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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>Progress and the Paragraph Mind.—The Editor</i>	- 17
<i>The Shadow of Dante.—Mimmermus</i>	- 19
<i>The Golden Age of Florence.—T. F. Palmer</i>	- 20
<i>The Canon's Closing Roar.—Ignolus</i>	- 21
<i>The Thesis and Antithesis of Modern Thought.— Cullwick Perrins</i>	- 22
<i>The Book Shop.—C-de-B.</i>	- 22
<i>Dean Inge, Defender of the Faith.—C. V. Lewis</i>	- 26
<i>Profits from Sins.—C. R. Boyd Freeman</i>	- 27
<i>Freethought in Germany.—Hugo Hertz</i>	- 28
<i>In My Looking Glass.—A Plain Man</i>	- 28
<i>The Alpha-Omega of Evolution.—Charles M. Beadnell</i>	- 29

Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,

Letters to the Editor, etc.

Views and Opinions.

Progress and The Paragraph Mind.

APROPOS of our new book *Opinions*, Dr. Henry Farmer writes as follows:—

It will probably do more good for Freethought than all your other works put together. That is not your fault nor mine—Thank God. Yet I think you will agree that there is barely one in a thousand who can read a book containing a sustained argument. A century ago practically everyone who could read could apprehend what he was reading.

The wretched daily press of the *Mail*, *Express*, and now the *Herald* type have bred "paragraph minds." That is the trouble . . . That is why I say that your clever book will do more good than other works. As the Yankees say: "you get down to brass tacks" in a line or a page. Brass tacks command attention, especially if you go about unshod.

I know what Dr. Farmer's opinion is worth. He is a writer of distinction, and does not express an opinion without consideration. But while reluctantly agreeing with him in the main, I am hopeful that things are not quite so bad as he appears to think—particularly with regard to my own writings. Naturally in a book containing some hundreds of detached "opinions," on all sorts of subjects, one is likely to hit a larger number of people on a reflective spot than in any single work which endeavours to carry out a sustained argument from the first page to the last. But unless some of these pages lead a number of readers to *think* a chapter, and so help to create an appetite for more detailed work, the book will fail to achieve its main purpose. An appetiser as an introduction to a meal is quite a good thing. But he who tries to make an appetiser do duty for a meal is apt to end with a very badly nourished constitution. In any case Dr. Farmer's comment does not touch the regular readers of

the *Freethinker*. If they were possessed of only the paragraph mind they would not be regular readers of this journal.

* * *

Have We Deteriorated?

It is true that a century ago practically everyone who read was prepared to follow a sustained argument on any subject in which he or she happened to be interested. But a century ago education—apart from the well-to-do classes—was mainly a matter of struggle. People read because there was a desire to know. The ability to read was not possessed by all, and the habit of reading was not, therefore, common to all. The character of the demand thus determined the quality of the supply. This was the case with even the daily or weekly newspaper. Writers were dealing with an infinitesimal proportion of the population compared with that covered by the newspaper of to-day, and when men had to club together for the luxury of reading a newspaper regularly, they were likely to be more seriously interested in the quality of the supply.

I do not think, therefore, that proportionally to the population there are fewer readers of serious works, or a smaller proportion of the population ready to follow a sustained argument on a serious subject. The proportion is at least as great—perhaps greater than it was; but the tendency is for them to be swamped by a new type of reader created by the universal ability to read—and other things. Allowing for the increase of population there is not a greater demand for a serious book than there was a century ago, or even two or three centuries ago. Other things equal, a publisher who brought out to-day a book like Malthus' *Principles of Population*, would not print a larger issue than was published originally. And it is certain that works like Paine's *Age of Reason* or the *Rights of Man* would not sell more largely or be more seriously read than they were on the date of their publication. The proportion of good readers remains pretty much what they were, the number of readers has increased enormously.

* * *

Demand and Supply.

The man who wrote and the man who published a century ago had mainly to keep in mind three classes of readers. There were the readers of serious books, the readers of religious works, and the miscellaneous remainder—which included the readers of juvenile productions—more frequently one would imagine these were read to juveniles, rather than read by them, and readers of the cheaper kind of fiction. The growth of popular education, ending in the universal ability to read brought a new public within the ken of both writer and publisher, and it created the popular newspaper and the popular journal. Everybody in the country became a potential purchaser of "literary"

wares, and it was not long before the commercial instincts of a number of people saw in this a new field for exploitation. What was the use of writing for a thousand readers when there were tens of thousands waiting for capture.

It was this state of things that led to the growth of what Dr. Farmer calls the "paragraph mind," the modern press did not create it, it fostered it. It was always here, what happened was that the modern newspaper fostered its growth. In the case of weekly journals we had the starting point with *Tit-Bits*. The discovery was then made that there existed a huge audience, which while incapable of sustained or serious thinking, was ready to devour scrappy items on all sorts of topics. This had its imitators in a number of other journals, marking what some might call a higher development in such self-styled literary papers as *John O'London* or *T.P.'s Weekly*, which by giving—not intelligent criticisms of new books, that would have been too great a tax on the intelligence of the class catered for—but short extracts from the books named, persuaded a number that they were really keeping in touch with modern literature.

* * *

The Paragraph Press.

A further development of this was its application to the world of newspapers. Here the leading place was taken by Lord Northcliffe, a man of very little genuine intellectual capacity, but apparently of great energy, with a commercial acumen that scented out everything likely to lead to financial aggrandisement. He appears to have been the real creator of the modern press in England, and no single man in the country ever did more to degrade the British press than did Lord Northcliffe. Universal education in the sense of the universal ability to read, and the existence of the "paragraph mind"—in other words an intelligence which simply could not stand the sustained attention required to study an old-fashioned newspaper article of, say, a column in length—formed the raw material out of which he manufactured pelf and power.

Once it was made clear that writing down to the lowest order of intelligence was the royal road to huge circulations and a large increase in advertising revenue, Lord Northcliffe found many followers. Nearly every paper was forced along the same path, articles got shorter and shorter and emptier—emptier of matter that could educate the many or interest the few. The news—or rather such as it was thought proper to give to the public—was cooked and served up in a tabloid form, and when it was found that even a lengthy paragraph was too much of a strain upon the intelligence of large numbers of people, all the paragraph contained was printed in staring headlines, so that the reader already knew what he was to be told in the paragraphs themselves. In what is considered to be the more serious and more literary parts of a paper, anyone with a name in any walk of life was paid to give his views on whether wives would be better if they lived apart from their husbands, or ought men who wear whiskers be admitted to Parliament. A highly paid musical artist may be invited to give his opinion on questions of international politics, and the attention of advertisers is called to the fact that more readers of a particular paper has met with sudden death than those connected with other journals. The greater the rubbish, provided it is written in what is called a lively manner, the better the chance of the market. Here is the advice given by a writer of several works (Mr. Michael Joseph) intended to train

men to get a living at journalism. He says:—

The most practical method I know of how to make free-lance journalism pay is to deliberately write what is known in Fleet Street as 'tosh.' By 'tosh' I mean the kind of innocuous twaddle which a very large number of perfectly respectable newspapers and periodicals require for the immense lower-middle class public upon which they depend for their existence.

The worst of it is that the advice for those who merely want to "get on" in journalism is unimpeachable. The success of the vast majority of newspapers in this country is absolutely dependant upon the degree to which they can first create an appetite for "Tosh" and afterwards satisfy it.

* * *

The Descent of Man.

To some extent this type of intelligence reacts upon the rest of the community, and particularly upon the taste developed in the younger generation. If one is brought up on the tabloid diet served up in the ordinary newspaper, the taste for a more nourishing diet is never developed. The consequence of this may be seen in five minutes' conversation with, say, ninety per cent of the men one meets in trains or in some other way equally casual. There is an almost complete absence of reliable information on things that matter, and an almost detailed parrot-like re-echoing of the catchy bits they have read in their particular paper. Adherence to this or that political party makes no difference whatever, so far as the type is concerned. They are all at the mercy of the particular dope that is served out to them.

So far I agree with Dr. Farmer as to the deplorable position in which the majority of modern newspapers keep their readers. I say "keep" rather than reduce, because I think it is at this point that our difference—if it exists—begins. For these people are not made as they are by the press, they are, in the main independent of it. They represent the people who, in an earlier generation would never have struggled for an education because they had no lively desire for it, and when they belonged to the "Upper classes," would never have made any use of it. The proportion of intelligent readers remain, I believe pretty much what it was, but it is hopeless to expect a press that lives wholly upon advertisements, to get which it must have huge circulation, to get which it must write down to the lowest mental level, to pay attention to the better minority, and to try to develop higher mental tastes in the majority. Let me say that minority and majority have no relation to class or rank. Both may be found as freely in Lambeth as in Mayfair, although in the one case you will have the local dialect of Oxford or Cambridge, and in the other the dialect of the New Cut. Both will be at one in speaking a bad English, although the badness will have different sounds in either case. But the elementary schools of Limehouse will provide the same raw material as the "playing grounds" of Eton or the classic halls of Oxford. It is nurture, not nature that is mainly to blame for the realized differences. Ultimately it is a question of environmental, in this case, institutional influences. The large literate public was bound to come, and when it arrived it was inevitable, things being as they are, that it should be exploited by men of the type of our newspaper magnates. They have taken with due thankfulness what the gods have been pleased to give them. But while the majority act, it is not always the majority that leads. And, perhaps, even the "paragraph mind" may gradually be induced by a skilful minority to appreciate higher and better things.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Shadow of Dante.

"Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea."
Wordsworth.

"Genius hovers with his sunshine and music close by
the darkest and deafest eras."—Emerson.

By the general suffrage of the literary world Dante's place has been assigned among the three greatest masters of his art. He shares with Homer and Shakespeare the ultimate supremacy of genius. Yet comparatively few people know intimately the writings of the greatest of all Italian poets. Thousands of books, in many languages on Dante and "The Divine Comedy" have increased to such a point the difficulty of studying his works that, to the bewildered reader, tossed on the perilous waters of contradictory commentary and subjective criticism, nothing is left but to take shelter in the safe haven of conventional admiration.

What wonderful changes have taken place in Europe since Dante's time. Poets have rushed, comet-like, across the literary horizon, lightened the darkness for a moment, then as rapidly disappeared. Their songs, their message, even their names, have been as forgotten as "the snows of yesteryear." Dramatists have provided fun and tragedy for the public of their time. Most of their names are lost to memory, and even their plays have ceased to attract. Time is merciless, and strews the poppy of oblivion over all but the worthiest. Dante is one of the select few. He has had but one serious rival during the six centuries since his death, and that is William Shakespeare, the greatest name in the world's literature.

Of Dante's life little is known. Even before his death he had come to be the subject of many flourishing legends. It is well nigh impossible to make out exactly what he did. So deep is this obscurity, that his stature gains from the uncertainty an unreal proportion like that of a tall man in a mist. Dante Alighieri, "the voice of ten silent centuries," was born in Florence in the thirteenth century. He was of noble birth, and had a passion for knowledge. Fortunately, he knew the book of the world as well as the world of books. A scholar "better than most," he fought as a soldier, did service as a citizen, and became chief magistrate at Florence. While young he met Beatrice Portinari. She made a great figure in his life, and a greater in his immortal poem. He married another, "not happily." In some Guelph-Ghibelline strife he was expelled the city, and ate the bitter bread of banishment. Without a home, he turned to the world of imagination, and wrote *The Divine Comedy*, one of the most remarkable of books and died, not old, at the age of fifty-six.

Dante's masterpiece, *The Divine Comedy*, is of great interest to Freethinkers, for it forms an epitome of the Christianity of the Middle Ages, a very different thing from the invertebrate and decadent substitute which is to-day known, popularly, as the Christian Religion. The poem was written in an age of Faith, and Dante himself was a firm believer. His uncompromising realism brings vividly before us the full extent of the fearsome credulity of those far-off days in which Paganism and Christianity were intermingled. However strange, however grotesque, may be the appearance which Dante undertakes to describe, he never shrinks from describing it. His very similes appear the illustrations of a traveller.

Writing of "Hell," "Purgatory," and "Paradise," he even introduces Virgil as his guide to the Infernal Regions. He compares the precipice which led from one circle to another in Hell to the rock which fell into the river on the south of Trent. The place

where heretics were confined in flaming fire resembled the cemetery of Arles. He puts Francesca da Rimini, whom he had nursed on his knee as a child, among the damned. Count Ugolini is introduced among other unhappy sinners. His own beloved Beatrice, the lode-star of his chequered and stormy life, continuously appears and reappears throughout the poem. Dante was all imagination, but he wrote like Hakluyt.

The power of Dante's genius carries everything before it. Such transcendent originality of conception is alone rivalled by old Homer and our own Shakespeare. For his having adopted the popular superstition in all its extravagances we no more blame Dante than we criticize Homer because he uses the deities of Paganism, or censure Shakespeare for introducing fairies, ghosts, and witches in his plays.

None the less, *The Divine Comedy* is a reliable mirror by which we may view the Christian Religion in the Middle Ages. In spite of Dante's magnificent genius, there is an air of grief and sound of lamentation over all this lurid and unlovely conception of human life. It is worse than the old Paganism, for some of the Pagan deities had their good points. But in medieval Christianity a monster sits in the seat of deity and rules a terror-stricken world. Dante shows us horrors on horror's head. He points to hell after hell, each more abominable than the last, round every species of petty offenders. He pictures in unforgettable language the torments of the unbaptized, the avaricious, the gluttons, and the lascivious. Some are tossed in furious winds, some are lying in filth under a constant hailstorm, others are punished in burning tombs, whilst numbers are tormented in rivers of blood. Except in the writings of the unbalanced Fathers of the Christian Church and theologians, few have ever had such ideas of filth and corruption. The tender human emotions, which Dante undoubtedly possessed, were strangled by this hideous theology. The hideous horrors of the Infernal Regions tinges even the flowers of Paradise and dims the glories of Heaven.

The Christian Superstition, of which Dante sings with such power, is now in the melting pot, but it matters little to the author of *The Divine Comedy*. The daring imagination, the artistry of the great genius of Italian literature can never be stale, for there are few lines of the poem without those superb felicities of speech which tingle the blood and excite the admiration of the reader:—

"Jewels, five words long,
That on the stretched forefinger of all time
Sparkle for ever."

The essence of Dante's greatness lies as much in his superb command of language as in his potent imagination. His reputation has survived the centuries, outlasted empires, kingdoms, and commonwealths. Nations, degenerate, cities become desolate, great soldiers and statesmen fade into mere names, but the supreme glory of a great intellect survives the centuries, and clothes an illustrious name with immortal glory, which grows in lustre through the ages. "King who had reigned six hundred years," Tennyson called him. It was no idle boast. Transcendent genius has made the name of Dante Alighieri ever illustrious, and his greatness is as secure as the everlasting hills.

MIMNERMUS.

War is a crime which involves all other crimes.

Brougham.

Tell your master that if there were as many devils in Worms, as tiles on its roofs, I would enter.

Martin Luther.

The Golden Age of Florence.

IN the days of Elizabeth, Anne, and Victoria, London was a great intellectual metropolis. Paris has at various periods been distinguished by its superb achievements in letters and in art. The Weimar of Goethe and Schiller adorns the annals of German humanism. Vienna is justly celebrated as a home of culture. But, save in ancient Athens, no European city has reached the intellectual eminence of Florence in the times of Da Vinci, Michel Angelo, Machiavelli, and Lorenzo the Magnificent. Renaissance Florence became the great intellectual centre of Italy, and its supremacy was admitted even in Rome itself. It was universally acknowledged that in science, jurisprudence, philosophy, the fine arts and scholarship, proud Florence reigned unrivalled.

The surroundings of this peerless city were, and are supremely beautiful. Reposing in the lovely valley of the Arno, encircled by picturesque hills with the Apennines towering in the distance, and environed by vineyards and olive gardens, Florence is almost unique in the splendour and variety of its scenery.

Its architectural glories are celebrated. The Duomo or Cathedral is a noble edifice. Designed and erected by Brunelleschi, its grand dome inspired the architects who later created the domes of St. Peter's in Rome, and St. Paul's in London.

The famous Church of Santa Croce is the Pantheon of Florence. The building of this fane commenced in 1294 with Arnolfo as its architect. Among its innumerable mausoleums are those of Alfieri and Michel Angelo, while stately monuments commemorate the genius of Dante, Machiavelli, and the persecuted natural philosopher, Galileo Galilei.

The importance of republican Florence, not merely in Italy, but throughout Europe, may be inferred from the fact that the City State was long its leading banking and commercial centre. So opulent were the Florentines that their money-kings provided the proudest and most powerful princes in Europe with loans; while her gold brocade, silk and woollen fabrics, were exported to every land. Again, the commercial houses of Florence were established in most Continental States.

One of the many bequests of Florence to later culture was her pioneer contribution to historical scholarship and science. An illustrious line of critical annalists and historians arose in Florence during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, whose writings are among the masterpieces of letters.

The monuments that attest the former magnificence of Florence may be compared with the *Chronicles of the City* composed by the Villani. As a modern English historian has noted: "While the rest of Europe was ignorant of statistics, and little apt to pierce below the surface of events to the secret springs of conduct, in Florence, a body of scientific historians had gradually been formed, who recognized the necessity of basing their investigations upon a diligent study of public records, State papers, and notes of contemporary observers. The same men prepared themselves for the task of criticism by a profound study of ethical and political philosophy in the works of Aristotle, Plato, Cicero and Tacitus."

The poet Dante and the three Villani were the fourteenth century initiators of this great movement. The *Chronicle* successively composed by the Villani; Giovanni, his brother Matteo, and the latter's son, Filippo has served as a model for many subsequent historians. Indeed, modern historical experts have bestowed the highest praise on the detailed statement

and philosophical insight which illumine these records.

Bruni and Bracciolini became the leading Florentine annalists of the succeeding century. Men of affairs, well versed in the public events of their time, they abandoned Italian, and indited their histories in laboured Latin, which lacks the virility of the vernacular employed by the Villani. And, like too many later historians, Bruni and Bracciolini dwell too exclusively on the doings of courts and camps to the neglect of those social and economic phenomena that so materially mould the lives of the people. Still, their chronicles retain their value as an ornate description of Florentine life.

The golden age of Florentine achievement in the realm of history, however, may be said to date from the years 1494 to 1537. This period embraces many spectacular and tragic events. For it witnessed the fall of the Medici, the brief ascendancy and overthrow of Savonarola, and the restoration of the Medici as rulers of Florence. A Medicean Pontiff, Clement VII intrigued with the Emperor Charles V with the object of reducing rebellious Florence to servitude. In 1529 an Imperial army invaded Tuscany under the command of the Duke of Orange, and in the fateful summer of 1530 Florence fell a victim to Papal and Spanish aggression, despite a courageous and devoted defence of the liberties of the Republic. The career of the far-famed Florence as a proud and independent City State thus terminated, and it has long declined to the status of a capital town in Tuscan Italy.

Yet throughout these turbulent times Florentine letters were adorned with the masterpieces of Machiavelli, Guicciardini, Nardi, Segni, Nerli and others. Among this group of penmen, two stand out as exceptionally eminent, Francesco Guicciardini and Niccolo Machiavelli. The first-named was both statesman and man of letters. As a politician his hands were deeply dyed in the corrupt practices of his period. But duplicity and maladministration appear indissolubly associated with political life. In any case, they have displayed potent powers of persistence, and even now, some suspect that political jobbery and corruption are not completely extinct.

In the days of his retirement, Guicciardini busied himself until his death in 1540, in writing his celebrated work *Storia d'Italia*, a dispassionate and frigidly analytical study of Italian life from 1494 to 1532. Utterly unemotional, no noble deed ever awakens his enthusiasm, and the many crimes recorded pass uncensured. In this and his other historical essays, he surveys mankind and its frailties and follies as "an ironic human procession with laughter of gods in the background." Yet, as a discriminating observer and political thinker he has few superiors in any age.

Despite the load of infamy heaped upon his character by the Church, and above all by the Jesuits, Machiavelli commands a greater prestige than ever as philosopher, patriot, and penman. Why so much clerical animosity was displayed is a problem. Machiavelli does not openly assail religion; indeed, he considers it a useful adjunct to the statesman's profession.

He made his appearance in Florentine affairs in the year of Savonarola's overthrow and death. Those who sup with Satan require a long spoon, and Machiavelli's diplomatic mission to that sinister politician Caesar Borgia doubtless familiarized him with the depths of deceit and dishonour to which ducal villainy may sink. At all events, the diplomatic correspondence arising from this embassy reveal Machiavelli as a consummate writer. Indeed, Signora Cantagalli claims that these epistles remain unsurpassed "in dramatic interest by any series of State papers."

Gravely concerned by the impotence imposed upon Italy through the absence of national defence, with the consequent need to employ mercenary soldiers to safeguard the lives and property of the citizens of the various Republics, and principalities, Machiavelli eloquently advised the recruitment of citizens to form a trained civic army. Above all, he was anxious for the security of Florence, his loved birthplace. Mercenary troops were apt to prove treacherous, and Italy direly needed national forces to protect her from foreign invasion and enslavement. Current events clearly proclaimed the truth of Machiavelli's contention, but his warnings passed unheeded until too late.

After Francis I. had been disastrously defeated at Pavia by Charles V. in 1525, Italy lay helpless in the hand of the victor.

Machiavelli's comedies display high dramatic powers, and his *La Mandragola* still ranks as a masterpiece. Ariosto and he were among the first to represent real life upon the stage.

The "Prince" is Machiavelli's supreme achievement. As a fearlessly outspoken treatise on the art of government it reigns unrivalled. Whether he was occasionally ironical in his advice to princes is still under discussion. Living, as he did, in days when assassination was rife, when the wicked flourished in their wickedness, when abject superstition bemused the common mind, and when clement conduct was regarded as a certain sign of weakness, the policy recommended by Machiavelli appears the only method then available to enable a ruler to maintain a modicum of security and rough justice among men.

T. F. PALMER.

The Canon's Closing Roar.

As a purveyor of supernatural slops the Rev. R. J. Campbell is bad to beat. Long ago when he was a Congregationalist he dispensed them in the *British Weekly*; but his egregious volume *The New Theology* was too much for the stomach of that staunch Scottish Presbyterian, Sir William Robertson Nicoll, the Editor of the *British Weekly*. In fact Sir William was (as the Scotch expressively say) "scunnert." Therefore Mr. Campbell's balmy effusions ceased to appear in the columns of that journal which claims to be a pillar of Nonconformist orthodoxy. But the irrepressible Campbell is a veritable Jack-in-the-box; and cannot be content with one pulpit. He has now found another week-day one in the weekly journal *John Bull*, wherein, under the heading of "Homely Wisdom," he is permitted to spread himself to the extent of half a column every Thursday.

But in the current issue of *Answers* (dated January 3, 1931) the sapient Campbell surpasses himself. Under big captions he expatiates on "The Christmas Spirit." By the way, may one enquire incidentally, and respectfully, what is Mr. Campbell's correct designation? *John Bull* prints him *Chancellor* and *Answers*, *Canon*. For our immediate purpose, we may refer to our subject as *Canon Campbell*. And though we speak of his "roar" he woos us like any sucking dove. It is really, if anything, a simulated roar—an outburst of brotherly love and greeting. "Love, Love, Love," cries our mentor. "No one can be truly unhappy whose heart is filled with unselfish love." "There are some," writes the Canon, "to whom Christmas is specially associated with sad memories, and for these the way of deliverance is to bathe themselves in the wave of love that at Christmas-time is sweeping round the world."

When I encounter the baa-ings of a person like this Canon, I long to see how a real man

like, say Dean Swift or Thomas Carlyle would deal with his gilded and sugary futilities and fatuosities! There is stamina in a man like Dean Inge, and nothing but *feathers* in a lady-like mind like Campbell's. In relating his experiences on a visit to the Armenian community in Jerusalem, his pandering to the national vanity of the British people is transparent; and he inferentially damns the Turks to all intents and purposes. Canon Campbell's historical perception is of the dimmest. It is less than eighty years since this country was fighting for the Turks against Russia. Twenty years later the swing of the pendulum had changed the majority of the British into lovers of Russia and haters of Turkey. We shouted that the Turks were vile assassins, and that they should be cleared bag and baggage out of Europe. The Armenian accounts of Turkish persecutions were swallowed by us with avidity, just as the accounts of Russian atrocities are now swallowed without enquiry by so many people. We have changed again. We now hate Russia, and are, if not friendly with, neutral or indifferent towards Turkey; but the greater part of our hatred of Russia has been fomented by Christians of this and other countries, who have not hesitated to make and spread lies about the Russians. One is almost persuaded logically to conclude that the only people who are ever persecuted are Christians! Persecution, cruelty and oppression do not change their character when their objects do *not* happen to be Christians.

So Mr. Campbell's "wave of love sweeping round the world" has its temperature and volume and effect considerably reduced by the contracting cold douche of *fact*. Mr. Campbell lives in the region of fancy and "the poetry of the soul." It would be too much to expect him to approach the stern necessity of *facts* to which he is such a stranger. As to the grim social and economic problems of the time and their causes he has not one word to say. Yet he is a type of "guide" in whom many people repose confidence. He doles out his bastard emotionalism and soothing syrup of bathos, and the poor credulous souls eat it with their scanty food. "Touching and beautiful" is the description given by the Editor of *Answers*, of Mr. Campbell's "stories." Men and women are crying out for bread and an abundant life, and men like this Canon offers them a stone for the one and poetry for the other! The physical and intellectual slaves look up and are not fed or delivered. But cannot we try to find out by *whom* the substance of life is being retained? Campbell certainly is of no help in this direction. Listen to this rhapsodical rot: "We need not make any difficulty nowadays about accepting literally the beautiful story of the appearance of celestial beings to pious shepherds in the darkness of the first Christmas morning. The strains of the anthem they sang will issue afresh from millions of human voices throughout the world at the coming Christmas festival!" The arrogant and impudent assumption of it all when the writer knows full well that Christian religionists are in a small minority when compared with the rest of the world's population, and that myriads of intelligent well disposed—aye and loving and brotherly people—decline to accept the tenets of a faith that has demonstrated its falsity and impotence; that lies failed to prevent when it has not promoted bloody wars between Christian nations; that has withheld the keys of knowledge from the common people, and allied itself wherever it could with the greatest "temporal" powers to maintain its priests! Humanity has within itself the power to transform and transfigure its life into something lovely and glorious without reference to any extra-natural agency or agencies the foolish and ignorant belief in which has hitherto blinded so many men and women to their own potentialities.

IGNOTUS.

The Thesis and Antithesis of Modern Thought.

THE THESIS.

(a) The external world of matter is dealt with by Physics, Mechanics and Mathematics.

(b) From observations of the external world, laws are discovered and formulated and theories postulated and verified.

(c) Mind is interpreted in terms of the laws.

This gives us the theories of Determinism, Materialism and Behaviourism.

The leaders of thought in this field are Galileo, Descartes, Hobbes, Newton, Haeckel, Spencer, Russell and Wallace.

ANTITHESIS.

This begins with Consciousness as something *apart from matter*. An internal subjective world is assumed, and theories of Psychology, Epistemology and Ethics are postulated as an extreme *reaction against Materialism*. All things are interpreted as sensations and ideas—matter becomes a state of the mind. Its theories are those of Spiritualism, Vitalism and Freewill.

The leaders of thought in this field are Descartes, Leibnitz, Berkeley, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Bergson and W. James. Spinoza stands outside both schools of thought, and interprets matter and mind as *the outside and inside of one living reality*.

Leibnitz assumed a spiritual monad, having "a priori" existence, with a destiny linked with the pre-established harmony of the universe. Mind and body were independent. (See Vitalism.)

SYNTHESIS.

The trend of modern thought is in a direction towards a new theory of Materialism, and a subjective Idealism which is sometimes termed Psychophysical Monism, but the problems of Freewill, Determinism, Morality, Life, Death and Immortality still remain. The controversy is now focussed upon Life as a co-ordinated potentiality, and the Quantum theory of matter is expected to throw a new light upon the structure of the atom. It is amusing to observe how ready the clergy are to make capital out of the discoveries of Science in these days. The Bishop of Birmingham referred to the "spontaneity" discovered in the atom in support of freewill of course, and I was amused to find the Bishop of Winchester making use of the same argument in his book—"What God is like."

Amongst those who accept the theory of vitalism may be mentioned Hans Driesch the biologist, and Professor H. Wildon Carr of London University. The latter throws down the gauntlet thus: "Does the life of an organism depend upon the form or not of the matter—or upon both." This he says is "the dilemma of mechanism." personally I fail to see any Dilemma whatever. That however is by the way. "The mechanist must hold either that the matter is the reality and the form assumed or—that form gives the matter its life," he says. "Vitalism," he assures us, "really rests on the absoluteness of the logical opposition between life and matter." That, however, depends upon whether there is any opposition logical or otherwise between the two. The crux of the matter is that where there is life there is matter. "If matter is real, then life is ideal," he states, and of course, "if life is real, then matter is ideal." And he assures us "there is no escape from this dilemma except by giving up reason and taking to philosophical idealism." I shall hope to revert to this subject again at a later date, but here I may point out that Professor Haldane contends that Vitalism explains nothing that is not explained quite as satisfactorily by Physiology and Biology without assuming any vital entity. The entelechy assumed to exist depends entirely upon the matter of the body of the living organism, and neither mind nor life is found apart from matter, whether matter is real or not. It is so real that without it the Vitalists would have nothing to theorise about. Professor Haldane contends that a solution will only be found in a science based upon the indisputable facts of Physiology, Biology and Psychology. Nothing is knowable of life apart from matter,

and it is absurd for Professor Carr to ask whether life or matter is real.

In Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe*, the following appears: "All changes which have since come over the idea of substance are reduced, on logical analysis, to the supreme thought of Spinoza's; with Goethe *I take it to be the loftiest, profoundest and truest thought of all ages*." According to both Spinoza and Haeckel, substance (that is matter) is the ultimate reality of the universe. With the Editor's permission I will deal with this fully in another article.

CULLWICK PERRINS.

The Book Shop.

MR. PAUL BANKS, the dramatic critic of the *New Age*, has slung at the head of the public a small book packed with common sense. The price is 3s. 6d. net, the publishers are the C. W. Daniel Company, and the title is *Metropolis, or the Destiny of Cities*. The author has mastered his subject, every phrase tells, and he has said what wanted saying for the benefit of those who think that two penny buses running in the place of one on an already crowded road constitute progress, or that smashing up Devonshire House in London, cutting down trees, and generally behaving like hairy apes in a course of destruction are matters that have no reaction. Well, as the wind blows, or according to any Bishop who sets out to prove that this is a Christian country, we must stand back and let Christians take the praise for the fierce activity of workmen in demolishing old buildings by the aid of electric light at night, and try to square it with the vast figure of the unemployed. Mr. Banks goes back to fundamentals; he is not dazzled by the glitter of the sham life that goes on in big cities; he goes back to earth, the source of life. In his journey he extends sympathy and understanding to the labourers who till the soil, and I am pleased to read his good word for *A Poor Man's House*, by the late Stephen Reynolds. London has much to answer for; the imposition of its standard of cheap vulgarity on the country is the cause of much annoyance to the author, and rightly so. There is little or nothing in London for the countryman to copy; any charlatan can easily collect a crowd in the wonderful city by merely placing an eggshell on the ground and gazing at it for a few minutes. A person in a fit is incomprehensible to hundreds of Londoners, whose curiosity prevents a sensible person from undoing the patient's collar. London deserves all the ferocity which Mr. Banks brings to his attack. *Metropolis* is good value, and, although all the book is quotable, I give just one sample from bulk which proves that the author has a remedy. It is in that terrible word "responsibility"—a word to make the knees tremble and the face go white of the majority who have been taught from birth upwards to cast their sorrows on Jesus—advice as useful as trying to study submarine life from a balloon:

For the silk-robed lady who steps from her car to drink tea or coffee in the café, there can be no one in the world black, white or yellow, unworthily to be acknowledged as her relation, and for whom she has not some responsibility. The state of affairs in which metropolitan cities flourish and flow with milk, honey and wine, while countrysides ruin their cultivators, has to be ended; preferably, for culture's sake by an awakening of responsibility among metropolitans. Thus only could *Metropolis* gain a destiny and escape a fate."

After re-reading most of Hardy's works, including his last volume of *Winter Words*, I bought for a shilling *The Victorian Age in Literature*, by G. K. Chesterton. The precise reason for this acquisition was to enable me to obtain correctly a journalist's opinion of a great man. There is such a thing as stooping to pick up nothing, or cutting off one's nose to throw at a dead bird, as they say in the country, but I did not want anyone's opinion of Mr. Chesterton's opinion of Hardy except my own. It is to be understood that I do not wish to defend Hardy; this would be like protesting against a shower of rain or a gloomy November day, as there is not the shadow of a doubt that the fame of Hardy is secure, and he will pass

as a classic on the definition of one by Sainte-Beuve. In the same way that Shakespeare is proof against the facetious claim of Mr. Bernard Shaw, who may, in a psychological manner be telling us a lot about himself, so may Hardy be considered as impregnable to those whom the tragedy of existence frightens and who get over their terror by taking opium—the opium of religion—and, behind the skirts of a priest, jeer at those who can manage without it.

"Hardy became a sort of village Atheist, brooding and blaspheming over the village idiot. It is largely because the Freethinkers, as a school have hardly made up their minds whether they want to be more optimist or more pessimist than Christianity, that their small but sincere movement has failed."

Under the Greenwood Tree, The Well-Beloved, Far from the Madding Crowd, The Laodicean, The Trumpet Major, do not in any way show Hardy in the mood imagined by Mr. Chesterton. Hardy's fault was that he called a spade a spade; he could look at life without the aid of candles. He stood upright, and at a time when religion was fairly well fixed in the saddle he could, by his method—the novel, tell the world a lot of unpalatable truths. There was nothing to prevent him but his sincerity from roaring about pots of ale and the Virgin Mary, and pretending that he was going to heaven in a cloud of words. That a great man dare consistently, by irony, by a forthright bluntness, by rapier thrusts at religious nonsense, stand on his own feet against the ritualistic bewilderment of the human race is something that the religious mind cannot grasp. Mr. Chesterton's opinion of Hardy is correct with one or two exceptions. One is, that Hardy's village is the world, another is that his poor creatures were often victims of a scheme, that mist-gulpers try to assure us, is all for the best, and the last one may be, that Mr. Chesterton can prove, by standing on his head, the failure of Freethought, at a time when pulpits are left for the press and the microphone. In the last sentence of Mr. Chesterton's opinion, it will be seen that his standard is one of quantity, as though for one moment a Freethought movement involving intelligence could ever equal in numbers the following of, say, the Catholic Church, the great gaoler of the intellect, that allowed the earth to revolve round the sun in 1829. As Harry Tate says, those also might say for this favour, who have not been priest-handled when young, or escaped later, "Thanks very much."

Hardy, through his entire works seemed to live up to the adamant doctrine contained in the Greek proverb, "Hope thou not much, but fear thou not at all." He gave no quarter to those who would soothe real pain with impossible and heavenly dreams. In an introductory note to *Winter Words*, which he intended to issue on his birthday, he takes no trouble to refute the charge of pessimism. The crowd of "glad tidings" bringers being what it is, and the state of the world smothered with its effects, Hardy made a wise choice. He does not claim any scheme of philosophy in the volume, but the reader will find many delightful fragments from real life. There is a touch of Landor in the following three verses, written on his eighty-sixth birthday:—

Well, World, you have kept faith with me
Kept faith with me:

Upon the whole you have proved to be
Much as you said you were.

Since as a child I used to lie
Upon the leaze and watch the sky,
Never, I own, expected I

That life would all be fair.

'Twas then you said, and since have said,
Times since have said,

In that mysterious voice you shed
From clouds and hills around:

"Many have loved me desperately,
Many with smooth serenity,
While some have shown contempt of me
Till they dropped underground.

"I do not promise overmuch,
Child, overmuch;
Just neutral-tinted haps and such,"

You said to minds like mine.
Wise warning for your credit's sake!
Which I for one failed not to take,
And hence could stem such strain and ache
As each year might assign.

Wint'ry Words is a book to possess, and read and enjoy, and read again. The Grand Old Man definitely chooses the Greek conception of a philosophical life as against the feather bed one with which the present age is familiar. Hardy's books are valuable; in one catalogue I notice that £75 is asked for a first edition of *The Woodlanders*, but the book-reader as distinct from the book-monger, can get as much real pleasure out of a 3s. 6d. pocket edition of this story as he can from the one mentioned above, which is apparently for sale on a gold basis. Messrs. Macmillan are the publishers of this convenient size—a size becoming very popular with many publishers and the reading public.

Just to refresh the memory again I have turned to Sainte-Beuve, and perhaps it will not be out of place to give in full his definition of *What is a Classic*:—

A true classic, as I should like to hear it defined, is an author who has enriched the human mind, increased its treasure, and caused it to advance a step; who has discovered some moral and not equivocal truth, or revealed some eternal passion in that heart where all seemed known and discovered; who has expressed his thought, observation, or invention, in no matter what form, only provided it be broad and great, refined and sensible, sane and beautiful in itself, who has spoken to all in his own peculiar style, a style that is found to be also that of the whole world, a style without neologism, new and old, easily contemporary with all time."

This summary is a fairly good workable caupon of criticism from a writer who was fortunate in having as his friends some French giants of literature. He made a lot of friends and many enemies; he became a member of the Senate in 1865, and his sympathies and support were with Materialism and Freethought. How far Hardy will fit in with the rigorous demands of the above standard is left to readers who may have more than a passing interest to place him in history.

C-DE-B.

Acid Drops.

Viscount Castleross is not impressed with the funerals of Atheists. He writes in the *Sunday Express*, "Twice have I attended an Atheist funeral. Instead of going away with the thought that death is the end of all things, more and more as the ceremony progressed did I become certain of the immortality of the soul." There is no accounting for such things, fancy is a wayward jade on most occasions, and in connexion with most things. But there is one point in which we are in agreement with Viscount Castleross. He, apparently prefers Christian funerals to Atheist ones. We can assure him that we have the same preference. We would always rather listen to a funeral service over a Christian than one over an Atheist. The funeral of the Christian may not be more impressive, but it is more satisfying. It helps one to realize that all things, even death, have their uses.

When we said we would give prominence to what we consider the thought of the week, we were convinced that the Bishop of London would not be long before he claimed prominence. Speaking at Grosvenor Chapel, South Audley Street, he introduced an unnamed "leading radiologist of the world, who told him, "only six weeks ago":—

We now know that matter is nothing apart from spirit. Spirit is everything. We sit now at the feet of philosophers, men of religion, and ask what is the next step. There it is! Straight from the horse's mouth. We know that matter is nothing but spirit. And the world is now sitting humbly at the feet of the Bishop of London, Billy Sunday, Dean Inge, and Gipsy Smith asking them what is the next step? Professor Eddington and Sir James Jeans have done more than annihilate matter.

They have annihilated themselves. All we want now is the name of the world's greatest radiologist, so that we may give him the honour that is his due.

Mr. Thomas Burke, the famous author seems to be tying himself in some beautiful knots in the *News-Chronicle*. He is advising man to go to the lion for instruction. This is good, as far as it goes, but Mr. Burke must administer a little piety in his article, and this makes it merely silly. Look you, this:—

For the animals seem with every breath to draw power from the deepest springs of life; they seem very much nearer to God than the creature who was created in His image.

This is a good sample of bad reasoning; it is, religiously speaking, also blasphemous. It is as good as telling God that he does not know his business. After two thousand years of priest-handling, man is now told that animals seem nearer to God than he is. Mr. Burke must have been disappointed with somebody or he would not write like this; perhaps he thought he was dealing with angels instead of ordinary men be-fuddled with the "Mysterious Universe," Spiritualism, and the choice garbage of newspapers.

Seven hundred people have perished in a volcano in Java. Perhaps there may be a time when ordinary scientists will be able to foretell these eruptions; they would be in a better position if they set about their job, leaving theology in the waste-paper basket—or to Sir James Jeans. They would at least relieve the Christian God of the responsibility for such disasters.

Bishop Welldon, in a letter to the *Daily Mail* is funny—probably he is not aware of it, but who can read the first sentence of it and treat it seriously. He writes:—

The observance of Sunday in the present day raises a difficult problem.

Who says it does, but the Bishop and his followers? Most people not blind or mentally deficient know that Sunday comes after Saturday; boys don't have to go to school, men don't have to go to work, girls don't have to fight for buses, and women get a chance of showing their husbands round their homes. All these people observe Sunday and there is always the tear-off calendar in case a reminder is needed. We are afraid the Bishop is struggling with his own Sunday complex.

The Countess of Oxford and Asquith, in the *News-Chronicle*, gives its readers her thoughts on Christmas. They do not appear to be any different from those of any woman who is without a title. She looks backwards at pre-historic England, when the country was smothered in piety, and forgets to name any public figure that helped to bring about a change. She writes:—

For us—who were brought up to think that everything we most enjoyed if practised on the Sabbath would bring upon us the curse of a loving God—Christmas Day was a festival to which we looked forward with feverish excitement.

No thanks to any of the ecclesiastical brethren that the good old times of the Sabbath disappeared with Dundreary whiskers.

Announcing a "Self-Denial Week," a Missionary Society reminds the brethren that "All that I have is Thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from Thee"; also, any special gifts are gratefully received by the Society. This pious "confidence trick" has been worked so often on the godly, that one might imagine they would begin to suspect it.

The Chief Scout advises "sticking to a difficult job with a grin." Now, the most difficult job a Freethinker could be given is that of praying. If grinning like a Cheshire cat would be helpful in this connexion, it might be worth a trial. But the spectacle might prove painful to the beholders.

Dean Inge says: "I cannot understand how anyone can believe in a God who is angry if thirteen sit down

to table." If the "Last Supper" legend had not been circulated among Christians, maybe the "thirteen" superstition would never have arisen to trouble our slightly less superstitious clerics of the twentieth century.

A Wesleyan journal hopes that Sir John Reith will not trouble overmuch concerning the suggestion that B.B.C. stands for "Better Be Careful." Our contemporary suggests that he should continue to interpret the letters in the future, as in the past—"Better Be Courageous." The quality of courageousness not having been particularly noticeable in the past, we presume the suggestion has a ironical inflection. The Corporation, it will be remembered, for a long time lacked the courage to allow debatable questions to be discussed. Outside pressure screwed the Corporation's courage to permitting point. But the Corporation is still too timid to allow a forthright analysis of the Christian religion to be put before the citizens of this nation—which boasts of its love of freedom and fair-play. The fear is, we presume, that such knowledge might prove too educational. Our best wish for the New Year to the B.B.C. is that it will commence to interpret the initials of its title as "Better Be Courageous"—and especially where religion and Freethought are concerned. We also hope that Freethinkers will, from time to time, remind the B.B.C. that the majority of listeners do not pay for a licence for the express purpose of encouraging the propagation of the Gospel.

A very big pinch of salt is necessary to take the following announcement seriously: "There is still no real alternative programme to Sunday religious broadcasts, however." The B.B.C. must imagine that it is catering for children in arms if it expects this statement to be accepted.

The Rev. Dimsdale Young says that 1930 has not been a great year from the religious point of view. He also thinks that with all the criticism passed on Christian people—and some of it only too well deserved—they are in many respects "a very fine order." Quite so! to say they were otherwise would invite criticism of the parsons who trained them! Dr. Young says he finds more kindness and consideration in the Churches than there used to be among church-goers of fifty years ago. We suggest as an explanation that instead of keeping themselves aloof from the "worldly" as their fathers did, the modern patrons of the Churches mix more freely with the "worldly" and thus have had their minds broadened and warmed.

After a visit to Brighton, a Wesleyan reporter records the sad impression that the town is a rather difficult place—from the religious point of view—because of the numerous counter-attractions, in the shape of Sunday entertainments. Brighton, we learn, does not make the spiritual progress it should make. Well, if that is the case, the only thing to do is to agitate for the closing of all counter-attractions to the churches, taking special care to express deep concern about the welfare of Sunday workers, the wickedness of "commercialism" on the Sabbath, and the urgent need of the inhabitants for rest—and boredom.

Fresh instances of the beauties and humanities of religion are constantly turning up. Here is the latest instance. A young man and a young woman fell into a quarry at Bolton. The mothers of the two victims of the accident wished them to be buried in the same grave. But the young man was a Roman Catholic and the young woman was a Protestant, so this could not be done. Nothing but religion could have interfered in such circumstances, but nothing on earth seems able to abolish the narrowness and vindictiveness of religious conviction.

The latest message from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is that he hopes to write a book with the help of the ghost of Charles Dickens. If the book, when it arrives, is no higher a level than the other spirit products we have seen, we hope the ghosts will find something else to do. We once read a spirit communication from Plato that would have disgraced James Douglas.

National Secular Society.

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

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

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

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—W. McKee, 10s.

A. MILLAR.—The matter of your letter appears to concern the *Literary Guide* rather than the *Freethinker*.

W. MCKEE.—Many thanks for good wishes.

J. CLAYTON.—Pleased to see so good a report of your discussion with the Rev. J. Bretherton. You put your case with force and moderation—perhaps one might say with the force that comes from moderation.

S. A. READY.—Thanks for New Year's greetings, which we warmly reciprocate. We shall look forward to seeing you and other Liverpool friends at the Dinner on the 17th.

J. SANDFORD.—Very pleased to know that you have taken our advice and begun the New Year well by joining the N.S.S. and remitting a year's subscription to this journal. We should like to see several thousand others follow such an excellent example.

R. G. PIPE.—We sympathise very much with what you say. One can be as intolerant in the interests of reform as in the opposite direction. And intolerance in any form is bad.

Mrs. J. WRIGHT.—We do not expect your town would be a very likely place for a Branch of the N.S.S. But we know by our correspondence that there are Freethinkers in your locality, but probably bigotry is too strong for them to do any open work. The more need for those who are in a position to speak out to do so. The abolition of slavery was accomplished by free men and women.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

This is the last chance we shall have that will be of much use, of calling attention to the Annual Dinner on the 17th. All we now desire to say, is: (1) All those who intend being present should notify the General Secretary not later than by the first post on the fifteenth. All tickets not required must be returned to the General Secretary by the 15th, and all applications for tickets made by that date. It is no light task to fix up a large

dinner party so that everything will run with smoothness, and trouble is caused by putting off application for tickets until the last moment. (3) Those provincial visitors who would like hotel accommodation securing over the week-end should write saying what they require, and efforts will be made to satisfy them. (3) A Vegetarian menu will be provided, but notice must be given beforehand by those who wish for it. (4) The dinner will be served at 7, and there will be a reception at 6.30. (5) The Midland Grand Hotel is at St. Pancras Station and can easily be reached from all parts of London. Only very substantial reasons should keep Freethinkers from being present and meeting friends from all parts of the country.

The President, Mr. Cohen, will be in the chair, and he will be supported by those best known in the Free-thought movement. There will be speeches, with the usual excellent concert, which is under the control of the very capable gentleman who looks after that part of the entertainment. If the evening is not a thoroughly enjoyable one a record will be established in the history of these dinners.

Quite a number of Freethinkers who have been or are in the Army or Navy are under the impression that (1) they cannot demand to affirm, and (2) that they cannot insist on being entered in the records as Freethinker, Atheist, or Agnostic. We have assured them they are wrong on both points, but letters are constantly received proving that they are still in doubt. With regard to the last point we asked Mr. Rosetti to write the War Office. The following is the reply, received December 29, 1930:—

In reply to your letter of December 13, inst., I am directed to inform you that if a recruit for His Majesty's Army declares on enlistment that he is an Atheist, or describes himself by any other term denoting no religious belief, he would be entered as such upon his records.

That should be enough to satisfy anyone. With regard to the question of affirmation, any person has the right to affirm in *any and every case* where an oath is usually required. This covers both Army and Navy. He may claim this affirmation on one or two grounds—on the ground of having no religious belief, on the ground of the oath being contrary to his religious belief. If there is any difficulty we should be glad of the information, with full details.

Our Business Manager asks us to say that a fresh supply of *Freethinker* pencils are to hand. The pencil is a good one, containing an advertisement of the *Freethinker*, and are supplied at six for 1s. or 2s. per dozen, post free. Everyone uses a pencil, more or less, and these are full value for money. Branches should be able to dispose of a quantity.

The Manchester Branch N.S.S. opens its New Year's course of lectures to-day, Sunday, at the Engineer's Hall, 120 Rusholme Road, Manchester, when Mr. R. H. Rosetti will speak at 3.0, on "Do We Need Religion?" and at 6.30 p.m., on "The God Men of Science Believe in."

Mr. B. A. LeMaine visits Plymouth to-day (January 11) and lectures twice for the local Branch, in the Co-operative Hall (Courtenay Street entrance). His subject for the afternoon, at 3.0, will be "The Church and the Bible," and in the evening, at 7.0, "Christ and Krishna." Admission is free, with reserved seats Sixpence, and One Shilling each. It is some time since Mr. LeMaine was last in Plymouth, and we have no doubt those who heard him before will renew the acquaintance to-day.

We print elsewhere in this issue an appeal from Mr. Hugo Hertz on behalf of Free-thought in Germany. We had a visit from Mr. Hertz some time back, and from what he told us, it is evident that while the struggle in Germany grows more intense, Freethinkers are greatly hindered in this fight by the distress prevailing among

the general population. He asked us to make the need of the German Society known to English Freethinkers, particularly to those Freethinkers in this country who are of German origin or descent, and we promised to do so. The address for letters will be found at the foot of Mr. Hertz's article.

Mr. J. Harvey will to-day (January 11) lecture on behalf of the Bradford Branch N.S.S., in the Godwin Street Cafe, at 7.30, on "The Evolution of Race Psychology." We hope the Bradford friends will do their best to be present. We are also asked to remind the local members that their subscriptions are now due.

Dean Inge, Defender of the Faith

I HAVE just been reading with interest Dean Inge's broadcast talk on "Science and Religion," as printed in *The Listener* for December 10; and its perusal has left me with the persuasion that Freethinkers have a quite legitimate grudge against the B.B.C. As an educational body, largely supported by public funds, its function is to *inform* the public by presenting all points of view. If Freethought must be referred to in these talks, why not allow some accredited exponent of these views to present his case, and let listeners form their own opinions? Whereas, in his talk Dean Inge has been permitted to prejudice the minds of the listening and reading public by skilful misrepresentation of Freethought views. The Dean is well known as a learned and eloquent writer and speaker; but as a propagandist he is prejudiced and unfair, and in his talk he makes it quite evident that he either does not understand or is unwilling to represent fairly the Freethought position. His cheap sneer at the *Freethinker* as a paper "which exists partly to deny with vehemence the possibility of free-thinking," shows quite plainly that he has not yet learnt to distinguish between *social* freedom, which is the only sense in which determinists use the words, and *metaphysical* freedom or indeterminacy, which is absurd. One can hardly expect the ordinary citizen to understand these philosophical niceties; and to put it plainly, the Dean's witticism smacks strongly of a deliberate exploitation of popular ignorance on a vital controversial point.

His sneer at "the vulgar Rationalist" shows clearly that the Dean looks at all Freethought propaganda and its exponents through the distorting lenses of priestly bigotry, a phenomenon historically familiar to all Freethinkers. Amazing as it may seem, in these alleged "broad-minded" days, the Dean really appears to be under the delusion that all Rationalists, Atheists, and other outcasts who disagree with his religious views must, *ipso facto*, be strangers to all morality, courtesy, and decent feeling. Otherwise, why "vulgar"? The Pharisee of the gospel narrative said in his heart: "Thank God I am not as other men are!" His modern descendants, exemplified by the Dean of St. Paul's, apparently prefer an even more egotistical formula: "What a pity other men are not like me!"

"To him ("the vulgar Rationalist") life is as common and as free from mystery as a Bank Holiday crowd." (Addition in brackets mine.) Here is the Very Reverend Dean's version of Freethought philosophy! And it is as like the real thing as a horse-chestnut is like a chestnut horse. Does he really think that Atheists represent existence as a cut-and-dried affair of obvious simplicity, the nature and workings of which are quite plain to everybody except priests? The claim to omniscience is part of the priestly tradition; but Freethinkers, modestly disclaiming all supernatural aids, make no such claim

to be in the confidence of the gods. The sense of ultimate mystery underlying existence, the over-worked theme of mystics, medicine-men and priests in all ages, is quite as real to the Atheist as it is to the religious visionary. And if the Dean thinks that the aim of Freethought is to profane, vulgarize and destroy the spiritual and emotional life of mankind, then it is high time he disabused himself of such a fallacy. From this haunting sense of imperfection the Theist takes refuge in the belief in God, "the sanctuary of ignorance," as Spinoza called it; the Atheist, more humble, more intellectually honest, believing that to beg the question solves no problem, prefers to admit his ignorance, trusting to time and fuller knowledge to make plain many things which as yet elude our comprehension.

Leaving these personalities, to deal with the true marrow of the Dean's discourse, the first thing we notice is his misrepresentation of science as being confined entirely to things measurable and ponderable, the "primary qualities" which Galileo introduced into modern philosophy. This misunderstanding of the function of science has been very properly rebuked by Sir Oliver Lodge, who though not a Freethinker is at least a scientist; but it serves the priests' turn because it limits the scope of the scientific method to mere material things, to the engineering shop and the physical laboratory, and denies it all validity in the realms of biology and psychology. There are really no such narrow limits to the scope of true science. The present writer is not qualified, nor has he the space at his disposal, to elaborate this point; we content ourselves with recommending the Dean to read *Materialism Re-stated*, or some other competent work on naturalistic philosophy, whereby he may gain further enlightenment.

The Dean is charmingly casual in dismissing as unimportant the adoption of theology to modern thought. It does not appear to strike him as at all remarkable that Freethinkers should force a divinely-guided Church to abandon beliefs which not so very long ago could only be deemed or doubted at the risk of life and limb. "Progressive revelation," of course! Apparently Divine Wisdom employed unbelievers as its prophets, and at the same time inspired its Church to bully and persecute the aforesaid prophets! Surely there is something ludicrous in such a spectacle! But then priests have never been conspicuous for a sense of humour or even of proportion. There is certainly something wrong, too, with the Dean's conception of Evolution, which assuredly means something much more than a mere "mechanical unpacking of what was there all the time." The theory of Emergence is much more important than the Dean appears to think; it is implicit in all the operations of science, and lies at the root of modern scientific materialism.

There is no space here for a detailed analysis of Dean Inge's lecture, almost every sentence of which calls for criticism. Especially provoking and unfair is the Dean's assertion that heretical scientists are dishonest in accepting Christian ethics while rejecting Christian dogma. As if morality were a Christian monopoly. Is it possible that the Dean believes morality to be inseparable from religious belief in a civilized country? Here is a startling survival of the Ages of Faith and Fear! One would reasonably expect a Modernist to show a little more tolerance and breadth of mind. Ethical standards among civilized people are products of human experience, and are fundamentally identical in all parts of the world. The so-called "Christian" virtues of love, charity, tolerance, are common to all great ethical religions, in theory at least, and, by the way, are not at all conspicuous in historical Christianity, as the records of religious wars and persecutions show. Atheists do

not dream of attacking or destroying those broad fundamentals of ethical teaching which both experience and reason show to be essential for the welfare of society. They simply strip these moral standards of their traditional sanctions, to re-erect them upon what Haeckel called "the solid ground of social instinct." The Very Reverend Dean, who shows neither reverence nor toleration for other people's rights to force opinion, really should not try to persuade the public that all unbelievers, as such, are degenerates and moral anarchists.

To crown all, the Dean finally surrenders his whole case for the *truth* of religion by confessing that the real proof of religion is experimental! Exactly! The very same proof can be, has been, and is adduced in support of every system of belief the world has ever seen! All religions "work" for those who believe in them, otherwise the believers would not believe. According to this experimental "proof" then, all religions must be "true." And is this what Christianity has become after 1900 years of "logical" vindication enforced by the pressure of secular power? Shades of St. Thomas Aquinas! Where now are the justifications of the *literal truth* of Christianity "on purely intellectual grounds"? Ichabod! Ichabod! The glory of Israel hath departed, and Christianity, the religion of "reason," has degenerated into a sort of camouflaged pragmatism—the last ditch of irrationalism!

C. V. LEWIS.

Profits from Sins.

(Continued from page 5.)

In order to make more business the Shop will invent "sins." For example, it will "tell the tale" to the effect that eating roast beef on a Friday is a sin; but if a chattel eats roast beef on a Friday and pays the fine it is alright. Quite alright. Oh, it is a beautiful business—for profits.

The Shop has not a fixed tariff. Its prices vary according to the time and place, the softness of the dupes, their capacity for paying, and the skill of the branch manager. But though perhaps most of the business is left to the discretion of the branch managers—meaning that these latter squeeze what they can out of the dupes according to the circumstances—yet to an extent far greater than is commonly realized the Shop *has* issued price lists, and has often had special bargain sales with all prices clearly marked. Of these we hope to give more particulars in later articles.

THE TAX-BOOK OF THE APOSTOLIC CHANCERY.

This is a list of sins, with the charges for absolution, dispensation or licence in regard to them. The origin of the book is ascribed to the Pope John XXII. Seventeen pre-Reformation editions have been traced and ten later ones. Ultimately Holy Shop tried to wriggle out of responsibility for it by putting it on the Index of Prohibited Books, and saying that Protestants had written it!—a sample of the crude sort of get-out that imposes on Holy Shop's own dupes, nobody else, of course, being taken in. If Holy Shop hadn't come up against anti-Catholic public opinion it would never have bothered about the book. A rector of the University of Paris thus referred to one of the editions, "There is to be seen in Paris, a printed book which is sold in public, both now and for a long time past, called *The Taxes of the Apostolic Chancery*, in which more enormities and crimes may be learnt than in all the books of the Summists. Of these crimes some may be committed on buying the

permission but of all, absolution may be bought after they have been committed. The work contains absolutions, licences, inpenities for adulterers, fornicators, perjurers, simonists, forgers, ravishers, usurers, murderers, poisoners, sodomites, etc.

Here are some of the items (put into English money):—

ABSOLUTIONS.

	s.	d.
For Perjury	9	0
Murder (ordinary)	7	6
Murder (of father, mother or wife ...	10	6
For laying violent hands on a clergyman if without effusion of blood	10	6
Lying with a woman in the Church	9	0
Keeping a Concubine	10	6
Defiling a Virgin	9	6
Incest	7	6

LICENCES.

For a man to change his Vow ...	15	0
To Eat Flesh in Lent	10	6
To get into a Nunnery alone ...	18	0

Some rather interesting comparisons in above items show what the Shop's ideas of "sinning" are. You could commit an ordinary murder for 7s. 6d., but if you landed a priest on the jaw (without effusion of blood) it would cost 10s. 6d. What would happen if you burst his nose? I do not know. Lying with a woman in the Church cost eighteen pence more than ordinary murder. But why "in Church"? In *Priestcraft* I quoted Mr. McCabe about a case he came across in Madeira, where some monks allowed amorous couples a room in the monastery and gave them absolution in the morning. (Terms cash—see collecting plate). So why not a pew for a cabinet particulaire? And look at that item—"to go alone into a Nunnery 18s." That sounds cheap doesn't it?—it depends though—*e.g.*, what was the time limit? Or perhaps they took your 18s. and then indulged in 7s. 6d. worth of murder and so saved the nuns virtue at a profit of half-a-guinea? But no, they would be further-seeing than that—would make you welcome and tell you to come again, as before 18s. (Terms cash). A queer concern in Holy Shop. There is much humour (of the unconscious variety) about it.

Book-keeping of this Tax-book kind was a development from an earlier system of penances, which the earlier Christians had evolved before Holy Shop turned religion into a business (Terms Cash). The original motive was a moral one. If a member of the Church committed a gross offence he was excluded and called on to publicly show signs of repentance before re-admission. To show his sincerity he was to do penance by way of fasting, etc. Catholics (Roman, Greek—or Anglo) have an itch for systematizing this sort of thing, or, to put it another way, officials in the Catholic churches have a mania for red tape—it gives *them* more importance. So they issued lists of penances. Here is a selection:—

For murder by a layman, 7 years penance, two on bread and water.

For adultery by a clerk (result, one child) 7 years penance.

For adultery by a clerk (result, nil) 3 years on bread and water.

For adultery by a layman; first offence, 3 years abstinence from all food of a very nourishing nature, separation from his wife and recompense to the husband. Second offence, one year.

For fornication with a number of persons, 50 weeks fasting.

For a woman marrying a third time, 8 weeks fasting.

These penances were the brain waves of those ridiculous early saints and ascetics of whom I have given some account in *Priestcraft*. Note how much attention these celibates gave to sexual sins. The way in which they made the punishment for adultery fit the crime is rather comic. What would the forlorn wife think about it? Sometimes alternative penances were allowed—*e.g.*, one Penitential (*i.e.*, book of penances) said "if any one is unable to fast a whole day on bread and water he may instead sing 50 Psalms in the Church, on his knees"—how many psalms would go to one housemaid's knee?

C. R. BOYD FREEMAN.

(To be concluded.)

Freethought in Germany.

FREETHOUGHT is essentially International. It knows no barrier of race, nation, or colour. For that reason I feel that readers of the *Freethinker* will be interested in knowing something of the position and struggles of their Freethinking brethren in Germany. The Freethought Societies of Germany are working to spread the philosophy based upon the teachings of Spinoza, Comte, Darwin, Spencer, and Freud. Here, as in other countries, the great task before us is the re-arrangement of the mental outlook of the people, especially among the rural population, where the old religious ideas and superstitions are firmly fixed. There is therefore much hard work ahead before we can hope to be within measurable distance of winning a natural basis for morality, and the rationalizing of social customs, institutions, holidays, etc.

The Freethought Societies of Germany were the pioneers of the first German revolution of 1848. Their formation dates from 1844, and their early history is very interesting. Ex-priests of the Roman Catholic, and Protestant churches were often associated with the committees in those early times.

Unfortunately for the happiness of our people the revolution of 1848 failed, the weakness of the people added strength to the monarchist cause, and although isolated stands were made, the military forces eventually broke all resistance. Since that time Germany was governed by conservative powers until the revolution of 1918. It will be readily understood that with these reactionary governments our organizations have suffered very much. Many were suppressed by force, others were obliged to cease work on account of lack of funds, but fortunately the spirit could not be killed, and a number of the old societies have maintained their existence.

After the revolution of 1918 the new constitution of the republic gave us the possibility of more effective work. The National Assembly at Weimar was forced to make concessions to modern thought, and to realize the demands of the ideas of the first Assembly in 1848. But to our great regret our progress was stopped through the monetary inflation in which our society as well as the greatest part of our people lost all their capital. In spite of these difficulties we continue our efforts.

Then reactionary forces arose again through the settlement of the Concordat between Prussia and the Holy See, and the acknowledgment of the Pope by the Italian Government, and lately, by the result of the recent elections in Germany. The Catholic Party is becoming more and more the ruling power in Germany on account of its decisive position in parliament.

Under these circumstances we appeal to you for financial help to carry on our work. Immediately after the inflation the Catholic Church took up large loans. Many gifts of money were made by believers, and the Catholic Church was able, not only to maintain its power, but also to increase it. The Pope sent money to Germany, and many establishments of monks and nuns have been founded with the help of foreign settlements. We therefore ask that Freethinkers support each other, especially where the need is great as in Germany to-day. In helping us to carry on the work of Freethought in Germany you will be helping the Cause of International Free-

thought. If the German movement is broken or forced back, it will give encouragement to the enemy in other countries, including England, where the Roman Catholic Church is gradually making headway.

Finally the struggle for accomplishment of a modern view of life will be ended on the Continent, because, there stands the residence of the Pope and his forces. We are convinced you will not ignore our appeal for financial help. The greater our funds, the more work can be accomplished. We regret the necessity for this appeal, but the urgent necessity is our justification.

HUGO HERTZ.

Volksbund Fuer Geistesfreiheit,
36 Bluchersshafe, Hamburg, Germany.

In My Looking Glass.

I USED to wonder as to the reason or force which prompts men to take up positions as missionaries in far-off parts of the world, but now I have reduced my wonder to two alternatives, and it occurs to me that these may be of interest to other folks as well.

A meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society was held in this district, and the speeches, as reported, can be made the basis of useful thought. It ought to be pointed out at the very beginning that the reporter concerned had his own sense of humour, for he started off with "At a crowded meeting, consisting mainly of women," and then proceeded to detail the words of a skirted male—a Bishop of Western China. I was not interested so much in that personage, although he did say that eighty million copies of the Bible had been distributed in China during twenty-five years. Perhaps an even greater number would have been disposed of had they all been printed on tissue paper.

It was in the speaker from Africa that I found most food for reflection. This gentleman was all sorts of things—L.R.I.B.A., F.R.G.S., etc.—and he told of the influence of the scriptures in the Dark Continent. He expressed the opinion that he would not like to live in Africa for five minutes if the Bible were taken away from it, but gave no reason for that statement. He did say, however, that he had seen natives in queues for three hours waiting to buy their copies. There was no mention of any lady member of the audience asking as to what had become of the free copies for which so many collections are made in this country. Perhaps they are like the Y.M.C.A. "sags" during the war!

But to proceed. This gentleman from Africa said that "It was from Africa thousands of years ago that missionaries went to carry Christianity to the wild heath men of Wessex and elsewhere 'in the land of the Angles.'" I like that "thousands of years," don't you? He then continued with "It is up to us to give back to Africa in some measure the message we once received from her."

I have found one of my two alternatives, and that one is—retaliation. The missionaries have realized that Christianity has made such an awful mess of their own countries that they are determined to carry it back to the country of its origin in an attempt to make the originators suffer in like manner. Of course, the African traveller did not put it that way. He "rejoiced to think of the comfort and spiritual help to multitudes." He was "glad to be able to speak of souls saved," which brings me to my second alternative—perhaps the truer of the two.

To give that, perhaps it will be better to quote a real thinker after so much other quotation, and I feel that I cannot do better than to turn to Sir E. B. Tyler, who said "The theory of the soul is one principal part of a system of religious philosophy, which unites, in an unbroken line of mental connexion, the savage fetish worshipper and the civilized Christian."¹

Now, which is it? Retaliation or "mental connexion"? Do missionaries enter upon their labours in order to "get their own back," or because their minds are more on a level with the savage of Central Africa and his fetish-

¹ *Primitive Culture*, p. 501.

ism? What a tribute to our vaunted civilization and cultural progress! And there are still audiences (even "consisting mainly of women") who are willing to listen and be gulled in the furtherance of these schemes of myth and chicanery. "Yet if it is our mood to bewail the slowness with which knowledge penetrates the mass of mankind, there stand dismal proofs before us here."² Still, even the missionary service has, at times, to come into line with the rest of mankind, for at the end of that meeting "We are £100 down this year," remarked the Chairman when he urged all to do better during the coming year.

A PLAIN MAN.

The Alpha-Omega of Evolution.

"A" STANDS for the ANIMALS active and free;
They arose long ago in an archæan sea,
When, wearied with salines all day as its diet,
A Protist once ate up its mate on the quiet.

"B" claims Luther BURBANK, the wizard of fruits.
From thousands of seedlings he'd take one that suits.
By graftings and crossings of such select few
He's evolved stoneless plums—huge berried fruits too.

"C," CHIMPANZEE stands for, a versatile ape
Who is nearest to man in brain and skull shape,
Boasts twenty-six ribs and a well-curved spine,
Is prone to catch measles, and counts up to nine.

"D" gives us Charles DARWIN, the greatest of men.
Of worms, fruits and orchids, facts flowed from his pen.
From gelatinous speck to man, oak or horse,
He has shown that all come from one common source.

"E"'s for EVOLUTION, now proved beyond doubt;
Just see its opponents in absolute rout.
It teaches that all things, from Shakespeare to star
Are ever transmuting, to make or to mar.

What word could be fitter than FITTEST for "F"?
To cry of the FITTEST our rulers are deaf.
SURVIVAL for brutes is by talon and tooth.
For Man it depends on love, justice and truth.

"G," gives us GORILLA and also GIBBON
Most man-like primates when all's said and done.
With leaves one will staunch a flesh-wound when it
bleeds.
And Gibbon on two legs when walking proceeds.

Letter "H" gives us three bold biologists.
Who on Darwin's behalf stepped into the lists.
'Twas HUXLEY and HOOKER who Wilberforce felled.
Whilst HAECKEL at Würzburg 'gainst Virchow rebelled.

For "I" we will take the old ICHTHYOSAUR.
Huge lizard who roved in the oceans of yore.
Some, eggs laid; some, young had; some, three eyes
possessed.
All terrible pirates, to fishes a pest.

"J" stands for JAVA where the Pithecanthrope
Was found by Dubois on the Bengawan slope,
A thigh-bone, three teeth and the vault of the skull
Proclaim it an ape-man to all but the dull.

"K" calls up that genius, Sir KEITH, F.R.S.
From fragments of cranium he'll make a true guess
Of its "culture" and age, and even its sex.
A feat which most scholars would sorely perplex.

"L," is for LUNG-FISH, now a very small band.
They show us how vertebrates came on dry land.
For while under water their breathing's by gills,
When dry, the swim-bladder this function fulfils.

"M" brings us to MENDEL the Abbot of Brünn
Whose work in plant-breeding has proved such a boon.
He found, of one hundred cross-matings he grew
That fifty were hybrids and fifty bred true.

"N" for NEBULA stands, colossal in size.
It shrinks to a sun which gets colder—and dies.
But all the while atoms more unions attain
Till matter-disruption brings fire-mist again.

"O" stands for the ORANG with coat a dull red.
Who dwells in the trees where it makes its own bed.
His brain and twelve rib-bones are like those of Man.
The Dyaks all call him the MIAS PAPPAN.

"P" the PLANTS represents, fixed, passive and green,
Save in deep-sea abyss they're everywhere seen.
They reduce C.O.₂ with aid of sunlight;
And deck our earth's surface with tints gay and bright.

"Q" stands for QUAGGA with stripings ornate;
The last one was seen Eighteen Seventy Eight.
With Tiapang, Horse, Ass and Zebra it's come
From Eocene Dawn-Horse, a four-toed Tom Thumb.

"R" stands for REVERSIONS, most troublesome things
That throw in the discard what long culture brings.
Thus, gill-clefts or tail may remain in the child;
And choice flowers and fruits "throw back" to the wild.

Herbert SPENCER is "S," the great SYNTHESIST.
Of all his philosophy, this is the gist:
"To integrate matter by EVOLUTION
You first must disperse it by DEVOLUTION."

"T" stands for TRILOBITE, offshoot of the Worms.
With Cephalopods they were not on good terms.
So curled themselves up as do woodlice to-day
And thus kept those molluscan monsters at bay.

"U" stands for the UNIVERSE—"All that exists."
In EXTENSION and TIME it ever persists.
Though some have tried hard to give it a limit
Because of their agoraphobic spirit.

VARIATION'S for "V" prime PUSH to all life.
Without it stagnation—no progress, no strife.
With HEREDITY only, where should we be?
A slime homogeneous dispersed through the sea.

Both WALLACE and WEISMANN for "W" we've placed.
The former, like Darwin, Man's ascent had traced.
But 'tween Ape and Man he fixed a great chasm.
Weismann linked up a long chain of germ-plasm.

"X" stands for XENARTHRA with bone-joints so queer.
Ant-eaters, Sloths, Glyptodonts, you will find here.
Mylodon's long hair has been found in a cave,
Although this huge Sloth had no "permanent wave."

"Y"'s for YAPOK, an Opossum aquatic.
It's hind feet are webbed and habits erratic.
Unlike its near forbears, it does not climb trees,
But dives into water the fish-tribe to seize.

With "Z" for a ZOOID our rhyming is done.
This MULTUM IN PARVO of evolution
Is here independent and swims about free,
And there joined with others as cell-colony.

CHARLES M. BEADNELL.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—With reference to Alan Tyndal's article "The Wellsian God," in your issue of December 28, perhaps the following from *The Open Conspiracy*, published 1928, may be of interest. In chapter 3, "need for a restatement of religion," Mr. Wells says:—

Great ingenuity has been shown by modern writers and thinkers in the adaptation of venerated religious expressions to new ideas. *Peccavi*. The word "God" is in most minds so associated with the concept of religion that it is abandoned only with the greatest reluctance. The word remains though the idea is continually attenuated. He is pushed farther and farther from actuality, and His definition becomes increasingly a bundle of negations, until at last, in His role of the Absolute, He becomes an entirely negative expression.

I call your attention particularly to the *Peccavi*, Mr. Wells does not mention his "Invisible King" at all in this book.

A. W. DAVIS.

² *Primitive Culture*, p. 334.

BIRTH CONTROL AND ABORTION.

SIR,—Your correspondent Medicus asks that I should show that "abortion is wholly a surgical and not partly a moral problem," and he asserts that "the whole of morality rests on feeling (sentiment)." My contention, as a Freethinker, is that abortion is right if it promotes social welfare, and wrong if it does not. The abortion of a diseased or malformed embryo is a socially righteous act, and individual fancies or feelings have nothing to do with this question of basic social ethics.

Your correspondent also asks "Why only *new-born* persons should be destroyed. The "feeling" upon which he bases morality led European nations to destroy many millions of innocent healthy adult males in the Great War. Every day Christian nations are hanging or slaying guilty persons whose lives had far better have been prevented or aborted. He really must not foist upon myself the invention of adult-slaughter. As he has raised this more or less irrelevant question, I may, however, say at once that I believe Death Control, like Birth Control, to be founded, not on "feeling," but on individual and social welfare. There is a moral obligation on society to prevent the birth of the unfit, and an equally strong moral obligation upon society to provide or permit an honourable exit for those to whom life has become an intolerable burden; and a suitable removal of those who have become a danger to society.

Admittedly every change in social customs can be made only in accordance with public opinion; but that is precisely why public opinion should be educated—led out of the morasses of servile feeling and up to the heights of Freethinking.

ETTIE A. HORNIBROOK.

TEETOTALISM AND THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Reformers have a tendency to be super-sensitive where their particular "ism" is concerned. Thus, "W.A." thinks that the *Freethinker* is unfair to Temperance Reform and the temperance reformer. As a reader since 1912, I have not noticed any unfairness.

The *Freethinker*, however, has criticized the false claim of the temperance reformer to have achieved by his propaganda alone, certain social improvements which can be accounted for largely by other influences. It has pointed out the psychologically harmful effect of intemperate propaganda which tends to attach a glamour to drink, thus making it attractive to a certain type of mentality. It has laughed at the pious reformer's attempts to brand the drinking of alcoholic beverages as "sinful" or "wicked." It has "jeered" at that kind of temperance propaganda and effort which obviously have an origin in the Puritan dislike of anything that tends to make people feel happy. It has ridiculed the pious total abstainer's pose of being morally superior because he abstains; and it has smiled at the total abstainer's notion that total abstinence is temperance. It has also criticized the temperance reformer's efforts at interfering with other people's freedom to drink what they wish to drink.

All this, I maintain, is fair criticism. The *Freethinker* has never praised intemperance, nor derided the principle of real temperance, namely, the moderate use of alcoholic beverages. Neither has it attacked the principle of total abstinence, or even advocated or advised the use of alcohol. All that it has said in regard to temperance reform and reformers has a legitimate place in a Freethought journal, and will probably have a purificatory effect in the course of time.

D.P.S.

CONSTRUCTIVE FREETHOUGHT.

SIR,—Your remarks regarding my article are most illuminating. They savour of Megalomania in its most concentrated form. Invariably, a Freethinker knows—no one else does. Further, the psychological insight necessary to comprehend a psychological article seems entirely lacking on your part. Unfortunately, Megalomania is apt to blur one's mental vision.

I must thank you. So often an intemperate criticism focusses the attention when an article is not worth reading.

ESTELLE COLE.

[We venture to congratulate Dr. Cole on the admirable way in which she succeeds in saying nothing by way of an alleged reply.—Ed., *Freethinker*.]

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National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD JANUARY 2, 1931.

THE President, Mr. Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Quinton, Gorniot, Moss, Clifton, Silvester, Cerrigan, LeMaine, A. C. Rosetti, Ebury, Mrs. Quinton, Junr., Mrs. Venton, and the Secretary.

Several apologies for absence were read.

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

New members were admitted to the Glasgow, Bradford, Liverpool Branches, the Parent Society, and Perth. Permission to form a Branch of the Society at Perth was granted. Correspondence was dealt with from the War Office, re Freethinkers in H.M. Forces, Bradford, Liverpool, Burnley, Horsham, Glasgow and Belgium.

The President gave an outline of the Montreal Blasphemy case, and the Executive endorsed the promise given for financial help towards an appeal.

Details of the Annual Dinner were discussed, and a proposal for a Social in March carried. It was agreed the next meeting be held on January 30.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.

THE Annual General Meeting of the West London Branch was held at the small Conway Hall last Sunday, Mr. W. P. Campbell-Everden presiding. There was a good attendance of members. The annual report showed that the Branch had carried on a very vigorous propaganda during the past year, in Hyde Park whenever weather permitted, and in the Conway Hall during the winter months. The report and balance sheet having been unanimously adopted, Mr. W. P. Campbell-Everden was re-elected President of the Branch, and Mr. B. A. Le

Maine Organizing Secretary. Miss Edith Lusher was appointed Assistant Secretary. The business proceedings disposed of, members spent a very pleasant social evening, in which several friends from the South Place Ethical Society and other visitors joined.—A.D.M.

Obituary.

EX-SERGT EDWIN MOSS.

ON Friday, December 26, 1930 (Boxing Day) ex-Sergt. Edwin Moss, late of the Northamptonshire Regiment, died in the Greenwich and Deptford Hospital after a long illness, following an accident by which he fractured his leg. Sergt. Moss was an old soldier. He fought in the Zulu War in 1879, and was on the battlefield when the Prince Imperial was killed by an Assagai aimed by a Zulu soldier. Sergt. Moss served twelve years' Foreign Service. When he returned to civil life he became a Freethinker, and heard the famous Charles Bradlaugh, Chas. Watts, G. W. Foote, and Chapman Cohen many times, and greatly appreciated their work for human emancipation from the tyranny of priest and parson. He was privately buried on Thursday, January 1, 1931, at Brockley Cemetery—aged seventy-eight.

His younger brother, Mr. Arthur B. Moss, delivered a Secular Service over the grave.—A.B.M.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrolds Road, North End Road, opposite Walham Green Church) : Every Saturday at 7.30.—Various speakers.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : 12.0, Mr. A. D. McLaren; 3.30, Messrs. C. E. Wood and C. Tuson; Every Wednesday, at 7.30, Messrs. C. E. Wood and C. Tuson; every Friday at 7.30, Messrs. A. D. McLaren and B. A. Le Maine. Current *Freethinkers* can be obtained opposite the Park Gates, on the corner of Edgware Road, during and after the meetings.

INDOOR.

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8, near Marlborough Road Station) : 11.15, Mr. Alexander F. Dawn—"J. C. Powy's 'In Defence of Sensuality.'"

HIGHGATE DEBATING SOCIETY (The Winchester Hotel, Archway Road, Highgate, N.) : Wednesday, January 14, at 7.45, Mr. H. Everett—"Law Reform."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 11.0, Mr. Ernest Thurtle, M.P.—"The Problems of Compromise."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road) : 7.0, A. Linecar—"Words, Idle Words."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Public Hall, Clapham Road) : 7.15, Mr. F. V. Fisher—"The Modern Aspect of Christianity."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.7, facing The Brecknock) : 7.30, Debate—"Is Progress a Delusion?" *Affir.*: Mr. L. Ebury; *Neg.*: C. E. Ratcliffe.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 7.30, Mr. Hesketh Pearson—"Dr. Darwin's Society and Dr. Johnson's Club."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Cafe, Godwin Street) : 7.30, Mr. James Harvey—"The Evolution of Race Psychology." All members are asked to attend.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley) : 2.30, Annual Meeting; at 2.45, Lecture—"The Quintessence of Shaw." Speaker, Mr. T. L. Peers, of Bury. Questions and Discussion. All welcome.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.—City (Albion Street) Hall, 6.30, a Lecture by Mr. Paul.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, 41 Islington, Liverpool—entrance Christian Street) : Mr. Handel Lancaster (Liverpool)—"Charles Bradlaugh." Current *Freethinkers* will be on sale.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, 120 Rushholme Road, Manchester) : 3.0, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, General Secretary N.S.S.) "Do We Need Religion?" 6.30 p.m., "The God Men of Science Believe in."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Courtenay Street entrance) : 3.0, Mr. B. A. LeMaine (London) "The Church and the Bible," at 7.0 p.m., "Christ and Krishna." Admission free. Reserved seats, Sixpence and One Shilling.

PAISLEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Baker's Hall, Forbes Place) : 7.0, Mr. D. Weir—"Science or Religion." A Branch Meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 14, at 7.30, in the same hall.

OUTDOOR.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Bigg Market) : 7.30, Mr. J. T. Brighton. Literature will be on sale.

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