is the story of the Resurrection. We must cease singing our Christmas hymns. "Christ is born in Bethlehem," is no longer relevant. It has lost its former meaning, it is "mere poetry." "Hark, the herald angels sing, glory to the New-born King," etc., is also obsolete. O, ye learned men, with your book-knowledge, and your theories, you have never seen Christ as the Saviour of mankind, our Mediator with God, and the only hope of salvation for sinful man.

Humble Christians can be very nasty when they choose.

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An interesting list of wills reveals the extent of the power of the dead over the living. Mrs. Ethel Mews leaves £35,155, stipulating that legatees must be or become members of the Roman Catholic Church. Mr. Kenneth Arthur Lees leaves £23,901, directing that the legacy of any of his children who embraced the Roman Catholic faith should be reduced by half. Miss Maria Celia Livius, a convert, since the death of her parents, to Roman Catholicism, left the bulk of her property to build a Roman Catholic school. And these are the



answers to those who have "gross materialism" on their lips when they are allowed to state their own case against Materialism. Money makes the mare go, and where there is plenty of it, Rationalization will easily make it a comfortable bed-fellow of a religion ostensibly founded on poverty.

Lady Chamberlain has been actively responsible in the sending of a Christmas Box by Italy to England. We shall thus have an opportunity of viewing famous pictures at the Italian Art Exhibition. International amenities of this kind may make even the dubious begu to think that the world does move. At any rate, exchanges of this kind between nations are preferable to those sent from the mouths of guns. In some happy future the human race may realize that knocking each other's eye out is not conducive to clear sight. The League of Nations might take a few lessons from Lady Chamberlain who no doubt has moved in the liberal atmosphere of the late Joseph Chamberlain.

Mr. D. B. Wyndham Lewis has a funny article in the *Daily Mail*, and the subject of it was an imaginary novel factory run by Mr. Edgar Wallace. Catching a little of current thought, Mr. Lewis playfully suggests in his interview that mass production can be used for articles in the following style:—

"Like to see the turning, polishing, trimming, packing, labelling, checking and forwarding departments?" asked Mr. Wallace, "Or our Journalism Section? We supply authoritative articles on anything from sheep-dip to the Hereafter at one hour's notice."

The butterflies of journalism can handle everything and anything in the world of ideas; how they do it is another matter, but in this matter, the hard won privilege of free thought is taken, as Browning would say, "with scarce a thank you."

Mr. T. C. Stobart is Educational Director and organizer of religious broadcasting. He tells the *Methodist Times*:—

There is a strong movement also afoot at the present time in favour of a daily evening service. It is being strongly championed by Miss Cordeux, the same energetic lady who produced a host of petitions for the daily morning service. It would obviously be very difficult to provide this while the usual programme is in full swing. It is therefore extremely doubtful whether we shall be able to accede to this petition, widely supported though it is. With all the best intentions, there must be, at some point or other, what chemists call "saturation point," beyond which an extension of the religious activities of the B.B.C. would do harm rather than good to the cause of religion.

A Linslade (Bucks) hawker was found selling notice plates, "No hawkers, no canvassers." About as funny as a parson selling the *Freethinker*.

What a miserable profession Religion is. It depends upon human trouble and suffering for its boom periods. The Bishop of Winchester was among the passengers on board the *Homeric*, which had such a rough passage across the Atlantic. Passengers and crew were bowled over like skittles, and much damage done to the vessel. Such an excellent opportunity for doing a little business could not be missed, and soon after landing the Bishop set up his stall and had a special thanksgiving service.

The *Daily Mail*, whose mission in the world appear to be that of keeping the human race in a state of perpetual childishness, is concerned about the publication

of a book *The Rise of the Christian Church*. The authors are eminently respectable as will be seen by those who value such things:—

Dr. L. Elliott Binns, Vicar of Gedney (near Holbeach, Lincolnshire); the Ven. J. W. Hunkin, Archdeacon of Coventry, and Dr. J. F. Bethune-Baker, Lady Maragaret's Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge.

A slight criticism of the Resurrection makes the *Daily Mail* wonder whether it is the right kind of spiritual food to put before boys and girls. A little less time spent by human beings on things that matter in life—such as truth, honesty, and integrity, instead of the religious gallery of myth and miracles, might compel the *Daily Mail* to prepare better fare for its readers. Even Freethinkers might hope for a miracle of this kind.

Someone recommends yawning exercises as an aid to beauty. The most natural way of practising the exercises is to listen to the wireless sermon. The result will be—God-inspired beauty!

It looks as though good old-fashioned, adulterated Christian ignorance will find its last home in this country with the Salvation Army. Speaking at Burslem, the other day, Commissioner Mrs. Booth Tucker said that the Salvation Army believes that the Bible was inspired by God, and people must believe it from cover to cover. It hardly seems possible that less than a century ago this was the general belief of all Christians. Freethought propaganda has done something during that period, and a splendid something it is.

The Vicar of Chorley Wood, the Rev. W. E. Woodhams Denham has caused some excitement in his parish by his attack on gambling over cards. He is no doubt doing his duty as an ordained priest, but these are not the days when people can be fined for not going to church, or even ostracized for not seeing the necessity of it. The real fun begins when any independent spirit begins to openly and publicly criticize the list of mock serious things for which churches stand.

There is no truth in the rumour that Spiritualists are responsible for advising the authorities to re-inforce the Thames Embankment with sand-bags. Rattling tambourines, finger impressions on wax, and chin tickling, mark the limits of their usefulness.

At a recent pageant a woman wore jewels worth £100,000. If the Scriptures speak the truth, the "needle's eye" test will floor her as much as our wealthy parsons.

Mr. D. Whittington, a schoolmaster, says that one good thing stands to the credit of the last war—it aroused the nation as never before to a realization of the value of education. Mr. Whittington is putting the credit to the wrong account. There was a growing realization as regards the value of education years before the war. What the war did was to shelve it, and so hinder its growth. It has commenced growing again now that war ideas have gone out of people's minds.

Wisdom on the wing: "Service is the rent we pay for our room here on earth," thus the sapient Bishop of Dover. It recalls to mind the tale of the small boy who was told, "what we are here for is to do good to others." "Oh," said the boy, "but what are the others here for?" That boy and the bishop ought to be put in touch with each other. We feel sure the Bishop knows the answer to the boy's question.



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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.

F. HAMPSON.—Thanks. Will be used.

P. V. MORRIS.—Quite interesting and shall appear soon.

C. H. AYLER.—The author of the work was Judge Strange, of the Indian Civil Service.

E. HORACE JONES.—We cheerfully take the will for the deed. Verses will be useful.

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

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## Sugar Plums.

The West London Branch of the N.S.S. has taken Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C., for a course of lectures from January till the end of March. Mr. Cohen has promised to deliver the opening address on January 5, taking for his subject, "What are We Fighting For?" The lecture will commence at 6.30. The entrance to the hall is in Theobalds Road. This will probably be the last London meeting that Mr. Cohen will address this season.

W. J. W. Easterbrook asks us to say that owing to two issues of the *Freethinker* having to be prepared for the press within three days, he is holding over the list of acknowledgments to the Cohen Testimonial until next week. As the fund closes on December 31, that should be the final list.

Mr. Justice Hill decided the other day that a marriage at a Moscow Registry Office was not marriage within the meaning of the English law. We do not know whether that is good law or not, and we are not greatly concerned whether it is or not. What we wish to notice is the remarks made by Mr. Justice Hill in delivering judgment. From a newspaper report we take the following dicta:—

The Soviet law did not recognize a religious marriage. In Russia a marriage was formulated by registration, which was conclusive evidence of the existence of the marriage.

In England we had what were known as Christian marriages, where a man or woman took one another to the exclusion of all others for life, or until the marriage was dissolved by the State.

The union of petitioner and respondent was not a marriage... They were never husband and wife within the meaning of the law.

Putting on one side the question of whether a marriage in Russia holds good in England, a question on which we are not competent to give an opinion, the rest of the remarks cited strike us as sheer muddle:—

1. If the fact that a marriage is by registration in Russia precludes it from recognition in an English court, what would Mr. Justice Hill do in the case of a marriage in England before a Registrar, where the Registrar's certificate is the only evidence? Would he decide that the man and woman "were never husband and wife within the meaning of the English law"?
2. Does the expression, "The Soviet law did not recognize a religious marriage" mean that this is the only marriage Mr. Justice Hill will recognize?
3. What is the difference between a "Christian marriage" which holds until the State dissolves it and a marriage by registration which holds until it is dissolved by the State?
4. What would Mr. Justice Hill do with a marriage contracted in Scotland, and which is legal by Scotch law, even though there had taken place neither a "Christian marriage," nor a marriage before a Registrar? Would he hold the marriage to be invalid in an English court?
5. What precisely is a mere "Christian marriage" that holds good in an English court of law? Would a marriage performed by any Christian minister or preacher be held good, without the presence of a representative of the Registrar or the sanction of the civil authority?
6. Is not a minister of the Church of England licensed to perform marriages by the State, and is he not, for the purposes of the ceremony, a civil official?
7. Is not the State the only legal authority in England which can say when a marriage shall begin and when it shall terminate?
8. Does "Christian marriage" mean anything more than that certain religious ceremonies has accompanied the civil marriage performed in a Church—by permission of the State—instead of in a Registry Office, and by a parson instead of by a Registrar?
9. Does it not look as though "a marriage formulated by registration" is in England not only, in this country, "conclusive evidence of the existence of the marriage," but the only marriage that is legal?

Anyway, Mr. Justice Hill appears to be in a delightful muddle. There are few things Christianity can touch without soiling it.

Our old friend and very good Freethinker, Mr. Greevz Fysher, of Leeds, has, we see, just been elected President of the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union. We congratulate the Union on its new President, and Mr. Fysher on the honour his brother members have done him.



## Pious Atheists Unveiled.

Theists Whose Practice Completely Contradict  
Their Profession of Belief in God.

THE word Atheist is used more freely and with less fear to-day by writers and speakers than ever before. Somehow it has become a little safer to be called an Atheist. Is it because the number of Atheists is on the increase? Is it because it has been demonstrated that the men usually denounced as Atheists are after all not wicked nor monstrous as they have been depicted in sermon and Sunday-school tracts? I have a suspicion which I trust will not be deemed entirely groundless, that the real reason for the diminishing hostility among the orthodox to a word once considered the most frightful in human speech is the fact that professors of theism have been made to realize, a little at least, that the real Atheist is the theist who does not live and act as though he really believed in a God. It is not profession, it is practice that counts. When conduct has demolished the creed, or treated it as being no more than a "scrap of paper," to continue professing the discarded creed publicly and solemnly as most sacred and most binding, that is atheism, however pious it may be.

In all practical matters, as I will make an effort to show, the theist, loud in his profession of belief, conducts himself precisely as he would have conducted himself if he had not been a believer in a Supreme Being. That statement cannot be successfully contested.

"I need thee every hour," prays or sings the theist. That is what he says with his lips. His actions, on the contrary, announce louder and in a manner far more convincing that he does not need him for anything at any time. Does he call upon the deity, for example, to feed and clothe him, to run his errands, to do his school or office work, to balance his ledger or to plough and sow his fields? If he is sick, does he not send for a physician or a practitioner? And are not both physician and healer human creatures? For which of his needs then does the theist look to the deity?

By a rhetorical phrase and a pious accent the theist protests his utmost dependence upon and absolute trust in Providence. Indeed, without the help of God he would not even dare to take a single step, turn to the right or left, or lift a finger. That comes from his mouth. What is the witness of his daily life? Having paid a verbal homage to his God, the believer, like any unbeliever, proceeds to lock his door, to protect his property and even his church with lightning rods; to place his burglar and fire insurance in a sound company, and if he be crossing the ocean, he inquires for the safest route and for a ship that is seaworthy. That is exactly what the people who have made no profession of faith in a Supreme Being do. By the way they act, who could tell which is the theist and which is the Atheist?

Does not the professional theist urge piously and in public, loudly enough for the world to hear, "Carry everything to God in prayer"? Everything! And yet, not a single interest or affair of a personal nature, vital to his prosperity, does he hand over to the deity to look after in his place. Does he leave it to God Almighty to elect a president or to manage municipal government, collect taxes or improve housing conditions—tear down unsafe tenements, close the slums or look after the unemployed? And is it scientific research, charity, or the public health, or world-peace that men cannot advance without divine guidance? Of course, we may do the

things we attempt badly, but it is we who do them, if they are done at all. What we leave undone remains undone. Can that statement be questioned? And what man is not strong or wise or virtuous enough to bring to pass, no power in heaven can bring to pass.

We have an example at hand. We desire an end to all wars. We have laboured toward that end from time immemorial, but without success. Has the deity succeeded where we have failed? We desire also to abolish poverty, ignorance and disease. We have not succeeded. Has the deity shown us the way? We have asked for the secret of life, of death, of the origin of matter and mind; has a voice from heaven enlightened our ignorance? They say heaven has spoken. But what has been said? No two believers agree.

We are advised that we must look to heaven, not for material but for spiritual gifts. Very well. Wisdom, knowledge, culture may well be numbered among the blessings which are not material. If we could have these things by praying for them, why have any schools? Is not every library and school-house proof conclusive that we do not expect these blessings to come down to us from above? If we really believed that the deity has a shorter and more efficient way of making the vicious virtuous we would do away with reformatories and houses of correction.

Since when have the theists stopped praying for material things? The Prayer Book still in vogue asks for fair weather, for rain, for harvests rich and ripe, for safety at sea, for recovery from sickness, for protection against storms, floods and pestilence. Is not "Give us this day our daily bread" still heard in all the churches? But where are the theists who really expect to receive their daily rations or wisdom or virtue from heaven for the asking? Does the theist who has prayed for fair weather dispense with his umbrella? Does he throw away his life-preserver because he counts upon the deity to save the ship? In what way, then, do theists behave differently from the people they denounce as Atheists? What do theists do to prove that they believe in God, other than to point to their vital pronouncements? If theists were Atheists could they do less than they do now to show that if they want anything done they must do it themselves?

To plead that God helps those who help themselves is to beg the question. Those who can help themselves need no other help. It is the weak and the helpless who need most the sympathy of the deity.

Not so long ago a twelve-year-old girl was kidnapped. Her parents accepted the terms of the kidnapper and brought him the money that was demanded before he would allow the return of the little girl to them. But when the sack, in which she was concealed, was opened, they found in it only the mutilated and mangled form of their child!

In one of the pleading letters written during her imprisonment, Marian Parker is reported to have cried, "Won't some one please explain why all this had to happen to me?" Dear little girl! She had no idea of the worse fate awaiting her. No doubt she prayed for help. Think you that the deity told her she must help herself if she desired any help from heaven! But she could not help herself, and, according to the "God helps those who help themselves," the father in heaven could do nothing for Marian.

"Won't someone please explain why all this had to happen to me?"

Let the theists explain.

"Where God sends mouths he sends meat" is



another saying which is supposed to prove the faith of the theist, and which is also meant to compliment the deity. But is it true? Dean Inge, a theist, writes: "We cannot throw the responsibility of unwanted children on God." And the Rev. Dr. Fosdick says: "There is only one solution—the scientific control of the birth rate. You cannot trust God to bring everything off all right, if you let the earth's population double every sixty years. If we sow that, we shall reap starvation and unemployment, physical and moral decay." In other words, heaven can do nothing for us. Formerly, it was preached that it is God who creates or sends children into the world. Now it is intimated that God has no part in bringing children into the world or in caring for them after they get here.

We have only to read again and reflect upon the quotation from the Rev. Dr. Fosdick to realize that in all practical matters the theist behaves exactly as the Atheist, with this difference—the latter acts as he professes, while the former by his conduct gives the lie to his pious verbiage. Says Dr. Fosdick, "You cannot trust God." Listen to that from a theist!

"You cannot trust God to bring everything off all right."

No? Not everything? If we cannot trust the Almighty to bring off everything all right, can we trust him to bring anything off all right? Yes? What, for example? And if, as Dr. Fosdick sanely asserts, "there is only one solution, the scientific," for over-population, is it not incontestably and sweepingly true that that is also the only solution for all other questions? And if the dean of St. Paul's knows what he is saying when he writes: "You cannot throw the responsibility of unwanted children on God," will he not let us know what are the things for which God may be held responsible?

One more illustration I may be permitted to offer by way of showing that the theist as such expects as little from Providence as he would if he were an Atheist. A traveller accidentally falls into a well. The first thing he does when he finds himself at the bottom of the well is to attempt to pull himself out. If he succeeds he does not cry nor pray for assistance. Where he can help himself he does so. It is when the well is too deep or he is too feeble to regain his liberty that he lifts his voice and calls for help. If some human being hears his voice, he may be delivered. If no human being is within reach of his voice, he surely perishes.

Has heaven ever come to the rescue when human help has failed? Has the deity unaided by man ever rescued anyone, except in books of fiction, from the lion's den, the furnace of fire, or a watery grave?

If we heard the cry of a man in the well but refused to run to his assistance, we would be looked upon as inhuman. Human hard-heartedness scandalizes for the very cogent reason that our faith in human sympathy is sincere. We really expect that men will do their duty in such a circumstance as I have noted, and when disappointed we give eloquent expression to our disapproval.

On the other hand, even the most pious believer in Providence is not in the least disturbed by the action of Almighty God, who hears the heart-rending cry of the man in the well but does nothing for him. Why so? Because his faith in divine help is only a make-believe faith.

The alarmed exclamation of the bishop, when during a storm at sea, which seriously menaced the safety of the ship, the captain having replied that he had done all he could and that now "only the Lord can save us." "Is it as bad as that, Captain?" cannot very well be quoted as proving his absolute

faith in divine providence—a faith he had so eloquently and ostentatiously professed.

The barbarian smashes his idol-gods when they fail to come to his help as promised, because his faith in his divinities is sincere, and not merely ornamental or professional.

It would really surprise the Hebrew or Christian theist if his God single-handed rescued a child from the fire, or pulled a cripple off the tracks in time to save him from an oncoming train. Such exhibition of almighty power and goodness would strike the theist with so great an astonishment that he would scarcely believe his senses.

In conclusion: One who has not made a vow cannot be accused of breaking his vow. The Rationalist makes no public or solemn profession of faith in a Supreme Being. He cannot therefore be justly accused of Atheism. The Hebrew and the Christian theists publish to the whole world that they really and honestly believe in a God, almighty, omniscient and loving. No student would think of calling them Atheists if they carried their profession into practice. It is when their practice completely contradicts their profession that they fully qualify as pious Atheists.

M. M. MANGASARIAN.

(Reprinted from the "Truthseeker," New York.)

## Black Human Nature.

SOME REMINISCENCES OF NIGERIA TWENTY YEARS AGO.

If only employers in Great Britain could adequately realize how very necessary it is that men of the right temperament (apart from ability) be sent to the West Coast, there would be much less distrust. In these days of welded Money Interests, of Huge Combines, of Titled Boards, it is appalling how much detail is demanded from even the "newest chum." The poor lad is left wondering whether he is in West Africa, or some Colney Hatch of Statistical Detail. It is nearly twenty years since I hymned some of the Trader's Little Troubles on the West Coast: among which I mentioned:—

"Oh, 'tis sweet to have the sandflies round his ankles,  
And a vigorous young mosquito on his neck;  
While the Rule, 'No Drink on Duty!' riles and rankles,  
As he trots around to pay the produce-check.  
Then a boat shows faintly on the far horizon;  
And the Great One sends a *chit* to know 'exact  
How many casks of oil I last set eyes on'—  
And (to a *tora*) 'last month's Trade Abstract!'

'Tis Dissect, 'sect, 'sect,  
All correct, 'rect, 'rect;

And the task is rather tricky he'll protest—  
For percentages of gin must be worked out well within  
The margin of his cottons, and the rest!"

But two decades ago was paradise compared to the present; and I'm afraid that I'd rather starve on bananas and water than submit to the querulous nagging of a pompous board of directors. *Chacun à son goût!* Or as one dear old dunce down river (Craig of Welsh's) would obstinately persist in translating my quotation, "Every dog has his day!"

When a youngster is placed in a lonely Creek station, he has enough to do to control his staff, get a decent "turnover," and maintain his self-respect, without swatting in the evenings and during Sunday at "statistical tables for the guidance of the board."

I am going to relate a typical true story. Inside a neighbouring Creek, worked Barley, a jolly good trader of the old school, but rather too fond of the bottle. We laid his bones to rest ere long in the Onitsha Cemetery; but he rejoiced to the end in the name of Bibulous Bill. His native mistress he called "Picture Gallery"; and she was indeed one of the ugliest coloured ladies I have ever known. Yet she would seem not to have been without charm, for—after Bibulous Bill's decease from abscess on the liver—she was instantly taken over by his successor. Prior to that, she had certainly been mistress to (a) the Doctor; (b) the Chief of Police; (c) the



District Engineer; and (d) a District Agent. In this connexion, no names nor pack-drill.

Now this lonely and desolate station was one of the dreariest spots imaginable—a market only once in four days; and then a lull which would have driven Saint Anthony to dalliance. The newcomer was of an effervescent temperament: a fine player of the piano, a good singer, and a rattling good athlete. His age was twenty-two.

Was it not a crime on the part of his employers to put such a fine chap in a place where there was not another white man within sixty hours hail, and with no possibility of recreation, or clean social enjoyment? For six months out of the twelve his bungalow even was swamped; and he was compelled to use a canoe to get to the kitchen.

"Picture Gallery" was not a bad woman, although her past appeared so frightfully unmoral, and I knew that she would do her best for this youth—boyish enough in fact to be her own offspring. Rumours came through from time to time that he was drinking heavily; and that he had had several severe "goes" of malaria.

Now this youth had nothing to do with my business, nor was his Chief Agent in any sense of the word a "pal" of mine. But I simply had to intervene in some indirect way, when the Postmaster came to me with a woeful face, and poured into my ears an insidious story of suspected defalcation.

I asked him what he meant; for he was probing for an analysis of the woman's character. Out of fear or respect for the white race he did not suggest X's responsibility. Nor had I ever heard any suggestion of "Picture Gallery" being dishonest, in all the long years I had known her.

So I became more than ordinarily circumspect; and fished for information, before I would answer a single question. I was soon bluntly informed that the woman had been buying postal orders, one pound each in value, at the rate of fifty per week.

"How long has this been going on?" I asked.

"Six months," came the astounding reply.

Apparently, the woman came and went so secretly that the postmaster had not at first suspected anything unusual. But he had now begun to keep records; and inside the present quarter over three hundred pounds had been carried away, by canoe, in the care of "Picture Gallery" to this lonely little creek station.

I went to bed that night very troubled. I had liked X for his *gaieté de cœur*, his good looks, and his musical abilities. The brief stay he had been able to make in Onitsha, before he took up his appointment, had made me wish to know more about him. To my mind, he had been a typically clean and unmorbid lad, fit product of any of the public-schools, merry and splendidly alive. Could it be possible that the woman was *fooling* him! and that he was wholly unaware of these fearful defalcations? I had to dismiss that idea as absurd.

Then I took it upon myself to gather together a little group of men, and to propose a week-end inside the creek. The plan was acclaimed, for others remembered and liked X. So, with a case of beer, a ham that had been boiled and dressed for immediate service, and a few extra loaves of bread (and not forgetting our guns), we started away upon a picnic.

It was a glorious week-end, and everybody had a good time. But I had my own objective, apart from pleasure; and I "saw things." X had indisputably gone off the rails. He was hysterically glad to see us, yet I could see the haggard lines of excess, united to strain and worry, upon his youthful face. Six months longer of this sort of life would have killed him.

I strongly suspected that "Picture Gallery" was merely his instrument; and that he alone was responsible for the embezzlements. For there is nothing a Native woman will not do for her "man," once she has subjected herself to his needs, physical and spiritual.

Now it is a dirty thing to get a fellow martyr into trouble—especially is it dirty if the accuser happens to be an employer of labour himself. Yet, surely, there ought to be honour, even among capitalists? I dared not issue any direct warning to X, though I had a few grave words with the woman, and pointed out to her that she stood toward him in the relationship of

guardianship, because of her long familiarity with white men's moods. I could not call her a "vamp"—but I hinted that she had her own reputation to maintain, especially among people of her own colour.

She heard me out in silence.

On returning to Onitsha I invited a call from the local "big noise." All I dared to do was to suggest that a watch should be kept upon "Picture Gallery's" movements, when next she came to market; and then quietly to add that I thought X looked as though a spell in hospital would do him good. He was fagged, and needed a little more social life, in a larger town where he could "make good." Solitude did not fit his peculiar temperament.

There the matter ended, in so far as I was concerned. But I learned afterwards that the postmaster arranged to issue *unstamped* postal-orders on the next occasion, trusting that there would then be some protest made by the recipient. In this way an inquiry would be set on foot.

A long wait ensued; and then "Picture Gallery" came back with a verbal rebuke that "these yere papers no be any use, because you no put them date stamp on them!"

The inevitable demand was then made: "Who says so? To whom do they belong?"

"To me," asserted "Picture Gallery" stoutly.

She was instantly arrested. But she would not budge from her allegiance. The local "big noise" went to his junior; and a careful stock was taken. Transparent was the shortage—nearly a thousand pounds; and the Chief Agent fumed and fretted, while X stood mutely by, with the dull parrot-cry: "I am sorry, but I know nothing at all about it!"

Nor could evidence be found. No case seemed possible—for "Picture Gallery" refused to talk. She continued to let it be supposed that *she* had had the money, and that it was safely stowed away somewhere. Who could say, in face of such resistance on the part of the two principals, whether there had not been a clever conspiracy among the native staff; and that X was culpable of nothing beyond criminal negligence?

X was dismissed. He went cheerfully home; and he never came back. The last I heard of him he had secured a prosperous fruiterer's business; and the initial capital of this venture in the Homeland was reported to have come mysteriously from the death of a relation in Australia.

"Picture Gallery" lay in gaol for a year. When she came out of durance, she removed to another town. She had made no signs of wealth; and nobody believed from thenceforward, that she had been anything beyond the most pliant tool of her lover, while sense of Fair Play prohibited her from blabbing.

I have told this story badly and at some length, mainly because of the last feature—the feature that here was a woman of colour sufficiently self-denying to *suffer shameful indignity for an alien White lover*. Joseph Conrad in *Almayer's Folly*, confirms this weird psychology of a once subject people.

A few weeks ago I happened to be travelling through a town more than a hundred miles away from my tropical home. As I alighted from the car a woman came up to me. Her face expressed one wide grin. I did not recognize her, until she had been speaking to me for full five minutes. She was anxious to know all the news of the river-bank, and I cheerfully answered her questions. Then, like a blinding flash, it came to my remembrance that I was talking once more to "Picture Gallery."

I asked her for the truth of those far-off events. She put the case in a womanly manner. I translate:—

"I loved him," she told me quietly, "I loved him very much. Therefore I did my best for him. After Barley died, I began to understand that there is a type of white man which seeks death out of sheer weakness of character. X was of that type. He ought never to have come to the Coast. He had not the backbone. So, as he said his firm was rich, and as he was engaged to a good girl in England, to whom he wished to get married, I helped him to vacate the Coast. You tell me he is doing well in England, and that he has a family. Ought I then not to be satisfied?"



"But, my dear," I cried in wonderment, "you helped to send away the man you *loved*?"

"Picture Gallery" shrugged. "How many men have I not loved—and lost?" she demanded. "We black women must be content with one at a time."

And then she used a native proverb which approximates to the French, "*Il y a toujours un autre!*"—or (in the English version), "there are always as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it." I sent "Picture Gallery" on her way with a sum adequate to buy her a new head silk; and she showed every one of her magnificent teeth in her grin of appreciation, at our parting.

A story of this kind would terribly shock Basden of the Church Missionary Society, though it would only cause dear old Bishop Shanahan to smile sweetly, and Brother Healy to go off into a lusty roar of amusement. Here we have the two moral viewpoints of London and Rome.

Basden I have travelled with several times; and he is very like in appearance Joseph McCabe; monkish, severe-eyed, self-contained, distrustful of anything flip-pant or *bizarre*. As F.R.G.S. Basden may generally be seen hard at work upon a map, or some other form of geographical evidence of his prowess as a "bush-slogger."

He knows the Ibo hinterland inside out; and his headquarters to this time have been Awka. Once he appeared to get lost, while in company with an Army officer. Both thought they knew the road; and only one of them thought wrong. The one who was wrong was distinctly not George Basden, for he relates the story of what ensued with great enjoyment.

The obstinate Army fellow, believing he knew better than his taciturn companion, decided that he could not do better than start away on his own path. The object for both was Awka; and naturally the reverend gentleman got home tranquilly, and without undue fuss.

He had bathed and changed, and was sitting at tea, when the officer staggered into view—sore of soul (and sole), sun-scorched, and apparently with a temper as raw as the exposed portions of his perspiring epidermis. He had been wandering for four solid hours.

Basden's instinct of hospitality is that of a churchman; and his hand already held that beverage which Cowper tells us "cheers and not inebriates." But there was such a baleful glare in the eyes of the new-arrival that Basden's cup went softly down to the floor. Hot-foot he sped into his bedroom, and emerged a moment later with a half-bottle of Dry Monopole. There was a vigorous plop (each meanwhile maintaining a terrible silence); and then a sparkling stream of champagne went hissing adown the side of a long tumbler.

Still, in a reserved silence, the officer drank. Then he handed back the glass. A slow grin emerged from the clouds, as if by the alchemy of thought-suggestion. In perfect friendliness he cried: "Good old sport!" Then—

"If you had *dared* to offer me a cup of that putrid footwash"—with a gesture toward the teapot—"I'm afraid I should have committed an assault!"

If I am wrong in attributing the army-role of this anecdote to Mytton, I do so only because it is typical of Mytton's humour. He was a gay old bird, in his Onitsha days among us. Quite in the early period of the war, the wife of our Resident (Roberts) organized a Baby Show on the river-bank. We had a happy time, and the Native Court House seemed to flower with human blossoms—black and brown, yellow and nearly white. Mytton was one of the Judges. So was I. So was little Archie Robb of the Niger Co. I have a photo (used in the first volume of my *Coaster* duct) which shows Mytton sitting on Robb's knee, with the placard "First Prize" hung about his neck.

Little Robb is long since "gone hence"—but his knee must have ached on that occasion, as Mytton was no featherweight. At a ball we held soon afterwards, the officer's fantastic dancing (of the elephantine kind) found such vent that other dancers preferred to become spectators.

He had given me a hint to keep at least one "extra" magnum of Heidsieck in reserve for him, albeit he was already sufficiently merry and bright to cause the ladies to lift inquiring eyebrows. I was on the way

from the bar to the vestibule, with the bottle tucked beneath my arm: while pausing to watch Mytton (now the cynosure of all eyes) in his porpoise-like wallowing about the native girls: when Ellis, the then M.O., touched me lightly on the elbow.

"For whom is the champagne?" he asked brusquely.

"Mytton." I answered, just as curtly.

Ellis's arm shot out; and he slipped my burden adroitly away. "It isn't a syphon of stimulant that he needs," came the dry comment. "A bucket of bromide would be nearer the mark!"

Partiality for female companionship had indeed many checks out here. It was not Mytton, but a contemporary of his in our District—Sproston—who was once "with the vine-leaves in his hair" tumultuously chasing a Native maiden down the road. They had met each other in the darkness; and S. wished to pursue the adventure.

The girl suddenly took refuge in a semi-dark house. Our hero dashed impetuously after her, in his eagerness quite oblivious of a low sound of wailing and singing that should certainly have warned him away. Suddenly he found himself in the midst of a Native "wake," with the corpse of a dead man, sitting upright in a chair, and staring him straight in the face.

I should not like ever to feel what that particular administrative officer must have felt, in such a moment of abashed self-revelation!

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

## Was Christ A God?

Is there any evidence that Jesus was a god?

It is an extraordinary thing to ask men to believe that God once walked on the earth like a man. People of weak, credulous minds believe readily almost anything they are told; they are intellectual children; but the average man, using his common sense, realizes that the statement that a person, recognized as a man in all his behaviour, was a god, is something that must be proved incontestably.

Jesus was the son of a carpenter. For thirty years he did nothing to distinguish himself from ordinary men in Nazareth. But a god is a god at all times. Men speak and behave as men; gods behave divinely.

Now Jesus never said he was a god. The theory of the Christian is that Jesus was a god, and that he had come on earth to die for us, and it was essential we should know it. *Yet Jesus never breathed a word of this during the whole of his life.*

Jesus behaved like a man who knew he was like other men.

When someone called him "Good master," he replied, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God." That is clearly the reply of an honest man and not the answer of a god.

The Bible says, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man." (Luke ii. 52.)

Gods do not increase "in wisdom," nor "in favour" with their fellow gods. The Bible phrase is preposterous if Jesus were a god.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, with his brother, declared he was mad. It is clear Mary recognized him as a man and not as a god:

Jesus amongst his own people "could do there no mighty work."

If Jesus could do no mighty work it was because he was a man.

Jesus remarked to the Canaanite woman, "I am not sent but come into the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

That phrase is not merely the remark of a man: it comes from a Jew with a limited outlook. Jesus saw the shortcomings of his race and wished to clarify men's thinking and behaviour and brighten their lot; but he had no idea of what people would ultimately make of his teaching. He not only made the remark just quoted to the Canaanite woman, but he also told his disciples on another occasion, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles."

But the Christians tell us Jesus came on earth to save all men regardless of race or colour. Jesus contradicts them.



The idea that a person of distinction was a god in human form was a common notion in the days of man's intellectual childhood. The Pharaohs were considered gods. The tales of men begotten of gods are Legion.

But Christians do not believe these other tales: they only believe their own. And their tale was hammered out through years of argument. It wasn't from anything that Jesus said they came to their conclusion Jesus was a god. It was because this idea was so common to religions in those days that the Christians could hope for no success if their great head were not a God. And they were men of such limited knowledge that they themselves believed readily.

To-day the intellectual Christian does not accept Jesus as a god. This is from the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, a book compiled by Christians for Christians . . . "in the person of Jesus we have to do with a completely human being, and the divine is to be sought in him only in the form in which it is capable of being found in a man."

That ought to be sufficient to anybody who is not afraid to think. W.H.W.

## Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

### ENTROPY AND CREATION.

SIR,—Basing their calculations on the second law of thermo-dynamics Professors Eddington and Jeans postulate a beginning and an end to the material universe. As far as one can judge the protons and electrons will ultimately cancel each other, leaving a universe at a uniform temperature, in which universe nothing happens. Unless there is another creation to start it off again. In fact Eddington prefers the view that the universe has started and will stop. He cannot see any sense in repeated cycles. Basing their calculations on experiment, I hold they neglect:

(1) The odd proton or electron which does not have a mate, and can start the process anew, apparently it is taken for granted that the protons and electrons in the universe will exactly cancel each other.

Is there any experimental evidence of this?

(2) Seemingly there is not apparent any reference as to what the universe as a whole is doing. Whether it is at rest; in a state of circular motion or otherwise. In other words, Jeans takes it for granted that the material universe taken as a whole has always the same orientation in space.

It is not a question of starting and stopping. I am inclined to think that one odd electron is sufficient to keep the whole process in being. In any case, can any evidence be found, either that the protons and electrons exactly cancel, or that the universe (I refer to that matter of which astronomers have calculated the weight) is not doing something in bulk, of which we are not aware and of which we cannot become aware. What would be the effect of one stray electron which came in contact with their universe which had arrived at thermo-dynamical equilibrium? E.

## Society News.

### WEST LONDON BRANCH.

ON Sunday, January 5, 1930, Mr. Chapman Cohen, the Editor of the *Freethinker*, will delight the London "Saints" with the first lecture at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. The subject for that evening is most appropriate: "What are We Fighting For?"

I am sure there will be no better opportunity of outlining the position of "Secularism" than the present. When our opponents are in complete disruption and dilemma.

These Sunday lectures will be continued for thirteen weeks, and we hope that the public will take this opportunity in attending these gatherings.

"All roads lead to Conway Hall."—B.A.I.E.M.

## 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): 7.30, Lecture—"Jesus the Atheist"—Mr. Botting.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (361 Brixton Road, near Gresham Road): 7.30, Mr. A. Heath—"Luther and Erasmus."

#### 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. F. P. Corrigan.

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Surg. Rear-Admiral C. M. Beadnell—"Animal and Plant Devices, and their Exploitation by Man."

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