

# THE CHURCH IN SPAIN.

The

# FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN · · · EDITOR · 1881-1915 · G. W. FOOTE

VOL. LI.—No. 21

SUNDAY, MAY 24, 1931

PRICE THREEPENCE

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## Views and Opinions.

### The Church in Spain.

JUDGING from the course of events it does not appear unlikely that before long we shall be seeing the Spanish revolution put to the same uses by certain papers and people in this country as was the Russian revolution. Then there was an organized attempt to stampede the country with lurid accounts of the influence of Atheism in Russia. There were stories of the closing of all the Churches of Russia, the wholesale massacre of simple, gentle priests, and the torture of Christians for no other offence than that of being Christians. The purposes of the stories were threefold. First there was the desire to stir up feeling against Russia on account of its economic policy, a policy with which in this place we are not concerned. On the religious side the aim was to stampede timid unbelievers into denouncing the Russian policy with regard to religion, and having got thus far to use the tales and the denunciations of these unbelievers to warn off everyone against having anything to do with unbelief in any of its forms. There are indications that there will be another attempt to work the same game by the same papers and the same people that were responsible for the stories about Russia. Those tales of religious massacre were dropped so soon as the exposure became telling, and in that exposure we believe we played some part in the series of articles we wrote analysing the position. What may happen in Spain no one can yet say with certainty, but it is well to try to get a reliable general view of the existing situation, so that we may be prepared for the religious campaign for the discrediting of Freethought, if and when it begins.

### Christianity and Civilization.

With the political aspects of the revolution in Spain we are not here concerned, save to say that the kind of Government a country desires is its business en-

tirely, and the practical expulsion of Alfonso left no doubt as to the desire of the Spanish people with regard to him. The expulsion was accompanied without bloodshed, and the king passed out without regret by the overwhelming majority of the people he had for so long helped to misgovern. The pose of submitting to the will of the people by one who only a few weeks recently is reported to have declared, when he believed that he had the army with him, "If the people want a republic they will have to fight for it," will deceive no one, least of all will it deceive those who have read what has been said of the character and career of Alfonso by those Spanish writers who have been ostracized from their country on account of their open speech, and their attempts to establish constitutional government. The declaration was obviously one intended to make his residence in France and England easier, since in neither country would he have been allowed to establish a public headquarters for plots against the new Republic. Kings of the Alfonso type do not calmly abide by the will of the people—unless it is accompanied by the only kind of persuasion such kings understand.

But two things have accompanied the revolution which are to many a little puzzling. The first is the apparent silence of the Church during the last phase leading to the expulsion of Alfonso, the other, the recent riots during which a number of convents have been destroyed, and which have been converted in some quarters in this country into Atheistic outbreaks against the freedom of religious worship. Both things, occurring in Spain, are surprising and require explanation. For Spain is the classic home of superstition and of religious intolerance. It was religion—the Christian religion—that reduced Spain from being one of the most civilized, the most tolerant, the most cultured countries in the world, to one of the most intolerant, the least enlightened, the most backward countries in Europe. The Inquisition set up by the Christian Church has gained eternal fame as one of the most damnable instruments of religious terrorism and intellectual barbarism that the world has ever seen; but the Spanish Inquisition was the worst form of even this. Accompanied by every circumstance of brutality, massacre, and greed, it divested Spain of its chief intellectual, agricultural and commercial strength by expelling the Mohammedans and the Jews. The destruction of the Mohammedan culture of Spain left the country, in the well-known phrase of Buckle, ashamed of having everything of which a country should be proud to possess, and proud of possessing everything that a country should be ashamed to possess. The Church became the supreme power in Spain; the life of the country was dominated by the figure of the priest—sinister, slothful, intolerant and ignorant. The Church from then until our own day ruled thought in Spain; it banned all education that was not under its control, while

what it dispensed as education the people would have been better without. No country has ever been more completely under the control of the Christian Church than has Spain, and its consequences are writ large in its history. I do not know any better reply to the plea that Christianity has aided the course of civilization than can be found in the history of Spain.

#### The Breaking of the Storm.

For over a century there have been going on in Spain attempts to educate and democratize the people, to be met with the solid opposition of Church and crown. The struggles in our own day of Ferrer to set up schools that would be worthy of the name is only a late stage of this process of emancipation. The murder of Ferrer would be fresh in the minds of all were it not that we are so largely a nation of newspaper readers, the vast majority of whom forget to-morrow what they read to-day. Ferrer's murder, with the suppression of his schools were only part of a series of such happenings that have been going on for long in the name of Church and Crown. But efforts at reform are never wholly useless. Even when they are formally suppressed they survive in part, along with some resentment against repression. Both bear fruit, as was seen in 1789 in France, in 1917 in Russia, and to-day in Spain. Revolution then becomes the expression of a determination to end a state of things that have become intolerable.

But when the revolution did come to Spain, the surprising thing to many was the silence of the Church. On the face of it the Church took no steps whatever to prevent it. It appeared to stand quite aloof; and if anything was required to prove the practical unanimity of the Spanish people in their desire to be rid of Alfonso it was the silence of the Church. The unanimity of the people was too much for the Church—for a time at least. Indeed it is very probable that had the leaders of the revolution promised to support the Church in its claims the Church would in turn have supported the revolution. For the Roman Church is not committed to any particular form of government. It will endow with divine approval any kind of government that backs it up in its claims, and protects its wealth. But if the Church said nothing there is no reason to believe that it remained passive, or that it would not have done anything to bring back so faithful a supporter of the Church as Alfonso.

Astutely enough in the circumstances the Church waited for the Republic to make the first move. And the new Government was bound to do something with the Church. Spain is a land that is simply overrun with priests, monks and nuns, and overcrowded with convents, monasteries and religious buildings. Madrid alone has over two hundred monasteries and convents, and that may be taken as a sample of the country as a whole. Any step the Government took to establish a system of sound education, or to make a just rule possible, or to develop the resources of the country, would be bound to come up against the interests and the power of the Church. Thus, action was forced upon the Republican leaders, and the first step was taken by a proclamation that there should be established complete equality in religion. It was also known that a system of national education free from priestly control was imminent—something badly needed in a population of which more than half was illiterate. These were things the Church could not tolerate for a moment. They are things which the Roman Church everywhere denies in theory, and wherever possible in practice. The Church took it as a declaration of war on the part of the Republic. It meant just what the declaration of the United States

Government that bootlegging, racketeering, etc., should no longer exist in the country would mean to Al Capone and Company. Just as in England any Government which attempts to improve or develop our educational system finds itself in conflict with religious interests, and is compelled to fight the power of the Churches, so the Government of a country such as Spain can make no real advance in the development of intellectual and social life without coming into conflict with the Roman Church. According to the *Universe*, for May 15, the Government has prohibited local authorities and public organizations from taking part, as such, in religious ceremonies, while soldiers and State Employees have been freed from compulsory attendance at mass. The *Universe* adds, that "Catholicism can never be considered in Spain as merely a sect." All of this means that while on the one hand the Government is compelled to move towards the secularization of the State, the Church is determined to do what it can to prevent this being done. For the fact that, again to quote the *Universe* "the laicisation of public life has begun," means a state of war between the Church and the Republic. The Church will give way only when it is compelled; and those who know the Church will be ready to credit the statement made by some of the leaders of the Republicans that the Church has already been in communication with Alfonso and his supporters in order to plot for the restoration of the monarchy.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be concluded.)

### La Belle Dame, with Mercy.

"Truth all round, clearness of vision, is the most fortifying thing in the world."—*Alfred Milner.*

"There is something to be said for every error, but the most important thing to be said about it is that it is erroneous."—*G. K. Chesterton.*

THAT a clergyman's wife should take the path to Atheism, was, in the nineteenth century, considered shocking. That she should become a Freethought leader was thought in thousands of sheltered homes, a happening so calamitous as to invite supernatural interference. Annie Besant did this brave deed, and took the harsh consequences. She also wrote her name indelibly in the intellectual history of this country.

In the last century there were few women in the Freethought Movement, the conditions were far too strenuous. It is also true that Richard Carlile's brave wife and sister both served sentences of two years' imprisonment for blasphemy, and, later, that Matilda Roalfe was sent to prison for selling *The Age of Reason*, but these heroic women were not, in any sense, leaders. Years after Mrs. Harriet Law made a great hit with her lectures, but Annie Besant was not only a pioneer, but a leader in a time of great stress and danger.

The younger soldiers of the Freethought Army can have little conception of the intense hatred and antagonism which the Old Guard of Freethought roused in the Christian Camp. To-day, if there be not a greater tolerance, there is at least less bitterness, due as much to increasing religious indifference as to more civilized manners. Christian apologists, who never tire of boasting of the tolerance of their intolerant creed, need to be reminded of these things. In the long-drawn-out struggle for Liberty, for instance, Richard Carlile and his colleagues endured fifty years' imprisonment. Daniel Eaton was prosecuted seven times, and had £2,500 worth of property destroyed by order of the Courts. The poet Shelley was ordered to be deprived of the custody of his

children, and a similar dishonour was inflicted on Annie Besant many years later. Charles Bradlaugh had to wait thirteen years, on account of his known Atheism, before he could take his seat in Parliament as the elected representative of Northampton. Edward Truelove, when over seventy years of age, went to prison. George Foote's own share of Christian charity was a year in prison. The late Marquis of Queensberry was denied a seat in the House of Lords on account of his sceptical opinions. Last, but not least, thousands of pounds bequeathed for Freethought purposes were diverted to other channels. It was not Christian justice that stopped this highway robbery, but the strong right arms of Foote and his colleagues.

Annie Besant, a charming and cultured woman, entered this battlefield with all the dignity of a queen. Although brought up amid the ease and luxury of a middle-class home, she never flinched at the stern call of duty. Educated far above her fellows, she carried her weight of learning gracefully. Matriculating at London University, she took the Bachelor of Science degree with honours. Her knowledge of French and German was soon turned to capital account, and she translated Jules Soury's *Religion of Israel*, and *Jesus and the Gospels*, and also Ludwig Büchner's works.

Thrust into leadership by her rare talents, she was forced into journalism by the accident of her position, but, even in the narrow way of propaganda, she, like her colleagues, found time to encourage genius. Bradlaugh, it will be recalled, introduced that shy genius, James Thomson, the author of *The City of Dreadful Night*, to the readers of the *National Reformer*; whilst she was publishing Bernard Shaw's novels long before that great writer had stormed the bastions of success.

It is one of life's little ironies, that whereas Annie Besant has been so largely regarded by the public as a leader, she has in reality been as much a disciple as any of the rank and file. Her life-story proves this. She sat, successively, at the feet of so many different teachers, such as Dr. Pusey, Dean Stanley, Charles Voysey, Moncure Conway, Thomas Scott, Charles Bradlaugh, Mdme. Blavatsky, the Fabians, to mention a few names that can be recalled readily. After thus boxing the compass of belief, she still finds numbers of well-dressed and apparently educated people, who regard her as the last of the oracles, and who wait upon her lightest word.

What is the secret of her hold upon such large numbers of people, ranging from hard-headed Secularists to sentimental Superstitionists. The explanation lies, we think, in her bright and forceful personality, and also in her gift of oratory, which was very remarkable. Indeed, she had no serious rival of her own sex, and the foremost women speakers on the Suffragette and Temperance platforms seemed commonplace in comparison.

How vividly do her orations come through the mist of years that are no more! Where she was at the meridian of her extraordinary power she was easily first among women speakers. There was none like her. When she chanted, in a voice as sweet as a silver bell, the Galilean's requiem, or retold in awed accents the piteous story of Giordano Bruno, or when she pleaded for liberty for men, women and children, the audiences cheered themselves hoarse in their admiration of her consummate oratory. A rare and accomplished artist, she played on her audience as a talented musician plays on an organ. At her farewell speech at the old Hall of Science, London, after fifteen years devoted service to Secularism, she made a most moving speech. Speaking of what even a woman had to endure in those dark days in the cause

of liberty, she exclaimed: "I have been called prostitute." Some of her audience actually broke down, and grey-headed men were not ashamed to be seen in tears. For, in those far-off days, Annie Besant was one of the most fascinating speakers it was possible to listen to.

Many years before, Annie Besant discovered her gift of speech. She was then the young wife of a Church of England minister, the Rev. Frank Besant, brother to the famous novelist. One day, being alone in the church, where she had gone to play the organ, the idea seized her of mounting the pulpit and delivering an address to the empty benches. "I knew of a verity," she wrote afterwards, "that the gift of speech was mine, and that, if ever—and then it seemed so impossible!—if ever the chance came to me of public work, this power of melodious utterance should at least win hearing of any message I had to bring."

It was no idle boast. Her golden tongue has won a hearing for many causes; but the fact emerges that her best and most lasting work was done for militant Freethought. It was not roses all the way. She was assailed with all the vocabulary of theological abhorrence, and no vituperation is so malignant nor so nauseating. Nor did enmity stop at abuse. Lime was thrown at her; sticks broken over her; mud slung at her. Reared in a sheltered home, it is difficult to realize how she withstood it all. After fifteen years of stress, long railway journeys, draughty and cheerless lecture halls, stormy meetings, little leisure, she must have sometimes felt weary, and sighed for the comfort and refinement of more congenial surroundings. Most men would rather have given up altogether than endure this, if they had to break stones for a living. And Annie Besant was a gentlewoman in the highest sense of that much-abused word.

In estimating her very remarkable career, this part of her life looms largest, and overshadows the smaller interests that succeeded. Paradoxical as it may seem, this rare and gifted high-priestess of a latter-day superstition seems fated to pass through life and to leave no lasting vestige save that ever-memorable time when she gave the best years of her splendid womanhood to the cause of militant Freethought. During those fifteen stormy years those of us who were then young and ardent regarded her much as the fervent soldiers of France esteemed Joan of Arc. A queen-like woman, she crowned even propaganda with a noble poetry, bearing "that happy air of majesty and truth."

If only for her great moral courage in championing such unpopular causes as Atheism, Malthusianism, and Republicanism in an age of false values and hide-bound convention, she deserves the admiration of posterity. Women of to-day have something to learn from this pioneer, who, in the full glory of her womanhood, devoted herself, unselfishly, to the welfare of her less-fortunate fellows. At the call of duty she left a comfortable home, where she could enjoy what the world had to offer, and, willingly, chose the hard road of the pioneer. It was well and happily done. For the pioneers look beyond the tumult and shoutings of the day, and are touched by what Shakespeare finely calls "the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come."

MIMNERMUS.

If an man's ears are closed to truth and cannot endure it, even from the mouth of a friend, his case is hopeless.

Cicero.

The people are seldom wrong—woe to those who despise their remonstrances.—Chateaubriand.

The fool enacts, the wise observe the law.—Boileau.

## Ferrer and his Work.

### I.

THE "Escuela Moderna" was founded by Francisco Ferrer, at Barcelona, on September 8, 1901. The basis of its teaching was wholly secular. No priest and no religion, no prayers, and no devotions inspired by any creed of supernaturalistic affinities, found shelter under its auspices. Already, in 1906, three years before the bigots murdered Ferrer, more than fifty schools based on the model of the Escuela Moderna, were established in Catalonia and other Spanish provinces. Not all of these institutions were actually branches of the Escuela Moderna founded by Ferrer, but the wide influence exerted by his initiative may be gauged by the fact that on Good Friday, 1906, Ferrer was able to give a banquet to 1,700 students belonging to the diverse schools affiliated with or inspired by the ideals of the Escuela Moderna.

In that year (1906) a vindictive explosion of persecution broke out against Ferrer, and when the authorities, stirred up by the clergy, had put Ferrer into prison and confiscated his fortune, new schools were formed in many localities, and all that this odious persecution was able to effect was that fresh impulsion was given in Spain to the cause of secular, unsectarian, and non-religious instruction. New centres were opened in many towns, and a considerable publicity was given by the Spanish press to the long-neglected subject of the national education. One of the most notable of the new schools thus launched into being was the Escuela Moderna, founded by Don Samuel Torner in 1906, in generous rivalry with Ferrer's foundation, but I regret to say that in October, 1909, Maura's Government, which murdered Ferrer, imprisoned Don Torner, besides many other teachers, and no information has yet reached me as to whether he and his fellow-victims have escaped the fate of Ferrer. How creditable to Spain, with its ten million people quite illiterate!

### II.

Ferrer was born, about seventy years ago, in the province of Barcelona. In 1886, when relatively young, and occupied in the position of director of one of the Spanish lines of railway, he fell under suspicion of the Government, and was forced to seek refuge in France. His flight followed the abortive attempt of the Republican General Villacampa to break down the monarchy, an event which brought about the exile of all those Spaniards who professed advanced political ideas. It was a strange fatality that, after being expatriated because of a few pistol shots of a republican general, Ferrer was destined to be the propitiatory victim because of a bomb explosion on the part of an anarchist.

During his exile, Ferrer lived at Paris as the friend and Secretary of Ruiz Zorilla, a former Prime Minister and chief of the Spanish Republicans. When Zorilla died, Ferrer became professor of the Spanish literature and language at the Philotechnic Association at Paris. After the death of his old chief, his faith, already much shaken, as regards the value of revolutions accomplished, as he said, by certain superficial revolutionaries, who nearly always are the victims of the same prejudices as their adversaries, succumbed also. For those who are interested in the evolution of Ferrer's ideal towards the pacific and pedagogic solution of the political problems in Spain, the able article by my old friend, Monsieur Alfred Naquet, on the Ferrer question in the Nineteenth Century Review of November, 1909 will be at once useful and instructive.

### III.

After the Villacampa incident he henceforth applied all his activities to the task of founding a school which he hoped might serve as a model for the schools already established by the radical, rationalist, and progressist parties in Spain. Fortunately it happened that one of the pupils of Ferrer—a lady of about fifty years, Mdlle. Meunier—sought to convert her professor to the true faith of a Roman Catholic, but in the course of the discussions waged between them the earnest lady found her salvation, at last, in the ardent idealistic rationalism of her instructor. Possessed, as she was, of several millions of francs, and having neither kith nor kin, she bequeathed to Ferrer a property in Paris producing an annual income of 35,000 francs. Her object was to endow Ferrer with sufficient funds to enable him to launch his educational campaign in Spain.

According to the programme published when the Escuela Moderna was founded, its teaching was based on the progressive evolution of the pupil's mentality. Ferrer's aim was to avoid the arousing of reactionary, atavistic instincts—religion, race enmities, class prejudice, the love or praise of war, and the spirit of revenge—which are artfully calculated and inculcated in order to saddle the child with the dead weight of past savageries—and thereby to prevent every tentative approach towards the realization of a condition in affairs making for an ever-increasing improvement in the general lot of mankind. "Our teaching"—said Ferrer—"accepts neither dogmas nor traditional theories, for they are the forms which imprison one's mental vitality within the limits imposed by the exigencies of transitory phases in our social evolution. We only accept those solutions of problems which have been demonstrated by facts—theories ratified by reason, and truths confirmed by indisputable proofs. The object of our teaching is that the brain of the individual may function as the free instrument of his will. We desire that the truths of science may shine with their native light, and may so illumine each intelligence that, when put into practice, they may bestow happiness upon mankind, without any limitations imposed by odious privileges in favour of particular individuals." This ideal—Ferrer's ideal—aims high, but it is an ideal that sums up abstract justice in its highest and noblest sense.

### IV.

When, in 1901, Ferrer enriched by the magnificent bequest, returned to Spain, the descendants of Torquemada gnashed their teeth with rage. They already saw, in their minds eye, the germination, and feared the development throughout Spain, of that pregnant seed—all so small at first—which was the Escuela Moderna, Barcelona.

Although the roots of his method—the method of the Escuela Moderna—had already been planted in Spain, Ferrer found it necessary to recommence and reorganize, enrich and methodize the new undertaking by the proper and convenient furnishing of the school, the selection and publication of new and up-to-date school books, and the elaboration of new pedagogic principles in conformity with his sane and bold conception of the fundamental necessity of ordaining the school and its emulators upon the lines of an out-and-out exclusion of religion and its dogmas from the teaching and doctrine of the Escuela Moderna. In no other way can the world be made safe and fit for the children born into it. In any other way, they are damned to be the slaves of the Churches.

### V.

The study of the methods of the Escuela Moderna is full of interest and inspiration. First of all, all re-

ligious teaching is eliminated. One of the text books—Malvert's excellent work, *The Origin of Christianity*, is not taught but explained. This capital work demonstrates that Christianity, so far from being the manna that fell from heaven is, on the contrary, a pernicious weed of superstition which fastens itself upon the heart and affections of mankind with other obnoxious evils, to the serious hurt and injury to one's intellectual clarity and the impairment of the reasoning faculties of the race. In order to counteract the insidious intrusions of theology an admirable work *The Universal Substance*, by Albert Bloch and Paraf-Javal was specially written for the school. But I must reserve to my next article the task of noticing more fully the various books, nearly fifty in number, issued by Ferrer in connection with the campaign initiated by him in favour of his great mission to rescue the education of the children of Spain from the hands of the priests. Suffice it to say that soon after the Escuela Moderna was launched, a large number of other schools which had been established in Catalonia and other parts of Spain, were absorbed by Ferrer's undertaking, so that already after his school was in the fourth year of its existence forty (40) schools had copied his methods and adopted his manuals. Precisely at that epoch his influence had begun to make itself felt in other countries. For example, at San Paulo in Brazil, at Rome even, and at Lausanne, and at Amsterdam the scholastic books of the Escuela Moderna were adopted. When the cataclysm of persecution burst upon Ferrer in May, 1906, about fifty (50) schools were already in existence. In consequence of the governmental repression about twelve of these schools were suppressed, principally those which were not too strong; but newer and stronger institutions rose, like the Phoenix, from the ashes of the weaker ones. One of the most remarkable of these was the "Nueva Humanidad" (The New Humanity) founded at Valencia during the incarceration of Ferrer.

The founder of that school was Don Torner, but in 1909 his school, too, came to grief, as we have already noted in the second paragraph of this article. Evidently the way of the transgressor is hard when bigots and ruthless priests, and priest-ruled rulers, fall foul at the hands of the godly emulators of Torquemada.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

(To be continued.)

### The Pendulum.

If Life were always sunny, would folk then feel inclined to ponder less on money, and more on being kind?

Not so! For Time goes swinging from sunrise unto night; so when sorrow follows singing, 'tis the darkness brings the light!

So were cloudland always golden, our faces would be fain to know our health beholden to the lisp of falling rain!

So if birds went always thronging in a psalm of endless zest, how our senses would be longing for a deep, deep hour of rest!

So were spirits always youthful and old age knew naught of grief, how much saner and more truthful our glad search for Death's relief!

So we seek no better heaven lest we flee a lesser hell, hearing all to Love's Last Leaven—Hope Endureth! All is Well!

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

Omitaka, Nigeria.

## More About the Roman Catholic Holy Shop.

(Continued from page 294.)

FOR going into the Church of St. Paul you could get 47,000 years pardon. In the Church was a chair—sitting in it, carried 100,000 years of pardon.

In the Church of St. Mary Major, at the first altar as you went in you could get 14,000 years pardon; at the High Altar 28,000. By going into a cellar, where forty-nine Popes were buried you got the right to deliver eight souls (your own choice) out of purgatory. In the cellar was a pit where Saints Peter and Paul were hidden (and forgotten) for 250 years. Whoso put his head into the pit and took it out again was made clean of all sin.

Behind the altar of St. John Lateran was a chair in which God once sat. Any pilgrim who sat in it had one third of his sins pardoned—and so on ad nauseam (one would think) but—the old book concludes "And thus may a man have at Rome grete pardon and soul helth. Blessyd ben all those pepull, and in good time born, that ressevith all those graces and well kepyth them. Of the which Pardone and grace our Lord Jhesu Chrest mote graunt to all good Chrysten men. Amen."

One wonders how human beings can be so soft as to be taken in by the balderdash purveyed by Holy Shop. And not everybody, even in the Middle Ages, was gulled. But the Vatican gang relies on the big battalions (Carlyle's—"mostly fools"). In these present democratic times it is mobilizing the "mostly fools" into battalions of voters. In the Middle Ages its chief power was in the peasantry. Put thus baldly it doesn't sound impressive. But think of it this way. The English kings who over-ran France and won the Battles of Crecy, Poitiers, and Agincourt, gained their victories by means chiefly of the skill of archers, who, of course, were peasants. The strength of the kings and nobles lay in the bowmen, who were brave as lions—*except in one direction*. They were afraid of purgatory, and of the priests who held the keys. When Becket was killed in Canterbury Cathedral, the priests worked on the superstitious fears of the mob. Unless the king did penance, everybody would go to hell or purgatory. And because the mob preferred to see the king do penance rather than itself go to purgatory the king was actually scourged bare-backed. For in those days every man was a trained soldier. Every man had his weapons, which he kept in his own home. And an armed mob—when the mob included *all* the lower orders—if it turned against the ruling caste left that caste absolutely helpless. The discovery of printing led to a spread of learning—in other words a decrease of ignorance, but for a long period the Vatican gang had enough political power to stamp out any signs of intellectual revolt with the savageness characteristic of it. The intellectual ferment, however, went on, and it was reinforced by a rising of the moral sense of the people. For the priests, spoiled by easy money, became—the big majority of them—mere blackguards. The jargon of their trade was in terms of holiness morality, the evils and dangers of sin, etc. The priests were supposed to set an example of good living, but from the Popes downwards, they became soaked in examples to the contrary. There was a stage when priests could have concubines if they paid a licence. This was followed by a stage where the Bishops made them pay for the licence whether they had concubines or not. Convents were brothels. In the monasteries the abbots and monks kept harems. The

records of the visitation of the monasteries in the reign of Henry VIII. give copious particulars. The officials who made the reports bluntly describe the women as whores. At the monastery at Bath one monk had seven, another eleven. At Monkfairley the prior had five and several bastards. At Abingdon the abbot had three. This beauty had two children by his own sister. At Shalbread the prior had seven, one of his monks also seven, another five. The prior of Bermondsey had twenty—and so on, through most of the four hundred monasteries and convents then in the country. There was also a lot of filthy, unnatural vice in these places. Yet these brutes presumed to consider themselves "sacred"!

"Whom the Gods wish to destroy they first make mad." The art of printing was spreading learning more and more, but instead of reading the signs of the times the priests, whilst the laity were rising in intellect and morals, sank deeper in vice whilst they inflated their bloated pretensions still more. When everything pointed to the need for walking delicately, Holy Shop started a sale of indulgences with even more than its usual brazen impudence, though it was really no worse in itself than what the Shop had done on special occasions before (*e.g.*, Jubilees). Only now it was flouting a public opinion such as it had not met before. The pope had agents for the conduct of the business all over Europe, and it happened that his agent for Germany was impudent even beyond ordinary for a priest or monk; and it also happened that this man came up against another man, also out of the ordinary (but in a very different way) namely Martin Luther. Nowadays we know what success Luther had, and we know also that his success was largely due to the fact that he had public opinion behind him. But when Tetzel started his tour, that public opinion was not in much evidence. And only a brave man would have risked his life on the strength of it. Not that Luther did build on it. His bravery was such that he acted without it. He stood up to an organization that bossed even kings and emperors, and whose cultured (Catholic-cultured) method of dealing with critics was to burn them alive. Luther was of the stuff that martyrs are made of, and he took the risk of being one. There was an outraged moral sense all over Europe, and he stepped forth to be its spokesman. His first act was looked on (and perhaps was) as similar to those of many good simple souls who had protested against wickedness. But as one crisis followed another Luther rose to each occasion and became one of the outstanding figures of European history.

As far as we know Luther first heard of Tetzel in 1516, but that Holy Hawker had been selling indulgences in an ordinary way of business since 1502. His special talent had brought him promotion, and now he was touring Germany in very high style, making money for the firm—and for himself—and quite enjoying life. Though a celibate monk, vowed to chastity, he had two of his own children with him. He was a knave, of course, and conducted himself like one. (The Emperor Maximilian once gave orders to have him put into a sack and drowned, but influence was brought to bear and he was saved.) He was a typical highly placed Vatican Ganger, with a forehead of brass, lungs of leather and no morals, a perfect specimen in fact of Catholic culture.

His wares were dispensations and indulgences. Dispensations to eat meat on fast days, or to marry a near relation (the Church had "prohibited" marriage to the fourth degree of consanguinity in order to sell dispensations to break the prohibition)—in short there were dispensations for anything and everything which the faithful might wish to possess who desired forbidden pleasures.

He had a tariff for different sins, though he would vary his charges according to circumstances. Polygamy paid six ducats, theft in church, nine; perjury, nine; murder, eight, etc., etc. He paid his travelling expenses in indulgences for getting four, five or more souls out of purgatory, and these papers began to circulate as paper money or bank notes!

The indulgences, the hawkers represented as letters of credit on heaven. When the great book of accounts was opened at the Day of Judgment the people believed that these papers would balance the accounts on the right side. Debtor, so many murders, so many robberies, debaucheries, etc. Creditor, the merits of the saints placed to the sinner's account by the Pope's letters in consideration for value received.

Tetzel travelled in state, like a nobleman with his retinue. When the procession approached a town a messenger was sent to the magistrates to announce that "the grace of God and St. Peter is at your gates." Then the clergy, priests and nuns, the council, schoolmasters and their scholars, guilds with their banners, all turned out, with lighted tapers in their hands, to the sound of music and the ringing of bells, and met the hawkers. Then they proceeded to the Church. The Pope's bull of grace was carried in front on a cushion, or cloth of gold. Next came Tetzel with a big wooden cross painted red. The procession moved forward with hymns, prayers and incense, and was received at the church with music. The cross was placed in front of the altar and the Pope's arms hung over it. All the time it remained there the clergy, etc., came after vespers to do obeisance to it. You see how Holy Shop realized the sweet uses of advertisement, and impressed its dupes with the importance of its wares. Tetzel, however, was the *piece de resistance*. No showman at a fair could give him points. He would get into the pulpit and hawk his wares in a way that certainly drew attention. Many of his sayings have been preserved.

"The Lord our God is no longer God. He has committed all power to the Pope. This cross has the very same efficacy as the actual cross of Jesus Christ. . . . Indulgences are the most precious and sublime gift of God. . . . Come, and I will give you letters under seal by which even the sins you may desire to commit in the future will all be forgiven. . . . I would not exchange my privileges with St. Peter for I have saved more souls by my indulgences than the apostle by his sermons. There is no sin too great for an indulgence to remit. Even should anyone—the thing no doubt is impossible—do violence to the Holy Virgin Mary, mother of God, let him only pay well and it will be forgiven him."

This rather startling illustration (it is startling, isn't it?) made even the Germans open their eyes, and mouths, but Tetzel maintained and defended his assertion in a work he published—which is pretty good evidence that he had perpetrated such a good specimen of Catholic culture. . . . "For each mortal sin" (we are still quoting our gentleman) "you must, after confession and contrition do penance for seven years, either in this life or in Purgatory—these sins are almost innumerable. . . . but now by means of these letters of indulgence you can at once for life, in all cases except four which are reserved to the Apostolic See, obtain a full remission of your pains and sins." (Note how the Holy Shop kept some wares on its shelves). "Oh imbecile and brutish people" (even a liar sometimes speaks truth!) "who perceive not the grace so richly offered you; indulgences save not only the living but the dead. . . . hard-hearted thoughtless man, with twelve pence you can deliver your father out of purgatory, and you are ungrateful enough not to save him—it will be pub-

lished in the day of judgment and you will be punished for your neglect.

D'Anbigni (*History of Reformation*, Vol. I, p. 222) gives a translation of one letter of indulgence which remits all penalties, even the four ordinarily reserved for the Apostolic See. It promises that "at the moment of death the gate of purgatory will be shut upon thee . . . that which leads to paradise will be open . . . in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Signed John Tetzel, Friar."

Many lively tales are told about Tetzel. Perhaps the best is that of the man who bought an indulgence from him and then, a few days later, caught him on a journey, gave him a hiding, took his strong box—and showed him the indulgence. Tetzel's language we are given to understand, as a specimen of Catholic culture, was one of the best efforts ever.

C. R. BOYD FREEMAN.

(To be concluded.)

### Acid Drops.

It is part of the Act regulating the collection of tithe that the whole of the tithe from a given area may be collected from one man, leaving him to get back from others their shares. An example of this comes to hand from Canvey Island, a Bungalow town in the Thames estuary. A man purchased a plot of land for £90. He found himself called upon, six years later, to pay the sum of £130, and as he could not pay, he had only his post office pension on which to live, his goods were ordered to be sold at Southend. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners say they must have the money, and the parsons say they must live—although the latter does not seem necessary to many of us.

Tithe is still one of the ways in which the country is compelled to support the Church, whether people wish to do so or not. One duty that once fell upon the tithees when collected was the giving of alms. In its palmy days the church never gave all it was supposed to give, but to-day it gives nothing at all. And the actual amount of tithe collected does not represent the whole of what the country pays to the church. In very many cases the tithe has been commuted—that is the parson's claim has been bought by the district. But this means that the district is paying to the parson the interest every year of the capital sum used to buy out the parson.

From a religious weekly we learn the following financial facts concerning the Churches of the United States and Canada. The Methodist Episcopal Church has an income of 94,117,400 dollars. The sister Church of the South has an income of 44,644,962 dollars. The income of the Presbyterian Church is 64,685,810 dollars. The grand moral is that fools and their money are easily separated; and fear of the Lord's torture chamber is a very effective separator. The joke is that the parsons manage to persuade their dupes that the money is given for "Love" of God!

The Committee of the Wesleyan Women's Department affirms that the Church is challenged to more fervent prayer in India's behalf in the crisis through which she is passing, and the Committee desires that prayer forces be rallied to uphold both Indian and British statesmen who are trying to bring the two countries to a better understanding of each other, and thereby find a solution to the many problems before them. Now, seeing that the prayer forces, however fervent and concentrated, can merely ask God to do what he thinks is best in the matter, one cannot help wondering what on earth is the use of appeal? To implore a God believed to be all-wise and all-just to do that is equivalent to suggesting that he sometimes does not exercise omniscience and justice in governing the affairs of man. Why don't these Wesleyan women try, for a change, trusting their God to do his

best without being asked to do so? What a pleasant surprise it would be for God if Christians would allow him to get on with his job without being bombarded with instructions or advice! Peace, perfect peace, would at last reign in heaven.

At the annual meeting of the Bible Society a decreased sale of Bibles in England last year was reported. The Bishop of Chelmsford thought it represented a decline in popular regard for the Scriptures. He was distressed to find that so many young people of every social class, not only did not know the Bible well, but did not know it at all. This was indeed a very unpleasant discovery for a Bishop. Although the Bible nowhere reveals a command from God that bishops and priests shall rule over mankind, the Bishop of Chelmsford realizes that there is little hope for the men of his profession to boss over their fellows unless the Bible is revered and read. Bible reading is essential for breeding the superstitious hopes and fears on which parsons exist and thrive.

The Bishop also said that the neglect of the Bible was the source of the disasters, anxieties, and troubles now facing the people of this country. This is simply an oblique way of suggesting that the difficulties are the result of not allowing the parson—through the Bible—to rule the roost. Put that way, it sounds rather egotistic, but parsons always have had a wonderful opinion of themselves. What upsets them in these modern times is that so many people outside the churches will not take the parsons at their own valuation.

The Eighteenth of May was celebrated as Goodwill Day. The origin of this name was, says a weekly journal, as follows:—

On the eighteenth of May, in 1899, a big thing happened. Statesmen of many countries met at The Hague to see how they could organize peace. That was a small beginning, but it was the beginning of the movement which has won for the world the League of Nations, the World Court of Justice, and the International Labour Office. The suggestion that this notable day should be celebrated as World Peace Day was suggested by a German lady, Frau Selenka.

The same weekly journal, describing Dr. Nansen as "The hero of Goodwill Day," says of him:—

All Geneva knew and loved him, the League of Nations trusted and honoured him, countless thousands owe their life and hope to him. In all he did he was fearless in standing up for the truth, in denouncing unworthy thought and action, and, once he saw a goal before him, he never rested until it was reached.

That is an excellent testimony to Nansen the Freethinker. But, of course, it omitted to mention the fact that he was a Freethinker, and that his fearlessness in standing up for truth was inspired by his Freethought convictions. Had he been a Christian, how eager our moulders of public opinion would have been to point a useful moral!

The Chief Scout declares that the world needs more men who have opinions. Well, much depends on the quality of the opinions. There is no lack of men with a stock of ready-made opinions acquired second-hand. What the world really needs is men with opinions wrought out by independent reflection, and with the courage to express such opinions openly. It may be added that the Freethought Movement appears to be the only one to encourage this type of man. The influence of the Christian Churches is in the opposite direction. Nor is the Scout Movement particularly helpful; for all its heroes are the physically brave, and not the mentally independent and courageous—a lopsided point of view which constitutes a real defect in the Scout ideal. Probably the defect would have been perceived if Freethinkers had some influence in the Scout Movement. But the loyalty-to-God affirmation in the Scout Law keeps them aloof.

Now that fortune has put Charlie Chaplin in a position to speak his mind, he amplifies Johnson's definition of patriotism. He declares that patriot-

ism is insanity. We do not expect from one who has amused children of all ages an Addisonian essay on the subject, but a few straight lefts of the same kind from "Charlie" will do the stupid world no harm. Newspapers, the distorting mirrors of truth, could be safely trusted to mangle the simple fact of love of one's own country into a hatred of others, and if Charlie Chaplin lays aside his battered bowler and cane, and pursues the subject, he may find the modern medicine-man caterwauling with the press.

At what close grips with the things that matter may be seen in pronouncements by the Lord's chosen spokesmen. Cardinal Bourne, at the opening of the new Willesden Roman Catholic Church, said that it was one of the saddest and most pathetic facts of the present day that the children of England were growing up in publicly-provided schools without being taught that Jesus Christ was truly God. If the truth of this teaching was as easy to prove as twice two making four, Freethinkers would join in with the Cardinal's groans.

According to the Rev. Prebendary Mackey the twelve apostles were a rum lot. In a book entitled *Difficulties in the way of Discipleship*, some of them are said to have found it a tough job to be Christians, and the pious author draws the moral that if men like Matthew, who had a "bad past," can succeed, there is no reason why more respectable folk should fail. That Andrew was rightly nicknamed "merry"; that Thomas was a narrow bigot; that Peter was anything but a "rock" and, in fact, an emotional person; and that John's "vision" went very near to being his downfall will, we should think and may hope, cause readers of this book to look a little further into the history of "the twelve"—though, we suspect, they will not bother about Judas—and, if they do so, it is hard to see how they will get over what the Prebendary calls "the difficulties in the way of discipleship." There are a good many more of them than he thinks it expedient to mention.

One of the more primitive religious weeklies declares:—

When we remember how God's ancient people always suffered as a nation when they turned from the Sabbath, we may well fear that our own nation will suffer if we, as a people, show that we have reached a point in our own apostacy when we are ready to overthrow the sanctity of the Lord's Day.

As a reason for the retention and enforcement of Sunday Laws, this is, of course, the religious argument in all its naked purity. Its basis is a superstitious fear that if the nation refuses to treat Sunday as a sacred or "taboo" day, God will inflict some special "frightfulness" upon the nation. To what extent many of the people of this country are really civilized can be gleaned from the fact that this primitive fear urged large numbers of people to sign the Lord's Day Society's petition to Parliament. This should prove interesting to social observers of the future, in search of data on which to base an analysis of the degree of civilization current in 1931.

The danger of allowing the conception of a church to be swamped by a notion of a club, is deplored by the Rev. Carey Bonner. We fancy this danger is not particularly harmful to the prosperity of the churches. It is the club activities, the secular amusements, which are so very useful in enabling the churches to retain their rather luke-warm clients, especially those of the younger generation. If the churches discarded these activities and concerned themselves with the purely religious, fifty per cent of their adherents would fade away. The dynamic power of dear Jesus isn't half so potent as it used to be. And "worldly" attractions have now to be relied on to make good the deficiency.

The local option idea in connexion with Sunday cinemas is displeasing to the Rev. G. Peet, of Worthing. He says that local committees are picked by "the world, and the flesh and the devil," and act in direct opposition to the known wish of the people. In Worthing, he says, the churches took a plebiscite of the town and got an overwhelming majority in favour of Sunday closing. Yet

the majority on the Council are Sunday openers, and all Worthing cinemas are defying the law, and the Council itself is defying the law with its own Sunday concerts in its own Pier Pavilion. How shocking! We congratulate the Worthing councillors on having the courage to ignore the bigots, and on being fair-minded enough to realize that non-churchgoers have a right to spend Sunday in the way they please.

Canon R. J. Campbell says he was recently asked if he knew anyone, in public or in private life, who was not "on the make." His reply is, "I am thankful to say that I do know people who are not on the make, at any rate, not for themselves—and the world is better for having them." We may perhaps be permitted to add that the same can be said of many in the Freethought Movement. It can equally well be said of the movement's pioneers. The outline of their activities given in our Jubilee issue affords ample proof of that. Fighting the Christian superstition was never a money-making game; nor does it require the hope of a reward, at compound interest, in a hereafter, to make it more palatable.

Discussing the problem of empty pews, Pastor A. L. Trudgeon complains that the churches have compromised with the spirit of the world and thus cheapened religion. They have sought to make religion popular and salvation sensational; to attract attention at all costs; to make people stare and talk. Worship has been modified to popular taste. They have sought to meet the needs of the age by many devices and social activities. They have pandered to the world, played to the gallery, and in so doing have lost spiritual prestige. This is a terrible indictment. But what could the poor parsons do otherwise, when faced with the dire necessity of retaining and getting clients? We think it was very clever of the parsons to learn a few tricks from the proprietors of our popular newspapers.

Speaking at a meeting of the Eugenics Society in London, on May 13, Lord Salvesen, one of the Scotch law lords, said:—

On this question of marriage reform England is, perhaps, the most priest-ridden of all the existing States of Europe, and it is the clergy of her State Church that have proved the chief obstacle to reform. We have said so often that we are one of the most priest-ridden countries in Europe that we are naturally pleased to have this re-echoed on a point of law by one who may be taken as an authority on the subject. We now await Lord Salvesen's further discovery that it is not only in relation to marriage that we are priest-ridden.

The Rev. Crawford Walters, a missionary from Burma, declares that whatever truth and beauty there is in Buddhism its effects on character were the most disastrous of all Eastern religions. Its supreme and vital need is the idea of God, and this is totally lacking. Our Christian missionaries, it appears, still keep up the ancient practice of slandering the adherents of other systems. The slander has its uses, of course; it thrills the European Christian with a sense of his own splendid superiority. But when the slander travels back to the slandered—what then? It is not at all likely to be conducive to good feeling between the white and the coloured races.

The Town Council of Tain in Ross-shire has refused to allow naval officers to play golf at Tain on Sunday. While denying the officers the exercise and recreation they feel to need when free from duty on Sunday, the godly councillors have no objection to benefitting by the officers' Sunday labour when on duty—labour which provides naval protection to the councillors and all the rest of the nation. Sabbatarian bigots are, of course, not sharp-witted enough to perceive the incongruity.

From the *Passing Show*:—

According to a Church newspaper, a recently ordained clergyman was formerly in the fire-insurance business. But why "formerly"?

Quite so. The gentleman merely transferred his services to a company specializing in imaginary "risks."

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

F. DRUMMOND (Toronto).—Your recollections take us back a great many years, but they are interesting reading. It has become the fashion with certain superior folk to sneer at Robert Taylor, but his work had a great influence, and he was a firm champion of the myth theory of Jesus Christ. The *Diegesis* was written while in prison for blasphemy, and was naturally not quite so accurate in all details had it been written under different conditions.

C. S. FRASER.—Thanks for the "True Story." It shall appear as soon as possible.

S. THOMAS.—The new edition of Mr. Cohen's *God and the Universe* will be out early in June. The first edition is now nearly exhausted. It will be simply a reprint, with just a verbal alteration here and there. Mr. Cohen has no time to elaborate any part of it, and he is against bulky books when they can possibly be avoided.

W. MCKEE.—Your lecture notice did not reach us until Wednesday—too late to be of use.

W. H. HICKS.—Thanks for good wishes, but we see no chance of taking "a good holiday" at present. Glad to have your appreciation of *Christianity and Slavery*.

C. V. LEWIS.—As soon as possible. Prebendary Gough was one of the leaders of manufacturers of the yarns about the Atheistic massacres of priests in Russia. These men never have to apologise when their falsehoods are exposed. Their dupes never expect them to.

F. C. MERRIS (Winnipeg) writes expressing his appreciation of the *Freethinker*, which he says he has read for over twenty years.

C. S. FRASER.—The London Press is just about as unfair where *Freethought* is concerned as any in the country, and much worse than many provincial papers. Still, it is well to let editors know that others are alive in the country beside Christians. Mr. Baldwin's talk on religion was just electioneering piffle. He is not quite so stupid as his remarks would make him appear.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

There is just time to remind delegates to the Liverpool Conference that a reception of delegates and members will be held at the Washington Hotel, Lime Street, at seven o'clock on Saturday evening. There will be music during the evening. The business meetings on Sunday are at 10.30 and 2.30. There will be a luncheon at one o'clock, price 3s. An announcement of the evening meeting will be found on the back page of this issue.

Delegates and friends travelling to Liverpool on Saturday for the Annual Conference of the N.S.S. are informed of the following trains from Euston, with arrival times, 10.30 a.m. arriving at Lime Street, 2.5 p.m.; 11.50, arriving 3.45; 2.35, arriving 6.35 p.m. The Washington

Hotel is opposite Lime Street Station, and faces one end of St. George's Hall.

We still continue to receive letters of congratulation on our Jubilee and our Jubilee number. That our sketch of the history of the *Freethinker* should have proved so enlightening to so many readers is proof of the truth of what we have so often said—the need of a history of *Freethought* which shall deal adequately with those persons and papers that fought the battle of *Freethought*. In spite of the very large increase in the number of copies printed, the issue was quite exhausted, and we can only supply orders now from the few returns that come straggling in. The number was a great success for us and for the paper. Even now the story of the *Freethinker* has been only partly told. If we may paraphrase a famous saying we might say of what has already been told, "Thus good begins, but better remains behind." If we had but two more hands, a couple of lives and forty-eight hours to every day, we might be able to do what we should like to do before we write "Finis."

There will be found advertised in another part of this issue a number of new books at remainder prices. We make it a rule never to advertise books in this way that are not well worth reading, and the present list is no exception to this rule. In particular, we can commend to all *Freethinkers* the first four on the list. Professor Marett is one of the leading modern anthropologists, and the two works by Professor Rose contains a very fine outline of a very important study. The work on *The Devil* is full of curious and out-of-the-way information. Only a limited number of each is obtainable, and we advise those who wish for copies to send at once.

From the *New York Medical Guide and Critic* :—

*War, Civilization and the Churches*, by Chapman Cohen, is a collection of twenty-five articles which appeared in the *Freethinker* between 1914 and 1920. It required courage to write these articles during the war, and the articles deserve the permanent form in which they are now presented to the reader. There are so many pacifists who are vociferous pacifists in peace time, but the moment war breaks out shut up like clams or become super-patriotic bitter-enders. Mr. Chapman Cohen was not one of those, and during the period of universal blood-lusting hysteria he kept his head and advocated sanity and decency. As to the behaviour of the churches during the war—the less said the better. They behaved infamously—like the worst of hoodlums.

Mr. Boyd Freeman continues his attack on the Roman Catholic Church in *Frank Words to the Free Churches*, price one shilling, postage 2d. extra. This time the attack takes, mainly, the form of an appeal to the Free Churches to lend a hand in the work of clearing England of the menace of the Roman Church. We agree with all that Mr. Freeman has to say of the evils of the Roman Church, but we have not his conviction of the love for freedom resident in the Nonconformists. The book is written in Mr. Freeman's usual vigorous style.

Mr. Freeman informs us that his books are being boycotted by certain booksellers, owing to the influence brought to bear by Roman Catholics. We find no difficulty in believing this. The Roman Church is exceptionally well organized in this respect, and booksellers are made to feel what it is to give publicity to attacks on the Roman Catholic faith. Newspapers are likewise very chary of permitting their columns to be used in exposure of "the great lying Church." We give in our advertisement columns a list of Mr. Freeman's works, all of which may be obtained from the Pioneer Press.

The Romford and Hornchurch Trades Council at its last meeting passed the following resolution :—

That the Romford and Hornchurch Trades Council urge the Government to include in the proposed Land Bill (Taxation of Land Values) a clause whereby churches will be rated and assessed as other property.

This is a very much needed reform, but we are quite sure that the Government will never have the courage to do anything of the kind. It is far too fearful to risk offending all the churches and chapels. Still the Hornchurch Trades Council has done well in ventilating the proposal. The way to get it put into operation is just to go on making Freethinkers and for Freethinkers to be a little more assertive than they are at present.

On Tuesday evening, 12th instant, the North London Branch of the N.S.S. held a successful open-air meeting in Hampstead, the principal speakers being Mr. I. Ebury and Mr. A. D. McLaren. There was considerable opposition, some of it of a very acrimonious nature, and the field seems to be well worth working. The meetings are held outside the park, just opposite the L.M.S. Station, and will be continued on Tuesdays throughout the summer. Freethinkers in the neighbourhood should make it a point to attend.

We have received from America another supply of *Atheism*, by Joseph Lewis, and all outstanding orders have now been completed. Anyone who has not received their copy, please notify the shop manager by return, as this supply may soon be exhausted.

From the *Commonweal* :—

Congratulations to our contemporary, the *Freethinker*, upon attaining its fiftieth year of issue. For a propagandist paper serving an unpopular cause to survive through half a century is a record of which all concerned have reason to be proud. May the *Freethinker* continue its useful career until the last vestige of intellectual slavery has been banished from the earth.

Mr. G. Whitehead addressed a series of successful open-air meetings in West Ham in co-operation with the local Branch of the N.S.S. Audiences were good all through, Mr. Whitehead's remarks were much appreciated, questions were many, and a quantity of literature was circulated. From a Christian Evidence platform, supposed to be an opposition meeting, the chairman and speaker took turns in addressing each other, and to vary the monotony, one evening the Christian Evidence speaker opposed Mr. Whitehead, with the result that everybody except the Christian Evidence speaker were well satisfied. We congratulate the West Ham saints for ignoring the traps set by the Christian Evidence speakers for gathering an audience.

A friend of ours, and of this paper, did some useful work at the Annual Conference of the National Liberal Federation at Buxton, and succeeded in selling and effectively distributing a substantial number of copies. He reports that the paper was obviously the subject of interest and curiosity, and that the distributors—two local unemployed young fellows—did not, in their work encounter one word of hostility or criticism.

With the co-operation of Dundee Freethinkers, the Perth Branch of the N.S.S. is prepared to arrange some open-air meetings in Dundee. Will those willing to co-operate communicate with the Secretary of the Perth Branch, Mr. J. A. Reid, 70 South Methuen Street, Perth.

We have to acknowledge the sum of £1 from J. M. A. Spence, 15s. from G. Webb, and 5s. from A. E. Stringer, to be used for any purpose we think best. We are devoting it to the small fund we have for increasing the circulation of the *Freethinker*.

I'd have mankind be free! As much from mobs as Kings—from you as me.—*Byron*.

None but the contemptible are apprehensive of contempt.—*Rochejoucauld*.

Freedom is the will to be responsible for oneself.

*Nietzsche*.

## Studies in the New Testament.

### THE SEARCH FOR THE TEXT.

It would be interesting to know the exact number of books and articles dealing with the textual criticism of the New Testament that have been written. How many thousands of scholars have there been not merely burning the midnight oil, but spending the whole of their lives in minutely comparing various manuscripts and collating texts and words! How many long discussions, carried on for years; interminable even now, have taken place as to the worth of the A text or the B text in getting at the precise words of Our Lord, discussions which it can confidently be said, have led to the most hopeless confusion? There has never been a literary problem before the world which has so baffled the would-be solvers as this search for the "perfect" text of the Gospels, this search for the veritable words straight from the Apostle's mouth; nor one which seems less likely of solution.

The idea at the back of the textual critic's head is that once we discover the *real* gospel, whether it be Matthew's, Luke's, Mark's or John's or the lot, the difficulties of Christianity will have vanished. The Modernist and the Fundamentalist, the Evangelist and the thorough believer in Christianity *minus* the miracles, would then be able to join hands together in one psalm of praise. Christianity would be saved. The world would embrace its most precious possession and God, having entered his own again in company with himself, that is, Jesus, everything would be once more for the best in the best of all possible worlds. To achieve this most wished-for consummation, then, is the immediate object of textual critics, and neither the frowns of the Roman Catholic Church, even if they develop into irretrievable excommunication, nor the scowls of the itinerant evangelist, gipsy or salvation breed, could ever deter the unselfish scholar from pursuing such a laudable object. But what a colossal task! Every word of each of the ancient manuscripts has to be collated with all the others, and how many millions of such collations have to be made, leave me dizzy to calculate. For the Freethought student who wishes to follow the discussion there are formidable obstacles, the greatest one being of course that, as far as possible, every reference to the text is given in Greek. Now while New Testament Greek is not particularly difficult, for the man who has to earn his living in other ways, it is not always possible to concentrate on Greek in his spare time. The professor, whose job it is to teach theology, or the ordained priest or clergyman whose work rarely extends beyond a Sunday, and who thus can devote most of the week to Biblical problems, is bound to know Greek, and can therefore spout learnedly without being pulled up by his Greek-less lay-brother. And woe betide any unbeliever who makes a slip in the language and calls the genitive tense, the indicative for example. Even some Rationalists seem to imagine that such an unlucky venturer into theological paths deserves all he gets from the indignant but more accurate believer.

The upshot of all this is, that the more learned a Christian finds himself, the more he knows of the Bible and the ancient manuscripts, the less optimistic he is about finding the true text. If you wish to find the true believer in God's Word, the Holy Book which has withstood the most violent infidel assaults, you must go to the uneducated working man Christian, who can barely speak the King's English correctly, who has never read a book on Biblical criticism in his life, who has never seen any other version but that of King James's, and who would wonder whether you

were not a lunatic if you started to talk about the *Codex Sinaiticus* or ventured into a discussion with him as to the purity of the text from which the Peshitto Syriac version was made. Yet the battle of texts and manuscripts is as violent as ever, and there is not the slightest suggestion from any quarter that peace is anywhere hovering near.

What are we to do?

You have on the one hand the gallant old conservatives—whatever was good enough for father is good enough for me. They were brought up on the Authorized Version. They will descant interminably on its beauties, its eloquence. It reads like God's Word, it looks like God's Word, it is God's Precious Word. They will fit in, as perfectly as a cross-word puzzle, some of Paul's most misty pronouncements, into their elaborate arguments that the *Textus Receptus*, as it is called, stands unassailable, alike from the hateful infidel attack and from the more subtle and quite as disintegrating arguments of the Westcott and Hort school. They will go on their bended knees and pray you never to heed these "so-called" Christians, who insist that our Authorized Version is packed with errors, some of them even grossly stupid. And they will point out that any version such as the Revised one, which actually has the audacity to put the story of the woman taken in adultery in the margin (as not found in the most ancient M.S.S.) is surely beneath the contempt of the "real" Christians.

The whole controversy is, to outsiders like the Freethinker, most amusing and instructive, because the question of "inspiration" seems to be put on one side. If the New Testament is "inspired" by God, how is it that there are two schools at all? Why hasn't God's Word come down to us in all its pristine purity? How comes it that there is a "traditional" text so different from an "ancient" text?

It is not only the Freethinker who can look on the "Battle of the Books" with a smile. The Roman Catholic sees in the discussion a further proof of the justice of his Church's claim that the Bible should not be read by the common herd—or sheep, as I think Christians prefer to be called, without special permission. How can anyone, he asks very pathetically, presume to understand the Bible without the wonderful training in logic, philosophy, science, history and languages, which every priest is bound to go through to say nothing of the obvious fact of his being in direct communication with God Almighty and Jesus and Mary and the Blessed Apostles and the Holy Saints? Is he not armed at all points to meet the silly criticisms of unbelievers? Is he not, or rather is not the Holy Church the proper receptacle for a Holy Book? How can anyone outside the Church even hope to treat such a problem as the true text, with anything like a proper attitude?

But has the Holy Roman Catholic Church the true text? Ah, that is a problem in itself. For, believe it or not, as you like, she hadn't it in Jerome's time which led him to repudiate the "old Latin" text, and so he set to work to make a new one called the Vulgate, which differs in dozens of places not only from the *Textus Receptus*, but also from the more modern text, and a holy mess they are now all in.

The difficulties are enhanced because the authorities, to whichever schools they belong, are at loggerheads about the value of the ancient manuscripts, such as the Sinaiticus, the Vaticanus, and the Alexandrianus, which are supposed to belong to the fourth and fifth centuries, and the manuscripts which were for long the basis of the "critical" editions of Erasmus, Stephanus, Wetstein and other editors who differed from each other quite as much as the M.S.S. on which they relied, also differed from each other.

You get a bit here and a bit there, you take as your authority this manuscript or that version, and lo and behold there's your precious text of God's own Word. And it is only when you compare it with somebody else's that you find how much your "critical" edition, all complete with marginal notes and various readings, differs from his which also has all the elaborate "critical" apparatus which swells the pages, if not the sense, of the costly volume. And have we reached finality? Alas, no. What Matthew actually wrote is as elusive as what Mark actually wrote. No one knows in short, *what* they wrote. No one knows whether they wrote with each other's gospels in front of them. No one knows which wrote first or when they wrote or where they wrote or in what language they wrote.

It is all very, very sad. And the cream of the whole story is, even if the heavenly truth was eventually discovered straight from the apostles' mouths, would that prove anything? Would it prove that Jesus was born of a Virgin, or he was carried about by a Devil? Would there still not be some hard-hearted unbelievers, unbelieving as ever? I think so.

H. CUTNER.

## Religion and Dementia.

I do not think that any affection of the mind is capable of depriving man of his normal use of his reason so universally and so fantastically as religion. And as those who have lost the normal use of reason are called "demented," so the term denoting their mental state is "dementia." It denotes a general mental incapacity.

This fact was signally exemplified a few weeks ago by the attitude and behaviour of the Sabbatarians at the Central Hall and outside the House of Commons during the debate on the Sunday Cinema Bill. According to report thousands prayed God to get the Government to reject the Bill.

Just reflect: To think that God who is credited with being omniscient and infinitely wise should be induced by the crazy implications of a crowd of fanatics to influence certain persons to vote as they wished that evening in the House of Commons!

They seem to be wholly oblivious to what a contemptible puppet they reduce their God.

In all seriousness the fetish of wood or stone idolized by our savage ancestors is incomparably less ludicrous than the idea of a Being who is supposed to rule, control, and maintain a universe of infinite dimensions, power, and energy to be influenced by the wishes of a human fanatic in respect to an ancient ritual. If that were possible it would be proof positive that the mentality of their god would be immeasurably more contemptible than that of the crazy simpletons who petitioned him.

To quote the Bible only betrays their crass ignorance of what the Bible is.

Religion, as exemplified in Christianity, has evolved a state of human dementia far below the level of that exhibited by the savage.

The grotesqueness of an idea is directly proportional to its incongruity to its mental world. The stone idol is not at all incongruous to the mental world of the savage; but should an educated European of the twentieth century bow down before it in adoration, it would be grotesque beyond expression. The disharmony between the attitude and behaviour and his mental world would be so conflicting as to amount to a mental outrage.

That is why the spiritualistic yarn also recorded about some alleged "retro-cognitive vision" with

which Sir Oliver Lodge's name is coupled, is far more grotesquely ludicrous than even the praying of those Sabbatarians. In the case of Sir Oliver, its incongruity with his mental world is nigh infinite.

But no culture however transcendent can protect a person from embracing the most fatuous of inanities, if the mind has been duly narcotized with the virus of religion.

KERIDON.

### Religion in Equatorial Africa.

FOR fourteen years (1882-1896) Dr. F. Puleston traded among the natives residing within and around the equatorial region of Africa, and in his book *African Drums*\* he gives quite an interesting and informative account of life out there; the dangers to which it is constantly exposed; and the customs, rites, and beliefs of the people who are in such proximity to the stern realities of Nature.

He is no anthropologist, nor is he a student of religion; he simply lays before us a frank, clear, outspoken narrative of what came under his observation, of that which was imparted to him by natives, and of his deductions therefrom.

In a chapter on witch doctors (pp. 155-166) he not only reveals the practices of these virtual rulers of the tribe, but he sets forth the religious opinions of the African. He informs us that after having been in the country some time he came to realize that the origins of religion were directly before him, whereupon he began to question the natives on the subject. Many were "Without the remotest idea of their origin, it was there, and they, like the majority of men did not trouble to inquire or investigate, but closed their eyes and blindly swallowed every story or command of their witch doctors."

Of course, if man began to search and find out things for himself there would be no necessity for witch doctors even those who wear euphemistic titles such as bishop or archbishop.

However, to resume, he eventually obtained a satisfactory account of the growth of religion as it appeared to the mind of the more intelligent of the natives, and having presented it in the pidgin English version he proceeds to explain and translate it for the benefit of the average reader. Not wishing to occupy too much space I have condensed it somewhat.

"In the beginning of time, when earth was almost utter chaos man was a fool and without sense. Finally the power of reasoning and questioning became established in his brains, and his first sensations were fear, amazement, and wonder at the destructive rainstorms, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, cyclones, floods, the terrific noise of thunder and flashes of lightning. He first feared then wondered at those happenings; later he began to reason and question about who or what might be responsible for the terrifying and mysterious cataclysms.

"At last one appeared with a more acute reasoning capacity than the rest of mankind. The first witch doctor! He concluded that these things could not be accidents, his experiences of life had taught him that every effect must have a cause. The world was here therefore some power must have made it. The same power must be the maker of the storms and other cruel and harmful phenomena; evidently they must be sent as punishment for wrongs committed by man. This man or power must be a superman, omnipotent, savage, terrible in his wrath; he had control over the elements and the earth; he lived above and spoke in tones of thunder accompanied by lightning."

Thus came the god of the Africans according to a native, and in a similar manner, we may be sure, were created the gods that still persist in more civilized countries though they are now rather nebulous with age.

The first witch doctor, having discovered Mabiaki Mundembi (God), at length proclaimed that he had been appointed by the Creator to act as a sort of medium between him and the people. He alone could speak with him,

could transmit his wishes and orders, could pacify him, and all who did not possess the gift of divination must obey. So came the cult of fetishism.

That ends the theory of the native, but then in steps the writer.

He opines that these fetish priests having tasted power became greedy for more, and by concentrating on the fear and superstition of the people they evolved a tremendous and fiendish system. When one reads the description of the god as supplied by the priests—for they are the only ones permitted to see him—one is not surprised at these poor ignorant savages being frightened. Just listen to this: "He is monstrously large; his arms reach to the skies, his eyes, which flash fire are so large that the whole world is visible to him at a glance. His tongue is a flame, and his voice is like thunder. When he speaks the mountains quake, smoke issues from the earth, and waves run high. When he extends his arms lightning plays at the finger-tips."

The character of Babiali Mundembi is such that it seems to me he would make a suitable companion and playmate for Jehovah. Not only is he continually demanding human sacrifices, but he "never says or does a kind, loving, or merciful thing. His favourite method of demonstrating his power is by visiting the people with plagues, pestilences, earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions or hurricanes."

All gods are primarily depicted as fearsome, brutal, vengeful—otherwise how could the mediators convince the tribe of their utility?—and it is only when culture displaces barbarism that the priests reform their manners somewhat, and we hear them called tender, benevolent, and loving gods.

The freethinker has for years been contending that without religion man would have progressed much farther and at a more rapid pace; that life would have been much more enjoyable; and that morality would have attained a loftier peak. Here is Dr. Puleston's opinion: "Certainly had religion not been conceived in Equatorial Africa the people would have been far more happy, contented, and comfortable. There would have been no torture or executions. Ninety-nine per cent of the misery, fear, and dread I should say is due to religion. The terrible, haunting, intangible, nightmare of dread caused by witch doctors fill the lives of the natives with a feeling of ever-present danger. It is comparable to the dark cloud of the Inquisition which caused the Christian world such misery."

With regard to the closing remark it may be stated that not only does a comparison exist, but it is the Inquisition in its embryological stage.

These Africans do not believe in a future life. "When me die, me done finish," is the reply the writer received to his query. For them there is no heaven and no hell—which is perhaps the only redeeming feature of the religion.

Naturally, while pursuing his inquiries, the writer was asked questions relating to the white man's God. He told of man being made of dust, and of woman being created from his rib. The natives howled with laughter and refused to credit such a tale. When, however, he spoke of Moses they nodded their heads declaring that he was the first witch doctor and was "all same black man." Which last comment, if passed on to a pious Christian, would most likely put him off his food for a week.

Altogether the book affords us with an entertaining and attractive glimpse of the growth of religion from fear and ignorance. It strengthens the view that the witch doctor is the forerunner of the modern priest and parson, and that the cathedrals and mosques of nowadays have evolved from his rude, sinister hut. Once more one perceives that had man been born with an understanding of the natural forces, religion, if it had ever arisen, would have enjoyed but a fugacious existence.

TOM BLAKE.

To be a really good historian is perhaps the rarest of intellectual distinctions.—*Macaulay*.

Our ideas are transformed sensations.—*Condillac*.

When we wish to forget—we remember.—*Anon.*

\* Published by Gollancz, 1930.

Flotsam and Jetsam.

FAITH: It requires no faith to believe what is possible, for faith consists in believing the impossible; and the more impossible the action is demonstrated, the greater becomes the faith. It is written: He that hath faith shall remove mountains; and while mountains of books have been written urging the value of faith, there has not yet appeared one Christian sufficiently endowed with this commodity to move a pebble.

Faith implies the disbelief of the senses, for it is written: We walk by faith not by sight. Christians must therefore not be dispised because they are senseless, for the senses are immaterial to their belief.

Those who live by faith, dream life away; faith is shadow's shadow; the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things non-existent.

Faith without works is dead. This is another way of saying, Faith and you would starve unless you worked to supply what faith or begging fails to give you.

The Bible says Moses was the meekest man on earth, Num. xii. 3; for when he timidly enquired what God was, he received the inane reply—I AM that I AM. In the more rude vernacular the rendering is—"Mind your own business, I am what I am, curiosity destroys me, take me with all my stratagems and vulgarities." Even Gods cannot fight against reason, that is why faith is so essential to belief.

Thomas A. Kempis said, Man proposes and God disposes. Anacharsis wrote a thousand years earlier: At Athens, The wise propose and fools dispose. Kempis substituted the word God for fools.

Every religion guarantees a heaven after death, the only condition is you must die first, the advantage of this arrangement is, you will never know you have been swindled. There are many Christians who agree to these terms, though few would purchase a legacy on the condition that they must die before the testator who bequeaths it.

Christians do not know their Bibles, only selected passages; if they read the Bible intelligently they would cease to be Christians. Agreed: As troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way by consent. Hos. xvi. 9.

Some Chinese believe a wasp can convert a caterpillar into a wasp; please don't laugh; there are some Englishmen who believe a parson can convert a Christian into an angel.

"Nature never did betray the heart that loved her," this is a stupid lie! The more one studies Nature the more one becomes convinced that no kindly motive actuates it. If you dispute this, try to make money farming, or argue with an earthquake; you will soon learn Nature has no soul.

The Conjuror moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform, and you lose his entertainment if you unravel them; for even God cannot survive the moving of the Screen, or the breaking of the biscuit.

When religion intoxicates the mind you may dispense with cinema tickets. One can see the Seven Heavens, a Hundred Miracles, and Angels with sugared almonds on their lips.

Irish Sweepstake or Mistaken Providence: I return and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet labour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to all. Eccles ix. 11. A sparrow contradicts this!

BULLETS FOR FREETHINKERS.

- Loving Wife: Jonah's—Believed him!
- World we dream of: Man in His heaven.
- Everybody listens when: B.B.C. forgets its Sunday.
- Staggering: Parson seeking Heaven.

MAX COORLEGH.

Experience of the world either breaks or petrifies the heart.—Chamfort.

I found the original of my hell in the world which we inhabit.—Dante.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."  
AN ABYSSINIAN FREETHINKER.

SIR,—The following extract is from a letter sent me by a friend, who has been resident some months in Abyssinia, and who is well known as an anthropologist. The letter is dated March 15:—

Let me tell you a few words about Wolde Tsadik Gashe, who was generally recognized as one of the finest characters, and also one of the clearest thinkers of this country, and who died yesterday (March 14) in hospital. As I was personally acquainted with this charming personality, his passing away has been to me, as to his many friends, a severe blow. Articles have been written in the Abyssinian newspapers about his noble and fearless life, but no allusion was made to his religious evolution, which was an interesting one. Born and educated in the orthodox faith (i.e., the Abyssinian Church), he was converted to Catholicism and even married at a Catholic Church; then he came under the influence of the Swedish Lutheran (Protestant) Mission; and later he studied the Islamic religion. Having thus listened to each one he showed an independence of thought quite extraordinary for this country by repudiating every form of religion publicly, and stating his conviction that ministers of all creeds are humbugs. Of course, this uncompromising attitude upset all his friends: Orthodox, Catholic, Protestants, and Muslims alike, who all thought the soul of their companion in danger of hell-fire; but it did not impair their admiration for his character, nor their belief in his sincerity. Several came to see me in the hope that I would bring him back to "the true religion," and they told me that they were convinced that his illness was sent by God to punish him.

I went to see him at the hospital and he did not hide that it was a joy for him to find at least one friend who understood him and did not worry him about religion. He also recommended the most broadminded of his friends to me and me to them. Though he was then very weak, I did not think that would be the last time I would see him. He died a few hours later, fully realizing his position. I believe him to be the first Abyssinian avowed Atheist. However much his friends may disagree with these views they all admit that he was ahead of his time, and that his death is a national loss.

THOMAS H. KEELL.

70,000 MEN KILLED IN A CENSUS.

SIR,—In connexion with the British census of 1931 it is well to remember what took place as the result of a certain census which took place in Palestine in the reign of King David of Israel about 1017 B.C. The Bible tells us that on that occasion God was so offended because David had numbered the people, that as a punishment He sent a pestilence upon Israel and killed 70,000 (seventy thousand) men, and also sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem. But after the angel had begun to destroy, God repented, alter his mind, and decided not to thoroughly destroy it after all. Let the Bible speak for itself. Here are the actual words, viz., "So the Lord sent Pestilence upon Israel, and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men. And God sent an angel into Jerusalem to destroy it, and as he was destroying, the Lord beheld and he repented him of the evil and said to the angel that destroyed, 'it is enough, stay now thine hand.' And the angel of the Lord stood by the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite." (1 Chron. xxi. 14, 15).

Now the question arises, what great crime or offence was there in numbering the people? Naturally, the king or government would like to know what was about the population of the country, and even the people might like to know themselves. And even if it were a great offence, why should the punishment be inflicted on 70,000 of the innocent subjects instead of on David himself, who caused the census to be taken? Even David, cruel and hard-hearted as he was in many of his ways, felt sorry for the people, and had to remonstrate with God for inflicting the punishment on the people instead of on himself. (1 Chron. xxi. 17.)

Some may say that this is an old story, legend, or

tradition, handed down in the ancient manuscript, instead of actual fact. But it is given in the Bible as actual history. There is no getting away from that. If legend, then the same might be said about three-fourths of the marvellous incidents we read of in the Bible. And then where are we? We have, as it were, nothing definite, no certain ground to stand on. It is stories like the one mentioned which cause thousands to lose faith in the Bible. They cannot continue any longer to look upon it as the "Word of God."

M. ROGERS.

### National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD MAY 15, 1931.

THE President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Quinton, Moss, Clifton, Wood, LeMaine, Rosetti (A. C.), Ebury, Mrs. Quinton, Junr., Mrs. Venton, and the Secretary.

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

New members were admitted as follows: Brighton, Birmingham, Perth, Glasgow, and W. London Branches, and the Parent Society.

Correspondence was dealt with from Burnley, Chester-le-Street, Brighton, Perth, Liverpool, Paris, and Louvain. The President's action in promising the Perth Branch every support, including legal, if necessary, was endorsed by the Executive. The Annual Report to be read at the Conference was before the meeting, and after discussion was accepted. Final details concerning the Conference were reported and the meeting closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

### Society News.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Glasgow Secular Society. Mr. MacEwan, President, reviewed the past year's work and showed the satisfactory condition of the Branch. He also referred to the resolution which had been sent to the Home Secretary and all Glasgow M.P.'s, asking them to use their influence in abolishing the Sunday Observance Acts.

New Office Bearers were elected as follows: Hon. President, Mr. R. Parker; President, Mr. W. H. MacEwan; Vice-President, Mr. R. Currie; Treasurer, Mr. A. Clark; Librarian, Mr. Wm. McKee; Secretary, Mr. Robt. Buntin, 373 Garscube Road, Glasgow.

A Rambles Programme for the coming summer has been arranged, and copies can be secured from the Secretary.—I.H.

### PAISLEY BRANCH.

THE Annual Report of the Branch showed that during the past year six indoor and twenty-four outdoor meetings had been held. Audiences had been very fair, and sales of literature all that could be expected. Speakers had also been supplied to outside organizations. The local press had inserted many reports of the meetings, and comments on them had been favourable. It is anticipated that the experience gained during the past year will be put to good use during the present one. Mr. P. Postlewaithe was elected President of the Branch, Mr. W. Murphy, Vice-President; Mr. R. White, 23 Kilnside Road, Secretary; Miss Craig, Minute Secretary; Mr. G. Fraser, Librarian; and Mr. J. McMillan, Press Reporter.

R.T.W.

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## 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 Shorrols Road, North End Road): Wednesday, at 7.30, Messrs. Frank, Day and Haskell. Saturday, at 7.30, Messrs. A. Mathie and E. Bryant.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.—Every Tuesday evening at 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury will lecture outside Hampstead Heath Station, L.M.S., South End Road. Every Thursday evening at 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury will lecture at Arlington Road.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Stonhouse Street, Clapham Road): 7.30, Mr. L. Ebury; Wednesday, May 27, at Rushcroft Road, Brixton, at 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury; Friday, May 29, at Liverpool Street, Camberwell Gate, at 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine; 3.30, Messrs. C. E. Wood and C. Tuson; 6.30, Messrs. A. H. Hyatt, A. D. McLaren and B. A. Le Maine. Bank Holiday, 3.0, Messrs. A. H. Hyatt and E. Bryant; 6.30, Messrs. C. E. Wood and C. Tuson. Every Wednesday, at 7.30, Messrs. C. E. Wood and C. Tuson; every Thursday, at 7.0, Messrs. E. C. Saphin and J. J. Darby; 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, May 27, at 7.45, Mr. H. Chard—"Is Death Finality?"

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Miss Stella Brown—"Some Modern Questions."

#### COUNTRY.

##### OUTDOOR.

ACCRINGTON MARKET.—Sunday, May 31, at 7.0, Mr. J. Clayton.

DURHAM.—Market Place, Tuesday, May 26, at 8.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.—Ramble, meet Paisley West Car Terminus at 11.30 a.m.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. G. Whitehead (London) will hold meetings as follows: Thursday, May 21, corner of High Park Street and Park Road; Friday, May 22, Islington Square; Tuesday, May 26, Islington Square; Wednesday, May 27, Waste Ground adjoining Knotty Ash Library; Thursday, May 28, Corner of High Park Street, and Park Road; Friday, May 29, Islington Square. All at 7.30 p.m.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. J. C. Keast will lecture at Bigg Market on Sunday, at 7.30.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.—Bigg Market, Wednesday, May 27, at 8.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

RAWTENSALL (Bacup Road).—Thursday, May 28, at 8.0, Mr. J. Clayton.

WHEATLEY LANE.—Tuesday, May 26, at 7.30, Mr. J. Clayton.

#### INDOOR.

LIVERPOOL, PICTON HALL.—Public Demonstration following the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society, addressed by Mr. Chapman Cohen, President N.S.S. Dr. C. H. R. Carmichael, J. Clayton, A. D. McLaren, E. C. Saphin, R. H. Rosetti, G. Whitehead, and others. Chair taken at 7.0 p.m. Admission free, reserved seats one shilling each.

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— A —

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Chairman: Mr. CHAPMAN COHEN (President N.S.S.)

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