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

Views and Opinions.

Dean Inge and Evolution.

THE other evening I listened-in to a broadcast by Dean Inge, on the subject of "What I would do with the World," presuming he were absolute dictator for twenty years. The address was delivered in the execrable English used by the Dean, and which he must have worked very hard to master, since no man could speak as he does without working hard to enunciate so badly. The address was stuffed with commonplace, but was chiefly noticeable—coming from a Dean of the Church—for one great omission. In the international commonwealth, which the Dean imagined himself as directing, no provision was made for God to do anything. I believe that the Dean took part in the appeals made to God during the war, but perhaps he thinks while God may be useful during war he is of no use during peace. In that case his omission is one more illustration of how much out of place is God in a civilized community. Still, it does seem strange that a man drawing a salary for working in the service of God, a Dean of the Established Church, when asked how he would arrange the world if he had the power to do so, leaves God out altogether. It is sheer ingratitude. Surely God might have been given something to do, or might have been given an honorary position, something like the Dean's own position in the Church. But while the Dean will have an international army and an international government, he will not have an international religion. He wants a head to his international State, but doesn't care a "cuss" whether there is a God or not. That is really a very serious position—for the Dean. Let us hope that his employers have not noted the omission. Talking as he did, and saying nothing about religion, he is in much the same position as would be a commercial traveller drawing a salary from one firm while selling the goods of a rival concern.

Man and Nature.

In one passage Dean Inge puts God still further back, even if he does not abolish him altogether, and incidentally puts in a formula which is worth analysing because it is so typical of so much of the talk which to-day passes for scientific sociology. He says:—

Dame Nature cares nothing for our happiness. She only asks, has this class or this nation any survival value? If not, away with it to my capacious scrapheap. Look, she says, at a collection of fossils, and see what I have done with my unsuccessful experiments.

Presumably, Dean Inge believes that nature owes its existence to God, and that the qualities or properties of nature are part of the purpose of God. So far as man is concerned, the Dean would fall back on the foolish plea that man mars the purpose of God because he is endowed with free will. But that obviously cannot hold good with nature. Nature, he says, does not care for happiness, she only cares for survival value. Which is just another way of saying that God does not care for happiness, only for survival value. But what is survival value? We can only know that by what survives. A thing survives, we are told, because it has survival value. But it has survival value only because it survives. So that in the end all we are saying is that a thing survives because it survives, which is a form of expression that is not merely characteristic of religious philosophy, but also of a great deal of the philosophic flapdoodle served up by the dope-gang of the B.B.C.

Still further, if God so arranged nature that the important thing is to survive, why did he not make only things that were fit to survive? In terms of this thesis of Dean Inge, everything that does not survive is useless, God does not care for it. Why, then, did he make it? Oh, says the Dean, it is one of nature's—or God's—"unsuccessful experiments." They are God's blunders, exhibitions of his bad workmanship. So that when a scientific teacher is taking a class through a museum, he might point to specimen after specimen of extinct animals as illustrating God's "unsuccessful experiments." I am not sure but that when God comes to examine the characteristics of some of his apologists and professional representatives that he will not regard them as among the most marked of his "unsuccessful experiments."

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Survival Value.

But when Dean Inge disowns the idea that happiness is nature's (God's) aim, and substitutes survival value, he is only removing one fallacy to make room for another. One can, of course, understand the Christian objection to happiness. Gibbon said that it was not in this world that the Christian aimed at being either happy or useful, and the last thing for

which Christianity could take credit would be that it increased the sum of human happiness in this world. It is also easy to discover the reason for Dean Inge stressing the assumed care of nature for survival value. There must, for him, be some plan in nature, and some care for something. A God who didn't care a "cuss" about anything would be too much for even the most modern of modern Christians. So as it is obviously untrue to say that nature seeks the happiness of living things it may serve, until someone discovers that the new thesis is as idiotic as the old one, to say that nature (God) cares about survival value.

Assuming that to be true, however, it is plainly the case that God doesn't care to the value of a brass button whether the qualities in virtue of which animals, or men, survive are of an ethical nature or not. What is survival value is determined solely by the nature of the contemporary environment. It was not because of any moral superiority that the France of Napoleon's time trampled on Germany, it was not because of moral superiority that Germany trampled on France in 1870, nor was it moral superiority that decided the world war of 1914. A loveable, honest, trustful man has in virtue of these qualities no superiority when operating on the stock exchange against a sharp-witted unscrupulous financier. Given the environment, a man may be too honest, too upright, too decent to survive, and in such cases nature (God) indicates approval of the morally lower type by favouring its survival. Nature really does not care what survives, there is no reason for believing that nature cares whether anything survives, for, if we are to trust scientists, the earth is moving towards the disappearance of all forms of life. Nonsense on the wireless may pass because one cannot talk back, and no adequate reply there is permitted, but it sounds very different when subjected to a little commonsense.

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#### What Survives?

Dean Inge would probably reply that in the long run the better character survives because of its survival value, and this is what nature (God) is aiming at. But the statement simply enshrines another fallacy. The better character does not survive, it merely appears. For example. There is no question that the children of the working class in 1931 are healthier, and generally of a better type than the children of the working classes in 1831. But the children of 1831 are not benefited because the children of to-day are better, they have not survived, they have simply disappeared and gain no benefit from the appearance of a better type. The man of to-day, we may agree, is a better type of man than the one that existed in, say, the Stone Age. But the older type has not improved, each individual that went to the making of that type is dead, he has disappeared. Each of them stood for one of God's unsuccessful experiments, and is finally wiped out without any compensation for having existed. These "inferior" types may have contributed to the making of the "superior" type, but the existing superior type will one day disappear, and will then be relatively an inferior one. We camouflage this process under the name of progress, but that does not alter its character. The generation that has gone reaps no benefit from the improvement of a later one. It suffers from no fault of its own. The child born in 1831 in some hideous, mind-and-body-destroying factory town was there through no choice of its own. Nature (God) placed it there. If Dean Inge is right nature (God) was using it as an experiment, and when the experiment turned out unsatisfactory it was ruthlessly discarded. And when, as Dean Inge suggests, nature manages to get a quite satisfactory type God will be completely

tired of his experiments and will get rid of the universe of life altogether. Well, if there is a God behind all this, planning all this, we might be compelled to recognize his existence, but it is an outrage on as much common sense and decency as happens to have been developed to ask us to worship him.

\* \* \*

#### The Quality of Evolution.

But Dean Inge really does not appear to understand the nature of the process which has been popularized under the name of the "survival of the fittest." He assumes that nature is aiming at the production of something that is better, if not the best, and that it encourages what he calls survival value. Well, nature encourages survival value just as the Old Russian Government, or Alfonso of Spain, by their conduct may be said to have encouraged revolution. Survival value is a good enough figure of speech, when one bears in mind that it is no more than a picturesque way of stating things. But it bears about the same relation to the facts that the phrase, the moon pulls the tides, has to the fact of tidal motion. If we can credit nature (God) with any intention whatever, it is that of aiming at the destruction of life rather than at its preservation. The active principle of survival is not preservation, but destruction. Evolution works by elimination. In terms of environmental conditions all forms of life that do not come to a given standard are eliminated, and in the absence of this elimination there is stagnation, not evolution. The elimination of the less adapted organisms—again in terms of environmental conditions—is what we see going on right through the animal world. It is the positive aspect of evolution. The fittest survives only because it possesses the capacity to overcome the forces bent on its destruction. It is perhaps too much to expect Dean Inge when dealing with religion and science to examine critically either the accuracy of his language or the correctness of his thought. If he were to do this he would see that the scientific picture of nature is that of a force, or collection of forces, which, finding life has made its appearance, is forever seeking every opportunity of wiping it out. Some number of living forms manage to escape and to perpetuate their kind, but they are watched by a force that never misses a chance of exerting its will. We have, obviously, to make the best of the universe in which we find ourselves, but there is no need to insult the small degree of intelligence that has developed, to strain language, and misrepresent a fact in order to perpetuate a belief in one of man's own unsuccessful experiments—that of a belief in God.

There is actually a conception of the environment which has a very important bearing on the question of developing a desirable type of character, but there is no recognition of it in Dean Inge's lecture, and I have not space to deal with it now.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Tolerance means reverence for all the possibilities of Truth; it means acknowledgement that she dwells in diverse mansions, and wears vesture of many colours, and speaks in strange tongues; it means frank respect for freedom of indwelling conscience against mechanic forms, official conventions, social force; it means the charity that is greater than even faith and hope.

Lord Morley.

Put it out of the power of truth to give you an ill character; and if anybody reports you not to be an honest man, let your practice give him the lie; and to make all sure you should resolve to live no longer than you can live honestly; for it is better to be nothing than a knave.—*Marcus Antoninus*.

## Under the Cap and Bells.

"Unless it is associated with seriousness, humour is but a sneeze of the reason."—*Heine*.

"The only true conquests, those which awaken no regret, are those obtained over ignorance."—*Napoleon*.

"There is no darkness but ignorance."—*Shakespeare*.

WHEN Mark Twain died, the event lessened the gaiety of the English-speaking peoples. So far as England was concerned, he was regarded as the prince of jesters, and justly so. He was, however, so much more than that, for he was a great man, a noble citizen, and an outstanding writer. The feeling for him among his own people was like that of the Scotch for Walter Scott a hundred years ago, or like that of our fathers for Charles Dickens. There was admiration in it, gratitude, pride, and, above all, affection. This was shown at one of the last public dinners Mark Twain attended. When he came in he was escorted to the table, and the whole company, in which no man was undistinguished, rose to greet him, and remained standing till he had taken his seat.

This personal affection went out to Mark Twain for what he had written and what he had done. His fiery dashes against tyranny, humbug, and corruption, attracted men no less than his infectious humour. The incident of his financial failure, which, like Walter Scott's, was wholly the work of others, raised him to the rank of the heroes. For he assumed a moral where there was no legal responsibility, and he set to work and paid off huge debts. It takes a rare man to engage in and win in such a stern fight. Such a man's humour was bound to be interwoven with seriousness. "Papa," said his daughter, "can make jokes, and enjoys funny things, but he is more interested in earnest books and earnest subjects."

Mark Twain was a thorough Freethinker, but he always wrote under the restraint of a family full of religious prejudice. His pious wife edited his jokes, and some of his more serious writings, such as "What is Man?" were suppressed, or withheld from circulation by the unseen hand of piety. We shall never know what we lost by this procedure, or what we missed by this kindly philosopher being trammelled by the critic on the hearth.

For this reason the posthumous publication of Mark Twain's *Mysterious Stranger* (Harpers) was of more than usual interest. The manuscript was discovered among his papers by his literary executor, Mr. Bigelow, and forms the strongest expression of Twain's views, and reveals the author as an uncompromising iconoclast. Beside this publication, the published profanities in the *Innocents Abroad*, and *New Pilgrim's Progress* pale into insignificance, for it reveals Twain among the pioneers.

*The Mysterious Stranger* deals with the follies and crimes that men are led into by religion, and the "stranger" is "Satan," who appears as a handsome youth named "Philip Traum." A fierce attack is made on the god idea, which is described as so monstrous that "Satan" wonders why man does not regard the universe as a nightmare. The profanity is not veiled, for "Philip" goes on:—

Strange, because they are so frankly and hysterically insane—like all dreams: a God who could make good children as easily as bad, yet preferred to make bad ones; who could have made every one of them happy, yet never made a single happy one; who made them prize their bitter life, yet stingily cut it short; who gave his angels eternal happiness unearned, yet required his other children to earn it; who gave his angels painless lives, yet cursed his other children with biting miseries and maladies of mind and body; who mouths justice and invented

hell—mouths mercy and invented hell—mouths golden rules and forgiveness multiplied by seventy-times seven, and invented hell; who mouths morals to other people and has none himself; who frowns upon crimes yet commits them all; who created man without invitation, then tries to shuffle the responsibility for man's acts upon man, instead of honourably placing it where it belongs, upon himself; and, finally, with altogether divine obtuseness, invites this poor, abused slave to worship him.

And the Satanic "Philip" sums up by saying:—

You perceive now that these things are all impossible except in a dream. You perceive that they are pure and puerile inanities, the silly creations of an imagination that is not conscious of its freaks.

So Mark Twain goes on holding the noses of his readers to the grindstone of thought, forcing them from complacency to discontent, stinging them into sensitiveness. Under the relentless rhetoric we are shown the contrast between religious dogma and reality. This is, in the last analysis, Mark Twain's question, and the burden of his so-called dream. These things have all been said a thousand times in the pages of the *Freethinker*, but it is refreshing to find it all echoed by one who was, in his generation, the most eminent man of letters in the Great Republic of the West, and whose books are still a large asset of national pride.

At the present time there is an unwholesome tendency to minimize the famous figures of the preceding generation without attempting in the least to understand them. Yet it was the great personalities of the immediate past whose ideas to-day are altering the face of the civilized world. In honouring Mark Twain, the American nation not only rewarded a great man and a distinguished author, but set the seal of her approbation upon a writer who carried on the intellectual traditions which have made Freethinkers, the world over, the very vanguard of Liberty, Progress and Civilization.

MIMNERMUS.

## A Peep into Humanity's Past.

IN the shadowy recesses of long-vanished ages, when ape-men had slowly and laboriously arisen from the purely simian stage of life, their near kinsmen the apes and monkeys used sticks and stones as implements and weapons. But a giant stride was made when the men of the Dawn, who dwelt in Eolithic Times, not merely utilized stone and other hard substances as tools and weapons, but began to shape them to more serviceable ends. The earliest evidences of man's handiwork were revealed in the eoliths—very roughly fashioned flints which primitive humanity designedly chipped and moulded so that they might be held and employed with greater convenience by the human hand.

In the succeeding Palæolithic or Old Stone Age men adapted flints to serve various domestic uses, and as weapons of offence; and they invented fishing and hunting appliances to aid them in procuring food. This rude stage of culture persisted through a vast range of time until the period emerged when crudely flaked artifacts were superseded by finely wrought and polished instruments. Indeed, the Old Stone Age lingered to witness the appearance of a fine large brained race of men—the Cro-Magnon stock—who manifested artistic ability of a superior order so great that their achievements are regarded with wonder, admiration, and astonishment by the modern antiquary and anthropologist alike.

In the Neolithic or New Stone Age, man's progress was pronounced. During the immense period em-

braced by the Palæolithic Age man appears to have remained in the hunting stage. But with the advent of Neolithic Times man had evolved beyond the exclusively hunting and fishing era. He had become a herdsman and tiller of the soil. It was in Neolithic days that the solid foundations of future civilization were laid down. Not only had man become a farmer and grazier with his domesticated cattle, sheep, horses, goats, and swine, but his domesticated animals and cultivated plants furnished the raw materials of woven fabrics. The cave habitation of his Palæolithic predecessor had been succeeded and surpassed by well-built dwellings grouped into hamlets or small villages. Even in the absence of metals a fair standard of comfort was thus rendered possible.

The opinion that the New Stone Age culture of prehistoric Europe was a direct development of the preceding Palæolithic has been shaken. Whether the newcomers arrived from Asia or Africa remains an open question, although the available evidence suggests an Asiatic origin. In any case, when once the Neolithic culture was established, the arts and crafts that adorned it, its husbandry, its tamed creatures such as its oxen and sheep, its improved artifacts and its pottery soon spread over the face of the earth.

The new civilization reigned supreme in Europe and extended in the far East to the islands of Japan. It reached Australia and the Pacific Isles. Remote and solitary Easter Island, as well as the two American Continents, were subject to its sway. Prehistoric expeditions by land and sea in search of trade or barter, and probably stimulated by man's insatiable craving to possess sacred shells and the precious metals all contributed to the widespread distribution of this then comparatively novel culture.

The discovery of copper and the extensive use of that alloy of copper and tin—bronze—slowly displaced the Neolithic culture in Europe. But it continued to flourish in Central and Southern Africa until the introduction of iron, while it persisted in the Pacific, and was supreme in the New World when Columbus and his successors made known America to modern Europe.

Central and North-Western Europe were still living under Old Stone Age conditions when Eastern Mediterranean lands had attained an advanced type of Neolithic development. Pottery of skilled manufacture and outstanding artistic merit was produced at a remote date in Crete. In Asia Minor and in Egypt stone tools of fine workmanship were made. Wide variations in quality are noticeable, however, even within limited areas. As Prof. Cleland remarks in his able volume, *Our Prehistoric Ancestors*: "If the decorated and highly polished axes of the second City of Troy are examples of Neolithic craftsmanship handed down to the Bronze Age, it is safe to say that the art of stone working saw its zenith there. Stone technique was not of this high character everywhere in the Mediterranean basin. In Southern Italy, for example, it was crude."

The most ancient Neolithic settlements in Europe appear to have arisen in the valley of the Danube. The settlers seem to have been an industrious and peaceful community. Their idols suggest the cult of an earth-mother and divinity, while their burial customs point to a belief in a future life. With the passage of the years pressure of population created new communities in Galicia, and along the banks of the Elbe, the Oder and the Rhine, while to the East Serbia and Hungary were invaded.

Neolithic culture was well advanced when it first appeared, and there is no reason to assume its direct descent from the earlier Palæolithic culture. That it

was the result of purely natural causes is obvious, but its birthplace remains one of the most baffling problems in archæology. Its place of origin apart, the extension of Neolithic civilization after its entry into Europe is easily accounted for. We may cite the opinion of Gordon Childe as expressed in his *Dawn of European Civilization*: "It was due to the gradual expansion of early agriculturists in obedience to perfectly natural laws and every step in their progress from the Danube Valley can be traced with perfect accuracy in the implements, vases, and ornaments they have left behind them."

The remarkable relics of a long vanished race which are found on the shores of Jutland testify a strange tale of the past. These remains, the famous kitchen middens, vary from ten to twenty feet in height, while some reach the length of 150 feet. These deposits are chiefly composed of the discarded shells of the oysters, mussels, scallop, and periwinkles upon which the people subsisted. Coarse flint implements, intermixed with the bones of the stag, wild boar, deer, and sometimes even the wolf and fox, lie in company with the remains of wild ducks, geese and swans.

Primitive races whose manner of life was apparently similar to the Jutland coast people have left their refuse dumps throughout a widespread region. Shell accumulations occur in the British Isles, along the coasts alike of the Atlantic and Pacific, and even in far away Japan. These deposits vary in antiquity. Many are far more recent than those discovered on the shores of Denmark. Some, indeed were accumulated well within the period embraced by tradition.

The great collection of flint artifacts gathered from the Danish kitchen-middens denotes a distinct advance from lowlier phases of culture. The pottery is crudely fashioned, but is intensely interesting from the circumstance that it probably represents the earliest earthenware of Northern Europe.

From the relics of a prehistoric shore-dwelling race the lives led by the people may be conjectured. The midden builders of Southern Scandinavia dwelt permanently along the sea coast. They lived from hand to mouth on the fish, fowl and game that they captured, and were driven in times of dearth to supplement their flesh foods with herbs and roots. Their refuse mounds proclaim the protracted period during which they were amassed. The peoples' mode of life was similar to that of the natives of Tierra del Fuego, who at this very hour are accumulating in their kitchen mounds the evidences of their daily lives.

The inhabitants of prehistoric Denmark probably possessed primitive canoes, and seem to have used fish-lines when capturing herring and cod, for the bones of these fish are fairly abundant. No domesticated animal appears except the dog, nor is there any evidence whatever that they tilled the land.

The mound builders dwelt in early Neolithic times, when the Baltic Sea was more extensive than it is to-day. The face of the landscape has also undergone considerable change. The pine was then the predominant tree, but has long since been superseded by forests of oak. Also the climate was more genial at that time. These, with various other phenomena prove that untold ages have departed since these twilight Scandinavians haunted the coasts of their sullen land.

T. F. PALMER.

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may  
Old time is still a-flying;  
And this same flower that smiles to-day,  
To-morrow will be dying.—Herrick.

I prefer the wisdom of the uneducated to the folly of the loquacious.—Cicero.

## Anthropological Christianity.

(Continued from page 795.)

SOME persons, with more ingenuity than archæology, have conjectured that, since there is no other way to heaven but the way of the tank, the practice of ducking believers beneath water in holy baptism gave rise to the comparison between the Christian and the fish. But the fish symbol was an ancient pre-Christian one, which came into special signification about 263 B.C., when the sun entered Pisces. *Ichthus* was a title not only of Jesus, but of Bacchus and Horus. The Sibylline oracles, which existed long before the Christian era, contained an acrostic on the word *Ichthus*. The early Christians interpreted this as meaning *I*esous *C*Hreistos, *T*HEOU *U*ios *S*oter, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour. Justin Martyr, the earliest Christian writer of undisputed authenticity, in the middle of the second century, appeals to the Sibyl as predicting "in a clear and patent manner, the advent of our Saviour Jesus Christ," and Celsus soon after nicknamed the Christians "Sibyllists." Possibly what the Sibylline books predicted was simply that the equinox would pass from Aries into Pisces—from the Lamb of God into the Divine Fishes. (Gerald Massey: *Natural Genesis*, i. 454), "When the equinox passed into the sign of Pisces, the fish became the figure of the Christ on the cross. Hence the fish on the pre-Christian cross which is found in Scotland and Ireland, and the fish type which was continued whenever the reckonings were kept." He further tells us that "Horus in Egypt had been a fish from time immemorial, and when the equinox entered the sign of Pisces, Horus, who was continued by the Gnostics, is portrayed as *Ichthus* with the fish sign over his head." Jesus said his only sign is that of Jonas, who was swallowed by a fish, or, as Kenneth Mackenzie says, "absorbed into the *Vesica Pisces*." This writer, in his *Royal Masonic Cyclopædia*, cites Dr. Crucifix, who says: "In former days, the Grand Master of our Order used to wear a silver fish on his person." Dr. Kenealy, in the curious anonymous hodge-podge he called *The Book of God*, said (p. 240), "the fishes mystically signify the Initiated into the Eleusinia." He says (p. 431): "The Marquis d'Urban possesses a white chalcedony, in the form of a truncated cone (a phallus), which is pierced through a (yoni), and which was probably worn as an amulet. On the base of the cone is a figure, youthful, beardless, drawn in profile with the name Christou (of the anointed one) and the image of the fish." In the Roman catacombs one of the most frequent symbols is the fish, generally taken as a sign that those using it were Christians, though this must be considered problematical. Everywhere in early Christian symbolism we find prominence given to the fish. It is found on gravestones, mural decorations, seals, lamps, and, indeed, wherever ingenuity could engrave or paint it. It was a private mark which indicated that the persons were of the new covenant, recognizing their God under the sign of the *Ichthus*. It proved they were "up to the time of day."

The Catacombs often represent fishes with loaves as a sign of abundance, connected with the good shepherd of the heavens, our lord and life-giver the sun, who turns water into wine, walks on the water, and rises from the dead. I think it quite possible that the customs and legends connected with such representations gave rise to stories of feeding multitudes with a few loaves and fishes, of the fish that so opportunely paid the taxes, and of the resurrected Lord eating broiled fish and honeycomb, and ascending skywards with this provender stowed in his interior.

Major-General Forlong (*Rivers of Life*, i. 246) says: "The fish is universally worshipped in all lands as the most fecundative of all creatures; and, where most valued, the superstitious have offered it in sacrifice to their gods, refusing to eat or injure it." While some abstained from fish, others partook of it as the sacred food, taken as a preparation for a following feast. Fish are known to be extraordinary prolific. Ancient dietetics was largely based on belief that animals noted for any peculiarity imparted their virtues to those who ate them. The use of fish in connubial feasts is still common. We may be quite sure that those who first thought it proper and pious to eat fish on Venus Day, or Friday, adhered to a more ancient faith than that which praises those who make themselves eunuchs (Matt. xix. 12). In Japan a typical paper fish is suspended over the doorway of the house wherein a child has been born. Let the student also note what Lajard says of the Friday worship of the Druses of Lebanon on p. 58 of his *Culte de Venus*. The Jews retain the custom of a Friday fish supper, as do religious Christians, and in especial monks and nuns, the modern *kadeshim* (holy ones), use a fish diet on *Dies Veneris*. Lenten fare is a preliminary to the celebration of the spring resurrection.

The most interesting feature of Lent to the antiquarian is Midlent or Mothering Sunday. Such far-fetched explanations of this title have been given, as that it comes from "Jerusalem the mother of us all" being mentioned in the epistle for the day, or from parishioners having then to visit their mother church, that I shall not scruple to connect it with the cult of the Mother Goddess worshipped by the Romans on the ides of March, and also preserved in our Lady Day. As at this time of the year the Great Mother conceived, it was natural that she should bring forth in nine months, viz., on December 25. Hone says (*Every Day Book*, 1-358, March 14): "On this day boys went about, in ancient times, into villages, with a figure of death made of straw; from whence they were generally driven by the country people who disliked it as an ominous appearance, while some gave them money to get the manikin carried off." This however was only part of another ceremony conducted by a larger body of boys from whom the death carriers were a detachment. "They carried two figures to represent Spring and Winter; the first appareled all in green, and drest in youthful fine array; the other Winter cladde in mosse with haire all hoare and graye." The proceedings ended in a fight in which of course Spring gained a victory. In Bohemia, on the same day, young people throw a puppet called Death into the water; then the girls go into the wood, cut down a young tree and dress it up like a woman and bear it round from house to house singing "We carry Death out of the village. We bring Summer into the village." Here Summer is "Our Lady." Mothering Sunday is also called Rose Sunday, from the Pope on this day carrying a golden rose in his hand, which he exhibits on his way to and from mass. In Seville on this day children of all ranks appear in the streets fantastically dressed. During the whole day they make an incessant din with drums and rattles, and cry, "Saw down the old woman." At midnight a procession parades the streets, knock at every door, repeat the cry, and conclude by sawing in two the figure of an old woman. This is said to be emblematical of Mid-Lent.

Servants who ask of their mistresses permission to leave their duties for a few hours, consider "It is Mothering Sunday" as quite a final argument. The only accessory in connexion with this institution known to me is the cake, a suspicious looking creation coated with white and embellished with pink "

(*Folk lore of Gloucestershire*, p. 20). E. Walford says, "Cake was not the only attraction of Mothering Sunday. At the Swan Inn, Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire, there was wine also for all the servants, who were at liberty to bring their friends and sweethearts, and doubtless the same custom prevailed in other houses." It was also the fashion to distribute frumenty on Mothering Sunday.

(The late) J. M. WHEELER.

(*To be continued.*)

### A Hymn to the Pope.

(*On his successful deal with Mussolini.*)

ALL hail the Papal tyrant's name,  
Let fools and dupes all fall,  
Before the triple diadem  
And crown him Lord of all.

Ye priests and preachers ne'er forget  
He claims you one and all,  
His laws and lies your jobs protect  
So crown him Lord of all.

Crown him ye carrion millionaires  
Who round his footstall crawl,  
Pay him his ransom, say your prayers  
And crown him Lord of all.

Crown him ye kings who rule by might  
And humble folk enthral,  
He backs your supernatural "right"—  
So crown him Lord of all.

The head that once was crowned with thorns  
Is crowned with glory now;  
And pomp and majesty adorns  
Peter's successor's brow.

A carpenter, a fisherman,  
A baby in a stall;  
What knew they of the subtle plan  
To crown him Lord of all?

Races and men of every clime  
Shall yet proclaim his fall;  
All signs reveal the coming time  
When Truth is lord of all.

A.H.

### Acid Drops.

A slander action in which two Roman Catholic priests were concerned led to a comment by the Judge which is worth notice. Mr. Justice Swift said that no one could be "surprised that those in control of the Roman Catholic Church should have spared no effort to prevent the dispute between the parties from coming into court." The plaintiff had been before an Ecclesiastical Court, where, according to a fellow priest who gave evidence, he had "a fair but not a canonical trial." The defendant, declared that he (and presumably the plaintiff) was prevented by his canonical obligations from taking the matter to a secular court. The latter statement, taken with the Judge's observations quoted above, explain why it is that while the misconduct of Anglican and dissenting clergymen often gets into the Police Courts and elsewhere it is only when, as in this case, a priest already in a position of having a grievance against the ecclesiastical court acts contrary to the rules of his cloth, that the misdoings of Catholic clergymen become public property. The Bishops and the canonical courts have a short way with priests who misconduct themselves—they send them to the safe and silent retreat of some monastery, and the immaculate standard of clerical conduct in Catholic England suffers no stain.

We note that Father Finn wrote to Rome "in regard to Father Tonge's trial." He thought it was quite a fair trial, but not a canonical one. This leaves us breathless. Does it mean a canonical trial is *not* a fair one, or what? No wonder the court roared with laughter, but what a spectacle of the private lives of priests was revealed. It almost reads like a page in Boccaccio.

The Archbishop of Canterbury is gravely perturbed about the dearth of candidates for the clergy. There are a hundred fewer ordained each year than are required to carry on the good work, and the Church is faced with a loss of 4,000 clergy since the war. The *Church Times* is very, very sad and simply can't understand why young men nowadays don't take up the ministry as a profession. Let us whisper the truth. There is no money in it for one thing, and for another, you can't expect young men nowadays don't take up the ministry as a profession and teach fairy tales. Surely the Church is beginning to find this out?

The late Dr. Westcott was always looked upon as one of the Church's greatest scholars. It is interesting to note what his contemporary, Lord Salisbury, thought of him—as recorded by Lady Gwendolen Cecil in her life of her famous father. Lord Salisbury had no particular admiration for Westcott—"the lazy sequence of that divine's mental processes were utterly different from his own and inspired him with intellectual distrust." Down goes another one of our idols!

And—according also to his daughter—Lord Salisbury had in him "an element of anti-clericalism!" And he was a Tory of Tories—will wonders never cease?

However tight money may be for most of us ordinary folk, enough will be found for the Catholic Guild of Israel to acquire a permanent hall for lectures and a Catholic reading room for "enquiring Jews in the East End of London." No doubt such good news will be welcomed not only by East End Jews, but by Jews all over the world. After all, it takes only £40,000 to convert one Jew, and in what better way could money be spent in these happy times?

We are pleased to note that Dr. Cary-Elwes, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Northampton, who was taken so seriously ill while leading a party of pilgrims to Lourdes and hurried back to England to be cured—may soon be restored to health. He sent a cheery message of hope to the Catholic Association, that God may give him health and strength once again to lead another party of pilgrims to His Holy Shrine. We hope so too, and also that the regrettable *contretemps* will not eventuate on this occasion.

In a Nonconformist journal a reader recently made the suggestion that a political party, guided only by the teachings of Christ, should be formed, as distinct from the other three chief parties, and called "The Free Church Party." The Rev. Tom Dring, of Gateshead, strongly deprecated the idea, and in his criticism of it ended on the following note:—

Finally, politically active and interfering Churches are faring badly in the world to-day—e.g., Russia, Spain, Italy—and will probably fare worse in the future.

We are pleased to see that at least one Christian parson is sharp enough to read a little of the "writing on the wall." This aside, one may add that, judging by the recent Prayer-book squabble, what a Free Church Party would do is to introduce sectarian venom and religious hatred into Parliamentary discussion. One can easily imagine the kind of rancour that would be stirred up by a Party which believed it was engaged in carrying out "the will of God." O Lord, we beseech thee to save the nation from such a fate! Amen.

One dozen regular and well known writers for the *News-Chronicle* were invited by the Editor to answer this question: "Supposing the end of the world were

coming to-morrow—how would you spend to-day." We should think our pious contemporary got a shock when it read the replies of its contributors, for we are glad to say that with one or two exceptions they might all have been written by Freethinkers. Mr. Robert Lynd "would take up Plato's 'Apology,' and try to believe Socrates when he declares that death is not an evil." Mr. Gilligan, the cricketer, thinks he would feel like a No. 11 batsman going in with seven runs needed to win, and "hoping for the best." Mr. J. A. Spender thinks the "decent impulse" would be to help others, "and so to forget the peril of my own vile body and immortal soul." Mr. A. J. Cumming would "do nothing: there would be nothing to do." Mr. E. A. Baughan (who is most to our taste) says "Many men have faced death with fortitude, and I trust I should not be weaker than they . . . There would be no prayers or supplications if I could help it." Mr. J. L. Hodson would "have a drink," look up old friends and "go to bed and hope for the best." Mr. F. W. Thomas would "take his two dogs to the 'vet' to be chloroformed, light a pipe, stroll out over the Downs and sit down and wait for it."

Miss Helen Hope says if there is annihilation for all of us there will be "no affairs to wind up." Miss Iris Downing was not afraid when, some years ago, before a serious operation she thought her last hour had come, and would not, she hopes, be afraid of the "end of the world." Mr. S. R. Baron would walk into the country and "watch the last sunrise," and Barbara—our pious contemporary's tame humourist—"would get Bernard to take me to a 'Nite' Club."

Only one of the contributors, Mr. Hugh Redwood—of Christian fame—is "so sure of God that he would not be afraid as once he was." Our only comment is that here are eleven out of twelve average persons—and journalists withal—who do not think about God or heaven or hell or any of the things which, if they believed most of the *News-Chronicle* favourite "stunts" should at least be given a thought on such an occasion. What ever will the churches say to this profane and manly symposium?

Lord Brentford ("Jix") tells the readers of *John Bull* that:—

I have always felt that our crowning sin is selfishness. If there was one man who ever lived on this earth a life of pure and entire unselfishness, it was the man Christ Jesus. Whatever views my readers may have of his divine authority there can be no doubt on that point, he lived here for others.

What about Santa Klaus? Both he and Jesus belong to the same category. They are merely imaginary persons embodying certain current conceptions in a concrete form. Both were born of man's desire to picture his aspirations as vividly as possible.

The cavemen in our midst! The Lord's Day Observance Society says: "What is the explanation of the successes of this Society? The Lord's Day Observance Society stands four-square on the Word of God, the solid foundation. It stands for the Lord's Day—the day consecrated as a memorial of the Glorious Resurrection, the Day which reminds the world of the greatest Triumph of the Saviour of Redeemer of men." We fancy that the "successes" and the existence of the Society are due to the fact that the parsons persuade credulous fools to send money to the Society in order that the parsons' day of business may not be hindered by secular competition. How sweet it is to remember that Christ died on the Cross that parsons might enjoy the good things of earth without their needing to work for them! How glorious it is to know that because a mob of Christians believe that they feel it incumbent upon them to prevent other people from enjoying Sunday as they may please!

In *John Bull's* letter page, a reader gives the reason why he "hates his home town," which appears to be Hull. He says:—

Its Puritan attitude towards Sunday makes a day of

gloom. The most desolate city in England on Sunday, young people can only wander about almost deserted streets. No kinemas, concerts, amusements, all cafés closed, and everywhere the appearance of a city of the dead. The sight of little children gazing sadly at locked playgrounds on the day they could fully enjoy them makes me hate the city I live in.

Needless to say, the parsons all love it. It reveals the fact that they have achieved their ideal city in the grip of Sabbatarian piety. And what lively opportunities it affords for altruistic efforts in the shape of organizing Christian entertainment for those bored with our English Sunday!

Another reader writes of his town in North Wales, thus:—

My little Welsh home town has a population of 7,000—3,500 "Church" and 3,500 "chapel." All other considerations are subservient to this rich distinction. A man has no merit unless he is of the "chapel," and there is no health in him unless he is of the "Church." This is life poisoned in the most charmingly situated little town in our fair country.

It only shows what Christians can achieve, if only they put their full energy into the task of bringing about the Kingdom of God on earth. Thank God, they don't succeed in every town and city.

A pious writer says that "as Christmas draws near we shall sing again of peace on earth, goodwill to men. Let us do more than sing of peace, let us work for it, and work for it now." The exhortation, he it noted, comes nineteen centuries after Christ and his message of Peace, etc. It is a striking comment on the value of nineteenth-century years of *singing* about Peace. Has the Christian Church failed? Oh, no! It is still singing.

The Rev. S. O. Tattersall has, in a Methodist journal, been writing about the "Wonder of Jesus." And we note the following passage:—

What can one say concerning the wonder of Christ? It is easy to sing—"When I survey the wondrous Cross." But do we feel the wonder of it? I have seen pilgrims ascending on their knees the steps of the Holy Staircase in Rome. The spectacle may seem in some respects grotesque, almost gruesome. And yet I could see on many a face a feeling of fear, something akin to a sense of wonder. Is not that note often missing in our [Protestant] religion?

The spectacle of a mob of credulous people grovelling on their knees in the grip of superstitious fear is indeed a gruesome sight. One might say a highly repulsive sight. And we gather that as that fear is akin to "wonder," this Protestant parson would not be altogether sorry if his flock would exhibit some of the same repulsive fear. Perhaps he dimly realizes that if Protestants had a little more fear, they might have a little more respect for their parsons as the supposed holy representatives on earth of the Big Bogey up aloft. After all, Catholic priest and Protestant parson are brothers under the skin. They both live on the fear and folly of man.

Needless to say, Mr. Justice McCardie's plain words from the Bench on Birth Control and abortion are filling the Anglo and Roman Catholic world (that is, those who profess to practice neither) with great indignation. To hope to prevent the birth of imbeciles or physical defectives, or to ask people who can't afford big families to refrain from having them in the interests of the community as well as in the interests of the individuals concerned, is looked upon as "growing paganism"—as if "paganism" was something worse than Catholicism.

In the *Universe*, a Roman Catholic doctor, called O'Gorman, suggests another Catholic Guild for chemists and pharmacists who will refuse to have anything to do with "contraceptives." This Guild would constitute a "sound centre" for Catholic ideas on such a pagan subject, but the whole scheme would have to be brought forward before the "ecclesiastical authorities for formal approval." We will prophesy a warm welcome from

these "authorities," but we really would like an answer to this question. What is the average number of children per family among Roman Catholic doctors, journalists and women who violently oppose birth control? We do not expect an answer.

It is characteristic of the *Church Times* that it should kick up a dust over a parson being compelled to pay rates. The other day, in the Chancery Court, Mr. Justice Clauson decided that the Rector of the sinecure rectory of Gestingthorpe, Essex—the rector is also the Vicar—has not the cure of souls of the parish, and therefore could not be exempt from rates as he would have been if the rectory had not been a sinecure. It seems to the *Church Times* "rather hard" on this parson that he should be the victim of the very law which relieves the majority of rectors from paying rates. We, on the other hand, think it is hard on the ratepayers in general, only a small proportion of whom go to church, that all the clergy are not in the same position as the Vicar and Rector of Gestingthorpe, made to pay rates like other people.

The Rev. Leslie Weatherhead recently published a book called *The Mastery of Sex*, purporting to give all the knowledge needed about sex matters for young men and women. A reviewer, the Rev. Dr. Waterhouse, suggested that the book was rather too frank, and that the information might do harm if the book came into the hands of adolescents. Whereupon, Mr. Weatherhead replies in the following strain:—

I am not so foolish as to suppose that frankness is without any danger at all. It has dangers. But these are not nearly so serious as those incurred by ignorance, and they never bring neurosis. Further, the hush-hush merchants have had their way for several hundred years. Let us give a new way a trial. When I say *us*, I mean let not all the frankness be shown by those who are hostile to the Christian way of looking at life. It is no characteristic of religion to be afraid to face facts, and I would go so far as to call it a crime that young people should be sent out into a world which shrieks sex at them without a knowledge of those facts which are relevant. Such a knowledge is their only chance of achieving a true adjustment to sex. Even *with* such knowledge it is hard enough.

One may add that the "hush-hush merchants" who had their ignorant and stupid way for several hundred years were all Christians; and their hush-hush policy was formulated from the Holy Bible. We gather that Mr. Weatherhead decided to be frank and write his book only because anti-Christian frankness has undermined the Christian taboo on sex knowledge, and anti-Christian courage has pioneered the path for him to travel along, and because he thinks that religion ought to make some sort of show of not lagging too far behind anti-Christian instruction. He is another dare devil of the Bishop Barnes breed. As for the latter portion of the above letter, it does no more than echo the reasons which anti-Christians gave years ago as grounds for enlightening Christian ignorance.

There is a rev. gent. "whose voice has heartened millions"—though in what way we are not told—who is allowed to blither (or is it blather?) to the extent of a page in one of our national Sunday weeklies. Like other pious parsons nowadays, he has discovered there are "some" people who actually question Christianity! Ye gods!

He asks us "a few simple questions?" Why *do* we want religion to be discredited? What is it in religion that makes us uncomfortable? What is it in Christianity that makes us angry? Do we really want to get rid of the New Testament? And he actually tells us "honest" thought might produce "amazing answers." How subtle, how penetrating!

We advise the rev. gent. to study some of our literature instead of writing balderdash. We attack religion and Christianity and the New Testament because they are not *true*, and there is not a living priest or parson

who dare meet us on that one point. Miracles, virgin births, flying saviours, devils and hell have been hopelessly discredited for centuries by almost every thinking man. The idea of Christianity or religion making us "uncomfortable" or "angry" is what a giggling school-girl generally calls "a scream."

The British and Foreign Bible Society never ceases boasting that it has translated the Holy Book in more than 640 languages, and tells us that an African convert "recently reading the Gospel for the first time in his own tongue," said, "We never thought our poor language could express such wonderful thoughts as these."

It would be interesting to know how many "Africans" can read their own language at all, but to tell us that one of them could understand the Gospel of John anyway, or that it could be accurately translated into some African dialect preserving its neo-Platonic phrasing so that an "African" could understand it is really pushing credulity too far. Surely the wealthy subscribers to this Society could do better with their money here than to use it for converting "Africans," or other natives who are as likely to understand "Christ" as an empty beer barrel?

A correspondent to the *Church Times* very strongly objects to a census being taken of Anglo-Catholics in this country. Perhaps he has in mind that fine and noble story related so reverently in God's Word about Satan provoking David to number God's Elect. The Lord "sent pestilence" upon Israel and snuffed out a mere handful of seventy thousand men. And He also sent an "Angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it"—although this time Jerusalem survived the terrible onslaught. We sympathize with the correspondent, for if the Lord repeated the operation, and seventy thousand Anglo-Catholics were wiped out, it might mean an end to that particular sect of Christianity altogether, and then where would Old England be?

At St. Paul's Cathedral, which, as the *Manchester Guardian* ironically observes, "is by common consent the resting place of the militant," and is "a place which is to some extent associated rather with war than with peace," there was on Tuesday last (December 15) a service of intercession for the forthcoming Disarmament Conference of 1932. The Cabinet, diplomats of other countries in London, and representatives of various religious denominations were in attendance, and by the tombs of military warriors, and in the shadow of regimental colours, and ornamented by the Lord Mayor in State and his gaudy retinue, all these gentry, and such of the ordinary faithful as room could be found for, "met together in prayer." We agree with our contemporary that this was "an impressive ceremony," and that "imagination will hail the idea of selecting the cathedral for a solemn renunciation of war," though we should have said "reel at" rather than "hail."

### Fifty Years Ago.

An Essex parson has just fixed the following nice scale of charges for his parish churchyard:—

1. Ordinary fee for a parishioner's grave	0	10	6
2. Fee for a non-resident, whether belonging to the parish or not	...	3	18 0
3. Brick grave for a parishioner	...	6	6 0
4. Brick grave for a non-parishioner	...	12	12 0
5. For permission to erect a common wood rail, and two posts, over grave of a parishioner	...	1	11 6
6. For permission to erect a common wood rail, and two posts, over grave of a non-parishioner	...	3	3 0
7. Head and foot stone—parishioner's...	5	5	0
8. Head and foot stone—non-parishioner's	...	10	10 0

*The "Freethinker," December 18, 1881.*



## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- J. HEWITT.—We do not think that anyone can prevent the members of a club playing billiards on Sunday. The matter rests with the club committee.
- D. O'BRIEN.—Your letter is quite interesting, but its length prevents publication. We have to refuse many letters for the same reason. Perhaps other writers will take the hint.
- S. LOMAX.—Thanks for the suggestion. We should like to do many things with the *Freethinker* which would make it still more interesting, and we think increase sales. But most of the things we desire depend upon a larger expenditure, and that, at present, we dare not risk. But we may do something shortly.
- E. CORNFORD.—We hope your letter to the editor of *The Depositor* will have some effect, but the clergy are licenced intruders in almost every department, and it is their game to see that they are as prominent as possible. It is a case of "Sweet are the uses of advertisement." The impertinence remains all the same.
- J. GRAY.—You do not give the exact reference, and we do not recall the passage. But it is not true that the idea of Satan began with Christianity. It is a very much older idea. What Christianity did was to restore the more brutal and more primitive meaning of the word.
- M. ROGERS.—The article appeared so long ago that by the time we could find room for it, it would be very much out of date. Sorry.
- H. J. HEWER.—Mr. Cohen attacks all religions and all gods, without any exception or favoured treatment. He is mainly concerned with Christianity because that is the special form of the disease that troubles us most.
- J. M. MCKENNA.—Our dating from the birth of Christ—A.D.—was decided several centuries after the alleged death of the assumed founder of the Christian religion. The birth-date is manifestly mythical.
- J. BRIGHTON.—Have heard nothing, and do not expect to. However, you did quite well in saying what you did.
- MR. G. BURGESS, of 98 Athens Street, Stockport, will be pleased to hear from any Freethinker in his neighbourhood who is willing to assist in the formation of a Branch of the N.S.S. in his locality.
- 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.
- Letters for the Editor of the "*Freethinker*" should be addressed to 61 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.
- 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.
- All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."
- Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

## Sugar Plums.

We are now only a month from the date of the Annual Dinner, and we hope to see a record number present on this occasion. Those who have decided to be present will please assist the arrangements by writing for their tickets—8s. each—as soon as possible. We hope to publish soon a full programme of the proceedings. There

should be a goodly number of provincial friends present, judging from who have already signified their intention of being there. Finally, provision has been made for a special menu for those of our friends who are vegetarians. It is specially desirable that these should say what are their requirements in good time.

In the *Freethinker* for October 25 last, we published an account of the suicide of a Lancashire clergyman, the Rev. F. W. C. Woollett, with the proceedings at the inquest and the jury's verdict that he was possessed of an evil spirit. The man was insane, and the evidence showed that he had ill-treated his wife and children. Unfortunately one of the newspapers which was sent us, and which we did not retain after use, referred to the man as the Vicar of Bolton. That description turns out to be wrong, and the Vicar of Bolton writes us that he obviously has not committed suicide, that he has never been certified as insane, that he has never thrashed his children or cursed his wife. The first is quite obvious, and for the others the disclaimer was quite unnecessary to those who know Canon Elliott. Fortunately, as the matter turns out, the fact of the suicide was enough to prevent Canon Elliott being identified with the Mr. Woollett of the inquest, and we imagine must have caused the former to smile over the information. All we can do now is to express our regret at the blunder, and for any feeling of annoyance experienced. We thank Canon Elliott for calling our attention to the matter.

Mr. Cohen had two fine meetings at Burnley in the Phoenix Theatre, on Sunday last, the place being crowded on both occasions. Mr. Hurley, of Blackburn, acted as chairman on both occasions. All concerned were delighted with the results of the day's work, and the meetings are expected to give Freethought in the district a fillip. Mr. Cohen will cease from lecturing over the Christmas period, and will be able to spend more time in other directions.

Fortunately for Freethought, Christian bigotry never learns from experience. Attempts to stop Freethought meetings in Durham has considerably increased the audiences there. The Sunderland Branch of the N.S.S. is now receiving attention. On two occasions quite recently, the bookings have been cancelled at the last minute by timid or bigoted owners. The local Branch of the N.S.S. is rising to the occasion, and we expect some well-attended meetings there shortly. It is unfortunate that the booking of the hall was not clinched by paying a deposit. This should always be done.

Birkenhead Freethinkers will have an opportunity of hearing Mr. A. D. McLaren to-day (Sunday), when he speaks for the local Branch of the N.S.S. in the Boiler-makers' Hall, Argyle Street, at 7 p.m., on "The Roman Catholic Menace." Mr. McLaren is a pleasant and instructive speaker, and the subject is one of local interest.

There were good meetings at Manchester last Sunday, and Mr. Rosetti's lectures drew a number of interesting questions. The well stocked bookstall received a deal of attention, and we believe many books and pamphlets changed hands. Mr. P. E. Monks, with his usual efficiency, occupied the chair at both meetings.

In *The Bible in Scotland*, Sir Andrew Macphail, just published (John Murray), there is an abundance of entertaining criticism of Scottish piety. Church worship he describes as "a machine-driven organ roaring through a cast iron grill, framed to imitate an East window." He writes of "raucous voices declaiming their noisy hymns," and suggests that Mr. Rudyard Kipling is a fit and proper person to purvey to the young for their religious instruction the real truth about "every story, allegory, parable and miracle in the Bible." An irreverent but diverting little book.

## Man and the Universe.

"It [religion] is, in its very nature, a machine for scaring; it must needs fail and break down as man gains more and more knowledge, for knowledge is not only power; it is also courage."

"The truly civilized man, it seems to me, has already got away from the old puerile demand for a "meaning in life." It needs no meaning to be interesting to him. His satisfactions come, not out of a childish confidence that some vague and gaseous god, hidden away in some impossible sky, made him for a lofty purpose and will preserve him to fulfil it, but out of a delight in the operations of the universe about him and of his own mind. (H. L. Mencken: *Treatise on the Gods*. pp. 350-351.)

THE late Earl Balfour, who was—as becomes one whose mother was a member of the great house of Cecil—a strong conservative, saw with regret, mingled with apprehension, that religion was losing its hold upon the masses. For he recognized religion as one of the strongest conservative forces acting upon mankind. So, to those who could no longer be intimidated by the fear of eternal punishment after death, he propounded a different bogey, the fear of annihilation. It has often been quoted, and has sometimes been taken for a statement of Balfour's own views by people who have only read it in quotations, thereby giving rise to the fiction, at one time widely believed, that Balfour was an unbeliever. As a matter of fact he was a member of the Established Church and attended its services regularly. We can remember, many years ago, during a parliamentary election, the rumour was circulated as to his religious heresy—a serious matter in those days—and the clergyman at whose Church he attended, writing to the press and stating the facts of the case.

The passage upon which most of the rumours were based is a statement of what science, apart from religion, reveals concerning the origin and ultimate fate of mankind in a godless universe, and runs as follows:—

Man, so far as natural science by itself is able to teach us, is no longer the final cause of the universe, the heaven-descended heir of all the ages. His very existence is an accident, his story a brief and discreditable episode in the life of one of the meanest of the planets. Of the combination of causes which first converted a piece or pieces of unorganized jelly into the living progenitors of humanity, science indeed, as yet, knows nothing. It is enough that from such beginnings famine, disease, and mutual slaughter, fit nurses of the future lord of creation, have gradually evolved, after infinite travail, a race with conscience enough to know that it is vile, and intelligence enough to know that it is insignificant. We survey the past and see that its history is of blood and tears, of helpless blundering, of wild revolt, of stupid acquiescence, of empty aspirations. We sound the future, and learn that after a period, long compared with the individual life, but short indeed compared with the divisions of time open to our investigation, the energies of our system will decay, the glory of the sun will be dimmed, and the earth tideless and inert, will no longer tolerate the race which has for a moment disturbed its solitude. Man will go down into the pit, and all his thoughts will perish. The uneasy consciousness, which in this obscure corner has for a brief space broken the contented silence of the Universe, will be at rest. Matter will know itself no longer. Imperishable monuments and immortal deeds, death itself, and love stronger than death, will be as though they had never been. Nor will anything that remains be better or worse for all that the labour, genius, devotion, and suffering of man have striven through countless generations to effect—(A. J. Balfour: *Essays and Addresses*. (1893). pp. 307-308.)

Lord Balfour goes on to compare this view of the Universe with the faith of Christianity, to the disadvantage of the scientific view; inasmuch as it leaves us: "divorced from all communion with God, face to face with the unthinking energies of nature which gave us birth, and unto which, if supernatural religion be indeed a dream, we must after a few fruitless struggles be again resolved." (p. 314.) But, it may be asked, would it not be better to go down to oblivion than to begin another cycle of existence under the rule of a Being who is the author of such a deliberately diabolical scheme as that revealed by science? How do we know what further experiments such a Being is capable of? Who is to guarantee that things will be better in the next life? Suppose they are worse? For our own part, if we were offered a continuation of life under such management, or rather, to put it mildly, mis-management, we should certainly decline.

It is often charged against us that we take away the hope of immortality divinely planted in the human heart, and leave it to despair. The truth is that the idea of immortality is not divinely implanted; it is humanly implanted before the child's reasoning powers have sufficiently developed to judge the matter impartially. The children of Freethinkers betray no craving for a future existence.

If a child were brought up in the belief that when he came of age he would inherit a fine mansion in the lovely, but far distant, island of Atlantis, he would, no doubt, be greatly disappointed upon arriving at manhood if he was informed that the island of Atlantis was a fable and had no real existence. It is the teachers of fables who are responsible for the disappointments that occur when the truth is revealed.

Look again at the millions in the Far East who believe that the ultimate end of man is *Nirvana*, the end of all effort, striving, and consciousness, where the personal identity is lost; swallowed up and submerged like a drop of water in the ocean, never to return to conscious identity again. These millions do not weep and lament for the fate that awaits them, because they have never been taught to expect a continuance of their personal life, therefore they are not disappointed.

Again, if religious people really believed that these ideas of God and Immortality are divinely implanted, why do they fight so desperately to teach religion in the schools? One would think they would say: "We don't care whether religion is taught in the schools or not, the germs of religion are divinely implanted and are bound to appear." They know only too well that if religion is not planted in childhood there is precious little chance of it taking root later in life.

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

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### LIES.

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Great is Bankruptcy; the great bottomless gulf into which all Falsehoods, public and private, do sink, disappearing; whither from the first origin of them they were doomed. For nature is true and not a lie. No lie you can speak or act but it will come, after longer or shorter circulation, like a Bill drawn on Nature's Reality, and he presented there for payment—with the answer, *No effects*. Pity only that it often had so long a circulation, that the original were so seldom he who bore the final smart of it. Lies, and the burden of evil they bring are passed on; shifted from back to back, and from rank to rank; and so land ultimately on the dumb lowest rank, who with spade and mattock, with sore heart and empty wallet, daily come in contact with reality, and can pass the cheat no further.—Thomas Carlyle, "The French Revolution."

## The Gospel According to Appleton

MR. E. R. APPLETON really deserves a banana; for he takes the biscuit as a religionist. But it is a dry biscuit, and a banana will go well with it. Mr. Appleton, who is described as "Founder of the B.B.C. Silent Fellowship," contributes a weird article to *Answers*, under the title of "Angels May Wink!" The note of exclamation is Mr. Appleton's not mine.

Now why did he use that note of exclamation? Is it because he thinks he has succeeded in giving the average churchman a shock from a galvanic battery? Anyhow, he evidently hopes to prove himself the inventor of a new sensation by introducing the atmosphere of the variety stage and dance hall into the Church. There is nothing new in his puerile, shallow and superficial notions. And taken in the mass they are nothing else but sloppy and unmitigated tripe.

There is really something majestic in the religious poetry of Isaiah and Milton. But oh, what a fall is here my countrymen! The believer of to-day is asked to prefer the jazz and jingle of Appleton to the sonorous music of the powerful writers who (be their creeds what they may) have made immortal contributions to the sum of human achievement on the grand scale! We all know that "angels" wink from the theatre stage to those "deah boys" who haunt their dressing rooms with tributes of flowers and sweetmeats; who entertain the "angels" to supper—and, incidentally, find that the "angels" have often devilish appetites—and that they are fluent retailers of language, phrases and stories that are particularly *demi-mondaine*.

A story used to be told of the early days of the cinema of a manager of a show whose pianist had not turned up. In such a fix, the said manager eventually decided to appeal to the audience to find if one of their number would preside at the piano. A young man in the audience arose and advanced to the front, where he was gratefully greeted by the manager, who, when he was seated at the piano, told him all he had to do was to carefully watch the pictures as they came on and play a tune appropriate to each. Things went well until on the appearance of one picture the volunteer pianist launched vigorously (loud pedal down) into "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow." He had not well started, however, when the manager came rushing to him with deprecatory gestures, commanding him to desist. "Why, what's up?" asked the volunteer, "Isn't that a Smoking Concert?" "Smoking Concert be damned," tensely whispered the manager, "It's the Last Supper, you idiot!" Did not Artemus Ward loudly lament the depredations of certain persons who broke into his wax-work show and took shocking liberties with his representation of the Last Supper and the figures thereof; the normal postures of most being grotesquely changed? One disciple the tearful showman described as "aperiently having been drinking as a bottle of whisky sot before him," while another had a cocked hat placed over his left eye, and he looked "eggsackly as if he was as drunk as a biled owl." There was also the incident—when Mr. Ward's show was raided in Utica—and a violent Utican informed Mr. Ward that he must understand "Judas Iskarrot couldn't show his face in Utiky by a darn site"—with which observation he "kaved in Judassis hed."

This Appleton article in *Answers* is proof of the low ebb Christianity has reached in this country, and of the debasing expedients to which some of its professed adherents are prepared to resort to get people to keep up the pretence that they have still "got religion"; though the vows, ordinances and sacraments, which according to the institution of

Christ "the man of sorrows," of whose gaiety and laughter we have no record are to be prayerfully and solemnly observed in rapt and humble adoration by every one of his professed followers, are neglected and even replaced by a series of empty-headed idiotic and childish jing-a-rings!

While the Freethinker always emphasizes the reality, the earnestness and the seriousness which need to be brought to bear upon life and its problems, there is none more appreciative of joyousness and good humour, and the comicalities than he. But there is a place and time for work; and a place and time for play. And play is of no recreative value that is merely insane or Appletonian.

Mr. Appleton has apparently been fortunate in his experience. "Life itself is gay," says he, glibly enough. Is it? For whom? The shallow-minded people who listen to him and who accept his view are merely sinking deeper into a slough of self-complacency and intellectual indolence which makes them a ready prey to quack nostrums. Life is a stern battle in which the great issue is between Truth and Freedom and Falsehood and Tyranny. Life is not the butterfly kind of existence that Mr. Appleton makes it out to be. His attitude and doctrine implicitly disregard and ignore the dehumanizing conditions under which myriads are existing to-day due to ignorance and the intellectual bondage laid upon them by the ecclesiastical systems governed by the God of whose "Love" Mr. Appleton so foolishly prates. These myriads are denied the bread of knowledge and are offered the stone of superstition! And Mr. Appleton poses as the theatrical propounder and expounder of that maleficent belief—a clownish priest in motley! Let us pass him two bananas.

IGNOTUS.

## Freethought and Politics.

A COMMENT ON OUR RECENT DISCUSSION.

THE position of Freethought, and, in particular, of the N.S.S. and the *Freethinker*, in relation to party politics, has been discussed and elucidated here with characteristic clarity and wisdom in two recent articles by the Editor. Nothing more needs to be said on the main issue. It may be, however, that one who has had a long and intimate association with political propaganda may add a note or two based upon that experience. The difference between Freethought and political propaganda is that the first is mainly concerned with thought, and the second almost entirely concerned with action. In politics things do not become propaganda until, in the best conditions, they have been thought out; or, as more often is the case, emergency or party opportunity turns them from the arena of contemplation or ridicule into the only practical means by which the immortal soul of this nation can be saved. We have had recent examples of both these processes.

Freethought, on the other hand, is much more concerned to advocate the right and duty and utility of men to think than in the results of their thinking. It is not concerned with an immediate return in offices or votes or status because it knows that in the end no human being can be anything but the better by the proper use of his intelligence. Its pioneers and advocates do not tread a path beset with traps, bribes, and gross temptations. Poverty, persecution, and, in these latter days, the secret and evil exercise of organized orthodox influences against them and all they do are tests which the demands of other propagandas do not put to their missionaries. Politics is called in the vulgar tongue "a game." Even that, as we shall see, is not of necessity a belittling epithet; but it would in no circumstances be used in regard to Freethought.

John (Lord) Morley, more famed, we hope, in letters

than in politics, said that "those who treat politics and morality apart will never understand either." This is a higher conception of politics than the general standard in his day and ours. If politics and politicians are commonly spoken of with a shrug or a grin; if it is a popular axiom that there is less honesty in politics than in the profession of law; if it is thought undignified for a man to appear as the hired advocate of three different parties within less than two years; and if it be the case that the main incentive of regular professional politicians is to get money, position, power; if the man in the street thinks that the fact about politicians is that "its six of one and half-a-dozen of the other," or "you-scratch-my-back and I'll scratch-yours"; if these things be, does anyone wonder that an electorate who thinks thus of its lawmakers gets the kind of lawmakers it deserves. Freethought may be hated, fought, feared, slandered, but it never has been and never will be a synonym for the main chance.

"Conscience," said Sheridan, "has more to do with gallantry than it has with politics." A noble lord of an ancient political line is credited with saying when asked, late in his life, what he thought of politics, "Politics, Sir! It's a dirty game. Both my sons are doing well in it, thank God: but it's a dirty game, Sir." "Conscience"—such an important thing to orthodox Christians—is the last thing associated with electioneering. During the war it was the Christians who were loudest and foulest in their denunciation of the "conscientious objectors." Conscience—yes, when it is "the voice of God"; yes, when it says "Amen" to the priest; yes when it says "Hear hear" in the House of Commons; but when it is the voice of reason and of right in an hour when the multitude is in no mood to hear it, then conscience can be put in goal, silenced by Act of Parliament, or at least made inaudible to all but its owner. Freethought and those who with deliberate knowledge of what it involves stake their all in its service do work which would be hampered if ever, by any implied or open associations with political organization and opportunism, they might be suspect of that from which few who toil in the world of propaganda for political opinions and parties, even the honest few, are believed to be exempt. The newest of the three parties has abundantly proved that it has learned all the oldest and worst tricks of its seniors. Its very pretension to moral superiority, and its dogmatism about details, show how infectious this poison is. For the Labour Party of to-day (or of yesterday) is the work of political and industrial opportunism. That is why it won. That is why it has lost. Obviously the majority of the electorate, even that part of it which voted for it in 1929, has not regarded its principles as sacred. Why should they when they see them treated with contempt by their most authoritative expositors? Exactly the same argument, in its essence, applies to all the political parties and their organizations. Neither they, or the people they represent and appeal to, are out for anything more than what looks like "practical politics" for the moment, and if none of them are sure what that is, they all combine to have it believed that they will find it by a joint effort. That is the kind of accommodating "conscience" which can have no place in the propaganda of Freethought. It has no "funk holes."

John Morley also said that "literature is the most seductive, the most deceiving, the most dangerous of professions"; but perhaps he was wrong. No doubt the literary man is often not provided with as good a character for respectability as the politician; but there is a moral compulsion in art that is not found in politics. The evils that literary men do live after them, but those done by politicians are generally interred with their bones, if not before. It cannot be said of the game of politics as played by the regular political teams that:—

"The game is more than the players of the game  
And the ship is more than the crew."

It can be said of Freethought that this cause, while as dependent on human instruments as all others, and more than others who claim the aid of God, attaches to it, by its very existence and objects, persons too informed to be ignorant as to how little the greatest can contribute to the mighty task with which it is charged, and calls

forth a devotion and loyalty deeper than that which binds their followers to gods, priests, kings, and party leaders.

We will conclude with a reference to the most recent illustration of the cheapness and trickiness of politics. Before the last General Election the Bishop of Winchester prayed for the election of "a life boat crew," doubtless thinking this a figure suited to the view of politics taken by the electors. The prayer has been answered. The life-boat crew turns out to be a Pirate ship but of the crew and especially of the cargo, not of independent seamen, but of political adventurers in the sea of national panic, concerned, not for the safety of the ship, but for the captain, the crew, and, above all, the cargo. A few stow-a-ways managed to get hidden aboard and were discovered some hours after. They can do nothing, poor fellows, but already there is a suggestion to put them in irons.\* The "National" Government ought to be grateful to the most illiterate Bishop who ever occupied the See of London, and to all the other godly men who prayed them to victory. It was a victory worthy of them—and of God. Let us keep the Freethought cause free from a contagion that proves fatal to liberty and truth.

A.C.W.

### The Book Shop.

THERE are in existence many lives of Jesus, including one running into millions of words by the late Sir Hall Caine, and also one by Charles Dickens, which was written, but not for publication. It has been an idea of mine, for many years, that Freethinkers should form a society for the protection of the central figure of the gospels, for Freethinkers and they alone, have treated him most fairly, and given him the least trouble. If you ask, which one, the answer is not definite, for the historical, and the mythical have been so confused by his followers, that the result was a will o' the wisp figure that defied specification. Messrs. Heinemann have published, for six shillings, *The Passing of the Essenes*, by George Moore, and this drama has substantially made an apologia for Jesus, which has more than a passing interest for all good men. Mr. Moore has stripped away the supernatural accretions, and, like a historian, and a story-teller, records the life of Jesus as reflected in the writer's mind. The play itself was produced at one of the small theatres in London, with the usual trashy notice by journalists, whose religious convictions seem somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Salvation Army and Fundamentalism; but from a reading of it, there appears to be in it magnificent material for a wider public than that of subscription theatres. A characteristic letter from the author to the *Times Literary Supplement* on October 30, 1930, evokes a well-known phenomenon to Freethinkers; the author's learned friend was unaware that in the three synoptic gospels there was no mention of the nails and spear; this is on a level with the father's advice in answer to his son's inquiry as to who was Shylock? He instructed the young thirster for knowledge to go and read his Bible. There is an artistic finish to the dialogue that grips the attention; there is a studied simplicity in the diction that might be well taken for a model by writers who have put aside Longinus and Dryden. Clear pictures come to the mind of a man, fifty-three years of age, going grey—none other but Jesus. He gives wise instruction to Jacob, an Essene, on the management of sheep and lambs which could be ratified for their wisdom by a Sussex shepherd of my acquaintance. A character, Sadoc, in the play, asks Paul, how his doctrine was received in Jericho, and Paul replies, "With stones, from which I escaped through the hills." Mathias, an Essene, in conversation with Paul, discovers that, in spite of the latter's rudeness in speech, he is specious in argument, and the author's irony may

\* See letter from retired Colonel in *Times*, advocating abolition of the Opposition in Parliament. *Times*, November 10, 1931.

be found in Paul's retort to Mathias, "My language serves me well enough. My mission is among the poor and ignorant rather than among the rich." And present day events prove that Paul's Christianity was nicely suited for wolves in their relations with sheep. There is an inconclusive finish to the play as Jesus leaves the stage, "Mayhap," he says, "they will learn in time that it is better to love the good than to hate the wicked." This is sound sense, even in a world where most human beings have a pound of passion to an ounce of reason, and Mr. George Moore's revaluation of Christianity after two thousand years of earth-worrying is a scholarly and gentle interpretation of myth, fable, affliction, and obsession, proving in an artistic manner, that mankind, in spite of Christianity, persists in growing up.

In these notes, I mentioned a few weeks ago, a book *Towards the Open*, by Henry Chester Tracy. A copy has been acquired, and I find that it abounds in mental sustenance, and, unlike the ruck of books, it has something to tell the reader worth memory space, and again, unlike many books, it will make a revelation to the reader, valuable in the art of living. Mr. Tracy moves in noble company; to take his own words, he is always in the company of "significant men," and, if I may say so, he is one himself. For the acquisition of his philosophy, which he entitles "Scientific Humanism," he does not offer you a substantial bank balance; any modern quack can offer that and gild the bauble with such sounding words as "glittering prizes for sharp swords"—as though the authors of such words would persuade the human race that the world must ever be a few degrees lower than a jungle. I must respect the space at my disposal and be compelled to give a short extract from many of my underlinings. ". . . we have educated for civilization and not for living. We have educated for efficiency and not for the good life." Mr. Tracy emphasizes the necessity of fresh air, as much leisure as possible, thinking for oneself, and a second reading of *Towards the Open* has sent me to a re-reading of Thoreau's *Walden* and *A Week on the Concord*. Like Thoreau, Mr. Tracy is familiar with Eastern philosophy, and he gives a quotation from Mencius that will make many readers wish to know more of this Chinese Spinoza. *Towards the Open* was published by Chatto and Windus, but it was "remaindered," and a copy may be obtained from the International Bookshop, 33 St. Martin's Court, Charing Cross Road, W.C.2 for 6s.

*Everyman*, price twopence, can never be termed dull; as weekly papers go, it is a lively little radical, pugnacious, and in a way, it is on the high road of trying to "make the unready mind recognize the obvious." This latter phrase belongs to the editor of the *Freethinker*, who would probably be the last to claim any copyright in it. *Everyman* has in the October issue of the 29th, an article by Maxim Gorki on "Young Soviet Writers." It is a pat on the back for the young writers in the continent of Russia by the father of reality in literature. I would claim Maxim Gorki as a "significant man" in the same manner that Thomas Hardy can be claimed in the world of letters in this country. Neither writers have written for drawing rooms; both have faith in man, and neither have been troubled too much with the spectre of superstition. There are many readable articles in the issue, marked by a fair amount of freedom of thought, and, an energetic, youthful mind will be encouraged to go further afield in reading as a result of profitable time spent with this weekly. It (the energetic, youthful mind) might be tempted to take seriously the pronouncements of premiers on financial stringency if these pronouncements were made over a penny bowl of pea soup. But we still believe that there are energetic and youthful minds capable of adding two and two together correctly.

Mr. Paul Banks, whose name and abilities fit him extremely well for the subject has written a booklet, entitled, *People versus Bankers*, price 6d. nett., published by C. M. Grieve, 321 High Holborn, London, W.C.1. It is a popular exposition of banking marching to Hanwell

instead of, as it could do, help a harassed nation to march to an earthly heaven of decency, prosperity and happiness. "Is the world," asks the author, "so different from the single family that, while a store of goods or savings is good for the single family, it is a curse to all families together? What has the system of exchange come to if it prompts us to go on our knees and thank God that he has sent us a famine?" I agree entirely with Mr. Banks when he writes that "the bankers, as a last word, are good, honest, trustworthy men. But they are sitting on a job they cannot do. They are afraid to tackle it, and they are preventing the community from tackling it in their default." In a nutshell, it is a question of the just price, but there are a thousand wild fowl flapping their wings and obscuring the issue. And thinking for oneself on the question is a surer guide than consulting newspapers that should be left to amuse themselves in the sewers of society.

C-DE-B.

## Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

"HONEST DOUBT."

SIR,—Mr. Handsacre has misunderstood the point of my reply to his article, in which he compared the attitudes of Swinburne and Tennyson respectively, to the problems of life and death.

Tennyson's works undoubtedly reflected the popular thought of his age—hence, probably, the fact that he became Poet Laureate. Again, Mr. Handsacre is accurate in stating that Swinburne was a pioneer of thought, while Tennyson did not write ahead of his time.

But still I claim that the attitude of Tennyson towards theological problems was essentially that of a man who was at heart a secularist. A necessary criterion of a man's status in secularism is his views of death—and thereafter. Let me quote, from the same poem, Tennyson's:—

"Lightly step over the sands:  
The waters, you hear them call.  
Life with its anguish, and errors,  
And horrors, away with it all!  
For why should we bear with an hour,  
Of sorrow, a moment of pain,  
If every man dies forever,  
If all his griefs are in vain?"

Perhaps my admiration for Tennyson as a poet prejudices my opinion of him as a thinker, but in the lines quoted I cannot but think that he reveals an attitude towards death quite as fearless as that expressed by Swinburne in the lines from his "Garden of Proserpine," which were quoted by Mr. Handsacre.

Cpl. A. STUART.

THE "FREETHINKER," MR. JUSTICE MCCARDIE,  
AND THE "CHURCH TIMES."

SIR,—Your comments on Mr. Justice McCardie's recommendation of birth control and advocacy of reform of the present law with regard to abortion, are admirable. They might well be taken to heart by some of our conventionalist-contraceptionists, who have already tried to smother the Judge's brave and humane remarks on the termination of pregnancy.

A certain impudently dishonest attempt to rouse prejudice against the case for legalizing abortion was dealt with in your pages, a year ago. The world has moved a bit since then—but what a long way still to go!

The *Church Times* laments "existing social conditions." These sociological trimmings are really too thin. They won't wash. I remember a long writhing street within a stone's throw of a famous West Country Cathedral. The noisome foulness of that street was not jerry built, but the accumulation of centuries. Its troll-like inhabitants had grown into their present state in the shadow of the Cross.

From that shadow it is our duty to deliver the women and children of to-morrow.

F. W. STELLA BROWNE.

## SCIENCE AND RELIGION.

Science has made many criminal blunders. And has in time by her own methods made good the crime. Dogmatic religion has also committed these criminal blunders; but has it ever acknowledged them of its own accord or ever made good the crime against truth by its own methods? Left to itself, dogmatic religion would still be teaching as it did fifty, a hundred, or nineteen hundred years ago, and not tentatively, provisionally, as in a sphere that was not its true one, but positively, arrogantly and with the penalties of the law and persecution at its elbow. Left to itself and to the revelations of its god, it would still be teaching that lightning is caused by the "Prince of the Powers of the Air"; that lightning conductors are irreligious; and that protection from lightning is to be sought in prayers and bell-rings; that the crazy confessions of tortured women were proof of their association with demons in witches' sabbaths; that actors are not fit persons to receive the sacrament of marriage; that the fall of man is an historic fact; that geology is "not a subject of lawful enquiry," and that "the principle of natural selection is absolutely incompatible with the Word of God."

Left to himself it would still be censuring the Galileos and fighting the Darwins.

Left to itself it would have continued to denounce Birth Control; just as left to itself in the future it will continue to drive women into the horrors of unwilling motherhood and the agonies of unscientific abortion and will maintain its low-grade sex education and its insufficient sex standards. It has no method of self-correction in these spheres. The deity has been and will continue to be a powerful weapon in human hands. He has been made to change his message only when science has shown his previous one to be beyond the credulity of men, or when human nature has found it beyond endurance.—Mrs. Janet Chance, "The Cost of English Novels."

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OUTDOOR.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrolds Road, North End Road): Saturday, November 14, at 7.30, Messrs. F. Day and C. Tuson.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.—A meeting will be held at White Stone Pond, Hampstead, near the Tube Station every Sunday morning at 11.30 a.m. Speaker to-day Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine; at 3.30 and 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Hyatt, Tuson and Wood. Current *Freethinkers* can be obtained opposite the Park Gates, on the corner of Edgware Road, during and after the meetings.

INDOOR.

HAMPSTEAD ETHICAL INSTITUTE (The Studio Theatre, 59 Finchley Road, N.W.8, near Marlborough Road Station): 11.15, Mr. A. F. Dawn—"Our Changing World."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, R. Dimsdale Stocker—"An Ethical Defence of Nonsense."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"Tasks and Hopes for 1932."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4, Hall No. 5, near Clapham North Station, Underground): 7.30, Mr. R. B. Kerr—"Dean Inge."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): Monday, December 21, at 8.0, Mr. A. D. McLaren will open a discussion on "The Churches and Elementary Education."

THE CONWAY DISCUSSION CIRCLE (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): Tuesday, December 22—"A Celebration of Science."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.7, five minutes from the Brecknock): 7.30, Mr. Robert Arch—"The Universe Around Us."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

IRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Boilermakers' Hall, Argyle Street, Birkenhead): 7.0, Mr. A. D. McLaren (London)—"The Roman Catholic Menace."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. Jack Clayton—"Freethought and Morality." Questions and discussion. All welcome.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (City Hall, Albion Street, No. 2 Room): 6.30, Mr. W. Queen—"Sex Passion and Human Unhappiness." Questions and discussion. Silver collection.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Buildings, 41 Islington, Liverpool, entrance Christian Street): 7.0, H. N. Little (Liverpool)—"Adolescence and Religion," and C. McKelvie (Liverpool)—"Religion's Debt to Fear." Current *Freethinkers* and other literature on sale.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Dr. E. F. Lowe, Curator of Leicester Museum—"Charnwood Forest." Lantern illustrations.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus, Hall No. 5): 7.0, a Paper—"X.Y.Z."

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