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Views and Opinions.

Morals and Freethought.

We are all acquainted with the old criticism of Freethought that its basis was actual or desired ill-living. That criticism is not by any means so dead as many believe. In some respects, although in a disguised form, it has even been promoted from vulgar belief and sermons to a philosophic level. For while it is not so often met with in its plain form, it does hold a place in bulky volumes, wherein is laid down the thesis that our moral sense cannot, like our bodily structure, be derived from normal evolutionary processes. And that is, of course, the old theory over again, expressed in more abstruse and less easily comprehended language. Still, it was always puzzling to us in what way a profession of unbelief made misconduct easy. It is certain that every form of rascality from national land-grabbing to exploiting fools through the medium of missions is made easier and safer by a profession of religion. A complete record of the world's scoundrels would show an easy ninety-five per cent to be men of religious conviction. Only the other day the Roman Catholic inhabitants in a Manchester prison went on strike against saying prayers with Protestants. And it is certain that there would have been a row if the Protestant guests in the same establishment had been left without adequate religious ministrations. It is neither cant nor insincerity that induces this concern for religion among our own criminal population and the criminal population of other countries. It is no more than an illustration of what certain writers call the power of religion in the human mind.

Our Ancestors.

The Freethinker, not as a rule living up to the standard of villainy marked out for him by his Christian brethren, some explanation of him has to be

found. Sometimes, as in the case of Bradlaugh, he receives the profound insult of being told that he is a Christian without knowing it. But more usually, as with Canon Peter Green and Dean Inge, the phenomenon is explained as due to the fact that he springs from a Christian ancestry, or he lives in a Christian environment, and so is acting under the influence of his heredity and his surroundings. This is interesting because, if true, it means that Christianity is most effective with those who deliberately repudiate all belief in it. In New Testament times Christ could work no miracles with those who did not believe in him. Nowadays he appears to be most powerful with those who will have nothing to do with him. And when one looks at those who believe in him and those who do not, one can admire his taste, even though one does not cease to marvel at the alleged fact.

But the argument does appear to be a trifle strained. For Christians generally are the products of non-Christian parents, the Pagans were also the products of a still earlier civilization, and that was derived from something still lower, and so on until we get right back to primitive savagery. So that it would seem as if succeeding generations must at the same time build upon and outgrow earlier ones. And from that a safe conclusion would appear to be that as the later generations discard the beliefs of earlier ones, the Atheist is exemplifying experience when he finds a better and a more permanent interpretation of the nature of morality than religion has offered the world.

The Dead Land.

Greatly daring the Freethinker might drop the defensive and take up the offensive. He might assert that improvements in the state of society, extending to even the more liberal-minded and better behaved Christians, are due, not to a Christian environment, but to the impact of non-Christian ideas on a Christian society. The stream of Christian ideas was on the side of Ptolemy and against Copernicus. It stood for a flat earth as against a round one; for miracle and against causation. It was for whipping devils out of lunatics and against lunacy as a consequence of neural derangement. It stood for creation and against evolution. Christian influence made for hell in the next world, and did what it could to create one in this. Developing knowledge caused Christians to surrender their absurd teachings in the directions of science, and the growth of a healthier social consciousness forced a moralization of their ethical beliefs and of their conduct. If one could get compiled a catalogue of the names of the men and women who for the past two centuries have helped to make the world better, arrange these names in the order of their departure from orthodoxy, they would probably be astonished to find the overwhelming proportion of them that had moved towards the "left." And to-

day the mere fact that Christians try to explain the work done by heretics on the ground that they are Christians without knowing it, or are unconsciously responding to the influence of their Christian surroundings, is proof that the impulse to reform is still outside orthodox circles.

There is, of course, a sense in which the present can never escape the influence of the past. The power of the past on the present is one of the impressive facts in human history. But it is one of the damning facts against religion that it has always used the power of the past to enslave the present, and has thus acted as a preventative to man reaping the full benefit of past experience and its application to the present. That is the bottom reason why in all forms of religion its ceremonies are performed with an archaic form of speech, of dress and of ceremonial. Religion strives to keep the past alive because it is only by the perpetuation of past forms of thought that it can maintain its own existence. Religion finds no hope and no justification in the present.

* * *

A Black Record.

But the final count against Atheism is that as no completely Atheistic has ever existed, no one is able to tell what the effects of Atheism on social life would be. So far, true. No completely Atheistic society has ever existed. Up to date the institutions of mankind have been largely permeated with religious influences. It is true that in this respect the Freethinker must look to the future; the Christian can refer to his past. And yet, I fancy that an intelligent Christian would much rather that his past was not definitely and categorically referred to. For the record of Christianity is before us all, its influence can be traced by anyone. While Christianity really controlled society morality was at its lowest, intellectual life was weakest, and the general outlook most hopeless. It was Christianity that gave us Jew-baiting and heresy hunts, it gave us witchcraft and magic in place of medicine; the Inquisition and the *auto-da-fé*. It gave us life without happiness and death made hideous with terror. It gave us the war of sects, and did more than any other single institution to establish the sect of war. Certainly the Christian record is there for all of us to read, and it is such that every Christian sect blames every other sect for its existence. What Christianity has been we know; what Freethought may be is a matter of speculation. But it cannot yet be said of Freethought what Kingdon Clifford said of Christianity, that it destroyed two civilizations and came perilously near wiping out a third.

It is a fine example of the narcotising power of religious teaching, that to-day men should even dream that religion inevitably makes for saner morality and a loftier type of men and women. Everyday experience gives the lie to such a belief. There is no man in business, no man in his daily intercourse with his fellows, who would trust them in any matter under the sun with no better knowledge of them than that they were sincere believers in this or that form of religion. The plainest teaching of everyday life is that any and every form of rascality can be found in conjunction with genuine religious conviction. Religion does not make a man moral, it does not even keep him moral. Whether or not the road to hell is paved with good intentions it is certain that the path to the scaffold is liberally decorated with professions of faith in Jesus. The facts are all in the one direction; the theory of the religious apologist is directly in conflict with them. It is true that the Freethinker of to-day has behind him a religious ancestry, and that he also moves in a religion-soaked environment. But it is

also true that behind and above these influences there is the force which comes from moralizing discipline of social life, and we may safely trust to this, under the fructifying power of increasing knowledge, to provide a higher type of character than religion has yet produced.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Bunkum and the Beyond.

"I sent my soul through the invisible,
Some letter of that after-life to spell,
And by and bye my soul returned to me,
And answered, I myself am heaven and hell."
Omar Khayyam.

"The rest is silence."—Shakespeare.

SIR OLIVER LODGE is a star turn on religious platforms. He is sandwiched between revivalist preachers, returned missionaries, and reformed burglars, and must often prove a welcome relief to unsophisticated audiences. His latest appearance was at the Modern Churchmen's Conference at Oxford, and he delighted his audience with scientific accounts of heresies which would have made their forefathers' hair stand on end, and have inevitably led to the lecturer's death in a blaze of fireworks.

In these sceptical days, however, a man may talk any nonsense he likes before a pious audience provided that he makes no attack on their religious beliefs, and Sir Oliver took full advantage of this pleasing circumstance. He told his audience how, when he is dead, he will do his best to communicate with this world, and that he had left a sealed document in the custody of the Society for Psychical Research, which was to be opened after his death.

This was remarkably good showmanship, but the veteran Spiritualist was not so happy when pressed for details. Asked whether he had corresponded with prominent Spiritualists who had died, Sir Oliver replied that he had had communications, but hesitated to publish them. He added that he had frequent guidance from his son Raymond, and from his wife, who died two years ago.

Fortunately, Sir Oliver has already recorded some of these alleged psychic communications in a volume, published in 1916, and entitled: *Raymond, or Life and Death*. It may be stated that this son, Raymond, was killed at the front in Flanders in September, 1915, and the book contains a record of what is said to have happened since the son's death.

For a trained scientist, Sir Oliver Lodge's book is very disappointing regarding evidence for so momentous a matter as human survival. One point relates to a prophecy of Raymond's death made at a seance in America a month before he was killed. Another refers to a "sitting" shortly after the young man's death, in which an alleged message from Raymond was conveyed to his mother, containing the words: "Good God! how father will be able to speak out! much firmer than he has ever done, because it will touch our hearts." Further "conversations" with Raymond give alleged descriptions of life in the next world, such as:—

There are men here, and there are women here. don't think that they stand to each other quite the same as they did on the earth plane, but they seem to have the same feeling to each other, with a different expression of it. There don't seem to be any children born here. People are sent into the physical body to have children on the earth plane, they don't have them there.

Another valuable piece of information follows:—

People here try to provide everything that is wanted. A chap came over the other day, who

would have a cigar. "That's finished them," he thought. He means he thought they would never be able to provide that. But there are laboratories over here and they manufacture all sorts of things in them. Not like you do, out of solid matter, but out of essences, and ethers, and gases. It's not the same as on the earth plane, but they were able to manufacture what looked like a cigar. He didn't try one himself, because he didn't care to; you know he wouldn't want to. But the other chap jumped at it. But when he began to smoke it, he didn't think so much of it; he had four altogether; and now he doesn't look at one.

That is a fair sample of Sir Oliver Lodge's case for survival after death. There are other matters included, which have no value as evidence, such as exalted visions, and a statement that Raymond had seen "Christ." It all sounds so very odd in the face of the familiar clerical argument that "the surgeon's knife cannot find the soul." For, in a sense Spiritualism does try to try the "soul" with the knife, that is with material means. It wants to get as good evidence for the existence of John Smith after death as it had for the existence of John Smith before his decease. The supposed "spirit" of Mr. Smith is required to prove his existence and presence by making himself audible, by showing that he remembers Aunt Jane or Granny Smith, or by having his photograph taken in a fifty-bob suit of clothes.

Now, what is there in Sir Oliver's evidence to convince the world, or even to carry conviction to the minds of plain men and women? The prophecy of his son's dissolution was not improbable, for he was a soldier, and sharing a soldier's constant risk of death. And what are we to make of the "revelations" of the "hereafter," with its "laboratories," and its "cigars," and its "factories?" Are we to suppose that all life is indestructible? In that case, we have still to ask where life begins; and wherever the line may be drawn, it is manifest that the jelly-fish, the oyster, and the lodging-house bug are on the hither side of it, and have "souls." All these, and a thousand other difficulties encounter us when we try to consider Sir Oliver's account of the "beyond."

Whilst "Raymond's" alleged description of a future life seems absurd to us, there is one important point well worth noting, life after death is not painted as being horrific, but as a continuation of life on earth, such as the poet Shelley's sarcastic description of hell as a place "very like London." Apparently, even religious folks now-a-days are getting really ashamed of the old theological theory of heaven and hell. Unconsciously, their ideas are becoming more and more secularized. Their ideas may be crude, even childish, but it is very gratifying to find that they are more humane. There is an enormous difference between Oliver Lodge's farcical views of a future existence and the tragical views of the orthodox Christians of a generation since. Charles Spurgeon, the most popular preacher of the nineteenth century, insisted that the majority of mankind were destined to eternal torture in full view of their duty:—

In fire, exactly like that which we have on earth to-day, will lie, asbestos-like, for ever unconsumed, every nerve a string on which the devil shall for ever play his diabolical tune of hell's unutterable lament.

The unfortunate people will:—

Look up there on the throne of God, and it shall be written "For ever!" When the damned jingle the burning irons of their torment they shall say "For ever." When they howl, echo cries, "For ever."

That was what Christians believed for two thousand years, and the same uncivilized ideas are still preached by the Roman Catholic Church, the Salvation Army,

and by thousands of itinerant evangelists. It all sounds very odd and more than a little barbarous, but the evolution of religious opinion is an index to the intellectual progress of a nation.

MIMNERMUS.

An Apostle of Democratic Deism.

VISCOUNT BOLINGBROKE, the accomplished Conservative statesman, and his friend the satirical and sententious Alexander Pope must be numbered with the Deists. Another Deist who strove to retain all that was possible in the Christian creed was the celebrated divine, Dr. Conyers Middleton. This sceptical scholar endeavoured to establish a compromise between the Deists and their clerical antagonists. Middleton's *Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers of the Christian Church* proved important, not merely for what it said, but for what it suggested. This, with his other writings encouraged a spirit of scepticism in cultured society, and incidently led Gibbon towards rationalism in religion.

But while the lettered world and the more emancipated clergy were willing to accept, at least provisionally, the criticisms and compromises of Middleton, dissentients remained among orthodox and heterodox alike. Peter Annet the Radical was one of the latter, and it was he who prepared the path for the popular publications of Thomas Paine and other later exponents of Freethought.

Annet's aggressive writings on religion were studied and utilized by Voltaire, who became the vehicle of their introduction to a wide Continental public. Unfortunately, few details relating to Annet's career have come down to us. It is stated that he was a Lancastrian, being born in Liverpool in 1693. So far as is known, Annet's earliest effort was entitled *Judging for Ourselves*, which is dated 1739. It bears the signature "P.A., minister of the gospel." It is therefore probable that, like Woolston, he was a clerk in holy orders, although he later entered the teaching profession as a means of livelihood. But his unenviable reputation as an unbeliever soon lost him his scholastic post. He was long a member of the famous Robin Hood Debating Society, to which Goldsmith was also attached.

The anticlerical essays of Annet appeared anonymously, but apparently his Freethinking opinions were common property. His first work consisted of lectures which seem to have been delivered to the general public. Indeed, Annet seems to have been the pioneer of a long and eloquent line of Freethought speakers who appealed to popular audiences. Annet was also an initiator of rationalistic journalism, but his *Free Enquirer*, a weekly organ, was destined, after the publication of nine numbers only, to an untimely end. The *Free Enquirer* was suppressed by the State, while its author was arrested, tried, and imprisoned for blasphemy. The trial took place in 1763. Annet was charged with the offence of ridiculing Holy Writ. The information alleged that he had attempted to show "that the prophet Moses was an impostor, and that the sacred truths and miracles recorded and set forth in the Pentateuch were impositions and false inventions, and thereby to infuse and propagate irreligious and diabolical opinions in the minds of his majesty's subjects, and to shake the foundations of the Christian religion and of the civil and ecclesiastical government established in this kingdom."

The attitude of the authorities at this time towards popular Freethought is evidenced by their harsh treatment of Annet. He was sentenced to a month's incarceration in Newgate, to suffer the indignity of

twice standing in the pillory, and then to undergo twelve months' hard labour in Bridewell, and to furnish securities for good conduct during the remainder of his life. And this, when the persecuted man had reached the advanced age of seventy. "The few remaining years of his life," it is stated, "were spent in adversity, but his spirit remained undaunted. He became a schoolmaster again, and invented a system of shorthand. But his *Lectures*, corrected and revised just before his death, show the restraining influence of persecution."

Annet's anticlerical attitude appears more pronounced than that of his predecessors, with the possible exception of Woolston. In the mind of Annet, Christianity was not merely untrue but vicious. Whether miraculous or improbable stories were related in writings sacred or profane common sense alone must decide their truth. "If a man says he has crossed Westminster Bridge, his story may be true and deserves examination, though the bridge is not quite finished (1747); but if he says he jumped the river, I know the story to be a lie and trouble myself no more about it." When Annet applies this matter of fact method to the legendary tale of the resurrection one readily surmises the result. The genuine part of this miracle, in Annet's opinion, was restricted to the circumstance that all the astounding events associated with Christ's resurrection made no impression on the people who witnessed them. For, "the nature of the Jews remained the same; their hearts were not rent, tho' the rocks rent; nor quaked, tho' the earth quaked; and tho' the graves opened, their understandings appear not to be opened! What a strange thing is infidelity, that no miracle can work upon it."

Peter Annet's *David, the History of the Man after God's own Heart* appeared anonymously in 1761. The authorship of this remarkable production has been assigned to Archibald Campbell and another writer, but that Annet gave it birth there can be no serious doubt. It is indited in the same style as Annet's earlier satires on Paul and Moses. The character of Saul is sympathetically portrayed, and this serves to emphasize the cruelty and wickedness of his supplanter. The marked realism of the Scriptural narrative loses nothing in Annet's pages, and the turpitude and treachery of David are remorselessly exposed. There is now no need to retell the tale, for is it not found in all its monstrous deformity in certain impressive chapters of the Books of Samuel and of Kings?

Annet, as others of later generations, has been accused of lacking the historical sense inasmuch as he judged the virtues and vices of a barbarous Oriental race by the ethical standards of more civilized times. Still, it is only just to remember that the Bible was, and still in large measure is, held up to public veneration as a model of morality, and that the alleged sacred writings have been sedulously sheltered by deliberately fostered sentiments of superstition against any candid criticism of their contents.

Annet never abandoned his belief in Nature's Creator and Sustainer. He also expressed his faith in "true Christianity," whatever that may be. In an early issue of his *Free Enquirer*, for which he was prosecuted and imprisoned, Annet claims that true religion does not rest on Judaism but on a rock; "on the rock of Nature, that it was before Judaism, and is independent of it." In more ribald vein Annet derides Moses' Egyptian miracle of the plague of vermin: "But in the next miracle, which is a lousy one, Moses outdid them . . . Pharaoh's magicians try to make lice, but they cannot: therefore they told the king that this lousy miracle was done by the finger of God: but the king without intreating him to kill them with his thumb, scratched himself again,

though it makes one itch to think of it. This singular wonder, however, had no wonderful effect, more than the others. But this seems a less miracle than any of the rest, for what miracle could it be for the lousy Israelites to infect the Egyptians with lice."

Annet's propagandist methods have been stigmatised as coarse and crude. Still, he appealed to the people, at that time denied ordinary access to culture. Any form of advocacy that serves to stimulate thought is certain in the end to benefit mankind. This truth justifies the life and labours of old Peter Annet.

T. F. PALMER.

Freethought in Australia.

Professor John Anderson and his Critics.

LAST July Professor John Anderson, Professor of Philosophy of the Sydney University, and President of the Sydney Freethought Society, delivered a lecture to the Society. In the course of the lecture he stated that such terms as "the State," "the country," and "the nation," were superstitious notions; that such terms as "Your King and country need you," were an appeal to prejudice and superstition; that "loyalty" was a kind of superstition; that war memorials were idols, and that the keeping up of religious celebrations connected with them, which only served the purpose of blocking discussion—were against the best interests of the community and not in accord with the national sentiment of present-day Australians.

All this is perfectly true and perfectly comprehensible to students of philosophy, as well as to any person who approaches the subject from an unprejudiced standpoint, but too strong meat for the general public. The newspapers naturally seized upon portions of the lecture, published them without their context, and thus warped the meaning in the usual way in which Freethought lectures are distorted all over the world by irresponsible journalists. Then the politicians joined in the fray—especially those who were preparing for the coming election, and wanted to get in a dig at the present Government. Professor Anderson was denounced as a "communist," as a "menace to the young minds of the community," an "Atheist," and so forth; and resolutions were passed calling on the Government (which subsidises the University) to dismiss Professor Anderson from his Chair of Philosophy.

Then the matter was discussed in the New South Wales Parliament, and it is a relief to know that the Labour Government in New South Wales—unlike the English Labour Government—took up a firm stand. They affirmed that the country stood for freedom of speech, and the Professor's address having been made outside of University circles they had no right to interfere.

Mr. Bavin, the leader of the Nationalist Party, in opposing the attitude of the Government made the priceless statement that he, too, believed in freedom of thought, but he objected to the expression of thought that shocked decent men and women. Thus, it is all right to cherish the belief that cinemas should be opened on Sunday, but all wrong to open them and still more wrong to attend them. Freedom of thought, of course—but not freedom of expression and still less freedom of action!

Credit must be given to Mr. Davies, the Minister of Education, for his defence of Professor Anderson in the New South Wales Parliament. He characterized the attacks on Professor Anderson as cowardly. He had interviewed Professor Anderson, and he detailed the Professor's replies, namely that he had begun his

address to the Society by outlining the objects of the Society. They were that Freethought was a positive thing that could also be expressed negatively as an attitude of opposition to superstition. Its connexion with freedom of thought came out most definitely in its opposition to political superstitions or idols. An idol, the Professor said, was an object treated in such a way as to prevent or hamper discussion or criticism. A superstitious regard for, or loyalty to, the State or the country was a noteworthy feature of modern political life. Professor Anderson illustrated his arguments by reference to Britain's foreign policy before the war, and he denounced secret diplomacy. "Men should be prepared to denounce secret diplomacy," said the Minister of Education, "and I congratulated Professor Anderson upon the straight-out manner in which he attacked his subject."

It is well worth putting these facts on record in the *Freethinker*, if only to show the contrast between the attitude of the Australian Labour Government with the attitude of the English Labour Government. The record of the English Labour politicians in regard to the Blasphemy Bill—especially the attitude of the Right Honourable Mr. Clynes—was for the most part utterly contemptible. With a few notable exceptions, the Labour politicians here sold the birthright of freedom of thought. The Sunday Cinema Bill was yet another example of cowardice and treachery.

Needless to say the Church did not let the opportunity pass to shove a spoke in the wheel of progress, and at the same time endeavour to protect their own vested interests. For once the Protestants and Catholics ceased to fight one another and united in their efforts to attack Professor Anderson. The Roman Catholic Bishop of Armidale (N.S.W.) (Dr. P. J. O'Connor) said that it was a shocking state of affairs when a man could stand up before a number of Australian youths and preach Freethought. If a man had ideas about this so-called science of philosophy, he should keep them to himself, and not lead young Australians astray (that is, away from the Roman Catholic Church!).

When making his reply to a gathering of University Students, under the auspices of the University Science Society, Professor Anderson (who was received with tremendous applause) said: "In this University and elsewhere, I have stood for discussion and investigation, as I always will stand for discussion and investigation. (Applause). And I would particularly like to say that I am glad we are meeting to-night in the name of Science which omits nothing human or non-human from its purpose. (Renewed Applause)."

F. A. HORNIBROOK.

Harvest Thanksgiving.

In these days of advanced religious controversy, when modernism in the Church is concerning itself with science and metaphysics, when men of the calibre of Professor Jeans and Professor J. Arthur Thompson are writing super-theology under the guise of science or philosophy, when stalwarts like Dean Inge or Bishop Barnes, Dr. Major or Dr. Jacks, are attempting to raise religious discussion to a plane far above the popular level, the clerical intelligentsia would look with unconcealed disdain upon the critic who descended in his captions to the subject of the weather. With an indulgent smile they would remind him that he was out of date, that he was thinking in a mental atmosphere heavy with the frowst of the last century, that the modern idea of God transcended immeasurably such petty issues, was now removed from them by many planes of refinement,

was sublimated so as to let through the light and splendour of things imponderable. Life, they would tell us, had become a complex of values, religion a spiritual outlook.

We who listened might, for a space, be carried in such a stream of thought by the mere tide of words, but not, let us hope, for long. A robust common sense, striking out on its own account, would soon restore our feet to terra firma, and the discussion would swiftly be forced down to what we in the North are accustomed to call "brass tacks." We should remind our clerical etherialists that the whole church-going public was shortly to celebrate the Harvest Thanksgiving, and that the heading in our morning paper had just announced the following:—

"Harvested crops ruined by the floods."

First we have torrential downpours that spoil most of the crops in the fields, the work of the months gone by, the hope of the months to come. Then, as if to consummate a cruel jest, what remains is gathered in and stacked at the cost of labour and money, only to be swamped when the day is all but won. The drowning man is allowed to get within an ace of the shore before the fateful wave is hurled upon him. Notwithstanding, therefore, quasi-philosophic panegyric to impress upon us the sublime majesty, the splendid aloofness of God Almighty, the man in the street, or rather in the field, looks at the matter thus:

If God is so sublimated as to have ceased to take, or to be capable of taking a personal interest in men's affairs, then He is too sublimated for a Harvest Thanksgiving. But if He has retained sufficient of His personal attributes to appreciate the service, then His was a curious interest and the service is a curious thanksgiving. And if it comes to a question of "petty issues," it will be difficult to persuade country folk, or any other folk for that matter, that the harvest is a petty issue. It may be very much of an earthly matter compared to the higher elements of spiritual life, but men are "of the earth earthy," and require first bread to eat and the wherewithal to live. No, all this transcendental humbug will not do! If God the Father has a genuine interest in His children He will not esteem the weather a matter beneath His attention, but if He is only the quasi-personal entity of a metaphysical theology a harvest festival is but an empty mummerly. Why then does it continue in our midst?

It continues for the same reasons which apply to other mummeries of the same type, namely because the Church dare not publicly abjure beliefs regarding the intimate relationships between God and men which privately she no longer cherishes. No minister with any claims to intellectual culture really believes in the crude anthropomorphism which pictures God in sympathetic consultation with the Greenwich Observatory, yet none will advocate the abandoning of thanksgiving services, or of prayer for suitable weather, on the grounds of their intrinsic absurdity. There are those, of course, who do not see any intrinsic absurdity; who, in perfect sincerity, would thank God for any and every calamity because it was not worse; but these we would hardly number among the intellectually cultured. What deters the remainder from public disclaimers is, consciously or otherwise, the fact that people would soon drift away from a God who was seen to be drifting away from them. Unless the myth of providential interferences were kept alive, we should be in danger of lapsing into that pagan outlook in which the gods figured as beings existing somewhere in the background, but commanding no more of men's attention than we in Britain would give to the Papuan Islanders. Conse-

quently the Church is doomed to labour under these incessant inanities. While I was writing this article I was interrupted by an announcement on the wireless to the effect that the Archbishop had enjoined universal prayer for the divine guidance of the present Government. When one reflects upon the dismal chain of events, from the War onwards, that culminated in the late crisis, one begins to despair that light will ever penetrate the skulls of those human ostriches who, with heads buried deep in the sand, with eyes and ears closed to the clamourings of common sense, will utter such a prayer on such an occasion. The patience of Job and his unwavering faith can be so decorated with rhetoric as to blind us to a fundamental element of thick-headedness. What man with a spark of intelligence but will experience a sense of hopelessness mingled with profound pity when he thinks of the thousands on their knees at the coming Harvest Thanksgiving? Is it any wonder that the toiling masses are put upon year by year, century by century? Still, to those in the Freethought Movement who will not own defeat, it all acts as a fresh spur to effort. We cannot give men common sense, but we must give them the food with which to nourish it and the means by which to exercise it, for only with the bludgeon of common sense can they ever hope to dislodge the vampires that feed upon their credulity and ignorance.

MEDICUS.

Acid Drops.

Another confession of Spiritualistic fraud and an exposure to the same end. The former is to be found in the *Daily Express* of September 18, and concerns Mr. Beare, who for years has carried on as a Medium, with a certificate of his genuineness issued by a South London Spiritualist Society, but who now confesses that the whole thing has been a series of tricks. This is neither surprising news nor a difficult performance. As we have so often pointed out, the precautions taken by "investigators" are so childish and so irrelevant to be quite useless, particularly as the investigators are usually half-believers before they start on their job. So Mr. Beare found his job as easy as selling gold-bricks to the British public.

The exposure is connected with the celebrated George Valliantine. This world renowned medium was taken up in England by Mr. Dennis Bradley, who in two books trumpeted the wonders of the manifestations received in his own house—trumpet messages, direct voices, finger prints, etc., but who is now publishing a book in which he announces that he has discovered the great George to be a complete fraud. It may be remembered that in the Queen's Hall debate Mr. Cohen pointed out that Mr. Bradley's precautions against fraud were childish, while he was obviously unacquainted with the scientific explanation of simple things that appeared to him to prove spirit intercourse. Now Mr. Bradley—who was present at that debate—has discovered how he has been tricked and is writing about it in a book that will be published shortly. We may notice the work at length when it appears.

The Recorder of the Old Bailey declares that "One of the lessons I have learned here is a growing belief in human goodness." This will serve as a reminder that the parson's view of mankind, as seen through the distorting lens of the Christian religion and expressed in such terms as "sinful man," and the "need of redemption," is not necessarily the only one of two. One cheering sign of the times is that although the parson's view was, by iteration and reiteration, accepted without question for many centuries, this is no longer the case to-day. Man is sloughing off the artificial "sense of sin" so carefully manufactured by the priest. Only the priest will lament it. Man should progress all the more

quickly when he has disposed of the handicap of a pessimistic and untrue conception of his own nature.

The Rev. Ensor Walters says that "London remains the 'heart of civilization'; for the Church to fail here means that the whole world suffers." We are not sure whether Mr. Walters has merely an overdose of the Englishman's national conceit, or whether he is suffering from the English Christian's disease of imagining his particular religion is vastly important to all other peoples in the world. In any case, we have learnt that there really is some foundation for the English Christian's proud boast that his religion induces humbleness.

In a religious journal, a parsonic scribe has a splendid and inspiring essay on "Parasites." We presume it was the parson's national modesty that prevented his mentioning his own tribe as one of the largest of the social parasites inflicted on the nation. Parsons are non-producers who live by preying on the superstitious fears of those who believe in them.

That primitive-minded, yet doggedly persistent, body known as the Lord's Day Observance Society sent two telegrams, one to the Schneider Committee and one to the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, protesting against the intended running of the Schneider contest on Sunday. "Can we wonder at the prevailing national distress when God's Commandments are wantonly flouted in this way?" says one telegram; and "we appeal to you to take immediate action which will help save the name of Portsmouth City from an indelible stain," says the other. With regard to the first, we can imagine the utter dismay of all members of the Society when it became known that not only had all previous records been broken, but that not one single pilot had been killed for so blatantly insulting their vengeful Ju-Ju. With regard to the second, we recommend that it would be a noble gesture on the part of all Portsmouth clerics who joined in the protest to follow the example of Lot and his wife and to leave Portsmouth for ever.

The Bishop of Ripon is wise in his own generation. The increase in the number of hikers and cyclists is a serious menace to the profits derived from Sunday collections. So the astute Bishop, bravely suppressing his religious dislike of shirts and shorts in "sanctified" premises, has set about to entice the wearers thereof by purely secular means. A service was held on Sunday, September 13, at 3 p.m., at Ripon Cathedral, which was preceded by a lecture on its history and architecture, and followed by a reception (doubtless with tea and buns) in the grounds of his lordship's "palace." We seem in some odd way, to be reminded of our childhood's days when the pill was served up to us in a jam sandwich.

One remarkable thing about the Sabbatarian is his kindly concern for other people. For instance, a writer in a chapel paper is pained at discovering that thousands of people, young and old, have nothing to do when the Sunday evening service is over. And as they cannot afford wireless-sets, they have to resort to aimless wandering about the streets. Whereupon, the aforesaid writer exclaims, "Why not abandon our notion that the churches ought to shut about 8 o'clock, and arrange for broadcast services?" What a noble notion! It has the hall-mark of divine inspiration. The Sabbatarian suppresses as far as possible all opportunity for rational recreation and amusement on the "Lord's Day," and then professes to be deeply concerned because people have nothing to do but be bored at doing nothing. This he regards as a heaven-sent opportunity for providing a religious means by which the bored can be rescued from boredom. The contemptible cant of it all!

Anything that tends to decrease the hold of the Chapel in Wales, where, in the remote districts, superstition is as strong as in the West of Ireland (though here under Protestant auspices), is to be welcomed. Thus in *The Welsh Outlook*, which we understand represents young Wales, an article on the "New Orthodoxy" refers to "the old superstitions that have ever clustered around religion," and to the fact that "at the present time men

of the highest scholastic attainments are to be found in the ranks of the neo-orthodox movement." It adds, and the words are significant from this Christian source, "Bacon has sagely observed that the master of superstition is the people." Moreover error and superstition have never throughout the whole course of Christian history, lacked the support of scholarship and sophistical acumen. But, on the other hand, it must not be forgotten that a man may be a scholar whose mind is in bondage; he may be learned in the creeds without ever having been, in the language of John Stuart Mill, "afflicted with the malady of thought." This is plain and true speaking indeed, but we must dissent from our young contemporary's view, apropos of an alleged revival of Popery in Wales, that "full and even generous justice must be done to the historical position and genuine virtues of that Church." Its historical position is not in doubt—the greatest foe of liberty in the world. And as to its "genuine religious virtues"—what are they? A series of tenets which, in proportion as they are earnestly and credulously held, enslave the minds, hamper the bodies, and darken the lives of their adherents.

A Devonshire parson suggests in a daily paper that prayer might be useful in the way of advising God what he ought to give this country in regard to weather. The parson doesn't put it quite like that, of course. He points out that in the 80's and 90's the bishops often called people to pray for fair weather, or in days of drought, for rain, and later there used to be special thanksgiving. He adds:—

In this time of torrential rain, flattened cornfields, with market and flower gardens ruined and tragic bathing fatalities everywhere, why is the voice of prayer silent?

Well, it is too late now to get the Lord to alter what he has done. But there would be no harm in offering up special thanksgiving prayers, expressing deep gratitude to the Lord for not making matters twice as bad as he has done, and complimenting God on his impartiality, in so much as he has treated the ungodly and the godly exactly alike. The ordinary thanksgiving might be interpreted as sarcasm. By all means let the voice of prayer be heard; otherwise, the Lord will not appreciate what he has been doing. Another sound reason is that every ass should be permitted to relieve its feelings by braying.

A "Hardy Memorial Organ" has been given by relatives of the late Thomas Hardy to Stinsford Church, Dorset. Bishop Joscelyne dedicated it, and perhaps the instrument and the dedication will somehow or other help to get people believe that the author of the following lines believed in the nonsense taught in churches:—

"A world I did not wish to enter
Took me and poised me on my centre,
Made me grimace, and foot, and prance
As cats on hot bricks have to dance
Strange jigs to keep them from the floor,
Till they sink down and feel no more."

The public, through the kindly offices of Mr. Phillip Snowden, having been perfectly educated in the art of thinking in millions may now be able to appreciate the following figure. A million people have been drowned in the Kunghsien area in China. It is only Atheists who dissent from the truth that He doeth all things well.

The resignation of the Chaplain-General, Dr. A. C. E. Jarvis is stated to be caused by the incessant strain of the responsibility of his position through not being able at all times to agree with the Socialist Government. Every sympathy will be felt with all those who are called on to reconcile the teaching of Christianity and War—at a good salary.

The restraining influence of Christian teaching is not very clear in the case of Southend. A member of the Southend Christian Tabernacle was fined £5 for posing as a detective. It may be that the individual had confused Scotland Yard with the Lord's Vineyard.

A pastoral, signed by the entire episcopate of Spain,

contains the illuminating information that all authority emanates only from God. This will doubtless impress the faithful, but ordinary people happen to know his interpreters and their history.

It is strange, but true, that the Articles of Religion, 39 in number, and sometimes called "the forty stripes save one," should be a constant theme of disputation among clergymen of the Church whose Articles of Religion they are. All of these disputants are, in fact, guilty of *lese majesty*, as well as of ecclesiastical disobedience. For in the Book of Common Prayer it is stated that "in the Convocation holden at London in the year 1562, for the avoiding of diversities of opinion," it was "by His Majesty's commandment" declared "with His Royal Declaration prefixed thereunto" that "no man hereafter shall either print or preach, or draw the Article aside any way, but shall submit to it in the plain and full meaning thereof; and shall not put his own sense or comment to be the meaning of the Article, but shall take it in the literal and grammatical sense." Nor is this all. "If any public reader in either of our Universities, or any Head or Master of a College, or any other person in either of them shall affix any new sense to any Article, or suffer any such to be held," he "shall be liable to Our Displeasure, and the Church's censure in our Commission Ecclesiastical, as well as any other; and We will see there shall be due Execution upon them." The Convocation aforesaid was held in the reign of the Virgin Queen (1558-1603), so we are a little doubtful as to the monarch responsible for this declaration which will not be found in a modern Prayer Book, but is in that from which we quote it, published in 1842. It was, presumably Edward VI.; but, in any case, there is no doubt that all these clergy who are haggling at present over the Articles, and the best way of swearing assent and dodging it, would "incur Our Displeasure" if it were not that His present Majesty's advisers dare not advise their execution.

The late Dean Farrar's sermons, "Eternal Hope," were, we believe, preached in Westminster Abbey. In days when hell was still vehemently defended in orthodox circles, his "larger hope" doctrine was novel, and by some thought dangerous. How far the Church has been pushed or dragged since then is indicated by a sermon preached at Westminster Abbey the other day by Dr. Percy Dearmer. According to him there is "a new movement in the church," which "will not be tied up to dogmas or waste itself by defending untenable positions merely because they are ancient." Christian reunion is, according to the Abbey preacher, a vain dream for, he says: "It is hopeless to think that the religious and educated men of Europe, America, and Asia can ever be united in the acceptance of any elaborate system." More. "It is folly to think that our finite minds can settle questions above our comprehension," but "science was always ready to alter its statements as the improvement of knowledge required. Therefore scientists were trusted." What is left of Christianity after this, the reader may ask? Something we have often heard before. "Christianity," Dr. Dearmer concludes, "consists in deeds rather than opinions, and in a life rather than in a system," which is precisely the test by which, both as a system and as a philosophy of life for the individual, Christianity has most conspicuously failed.

We observe that a new fashion in hats, "bowlers," worn, so far as we have seen them, *a la cockney* on the side of the head, has come into the bad books of the clergy, following in the steps of "beach pyjamas," hiking "shorts," and knee length skirts. It is to be noted that clergymen and pious women have no claim to novelty in these criticisms. The *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, reprinting paragraphs from its columns of forty years ago, includes the following:—

The advocates of rational dress and opponents of the corset should derive much consolation from a scene which has just taken place at Sydenham, Ontario. There, it appears, religion has been brought to bear upon the question, and the corset has been denounced as "incompatible with Christianity." So stirring was the crusade that a number of women built a bonfire, and threw the

objectionable corsets into the blaze, shouting, as they did so, "We will die as God made us."

We are not expert enough to say for certain if it is so, but we have a notion that whereas corsets were anathema to the clergy forty years ago, at least in Ontario, it is the lack of them that is denounced to-day. Inconsistent as ever, clericalism changes its denunciations with the fashions. All we have to add is that, judging from some specimens we come across he must have been in a very bad temper when he made them.

A copy of Handel's *Messiah* is now in the Imperial War Museum. It is a pocket edition and it is reported that the owner's life was saved in the war through carrying the book in the breast pocket. It used to be the Bible that acted in this way.

The *Morning Post* is running a risk of prosecution for blasphemy in publishing the story of the little girl who witnessed a thunderstorm with her nose pressed tightly to the window pane. In the excitement she shouted out "Go it God." That admirable paper, as pre-historic in its views as flint axes are for chopping wood, must learn to restrain itself.

Members of the Young Laymen's League (a Methodist concern) have just had a fortnight's camp at Dover. We gather that in between the frivolous items, such as playing games, the young laymen solemnly discussed religion in order to discover "just what they did believe about Jesus Christ," and the Bible. Of course, the discussions were properly steered into safe channels; for we learn that they proved of lasting inspiration, and there were a good many "definite decisions for Christ." How much more educative and inspiring such discussions might have been if only a Freethought lecturer had been permitted to address the crowd and ask questions! What doesn't seem to have occurred to the "young laymen" is that they can hardly hope to come to sound conclusions about the Bible and the Christian religion until they have also become acquainted with what can be said against that religion. But of course they have been well trained from the cradle, and so they never dream of searching for the other side of the case presented by the parsons. We should have thought that such poor fish were nothing to be proud of for catching. But the parsonic intelligence being what it is, the Lord's fishermen are completely satisfied.

To those who regard beach costumes when worn in the streets as "indecent," a reader of the *Daily Sketch* addresses the following question: "Why will parsons in particular, and their flocks in general, make themselves ridiculous about the vagaries of feminine dress, and prate about 'the laws of decency,' when they mean convention?" A possible answer is, we suggest, that it is in the nature of the truly religious animal to get mentally muddled and make itself ridiculous by confusing departures from convention with "indecent." Another instance of similar muddled thought reveals itself when the pious object to marriages which concern a deceased wife's sister, or a deceased husband's brother, and so forth. The ban on such marriages originated in a convention once current among the ancient Hebrew tribes. And to-day our pietists make themselves ridiculous by insisting that it is "wicked" for this ancient convention to be ignored.

Five priests of the Dominican Order were drowned in the Ottawa River owing to their boat capsizing in rough water. There is no moral, but there would have been a big one if they had been Freethinkers.

It is announced that an artist and yachtsman will be the new traffic dictator of London. We suggest on these lines that the next important vacancy in the Air Force be filled by the Bishop of London.

We are very pleased to learn that the *Freethinker* is not the only paper to chronicle the imbecilities of people suffering from the effects of the Sunday taboo. The *Passing Show* has the following notice under the heading of "One Week's Wisdom." The inhabitants of Ealing should keep well 'o nights in consequence:—

News of the erection of a solid bulwark against decadence and incipient paganism contained in the columns of the *Morning Post*:

By 22 votes to 12 Ealing Town Council rejected a proposal to permit Sunday morning swimming in the local baths. Several members said that Sunday swimming was "the thin end of the wedge of Sunday recreation."

The question of tithes is now receiving the benefit of modern flood lighting, and it will be interesting to watch the antagonism between a world of fluctuating prices and a medieval claim on the farmer's produce. We are told in the press that:—

The National Farmers' Union, the Central Council of the United Tithe-payers' Associations, and the Liberation Society are among the organizations lined up for the campaign against the tithe. It would almost look as if a day of prayer was also needed to enable sheep-shearers to continue with their work.

Dr. H. D. A. Major has expressed the opinion that "the failure of our civilization, if it comes, will be brought about by two things—secularism and superstition." Apart from the saving clause "if it comes," this statement is exactly equivalent to saying that the failure of civilization will be caused by the two opposite forces—superstition and the absence of superstition. From the remarkable logic displayed by Dr. Major, we infer two things. One is that he is a Christian, and the other is that he is a parson.

A Committee of the League of Nations is considering the question of introducing a rational calendar. In reply to a question an official said: "What opposition there has been is from the orthodox Jews and Seventh Day Adventists. They are afraid that the new calendar would interfere with their devotions in the first week of each year, but that could be overcome by holding two successive days of worship at that particular period." This is, of course, one solution. But since two successive days of worship would probably be too much of a good thing even for these ardent enthusiasts, there is the obvious alternative of requesting their respective "almighty" deities to join forces and reduce the time of the earth's revolution round the sun by one day and a quarter.

Placards in the Battle Bridge district of Co. Roscommon warned all Catholics that anyone found working for Protestants or assisting them in any way would be severely dealt with. This, no doubt, is a sample of Christian love that passeth all understanding.

Fifty Years Ago.

THE "thinginess of things," as the Hegelians say is decidedly queer. At the outset we are pitched and pulled into this wondrous world, *volens volens*, in most distressing manner. Instinct for life (a power not ourselves that makes for much that is not righteousness) makes us struggle, squeal, suck, slobber and sleep; and our after career is little more than a repetition of these processes. We live and learn, outgrow our infant clothes and creeds, discard our toys, and strive to adapt ourselves to our surroundings. Impelled by inherited instincts, we seek in various ways for a happiness that ever escapes us. We interest ourselves in one thing after another, only to find fresh old sawdust in our new dolls. Most of us have a constant struggle to stave off starvation. Many strive might and main to be true to the best they know. Others "go it blind." All are more sinned against than sinning. We love and aspire—to have our loved ones torn from us, and see our aspirations tumbled in the mud. Our utmost endeavour reaches but to build some sand castle, soon to be swept away by the incoming waves of time, our best satisfaction contriving to reproduce our miserable selves. At length some joint of our decaying machinery gets loose, and out the soul bursts from its prison house of clay, only to find itself hurled headlong hellwards, and cry out in despair, "What have I done to be damned?"

The "Freethinker," September 25, 1881.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—Dr. W. M. Hewetson, 4s. 3d.; Vivian Phelps, 4s. 9d.

BAYARD SIMMONS.—Received, thanks.

F. ABEL.—Article received. Hope to publish shortly.

S. MORGAN.—We cannot tell you what you *must* do. All we can say is that we withdrew from religious instruction our own children. We feel sure that in a great many cases children are not withdrawn more because parents do not wish to advertise their own disbelief, than from any real fear that their children will suffer persecution.

D. MATHEWS (Johannesburg).—Sorry we are unable to use your letter, but the letters to which you reply were published so long ago that the subject will have passed from the mind of many readers. That is the penalty of living at so great a distance from our office.

S.J.—Always pleased to meet friends from overseas. We have them from the four corners of the earth, and the visits are invariably pleasant.

T. H. GUNNING.—You are quite mistaken. It is not because the matter is a "small affair," but because I know the inside history of the affair. I should not have acted as I did act otherwise.

I. BOLTON.—The essential position of Unitarianism is the rejection of the divinity of Jesus and of the Bible as more than the religious records of the Jewish people.

J. CLAYTON.—Nothing tells so much as persistency and good humour combined with common sense.

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.

On Sunday next (October 4) Mr. Cohen will commence his autumn lectures with a meeting at the Picton Hall, Liverpool. His subject will be "The Disease that Kills Religion." We suggest that Freethinkers should make it a point of bringing one or two of their Christian friends with them to the lecture. The chair will be taken at 7.0. There will be a limited number of reserved seat tickets at one shilling each.

We see it is stated that the Sunday Entertainment Bill is not likely to be proceeded with during the life of the present Government. But it is intended to pass a single Clause Bill permitting Sunday Entertainments to be subject to the consent of the local authorities and the conditions they choose to lay down. The Act is to hold good for one year. Perhaps it is a case of seeing what the Lord thinks about it. Then if at the end of the year he has not destroyed a number of cinemas, or otherwise expressed his displeasure the permission to open may be extended. Our advice is what it has always

been. Let all those who are in the entertainment business decide to act as if we were living in a civilized country and no such thing as Sabbatarianism existed. The whole Act would then soon become a dead letter. It only requires a little courage.

Following the recent notice of the formation of a Study Circle for speakers and members interested, the first meeting will be held at the offices of the National Secular Society, 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, on Monday, September 28, at 7.30 p.m. Mr. A. D. McLaren will be in charge, and judging from the response to the first notice, there is every promise that some very useful and interesting work will come from the Circle. All members of the N.S.S. are eligible to attend.

In *The Trial of Jeanne d'Arc*: A complete translation of the text of the original documents, with an introduction by W. P. Barrett (Routledge) good work has been done by making it plain that the Church of Rome (which has now canonized Joan) was entirely responsible for her trial and its results. At this time (says Mr. Barrett), "the Inquisition was at the height of its perfection: every security of justice was removed, and no person in the situation in which Jeanne found herself, accused of witchcraft and heresy in a hostile ecclesiastical court had the faintest chance of a fair trial." We agree with the *Observer's* remark in reviewing this book that "at a time when determined attempts are being made to whitewash the Inquisition, and to prove that medieval life and faith was literally all 'beer and skittles,' it is of great importance to have accessible, authentic records of those times." Mr. Barrett has made a notable addition to such records.

The new Branch of the N.S.S. at Wembley made an excellent beginning to the syllabus of fortnightly meetings and discussions. The room was well filled and the address given by Mr. R. H. Rosetti was closely followed. There seemed no end to the questions, and only the forced departure of the speaker to catch his last train home brought the proceedings to an end. The enthusiastic and energetic Branch Secretary, Mr. P. V. Morris, will read a paper for discussion at the next meeting on October 5, details will be announced in our Lecture Notice column in due course.

Mr. G. Whitehead had a succession of good meetings in Birmingham, and helped to revive local interest in our work. The Birmingham Branch will follow up with a course of indoor meetings during the winter, will the local saints please watch our columns for announcements. Mr. Whitehead will be in London this week, which he will spend in the Fulham district in co-operation with the Fulham and Chelsea Branch of the N.S.S.

It is amusing to hear that an American firm in the hosiery and lingerie line calls together its bagnmen of a morning before they start on their rounds for a dose of "uplift" and pep. We hope British business will not follow the example of British evangelism in copying U.S.A. methods. In H. J. Mencken's *Prejudices* there is a telling description of the results of the latter across the herring pond:—

Religion lost all its old contemplative and esoteric character, and became a frankly worldly enterprise, a thing of balance sheets and ponderable profits, heavily capitalised and astutely manned. There was no longer any room for the spiritual type of leader, with his white choker and his interminable fourthlies. He was displaced by a brisk gentleman in a "business suit" who looked, talked and thought like a seller of Mexican mine stock. Scheme after scheme for the swift evangelization of the nation was launched. . . . The Y.M.C.A. swelled to the proportions of a Standard Oil Company, a United States Steel Corporation. Its huge buildings began to rise in every city; it developed a swarm of specialists in new fantastic moral and social sciences; it enlisted the same gargantuan talent which managed the railroads. . . . Down to our own day this trustification of pious endeavour has gone on.

Christianity and the Fall of the Roman Empire.

PROFESSOR ROSTOVITZ, the Russian historian—now domiciled in America, as Professor of ancient history in Yale University—observes, that every writer on Roman history, since Gibbon, is expected to give his opinion upon the “Fall of the Roman Empire, or rather ancient civilization in general.”¹ He says that “Christianity is very often made responsible for the decay of ancient civilization.” This is, of course, a very narrow point of view. Christianity is but one of one side of the general change in the mentality of the ancient world. Can we say that this change is the ultimate cause of the decay of ancient civilization.” (p. 486.) Having thus absolved Christianity, he tells us, a few lines further on, that “The change, no doubt, was one of the most potent factors in the gradual decay of the civilization of the city—state and in the rise of a new conception of the world and of a new civilization.” Probably the first opinion is merely a sop to the Christian Cerberus.

Rostovitz's, *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, was published in this country, in 1926; immediately following it, in the same year, was published his *History of the Ancient World*; the second volume of which deals with Rome. Here the historian is more explicit as to the share of Christianity in the matter. We are told: “One thing is clear: the victory of Christianity indicates a break with the past and a changed attitude in the history of the human mind.”² They dropped the substantial material world to grasp at the shadow of a spiritual after life. Says our historian:—

Religion, and especially the Christian religion, gave man the assurance of happiness—beyond the grave. Thus the centre of gravity was shifted, and men's hopes and expectations were transferred to that future life. They were content to submit and suffer in this life, in order to find true life hereafter. Such an attitude of mind was entirely foreign to the ancient world, even to the earlier nations of the East, not to speak of the Greeks and Romans. To a Greek the future life was something shadowy and formidable; life on earth alone was prized by him. (Rostovitz: *A History of the Ancient World*. Vol. II., p. 350.)

And this change of ideals, from secular progress to religious aspiration and obscurantism, was solely responsible for the catastrophe, and this is the verdict delivered by Rostovitz when he sums up on the last page of his work:—

Any creative power that remained turned away from this world and its demands, and studied how to know God and be united with Him.

Thus here again, in the case of the Roman Empire, a steady decline of civilization is not to be traced to physical degeneration, or to any debasement of blood in the higher race due to slavery, or to political and economic conditions, but rather to a changed attitude of men's minds. (Vol II., p. 366.)

The latest historian of the catastrophe which overtook the ancient world, Prof. Ferdinand Lot, is of the same opinion: “Science and philosophy,” he says, “unable to strive against mysticism, which secures for the initiated union with the absolute Being, were submerged in the torrent of religiosity coming from the East, which, especially since the first century A.D., tolerates nothing outside itself.”³ The new

superstition sucked the life out of the ancient world like a vampire. “In spite of the efforts of the Emperors,” says the same historian, “we can see that ancient society became rigid and lifeless. That there was no longer any political life goes without saying, but there was scarcely any municipal life left either.

... The religious sphere alone was the field of violent turmoil, because it attracted with a passionate force every faculty of heart and mind.” (p. 100.)

Take again the testimony of another eminent scholar, Thomas Hodgkin, whose work, *Italy and her Invaders*, a work of real research, in eight volumes, is a standard authority on the barbarian invasions of Italy. Mr. Hodgkin is a Quaker, and therefore, as an earnest Christian, would be glad to testify in favour of his religion if he honestly could; and this is his conclusion. After remarking, of Gibbon, that “It was not by an accidental coincidence that the great historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire was also one of the ablest opponents of the Christian Revelation to whom the last century gave birth.” He, further on, continues:—

That the substitution of Christianity for the worship of the deities of the Capitol had something to do with the crumbling away of the Empire in the fifth century, is a conviction which forces itself on our minds, and never so irresistibly as when we are listening to the most eloquent and the most subtle apologist for Christianity, Augustine, endeavouring to prove to us in his book on the City of God that the thing was not so... and when we are called upon finally to adjudicate on the question “Would the Rome of the Fabii and the Scipios, the Rome which heartily believed in and worshipped Jupiter and Quirinus, Mars, Ops, and Saturnus, have fallen as the Christian Rome fell before the hordes of Alaric?” we are bound in our historical conscience to answer, No. (T. Hodgkin: *Italy and her Invaders*. Vol II., p. 547.)

Or take the latest work dealing with the subject, just published, *A Short History of the Roman Empire*, by two Oxford scholars, Dr. J. Wells and Mr. R. H. Barrow, where we read that “The very ardour with which the new Christian communities accepted the faith betrayed them into excess of feeling and behaviour which earned for them the hatred of the mob.” And further:—

Christianity proclaimed the early return of Christ to judge the world; the fiery language of prophecy was taken literally by the mob as predicting the overthrow of paganism and the final conflagration of the world, from which Christian believers would be rescued into immortal life. The consciousness that they were somehow “set apart” betrayed the Christians into a narrow exclusiveness which rapidly developed into intolerance. With fanatical zeal they gloried in the impending catastrophe, and in later years deliberately provoked hostility to obtain the crown of martyrdom... Society and the Government showed to religion in general a tolerance which has had no parallel since; yet because of its beliefs Christianity answered tolerance by intolerance. It was inevitable that it should do so: strong in the faith that the existing organization was soon to perish, the Christians refused to cooperate with it. To take part in religious festival, even passively, to take an oath, to shoulder civic responsibilities, to serve in the army were inconsistent with their religion. The Christian held aloof, and his aloofness seemed like the pride of conscious superiority. Yet the pagan provincial was proud of the Empire and proud of his civic life; the non-cooperation of the Christian, if it should spread, would plunge Roman civilization into the destruction foretold in his gloomy prophecies; and the Roman world valued its civilization. (pp. 300-301.)

And this is precisely what Christianity did do.

W. MANN.

¹ M. Rostovitz: *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*. p. 478.

² Rostovitz: *A History of the Ancient World*. Vol II., p. 350.

³ F. Lot: *The End of the Ancient World*. p. 170.

The Whole Hog-Part-or None?

Credo quia impossibile! Thus old Sir Thomas Browne, who might well be adopted as patron saint "way down in Tennessee." The most credulous of Christians could not be a more convinced fundamentalist than he.

Upon the utterance of a certain formula, Catholics are required to believe that in a twinkling, baked bread and pressed wine are converted into human flesh and human blood. The writer was once arguing with a Catholic on the doctrine of transubstantiation, and pointed out that this miraculous change was revolting to ordinary reason and common sense. The Catholic's rejoinder was: "The moment you deny it, you deny the omnipotence of Almighty God." That closed the discussion.

The Catechism contains the question, "Who made you?" The answer is "God." One youthful bright intelligence, to whom the question was addressed, had the shocking temerity to adopt the Scotch method of answering one question by asking another, namely: "Who make God?" the framers of the Catechism ask us to believe that God made man, while Freethinkers maintain that the great volume of evidence shows that man made God. The God of to-day, moreover, is not the God of yesterday, as the God of tomorrow will not be the God of to-day. The phantasms of Zeus, Jupiter and Jehovah pass across the screen of history. Yes, *they pass*.

But our twentieth century medicine-men will have it that the father of Jesus Christ is the ever living God—the creator and ruler of the Universe—and that belief in any other deity is mere superstition.

Now, if we are to have a religion based upon belief in the Christian deity, we cannot cut and carve—we cannot have our cake and eat it—we cannot blow hot with one breath and cold with the next. It is essential that omnipotence must be accepted as the first attribute of such a God; and his inspired word must not be questioned. Yet Protestants have chosen to partially disbelieve. They praise their God as the Almighty and All-Wise with their lips; but their hearts are far from conceding his almightiness and perfect wisdom to all intents and purposes. The amazing thing is that they can believe certain miracles, as difficult of acceptance by the intellect as other miracles, which they disbelieve, and which their fellow-Christians, the Catholics, faithfully and believingly accept as true and actual occurrences. There are no half-measures with the devout Catholic. His God can do anything.

The only logical position is to accept all or reject all. A God that has to be explained or apologized for is a futility. When people require a *supernatural* boss, he must be obeyed without question. It was disobedience that fired Adam and Eve out of Eden.

The Protestant is neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring. Protestantism, like Mahomet's coffin, hangs suspended between Heaven and Earth. It is a floating *nébula*—drifting in the inane. It has no rock for its foundation. It has lost the keys that open the doors of Heavenly mysteries and glories. These keys are in the pocket of Papa of Rome.

The Freethinker watches the antics of the wholly superstitious and semi-superstitious with interest. He listens to the clamour of their controversies with a greater interest; because the latter are revealing proofs of the loosening of the grip of credulity. The Cathedrals, churches and chapels are emptying. The voices from the pulpits are growing thin. Man is awake, has arisen, is stretching himself, and marvelling that he has allowed himself to remain so long the victim of A L.I.E!

IGNOTUS.

Wonderful.

On a fine day lately I called on my newsagent with a little grudge in my mind—he had recently refused to place the *Freethinker* on his counter—and quoted Shakespeare's:—

Full many a glorious morning have I seen

Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye . . .

The newsman approved and said it reminded him of Goldsmith's (but it was Gray's) lines, "Full many a gem," etc. Exactly, I said, the great copying from the greatest: well, the *Freethinker* aims also at that higher level.

What! said the sapient shopman, touching the floor with his knuckles, I thought it got down just as low and low as it could—who could be agnostic (sic) in the face of the wonders of Nature? I was fresh at the moment from the perusal of Mr. Mann's review of the *Parade of the Living*, and the imagination filled with its picture of the Dinosaurs, Tyhannosaurs, Smidlodons, etc., and their duration before man appeared of 100,000,000 years! Wonderful! said the shopman, wonderful! said a man at the counter, both steeped in the stupidity of worship, even stupider than Tennyson, who at least saw that "Nature red in tooth and claw with ravin shrieked against their creed. Wonderful, said a famous Freethinker once, "Wonderful is the imbecility of the people!" The most modest Freethinker, even one so excessively modest as I, cannot avoid a little pride of logic and sympathy of imagination; not pride of learning either, but mere simplicity of observation and conviction. From the wonders and blunders of "God," to those of man and his wars and superstitions 'tis but a step for the power of the King is but the shadow of the power of "God." The King can do no wrong and so is safe from Law and Logic. Wonderful! most wonderful of all, I commented as I left the shop, is human credulity.

ANDREW MILLAR.

This Year of Grace.

PEACE ON EARTH.

Two thousand years ago, rumour has it, a carpenter discovered the uses of self-advertisement, reached the summit of his fame and immolated himself on the altar of his own ego. Blatantly borrowing from previous religious epigrams and trite sayings, he gathered together a band of primitive press-agents (they have now changed their name by deed-poll to "primitive methodists") and, becoming a body of itinerant tub-thumpers they spread a gospel of "peace on earth." Ever since this so-called "peace" movement has ruined homes, separated husband and wife, father and child, conquered countries and taken inhabitants into slavery, brought about wars, tumults, riots, torture and bloodshed. Christianity, we are told, has spread its protecting power throughout the world; what is the result?

In every country to-day, that is every pseudo-civilized country, there are thousands of people starving. The Christians' holy book records that the carpenter said "man cannot live on bread alone," these people can't even get bread! One would imagine there must be a world famine, but oh dear no, *there is a glut* of wheat, but so that people shall be forced to pay the price for bread that wheat-racketeers demand, a wheat pool is formed and the thousands go on starving because they cannot afford the price. The seas deliver up to the fishermen tons of fish (it is an alleged record that the carpenter turned fisherman) but the "fish ring" says the price must not go down so the fish, dead, go on the manure dump and the thousands go on starving. Acres of land in England alone are kept in beautiful idleness, acres which might grow food for the starving, kept that their lordly owners may hunt, shoot and ride at their leisure and the thousands go on starving. The same "holy" book says "the poor ye have always with you," and the godly of the world make certain that they shall never leave us.

This year of grace!

PEACE AND GOOD-WILL.

Nearly thirteen years ago a world-war ended—a war to end war. The Press of several countries played upon the passions of countless people engendering hatred which never existed. Our purveyors of the precepts of the “prince of peace” preached war and bloodshed from the pulpits. Fanatics fanned the flames of fury, and financiers grew fat on the futile fighting of misguided fools. Ludendorf, a one-time ardent militarist, is to-day prophecying another war, that, of course, means nothing but, and it is a serious but, such is the education of our people, and such is the hold which religion and the press has upon them, that an amalgamation of the press and pulpit could bring about at any time another war. Witness the recent attack on France, via the League of Nations in one of the large dailies. There are few big newspapers to-day which are not under the apparent direction of silly religious old women who, with their tongues in their editorial cheeks, prate of the goodness of their editorial souls and bamboozle the public. We are still dominated by the press and the pulpit, the press denies our right to think, the pulpit denies our right to live until after we are dead. The pulpit says it is wicked to gamble, the Government says you shall not gamble, the press gambols between the two and draws huge sums for advertising space.

By what authority did a nonconformist political party deny the right of engaging in any form of lottery to the people who kept them in office. Financiers on the stock exchange gamble with the lives and the very food of the people! By what authority does the church deny the right to gamble? One of the disciples of the founder of their religion was chosen by lottery! Yet thousands of people to-day accept their ruling.

Peace on earth, goodwill towards men in this year of grace!

R. HENRY BURGESS.

That Wayside Pulpit Again.

FOR sheer muddleheaded thinking commend me to the persons who are responsible for the maxims on the “Wayside Pulpit” boards displayed outside many chapels, some of which I commented on in a previous *Freethinker* article.

These worthies are still busy broadcasting their messages, which show a strange mixture of commonsense and nonsense, and it may be of interest to spend a few moments looking at some of the latest examples.

For instance:—

“The Bible is life’s best guide.”

How anyone could possibly attempt to guide their life on the contradictory teachings of the Bible passes my comprehension. Here is one example from the New Testament, and for dozens of others I would refer my readers to the *Bible Handbook*, by G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball:—

“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.”—Matthew vi. 34.

“But if any provide for his own, and especially for those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”—1 Timothy v. 8.

Another message reads:—

“God provides food for every bird, but he does not throw it into the nest.”

Suppose, for the sake of argument, we admit the existence of God who controls the forces of Nature. What are we to think of this God when he sends the snow and frosts which cut off the food supply of his little feathered creatures and drive them to risk life and liberty through sheer hunger?

Last winter I had chaffinches and robins feeding out of my hand, and we should be fully justified in asking what the devil God was up to in starving them until they fed from the hand of a wicked Atheist.

Sometimes the message encroaches on the preserves of other professions, as in the following:—

“A Bookmaker’s tip . . . Keep your money in your pocket; that is the only certain winner.”

Excellent advice, no doubt, but I wonder what the Parson would say if his congregation acted on this tip when he sent the collection plate round.

As a specimen of pure unadulterated piffle one message will take a lot of beating:—

“The worst moment for the Atheist is when he is really thankful but has no one to thank.”

(By the way they did have the grace to spell Atheist with a capital A.)

Atheists must be a lucky lot if that is the worst moment they have to contend with although I must confess that I cannot make out what the fellow is driving at, unless it is meant to scare timid Christians from enquiring into what Atheism really is.

On a par with the last, is:—

“A Christian on his bended knee sees more than the Sceptic on tip toes.”

For once we must agree, for Christians on their bended knees do often see a lot more than a Sceptic in any position. They see things a Sceptic could not possibly see, and which he has no desire to see. So do people who habitually indulge in “one over the eight,” snakes and suchlike, but let us pass on:—

“Life’s lessons are God’s silent sermons to mankind.”

My God! what a God and what sermons. What must the poor soul suffering from cancer, or consumption, waiting for death to release them, think of the life’s lesson of their Christian God, who, having the power to save them, leaves them with the cold consolation of a silent sermon.

I could go on quoting other examples, equally futile, but will content myself with the latest to come to my notice:—

“The thought which has helped you most might help others send it on a card to the Minister of this Church.”

Well, I duly sent my card as requested, and although several weeks have elapsed, the thought has not yet appeared on the Wayside Pulpit, in fact, if I were a betting man I would wager my best pair of boots to the Bishop’s breeches that it never will appear. The message was:—

“Religion is the opium of the people.”

FRED HOBDAY.

To Give is Nature’s Law!

AND is the thought discouraging: no matter where you go, and be the season winter, spring, or autumn’s fervent glow, someone will ask a helping hand, someone must proffer a demand?

For every one who seeks you now but comes to beg a favour: the poor, with anguish on the brow, want money; while the savour of wittiest talk—words that bewitch—is needed by the pampered rich. The sad are craving consolation; the weak, Ambition’s goad; the struggling one, Hope’s stimulation; the weakling, Love’s Abode; and one and all from me and you are asking help—what shall we do?

Brother and Sister, needed so, how dare breathe discontent? The hidden laws of Love bestow on us their lavishment; for we can give, and give, and give; and only those who give can live!

To give is life’s divinest power in this and every land; so give through every fleeting hour a smile; a clasp of hand; a glance that seems from high heaven sent; a word of soft encouragement.

For stable as the centuries stands one eternal Truth: the Highest of all Verities, for happiness or truth: More blessed far than to receive, and worthier more, it is to GIVE!

To give, to give, to GIVE!

J. M. STUART YOUNG.

Onitsha, Nigeria.

Who never doubted never half believed,
Where doubt there truth is—’tis her shadow.
P. J. Bailey.

Another True Story.

The experience of "C.S.F.," as related in the *Freethinker* of June 28, brought back memories of an almost similar experience which I had some time ago. I am a working man and was returning to my home one Sunday night.

I had just boarded a street car and settled back in my seat for half an hour's reading as is my custom. I took Chapman Cohen's little work *Creed and Character* from my pocket and had only commenced to read, when I heard a voice say in Cockney accent, "I say, what is the ideah?" I took no notice as I was unaware whom the speaker was addressing.

Again came the voice, this time close to my ear, "What is the ideah of the little book you are reading?" I answered, "Oh! it is a little work called *Creed and Character, the Effect of Religion on Racial Life.*" "And may I ask," continued my questioner, "to what religion it refers?" "All religions," I answered. "And does that include the Christian Religion?" was his next question. I replied, "All, includes the Christian religion." "And may I ask if you believe what the book says?" I said, "absolutely."

I had used very short answers as I had no desire to create a scene, but he was so insistent that I turned around and saw my questioner was a Church of England minister. I said to him "probably I had better come back and sit with you," which I did.

Being a Sunday night the car was crowded, and my friend, the enemy, spoke loudly enough for most people in the car to hear. No doubt he wanted to show them how to put an unbeliever to rout. To make a long story short I gave him a little better than he gave me. He quoted scripture, I counter quoted.

He used theological arguments, I scientific ones. Freewill versus determinism came up, and I got him there. Then "God," of course, in turn with the subject, and I was glad I was familiar with Cohen's *Theism or Atheism*. Eventually I lead up to psychology, and he admitted he knew nothing of that subject.

At last I reached my street and had to leave him.

Strangely enough, on the following Sunday, I was waiting for the street car in the same place and my clerical friend was there also. I stood aside for him to get on the car first, but he insisted that I get on first. As I had to buy tickets from the conductor he was compelled to go inside before me. When I reached his seat (the seats in the cars here are made for two persons) I saw he had a valise on the seat by his side, thus preventing anyone else using the seat.

I said to him, "would you like to continue the discussion of last Sunday?" and, rubbing his hands together, he replied, "well, I don't think it would be profitable, especially in a public conveyance." I then said to him, "probably it was unfortunate that you started the discussion," and the wonderfully intellectual answer I got was, "Yes, it has been a beautiful day, hasn't it?"

Now this spiritual adviser had to crane and twist his neck (rubber-necking we call it here) to see what I was reading as I was in front of him. After finding out what I was reading he was so ill-bred as to take me to task in public.

I am convinced that it will be a long time before he makes another mistake of attacking anyone else that way even though the reader may be only a common worker.

JACK CHAPPLE.

Vancouver, B.C., Canada.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

A CURIOUS CASE OF HUMAN GRAVITATION.

SIR,—As nearly two years has elapsed since I had the pleasure of welcoming my last visitor here, I was delighted when I espied a couple of great stalwart travellers striding up to me, where I live on the top of a hill, and who introduced themselves as Messrs. Thornton and Walton. They were mapping the country for a new railway, and stayed here only an hour or two. In the course of conversation it transpired that we were all

three Atheists, and all three subscribers to the *Freethinker*. We thought it remarkable that in this dark corner of the dark Continent, three subscribers to the *Freethinker* should come together as if by mutual attraction like magnetized needles. It reminded me of an old theory of mine that I dignified by the title of human gravitation. I think there must be something in this theory, or else why constant collisions in the air and at sea when there is such infinite room for crafts of all kinds to pass clear of each other. In country walks it may often be observed how two people from opposite directions meet at a stile or gate at exactly the same time. Rather more than a mere coincidence.

I said to my two friends that our happy meeting deserved placing on record in the *Freethinker*, and they cordially agreed and gave me permission to mention their names. Mr. Walton spoke of forming a branch of the N.S.S. in South Africa and I promised my support.

J. E. ROOSE.

Kafue, Northern Rhodesia.

FREETHOUGHT IN N.S. WALES.

SIR,—From time to time, letters appear in the *Freethinker* giving particulars of the activities of Freethinking Societies in different countries, and a brief account of the activities of the Rationalist Society of N.S.W. may be of interest.

We are an organization of mostly young men formed in 1928, owing to the lack of militancy in the existing Society. That Society had been in existence for about thirty years, but lived upon its past rather than upon its present activities, and looked down upon such as wished for a more forward policy. The new organization was formed at last to place propoganda upon a more satisfactory footing, and after three years we find ourselves steadily increasing in strength. The results we have accomplished have been in the face of strong opposition, some of it coming from the more timid section of Freethinkers. But we are firmly established, and we lecture to an audience of about 1,500 every Sunday evening in the Australian Theatre, Hyde Park, Sydney. We have encountered opposition from the authorities, which arises from the state of the law (I enclose quotations from the relevant Act, which seems worse than England). But we are continuing our meetings and hope to break down the opposition. We intend exhibiting films, but are promised a prosecution if we do so. In common with such movements we suffer from want of finance, but so far we have managed to carry on.

Many of our members when in England were members of the N.S.S., which I think accounts for our remarkable success, our education in Freethought having been of the best. I hope that all Australian readers of this letter will try to get into touch with our Society.

SYDNEY BURKE (Vice-President).

P.S.—The following is the text of the Act above referred to:—

THEATRE AND PUBLIC HALLS ACT N.S.W. 1908.
 Sect. 13, 1908 EDWARD VII.

PENALTIES.

Part II., Section 19.—If a Public Meeting or Public Entertainment is held in a Theatre or Public Hall licensed under this Act on any Sunday, Christmas Day, or Good Friday, the person so holding such Public Meeting or Entertainment and the owner or lessee under whom or by whose authority such person occupies the said theatre or hall, or holds such entertainment shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding £100.

Definitions "Public Entertainment" means entertainment, including boxing, dancing, or other amusement or contest to which admission may be procured by payment of money, or by any other means as the price or condition of admission. "Public Meeting" means an assemblage of persons for any purpose of a political, religious, charitable, or intellectual nature to which admission may be procured either upon or without payment of money or by ticket or by any other means but does not include an assemblage of persons for religious worship only

[At its last meeting the Executive received an application from the above Society to constitute itself an Overseas Branch of the N.S.S.—ED.]

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD SEPTEMBER 18, 1931.
THE President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Moss, Clifton, Wood, Hornbrook, Easterbrook, Le Maine, Rosetti (A. C.), Ebury, Preece, McLaren, Sandys, Mrs. Quinton, Junr., Mrs. Venton, Miss Kough, and the Secretary.

Minutes of the previous meeting were read and accepted, and the Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to N. London, W. London, Fulham and Chelsea, Brighton, Birkenhead, Newcastle, and Nelson Branches, and the Parent Society. Permission was given for the formation of a Branch of the N.S.S. at Wembley, to be known as the Wembley and District Branch, also for the formation of an Australian section of the N.S.S. Correspondence was dealt with from Birkenhead, Bradford, Glasgow, N. London, Fulham, Nelson, Liverpool, and reports from Messrs. Whitehead and Brighton submitted. The delegates to the International Congress at Berlin (the President, and Mr. A. D. McLaren) presented a report of the proceedings, which was discussed at some length. The President reported settlement of the late R. Bulman estate, the part due to the N.S.S. having been received. Under winter work, assistance was granted to Glasgow, Birkenhead, N. London, and preliminaries made for lectures at Sunderland and Stratford. Messrs. T. M. R. Robertson and G. F. H. McCluskey were re-elected as Trustees of the N.S.S.

The Annual Dinner was fixed for January 16, 1932.

R. H. ROSETTI,
General Secretary.

Miscellaneous Advertisements.

COUUPLE with car would like to make the acquaintance of a private country family (Surrey/Sussex) who would receive them as paying guests for week-end occasionally. Moderate terms.—Write Box P., FREETHINKER, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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By JOSEPH McCABE

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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.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—A Lecture.

FINSBURY PARK N.S.S.—11.15, Mr. H. S. Wishart—"Christ and the Crisis."

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. G. Whitehead's Mission Week.—Saturday, September 26, Corner of Shorrols Road, North End Road, 7.0 p.m.; Sunday, September 27, Effie Road, opposite Walham Green Station, 7.0 p.m.; Monday, September 28, Tuesday, September 29, Walham Grove, 7.0 p.m.; Wednesday, September 30, Effie Road, 7.0 p.m.; Thursday, October 1, Friday, October 2, Saturday, October 3, corner of Shorrols Road, North End Road, 7.0 p.m. Supporters welcomed at all meetings. *Freethinker* and other *Freethought* literature on sale.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Regent's Park, near the Fountain): 6.0, Mr. L. Ebury—A Lecture.

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. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, Sunday, at 7.30, A Lecture; Wednesday, September 30, at 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith): 3.30, Messrs. Bryant and C. Tuson.

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, B. A. Le Maine and E. C. Saphin. Every Wednesday, at 7.30, Messrs. C. E. Wood and C. Tuson; every Thursday, at 7.0, Messrs. E. C. Saphin and 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.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (outside Technical College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—A Lecture.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): C. E. M. Joad, M.A.—"The Eclipse of Democracy."

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

ASHINGTON.—Sunday, September 27, at 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BLACKBURN.—Thursday, October 1, at 7.30—Mr. J. Clayton.

BRIGHTON BRANCH N.S.S.—Branch meetings at 164 Elm Grove (corner of Linton Street) on the third Thursday in each month at 8.0. Will members please take note.

DURHAM.—Tuesday, September 29, at 8.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

GREAT HARWOOD.—Monday, September 28, at 8.0—Mr. J. Clayton.

HAPTON.—Tuesday, September 29, at 7.30—Mr. J. Clayton.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S.—Sunday, at Queen's Drive (opposite Baths), Messrs. Jackson, Shortt and Tissyman; Monday, at Beaumont Street, Messrs. Jackson and Wollen; Tuesday, at Edge Hill Lamp, Messrs. Little and Sherwin; Wednesday, at Waste Ground adjoining Old Swan Library, Messrs. Little and Shortt; Thursday, at corner of High Park Street and Park Road, Messrs. Jackson and Tissyman. All at 7.30. Current *Freethinkers* on sale at all meetings.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.—Wednesday, September 30, at 8.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Arcade, Pilgrim Street): 3.0, Members' Meeting.

PRESTON (Covered Market).—Sunday, September 27, at 3.0 and 7.0—Mr. J. Clayton.

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Church Street).—Saturday, September 26, at 6.30, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

INDOOR.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Cafe, Godwin Street): 7.30, Members' Meeting.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Picton Hall, Liverpool): Sunday, October 4, Mr. Chapman Cohen (London) President N.S.S., will lecture on "The Disease that Kills Religion." Doors open at 6.30, commence at 7.0. Admission free.

Pamphlets.

By G. W. FOOTE.

- Christianity and Progress.**
Price 2d., postage ½d.
- The Philosophy of Secularism.**
Price 2d., postage ½d.
- Bible and Beer.**
Price 2d., postage ½d.
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Vol. I., 128 pp., with Fine Cover Portrait,
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