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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>Politics and Religion.—The Editor</i> - - -	49
<i>The Real Burns.—Mimnermus</i> - - -	51
<i>Cusanus, Copernicus, and Bruno.—T. F. Palmer</i> - -	52
<i>Professor Jeans and The Universe.—Mephisto</i> - -	53
<i>Stevenson on Burns.—Andrew Millar</i> - - -	54
<i>The N.S.S. Annual Dinner.—H. Cutner</i> - - -	58
<i>Murderers I Have Met.—John McCrashan</i> - - -	59
<i>Time.—O. M. Warner</i> - - -	60
<i>Profits from Sins.—C. R. Boyd Freeman</i> - - -	61

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

Views and Opinions.

Politics and Religion.

Quite a pretty little discussion began last week in the columns of the *News-Chronicle*. The participants were Mr. George Lansbury and Lord Brentford, better, and somehow one feels more appropriately known, as "Jix." I am omitting the commentators in the shape of letter writers who always appear in clouds on such occasions. The discussion began with a letter from Mr. Lansbury, always warm-hearted and well-intentioned, and whose mind has been seriously disturbed by the state of things in South Wales. He wrote demanding that Christianity be applied to the industrial problem, the said Christianity being as usual unspecified. It is true he stated the not very original, and certainly not very enlightening, proposition that until we are ready to accept Christ's teaching "Love one another," and "Woe unto you by whose mouth offence cometh," there is little hope. He also demanded that what he understands by religion shall be introduced into politics, and that the Archbishops, Bishops, Cardinals, and Free Church ministers shall get to work telling the people in plain language where the wealth of the world comes from. They might reply in defence that they have never ceased to introduce Christianity into politics, and they have always told the people where wealth comes from. I suggest that Mr. Lansbury should alter his message and advise these ecclesiastical showmen to tell the world where wealth goes to. That would be a much more awakening propaganda.

Then on the scene appears the redoubtable "Jix," whose nick-name seems to suit his mental make-up as a clown's countenance matches his costume. He says that "the attempt to associate the Deity and Christ with political Socialism is really more than I can bear with equanimity." He adds that he has studied the

Bible, Old and New, and does not find in them what Mr. Lansbury finds. More, "It will be a bad day for religion when the Churches, or any Church, associates itself with any form of political propaganda," and in the complete Jixian vein:—

Mr. Lansbury tells us that the nation needs religion to waken it to a sense of corporate responsibility. Sir, religion is not a corporate question, it is an individual one . . . Nothing but the individual admission of sin, repentance and the acceptance of religion, can make a man religious.

So the good-natured emptiness of Mr. Lansbury is answered by the time-honoured vacuities of Lord Brentford. Shibboleth calls unto Shibboleth, but what effect either will have in inducing a better state of society no man can tell.

* * *

Misleading Rules.

I wonder if it ever flashed across Mr. Lansbury's mind that the people to whom he is lecturing—he can only be addressing himself to Christians—believe with him in the texts he cites. They quite firmly believe in Love one another, and in all the other sayings of the New Testament. I am quite sure that Jix would not doubt a word of them. Mr. Lansbury might also reflect that the general belief—the very general belief in the sayings of Jesus—is not a thing to be established to-morrow, it is not a thing that some few began to believe yesterday, it has been believed in for quite a number of generations, and the state of society he is lamenting is largely a product of the people who believed in this glorious gospel of Jesus. It is quite true that these people did not interpret the sayings of Jesus as Mr. Lansbury interprets them, but then he does not interpret them as they did. And very mildly one would ask Mr. Lansbury kindly to explain how can a people, a whole people be guided by a set of teachings which with the best intentions in the world no two groups of them can understand in the same sense? What a pity it is that at the time when Jesus is said to have taught there was in existence no school of journalism that would have trained him to say what he had to say in a manner which people all would understand in the same way.

I wonder what Mr. Lansbury would say if on consulting the rules laid down for the guidance for the House of Commons he found that every half dozen members in the House of Commons read a different meaning into the same rule. He would, I expect move that a Committee be appointed to put the rules into such language as would convey an identical meaning to all ordinary human beings. Of course, in a sense this has been done. At least two official bodies have been appointed by the Church of England to word the Bible so that its meaning would be plain to everyone. The Roman Church has another version of the same set of rules, because it does not read the

Church of England set of rules as episcopalians read them. They both believe in the same book, but of a number of the texts they have a quite different reading. I suggest to Mr. Lansbury that, if he will reflect on these things, instead of saying that nothing can be done until we put the teachings of Jesus into practice, he might with greater justification say "Seeing that for generations, men and women, equally anxious to do right, equally desirous of bringing about a better state of society have all professed, with equal honesty, to be guided by these texts, which they have read with equal intelligence, and have been all the time working against each other, let us put this "Divine guide" on one side, and try to study the problem before us in the light of a careful and intelligent review of the facts." Of course, they might not agree even then, they might not even interpret the facts in the same way, but at least they would not make themselves as ridiculous as Mr. Lansbury's suggested rule, which has been very largely relied on, makes them.

* * *

Words, Mere Words!

Mr. Lansbury is vaguely unreasonable. Lord Brentford, as one might expect from his record, is loudly and aggressively idiotic. He is a member of the evangelical side of the Church of England. He believes in a State Church, but he says "religion is not a corporate question." One wonders whether he really understands what he is saying. For if religion is not a corporate question, what ground is there for a State Church? Lord Brentford also believes in the Blasphemy Laws, in the existence of Sunday Laws, and in the teaching of religion in State-supported schools. But all of these are aspects of corporate religion, the only possible excuse for them is that there ought to be a corporate religion. One cannot expect the late Home Secretary to be decently intelligent, but he really ought not to be aggressively stupid and unintelligible.

What Lord Brentford suggests as methods of curing social ills is, first, the observance of the rule, "If any would not work, neither shall he eat," which he appears to think would only affect such as are living on the minor dole, as contrasted with the major dole popular among the "upper classes." I am very much afraid that if he goes on this line he will find himself denounced by many of his friends as an agent of Moscow and a Bolshevik in disguise. For the next step would surely be an enquiry as to what is work, the setting up of some standard of social utility, and a revaluing of values that would threaten the existence of some of our most cherished institutions. What "Jix" thinks will save the situation is "The individual admission of sin, repentance, and the acceptance of religion." That is capital, for it is on this ground that the miners and mineowners of South Wales have something in common. Bring them together and they will, by an overwhelming majority, agree in the individual admission of sin, and they will all be ready to repent, and so spend a thoroughly enjoyable evening. They have done this on more than one occasion. But somehow it does not seem to bring them a step nearer conducting their worldly affairs in a more rational, or a more satisfactory manner. Mr. Lansbury and Lord Brentford are, indeed, agreed on this very thing. They will both confess they are sinners, they will, like good Christians, both urge the necessity of repentance, both will agree that if a man does not work neither shall he eat, and see how it binds them together in terms of brotherly love, common agreement, and united effort along an agreed road! Why not? Are they not both brothers in Christ?

Sheer Cant.

The truth is that Mr. Lansbury and Lord Brentford are talking cant, religious cant. I hope it will not be taken as a slur on their intelligence to say that they may both believe what they say, but their belief will not alter the character of what they are saying. For what they are saying is the same cant that has been current through all the Christian centuries and in all the changing states of Society. In the days of serfdom the lord and the serf, the bishop who grew fat on his plunder of the peasants and the peasants who saw their families living in filth and dying of preventible diseases, both worshipped the same God in the same Church, made the same admission of sins and believed in the necessity of repentance. In the days of the Stuarts, when revolutionist and royalist fought there was the same unity in a belief in Jesus and the rest of the current theological moonshine. In the days of slavery in the United States, slave and slave-owner believed in the same God, the same Jesus, and the slave-owner commended the New Testament to the slave to learn therein the lesson of unquestioning obedience. And to-day we have the same feature presented to us in the controversy between Mr. Lansbury and Lord Brentford.

Martin Luther called the Epistle of St. James a nose of wax. With equal or greater justification he might have applied the phrase to the New Testament. It has suitably been all things to all men. Each of the hundreds of Christian sects have taken Jesus as their example. The witch-finder and heretic-hunter and exorcist have been equally certain they were following in his steps. The sham of the doctrinal Jesus has been with many replaced by the sham of the ethical saviour. On the strength of a number of moral platitudes, all well known and widely used long before the name of Jesus Christ was heard of, he is proclaimed as the hope of the world. Those who so hail him never even face the position that the mere fact of his being taken as an ideal by men of so widely different aims, ideals, and teaching is alone enough to prove that he is just a lay figure that anyone may clothe as he pleases. The ethical value of the New Testament Jesus is one of the most prevalent of superstitions to-day. A teaching that means anything of everything, is in practice worth—exactly nothing.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE PEOPLE'S "EASTER."

The motley throngs come forth elate:
 Each will the joy of the sunshine hoard,
 To honour the Day of the Risen Lord!
 They feel, themselves, their resurrection:
 From the low, dark rooms, scarce habitable;
 From the bonds of work, from trade's restriction;
 From the pressing weight of roof and gable;
 From the narrow, crushing streets and alleys;
 From the churches' solemn and reverend night,
 All come forth to the cheerful light.
 How lively, see! the multitude sallies,
 Scattering through gardens and fields remote,
 While over the river, that broadly dallies,
 Dances so many a festive boat;
 And overladen, nigh to sinking,
 The last full wherry takes the stream.
 Yonder afar, from the hill-paths blinking,
 Their clothes are colours that softly gleam;
 I hear the noise of the village, even;
 Here is the People's proper Heaven;
 Here high and low contented see!
 Here I am Man,—dare man to be!—Goethe.

The Real Burns.

"For proud and fiery, and swift and bold,
Wine of life from heart of gold,
The blood of his heathen manhood rolled
Full billowed through his veins."—*James Thomson.*

ROBERT BURNS has been dead over a century, and his fame is far wider and more secure than when he died. His life is now celebrated as an important event, and his poetry rightly regarded as a valuable contribution to the world's literature. Admittedly, Scotland's greatest poet, he has been exposed to extreme adulation from his countrymen. Had he been a lesser genius than he was, this fulsome praise would have exposed his name to derision.

Yet it is quite permissible to regard Burns as a British poet, rather than a purely Scottish singer, and as the poet of a nation whose capital was London and not Edinburgh. This is a direct challenge to those very numerous critics who declare that Burns depends upon dialect, and that when he tried to write English he fell into mediocrity, fettered by the difficulties of a foreign language.

This time-honoured contention, however, is part only of the truth, and shows that Burns, like so many classic writers, is more talked of than read. One or two brief quotations, taken at random from his works, will help to modify this purely provincial idea effectually. Take, for example, this from one of his very best songs:—

"O my love's like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June.
O my love's like a melodie
That's sweetly played in tune."

Here is another from a battle-hymn, one of the finest ever written:—

"By Oppressions woes and pains,
By your sons in servile chains.
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free.
Lay the proud usurper low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Let us do or dee!"

How much do these two very striking quotations depend upon the Scottish dialect? Or, does this?—

"A fig for those by law protected,
Liberty's a glorious feast.
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest."

Then, turn to these lines which are admitted to be among the very finest that even Burns ever wrote:—

"Had we never lov'd sae kindly
Had we never lov'd sae blindly,
Never met—or never parted—
We had ne'er been broken-hearted."

Do these superbly chosen words derive their force from the one solitary word of Scottish dialect? Burns has suffered grievously at the hands of hiccuping Highlanders and maudlin ministers, but professed literary critics might well give the corpses of defunct heresies decent burial.

Critics have written very discreetly concerning Burns's Republican views, but they all turn a blind eye to the poet's militant Freethought. In view of Christian cant on this subject, this is a pity. For Burns's heresy was "four square to all the winds that blow." Oliver Wendell Holmes, indeed, expressed surprise that Calvinistic Caledonia could take Robert Burns to her straight-laced bosom without breaking her stays. For Burns, like Paine and Voltaire, was a Freethinker. Of other religion, save what flowed from a very mild form of Theism, he scarcely showed a trace. In truth, one can hardly call it a creed at all. It was mainly a name for a par-

ticular mood of sentimentalism, the expression of a state of indefinite aspiration. The Holy Willies of Orthodoxy have made the basest uses of the poet's emotionalism, but Christians cannot read Burns without loosening the shackles of their superstition.

David Hume's young Freethinking contemporary did not merely express his dissent from the Christian Religion. He struck at the heart of Christianity. Seeing plainly that priests everywhere trade on fear, he sounded a true note when he sang scornfully:—

"The fear o' hell's a hangman's whip
To haud the wretch in order."

How he lashes the rigidly righteous:—

"Sae pious and sae holy,
Y've nought to do but mark and tell
Your naeboot's fauts and folly."

And, again:—

"D'yruple mild, D'yruple mild, tho' your heart's like a child,

And your life like the new driven snow,
Yet that winna save ye, auld Satan must have ye
For preaching that three's ane an' twa."

The "merciful great God" of the Christians excites his derision and indignation:—

"O Thou wha in the heavens dost dwell,
Wha, as it pleases best Thyself
Sends ane to heaven and ten to hell,
A' for Thy glory,
And no for any guid or ill
They've done afore Thee."

In short, the real Burns is not the popular Burns of the Scottish manse and drawing room. When the peasant-poet was received by the aristocracy of Edinburgh, they had very little in common. The company that professed to admire him, and drank the poet's health, belonged to another world than the young Freethinker. In spite of all the glib phrasemaking of the critics, Burns lived in a very different atmosphere to that which his patrons inhabited. The barriers between Burns, the rare genius, and his stupid, if well-meaning, patrons, is not got rid of by pretending that they do not exist.

Like all pioneers, Burns was much alone. So early was he in the field that he could do little more than anticipate Carlyle's bitter "exodus from Houndsditch," or his caustic apostrophe to the figure of Christ, "Eh man, ye've had your day." But what he did was sufficient for his day and generation. He fought at fearful odds, and as Carlyle says:—

Granted the ship comes into harbour with shrouds and tackle damaged, the pilot is blameworthy, but to know how blameworthy, tell us first whether his voyage has been round the globe, or only to Rams-gate and the Isle of Dogs.

The outstanding quality in Burns's poetry is the eternal quality of honest indignation. It comes always with no veil of convention, it is blunt, simple as daily speech, the man himself talking before us. It is this quality that makes his "Jolly Beggars" a poem which stands alone in literature, not only unmatched, but unmatchable. The beggars are not mere rebels; for them the laws and conventions of society have no existence. So with Robert Burns himself. He rises above the network of ecclesiastical authority like an eagle with out-stretched wings above the clouds.

MIMNERMUS.

Do not be too moral. You may cheat yourself out of much life so aim above morality. Be not simply good; be good for something.—*Thoreau.*

Hypocrites weep and you cannot tell their tears from those of saints; but no bad man ever laughed sweetly yet.—*Ouida.*

Cusanus, Copernicus, and Bruno.

THE magnificent achievements in the pictorial and plastic arts of the Italian Renaissance coincided with a noteworthy revival in letters, philosophy and science. The influence of Italy is plainly displayed in the enlightened outlook of Nicolas Cusanus. A philosophical priest, whose personal character stood above reproach, he condemned the sale of indulgences, sternly opposed the witch-mania of the period, and fervently denounced various other superstitions encouraged by the Catholic Church. Born near Trier, in Germany, in 1401, he passed away in Italy in 1464.

Cusanus' extensive writings were largely theological, but were illumined by a humanistic spirit far in advance of his age, for we must remember that men so eminent as Machiavelli and Michel Angelo were prone to theosophical misconceptions concerning the baleful influences of invisible spirits. Leonardo da Vinci appears to have been the solitary thinker, whose theory of life and death closely corresponded to that of contemporary rationalism.

Cusanus repudiated the teaching of Aristotle, which confined the universe within the limits imposed by a sphere. Curiously enough, this ancient doctrine has been recently resurrected from the grave of abandoned beliefs by mathematicians and metaphysicians of the Einstein school. Now, to Cusanus the universe meant the sum-total of existence, as it needs must to every logical mind. As it is utterly impossible to rid ourselves of the concept of space, which must extend beyond the limits assigned by any alleged spherical universe, this limited sphere cannot possibly comprise the entire universe. The universe, as the term implies, is universal, and therefore presupposes infinity.

Cusanus, however, championed a rational form of relativity when considering man and his place in Nature. Men then regarded our globe as the centre of the cosmos, about which the heavenly orbs journeyed to minister to their desires. But, contended Cusanus, men would succumb to the same misconception were they the residents of the sun or some other star. Bold questionings such as these passed unheeded, save by a select few, and scarcely any seem to have suspected their revolutionary implications.

A century elapsed before another philosopher arose whose labours proved the harbinger of one of the greatest revolutions in human thought. Nicolaus Copernicus, a man of German descent, was born at Thorn, in Poland, in 1473. He was trained in the Italian university at Bologna, ultimately returned to his native land, and died there in 1543. From his earliest youth he was an assiduous student of astronomy and mathematics, and soon discovered the discrepancies between the received Ptolemaic System and his own observations of the movements of the starry orbs. The reigning system failed to explain the marked perturbations that characterized the motions of the planets. So, by displacing the earth from its supposed position as the centre of the universe, and making the sun the great luminary around which all the planets, including our earth revolve, the firm basis was prepared for the later triumphs of Galileo, Kepler and Newton. Copernicus himself regarded the solar system as a family of planets travelling round a fixed central sun, while the outer stars stood stationary within a sphere. He was, therefore, in some respects less advanced than his forerunner Cusanus. But while the views of the latter received little attention, the doctrines expounded by Copernicus in his work *De Revolutionibus Orbium* were eagerly discussed. A theory so startling, which appeared to dispute the clear evidence of the senses,

when once made public, aroused wonder and astonishment as well as resentment in orthodox circles.

Copernicus devoted many laborious years to the development of his heliocentric hypothesis, and not until his death drew near did he dare publish it to the world. His book was dedicated to Pope Paul III, and a copy was placed in the hands of its author on his deathbed. Those to whom publication was entrusted decided, if possible, to disarm sacerdotal and secular animus by adding a mischievous and misleading preface, in which it was asserted that the leading teachings of the work were entirely speculative. This mendacious preface, though at one time ascribed to Copernicus, was really concocted by Osiander, to whom the executor of Copernicus, G. J. von Lauchen had entrusted the publication. The Humanists received the new astronomy not unkindly. But the Jesuits condemned it, while Martin Luther stigmatized Copernicus as a presumptuous fool, who arrayed his feeble intellect against the plain truth of Scripture. Even the mild Melancon urged the suppression of doctrines so pestilent, by the civil power.

That ill-starred Italian sage, Giordano Bruno, came next in order of succession. He was delivered from his mother's womb at Nola about 1548. Entering the Dominican Order at an early age, he soon began to doubt the truth of transubstantiation and other strange beliefs. He was then accused of heresy, and fled to escape persecution. He travelled to Geneva, where he remained for two years, but his freethinking proclivities soon awakened abhorrence among the Calvinists who ruled there. To avoid arrest, he wandered to Paris, where he lectured on logic. But his unsparing onslaughts on the reigning Aristotelian philosophy procured him so many powerful enemies that he hastily quitted France.

Passing across the Channel to England in the train of the friendly French Ambassador, Michel de Castelnau, Bruno passed a couple of years of comparative tranquillity in our island home. While with us he won the esteem of Swinburne's "Flower of England," Sir Philip Sidney, Fulke Greville, and other eminent Elizabethans.

Bruno's most important works appear to have been composed in England, and here he seemed contented until his outspoken heresies so scandalized the clergy that the luckless thinker was again driven to flight. He revisited Paris, and later wandered through Germany, until at last when wearied with misfortune he returned to his native land. For a space he resided in Padua, and then sought repose in Venice, where he was shamelessly betrayed to the agents of the Inquisition, and conveyed in custody to Rome in 1593. There he was subjected to seven years' imprisonment, persecution, and probably to torture, his priestly enemies ever trusting to break his proud spirit with a forced recantation. When all these efforts ended in failure, he was excommunicated and consigned to the flames on February 17, 1600. His fiery martyrdom, he met with dauntless courage, treating his murderers with mingled pity and scorn.

Bruno's execution attracted little notice either in Rome or elsewhere, and this explains the few contemporary references to the tragic event. But as time went on, the martyr's works were studied with increasing interest. His influence is marked in the reasonings of Descartes, as also in the speculations of Spinoza. Bruno has since become the supreme martyr of modern Freethought. In 1889 a monument was erected to his memory on the site of his incineration, the Campo dei Fiori—the field of flowers—in Rome. At its unveiling, a gathering of scientists, social and religious reformers, men of letters, and others signalized the ceremony. Haeckel delivered an unpromising address, and Swinburne, in England, cele-

brated the occasion in a powerful ode in which the Roman Church was reviled as "a withered harlot" and "child of hell."

To the Pagan poet, Lucretius, Bruno, owed much, but probably his greatest indebtedness was due to Nicolas Cusanus, whose writings he constantly perused. Yet, he was no mere copyist, for Bruno's system displays pronounced originality. Indeed, it bristles throughout with the haughty and independent character of the philosopher himself.

Bruno's *Evening Conversations on Ash Wednesday* form a fine exposition of the Copernician theory. His *Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, is a strange allegory, yet it contains perhaps the most lucid exposition of his pantheistic philosophy. Other compositions are his meditations *On the Sole Cause of Things*, and *On the Infinity of the Universe and of Worlds*. Bruno taught that the infinite soul of the Divine not merely embraces the universe, but that Nature herself is a material manifestation of God. Nature—the totality of existence—was to Bruno, as later to Spinoza, Jacobi, and Goethe, "the living garment of God."

In company with so many other pioneer spirits of the Renaissance, Bruno is apt to conceal his real meaning within an allegorical framework. In those perilous days this was justly deemed advisable. But the patient studies of several modern scholars prove that when the mystical externals are removed from Bruno's writings, there stands clearly outlined the philosophy of a finely fashioned mind.

T. F. PALMER.

Professor Jeans and the Universe.

(Continued from page 37.)

WHEN Prof. Ramsay, on careful comparison of nitrogen obtained by chemical dissociation of a compound, found that the first kind of nitrogen would not give all the reactions of the second, he didn't invoke a spook to explain the differences, or assume that the law of causation didn't hold, he first of all assured himself the two differently derived nitrogens had differences; and then he went to work to discover why the first was the more inert, eventually proving that there were in the atmosphere besides the currently accepted oxygen, nitrogen and carbon, small quantities of other unsuspected gases, related to nitrogen, but still more inert, such as neon. Physical science is a progressive revelation, and its achievements have been obtained by deterministic reasoning: and when it achieves the accuracy of predicting not only the time, place and duration of a solar eclipse as in 1927, to within a second and a few yards of space, it is wiser to keep to this wonderful instrument of research, and when it apparently fails, seek the causes of discrepancy, than to assume that continuity and uniformity in nature are no longer to hold.

When the Newtonian mechanics and physics no longer *exactly* explain phenomena then, still on deterministic lines, it is necessary to modify the statement of the law or to assume new conceptions of the universe which better fit the facts. So anxious is Sir James to bring in the notion of indeterminacy in order to find an opening for "free-will," that he comes back over and over again to quoting the physicists. "Heisenberg now makes it appear that nature abhors accuracy and precision above all things . . . she knows nothing apparently of pre-

cise measurements." (p. 26.) "These and other considerations have led many physicists to suppose there is no determinism in events in which atoms and electrons are involved singly, and that the apparent determinism in large scale events is only of a statistical nature." (p. 28.)

"We can illustrate this concept by an analogous situation in the large-scale world. If we spin a half-penny, nothing within our knowledge may be able to decide whether it will come down heads or tails, yet if we throw up a million tons of halfpence, we know there will be 500,000 tons of heads and 500,000 tons of tails. *The experiment may be repeated indefinitely and will always give the same result.* We may be tempted to instance it as an evidence of the uniformity of nature, and to infer the action of an underlying law of causation: in actual fact it is an instance only of the operation of the purely mathematical laws of chance." (p. 28.) This numerical illustration gives the opportunity of exhibiting certain confusions in Sir James's mind. First it is not correct to say that always there would be 500,000 tons of heads and 500,000 tons of tails. Sometimes a couple or more of half-pennies would predominate in heads, sometimes in tails. Suppose the experiment were stopped after one ton—there would be perhaps equality, perhaps not. At the second ton, the results might be the reverse of what they were at the end of the first ton and so on: but strict equality of heads and tails *could never be predicted* at any *given* moment, of the tossing. Yet if the tossing goes on long enough, the difference between the two sides will become fractionally less: and for practical purposes negligible. So when we say that there will be equality according to the *law of probability* we mean not that there is any *force* at work to produce equality: but that *our experience* tells us that is how the matter will fall out over a large number of throws.

But what determinism would say is, if we knew all the forces at work, and could correctly estimate their resultant, then the top face of any and every half-penny thrown, *would be known beforehand.* And so the position and speed even of an electron would be known if we knew exactly all the forces at work. This belief in causation everywhere and at all times has not only given us all we know in the domain of science, but the new physicists cannot take a step towards their anomalous conclusions without constantly assuming causation. Sir James sees this for he is constrained to say, "if we and nature in general do not respond in a unique way to external stimuli, what determines the course of events? If anything at all, we are thrown back on determinism and causation: if nothing at all, how can anything ever occur." (p. 29.)

A similar confusion is shown with respect to time. "The fundamental laws of nature, in so far as we are at present acquainted with them, give no reason why time should flow steadily on: they are equally prepared to consider the possibility of time standing still or flowing backwards." (p. 30.) What is one to make of this? "The fundamental laws of nature . . . are equally prepared to consider." Presumably what is meant, that having given a mathematical expression to one aspect of reality, we can assign a negative value to it, and assume time reversed. But what we can in imagination do is often very different from what is possible in the reality of nature: and the results of mathematical operations may have no relation to actuality. The binomial theorem which we owe to Newton is *true* for positive integral indexes, and applied to reality will never fail us. But if we use a negative index, the results are only true for certain well-defined values of the terms of the binomial.

When we come to fractional indexes, a *meaning* can be given to them which will not contradict the generally accepted conventions: but every use of these refinements of mathematics needs testing by being applied to reality. By ignoring this application to reality "the theory of relativity (according to Sir James) goes some distance towards stigmatizing this steady onward flow of time and the cause—effect relation as illusions." (p. 30.) No wonder J. C. Squire was moved, on hearing the tendency of relativity, to add a couplet to Pope's.

"Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night,
God said let Newton be 'and there was light,'
It could not last, the Devil crying 'ho,'
'Let Einstein be,' restored the status quo."

To come back once more to this point of indeterminacy in the electron or photon, for on this is based the whole case of the scientists who leave scientific method to establish "free-will." A beam of light is ultimately, according to the latest theory, made up of photons which cannot be further reduced, *i.e.*, photons are the irreducible particles of which all light is composed. Sir James tells us that we can split a beam of light into two; each following different paths. At the last reduction we get a photon which cannot be split, and *we cannot tell which of the two paths it will take.* Because of this ignorance we are asked to accept indeterminacy, while at every higher stage determinism is accepted. At this lowest point the photon is undetermined in its path, therefore it is argued that the route of the photon is *indeterminable*: and so here we have free-will or the possibility of the entry of free-will. This argument from ignorance is the stock-in-trade of the theologian. What you cannot explain by known forces, attribute to the gods or spirits, just as the medicine-man does. It is the underlying fallacy of much of Sir James's thinking, and yet it does not help him. For if any action of an atom of matter or of light is indeterminate (in the sense that it can never be determinable even by omniscience) then the sum total of atomic activity is also indeterminate, *i.e.*, indeterminate, which we know to be untrue. But if it were true what becomes of the increasing entropy (2nd law of thermodynamics) which is running down the universe to give Dean Inge his opportunity of saying, "Who wound it up?" as the final defeat of the determinist.

If the action of a single atom is capricious, how can there be any definite laws of action of a multitude of capricious individuals. If it be argued that the various caprices cancel each other out, then in the practical affairs of life these atoms as such can be ignored: and only masses of atoms need be considered. For the free-will that Sir James Jeans wishes to introduce truly appears only with human (or animal) beings: and its introduction among the atoms is useless to his purpose unless indeterminacy can also be predicted of the large masses of matter, and that indeterminacy rules the universe.

At one time this was the accepted doctrine for many of the variable phenomena of life—and rain, wind, eclipses were all at the will of some god or spirit. As our knowledge of the forces producing these phenomena increased, our power of predictability grew until we now can broadcast the weather a day or two in advance.

Let us revert to the case of a total solar eclipse. Each eclipse is foretold, its duration, place where total or partial eclipse is visible and the moment of its beginning and end. Steadily our increasing knowledge of physics and mathematics reduces the difference between prediction and observation and *on the assumption of continuity* we can go back into the past

and verify the dates of recorded eclipses in ancient Greece. There are limits of error in these matters, and to this extent indeterminacy exists; but the indeterminateness is due to our lack of complete knowledge, not to caprice in the forces producing the effect.

Similarly the path of a comet is determined *within limits*: and, if it does not appear to time, astronomers look for a disturbing physical cause and do not set it down to the comet's caprice. Sir James tries to slip the rabbit of free-will into the hat unobserved, but it falls through the bottom. He cannot have all his physical constants, *i.e.*, his determinist philosophy for his second law of thermodynamics and then throw them overboard at the atom and in the human being to prove indeterminacy. And if the will is *undetermined* by motives, what becomes of all systems of rewards and punishments? What is the use of all argument?

MEPHISTO.

(To be concluded.)

Stevenson on Burns.

From *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*. R.L.S.

It is the fate of Robert Burns—like, but how unlike, Cromwell—to be damned to everlasting fame and to have an anniversary. How well brither Scots love, how little they understand even his simplicity! He has many biographers, amongst them, Carlyle, Henley, Shairp, Stevenson, Carswell, Crichton-Brown, and the nameless host of post-grandial eulogists—idealists and realists, white washers and the reproaching righteous; but the life is lived, the fate is sealed, "The moving finger writes and having writ . . ." Henley and Stevenson are frankly critical of the moral man, the latter just a little condescending as the college dilettante would stoop to one more lowly born and rudely bred. But, after all, poverty and toil are no bad makers of character; always excepting, of course, mere sordid want and utter privation; excepting also that wormlike spirit of inferiority so common to a baser kind of indigence. The robust Burns escaped this last and many other "useless fetters" of his time and station. One can imagine at the Burns table such things as porridge, potatoes, eggs, milk, butter, scones, oatcake, and health and hunger would make excellent sauce—but ever haunting near would be the fear of worse to come—debt, summons, gaol, disgrace, ruin—these are the bugbears of honest poverty! This family sat at mealtimes each with a book in hand, a literary lot, Dominic Murdoch would read to them from *Titus Andronicus* till the family in distress would call on him to forbear the cruel story. Books were happily scant in these times, now in the age of print the savage Woodlander might again grunt—"Much read, little know!" At this day (vide Gibbon) "the monks of Oxford were steeped in prejudice and port," while scandal and scalliwagging were the main occupations of its young gentlemen of England; and much later what wonder a Shelley was intolerable there. To-day, perhaps, the "accent" is the main impress of the College which, if not intolerable, is often unintelligible over the wireless; while an Oxford lady's voice in the microphone is the listener's despair. In a wholesomer if "humbler" air and fare our "good animal" grew up, our normal man; so far is ruled out the superman; the moral and spiritual man, the genius, is subject for more recondite concern, but still no mystery beyond the feeblest and meanest of his species.

At the outset of his essay Stevenson notes Principal Shairp deploring the fact that "the hand that wrote the *Cottar's Saturday Night* should stoop to write the *Jolly Beggars*." How priggish, how priestly this: "nothing is adequate to it but the old cry of Geronte: 'Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galere?'" Mr. Carlyle, says S., made an inimitable bust of the poet's head of gold: may I not be forgiven if my business should have more to do with his feet of clay? He sees Robert from the first:—

A proud, headstrong, impetuous lad, greedy of notice; in his own phrase "panting after distinction," and his brother's, cherishing a particular jealousy of people who were richer or of more consequence than himself. . . .

He was emphatically the artist . . . at Tarbolton Church with the only tied hair in the parish . . . plaid of particular pattern wrapped in particular manner round his shoulders. Later, when Officer of Excise, we see him out fishing . . . with fox-skin cap, belted great-coat, and great Highland broadsword!

The Dandy! The name was Burnes, Burness, finally Burns, the poet's own choice; proud even down to his name; proud of his power in conversation; the Duchess Gordon declared that he "carried her off her feet"; When he came late to an inn the servants would get out of bed to hear him talk; and then his eyes! dark, luminous, burning, of which Scott has said: "I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men of my time." No; for such light was not of learning; it had all time for its creation, all the world for its contemplation, nurtured in savagery and solitude; yet not light from heaven, but of earth; yet no hallmark of genius, for a man with such compelling orbs might smile and be a villain: there are surer tests of a man, yet an eye is eloquent of much, and the eye of Burns did not betray the great humanist poet.

Stevenson makes much of the Don Juanism in Burns and his eternal quest for Love; one image at the last embrace easily effaced by the next. He groaned for the dead Highland Mary, now an angel in his imagination, who was in reality quite a commonplace country lass—commonplace? She exists to-day in her thousands still making fools, heroes, poets of men; princesses, all but the culture and the apparel; the scantier the last, the shapelier she—poor Burns! had he been living now! But why single out Burns for seductions, sins and sorrows; and beware transgressors all of sheltering in the shadow of a great name; his not the shadow of a great rock in a weary land; no more so is the facile and fictitious Rock of Christ; let us stand on our own feet while Christians on crutches cry "Impossible!"—yea, let the cripples pray.

There was ever affinity of sex—two words of one meaning—but affinity of sense and spirit in the higher sense, of intelligence, was rarer to seek. Clarinda, one thinks, would have been the fitter mate; but here too was common passion if disguised in stilted protestation and mock heroics, yet producing "the essence of a thousand love songs." How easily one writes of this lover, labourer, poet, sinner, sufferer: peace, perturbed spirit; one at least would do thee utter and exact justice; even lament that he is not just such a man!

Let it be no disrespect of her class to say that the much-eulogized Bonnie Jean was the commonest of ignorant country girls (there is a city population counterpart of these) while loving another (her fitter mate) she married Burns of necessity; he, on his part refrained from the "wrong that amendeth wrong" by making her his wife. Pretty, patient, docile, perhaps a little stupid, she was but the "delicious amful" of his animal desire, otherwise the incompatible and unfortunate mate of Burns. Stevenson and Henley (and the writer) are at one in this; sad to say and hastens to be said.

The Poet had been pluming for flight to Jamaica:—

But the great master dramatist had secretly another intention for the piece; by the most violent and complicated solution, in which death and birth and sudden fame all play a part as interposing deities, the act-drop fell upon a scene of transformation. Jean was brought to bed of twins . . . the success of the book was immediate and emphatic; it put £20 at once into the author's purse . . . he was encouraged to go to Edinburgh . . . news of the death of Highland Mary, suffered in secret—Edinburgh, popularity, triumph—his lax religious views helped to make him notorious—Aitken "read him into fame." In the war of creeds Burns found himself in a clique of roaring lawyers and half-heretical divines, with wit enough to appreciate the poet's help, and not sufficient taste to moderate his grossness and personality.

To make him, say, more like R. L. Stevenson! one infers the sceptical R.L.S. would never permit himself to be a "blatant Atheist." Mr. J. M. Robertson has remarked that Stevenson distinguished himself by a supremely coarse and cowardly—albeit skilfully poetic attack on

Bradlaugh, adding that his unbalanced mentality, his critical perversity is as full, if with less crude brutality, exhibited in his attack on Burns as in his attack on Bradlaugh—the scientific summary is that he (R.L.S.) was an unstable compound alike as artist and as man." But that attack on Iconoclast—surely a rush-wand lashing an oak!

Yet Stevenson has good and shrewd things to say if the whole is marred by condescensions, commonplaces and impertinences: The Ploughman poet, if not devoted to religion, was haunted by it—ill or depressed he would prostrate himself before God with "unmanly penitence"—he had aspiration beyond his place in the world (sic)—he had tastes, thoughts and weaknesses to match (!)—he loved the sound of the winter tempest sounding in a wood and the piled-up drifts of snow—he had a great tenderness for animals—his vade mecum was *The Man of Feeling* of which he wore out two copies in his walks and readings—he read in the hearts of men he met as in a book." Yet magnanimously, we may well suppose, often finding heroes where was none—what trashy heroes and masterpieces have we not all known and read in uncritical days, in that glorious magnanimity of soul! How many a *Man of Feeling*: wiser, if sadder, grown we would feel that glow again.

And now the Essayist follows the Poet in his dark days in Dumfries, praising his "virtues," deploring his "faults." Over all seems to stand the right-lined rectitude of Robert Louis Stevenson, lamenting that other Robert's "downward course"—a not too polite and hardly magnanimous biographer. To be other than this, he suggests, wisely enough, is to do the work of the wrecker removing beacons from a perilous seaboard . . .

Another little essay is necessary to complete the indictment of Robert Burns—and Robert Louis Stevenson! Meantime the "awkward squads" will shortly be firing their annual salutes to the Memory, and I would not be found *dans cette galère*, though little averse to the fervent hand—clasp of *Auld Lang Syne* in the letter and the spirit of Burns; not in his "downward course," but in his rising star, that may help ever more and more to knit the bonds of brotherhood in man to man the world o'er—an anthem, not national, but universal; not for a monarch, but for mankind.

ANDREW MILLAR.

Acid Drops.

Murder will out! Crimes may remain undetected for years, but somehow something turns up that throws light on the mystery, and the ill-doer is named even though he may be beyond the reach of punishment. So at last we know who is responsible for the appointment of the present Bishop of London. And our informant is the Bishop, than whom no higher and no more truthful informant could be obtained or desired.

Speaking at Bournemouth the Bishop told his audience that he had written to the Archbishop of Canterbury recommending the appointment of Bishop Talbot. On returning home he found among his letters one from the Prime Minister. So he put it at the bottom of the pile before reading it, and then when he read it discovered that the Archbishop "was set on my being the Bishop of London." That is a very simple and convincing story. What we like about it particularly is his leaving the letter from the Prime Minister till he had finished with all the other odds and ends. It must have been sheer devotion to truth which prevented the Bishop leaving the letter for a week or so and then the servant finding it in the dustbin, just after a deputation from the Prime Minister had arrived begging him to accept the post. But we now know who was responsible for the present Bishop of London.

The Archdeacon of Bradford says that he was informed by the B.B.C. that the largest audience of listeners it has is when it broadcasts a religious service. We take the statement from a Nottingham paper of January 14. We leave all interested to discover who is responsible for the lie, for that it is a lie no one can have the least doubt.

There is no way in which the B.B.C. could tell how many listeners it had for a special broadcast, and as many will not listen to a Church service at all that alone would prove the statement to be a lie. We suspect the Arch-deacon, and we suggest that the B.B.C. ought to bring him to book.

"I shall never make a war unless I am first seized by the throat," says Signor Mussolini. No one need disbelieve him. After all, war-making is an art. You can dangle your coat-tails and dare the other fellow to tread on them. When he gets nettled and becomes aggressive, he naturally takes the onus of blame. There are tricks in every art.

During 1930 our life-boats, declares the Lifeboat Institution, saved a life for each day of the year. On the theory of Providence this means that the lifeboats and their gallant crews cheated "Our Father in Heaven" of some part of his plan. Presumably, he will be satisfied with the net result of the divine plan, a certain leakage being regarded as inevitable and allowed for in the annual forecast. But when human interference with the divine plan becomes a nuisance, earthquakes serve to balance any deficit on his grand total. "Oh, come let us adore Him!"

The shade of Carlyle must be doing a quiet grin over the message of Mr. Walter Ayles, Labour M.P. for Bristol North, to the Bristol Section of the Institute of Civil Engineers. The occasion was a dinner, and Mr. Ayles accepted the invitation, but pointed out that he did not wear evening dress. The committee replied stating that the Institute could not deviate from its rule, regarding evening dress. And this evoked the following letter:—

Evidently what you are most concerned with is not a Member of Parliament, but his clothes, and my working-class dress does not seem appropriate to your select company. Evidently I shall be much happier away from you. And learned professors fill fat books with the curious customs and dresses of the natives of Chickapoo.

Let us praise the living even in an "Acid Drop." Sir Thomas Lipton, that great popularizer of the cup that cheers, but not inebriates, has presented to Lord Provost Kelly, of Glasgow, the sum of £10,000 for the poor mothers and children of the city. Not content with this he subsequently increased the amount to £25,000. Preachers of the blessings of poverty for the other chap, who die and leave the final proof of their insincerity in their wills, for obvious reasons cannot be told to do likewise, but Sir Thomas has set a good example to those who are not honest enough to admit the very worldly touch of life's tar-brush.

Evidently knowing what sailors are, some thoughtfully disposed person has provided the H.M.S. *Repulse* with a stained glass porthole. The extra rum ration will no doubt follow at a later date.

Dr. Russell Malthus says that among dissenters, "intensity," or enthusiasm for religion, has greatly diminished. There is "a certain loss of passion and conviction." He indicates some evidence in support of this statement. In the Wesleyan Church, congregational singing is less charged with emotion. The hymns of greatest intensity are those most rarely sung; to-day they provide a sense of unreality. In many places prayer-meetings have been abandoned. The "Covenant Service" has had to be abridged and "eased." And some people have suggested it should be made "shorter and brighter." This is a very sad story for any parson to have to relate. And one cannot help wondering why the parsons talk so much about the imminent coming of a "Revival" of religion. What is obvious is that a large proportion of the adherents of the churches are merely luke-warm in their beliefs. And they are not the kind of material that can kindle a nation-wide revival. Before any real attempt is made to capture the "outsider," the parsons will need to make a gallant effort to evangelize their own adherents.

A nice little puff of advertisement is given to the Rev. William Patrick Glyn McCormick, preacher at St. Martin-in-the-Fields. The writer up of the nose-gay in the *News-Chronicle* lets himself go with amazing results—his subject becomes a human being, as distinct from the ordinary impression that one gets of the general idea of clergymen. It is considered worthy of special comment to state that his extempore prayers are clothed in the language of to-day rather than in the medieval garments of the past. If this practice becomes general the clergy will run a great risk of being understood, and then the fat will be well and truly in the fire. Fancy asking the Lord for something in the same style as one asks for a return ticket to Brighton. It has endless possibilities, and we trust the new style will be extensively copied.

Professor J. B. S. Haldane has been getting himself into hot water. In the preface to a book on *Crime and Destiny*, by Dr. J. Lange, he points out that "Fifteen per cent. of our criminals are Catholics. So a Roman Catholic is at least twice as likely to become a criminal as a member of another religion or of none." Naturally the Roman Catholics are annoyed, and their defence is peculiar. It is pointed out that the Roman Church has among its adherents a large number of poor people. But Professor Haldane might retort that there is no other Church which keeps its members under so close a guard as does the Roman Church, and that should counteract the temptations of poverty. And in any case part of the defence of religion is that it keeps people moral. The value of the statement is seen in the fact that the most carefully guarded of all supply twice as many criminals as the rest. And this large percentage have the most careful of religious instruction while young, go much more regularly to church than do the rest of the religious population.

The Rev. Dr. Herbert Gray says that young people are not, as some persons believe, always gay and self-confident. The young people, he declares:—

... come to me broken, very often, telling me they have moods they cannot control; telling me of temptations which are threatening them with disaster; of sorrows they do not know how to face. They come and tell me of their fears, longing to know how a man can be delivered of his fears. Like the rest of us, this supreme need is to know the secret of power. Their supreme need is to learn what Christ lived and died to tell the world—that there is an inexhaustible reservoir of power in God.

What is obvious is that Mr. Gray is referring to young people who are upset by feelings and emotions connected with the sex instinct. They are bewildered, because they have been brought up in a pious atmosphere where ignorance is encouraged in the belief that it is the same as innocence. The fears they experience are largely due to their stupid upbringing. With a more wholesome training, and with knowledge instead of ignorance, they would not need to go crying to a parson—to receive more distorted "enlightenment" which makes religion seem useful to them. This is another instance of ignorance being exploited.

We are told that a volume of more than ordinary interest is *Science and Religion*—a symposium of the broadcast talks delivered by Professor Eddington, the Bishop of Birmingham, Professor Julian Huxley, Dean Inge, Sir J. Arthur Thompson, Rev. H. R. L. Sheppard, Professor Malinowski and Canon Streeter. What would interest us and many others would be to find in the book any name representing the other side as distinct from the orthodox religious and respectable scientific interests. As that great provider of a traffic problem, Henry Ford, remarked, "You can have your car painted any colour you like so long as it is black." Not for one moment could any one outside a lunatic asylum imagine the B.B.C. allowing anything that had not been strictly censored to come over the wires. Its childish evasions of the question of an alternate Sunday Programme tell the thoughtful all they need know.

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.—Cine Cere, 5s.
- B. D. EDWARDS.—Obliged for cuttings. But we think the matter was the subject of comment on its first appearance.
- J. STEPHENS.—Mr. W. Mann is for the present engaged in other work, which prevents his contributing, as he has been in the habit of doing, to the *Freethinker*.
- W. WEARING.—The question of compulsory attendance at Church Service, while in the army or navy, and the right to affirm or to have oneself entered as an Atheist or otherwise, are distinct questions. The two last are rights that are secured by law. Release from attendance at "divine service" is only a favour. All we can do to get the attendance made voluntary we are doing. Naturally the clergy are opposed to it. They know they would get so few attendants that the service would soon be dropped. The application of the affirmation has nothing to do with the war. It dates from 1888.
- G. H. McCLESKEY.—Sorry you were unable to be at the Dinner. Shall hope to see you soon.
- D. RUTHERFORD.—Your letter in reply to our note on "Progress and the Paragraph Mind" shall appear next week. Sorry it is crowded out of this number.
- T. W. BLSOR.—Thanks for good wishes. The Dinner was quite a success.
- A. D. CORRICK.—Thanks for calling attention to Arnold Lunn's *Flight from Reason*. We saw the book directly it was issued, but while written in a lively style it contains nothing that at present calls for special mention, seeing that we have so recently dealt with many of its points in connexion with other writers. We noticed one amusing phrase, "Ethical Societies were founded to provide Atheists with a surplice and a pulpit," which has enough malicious truth about it to arrest attention. It indicates that Christians are not so easily gulled by vague names as those who adopt them appear to believe. But the capacity of the writer may be gauged by his saying that as the editor of the *Freethinker* does not believe in "free will," therefore there can be no Freethought, and we ought to alter the name of this journal. The man who can write that is quite impervious to criticism.
- C. EVANS.—We do not know of any regeneration of character due to religion. There is a modification of character, for good or ill, that is effected by the force of human association and the power of human sympathy, but to attribute this to religion is equal to attributing a storm to the incantation of some reputed witch.
- A. MILLAR.—Glad to hear of the success of the meeting. Such a paper could not but do good. It is like the parable of the sower, some of the seed is certain to fructify.
- 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. Roselli, 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.

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

To-day (January 25) Mr. Cohen will speak in the Socialist Church, Mottram Road, Hyde, at 6.30. His subject will be "Freethought and Freethinking." Manchester friends will please note.

Will Manchester Freethinkers please note that as Mr. Cohen will be lecturing at Hyde to-day (Sunday) Mr. J. Clayton's lecture at the Engineers' Hall, 120 Rusholme Road, Manchester, has been postponed until next Sunday, February 1. Refreshments can be provided at Hyde for Manchester saints making the journey to hear Mr. Cohen.

On Sunday next (February 1) Mr. Cohen will deliver the first of a course of four lectures on "God and Man," in the Secular Hall, Hummerstone Gate, Leicester. Each lecture will commence at 6.30.

Mr. Sidney Dark, the editor of the *Church Times*, we believe, recently gave a broadcast address, in which he described Robert Owen as a Christian Socialist. Attention was called to this gross misrepresentation of a man whose opinions could be easily ascertained, by one of our readers, Mr. A. W. Coleman. He wrote the B.B.C., pointing out that "to speak of Robert Owen as a Christian—any sort of a Christian—is not merely to mislead grossly your listeners, but gratuitously to insult a great Freethinker." To this the B.B.C. replied:—

I have been making an enquiry into the error in Mr. Sidney Dark's talk, to which you kindly drew our attention. May I ask you to accept on behalf of the Corporation as well as Mr. Sidney Dark, sincere apologies for this quite inexcusable error. I do not know how those responsible for the talk failed to notice it. We consider the matter of such importance that the *Listener*, next week, or possibly the week after will publish a full correction by Mr. Dark.

This is quite good so far as it goes, but the performance was not a very liberal carrying out of the promise. Mr. Dark's apology for his "inexcusable error" ran as follows:—

In my broadcast talk on New Year's Day, I described Robert Owen as a Christian Socialist. This was a mistake. He was a Socialist, but not a Christian.

This can hardly be called a very elaborate apology, or explanation of an error of "such importance." Merely to say that Robert Owen was not a Christian leaves him, so to speak, in the air. He was very definitely, and very strongly anti-Christian. The man who could publicly say that all the religions of the world were so many forms of geographical insanity cannot be properly described as merely a non-Christian. We would like to know whether the B.B.C. considers that Mr. Dark's letter fulfils their promise. Mr. Dark could hardly have said less, he might very easily, and justly, have said more.

We congratulate "Low" of the *Evening Standard* on his cartoon of January 17. It depicts the three religious groups—Roman Catholics, Free-Churchmen, and Anglicans, interviewed on the 13th by the Minister of Education, with Mr. Trevelyan suggesting to the Prime Minister that the school age be raised to seventy-five for religious

leaders. The intense mixture of bigotry and cunning suggested by the drawings have exposed "Low" to imprisonment for blasphemy in an earlier period.

The Perth Branch of the N.S.S., although only just formed, has soon got to work. The first public meeting was held in the I.L.P. Hall last Sunday evening, Mr. J. Wingate spoke on "The Necessity for Atheism in the Socialist Movement," and many questions, and much discussion followed. Attention is to be given to the rights of Freethinkers in the local Public Library. We understand there are also some local Freethinkers who have not yet joined the Branch, the local Secretary, Mr. J. A. Reid, 70 South Methuen Street, Perth, is waiting to hear from them.

Will those members of the Glasgow Branch N.S.S. who have not received their Membership Cards for 1931, communicate with the Branch Secretary, Miss I. Hill, 17 Battlefield Gardens, Langside, Glasgow.

We print below a report of the Society's Annual Dinner, held on Saturday, January 17, at the Midland Grand Hotel, St. Pancras. The Dinner was well-attended, and it went with a smooth swing from the outset. The floral decorations were excellent, and the entertainment, as that always is, was better than ever. For this we have to thank Mr. G. Royle, who very kindly looks after that part of the evening. The speeches also touched a very high level, the pity of it being that these had to be very brief. We have also to thank the General Secretary on the easy running. A dinner of this description, to go without friction, means a deal of careful work beforehand.

The National Secular Society's Thirty Fourth Annual Dinner.

THE attendance of members and friends at the Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society, held last Saturday evening at the Midland Grand Hotel, nearly constituted a record, and it would have been difficult to surpass its enthusiasm and general happiness.

Among those present were: Col. A. Lynch, Mr. H. Snell, M.P., Rear-Admiral Surgeon C. M. Beadnell, Dr. C. H. R. Carmichael (Liverpool), Lieut.-Commr. Rasterbrook, Mr. H. Cutner, Mr. and Mrs. Repton and daughter, Mrs. C. Cohen, Mr. W. J. W. Rasterbrook, Mr. and Mrs. G. Finch, Mr. A. B. Moss, Mr. and Mrs. E. C. Saphin, Mr. H. Silvester, Mr. and Mrs. G. Wood and daughter, Dr. Gompertz, Mr. A. D. Maclaren, Mr. and Mrs. Venton, Mr. and Mrs. F. G. Warner, Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Smith (Birmingham), Mr. and Mrs. W. Ash, Mr. and Mrs. Quinton Senr., Mr. and Mrs. Quinton Junr., Mr. and Mrs. Side, Mrs. H. Rosetti, Mr. and Mrs. Sandys, Mr. and Miss Dobson, Mr. and Mrs. F. A. Hornibrook, Mr. T. Gorniot, Mr. H. R. Clifton, Mr. and Mrs. G. Royle, Mrs. and Miss Walter, Mr. and Mrs. C. S. Fraser, Mr. and Mrs. R. B. Kerr, Miss Stella Browne, Mr. G. Whitehead, Mrs. Fincken, and Messrs. E. and W. Fincken, Mr. F. F. Corrigan, Mr. Hyatt, Mr. B. A. LeMaine, Mr. Bayard Simmons, Mr. Andrew Millar, Mr. Lazarnisk, Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Rosetti, Mr. V. Thorpe.

The event is one always looked forward to, not only because of the many old friends one is sure of meeting, but also because those of us who have the "best of all causes" so much at heart wish to welcome the younger generation, ready, it is hoped, to carry on the good work in the fight that is still to come. Nothing seems to quench the enthusiasm of those whom we call "the old brigade," those fine old fighting Freethinkers whose quiet but determined work has made the N.S.S. a force for good in the social activities of this—and other—countries. Ever ready in the forefront of the fray, they have set a gallant example to

the younger men and women in the Movement, and it was good to hear the speeches later on in the evening representing the old and the new points of view of the work of the N.S.S.

The ladies turned up in full force, adding the necessary picturesque touch to the assembly and the general vivacity, happy laughter and good humour would have made any "man of sorrows" turn in his grave with envy. Anybody who imagines militant Freethought makes people glum and miserable should not come to their Annual Dinner. It would be too heartbreaking to see so many joyous people. The half-hour reception is really all too short, as one meets so many old friends, and one has so much to say that it seems truly less than five minutes. As usual the dinner was excellent—good waiters and no waiting. And as usual again, the President of the National Secular Society, Mr. Chapman Cohen, made an ideal Chairman. His Address was quietly delivered, short, restrained and altogether admirable. He made his points forcibly and effectively, and it was with more than a touch of pride that he referred to the *Freethinker*, the paper he has written for and edited so many years with such wisdom, foresight and courage.

He would have preferred, he said, to listen to someone else rather than talk himself, but he was glad to see so many young people—our hope for the future of the Movement—present. Visitors were present from all parts of the country. He had also received letters of regret from many whom they would have been pleased to see there, but whose places they hoped would be occupied by them on the next gathering. The Chairman then proceeded to give a brief review of the principal events of the year as they concerned the Freethought Movement, concluding with the remark that to all of them 1931 would be a remarkable year, because in a few months the *Freethinker* would have achieved its jubilee. In the whole history of periodic literature there had been only one other Freethought paper—the American *Truthseeker*—that had been able to put fifty years of existence behind it. He was proud of his association with the paper, particularly that during the past thirty years, there had not been one issue of the paper that had not had at least one article from his pen. Advanced movements would not be where they are to-day had the *Freethinker* not been in existence. Its enemies had paid it the compliment for their hatred; its friends had repaid it with their affection, and he felt it had deserved both.

All the other speeches were excellent in form and matter. Mr. Harry Snell, M.P., in proposing the toast of the National Secular Society said that he felt it an honour to propose the toast, and dwelt upon the immense work the National Secular Society had done, and its influence on the life and thought of to-day. He said we were breathing a purer air, and living in a freer society because of its fearless work in the past. He also begged those present not to regard the work of the N.S.S. as done. It had to be done anew for each generation, not on the same level, but the work of mental liberation was a perennial one. The Roman Catholic Church was strong and aggressive, and its attacks could only be met effectively by citizens who had been properly trained for the fight. If we were breathing a purer air and enjoying a greater freedom, it was largely because of the work done by the National Secular Society. The speech was listened to with the greatest interest, Mr. Snell's picturesque phrasing and incisive speech being greatly appreciated.

Dr. Claude Carmichael's speech, in seconding the toast, was ideal for an after dinner gather-

ing such as this one. It was bright, witty, punctuated with laughter and applause, but with every witty comment or anecdote holding some serious lesson for those who cared to look for it. It was Dr. Carmichael's first appearance at this function. We hope his visit will be an annual one. The chairman then called on Mr. A. B. Moss to say a few words in support of the toast. Mr. Moss showed by his speech that he had lost none of the enthusiasm of his earlier years, and his chief point that propagandists must never forget the more elementary and the more fundamental aspects of Freethought was one that deserves attention.

Speaking to the toast of Freethought at Home and Abroad, Dr. Arthur Lynch, a much-travelled man, with a keen eye for events and their significance, gave a rapid but instructive review of the position of Freethought in most European countries, the whole punctuated with flashes of wit that delighted his hearers. He was specially interesting in his account of the Freethinking opinions of the late Marshal Joffre and his personal friend T. P. O'Connor. Both were buried with full religious ceremonies.

Rear-Admiral Surgeon Beadnell, is a new speaker at these gatherings, but a very welcome one. He was, he said, chiefly interested in Freethought from the scientific side, and it was his interest in science, with its bearings on religion, that first led him to the Freethought Movement as a whole. His story of the way in which he first made acquaintance with the *Freethinker*—through a clergyman who presented him with a copy, assuring him that it was the most honest and the most fearless paper in the country, greatly tickled his hearers. We hope to again listen to Dr. Beadnell on future occasions.

The entertainment part of the programme which alternated with the speeches, has been rarely excelled. Miss Dorothy Hogben, at the piano, was splendid, and Miss Hilda Warren sang admirably. Mr. Leonard Gowings fine tenor voice made Toselli's *Serenade*, a haunting thing of beauty and Mr. Lionel King, a card manipulator of exceptional skill, would have easily beaten any spirit conjuror at his own game. He literally bewildered his audience. Miss Edith Faulkner's humorous impersonations were wonderfully clever, and Messrs. Clapham and Dwyer made their audience rock with laughter. Mr. George Royle, who was responsible for this part of the evening's pleasure, deserves, and we are sure he has, the thanks of everybody present.

The singing of "Auld Lang Syne" by the whole company brought to an end a delightful evening, which will long remain a memory for all those who were fortunate enough to be present.

H. CUTNER.

Bad men live that they may eat and drink, whereas good men eat and drink that they may live.—*Socrates*.

Personal liberty is the paramount essential to human dignity and human happiness.—*Bulwer Lytton*.

Labour disgraces no man; unfortunately, you occasionally find men who disgrace labour.—*U. S. Grant*.

Men are never so likely to settle a question rightly as when they discuss it freely.—*Macaulay*.

Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man.—*Bacon*.

Despotism and freedom of the press cannot exist together.—*Gambetta*.

Murderers I Have Met.

(Concluded from page 42.)

KEATS, in his own way, was a sensitive little Mr. Kelly who danced in a prison-cell of poetic thought; and who used dactyls and hexameters, whatever they may be, for the purposes of his literary prancings, instead of ordinary feet. As for me, I am also a Kelly. Have I not polished daily, for more than thirty years, a chain of thought which reaches around the world? Australia, in brief, is merely the wooden prison-stool on which I sit. The murderers that I met, of yore, and I met many, in gaol with Mr. Kelly, were gentlemen, compared with the economic banker-murderers, and the holy episcopal come-to-Judas and be-damned-to-Jesus-murderers, who have smashed Australia to death, with the aid and blessing of the Bank of England, to-day.

There is nothing sensitive about me. Human genius that expects to get anywhere, and to smash an Empire or two in the process cannot afford to be as tender-hearted as a Chatterton, or as sensitive as Johnny Keats. Thirty years' hard work, upon the breakwater of common life, where we are all toiling together, like those coral-insects that I spoke of, beneath the stormy surface of the Pacific, has long since cured me of the Keatsian complex. I was tarred and feathered, once, in Australia, about ten years ago, for having written and published a newspaper article, which exposed the greatest Church-protected thief and swindler that this country ever saw. Five minutes after I had escaped from the hands of that hired gang of drunken, Christian Church-blessed hooligans, I sat down again, at my office-desk; wrote a soap testimonial; telegraphed it to Adelaide, and sold it to the Bunyip Soap Company, for one hundred pounds.

For that steel-sharp and iron-hard executive capacity to think and act, across long angles of this earth's surface, I have to thank the years that I spent, like Kelly, in prison, polishing my chain of thought. What is essentially wrong with writers like Mr. H. G. Wells and Mr. G. K. Chesterton, and the real reason why they are national failures, unable to serve the critical need of England, is that they have never developed that crashing, silent power. To me, that is to say, a book is merely a forest of words. I hurl myself through that forest, mentally, like a sort of patent steam-gorilla; looking for fruit. If I fail to find any, or if the intellectual fruitage that I find be sour and poisonous, as in Wells's case, or sweet and doubly poisonous, as in the case of Chesterton, I simply tear off a branch and use it as a club, wherewith to smash the writer's head.

Rough criticism? Yes. But if a few more direct and honest-purposed literary persons sprang at books like gorillas, and tore off branches occasionally, and smashed a "successful" Wells or a Chesterton, better forests of words might grow. What right has a Chesterton got to exude an eternal holy fungus of words, I ask, when none of them is worth, in the last analysis, a single brazil nut? That is what I want to know. Candidly, I think that a man who callously and deliberately imprisons one hundred thousand words, in a book; locks them up, in numbered chapters, as rigorously as if they were so many convicts, incarcerated in a prison's numbered cell-buildings; and never allows one good clear oceanic breath of sovereign honesty to blow through that volume, is just as big a moral murderer as any physical assassin that I ever met.

So I am saying so. Words are friends of mine, like Mr. Kelly, and I hate to see them abused. I loathe and despise my fellow-Australians, simple souls, for

many reasons, but principally because they are too lazy, upon the one hand, to speak or write the English language, which is a great one, correctly; and are also too incompetent and unimaginative, upon the other hand, to invent a genuine language of their own. They are the sort of people who can never shut their mouths, and who can seldom or never say anything, worth listening to, either, when their mouths are open. Because I tell them so, they hate me. But, at fifty, a man at least should possess sufficient courage to speak the truth, and damn the odds, about his native land?

That is how I propose to enjoy my fiftieth birthday. I think, with André Maurois in his *Whatever Gods May Be*, that the Australians are a strange mixture of frailty and courage, boldness and timidity, of modesty and ardour; and that they are all self-murderers at the core. Nobody, except myself, possesses a real, positive SELF in Australia, so far as I can see. Everybody, in short, takes his time from a damned old mummy like the late Sir Charles MacKellar, or the present-day Mr. Thomas Buckland, and tries to think and act in a way that would please the junior director-martinetts of the Bank of New South Wales.

Therefore, we are all in gaol. Culturally, Australia is nothing but a gigantic prison—a sort of super-Botany Bay. There is something heroic, I know, concealed beneath the lack of will-power of the average Australian, but I know that Bradman is not heroic. Like the average Pitt Street banker, he is simply an infernal bore.

What distinguishes this people, in brief, is a refusal to see life as it really is. They are trying to live up—or down—to an English or an American magazine ideal. An irritatingly silly sentimentality—the sort of thing which calls the really able Mr. Kingsford Smith “Smithly”; and which affects to find a special virtue in the alleged fact that he “looks just like a great big kid”—that is what I loathe and detest, at fifty—in my own self-murderous fellow Australians. They have endless toleration for their own most glaring faults, but are most sharply intolerant of the genuine excellences, let alone the faults, of others. Above all, they possess no boiling-point. Without the very real capacity to get, occasionally, mad, without being “doped-up” to it by the Press, a people amounts to nothing. That is why the English and even the Americans are so superior to the Australians. They can, both of them, once in a way, really get mad enough to rage together, with a common fury.

As for this country, its sap rolls through me, penetrating every word that flows from my pen; and I serve its needs as best as I know how—which is a far better and a more manly thing than miawling, cat-fashion, that I love it. Too many people affect to “love” Australia, simply because it is a good thing, like a cow surrounded by poddy-calves to suck. Maybe there is also a lot of people who affect to “love” England, Scotland, Ireland, etc., in the same way?

Australia, to-day, has the look of a concubine, instead of the look of a conqueror. Instead of facing the future man-fashion, it moans like a somewhat tarnished harlot who has either fallen or been thrown downstairs. I believe, sincerely, that this people requires to be tarred-and-feathered, with honest criticism, before it will ever learn to become habitually victorious. And maybe the people of England, taken at large, require the same thing? Perhaps since the war's end, they too have crawled away, into a corner a bit, and have murdered themselves? Have lost, I mean, volition.

As for me, at fifty I have taken life's measure, and I have won through. I am a hard-boiled Messiah,

and either I will crucify the Australian people or else they will crucify me. It is Julius Cæsar's jest to the pirates; and I live, facing the Pacific, upon a one-sided street called Victory Street. I have enjoyed this day, my fiftieth birthday, because I have seen and talked with Kelly. To all genuine Freethinkers, throughout the world, I send a strong gorilla's greetings. If I am old, I am also bold and more audacious than a double-barrelled Danton. Here in my continental prison-cell, still polishing my steel-bright chain of thought, I have boiling-force enough to believe that it is “up to” England to call me, presently, to service in a larger sphere.

JOHN MCCRASHIAN.

Sydney, Australia.

Time.

ONCE, before history, a patriarch died. His fame was so great that his tribe heaved a stone from a quarry and set it on a hillside in his memory. Men worshipped there. Æons passed, and the tribe with them. The stone remained.

At length a pioneer, travelling alone, discovered the memorial. To him, a zealot, it was more than a stone; it was the lost shrine of a saint. He slept beneath it, and saw a vision. He journeyed no further, but became a holy eremite living on the hill. To him gathered the superstitious.

In his turn the zealot died. Out of the cell which he had built sprang a chapel, dedicated to him and to the saint of the stone. The hill became populous, and the chapel grew. It was made of wood; but heathen, having defeated the people of the hill, set it on fire, and burnt it to the ground.

The heathen passed, but veneration remained. A pious merchant, security assured, built a new stone chapel round the shrine, which now stood within its structure. Another village rose upon the hill, and prospered. With it prospered the chapel. First it grew into a church, to which men added chantry chapels, and at last the dwellers on the hill grew so many that the church became a famed cathedral.

For one, two, three centuries the cathedral grew rich, bought lands, built a palace for a Bishop and houses for its priests, was embellished with silver and glass. Its shrine was sought by pilgrims. But with the passing of time came also corruption. Covetousness came, too, and a King with power to destroy. The shrine was despoiled; its purpose remained but not its wealth. Then came heresy and war, bringing with them more complete destruction. The stone was hidden beneath plaster, and all the beauty of the past forgotten.

For two more centuries the cathedral slept. Then new zealots came, with visions of an earlier glory. These in their passion transformed the building into something which it had never been. By chance in their work they uncovered the stone, and set it up again, outside the building. But first they smoothed it at the top, adding a cross-stone and above that an upright—this also in honour of death. They were restoring it, they said, to the shape it had taken in the distant past.

Centuries went by, and with them the cathedral and its acolytes. Its structure crumbled; moss and flowers covered its walls, and the hill once more grew desolate. Only the ancient stone remained, though that, too, suffered. The top crumbled, for the stone of the shaft was more enduring than the newer stone and at last it stood naked as in the beginning.

Æons passed, and then a zealot, travelling alone, came to the deserted place. He slept beneath the stone, and saw a vision . . . O. M. WARNER.

Profits from Sins.

(Concluded from page 43.)

ALTHOUGH Papal indulgences were at first accepted at their face value, yet their wholesale throwing about became such a farce that the Shop found it necessary to do a little "telling the tale." They told two tales, each of which was sufficient in itself, but with such experts in plain and fancy lying, a superfluity of tales is no matter. The Saints (said the Shop) had done so many pious deeds and virtuous actions beyond what was necessary to their own salvation that an enormous, in fact inexhaustible, treasure of merit had been laid up. The guardian and dispenser of this treasure was the Pope, and he could deal it out as he wished (terms—of course—cash). The other variation of the tale was that the treasure of merit was the blood of Christ. The merest drop of this was really sufficient for the purpose of atonement. The remainder, the superfluous "merits of Christ" could be applied for shortening or cancelling the punishments in purgatory—and was, of course, in the keeping of the Holy Shop, or rather of the Chairman of Directors, who could dole it out—as before. These tales are still in use, and go down yet with the muddle headed patrons of the Shop.

Shortly after the treasure-of-merit blarney was put into circulation, the Shop had one of its most brilliant ideas—that of Jubilees. The first of these was in 1300, though the Pope who arranged it said that such solemnities had been held at the close of every succeeding century—an unnecessary statement, which simply illustrates a peculiar kink in the priestly brain. Holy Shop has an absolute itch for lying. It just prefers fancy lying to plain truth. Or if it is not the ingrained instinct of the confidence trickster, it is done on the principle that the more lies there are about, the more difficult will it be to sift the truth . . . and, of course, the Shop does not want truth to be sifted out . . . anyway, in 1299 the Pope wanted a lot of money, so wrapped up in a splattering tale he made his offer to all Western Christendom—a plenary indulgence, i.e., entire remission of sins to all who should visit, for purposes of devotion, the churches of St. Peter and Paul in Rome. Of course an alms to Holy Shop was an understood condition.

The result was astounding. The Crusades, which entailed military service, had enlisted vast numbers. But this Jubilee offered the same benefits, and entailed no military service. Gibbon, in his inimitable style, thus describes it, "The welcome sound was propagated throughout Christendom, and at first from the nearest provinces of Italy, and at length from the remote kingdoms of Hungary and Britain the highways were thronged with a swarm of pilgrims who sought to expiate their sins . . . in the streets and churches many were trampled to death by the eagerness of devotion. The calculation of their numbers could not be easy nor accurate, and they have probably been magnified by a dextrous clergy well apprised of the contagious effect of example, yet we are assured by a judicious historian, who assisted at the ceremony, that Rome was never replenished with less than 200,000 strangers, and another has fixed at 2,000,000 the total concourse of the year. A trifling oblation from each individual would accumulate a royal treasure; and two priests stood day and night, with rakes in their hands to collect, without counting, the heaps of gold and silver that were poured on the altars of St. Paul." (*Decline and Fall*, c. 69.) What a scene for the Yorkshireman who, in that symposium on "What is the grandest thing in the world?" answered "Summat for nowt." Raking in the shekels—literally day and

night. Call the Shop Holy, call the counter an altar, make the till as big as a cart, tell the tale—and there you are. It makes the Rothschilds and the Rockfellers look small, eh?

Had the Shop to wait 100 years for another beano like that? Not likely. Was that silly lie about the end of the century being the occasion of Jubilee to stand in the way? Not likely. When 1350 approached, the Pope had a deputation from the citizens of Rome. They wanted another Jubilee, for they saw great profit to themselves out of the pious ninnies who would visit the city. So the Pope had a dream. To make certain he prayed to God to confirm it, and as he dreamed it a second time it evidently *was* from God—and the Jubilee was put on a fifty year basis. Profiting by experience this indulgence covered not only the stay in Rome, but the journey. "If any of the faithful, truly confessed, should die on the road (said the Pope in his announcement) we grant to him the full absolution and remission of sins; commanding absolutely to angels of Paradise, to introduce his soul into the glory of Paradise without even entering purgatory." The result was as successful as before. In fact the swarm of loonies was so great that one Bishop began selling dispensations for them to miss some of the routine in order to get them quicker out of the city so as to make room for more. But the citizens, who had all gone into the boarding-house business and were making tremendous profits, soon settled the hash of that interfering idiot. They removed him (and most of his household)—with poisoned wine . . . The necessity of the fire insurance policy covering the perils of the road was shown by the fact that only one in twelve of the pilgrims got back home. The chief cause of this was the plague. Catholic culture connotes dirt. Physically speaking the period when Catholic Culture was in its palmy days was one of indescribable filth—no sanitation, no soap. (In *Priestcraft* I gave some account of how this applies even in modern times. The Phillipines, e.g., were found to be in an appalling state of filth when the Americans got hold of them.) Consequently when the great unwashed had their Jubilee, so did the microbes. But Holy Shop didn't care. Business first. As long as the Shop got the pilgrims' money, they (the pilgrims) could go and die off like flies. And they did.

It was evident that fifty years was too long to wait for another Jubilee. So another scheme of reckoning was propounded, based on the thirty-three years of the life of Jesus. The Pope who worked this out, planned a Jubilee for 1389. But like the Bishop just mentioned, he proved an illustration of the fact that wine is a mocker—especially if it is doped. In short, he died and went—you may guess where—I don't know—but his successor held the defunct one's Jubilee in 1390. Also, to some extent, he diddle the microbes—not that he knew anything about microbes—these infallible Popes are an ignorant lot where scientific knowledge is concerned. Nor did he know anything about sanitation or soap. But he knew that if people stayed at home they were not as likely to get the plague and never land at Rome (with their money). So he sold indulgences to those who stayed at home if they subscribed the cost of the journey—you see how the Shop profited by experience.

The end of the century came. There had been a Jubilee only ten years before, but—well, of course that didn't matter. The end of the century was the time for a Jubilee, so the Pope (the same Pope as in 1390) proclaimed one. And the fools came again. That there was some little sense left in Europe was shown by the King of France doing all he could to keep his subjects at home—he could see that the thing was a waste of lives and money. But they swarmed over the frontier to get ticketed for heaven,

and very few of them got back home. The Pope's soldiers, who ought to have kept order, robbed and murdered the men, raped, robbed and murdered the women. And the microbes took a hand in the game. Plague carried off hundreds a day in Rome—the Pope would not release a farthing of his profits to help the miserable dupes. It saved expense to let them die and rot . . . The thirty-three year system would bring another Jubilee first—so the thirty-three year system was used, in 1423. Then a hop back to the fifty-year system brought a Jubilee in 1450. Then a Pope just announced that henceforth Jubilees should be reckoned every twenty-five years—so he got his Jubilee profits in 1475. But this does not mean that Jubilees only come every twenty-five years. Holy Shop is cuter than that. The twenty-fifth anniversary of, oh, anything is good enough excuse. In the nineteenth century Pope Leo XIII had fourteen Jubilees in twenty-one years.

The ordinary stores has its Great Spring (and Summer and Autumn and Winter) Sales. Holy Shop has its Jubilees. What's in a name?—Holy Shop knows—*pots of money!*

C. R. BOYD FREEMAN.

Society News.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.

THERE was a good attendance at the Conway Hall, when Dr. Estelle Cole lectured on "The New Psychology in Education."

The lecturer explained that the whole system on education in our elementary schools was wrong. There is too much of repression and very little of directive bringing out of the best in the child.

Dr. Cole's experience in her own faculty was fully borne out during the development of her lecture, and she also pointed out the necessity for Co-educational centres up to a certain age.

A good deal of heated discussion followed, and the meeting concluded with a vote of thanks, which Councillor Savory moved.

On Sunday next Captain C. A. Butcher will lecture on "The Suicidal Policy of War."

New Church Evidence Society

Swedenborg Hall, 20, Hart St., W.C.1.
(ENTRANCE BARTER STREET).

MONDAY EVENING LECTURES

7.30 p.m.

"Rational Evidence of Divine Revelation."

Jan. 26. I.—"The Criteria."

Feb. 23. II.—"The Evidence of the Old Testament."

Mar. 23. III.—"The Evidence of the New Testament."

BY

REV. W. H. CLAXTON
(former Hyde Park Missioner).

CHAIRMAN: Mr. B. A. LEMAINÉ, West London Branch
National Secular Society.

QUESTIONS RELEVANT TO THE LECTURES INVITED.
Written or Spoken.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

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.

HIGHGATE DEBATING SOCIETY (Winchester Hotel, Archway Road, Highgate, N.): Wednesday, January 28, at 7.45, Miss J. Wood.

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8, near Marlborough Road Station): 11.15, Miss Dorothy Matthews, B.A.—"Language as Power in Prose and Poetry."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Mr. Dimsdale Stocker—"The Psychology of Clothes."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, John A. Hobson, M.A.—"British Common Sense."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Winter Garden, 37 High Street, Clapham, near Clapham North Underground Station): 7.15, Mrs. M. L. Seaton-Tiedman (Sec. Divorce Law Reform Union)—"Dean Inge's Married Pariahs."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.7, facing The Brecknock): 7.30, Debate—"Can a Christian be a Socialist?" *Affir.*: Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe; *Neg.*: Mr. G. Head.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 7.30, Captain C. A. Butcher—"The Suicidal Policy of War."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BURNLEY LABOUR COLLEGE EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY (Labour Club, Grey Street, Burnley): A Lecture by Mr. J. Clayton.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Schools): 7.0, Mr. B. A. LeMaine—"Christianity and Mithraism."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley, 3.30, Mr. J. Clayton—N.S.S. Questions and Discussion. All welcome.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.—City (Albion Street) Hall, 6.30, Mr. A. M. Rennie—"Obliter Dicta."

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, 41 Islington, Liverpool—entrance Christian Street): 7.0, Councillor George Hall (Manchester)—"Why Worry About Gods." Current *Freethinkers* on sale.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Prof. Robert Peers, M.A. (University College, Nottingham)—"Religion and Nationalism."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, 120 Rusholme Road, Manchester): Mr. J. Clayton's lecture has been postponed until February 1.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Socialist Club, Arcade, Pilgrim Street): 3.0, Members Annual Meeting and Report.

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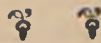
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