

# The FREETHINKER

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### Views and Opinions.

#### A New Year's Homily.

GOOD wishes are an inspiration. They placate the gregarious spirit of a man by satisfying him that there is at least someone who thinks enough of him to express a desire for his future welfare. That they may cover no more than a mere formality does not detract very much from their welcome; we may still feed ourselves with the illusion that they spring from a kindly concern. But we give them, and we receive them; perhaps we give them because we like to receive them, and in either case they do at least bear witness that man cannot live alone and be content. So a happy new year, once more, to all readers of this journal, and while we are about it the same to that much larger body of potential readers, some of whom we hope to transform into actual ones before 1932 comes to an end.

Occasions exist to be utilized, and we intend utilizing this one by talking about the *Freethinker* and its work. We may begin by glancing at the position of "the enemy." 1931 has provided no more cheering picture for the Churches than has many of the preceding years; nor can the year that lies before us hold out reasonable prospects of improvement. The established Church laments the growing difficulty of getting men to adopt the ministry as a profession, and whatever may be the situation in the "Free" Churches in this respect, the one thing that is plain is that the men the Churches attract to their service are such as do not rank highest in either the intellectual world or in that of social leadership. Religion, while still powerful in its organized form, and insidiously dangerous in its unorganized one, continues to lose its hold on life. Art, literature, science, even politics, offer strong evidence of this weakening of religious belief.

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#### Our Position.

That is one side of the picture, and it is encourag-

ing. Another aspect of the picture is not quite so pleasing. With religious belief weakened as it has been, with so small a proportion of the population attending places of worship, Freethinking societies should be stronger than they are, and a paper such as the *Freethinker* should have a much larger circulation than it has. I know the retort may be made that it is much easier to shake people's faith in religion than it is to get them to take an active and intelligent interest in reform, and also that much the same complaint has been made ever since the beginning of popular Freethought propaganda. In addition, I have never made the mistake of thinking that our work consisted in building up a new sort of Church, wherein we would sing a different kind of hymn, and generally establish under the name of Secularism another form of the sectarianism which had previously existed under the name of religion. But, all the same, organization is necessary, and the National Secular Society challenges attention as the Society which stands for uncompromising Freethought, and asks for support. Why not, then, join it? Every year some hundreds of new members are admitted, and during the past year several new Branches of the Society have been established. But the number of new members are but a fraction of the number we are entitled to expect, and there should be a Branch of the Society in at least every large town in the kingdom. In this issue of the paper there is published a statement of the Society's Principles and Objects, and we invite all who ought to do so to fill in the appended form and send it in at once. It will mean new Branches, an increased incentive to get on with the work, and a distinct step towards the rationalizing of life.

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#### The "Freethinker" and 1932.

I am also hoping that 1932 will mark distinct improvements in the case of the *Freethinker*. I have several new moves in contemplation, although it will depend upon certain circumstances eventuating how far these will be realized. In the first place there is the future of the paper to be considered. For the past seventeen years I have carried on this journal single-handed, and those who know anything of the labour involved in the issue of a weekly paper, will realize what this means. But I am not getting younger, and I want to put the paper into such a position that it will be quite independent of me whenever I have to cease work in part or in whole. This will mean an increase in expenditure, and *I want that to be found in the shape of income*. I am not asking the friends of the paper to *give* money, although I know if that were necessary, it would be given as promptly and as generously as on previous occasions. I repeat it should come in the shape of income, and that can only come in one way.

Last May we achieved our Jubilee, and that

brought us letters of congratulation from all parts of the world, for however thin it may be, we actually do put a girdle round the globe. And from the purely personal side I can safely say that there is not a journal in this country for which such personal affection is shown, as is manifested by readers of the *Freethinker*. What I am suggesting is that our friends should give that affection a practical expression during 1932. Let each one make up his mind to secure at least one new reader in the near future. If they *will* they *can*. "Round the corner" there is always a likely subscriber to the paper. It is impossible adequately to advertise so as to make the *Freethinker* better known; that requires funds that are out of our reach. But the form of advertising I am suggesting can be done by all who will. Some better use ought to be made of the growing weakness of religion, some advantage ought to be taken of the rapid and marked decline of church-going, some profit should be derived from the secularization of life that has been going on. I have suggested two ways in which this can be done.

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#### Frustrated Efforts.

And the profit derived from a strengthening of the N.S.S. and of the *Freethinker* is not a personal or a party one. Each generation we lose some of the ground we have gained because we do not, in the present circumstances, effectively transform our gains into a corresponding modification of the environment. We convert numbers of people to our views of religion and life, and then allow the force of social circumstances, the drag of established institutions to enforce a formal acquiescence to the things we have disproved. We forget that whether we are dealing with ideas or bodies the maintenance of life, in both directions, is mainly a question of environment. Unbelief in this country remains to a very considerable extent furtive and, in the more "respectable" circles of society, rather ashamed of itself. Thousands of people keep their opinions on religion to themselves, or if they do speak at all do so in a hesitant, apologetic, timid way that leaves the mass of believers sorry for the heretic instead of envying him his freedom and robust mentality. We affect the individual without effecting to a corresponding extent the general social environment, with the result that after converting the parents, we too often find ourselves engaged in converting the children. It is because of this that we are unable to secure such small measures of reform as the disestablishment of religion in the State, or the repeal of such monuments of medieval brutality and bigotry as the Blasphemy Laws. No *Freethinker* is fully justified in complaining of the bigotry of Christians so long as he is contributing to its existence by his own timidity. The strength of our enemy is to-day largely made up of the timidity of our friends.

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#### Get to Work!

That is really my justification for asking for a forward movement as regards the N.S.S. and the *Freethinker*. With regard to the latter I do not think that in the whole country there is a periodical that exerts a saner influence on national life. Those who have read it attentively since the opening of the miserable and stupid squabble which half-frightened historians dignify by the name of the "Great War," cannot but admit that if this paper had enjoyed an influence greater than it has, if it could have impressed upon the peoples of the world something of its sanity and balance, the world would not to-day be as it is. The *Freethinker* has held its course in the face of adversity, bribes, and threats, and it will continue to do so whatever happens. And that, again, indicates a

difference between this paper and its readers that hardly exists with other papers. Those who write for it do so free from the fear of giving offence, or what is still more harmful, the desire merely to please. And those who read it do not expect to find in it only those things with which they agree. Occasionally, very occasionally, I get a letter from some reader telling me that he does not agree with something that has appeared. My only reply is that it is not written with a desire to gain his approval. The articles are written by men and women who do their own thinking, and readers are strongly advised to follow the same plan. It is this policy that has made the *Freethinker* what it is, and which has given it an influence in the country quite out of proportion to its actual circulation.

But I want that circulation to be larger than it is, because I want that influence to be much greater than it is. And I am asking readers to help, not with gifts of money, but with what is harder to give—personal service. We want more readers, and I am asking those who are interested to see that we get them. Advertising the paper on a scale sufficiently large and adequately persistent is a financial impossibility, but the other plan is open. I am not sanguine enough to believe that a paper such as this could ever become a paying property, if it ever achieves that it will have done its work, and may then be dispensed with, or sink to the level of an ordinary newspaper or weekly soporific for the unthinking. But I am convinced that there is a *clientele* three or four times as great as we have at present, if we can only get at them. I am asking the help of readers to do that. Let us try and make 1932 a memorable date in the history of the *Freethinker* and of the Cause it represents.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

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### Freethought's Big Job.

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"Speedy end to superstition, a gentle one if you can contrive it, but an end."—*Thomas Carlyle*.

"Rough work, iconoclasm, but the only way to get at truth."—*O. W. Holmes*.

"Liberty's chief foe is theology."—*Bradlaugh*.

POETS and Apostles are ever prophets. The poet, Swinburne, saw and sang, "A Vision of Spring in Midwinter," and generations earlier Shelley asked the question: "If winter comes can spring be far behind?" Happy are the pioneers who can note the mistakes of the past and present and fix their gaze on the promise of the future. For them the darkest of nights is jewelled with a star of hope. For them there is a budding to-morrow in every midnight, and for them nothing seems irrevocable, for their eyes are ever looking to the far horizon.

Some time since, Mr. Lloyd George, turning aside for a moment from the paltry pettiness of party politics, related to an astonished audience the drawbacks of a political career. He spoke of the calumnies to which a politician was exposed, and, in characteristic fashion, explained a phase of the seamy side of public life. After describing the burdens of a politician's lot, he went on:—

Tradesmen have their worries and anxieties; but suppose that in addition to their ordinary troubles they found a constant mob of detractors standing outside their doors, some doing it for hate and others for hire, yelling into every customer's ears as he entered their shop: "Don't go there whatever you do. You will be robbed and cheated at every turn if you do business with those fellows. They are all thieves, rogues, and liars." The whole time you are attending to your customers you have to dodge

bricks, clods, and worse, hurled at your head. Most men would rather give up business than endure this, if they had to break stones for a living.

There is truth in this very frank avowal, but if there is sacrifice in the case of a prominent politician, what is to be said in the case of the leader of a really unpopular movement, to whom sacrifice is a science and denial an art? Freethought is a wider and nobler evangel than a merely political one. It has its roots in intellectual necessity, and, deeper still, in ethical right. It is based on the psychological law of human development, only apprehended by a few choice spirits for ages, but latterly taking on a new significance and fresh urgency. Perpetually reaffirmed from generation to generation by unnumbered examples of unselfish martyrdom, from the far-off days of Hypatia to those of Ferrer, it is to-day changing the direction and character of the ideas of the civilized world.

The Freethought leaders are the most potent forces of progress. No other men are so widely influential as these apostles of freedom, but magnificent as is their life-work, the men themselves are greater. Hissed at by the superior people, cursed by the vulgar, they have many trials to submit to. Perhaps the hardest which can be mentioned is that of seeing charlatans ride by in their motors amid the plaudits of the mob: or in other words, to mark the success of humbug, whilst they feel that intellectual honesty is as rare in Georgian England as in the Greece of Socrates.

Yet good and true men and women have had to submit to this scurvy treatment. Richard Carlile endured nearly ten years' imprisonment for championing the cause of free speech. Charles Southwell was aged prematurely by his fight for liberty. Bradlaugh suffered defeat after defeat for sixteen years in a battle which was Homeric in its intensity, and his dying cars never caught the echo of his triumph. Francisco Ferrer, fronting the rifles of his enemies, had to find his triumph in his own heart. G. W. Foote had to listen to the mocking voice of the Christian judge telling him that he had devoted his great talents to the service of the "devil." Yet, in their hour of apparent failure, these men had actually triumphed. They were martyrs who missed the palm, but not the pains of martyrdom, heroes without the laurels, and conquerors without the jubilation of victory. Labouring not for themselves, but for the coming generations, their influence was as far-reaching as the utmost reach of the great wave whose crest they sometimes were.

When a politician carries on a campaign against the landed privileges of the nobility, he encounters, necessarily, the resistance of only a portion of the community, whereas a Freethought leader, directing his force against Priestcraft encounters the opposition of 40,000 priests, and their hundreds of thousands of satellites, and has to bear the brunt of an enormously greater opposition. No enmity is more relentless, or more venomous, than religious hatred. The abuse directed against politicians is politeness itself compared with the assault and battery made upon the reputation of a Freethought leader. G. W. Foote once said: "I have been accused of every crime in the calendar except murder. That solitary exception was due to the difficulty of finding a corpse."

The politician has, at least, the support of a goodly proportion of the newspapers of the country, but a leading Freethinker is certain to be grossly insulted and lampooned by Liberal, Tory, Labour and Socialist papers alike. Villified daily, their actions misrepresented constantly, this well-nigh intolerable animosity is, in reality, a tribute to the fear they arouse in the ranks of the superstitious. Yet the men against

whom a hundred thousand pulpits and platform fulminate abuse will have their reward in the time coming. Thanks to their courage and devotion, heterodoxy is no longer the danger it once was to the ordinary man. They have forced attention to Freethought advocacy, placed its exponents on a strong platform, and justified its rights to equal citizenship. Through the religious prejudices of our time they have knocked an opening large enough for heretics to pass through in future, and, in very many directions, we breathe more freely and our lives are easier because of their life-work.

What of the coming year? The rights of free speech all over the country have been attacked, and there are ominous signs of a recrudescence of bigotry. There was never a time when it was more clearly the duty and interest of the Freethought Party to resist the mailed fist of the Churches. It is for Freethinkers to stop this reaction and this plunge into medievalism. An outbreak of bigotry will offer no insuperable obstacle if we front the enemy forces with a full war-chest and up-to-date equipment. Forgetting trivial distinctions in the face of our opponents, let us secure the Freethought Movement from attack. To-day the situation seems ominous and uncertain. Let to-morrow, and all to-morrows, find it becoming less so, and those who have done their duty be judged worthy successors of those past leaders, who, in the days of deadly peril, thrilled mankind by raising their swords on behalf of outraged and trampled Liberty.

MIMNERMUS.

### Albert Einstein : Scientist and Humanist.

EINSTEIN is one of the outstanding personalities of the age. Whether he will be regarded as man of science or metaphysician posterity alone must decide. His speculations have proved the parent of many strange assertions. Among these is the statement that Einstein's discoveries have overturned the classical geometry of Euclid, with the system of mechanical science associated with the age-famous names of Archimedes, Galileo, Newton, and other natural philosophers.

Still, the truth remains that despite the space-time-continuum, and the special and general theories of relativity enunciated by Einstein and his colleagues, every mechanical inventor or operator whose practical concerns relate to the production or working of machinery labours in a three dimensional world, and perforce obeys the principles of a system alleged to be overthrown. Moreover, all the new views advanced are based on the impregnable rock of the older mechanics, while every applied science serenely pursues its accustomed path just as if no revolution had ever occurred.

Whatever the validity of his theories Einstein is a man of genius. The biographical volume written by Anton Reiser portrays his subject as a very human creature.<sup>1</sup> The brief foreword to the volume penned by Einstein himself guarantees the accuracy of the information conveyed. Perhaps the portrait appears somewhat too angelic, yet there is no question that Einstein is a man of the loftiest personal character, and that his outlook upon life generally is that of a noble humanitarian.

Einstein was born of Jewish parentage in Catholic Bavaria, in 1879. His father was a Freethinker, and the traditional customs of the orthodox Hebrew household were disregarded. The child was distinctly

<sup>1</sup> *Albert Einstein*, Thornton Butterworth, 1931.

imaginative and mystical, and one of his earliest interests was awakened by the sight of the strange movement of the needle of a compass shown him by his father. Again, the convinced pacifist of later years was foreshadowed in the boy's repugnance to the noise and glitter of military displays; in the terror inspired by the prospect of one day serving as a soldier in a land of conscripts; and young Albert's alarm was not dispelled until his parents assured him that a soldier's life should never be his.

The boy entered the primary school under Catholic supervision at the age of six. Despite his detested race the teacher was attracted to his pupil. "But," states Reiser, "one day the same teacher brought a large nail to class and told the children that it was the nail with which the Jews had nailed Jesus to the cross. The incident stimulated in the pupils anti-Semitic feeling which was turned against their Jewish fellow student Einstein. For the first time Albert experienced the frightful venom of anti-Semitism."

Music made a powerful appeal to the boy's emotions, and his delight in Bach, Beethoven and other giant composers has been retained through life. The mature Einstein revels in improvisations and is a fine performer on the violin. Music and mathematics combine to minister to his mental and emotional life. As a young man he studied and accepted the teachings of Büchner's *Force and Matter*, but in later years he has apparently abandoned materialistic monism in favour of a vague and indefinite Pantheism.

When his father's business failed in Germany the Einsteins migrated to Milan. The youth's Italian experiences were very agreeable, and his love of things beautiful was intensified. But it was in Switzerland that young Albert really started on his life's labours, and later, in 1914, when his name had become familiar to the world at large, he was offered and accepted a professor's chair in Berlin University, a position he still holds.

The following paragraph from Reiser's work may be appended for the benefit of those who erroneously allege that the older physical concepts of the Universe have been thrown on the scientific scrap-heap. "The word 'relativity' gave rise, and still does," states Reiser, "to the misunderstanding as to whether a pure subjectivism is to prevail, instead of the traditional greatness of physical-mathematical measurements. That, of course, is quite out of the question. The theory of relativity in no way starts with the destruction of old, fundamental principles, but rather corrects prejudices and habits of thought which have occasioned unnecessary difficulties. The new ideas do not signify destruction, but revision, extension and simplification. Laws of Nature are not overthrown. On the contrary, their validity is assured and extended."

When, in the late summer of 1914, the bands were playing and the flags flying, and all political and religious differences had disappeared in Berlin amid a frantic enthusiasm for the impending conflict, Einstein stood apart. To him the War was not only a blunder but a crime. He turned his back on the popular insanity, became immersed in his research work, and the war years proved one of the most productive periods of his life.

Einstein appreciates his kinship with the Jewish race, but his ideal is that of the good European. He entertains advanced social views, and is fully conscious of the vast indebtedness of most living races and creeds to modern Western culture. Much of his time is devoted to the amelioration of political and economic injustice. Still, his earnest pacifism is perhaps his leading ethical characteristic. This explains his support of, and justly critical attitude towards the League of Nations. He

is appalled at the thought that the discoveries and inventions of science should have been employed in the past, with every prospect of far greater employment in the future in a pitiless destruction of life and property. As Einstein's biographer tells us, his subject "realizes a contradiction and a betrayal of the spirit when the achievements of science and technique are used to destroy human beings, nations, and their products."

Ever since the dim and distant days of ancient India and prehistoric Greece, poets and sages have deplored the unmitigated curse of military aggression. Reiser recalls a more recent instance when he cites the humane and sceptical philosopher, David Hume, as a keen satirist of warfare. "When," writes Hume, "I observe two nations engaged in war, I seem to see two drunkards fighting with cudgels in a china shop. Not only will it take them a long time to heal the scars they inflict on each other, but they will have to pay for all the damage which they cause." How bitterly every really thoughtful man must realize the truth of this to-day!

After the Armistice, when the sadly disillusioned people were experiencing the woes of revolution in Germany, Einstein stood in danger of his life. Every political party and religious sect viewed with suspicion a man who remained independent and apart from all the jangling factions. He was denounced as a Bolshevist who was only too anxious to destroy all reigning institutions—scientific, theological and social. Then he was accused by the anti-Semites of a sinister desire to secure the dictatorship of the hated Jews.

But a calmer season came at last, for despite the national and racial animosities inflamed by the War, Einstein, previously reviled abroad as a horrible Hun, was enabled to visit France and England, and in each country was accorded a respectful reception. Subsequently he journeyed to North and South America, and in addition spread the gospel of the internationalization of science to far Eastern Japan.

When he paid another visit to Paris, in 1929, Einstein's German origin was ignored. This was a distinct improvement, for, at his first appearance in France, in 1921, Einstein's Teutonic descent was minimized in the Paris press by the statement that he was a Swiss citizen, and this statement, by the way, was, and remains, perfectly true. But in 1929 a doctor's degree was conferred upon him with the most solemn ceremony by the Sorbonne, in Paris. At least, in intellectual circles, a marked reconciliation had taken place, and no one, least of all Einstein, attempted to disguise the truth that the man whom humanist France delighted to honour was a German. Thus while national and religious dissensions divide and embitter, the all-embracing light of science leads the way to the healing of the nations.

T. F. PALMER.

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We acknowledge that we should not talk of our wives; but we seem not to know that we should talk still less of ourselves.—*La Rochefoucauld*.

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You cannot, by all the lecturing in the world, enable a man to make a shoe.—*Dr. Johnson*.

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Use, do not abuse; neither abstinence nor excess ever renders man happy.—*Voltaire*.

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Talkers are no good doers.—*Shakespeare*.

## Criticism and the Bible.

MORE than half a century ago, Ludwig Feuerbach gave to the world his famous work, *The Essence of Christianity*. No one who reads this work, even today, can fail to experience, as did a few acute minds among his contemporaries, a sense of deliverance from the Babel of religious conceptions and contradictions. He made his assault on the Christian theology, from the standpoint of philosophy. He had been a Hegelian; but later he became one of the left-wing critics of Hegel's philosophy, which he characterized as the last refuge of theology. For Feuerbach, not the "absolute idea," but *time* was the real dialectic, and man the active and primary element in religion. Not God made man, but man made God. All the holy sacraments of the church were theoretically analysed with great acumen by Feuerbach, and shown to originate in man's own qualities and needs. He reduced theology to anthropology and dissolved the holy family in the earthly family.

Nevertheless, Feuerbach's theoretical analysis of Christianity, searching as it was, remained still too far up the heights of philosophical abstraction. He failed to follow up his logical dissection of the anatomy of the Christian theology, with a historical and concrete analysis of the history of the Christian religion and of the religion out of which it evolved—the religion of the Hebrews. To that extent he remained a philosopher, an idealist philosopher, in spite of his declaration—"My philosophy is no philosophy." In his lack of a historical sense of Christianity he indeed fell behind Hegel, whose *Philosophy of Religion* displays quite a keen interest in the "becoming" of the "idea" of God. Apart from one or two incidental allusions, *The Essence of Christianity* does not touch historical ground. It treats of Christianity too abstractly, and its god-making man is a man in general. Feuerbach's anthropology is purely mechanical instead of being sociological.

Yet his merit remains, the merit of having been the first to cut the cord and bring down religion to its earthly foundations. His contemporaries on the Hegelian "Left," appreciated the liberating effect of his analysis and passed on from philosophy to politics, and from politics to economics.

The critique of theology by Feuerbach and his successors, undoubtedly gave a spur to the critique of the Christian religion by the theologians themselves, or, at least, by the more advanced and liberal-minded among them. However, it must be said that none of them were so liberal-minded as to cease being theologically-minded. Furthermore, the progress of events in the nineteenth century, brought with it other developments which reinforced the demands made upon the Christian theology for some sort of rational strengthening of its foundations. Natural science was making great headway, and its implications made the old theology look very senile. The general advance, too, in the standard of culture weakened "the eye of faith"; and the world was not so small as it used to be, or so exclusively Christian. Other peoples had been found living on different parts of the earth's surface, on lower cultural levels than those of Europe, and who had never heard of Christianity—but they had their gods and religious practices. Missionaries of the Christian Churches were even being sent out among those heathen peoples. Unfortunately most of them were too much concerned with imposing their own god on those "backward" tribes of men, to be capable of understanding very much about the gods they sought to depose. There were, however, other

travellers and investigators with a more scientific training and a keener appreciation of objectivity, who had begun to lay the foundations of ethnological science. Already comparisons were being drawn between the beliefs of the "heathen" and those of the Christians, which were not very encouraging to the "faith once delivered to the saints." Finally there had been growing up, if slowly, since the time of the French Revolution, a popular literature and popular platform which, under the banners of Free Thought and Rationalism, played sad havoc with the "infallible Word of God," by exposing its contradictions and satirizing its characters.

For a long time, the theologians, great and small, fought back in the good old way with the terrors of infidel death-beds and threats of eternal torment hereafter, and some doubtless sighed for the dear old and more matter-of-fact weapons with which they were wont to silence sceptics and blasphemers. It became more and more evident, however, that the advancing tide of modern enlightenment, was not to be swept back by this old-fashioned broom. In the Protestant circles there began the work of renovating and redecorating the Christian religion, removing some of its out-of-date fittings to the back-yard, and giving to the whole structure the appearance of resting on rationally re-tested foundations. The initiative in this work was taken by a number of theologians in the form of a criticism of the Bible, notably of the Old Testament, which came to be popularly known and spoken of as the "Higher Criticism." The greater part of this work of criticism originated in the more advanced Protestant circles of German theology. Wellhausen, Dillman, Kuenen, Graf, Budde, Stade, Smend, are among the best known of those "higher critics."

But the real character of Hebrew religion will never be understood until one discards the old theological notion that the pre-Christian religion of the Judaist Yahve-worshippers, is an exclusive religion specially revealed by God, and studies the Hebrew religion as one religion among hundreds of others, as a product of social evolution which has developed according to the same laws of evolution as other religions, and therefore to be judged according to those same laws. This, the "higher criticism" has never done. It has exhausted its task in trying to establish the actual form of the Old Hebrew religion, solely by means of a textual and etymological criticism of the literary materials which the Old Testament offers. No doubt this kind of criticism has its value. Nevertheless, it does not carry the value with which the "higher critics" have credited to it. It can, at the most, only furnish the proof that here and there stand contradictions, that different sorts of reports have been amalgamated, that additions, eliminations and permutations have been made, etc., but it cannot explain the whole psychological superstructure of the Hebrew tribes in relation to the conditions of social life in which this superstructure is historically rooted.

This knowledge can only be gained when one seeks to investigate the Hebrew religion in its origin, studies it as a mere step in the evolution of religion in general, traces out its earlier phases among other peoples, and makes use of the Biblical narratives as raw material which has value only in as far as it psychologically agrees with the results of the general investigation of religion.

W. CRAIK.

In gratitude is always a sign of weakness. I have never seen that clever men have been ungrateful.

Goethe,

## Scarecrows for Dissenters.

### I.—ROMAN CATHOLICISM.

THE Protestant Dissenting Deputies date back to 1732 when they first met to secure the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. They survive unto this day as an assembly of ministers of the three chief Nonconformist Churches, Congregational, Presbyterian, and Baptist, and, like many venerable institutions, appear to consider themselves justified in concerning themselves with objects not only different from, but hostile to, those for which they were founded. They were founded to secure the removal of disabilities imposed by the law on Nonconformists. They survive, it would seem, to prevent, if they can, the logical completion of the work by which they profited so long as it did not go too far, but which, if it should progress until it reaches the rational and proper end of the secularization of the State, will evidently find in them its most stubborn and resolute opponents.

To this body Mr. Bernard Manning, Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, recently delivered an address. It has been reprinted in two issues of the *Christian World*, which describes it as "timely and brilliant." Mr. Manning's theme was thus entitled: *Dangers and Opportunities: the Free Churches, the State, and the Established Church*. With an odd candour, Mr. Manning himself surmises that he may be regarded as "a fatuous example of insular pharisaism, and snug, evangelical self-satisfaction." A guilty conscience needs no accusing.

What really alarms Mr. Manning is "the continental movements against reformed religion." What are they? Russia, Spain, Italy; the fact that, according to him, "we now have in England a definitely anti-religious party" (*i.e.*, the Communists); and the danger that "the whole trend of the modern state and its control over opinion will make it easy for a majority (*i.e.*, unchristian) once in the saddle to perpetuate itself." These are the dangers. As to those advantages that dissenters at present enjoy in this Christian country, "such protection as the law affords to Sunday observance, to Christian ideals of marriage and morals, to religion as a part of education," they are "not eternal or even durable." Mass opinion, increasingly organized and controlled, means "that the days when public opinion was left malleable under the hap-hazard influence of free institutions are probably numbered." So, it is the "peculiar responsibility" of the Protestant Dissenting Deputies "to keep their eye on any forces which will mould (public opinion) in a shape harmful to evangelical religion."

We are anxious to state Mr. Manning's case in his own words. We pause here, therefore, to say that, after having developed the position outlined above, he stops to deal with what he thinks the danger to religion from the religious angle. That danger is Roman Catholicism. We therefore will deal with what he says about that now, and still, following him (in a further article) with what he says about the Established Church, and with the fundamental considerations relating to his whole argument which carefully avoids mentioning Freethought, as if it were only an indirect consequence of Romanism and Communism, instead of being the only constructive philosophy of life which has challenged and still challenges, with increasing influence and consequence, the whole fabric of Christianity, Catholic and "Evangelical."

First, as to the Roman Catholicism. Mr. Manning "would not mind if the Roman Church could make us all into good Catholics." What he is afraid of is that "they can do here what they have done everywhere else, make half the people Roman Catholic and the other half anti-Christian." The people on the continent "have no choice between clerical religion and anti-clerical materialism. Rome and Communism work hand in hand to sink us to the level of continental nations in this respect." Now, if the last statement were true, it would not help Mr. Manning much because, whatever the strength of Communism is in this country, its warmest friend could not pretend that it is more than a microscopic element in public opinion. To believe, with Gambetta that "le

clericalisme—voilà l'ennemi" is no more to be a Communist than to be a Roman Catholic. Leaving out its wealth and material power, who can doubt that the real strength of Roman Catholicism to-day, whatever it may have been in the past, is that it is the only organized Christian body in the world that unreservedly opposes modern thought and unreservedly accepts the implications both of supernatural belief and historic Christianity. Between it, and Reason, there is, as Newman thought, no alternative. If the survival of Christianity depends on that part of it which for a century has receded step by step, and abandoned one after another all the fundamentals of the Christian creed, its future is as doubtful as we could hope to see it. But it is not so. Clericalism, Protestant, not less than Catholic, as evidenced, for example, by what Mr. Manning calls "such protection as the law gives to Christian ideals," as evidenced by the superstition of rural Wales and the reactionary exploitation of a great industrial community by religious bogeys in Ulster, as well as by its hostility to the full grant to others of the liberty it demands for itself, is as much the enemy of mankind, and in the English speaking countries more the enemy, than that ancient Church which, as Clemenceau said, "instead of founding a brotherhood of love has founded a society of cruelty and blood." Its crimes and its creed hold sway precariously in the least cultured and advanced communities of men; but, in advanced countries, and where people are moderately literate and free, it is only dangerous, not to such populations, but to its own religious foes who have tried to separate freedom of opinion from freedom of thought, and whose hold on those whose main concern is to retain faith in an increasingly sceptical world will decline as it is declining. English Dissent fears Freethought, and only fears Roman Catholicism because it realizes that all that nonconformity holds in common with Rome, and not that in which it differs from it, is in peril, and in peril so great, that, if it should lose the prestige and privilege of legal protection, social status, and political blackmail, it would go the way it has gone wherever in our time there has been a straight fight between Christianity and a community which has realized its record and its menace.

ALAN HANDSACRE.

(To be concluded.)

## Acid Drops.

The St. Alban's magistrates heard a case the other day, in which a dozen persons were summoned under an Act of 1635, which inflicts penalties on any person leaving his own parish to attend sports or games. The summonses were issued with a view to stopping dog racing that has been going on on Thursdays and Sundays, to which some people in the neighbourhood object. Under this statute the fine for a labourer is 1s.: a gentleman 3s. 4d. and a man above that station 5s. If it is no longer thought proper to put into force the law which compels people to attend their parish church on Sunday—and an attempted prosecution at Manchester recently failed—it is always possible for some personal or organized interest, if it can dig up an old Act that will afford shelter for privilege or justification for interference, to do so. It is high time that all this antiquarian legislation should be scrapped, and the scrapping of it would be a contribution to our national well-being at least as useful as the new tax on imported greengrocery.

Our independent contemporary, the *New Age*, has an excellent broadside for the pitiful hulk of Christianity at a time when its representatives are no longer able to hunt with the hounds of finance and at the same time console the frightened hares of democracy. Brutal truths must be spoken as society more and more threatens to become like cinema pictures on a screen. "If the object of the economic system is to make," it states, "not this world, but the next, safe for Democracy, the existing financial system is beautifully adjusted to the concept—

as is testified by Major Douglas's graph of suicides who have hurried off there to queue up at the early doors." There is, we feel, no pleasure in having to record the obvious in such terms, but the kept press and tame religious leaders of thought, make no alternative possible for those who stand nearest to the true interests of the human race.

The pious *Daily Express*, whose leading articles are abbreviated to prevent headaches of its readers, in good journalese, waxes as furious as a seidlitz powder about the decision made by the deacons of a Calvinist Methodist Church in Carnarvonshire. These deacons have denied membership to the wife of a local publican, and with fine frenzy, the *Daily Express* draws its wooden sword and strikes a mighty blow to ensure that its nonsense shall suit the nonsense of readers. We wonder if the sound of the blow has travelled over those famous Welsh Hills, and if the supply of common sense in Carnarvon is so infinitesimal.

Mr. Herbert Morrison, late Transport Minister in the Labour Government, states that the Labour Party has passed the stage where Socialism was supposed to imply Atheism and Free Love. As the Labour Party is only capable of speaking, and badly at that, for only a Party, we do not suppose that it will ever take any risks in losing a religious vote by an open or covert declaration of Atheism. It would involve too much thinking to qualify for the mental outlook, too much integrity for a politician, and too much sacrifice of the worthless haubles that are thrown at Labour leaders and accepted. We wonder how many standard works on Atheism Mr. Morrison has read and understood. Free Love—of course, yes, he only put that in to make the proposition more difficult—like the twiddly bit in the riddle.

Our pious contemporary, the *Universe*, seems very sick that during 1931 the "two greatest blows at the Church came not from anti-Christian but from Catholic countries." These were the conflict between the Fascist Government and the Holy See and the events in Spain, which divested it, "officially, at least, of its glorious Catholicism." We agree that no blows are so unkind as those coming from our friends, but surely the Holy Church, powerfully backed by Almighty God, should easily have held its own against mere Fascism or degenerate Spain? What was the All-Highest doing this year?

Preachers and scholars in America are discussing the Chicago Bible, and we have no doubt that something in keeping with the biggest showman nation will emerge. The New Testament has been brought up to date by the substitution of "Colonel" for "Chief Captain of the Band," and "barracks" for "castle." The precise place where, "sez you," appears is not indicated, but the attempt at mending worn out shoes appears to be as original as putting bread on butter instead of the usual way, and as a contribution to world thought, just as useless.

How these Christians love one another. There is now some difference of opinion between Church newspapers over the question of allowing the Salvation Army in Canterbury Cathedral. From a report we see that the building,

should not have been handed over to a body "which practises trombone-playing more consistently than holy baptism."

One would have to go in the opposite direction to one's nose to follow the reasoning in this.

Mr. Justice McCardie's sane views on Birth Control and Abortion have, of course, aroused hostility and denunciation in pious circles. But these views have good authority behind them, and in an interesting little book entitled *Weeds in the Marriage Garden*, by George Pitt Rivers, with an introduction by Sir Arthur Keith (Noel Douglas), there is a most effective quotation from Lysurgus (taken from Plutarch's *Lives*). It reads as follows:—

Such as should become citizens should not be begotten

of every man, but of the most humblest men only . . . There were many foolish vaine toys and fansies, in the lawes and orders of other nations, touching marriage: seeing they caused their bitches and mares to be limed and covered with the fayrest dogs and goodliest stallions that might be gotten, yet although they were sickly, feeble-brayned, and extreme olde they kept their wives notwithstanding shut up safe under locke and key. As if it were not first of all and chiefly a discommoditie to the fathers and mothers, and likewise to those that bring them up, to have unperfect and feeble children borne, as it were begotten of drie and withered men: and then, to the contrarie, what pleasure and benefit is it to those that have fayer and good children borne, as gotten of like seede and men.

Mr. Pitt-Rivers, who is a distinguished anthropologist, deals with the problems of race and population with great knowledge, judgment and clarity in less than one hundred pages of this excellent book.

Here is a Christmas cracker from the *Christian World*. "We are all worried about money, about the instability of our material circumstances. The stable at Bethlehem is no unfitting place for quiet thought over what we stand to lose, and what we may preserve and even gain—in spite of all." Can it be that our contemporary thinks the gold brought there two thousand years ago by a Wise Man from the East is still in that stable?

For once we can agree with the *Church Times*. Referring to the Archbishop of Canterbury's sermon at the St. Paul's Cathedral Intercession Service for Disarmament, it says the sermon "was, of course, felicitous in phrase and admirable in sentiment, but it was an amiable political speech rather than a sermon." We noticed that His Grace did not include God in his sermon—just as Dean Inge omitted him from his broadcast speech on how he would rule the world—and that he emphasized only the human factors required to make peace—and war. The *Christian World* has a grouse against this service as being "exclusively Anglican" in character. No doubt some stray dissenter missed the oration to the Almighty which they call prayer. The League of Nations Union also butts in to say it was not responsible for the service—which was arranged by the Dean (Inge) and Chapter—but only "for the distribution of tickets and Press publicity." On the whole, this seems to have been some service!

Mr. Cosgrave, the President of the Irish Free State, asked Irishmen to "buy Irish" first and British second. He also hoped the British would return the compliment. On the same day that this genial pronouncement appeared it was recorded that the *Daily Sketch* has been forbidden circulation or sale in Ireland, the Minister of "Justice" alleging that it advocated "the unnatural prevention of conception." The order against the *Daily Sketch* will remain in force for three months; but we could wish that this interference with, and gross misrepresentation of, a newspaper might be the subject of more effective protest than mere contempt and, perhaps, surrender. It would not be the first time that Irish liberty had been fought for in this country.

The Report of the Conference between Anglicans and Eastern Orthodox Christians is just out, and the *Times* innocently observes that "it was anticipated in some quarters that the representatives would feel justified in submitting definite proposals for intercommunion between the Churches." It adds: "No step of that kind, however has been taken." Trying to get Christians to agree is like appointing a Royal Commission "to enquire and report." It means an appearance of negotiation and an absence of result. Thus, to quote the *Times* again, "the Commission has kept strictly within its terms of reference," but "it will be found that the proportion of agreement reached is encouraging." The Œcumenical Patriarch and the Archbishop of Canterbury are understood to have shaken hands!

What a delightful thing is Catholic censorship! Here is Cardinal Hayes of New York recommending—which, of course, means permitting only—a number of English

writers to be read by the faithful. Mr. Belloc, whose distortions of history are a speciality of his own, heads the list, and among the others are Miss Sheila Kaye Smith, Mr. D. B. Wyndham Lewis, Mr. Christopher Dawson, and Fathers Benedict Williamson and Stephen Brown. How tolerant in its Catholicity is the Holy Church—permitting only those writers to be read who so thoroughly agree with it!

The Sunday Press is as quick to grab any possible stunt as it is, nine times out of ten, ignorant of the necessary data. Thus last Sunday the *People* had a poster announcing a surprising development at the notorious Agapemone at Spaxton. The "news" turned out to be an announcement that this sect was attracting young rich girls as it has been ever since it was founded, not, as the *People* says, by John Hugh Smyth Piggott, but by Henry John Prince as long ago as 1842 after the "revival" at Charlinch at that time.

Prince started off with a couple of maiden ladies with means, and the Courts ultimately came to the rescue of their executors, and Brother Prince had to stump up. Piggott, and Sister Ruth—not to mention those happily named children "Glory" and "Power," belong to a later period. It is interesting to note that the present head of the sect—one Hamilton, an elderly Scotsman—is, if the *People* is right for once, like the Government concerned for economies. What these gentry are never concerned about is that when the *raison d'être* of the sect is destroyed—as in this case it was by the death of Prince—their mere existence in this position is an utter imposition. Doubtless, when Hamilton joins Prince and Piggott in "the happy land," there will be some other person ready with a combination of business acumen, erotic piety, and a way with the ladies, to "carry on." Another example of the same sort of thing is the continued existence of the Catholic Apostolic Church founded by the famous Edward Irving. It was at the outset believed that when the last of the twelve new Apostles then appointed died the end of the world would come. But they all pegged out years ago, and the denomination still goes on, doubtless with another dozen apostles. It is true, as a somewhat vulgar saying has it, that "one is born every minute"—or if you prefer not to be vulgar, Carlyle was right about his 20,000,000 people mostly fools—and there will never be a lack of pious charlatans to batten on the credulity of men and women.

The "standards" of the B.B.C., says the *Manchester Guardian*, "must be intellectual and not political or conventional. Communism must be as sure as Mr. Amery's faith in the British Empire, and no book or play must be debarred from mention merely because it is controversial. Otherwise the B.B.C. will take its place with other publicity organizations—useful for propaganda purposes in a national crisis, easily used to inflame national passions and fears, providing a certain amount of useful entertainment, but of no intellectual significance whatever." If the new and stricter censorship comes about—and we have no doubt it will—we agree with our contemporary that "men of letters will be available for the work because a fee is offered, but their talks will have as little vitality and interest as a tutorial lecture droned to listless students in some academic wildness."

A worthy cleric says he has never killed anything but a wasp and then only in self-defence. Still, even that was hardly Christ-like; he should have "turned the other cheek" to the wasp. It is by such truly Christian conduct that one becomes sure of a seat in heaven.

A pious editor solemnly affirms that "There is no security possible for the world until all men love one another." Love means warm affection, attachment or fondness for another. We are not told how the millions of people in the world are to acquire such love. As the majority must perforce always be strangers one to another, we fail to see how there can be any chance of

"love" entering into the relations between such people. If nineteen centuries of talk about "love another" has failed to bring security to the nations of the world, we are not sanguine that a continuation of such sloppy talk will improve matters to-day.

A Methodist writer has been observing the average Englishman:—

#### THE PATHETIC ENGLISHMAN.

Of all the pathetic things in God's world at this moment, there is none more so than the average Englishman, churchless, Christless, silent, disorganized, leaderless, organized for a hundred things, but not for spiritual ends and purposes—a prodigal of his own peculiar kind, away from home, lacking food for his soul, separate from Christian teaching, ignorant of his Scriptures, trying to fill his immortal soul with the pleasures of the drinking club, the cinema, the racecourse, the "flutter," the athletic spectacle, the Sunday excursion, his dog, his motor, or motor-cycle; his wife and bairns with no family altar; and then his pathetic comings to church for baptisms and marriages and burials.

It is this average Englishman who the *Daily Express* would have us believe is rushing back to the churches! It seems highly improbable.

The Rev. Ernest Braham knows how to stop war. It is "by making a real effort to understand that all men are equal in God's sight and all are his children." But that has been believed in and affirmed by Christians for many centuries, yet that belief has never yet stopped a war, nor ended one. And it never will stop one. The prevention of war is not by way of pulpit clap-trap.

Mr. Braham has another wise suggestion for achieving peace on earth. "The homes of the peoples must be evangelized, and Christian marriages must be declared to be indissoluble." Forcing badly-mated couples to remain in marriage bondage is not a very sane way or bringing peace on earth. It, however, is a fair specimen of Christian thinking. But perhaps it may serve as a warning to those who rather vaguely believe that the Christian religion has something useful to contribute to social betterment.

#### Fifty Years Ago.

THERE is no nation like the English for humbug and hypocrisy. I suppose I may add also, there is no nation likes the English for humbug and hypocrisy. In nothing does the national vice come out more sadly than in the prayers of the nation. Is there really any honest, thinking man or woman who believes that the prayer for Parliament offered in the churches every Sunday during the Session—as if M.P.'s didn't need praying for during the recess—has the faintest influence on the legislature or the legislators? Is there any honest, thinking Englishman who does not regard with a feeling of contempt for the man and shame for his country the black-robed, white-chokered anachronism that they call the chaplain of the House of Commons, as he paces demurely behind the Speaker through the lobby of the House on his way to prayers? No other nation, I believe, is so daringly hypocritical as ours. None other commences proceedings of a purely worldly nature, having only to do with the things of this earth, with mock devotions addressed to a mock deity. Certain boards of directors, whom the shareholders probably find rather uncertain, I am told pray bodily before their business meetings commence. If only the people who pray are once made to understand that the great body of their fellow-countrymen regard their proceedings in this matter with feelings of unmitigated contempt, if only they can be induced to understand that the consciousness that the whole thing is humbug so rife in their own minds has extended itself to those of the onlookers, they may cause the hypocrisy to cease, as a non-paying transaction.

The "Freethinker," January 1, 1882.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—M.R., 5s.

W. MCKEE.—We believe the papers have been returned to Vienna, but will make enquiries.

S.L.—We cannot continue a correspondence as to whether we were justified in not publishing your article. The Editor must be the final authority on that point. His judgment may be wrong, possibly it often is wrong, but he must be guided by it.

J. HAYES.—Thanks for record of your experience. It is not unusual, and yet were it not for their religion the priests you met on shipboard might have behaved quite decently. It is a case of "Learn thou, then, to what damned deeds religions urges men." Religion never makes a man better than he would have been without it, and very often makes him worse.

M. J. WADMAN (Durban).—Pleased to see your excellent letters in the *Natal Mercury*. Will do good.

A. R. POWELL (Johannesburg).—Thanks for greetings and good wishes from yourself and wife. We value them highly. We would like more "helpers," but we must do what we can with what we have.

E. MELTON.—You have misunderstood. There is to be no conference on disarmament. It is an international conference to consider whether armaments cannot be built up on a cheaper scale. It is economy, not civilization that is the aim of the Conference. As though it matters whether nations try to settle their disputes in terms of big armies or small ones. We say "try" because the fools have not yet realized that no dispute is to be settled nowadays by war. That is not to be wondered at since it has taken some of the fools twelve years to realize that in terms of modern life "reparations" are a sheer delusion. All the fools have not realized it yet.

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

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Sugar Plums.

The Editor desires to thank the many friends who have been thoughtful enough to send him the season's greetings. The letters have been too numerous for him to forward individual replies.

In connexion with the Annual Dinner of the N.S.S., at the Midland Grand Hotel, St. Pancras, London, on

January 16, will those requiring hotel accommodation please notify the General Secretary at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, as to their requirements. January 16 being a Saturday should make it convenient for provincial friends to attend in force.

We are pleased to say that the application for tickets are coming in much earlier than usual, which points to a good gathering, in spite of the depressed times. But we hope that those who have not yet written for tickets will do so without delay. Early application means more effective, and more comfortable arrangements. A couple of years ago we were rather over-crowded owing to the number who delayed writing until the very last moment.

The Secular Society, Limited has just issued a reprint of Colonel Ingersoll's *Rome or Reason?* with an introductory preface by H. Cutner. The Reply was originally issued as an answer to Cardinal Manning, and we have no hesitation in saying that it is one of the most devastating replies to what we may call the statement of the Roman Catholic position ever issued. Manning was a great controversialist, but in Ingersoll he met more than his match. Ingersoll follows the Cardinal step by step, examines his case point by point, and leaves the great Catholic advocate completely discredited. *Rome or Reason?* runs to about sixty-four pages, and is published at the low price of 3d., by post fourpence. The Roman Church is a growing menace in this country, and we suggest that Freethinkers should send for several copies, and see that they are distributed in likely quarters.

We are asked to announce that the Conway Discussion Circle will resume its Tuesday evening meetings at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, on January 5, with an address by the Rev. J. H. Weatherall, on "Unitarianism as I Know It." The meetings commence at 7.0.

There has been a little delay in issuing the print of G. W. Foote's celebrated speech before Lord Coleridge, but we hope to get it out about the middle of January. Several other things turned up that had to be done at once. Hence the delay. The trial of G. W. Foote was the last important trial for blasphemy, and in several respects was the most important trial for blasphemy in an English Court of Justice. The speech of G. W. Foote, too, was by far the finest ever delivered at a blasphemy trial. Lord Coleridge made no secret of the extent to which both the matter and the form of the address impressed him. The speech was more than a mere defence, it forms one of the best pleas for freedom of thought made in modern England. When issued the booklet should have a very large sale.

FAITH.

Friar : 'Tis strange you should want faith.

Pierre : You want to lead

My reason blindfold, like a hampered lion

Checked of its nobler vigour; then, when baited

Down to obedient tameness, make it couch

And show strange tricks, which you call signs of faith.

So silly Souls are gulled and you get money,

Away! no more Captain, I'd have hereafter

This fellow write no lies of my Conversion

Because he has crept upon my troubled hours.

Otway, " Venice Preserved."

## Jesus, the Preacher and Prophet

THE Jesus of the Gospels, assuming that he ever lived, was a strange personality—a combination of a kind of Oriental Sage, religious enthusiast and fanatic; and his alleged teachings are consequently made up of a large number of contradictory declarations, some good, from an ethical point of view, others harmful, and others again positively pernicious. Although Jesus is alleged to have followed his father's trade—that of a carpenter—the Gospels give no evidence that he ever became an efficient workman in that capacity; and indeed they give us little else than the story of Jesus as a wandering evangelist, who went about performing so-called miracles, delivering sermons and prophesying terrible consequences to those who declined to accept him or his teachings at his own valuation. Take for example his so-called "Sermon on the Mount," as given in Matthew v. "And seeing the multitudes he went up into a mountain, and when he was set, his disciples came unto him, and he opened his mouth and taught them saying: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'" (Matt. v. 3.) Now that seems bad as a beginning for the "poor in spirit" are the oppressed in every country in the world. And as the famous Charles Bradlaugh said, over sixty years ago, in his fine pamphlet, *What Did Jesus Teach?* "Is poverty of spirit," the chief amongst virtues that Jesus gives it the prime place in his teaching? Is poverty of spirit a virtue at all? Surely not. Manliness of spirit, honesty of spirit, fullness of rightful purpose, these are virtues, but poverty of spirit is a crime!" And this sentiment will be endorsed by all rational persons who have a large experience of the ways of men in all the civilized and uncivilized countries of the world.

But if we turn to Luke we find Jesus going one stage further and declaring: "Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the Kingdom of Heaven." (Luke vi. 20.) Now poverty is one of the greatest curses that human beings can be afflicted with; and one has only to go into the homes of the poor to realize what it means. No doubt it was not so bad in Palestine and other parts of the so-called "Holy land" nearly two thousand years ago, but in modern times poverty in all the great towns and cities, means distress and misery of the worst kind. And then Jesus says, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew v. 5). And if the latter part of this was meant as a prophesy, it has been falsified in every age in all parts of the world, down to the present day.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." (Matt. v. 6.)

Well, that is decidedly better, but it would have been better still if Jesus had explained in what direction this thirst for righteousness should have been used—for secular or religious purposes?

The four following declarations would assuredly win the approval of every earnest Freethinker with slight modifications, viz: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy"; "Blessed are the pure in heart"; Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God"; and especially this: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you (as most Freethinkers have been in the past and still are) and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." (Matt. v. 7 to 11.) Or anybody else's sake we might add. And then turn to Luke again and see to what extremes Jesus would lead his followers. "Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled." When? in the good by and bye? "Woe unto

you that are full for ye shall hunger"; "Woe unto you that laugh now for ye shall mourn and weep." That is not a pleasant prospect. "But I say unto you, love your enemies, do good to them which hate you. Bless them that curse you and pray for them that despitefully use you; and unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other, and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid him not to take thy coat also." (Luke vi. 21 to 29.) Fortunately the majority of Christians have never attempted to put these precepts into practice, otherwise they would have been the most despised and oppressed race in the world. And here are a few more teachings of Jesus from his various sermons, which shows Jesus in an altogether different mood. "If any man come unto me and hate not his father, and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also he cannot be my disciple." (Luke xiv. 26.) Jesus could not hope, or deserve to get many disciples, following this declaration: "Think not that I have come to send peace on earth. I come not to send peace, but a sword. For I come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—and a man's foes they shall be of his own household. (Matt. x. 34 and 35.) And now let us turn to some of the sayings of Jesus when he was in a prophetic mood. He speaks not very cheerfully when he tells his hearers: "That many are called but few chosen." He gives a very poor reason for this. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark xvi. 15-18.) Jesus evidently thought that man could believe exactly what he liked, but he cannot. He has to believe whatever is forced upon his mind by the weight of evidence, that is, if he is a rational being. Others believe what they are told by their spiritual pastors and masters, without regard to the question of their truth—these are the credulous and thoughtless. And it must never be forgotten that it was Jesus who taught the horrible doctrine of Hell open for the reception of all unbelievers and Heaven only to be gained by implicit belief in him. There was little chance for a rich man to get to heaven, however good or generous and kind he might be to his fellows, for Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God." (Mark x. 20.) And further he said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark xvi. 15 and 16.) But I am glad that he said something more, for he went on to declare that "These signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover." (Luke xvi. 17 and 18.) But we have never known a sincere Christian who was prepared to demonstrate his faith in the words of Jesus by drinking a dose of arsenic or prussic acid—Never! Jesus frankly admitted that "my Kingdom is not of this world. I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." (John xvii. 9.) Upon another occasion he exclaimed: "He that denieth me before men shall be denied before the Angels of God. Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire."

On another occasion he prophesied what was going to happen "Immediately after the tribulation, shall the sun be darkened and the moon shall not give her light and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven

... and still other wonders," and then he declares, "Verily I say unto you this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." (Matt. xxiv. 29, 30 and 34.) But as our late Editor—G. W. Foote—used to say, "this prophecy has not been fulfilled up to the time of our going to press."

At this time of the year, Christmas time, we shall be hearing from various sources; from the clergy, from priests and parsons, of various sorts, and the Daily Press, that Jesus was the "most perfect being that ever trod the earth," and that his teachings and his example are worthy of being followed by every rational creature to-day; but if the reader will only examine carefully the alleged teachings of Jesus as recorded above, he will see, at a glance, that they are full of contradictions and absurdities, and that most of them are not only impracticable, but in many cases positively harmful and opposed to the well being of the human race.

Young Freethinkers coming into our movement should ponder over these teachings and ever be ready to answer their Christian friends with chapter and verse from the Gospels. And then turn to the more rational teachings of Freethought—based upon the latest deductions from modern science, and the clear and rational teachings of Secularism which they will find not only more satisfying to their reason, but more likely to promote the well-being of humanity in all the civilized countries of the world.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

### Freethought: Its Objective and Method.

"All this is full of dangers, but without danger no great undertaking is possible."—Rudolf Eucken "Main Currents of Modern Thought," p. 135.

PERHAPS it is not necessary to remind the Freethinker who is acquainted with the history of our movement that a good deal of danger has attended the footsteps of Freethought, but the need of hard work and perpetual striving does seem at times to call for a gentle reminder. This is so when misunderstanding of the Freethought position and its requirement presents itself from time to time, and even through those who have joined our ranks.

All too frequently the misunderstanding takes the form of underestimating the work which we have to do, especially with regard to both quality and method. Many appear to be of the opinion that the position of the religionist has become so weakened that it is now easy to destroy it, and they consequently claim that much of the best Freethought intellectual energy should express itself in activity other than that of attacking Christianity.

Quite recently, I have heard the theory put forward that the lesser minds in Freethought are all that are required to do the work of criticizing and attacking the Bible and the various forms of Christianity, and other religions; while the greater and more competent minds should engage in the work of building-up a positive Freethought philosophy.

What, exactly, is meant by those who talk so much about "building-up" and "being positive" is not very clear, and it seems to be a fair inference that they have formed a strange conception of the work of Freethought if they think nothing in the nature of the positive and of building up has resulted from passed Freethought activities. Surely it should not be difficult for the Freethinker to realize that all the results of modern science and all the most substantial theories in modern philosophy are the result of the activity of Freethought principles. Freethinking is

man's natural mental condition, in the sense of thinking free from the influence of external authority, and consequently throughout the ages there have been men and women who, even when professing the prevailing religious beliefs, have in other directions thought with some measure of freedom. They have often not been Freethinkers themselves, in the fullest sense of the word, and hence there evolved the specific Freethinker whose positive work was, and is, that of making a world in which science and thought in all spheres shall proceed in a natural manner, without being interfered with by institutions seeking to make human society stable and subject to self-satisfied authorities.

This has necessitated criticism and attack, especially of established religion, and in-so-far as the objective was that of improving the conditions of man the work has been, and is, as much positive and in the direction of building-up, as negative and breaking down.

The specific Freethinker is the body-guard of the principles of right thinking and his work is to defend and maintain those principles in human society against oppression and suppression. The means to the end may often be critical and negative, but the end is one of the greatest positive objects in life.

The suggestion that only the inferior thinkers of the Freethought movement are required to carry on the work of attacking and destroying Christianity does not matter very much as far as the greater minds of Freethought are concerned, because they will see to it that they do their share of critical work in its destructive as well as its constructive form. The danger of the suggestion lies in its implication that anyone will do for the work of the Freethought offensive, and that the work is easy. A discussion of three or four implied fallacies will help to clear the air. For this purpose we can leave the greater minds not only to take care of themselves, but also of our movement. They are not likely to under-estimate what is required of them in the way of providing a storehouse of critical knowledge and philosophy for the use of others, and in leading the attack upon religion in general, and Christianity in particular.

Confining ourselves to Christianity, it is quite true that our opponents case is easily dealt with in one sense; but in another it is not true. To the Freethinker who is well grounded in methods of careful thinking—and this involves a good deal of criticism—the case for Christianity is a very poor one, and he should have no difficulty in disposing of the main arguments put forward in its support. Here and there a "tricky" argument may call for a little extra careful handling; especially when the plausible type of evidence is met with, which requires one to get to the back of it, as it were, but the competent Freethinker should be able to put himself right very soon on this score. It is when he comes to deal with those who are not Freethinkers that he finds the weak case for Christianity presents itself in the armour of strength—to the other person. Then the well trained mind is required to deal with the case, so that the other person shall be brought to realize how poor the case for Christianity is. Especially if that case has been put forward with skill and the form of argument which requires us to get to the back of it has been very freely used. This is revealed to the careful student in public debates. How often has a poor case for Christianity been destroyed before the minds of those present, and yet the defender of the Christian case has been cheered each time he has sat down, while few Christians have gone out with a disturbed mind after hearing all that has been said against their religion. The difficulty which confronts the advocate of Freethought is not that of destroying Christianity to his

own satisfaction, but that of getting the other person to see that the destruction has taken place. A brief example of the kind of argument which one has to get behind may be taken from the first of the two debates on "The Divinity of Christianity," between Dr. Sexton and Charles Watts (Batley, Yorks, June 11, 1877).

Dr. Sexton said: "When Mr. Watts says that circumstances were favourable at the time to the growth of Christianity, I say that it is historically incorrect, for nothing could be more unfavourable than was the state of the Roman world when Christ came. The state of society was immoral in the extreme, and, therefore, terribly unfavourable to the success of a religion of purity and truth." p. 31. Now this kind of argument, with variations to suit the case might be put forward in connexion with almost any period of Christian history, and the Freethinker would have no difficulty in pointing out that if Christianity is divine it should have been able to clear immorality out of the world long ago. Yet this would have very little impression on most believers in the divinity of Christianity, because they would be able to make excuses about the wickedness of human nature and Christianity not having been tried. Fallacy would be supported by fallacy, and the work of the Freethinker would lie in the direction of getting the Christian to realize that the "success" of Christianity depends upon adaptation to conditions—emotional, intellectual, and social, and that talk about the success of Christianity *against* an immoral world simply begs the question. Christianity has been *successful* in periods of comparative immorality and of comparative morality, and will continue to be *successful* while it retains its Chameleon-like capacity for changing in order to adapt itself to circumstances. Had it remained true to its former self it would long ago have ceased to be of much account against the advance of science, philosophy, and general social development.

The fallacies involved in the above quotation from Dr. Sexton cannot all be dealt with now, but the plausibility of his argument and the realization of its possible effect upon Christians should enable those who think the work of destroying Christianity to be easy to see the futility of their case.

It is not suggested that every advocate of Freethought should of necessity be a very learned person and a reasoner of the greatest capacity, but it should be remembered that he should make every effort to carefully equip himself, and that he needs the help of the greater minds in the Freethought world if the work of destroying Christianity is to be carried on successfully. He should always remember that a poor case may be defended with skill. This brings us to the fallacy that Christians are not very well educated. The fallacy of most sweeping statements, in that there is no qualification owing to their being so sweeping. It is true that a large percentage of Christians are not highly educated, but they have men of high attainments in various spheres of thought and science to expound and defend Christianity; and it is their skill that has to be contended with. A man's religious beliefs are frequently no indication of his mental capacity, and if he uses the latter to expound and defend Christianity, whether honestly or dishonestly, the task before us is made less easy than it might have been. He supplies the plausible arguments not only for the illiterate, who do not understand them, but can repeat like parrots; but also for the men and women of fairly good education whose Christian upbringing makes it possible for them to accept and use, with some measure of skill, arguments they would reject in connexion with other subjects.

The fact that so many men who are intellectually

highly trained in many directions give their support to Christianity helps to account for its *success*, in the sense of maintaining sway over the minds of people throughout widespread areas of the earth. Looked at from other standpoints the *success* of Christianity reveals its failure; but into that we cannot go.

Another fallacy is the idea that criticism of the Bible and of Christianity is entirely destructive. This is due to the fact that so many people fail to understand that the object of critical enquiry is to get at a correct estimate of the facts of the subject under discussion and to draw sound conclusions therefrom. Obviously this involves a good deal of destructive work, but surely it should not be difficult for anyone who thinks out the matter carefully to realize that the result is not entirely negative, and that the process involves a good deal of constructive thinking.

As far as the work of Freethought is concerned the objective is that of, on the one hand, destroying religion and all forms of intellectual obstruction and, on the other hand, of constructing a world philosophy based upon psychology and a sociology that takes up into itself all the findings of modern science by which human life is affected. With a view to making life well worth living for all, in the fullest sense of the term, and as a fine scholar of Freethought has said, "when this life is well worth living for its own sake the next will hardly be worth speculating about, and certainly few will pay to be shown the way to it." (A. D. McLaren, *Freethinker*, p. 779, December 6, 1931).

The method of Freethought is essentially critical, in the sense of being ever on the lookout for the defective and as ever ready to build into its conception of the universe the soundest thought and science of its generation.

This means that Christian teaching must be destroyed; false views of the Bible must be destroyed, and those who hold the fallacy that all this can be done by the lesser minds of Freethought without the help of the greater thinkers, would do well to acquaint themselves with some of the literature that needs to be mastered by the well equipped advocate of "the best of causes."

F. EGERTON STAFFORD.

### Bigotry.

FREQUENTLY one reads in the *Freethinker* of savage attacks made on various outdoor speakers for the N.S.S. by bands of "brotherly" Christians. These reports by no means make pleasant reading, for there are times when the onslaughts are so brutal, so violent, so cowardly that one begins to wonder how man contrived to progress at all in the face of such acrimonious and unreasoning hostility. Indeed there is no action too mean, there is no action too despicable for some Christian crowds to descend to if only it will disconcert the speaker or prevent him delivering his address; especially is this to be noted when there happens to be but a handful of his supporters present. One is compelled to admit that even if these people are incapable of using their brains in other directions they certainly are proficient in the art of wrecking meetings.

Of course all acknowledgments are due to the priest and parson and the skilful manner in which the mind of the child is inoculated with religious poison. It is undoubtedly the injurious effect of this poison upon the mental outlook which brings about the state of affairs we are noticing; furthermore it is this poison, which if not counteracted, will in time produce the bigot. At this juncture it may clarify matters if it be stated that bigot is the term applied to the person who is exceedingly dogmatic about his opinions and displays vehement intolerance towards anybody who holds conflicting views or is presumptuous enough to propound theories which are not

in harmony with his own. Bigotry is the essential outcome of strict and assiduous religious instruction for the simple reason that the easily grasped explanations of the why and wherefore of all things which it offers dull the reasoning powers, reduce thinking to a minimum, and encourage egoism.

Rowdyism, the hurling of missiles both material and oral, and other measures employed by Christians to discomfort those who attempt to expose the flaws in their creed, and urge them to investigate facts for themselves with a view to finding a more logical solution to the problems with which we are confronted, are nothing more or less than an aspect of bigotry. They are the reactions of the unhealthy mind wherein faith is enthroned.

Bigotry was, however, a much more virulent force in primitive society, where the savage on account of his ignorance was afraid of anything which involved change or reform, or which in any way advocated a departure from the existing order. Inspired by the medicine-man, ever ranged on the side of conservatism, he regarded the rebels of the herd as enemies who were plotting to disrupt the system. Therefore he poured scorn and abuse on their propositions, and, if their plea became too insistent he administered drastic punishment.

Still bigotry did not really come into full blossom until the Middle Ages, or, to be more precise, until that period in the history of Europe when Christianity was at the height of its power. Then did bigotry bare its teeth with a vengeance. The Christians having experienced persecution "forgave their enemies" when they attained rulership by returning the compliment—with interest. Jews, Pagans, heretics, and even Christians, who professed doubts on minor points were hounded down, and cruelly maltreated. If after this they were not convinced that Christ was the deity incarnate, and that Christianity was the only infallible religion they were put to death. With the establishment of the Inquisition persecution reached depths hitherto unknown and undreamt of. The faintest hint of heresy from any quarter roused the Christians to a state of insane fury and down they swept to torture the responsible individuals and ultimately exterminate them. But that was not all; if the family or relations of the detested unbeliever could be traced they too were subjected to various forms of torture and sometimes were sentenced to lengthy terms of imprisonment, merely on the grounds of their connexion with him.

But why did Christians seek to root up and utterly destroy heresy? Why did they persecute all who rejected their doctrines and clung to other creeds? It was because they were arrogantly certain of the soundness of their beliefs, and consequently they would not tolerate the slightest divergence of opinion. For the purposes of quashing the rebels or at least stamping out their pernicious ideas they utilized the terrible weapon of persecution. Only bigotry could have dictated such a course.

As the centuries rolled by the Inquisition tottered, clawed wildly at the air, and crashed; the strength of Christianity gradually declined and heresy began to influence public opinion in many countries. This meant that persecution had to be considerably moderated. To have carried it to the same harsh extent as of yore would have spelt disaster. For awhile punishments were inflicted on defaulters in church attendance, but, as the drift away became steadier and the recusants began to assert themselves this had to be abandoned and more subtle means of suppressing the growth of scepticism were adopted. The foremost of these were ostracism, defamation of character, and the spreading of highly decorated lies revealing how the wicked unbeliever had been reduced to a cringing coward by a man of God, or had been compelled to abandon his meetings in certain towns because of prayers against them offered up by the pious.

That these implements of bigotry were very effective we are able to ascertain by reading such a book as the *Life and Record of Charles Bradlaugh*, written by his daughter, or the experiences of any of the pioneers of modern Freethought.

Nowadays, however, even they are worn and thin, and are not achieving results as pleasing as was once the case. Nowadays we find that the policy of the bigot is to ignore the unbeliever, to pretend that such a person does

not exist, while at the same time ready to spring upon the more illustrious of them when dead, and bury them with all religious pomp and ceremony. We also discover the bigot actively engaged in combating Sunday entertainment, in declaiming against what he describes as the laxity of modern morals, in ceaseless agitation for a rigid censorship of books and films, particularly those which contain an illusion to sexual matters.

Nevertheless bigotry is fighting in its last ditch; it is striving might and main to delay the inevitable end. Its hatred of fair-play, decency, and freedom of thought and speech have marked it down for destruction. By attacking it at every conceivable opportunity, by giving fearless expression to our honest convictions, by "shouting truth from the housetops" we shall hasten its progress towards annihilation.

TOM BLAKE.

### Prohibition and the Bible.

ONE question that—so the Dr. Wilsons and their ilk contend—has never been satisfactorily answered is why, in the name of everything sensible and uplifting, should anyone ever want to drink? They cannot possibly understand why so many apparently sane and reasonable people make such a fuss about something so utterly unnecessary and unimportant?

These cheery and liberal-minded souls never seem to be able to get through their nickel-plated skulls the idea that millions of men and women in this country cannot enthuse over Mr. Hoover's anti-alcohol attitude, the paternalistic intentions of the Federal laws and the Constitutional prohibition of something heretofore regarded as an entirely personal matter.

The strangest part of this fanatical aberration is that those most vehement for its enforcement gallop through the Bible on all four feet for texts substantiating their convictions. They seem to have entirely forgotten that they find, in this glorious old book, such passages as these:—

Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto him that is of heavy heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.

Also there are references to wine "which cheereth God and man," "wine that maketh glad the heart of man" and "go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works."

Nor must we forget that beautifully human and considerate incident during the marriage feast at Cana, when the host ran short of wine, and Christ, at his mother's request replenished their supply and made the party a complete success, by turning the water into wine.

What do you suppose a snooping, stooping, and altogether despicable enforcement officer would do to Jesus to-day, if he ever caught Him in the act of turning a big vase of water into delicious wine?

In the "Ode to Anacreon," old Abraham Crowley asks:—

"Should every creature drink but I?  
Why, man of morals, tell me why?"

Perhaps this may explain the ubiquitous speakeasy in this brain-bereft country. Everyone, who knows anything at all, knows that speakeasies continue in business and, in fact, are on the increase, because the great majority among the public want to drink.

If the public generally didn't demand liquor the hundreds of thousands of speakeasies—which supplanted the open saloon—would vanish overnight. And without a cent of expense on the part of our benevolent, though somewhat thick-headed and utterly ridiculous Government.

EDWARD ORLEANS.

(In the N.Y. "Daily Mirror.")

Honour is the moral conscience of the great.

Sir W. Davenant.

A drop of ink may make a million think.—Byron.

## Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."  
 FREETHOUGHT AND SOCIALISM.

SIR,—As I am the person alluded to in Mr. P. Victor Morris's letter, re the resignation from the Wembley and District Branch of the N.S.S., I would like to state that the points he comments on are not in accordance with the facts.

Had Mr. Morris accepted my offer to set forth my reasons in writing, perhaps he would not have been guilty of putting such a gross misconstruction on the remarks I made in the conversation I had with him, re the Socialist Party of Great Britain and the N.S.S.

I did *not* state that the political activities of certain speakers of the N.S.S. constituted "evidence" for the S.P.G.B., that the N.S.S. was an "anti-working-class organization." Nor did I imply it.

Contrary to his implication that I did not base my resignation on my own experience of the N.S.S., I *did*, and I am quite willing to enlighten him on that point if he is sufficiently interested.

That I subjected myself to dictation is on a par with his last suggestion, that I have found a suitable environment for mental stagnation—rubbish. I left that environment behind when I parted company with the Wembley Branch of the N.S.S., which was apparently satisfied with what Mr. Morris told them re my resignation during my absence. It never occurred to their sluggish minds to ask me to state my reasons personally, especially so, since I was the prime mover in the formation of the Branch—and so early a resignation was manifestly intriguing. Whatever fairy tale he told them they swallowed it without question.

As for the S.P.G.B.'s attitude to the N.S.S., I feel sure that body will accommodate Mr. Morris if he cares to ask them, but I want to take this opportunity to warn them, that he apparently finds great difficulty in understanding plain straightforward statements.

H. G. HOIT.

## Obituary.

MRS. ADA BUDGE.

ON Wednesday, December 23, the remains of Ada Budge were cremated at the Wilford Hill Crematorium, Nottingham. The cause of death was Cancer. An operation in January last was only temporarily successful. A complete breakdown followed early in December, and death took place on the 18th, at fifty-five years of age. In complete sympathy with the Freethought views of her husband she lived a purely secular life. Simplicity and dignity marked the final scene at the Crematorium. A Secular Service was read by Mr. R. H. Rosetti. By the request of the deceased there were no flowers. R.H.R.

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LONDON.

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. R. Dimsdale Stocker—"The Things that are not Cæsars."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Yusuf Ali—"Ring out the False, Ring in the True."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Rt. Hon. Lord Snell—"The United States of India: Problems and Prospects."

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. C. Ratcliffe (Pres. M.S.S.)—"Is Progress a Delusion?"

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): Monday, January 4, at 8.0, Mr. C. Tuson will open a discussion on—"The Future of the Freethought Movement."

THE NON-POLITICAL METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.7, five minutes from the Brecknock): 7.20, Mr. J. Humphreys—"Evolution of the Brain, from Amoeba to Man."

THE CONWAY DISCUSSION CIRCLE (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): Tuesday, January 5, at 7.0, Rev. J. H. Weatherall, M.A., Principal of Manchester College, Oxford—"Unitarianism as I Know It."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

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

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY.—Ramble, meet at Barrhead Centre, 10.0. Members and friends invited.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Buildings, 41 Islington, Liverpool, entrance Christian Street): 7.0, E. Biddle (Chester)—"Religion Under the Soviets." Current *Freethinkers* and other literature on sale.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus, Hall No. 5): 7.0, Councillor P. Jolly—"A Homily on Thrift."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Rooms, Green Street, Sunderland): 7.0, Debate on "Is There Evidence of Life After Death?" *Affir.*: Mr. Abbott; *Neg.*: Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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