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Views and Opinions.

More About the Sunday Question.

By the time this copy of the Freethinker is in the hands of its readers the New Sunday Bill will have been brought before the House of Commons on a second reading debate. The Government is leaving the question to a free vote of the House—that is every member may vote as “his conscience dictates,” instead of voting as the party whips order, and “damn his conscientious convictions.” This is one of the cowardly ways in which ministers act when they are afraid to give a responsible lead in a matter which is of importance. The other method is that of appointing a Royal Commission to enquire. This latter method has been adopted with the Sweepstakes Bill of Sir William Davidson. The Commission sits over a lengthy period, it spends a lot of public money in “enquiring” and by the time it reports, interest in the matter has waned, and the question is shelved. Both methods are adopted when either the Government does not wish to do anything, or because it knows that something ought to be done, but fears, to use an expression of the *Evening Standard*, “to come into conflict with an organized repressive minority.” There was no need to appoint a Commission to enquire about sweepstakes, and there is no justification for leaving the Sunday question to the free vote of the House. The facts about both are well-known, and no Commission can add to our knowledge on either question. The Government is simply shirking its duty. There is no argument against the provision of entertainments on Sunday, save the purely religious one. Sunday is a day of religious taboo. It belongs to the same family of primitive beliefs as taboos on food, or clothing. There is nothing else but the argument of taboo which can make what is permissible on six days of the week, not permissible on the seventh. The improvement in public conduct where a rational way of spending Sunday is the vogue is marked and universal. But we have to fight an organized and unscrupulous religious minority. That minority is bombarding

members with postcards written by many who falsely pretend to belong to the constituency of the member to whom the cards are addressed, and many of them written by the same person in different names. Politics is never a too clean business. As Meredith said, “Politics is like climbing the greasy pole. Mutton or no mutton, you get the grease.” But when religion and politics are combined, then one may say good-bye to what little honesty is left in the political make-up.

* * *

No Compromise.

The other day I received an invitation to visit a certain Lancashire town to deliver a lecture against the existing Sunday restrictions. The proprietor of a large cinema had offered to place the building at my disposal on the following conditions. There must be no charge for admission, the staff of the Cinema would give their services free, the whole of the proceeds were to go to a local hospital. All these arrangements were subject to the consent of the Associated Cinemas, Limited. Now I should have been pleased to deliver the lecture, and without payment—my friends know that this is nothing new in my life. But the other conditions are not fighting Sabbatarianism, they are temporizing with it; and that way nothing worth really gaining can be obtained. For years I have pointed out to Cinema proprietors that all the applications made to Councils and magistrates to give an entertainment for which a charge for admission was made, were all bunkum. No authority in the land had the power to give permission. Then I urged upon these same people that if they would take their courage in both hands and open their places they would create a situation that would lead to a practical repealing of the Act. These men lacked the courage to do this, and when the question came before the courts, the judges swept all the permits on one side quickly and easily enough. But the soundness of my advice to the Cinema proprietors was proven when the mere threat to open as usual, and the complaints of those who were deprived of their entertainments, compelled even the Labour Government, by way of a temporary Act, to make Sunday opening legal in places where Sunday opening had been the rule.

But I object wholly to legislation that selects Sunday for special attention. I no more believe in sacred days than I do in sacred books or boots. It is simply ridiculous to say that a man may open his place of business provided he gives the profits to a hospital. If he cares to do this, let him do so, but it must be a free-will gift. Moreover there is no law in England that can prevent a man opening a hall for a public meeting on Sunday provided there is no charge for admission. There is no need to ask the permission of anyone to hold a public meeting on Sunday. No magistrate and no Council has the power to prevent it. You may have music at the meeting, and

still no one can prevent it. You may exhibit pictures and still no one can prevent it. Provided there is no charge for admission no one can prevent these things being done. Moreover, a licence that permits a man to do a certain thing during six days of the week, and under certain conditions, simply cannot prevent his doing something else, under different conditions, on the seventh day of the week. I decline to play to Sabbatarianism by voluntarily submitting to the conditions laid down. I will go anywhere in the country to speak against Sabbatarianism, but it must be in circumstances that really challenge this primitive religious bugbear, and not in circumstances that do it honour. When Freethinkers like Hetherington, and Bradlaugh wished to fight the tax upon newspapers they did so by ignoring the law on the subject. It was a bad law; it deserved to be broken; and when the Government found those who fought it were not to be intimidated, the law was repealed. If we wish to do away with these stupid Sunday laws, this is the only attitude to adopt. Ridiculous bodies such as the Lord's Day Observance Society, and the different Councils of Free Churches, bully local authorities into submission. Those who wish for freedom must be equally insistent. I am not sure that these bigots are even in the majority, they are merely better organized and more insistent. It is a queer thing that so often people should be more active in the maintenance of tyranny than they are in the achievement of liberty.

* * *

Political Bunkum.

I have pointed out many times one new danger indicated by the Bill before Parliament. It places "debates" as one of the subjects which on Sunday must be held only under licence. Now the Secretary of the Metropolitan Secular Society writes me that he has written the Home Secretary on the question of the Bill, and he has replied that the Act will not apply to Sunday debate. I have now seen the amended Bill. It contains all the bad features of the old one, and the clause concerning debate is still there, and debate must mean debate, no matter what the Home Secretary says. Besides, if a case is brought before the Courts the task of the judges will be to determine what the Act says, not what the Home Secretary said he thought it meant. This occurs over and over again in the courts. Debates such as are carried on by two or more people publicly discussing a subject are clearly barred in a meeting that is not licensed—that is, unless our language has lost all meaning, and unless judges take the word of a mere politician instead of being guided by the words of an Act. And, as I have before said, it is not clear that a debate, to be a debate, must be carried on between two or more people. While in common usage it does usually imply this, if anyone will take the trouble to trace the significance of the word "debate," he will see that it may easily mean discussing a debatable subject whether in the course of a speech delivered by a lecturer, or between two persons. And, when we bear in mind that this Bill owes its entire existence to the principle that certain things which may be proper on week-days become improper on Sunday, I do not think that very much reliance can be placed upon the reply of the Home Secretary to the question as asked. Readers will remember that not very long ago I had to point out the misdirection of the then Attorney General to a House of Commons Committee—it was the Bill for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws that was under discussion—on a point of law with which any "office boy in a lawyer's firm" ought to have been better informed. No one will be greatly influenced in his judgment of the Bill by what the

Home Secretary has to say to a correspondent. There is really no need to ask the Home Secretary what a printed statement means.

* * *

Reviving Sabbatarianism.

If the Sunday Bill becomes law it will mean that instead of having an Act which applies to the country as a whole, and which is fast sinking into oblivion because it is so widely regarded with contempt, we shall have a new Act which surrounds the question of entertainments with a number of monstrous regulations and by the institution of local option places the more intelligent and the more enlightened section of a community at the mercy of a number of organized bigots, and we shall be giving Sabbatarianism the *cachet* of an up-to-date measure. It is one of those measures which while apparently yielding to a demand for a much needed reform actually places the retrogressive forces in a much stronger position than they were. It enables a bigoted and well-organized minority to say how the majority shall *not* spend their leisure time. Finally—All over the civilized world the trend of affairs is towards the secularization of the State. In our own country for several generations this movement has been most marked. It is true that we still have in England a State Church, and we still have privileges granted to religion and religious organizations. In other directions we have seen a marked tendency to base legislation upon the principle of civic equality without any regard whatever to religious convictions. Not merely have all public offices but one been thrown open to all religious sects, but an avowed Atheist may attain any office in Parliament, in the judiciary or elsewhere. It is true that religious bigotry is still strong enough to place obstacles in the way of his filling such offices, but there are no legal obstacles. In this new Sunday Bill we once again return to the bad old principle of specially legislating for the protection of religious opinions. By compelling those providing entertainments to give a portion of their profits to some designated charity—which may be a Salvation Army organization if the licencing body so decrees—and by drawing a distinction between what is permissible on Sunday and what is allowable on other days in the week, we return to Sabbatarian legislation and the principle of religious intolerance. The Bill is an example of what Lord Morley called compromise in the wrong direction. All that the Bill gives us that is good we were getting without it. What we get is a slice of legislation designed to strengthen upon sectarian bigotries. The Bill really affirms a principle that is bad in essence and out of touch with the best liberal thought of the time. It is not a modification of Sabbatarian legislation that is needed but its abolition. We want a *free Sunday*, not a Sunday which affords scope for the exercise of puritanical bigotry.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Ebb-Tide of Theology.

"Nought may endure but mutability."—Shelley.
 "The creed of Christendom is gradually melting away, like a northern iceberg floating into southern seas."
 G. W. Foot.

"So far as a man thinks, he is free."—Emerson.
 "More life, and fuller, that we want."—Tennyson.

COMMENT is often made of the enormous, never-ending output of books, of the indigestible glut of the literary market; but with all the activity of authors and scribblers there is one department of literature which shows a falling-off. During the past half century a steady and continuous decline has taken place

in the production of theological and religious books. To what is this decline due? There are several reasons, the first and most potent being the indifference of the wide reading public towards religion itself. In his day Macaulay noted with an ironic smile, the singular periodic manner in which the British public had spasms of religion and sentimentalism. To-day, John Bull no longer remembers that he has a soul to save; indeed, he appears indifferent as to whether he has a soul or not. Meanwhile, he reads novels, periodicals, and newspapers, especially newspapers. And newspaper editors use all forms of religion as simply so much news. They will publish pictures of Mormon missionaries, and report a clerical scandal with the same zest as they record a divorce case or the latest murder. Their affection for the dear Bishop of London is largely due to the fact that he so often "spills the beans," and in full war-paint resembles an African witch-doctor. From a news point of view he means no more than a pole-squatter.

Another reason is the lower mentality of the present-day clergy. There are no longer any great ecclesiastics and it certainly cannot be said that the contemporary Christian churches show any signs of intellect in the production of modern religious books. Not for contemporary clerics are the rolling harmonies of Jeremy Taylor, the subtle cadencies of Milton, the chastened utterances of Newman. They cannot even echo Baxter or Bunyan. There is not one original idea in their books. Everything is twenty-second hand, bug-eaten and most threadbare, and the poverty of the prose emphasizes the emptiness of their heads.

Yet another cause of the continuous decline of religious literature is the steady growth of Freethought. The ordinary citizen is no longer content to be blindly led by the nose by the parson. Even the left wing of the Christian Churches no longer makes an appeal like that of a generation since. The force of Puritanism has at last spent itself, it no longer inspires but only perspires.

This decline and fall began a half century ago. Round about that time there was a real and unmistakable interest in devotional literature. The second-hand booksellers "fourpenny boxes" were then seldom without copies of Zimmerman *On Solitude*, and Harvey's *Meditations Among the Tombs*. In the new bookshops the Rev. J. R. Macduff rivalled the foremost novelists in popularity. The tale of his theological works was to be reckoned in hundreds of thousands. He was, in fact, the Dickens of Orthodoxy. For years Dean Goulburn's *Thoughts on Personal Religion* had an annual sale of many thousands, and Bishop Oxenden's works were equally popular. Non-conformists shared the limelight and the applause with the priests of the Government Religion. Newman Hall's publications ran into a sale of millions. Spurgeon's sermons sold like hot rolls for a whole generation, and his rival, Dr. Joseph Parker, had an army of admirers who bought his books eagerly. In looking through the old publishers' catalogues it is truly surprising to notice the number of works of a devotional nature. Familiar as household words a generation or so ago, how many of these are known by name to the present generation? The Victorian era was a paradise for the well-to-do, a purgatory for the middle class, and an inferno for the workers, but it was a golden age for religion, and priests waxed fat in the land.

Not only was there a constant demand for the works of individual authors but for such libraries as *The Biblical Cabinet*, *Sacred Classics*, *The Christian Family Library*, and many other series. The taste for such literary provender has gone, let us hope for ever. Nor is it to be supposed that fresh life can be given to superstition by the silly publications of the

Christian Evidence Society, or the still more contemptible propaganda of the Catholic Truth Society. These things serve a temporary commercial purpose, and, having served it, pass to the dust-destroyer.

The change of public opinion towards religion in this country, during two generations, is highly significant, and illustrates with startling clearness the changed attitude of the reading-public towards an Oriental superstition which has been foisted on this country by the machinations of Priestcraft for so many centuries. Based on Eastern fables, supported by brute force, trading on sheer ignorance, Christian priests at long last find the conscience of the race rising above their abracadabra. The voice of reason has been a still, small voice, almost inaudible, though never quite stilled; but now it is swelling into a volume of sound which will overwhelm and overthrow the din of sects and the threats of the priests. It is well done, and Freethinkers look beyond the tumult and shouting of the day, and are touched by what Shakespeare calls "the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come."

MIMNERMUS.

A Story of Departed Times.

CENTURIES before the City States of ancient Greece were established, highly civilized urban communities flourished in Mesopotamia. Imperfect as our knowledge of ancient Sumer still is, there is ample evidence to prove that many hundreds of years before the Christian era races, both cultured and refined, occupied the now almost desolate lands lying in the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates.

The imposing centre of Sumerian civilization was the holy temple of the gods. Each city was dedicated to the service of its special divinities. The earthly ruler was a priest-king, whose authority rested on divine right derived from the great gods themselves.

From the temple emanated all commands to the people, including everything that related to the construction and maintenance of those remarkable works of irrigation which provided the soil with moisture so indispensable to the crops upon which the dense population of Babylonia depended for its sustenance.

Within the temple itself a leisured priesthood cultivated philosophy and science. A calendar recording the succession of the seasons of the agricultural year was devised, and this led to a study of the correspondence of the spring, summer, autumn and winter months with the starry constellations appearing at their appointed time in the vault of heaven, and to observation of the movements of the planetary bodies.

The ancient land of Sumer was situated in a restricted area in the lower reaches of the great Oriental rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates. Nippur was its leading city famous for its temple of the Earth God Enlil. This sacred city was the Rome of Sumeria and the capital of Mesopotamian culture.

The earliest Sumerian cities were clustered together along the banks of the Euphrates. But as the communities multiplied, colonies were established at ever increasing distances from the more ancient settlements. All the many city states were environed by their artificially watered cornlands and gardens. Rich pastures furnished food for the imposing flocks of sheep and herds of goats and cattle. The generous soil yielded crops in abundance. Wheat and other cereals, sesame, melons, cucumbers, vines and, above all, the date palm which furnished fibre for ropes, wood, wine and fruit, ministered to the wants of the people.

The prosperity of the community was entirely dependent upon the irrigation of the alluvial soil, and the great canals constructed to convey water to the crops were recorded by the Greek traveller and historian Herodotus as among the marvels of antiquity. Mesopotamia's population probably exceeded that of ancient Egypt, both in number and in wealth. Yet, this powerful civilization was doomed to perish by military aggression. Its system of irrigation became utterly neglected, and the once proud and prosperous country has now declined to a stagnant, insalubrious desert-land.

The Sumerians and their kindred were a divinity-ridden stock. Each of their cities had its patron deities—male and female—who were revered as the sovereign lords and ladies of the State. The city walls, watercourses, streets and gates all bore sacred names, while from the sacred temple itself issued the chief influence of mental and emotional life. Within the temple were the dwellings of the priests and State functionaries; as also the schools, libraries and granaries, while, rising above the city the solemn state temple proclaimed the supremacy of the gods who must ever be consulted when any enterprise of public importance was projected.

The Sumerian and Babylonian polity was purely theocratic. The secular ruler was pontiff as well as king. The great monarch, Hammurabi himself asserted that when the divine beings laid the foundations of Babylon they specially named him as priest king. As the mouthpiece and representative of the mighty god Marduk the king was all powerful. In his famous Code Hammurabi declares that he has been divinely appointed "to establish the welfare of mankind, to create justice in the land, to destroy the wicked and perverse, that the strong may not oppress the weak." Hammurabi's celebrated Code, which has been justly termed "the masterpiece of ancient jurisprudence," proves beyond all doubt that he was one of the supreme legislators of the world.

In addition to the high State divinities there were the household gods, presumably the ancestral spirits of the family in which they were worshipped and appeased. Yet, despite the ubiquitous influence of the gods, the Sumerians remained a practical people in secular life. Apart from its sacred associations, the temple formed the centre of the industrial activities of the community. For the Sumerians were a great commercial people who traded extensively with neighbouring nations. As Prof. Sayce points out, the poverty of Mesopotamia in metals, timber and other utilities early led to the establishment of trading relations with other communities. Silver and lead were imported from Asia Minor, and copper was obtained from Cyprus. "Originally," as Dawson reminds us, "the State and the temple corporation were the only bodies which possessed the necessary stability and resources for establishing widespread commercial relations. Temple servants were sent on distant missions provided with letters of credit which enabled them to obtain supplies in other cities. Moreover, the temple was the bank of the community through which money could be lent at interest, and advances made to the farmer on the security of his crop. . . . The temple and the palace remained the centre of the economic life of the city, but by their side and under their shelter there developed a many-sided activity which found expression in the guilds of the free craftsmen and merchants, and the private enterprise of the individual capitalist."

All this happened thousands of years ago, and yet how very modern it appears. Then, as now, business transactions were regulated by law, and were duly witnessed and sealed by the principals concerned, and the clay tablets of the time provide conclu-

sive evidence of the high efficiency of the Babylonian systems of banking and credit.

Trade was carried on by means of caravans with Media and Persia, Bactria, and probably India, while cargoes were shipped on the Persian Gulf to Arabia. The commodities dealt with were numerous, and among the many occupations of the working community mentioned on the clay tablets are those of the carpenter, builder, smith, dyer, weaver and potter.

Education was widespread and the script that the Sumerians had developed out of their primitive pictographic writing was taught in the temple schools. As stone and minerals were almost absent clay, baked into brick in the intense heat of the summer sun was used for their buildings. Asphalt served as mortar and the dwellings were roofed with reeds. Clay tablets, again, with their records of the manners and customs of the people have been discovered in thousands. Even the exercises of the pupils in the schools have come to light while clay-inscribed dictionaries and grammars bear witness to the existence of linguistic attainments. Land surveying, a system of weights and measures, and text books in use in the distant days of Hammurabi which deal with geometrical problems testify to the practical character of these Mesopotamian pioneers.

Out of astrology and divination there emerged in Babylonia the beginnings of the astronomy of classical antiquity, for it is now conceded that the Greeks derived much of their science from their Mesopotamian predecessors. The planetary orbs were watched and their movements recorded, and the eclipses were earnestly studied. The precession of the equinoxes appears to have been discovered, and the chief constellations were named and described. The Babylonians thus laid the foundations of modern science, and had circumstances proved propitious might have proceeded far. But this splendid culture was destroyed by military invasion and conquest, a calamity destined to be many times repeated throughout the world during succeeding centuries.

T. F. PALMER.

Thomas Paine.

[The following sketch of Thomas Paine will be of added interest to our readers as it comes from the pen of a member of the Church of England. Times have changed.—Ed.]

THE name of Thomas Paine does not convey much to the average person now-a-days. I was asked a little while ago by someone otherwise well-informed, who Thomas Paine was. Nevertheless Paine played an important part in events which altered the destinies of two great countries in the Old and New World. Nothing in his origin or early life fore-shadowed a career in the least out of the ordinary. He was born in the small but very ancient town of Thetford in Norfolk on January 29, 1737. His father had a small farm and also followed the trade of a stay-maker, to which the boy Thomas was apprenticed at the age of thirteen. His father was a Quaker and in the strict tenets of that branch of the Christian religion the boy was brought up. In the middle of the eighteenth century it was a distinct handicap to belong to any Non-conformist sect, and the Quakers were especially marked out, not only by their method of worship, but also by their distinctive style of dress, in which an avoidance of all bright colour or ornament was essential. So the little boy Quaker did not have many friends to play with in the ancient Grammar School at Thetford to which he was sent—by the self-denying efforts of his parents who were very poor. He seems to have had a very precocious mind. At the age of

eight he composed the following epitaph for a dead crow which he buried in the garden:—

"Here lies the body of John Crow,
Who once was high but now is low;
Ye brother Crows take warning all
For as you rise, so must you fall."

Shut out from many of the sports and amusements of other boys of his age he had all the more leisure to reflect upon what was going on around him. Close by the Quaker Meeting House was the Town Gaol, in front of which were the pillory and the stocks, both of which Thomas no doubt often saw occupied. In the light of the present day those times were scarcely civilized. The penal code was in fact a savage one. Capital punishment was inflicted for comparatively trivial offences. Sentences were carried out in public. Bodies of criminals swung in chains on roadside gibbets. In Thomas's thirteenth year a girl of seventeen was executed at Ely, twenty-three miles from Thetford, for the murder of her husband and this was the manner of it. "Her face and hands were smeared with tar, and having a garment daubed with pitch, after a short prayer the executioner strangled her, and twenty minutes after, the fire was kindled and burnt for half an hour." This in the very shadow of the Cathedral.

Thetford was a chartered borough with a mayor and corporation, although the population was only about 2,000, and returned two members of Parliament, both the absolute nominees of the Duke of Grafton. There is no doubt that the subsequent author of *The Rights of Man* pondered all these things in his heart.

The occupation of making stays did not long satisfy the aspirations of Paine. In his seventeenth year he endeavoured to enlist for service on the ship "Terrible," whose captain bore the ominous name of Death, but was discovered by his father before the ship sailed and taken home. Two years or so later, however, he succeeded in joining the privateer "King of Prussia," England being then at war with France. His experience on board soon cured him of any liking for that kind of adventure, but he did not return to Thetford. We find him at the age of twenty employed by a stay-maker in London where he remained for two years, attending philosophical lectures in his spare time and becoming acquainted with Dr. Bevis of the Royal Society.

From London he went to Dover and from Dover to Sandwich, still following the same trade, and at the latter place he married, at the age of twenty-two, Mary Lambert, who died the following year, 1760, at Margate, where the young couple had gone to live. Mary Lambert's father had been an excise-man, and as the stay-making business did not flourish, Paine resolved to become an excise-man, for which occupation he qualified after some months study in London, and it was in his native town, Thetford, that he first exercised duty as a supernumerary excise officer.

As an excise-man he was sent to Grantham and afterwards to Alford. At the latter place he was found guilty of slackness in duty, passing premises as duly examined without having actually inspected specimens of goods as required. For this he was dismissed in 1765, but a year later succeeded on appeal in getting re-instated. In the meantime he supported himself by stay-making again and by teaching English in a school in Goodman's Fields, London, where he got a salary of £25 per annum.

In 1768 we find him settled at Lewes, still in the excise, and he had then attained a position of some responsibility in the Service. His lodgings were at the house of Samuel Ollive, a tobacconist, whose daughter, Elizabeth, he married in 1771.

He made a number of friends in Lewes, members with him of an evening club held at the White Hart.

It seems to have been a kind of literary and debating society, and they had a rather curious custom. An old volume was kept which was called the "Headstrong Book," and it was sent the morning after a debate to the member who had shown himself to be, in the opinion of the members, the most vehement and obstinate arguer. Paine achieved that distinction at least on one occasion that was recorded.

The marriage was not a success. At the time it took place, Elizabeth's father, the tobacconist, had been dead two years. Paine opened a shop and took over the old tobacco mill which Samuel Ollive had owned. In 1774 he went to London and was engaged there for some time, pressing forward a memorial on behalf of excise-men for better pay and conditions of service.

Shortly after his return to Lewes he received notice of dismissal for the second time, the reason given being quitting duty without the Board's leave of absence. This time it was final, and his grocer's and tobacconist's business, not being a success, was sold to pay debts. At thirty-seven years of age Paine found himself penniless, and later the same year, a formal separation took place between him and his wife. The reason for this neither of them ever divulged. There were no children of the marriage.

Paine went to London and in some way became acquainted with that great American, Dr. Franklin who was then resident there. The latter gave him a letter of introduction to his son-in-law, Richard Bache, of Philadelphia, and on November 30, 1774, Paine sailed for America, where he was first to exercise his true vocation.

Thanks to his introduction Paine soon found employment at Philadelphia. Early in the following year we find him contributing articles to a new publication called the *Pennsylvania Magazine*, articles which largely increased the circulation of the paper, and a little later he became the Editor, acting in that capacity for eighteen months at a salary of £50 per year. Paine's arrival in America coincided with the eve of the protracted struggle with the Mother Country which ended in the complete independence of the colony. It was in April, 1775, that the smouldering fires first broke into flame with the armed clashes at Lexington and Concord. At first there was no thought of complete separation, but that idea was soon to originate and gain strength. In the autumn of 1775 Paine published a book which immediately found acceptance and popularity. It became in demand throughout the length and breadth of all the States. Its title was *Common Sense*, and there is no doubt that it exercised an enormous influence in determining the distinction and the ultimate issue of the struggle between America and England. Probably the main reason of the fervour with which the arguments and principles set forth in the book were acclaimed by the mass of the American people was that they recognized in them what they had already felt, but had never seen expressed. In *Common Sense* all their grievances and discontent were crystallized in strong and vigorous English which went straight to the point, without the slightest ambiguity or waste of words. Its style is such that it can be read with pleasure after a lapse of 150 years, instead of passing into oblivion like the majority of literary productions which owed their popularity and influence to current events. All Paine's writings are distinguished by the utmost clearness of thought and expression, however one may differ from some of the conclusions he arrives at, and it is a matter for surprise as to how he acquired his literary gifts, considering his very limited scholastic education. The little grammar school at Thetford should have some of the credit. The teaching there must have included a

thorough grounding in English, although Paine had to leave at the age of thirteen.

The causes of the American War of Independence are a story by themselves—and a long one—but when it is remembered how the various settlements commenced; made up for the most part by people who found it necessary to leave their native land owing to persecution, either religious or political, Pilgrim Fathers seeking a country where they could worship their God in their own way, Quakers, Puritans, Roman Catholics, Cavaliers, Jacobites, it is easy to see what a fertile soil there was for grievances, and how relations between the parent country and the States became strained to breaking-point when the young King in England, whose ambition it was "to govern as well as reign," and his equally stupid minister, Lord North, passed measures which the colonists considered injurious to their interests, besides being an unwarrantable interference, and utterly transgressing the cardinal principle of "No taxation without representation."

One of the first articles that Paine wrote in America was against slavery. In it there is the following passage:—

How just, how suitable to our crime is the punishment with which Providence threatens us? We have enslaved multitudes and shed much innocent blood.

Anti-slavery was a new doctrine then and met with no general response in the minds of the colonists. It is an illustration of the fact that seed will not flourish in ground which is unprepared. Nearly a century was to pass before slavery was abolished in America. It had gone in the Northern States before then, but it is open to doubt whether that would have been the case if negro labour had been as essential or profitable there as it was in the cotton and tobacco states.

The Quakers of Philadelphia were generally speaking against the War, ostensibly, because the tenets of their religion forbid the shedding of blood, but perhaps also because it threatened their business dealings with the Home Country.

The following quotation from Paine on this phase of the question is interesting:—

I am thus far a Quaker, that I would gladly agree with all the world to lay aside the use of arms, and settle matters by negotiations; but, unless the whole world wills, the matter ends, and I take up my musket and thank Heaven he has put it in my power. We live not in a world of angels. The reign of Satan is not ended, neither can we expect to be defeated by miracles.

F. M. READ.

(To be continued.)

Acid Drops



The Oath question in the Irish Free State has little to do with the fundamental question of oath-taking. Mr. W. B. Yeats, the Irish Poet, has pointed out that the London County Council, which governs more people than the whole population of the Irish Free State, is not an oath bound body. Neither Mr. De Valera, nor ninety per cent of his followers, nor Mr. Cosgrave and the same proportion of his followers, have any objection of a religious or theological sort to an oath as an oath. Their objection is to taking an oath which is supposed to exclude Republicans from the Free State Parliament. But since it does not exclude them, any more than an oath excluded Bradlaugh or Dilke from the English Parliament, the whole matter would seem to be much ado about nothing. We only wish we could believe that there was a strong feeling in Ireland against any

oath or test of a religious character; but all the evidence is the other way. Anything more preposterous than the suggestion that there is something revolutionary or atheistic in the Irish opposition to the oath could not be imagined. It is enough to make cocks and hens laugh.

The *Christian World* in a leader dealing with the recently formed Church Self-Government League, mentioned here on its first appearance, notes that the programme of this body not only anticipates the Report of the Commission appointed by the Archbishops, but completely ignores "the rights of the most important party concerned, viz., the State." It adds: "The State is scarcely likely to remain dumb if the Church steps out of all obligations which have been laid upon her, but still seeks to retain the privileges attaching to an established position, and to continue to be financed through endowments which hitherto she has enjoyed by virtue of her officially recognized national standing." What the State, as represented by a Parliament such as the present may do is, we think, incalculable. It is clear that a first class crisis in the relations between Church and State is imminent, and it was in the light of that probability that Mr. Alan Handsacre has written his book *The Revenues of Religion*, which will be published on April 21. It will, we believe, be found to be a timely and informative examination of a question which, if it is to be justly settled, must be settled in the interests of the community as it exists to-day, not as it was when the present relations between Church and State were last settled, in the sixteenth century.

We gather from some comments in the Nonconformist Press that those they represent are not too easy about the Anglican movement for self-government for that Church. The *Christian World*, as we have pointed out rightly refers to the State as the body principally concerned in this business. In the past, for example, in matters relating to education, it has often turned out that an appearance of concern for the public interest by Nonconformists was only a blind for a desire for equality of privilege with the Church. Public money, ostensibly devoted to education, is still being spent to a large extent annually for the teaching of religion in the schools under the pseudonym of "simple Bible teaching," but we have never noticed any anxiety in dissenting circles to prevent this imposition on the minds of the nation's children. One of the incidental advantages of the disendowment and disestablishment of the religion at present established is that it will do something to bring home to the public the enormity and the expense of indirect as well as direct State patronage of religion.

We recall that at the very time when the late Dr. Clifford was eloquently denouncing "Rome on the Rates," the Paddington Free Church Council presented a demand to the Borough Council for the remission of the rates on Paddington Chapel. Since then all places of worship have been exempt from rates, and we are not aware that the ratepayers, whose Sunday recreations are now to be controlled by a few local busy-bodies, were ever afforded the blessed privilege of "local option" as to whether it was their corporate desire to subsidize all the churches and chapels in their areas by a contribution from the rates. It would seem that "democratic" machinery, like religious "equality," is a case of "what's yours is mine, what's mine's my own."

If the Bishop of London's condemnation of Tariffs in a recent sermon at St. Paul's does not prevent it we think the Religious Tract Society might call the attention of the Tariff Commission to the following advertisement. Surely imported Tracts are as fit for taxation as imported broccoli. And in the case of the former there is no lack of the British made article:—

"Best Evangelical Literature."—Books for Bible Lovers, tracts, book-marks, mirrors, blotters, rulers, pencils, pins, all with Bible texts. Write for circulars. Valentine Gebhardt, 1732 Summerfield Avenue, Brooklyn, N.Y.

A pleasant-sounding title is "The Devil's Camera"—Menace of a Film-Ridden World, written by two authors of the Epworth (Methodist) Press. They seem to be the authentic successors of that defunct divine, the Rev. Archibald G. Brown, who, more years ago than we care to remember, produced a much-boasted work entitled *The Devil's Mission of Amusement*. There is one notable difference between the present authors and Mr. Brown. The latter thought that the Christian should regard Theatres, Music Halls, Dancing—and in fact all "worldly pleasures" as "untouchables." The Cinema had hardly started in his time, but it would doubtless have been on his Index. He would, we fancy, turn in his grave if he knew that it is now proposed in order to "clean up" the cinema trade, that the Churches should save the films by having cinemas on their premises, and, to avert risks by fire, only use "non-flam" film. The author's at least deserve a little credit for the last suggestion, for the Lord, whose tender mercy is over all his works, cannot save children in a cinema fire unless he has the assistance of suitable exits, and a human fire brigade and its proper equipment!

Mr. Isaac Foot, M.P., on his way to the House of Commons every day, raises his hat, he says, to the statue of Oliver Cromwell. This moves a newspaper to explain that "Cromwell set us free from the divinity of Kings." When our newspapers and other journals get a little less timid, perhaps they will give public recognition to the men who have gone one better than Cromwell—those who set us free from the divinity of priests and parsons.

In the opinion of a pious scribe, an All-loving Father has given man flowers for his delight. This, we presume, is as a sort of off-set to the various things—such as germs, diseases, earthquakes, tempests, etc.—which an All-loving Father has given man for something other than delight. It is awfully good of our All-loving Father to balance things so nicely.

In the *Daily Sketch* a reader says: "We have far too long associated Christianity with the long face, which has done more to empty our churches than anything else. Humour is both the salt of life and of true religion." On this hypothesis, then, the quickest and best way of making the Government religion of England "true religion" is to appoint P. G. Wodehouse and George Robey as Archbishops of Canterbury and York. The only drawback to this scheme is that we fancy our humorous friends would object to performing the solemn antics associated with these high spiritual offices. If such is the case, we greatly fear that this country will have to jog along as best it can without "true religion," and that Christianity will have to continue to be associated with mule-like faces. After all, the association is not surprising. The thoughts of the true believer should be directed to humourless ideas such as: earth is a pilgrimage, "am I saved?" Christ's bloody sacrifice on the Cross; the deaths of the martyrs, and God's awful majesty and his "all-seeing eye," etc. There is nothing here to tempt the Christian into a cheerful smile. The only man who has learnt to laugh at them is the Freethinker. One might truthfully claim that humour is the salt of life and of Freethought—which is the sanest philosophy of life.

Letters in the *Daily Mirror* have been discussing the value of Prayer, especially in connexion with "luck." One of the best letters, from a Mr. W. Foster, of Richmond, is calculated to set the pious thinking. The following is a portion:—

Most religions says God is omniscient. "Not a sparrow falls," etc. Surely, then, all prayer is illogical? Why ask God to waive his infinitely better judgment in favour of one's own? Even with prayers for guidance, are these petitioners afraid God might misdirect them? After this, we suggest that the pious had better merely ask God to do what he deems best and just. God will appreciate the implied compliment, while he smiles at the stupidity of those who address such a petition to an all-wise and all-just Being.

Apropos of the Sunday Cinema Bill, the *Daily Herald* pleads for a "Rational Sunday." It explains that:—

On the grounds of liberty, of morality, and of sane recreation and variety in life, the case for the Sunday opening of Cinemas is unassailable.

The *Herald* might explain why, if the proprietors of cinemas are doing the nation so great a service, they should need be fined, by a compulsory contribution to charities for rendering such service. And the service rendered, we may add, appears to be all the greater for the fact that the Churches have reduced Sunday to the dulllest and most depressing day of the week.

Someone in a pious weekly has been deploring the fact that the custom of giving thanks to God before meals has greatly declined in this country. We are not told why. Possibly the people realize that there is nothing to thank God for. A man has to work to earn his food. He gets his food only by working for it, not by asking God to send it. In many lands, indeed, men work to produce food, but God often destroys it wholesale, leaving them to starve in most instances where they cannot be helped by men in other lands who have stored food. It is just as well that people have ceased to thank God for their food. For it suggests a change in their way of thinking, due to the realization that for the necessities of life they must rely on themselves alone. Man self-reliant is a superior being to man waiting for the favours of a God.

Having referred to the drastic changes which have taken place during the twentieth century, a writer remarks that to-day people are increasingly called upon to modify their ideas and habits. He adds that "the young people have a great advantage over the older people, since they are growing up with the age and so accept with equanimity changes that perturb older people who have to modify many of their cherished ideas and ideals." For our part, we suspect that the older people, especially those who are in the churches, will not regard it as an advantage for the young people. The older people oppose those changes and those modifications, and they regard the young people's attitude of acceptance as indicating that the young people are lacking in principles, morals, and convictions. Of course if one's ideas, beliefs, customs and habits are based on a Holy Book and divinely inspired truth, that stupid point of view as regards new ideas and changes is quite natural. And that is but another way of saying that the religious mind is the most stubborn obstacle to change, without which there could be no such thing as progress.

Sir Frank Smith, Secretary to the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, has been telling readers of a daily paper that but for Science, the people of this country would still be "racked and decimated by disease, scratching a precarious living from an unwilling soil, with tools laboriously fashioned, working long hours at hard and thankless tasks." We may as well stress the fact that it is Science to which man is indebted for having been lifted out of the state in which God—on the Christian hypothesis—was pleased to place him. It is Science, not prayer nor priests nor the Church, which has improved man's lot. Meanwhile the Church has been supplying spiritual encouragement, in the shape of extorting the people to be contented with their lot and to count their blessings, and of assuring them of the certainty of recompense in another world.

Fear, says a contributor to a weekly paper, is the most insidious disease known to man; and the great majority of people suffering from it would indignantly deny that they are victims of the disease. At a guess, we are inclined to think that this writer has been observing the people going into a Roman Catholic Cathedral. Of course they would all deny that it is fear which brings them there. The priest has told them that it is religious feeling and love for God, and they believe what they are told. Whereupon a philosopher might well surmise that a disease which is thought to be something beneficial is all the more deadly.

A Nonconformist journal has been presenting its readers with a disquisition on the ancient doctrine, originally propounded by religious knaves for religious fools—"No salvation outside the Church," and the later constructions put on that doctrine. The reason given for this discussion is that "There are many at the present time who seem to be suffering from what may be called an anti-Church complex." Our contemporary's final exhortation is, "Let those who care for the salvation of their own souls and the salvation of the world rally round 'the Church of the Living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.'" We fancy this is merely an oblique way of reminding believers that they cannot dispense with the parson, or ignore his claim to tell them how to get properly "saved," what to do and why, and when and where to do it. Expedience requires, of course, that this priestly doctrine must be well-coated with sugar if it is to be swallowed. To assert that there is "No salvation without the parson," would excite among Nonconformists nothing but controversy and dissent. Yet everyone who attends a church where a parson is in evidence assents to that doctrine every time he pushes his threepenny-bit in the collection-bag to help pay the parson's salary!

An advertisement of the Wesleyan Missionary Society says:—

A travelled journalist (Mr. Robert Bernays, M.P.), quoting critics who say: "One religion is as good as another: missionaries merely turn good Hindus into bad Christians," replies: "This is the greatest lie of the age. I was enormously impressed by the work of the Christian missionaries in India. They set up a standard to which no religion in Asia, even at its purest, approaches."

The "critics" would have been on surer ground had they said—perhaps they did say so—that one supernaturally based religion is no better than another. This would have allowed them to add that, each religion is as stupid as the others; but some have a more harmful effect than others. As for the statement that the Christian missionaries "set up a standard to which no religion in Asia, even at its purest, approaches," we should prefer to say, not that it is a lie, but that it is just about as true as most statements made by Christians concerning Christianity and its achievements.

Pastor F. J. Boughey, of Nottingham, writes to the *Methodist Recorder* as follows:—

I have been a reader of the *Recorder* for more than forty years, but I never remember when there was ever discussed in your correspondence columns such questions as "Did Jesus die for me?" or "Did Peter deny Jesus?" Many must wonder what we believe. One of the foundation stones of the Methodist Church is the doctrine of the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus. I have preached this for many years, and will continue to do so. I believe criticism of our standard doctrines does incalculable harm.

We hope so. Still, that is one of the drawbacks accruing from the bright theological discovery of "progressive revelation." By the way, as there seems nowadays so much difference of opinion as to "standard doctrines," what is the starting price of that noble horse "Christian Unity" in the race for world conquest?

Writing in the *New Passing Show* anent what she calls "the old iniquitous mockery of a marriage sacrament" which is "slowly but surely passing away," Miss Ethel Mannia says: "It is difficult to imagine how sane people ever voluntarily endorsed an institution which insisted that one took a partner for 'better or worse.' To commit oneself to such an outrageous idea is positively indecent." The article is illustrated by pictures of a bridal couple facing a Bishop in full canonicals, book in one hand, and the other uplifted in blessing. It is all very sensible and effective, but how dreadfully irreverent!

We all know how often the truth of the Flood Story has been proved by clerical travellers showing stones they themselves have picked up on Mount Ararat, the mountain on which the Ark rested after the waters dis-

appeared. In the *Times*, on Maundy Thursday last, Mr. Athelston Riley gives a description of the discovery of a large Byzantine Church on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. In the centre of the *bema* was the identical stone on which "Our Lord" multiplied the loaves and fishes, which are depicted on the mosaic surrounding it. At least, so goes tradition which surely this time, is as true as the marvellous story itself. Thus once again the stupendous miracles of Our Lord are vindicated against the ignorant quibblings of sceptics.

Quoted in "Sayings of the Week," in the *Observer*, is a characteristic piece of Catholic propaganda posing as epigram from Mr. G. K. Chesterton. He says that if people are allowed to think as they like they will think it so hard as to want to kill anyone who does not think the same. Thus the right to exterminate heresy and heretics, and the end of private judgment in matters of faith and morals, are subtly commended to the thoughtless as being the only escape from an unpleasant bigotry. The fact is, of course, that the essence of liberty consists in thinking not what one likes, but what, to the best of one's information and belief, is the truth. The truth, so arrived at, sets men free. But "revealed" truth, accepted on the authority of God, Church, or Book, is the mother of intolerance.

A nation deserves and has to pay for its great men. If we are to believe Mr. Hannen Swaffer's report of his conversation with the late Lord Birkenhead at a time when he was Secretary for India, the coiner of the phrase "glittering prizes for sharp swords," was twenty degrees lower than a cynic. His lordship appeared to think that "niggers" were different from other human beings on the earth in the matter of a little elementary justice. We have always maintained that this is a Christian country.

A *Daily Herald* correspondent wants us to take our hats off to the Rev. Donald Soper. This reverend gentleman wants to abolish the "long face" from religion. It now remains for Mr. Harry Tate to preach a sermon in church; laughter in the Bible is conspicuous by its absence, and the "long face" may explain the short ways in history that Christians had with those who dared to laugh at its preposterous nonsense. All the same, we shall keep our hats on until something better comes along to remove the pretensions of the black army.

Fifty Years Ago.

WE cannot say that Cardinal Newman indicates how humanity will suffer from the "coming storm of infidelity and irreligion." He does, indeed, refer to the awful state of a people forsaken by God, but in our humble opinion this is somewhat ludicrous. We can hardly understand how God can forsake his own creatures. Why all this pother if he really exists? In that case our scepticism cannot affect him, any more than a man's blindness obscures the sun. And surely, if Omnipotence desired us all to believe the truth, the means are ready to hand. The God who said, Let there be light, and there was light, could as easily say, Let all men be Christians, and they would be Christians. If God had spoken the universe would be convinced; and the fact that it is not convinced proves, either that he does not exist, or that he purposely keeps silent, and desires that we should mind our own business.

The truth is, Revolutions must occur in this world, both in thought and in action. They may happen slowly, so that we may accommodate ourselves to them; or rapidly, and so disturb and injure whole generations. But come they must, and no power can hinder them; not even that once mighty Church which has always striven to bind Humanity to the past with adamant chains of dogma. In Cardinal Newman's own words— "here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often."

The "Freethinker," April 16, 1882.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

S. WARNER.—If the Bill passes as it stands the Sabbatarians will have come very profitably out of a situation which threatened to destroy their political power. That is the price we pay for having so many politicians who are terrified by the organized church and chapel vote.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS for cuttings to "Cambridge," F. K. Noyes, S. F. Budge, T. W. Haughton, H. Murphy, W. J. Mealow, J. Stevenson, N. Mathews, W. H. Hicks, A. W. Tingle, E. W. Flint, and H. P. Turner.

W. J. M.—Pleased to have your appreciation of the *Freethinker*.

S. M. DE GOLIER.—Your friend's letter is both able and interesting. You are quite justified in feeling proud of the influence you have evidently exerted.

F. GATESHILL.—We share your appreciation of the article by Mr. A. England in our last issue.

S. R. A. READY.—Crowded out. Next week.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.



We hope that all members of the N.S.S. and particularly Branches of the Society are completing their arrangements for the Annual Conference on Whit-Sunday, May 15. The Conference is to be held in Manchester, and that is very central for the whole of the country. An excursion is arranged for Whit-Monday, and this and the Conference itself gives Freethinkers all over the country of meeting and exchanging opinions. Those who can attend should do so, and should write as soon as possible to the General Secretary, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, stating their exact requirements. From information already to hand the Conference promises to be very successful.

Will Woolwich and district saints please note, an effort is being made to form a Branch of the N.S.S. in the Woolwich area. A resident speaker is available, and open-air meetings can be held during the season. Will those willing to help please communicate with Mr. Burke, 4 Lyford Street, Woolwich, S.E.18.

A question was asked in the House of Commons the other day concerning the refusal to permit Mr. G. Kumbleben to land in this country. The Home Secretary stated that he was refused by the Immigration Officer in the discretion vested in him by the Aliens Order of 1920. Mr. Kumbleben was visiting this country to speak at some educational centre. The official reason given for his non-admission, viz., that he had not enough money in his

possession, is absurd. We are informed that the Immigration Officer remarked: "We don't want men of your opinion in this country." Mr. Kumbleben is, we understand, a Socialist or Communist, which makes the real reason for this action plain. British liberty has come to a fine pass when a mere official is permitted to prevent a man landing because that official does not like his opinions. The next step will be to transport all whose opinions are not favourable to the party in power.

Some of the papers that noticed the publication of Mr. Cohen's *War, Civilization and the Churches* (a reprint of articles on the war 1914-1918) commented on the prophetic forecast of events. Perhaps this was due to the author not being a paid advocate of war-propaganda, and having no private axe to grind. Here is another instance we may cite in which events have justified all that was said. When the League of Nations was formed Mr. Cohen pointed out that one could expect very little from a body composed of the old political gangs, none of whom could trust the other, and who would be engaged in the same political game of plot and counter-plot. We said that the League should have been composed of independent men drawn from all nations, and free from the diplomatic old women who do not know that they are living in the twentieth century. Now from a recent work by a lady, and endorsed by one of our leading Sunday papers, we get the opinion that the League if it is to do its work, should be staffed by men who are "relatively immune" from the old diplomacy, and all the key positions taken out of the hands of diplomats. This is the advice we gave directly the war was over. In the absence of that policy Geneva has been converted into a stage on which the "old gang" play the old piece. And the world pays for it.

In the circumstances we may be pardoned taking the following from an article reprinted in *War, Civilization and the Churches*, and written while the League was being formed:—

Every member of the League ought not merely to promise not to break the peace of the world, it should voluntarily place it out of its power to do so. If the League is to become a reality, it can only be by every one of its units forgoing the luxury of maintaining an army or a navy large enough to defy the League whenever its decisions displease it in connexion with international disputes. . . . The only effective military and naval force as between nations should be under the control of the League itself. If the nations cannot agree among themselves sufficiently for that, or cannot trust each other enough for that, then it is idle to talk of a League of Nations. You may have a series of shifting and changing alliances, but you can have nothing else. You have not removed an evil by establishing a League under present conditions; all you have done is to create an elaborate hypocrisy to camouflage its existence. And the world surely has sufficient hypocrisy in existence to obviate the need for creating more.

We think these words are as applicable now as when they were first written.

Now that we may expect something like summer weather, and in any case people will be moving about more, we venture to bring the claims of this paper before those who are inclined to do a little quiet propaganda. There are many new subscribers just round the corner if we will only look for them, and by taking either an extra copy and sending it to a likely reader we may get them. If that is not done, we will send a copy of the paper for six weeks to any address that is sent along with six halfpenny stamps to cover cost of postage. We receive many letters from old readers who tell us that the paper was never better than it is at present, and we ought to see that it goes into as many hands as possible.

The advance orders for Mr. Alan Handsacre's book *The Revenues of Religion* are coming in very well. We are quite sure that it will be useful to all Freethinkers and to a very large number of Christians. We are hoping to have a call for a second edition in the near future, and if the book gets the publicity it deserves there should

be no doubt of that. The work extends to nearly 150 pages, and is published at 1s. 6d. in paper and 2s. 6d. in cloth. There is a very striking cover-design by Mr. H. Cutner. The book will be on sale about April 21.

Our friendly contemporary, the *New Age*, says of Mr. Cohen's *Selected Heresies* :—

Anyone who will take the trouble to read this book will be struck by the moderation, clarity, yet forcefulness of his criticisms. One can admire the crescendo of his sledge-hammer blows, but would prefer that so much energy and knowledge were devoted to the present financial system, after the manner of our own "Notes of the Week."

We appreciate the implied compliment, but Mr. Cohen has his own work to do, which is the more necessary since there are so few, comparatively, who will take an open part in it. And after all, this world is too complex for all its problems to be solved by a single formula. We should be the last to deny that our financial system needs overhauling, but so still more glaringly does our religious system need disestablishing. It is not at all clear that any re-arrangement of our finances will of necessity weaken the power of superstition, but it is as clear as noon-day that the weakening of superstition and the inculcation of rational modes of thinking will help all sorts of reforms and compel the considerations of questions that are now accepted as beyond question. Mr. Cohen has often been invited to take an active part in different branches of public work, but he has met the invitation with the reply, "When all you fellows show a greater interest in my branch of work I may be able to spend more of my energy in other directions." As the Americans say, that reply goes in the present instance.

Someone has been sending the parson who is responsible for the editorial in the *Castleford Parish Magazine*, some copies of the *Freethinker*. So he relieves his feelings as follows :—

This unhappy little paper breathes no word of comfort for the sick, the sorrowing and the aged. It has no word of encouragement for the living in this hurrying, bustling age. It has not even a sense of humour; it does not contain a joke.

The reproduction of this ought to at least relieve us of the charge that we have no sense of humour. And if I knew the name of the editor I would print it, if only to be able to say that one issue of the paper contains at least a reference to a joke. But it is difficult to please all, and so while this parish magazine complains that we have no sense of humour, the general complaint we get is that we have too much humour. The editor, by the way, although he is not witty, is at least wise in his generation. He does not give the name of the "unhappy little paper." He only refers to it as published by the Pioneer Press. Perhaps he is afraid that some of his parishioners might be led to read it if they knew the name. And where business interests are at stake the average person is quite all there.

The Scientific Attitude.

So gradual in their working are most of nature's processes that one is seldom able to observe them in motion or to prove conclusively in what direction they are moving. Like the movement of the moon across the sky, we cannot detect any displacement or direction in a short space of time by means of the eye alone. Yet continued observation over a sufficiently long period will surely convince us both of actual motion and of definite direction. Similarly by submitting the processes of nature to a series of consecutive observations over a long enough period, we may often detect not only their movement, but the direction in which they seem to be going. Some of these processes are so slow that it may need the lapse of millenia to notice them. Others can be observed within the life-

time of one or a few generations.

Yet no matter how careful we may be in our observations, and no matter what length of time may be covered in making them, we must never suppose our conclusions to be infallible or eternally true. For there is no known test by which any statement of natural law can be shown either to have been true for all time past, nor to be true for all future time. Nevertheless, the possibility of forecasting events on the evidence of the past is a valuable adjunct to human thought and progress; and if a forecast has been repeatedly verified by subsequent experience, we are justly entitled, within the limits of time indicated by our observations and proof, to assert the probability of further repetition. This, and this only, is the truly scientific attitude. All other is either dogmatic assertion or wild prophecy.

Man, however, continues to suffer under three serious handicaps. His emotional bias leads him to pick and choose, often quite unconsciously, from the mass of evidence available, so that he arrives at conclusions based upon irrelevant or insufficient data; his limited understanding, or ignorance, leads him to misinterpret the evidence, even though it may be ample for a given enquiry; and lastly, his impatience leads him to act upon conclusions before he has allowed the necessary time to elapse for them to have been proved. In short, man tends to cancel out the benefits which he might derive from careful scientific prediction by failing to keep clearly in view the distinction between theory and proven truth.

Science, as we understand the word, has reached a stage of common-sense that refuses to accept as truth what has not been and cannot be repeatedly proved by experience. Yet its followers, being human, are fallible and frequently ignore that necessary principle of progressive knowledge. From time to time we find eminent scientists actively supporting or maintaining the truth of certain wholly unproven beliefs. It is unfortunate that it should be the case. It is even more unfortunate that the general public is incapable of distinguishing the spheres in which the opinions of any given scientist may or may not be accepted with assurance. But for those who are seeking the truth there is one rule which may be safely applied in these cases. Do not accept as valuable the opinions of any scientist upon any subject other than that which has given him his right to be regarded as a scientist. Another rule which is also fairly safe is the following. If, in his efforts to convince the public of the truth of certain contentions, any scientist uses emotional phraseology or otherwise appeals to the emotions of his hearers—do not trust such contentions. For emotion is the enemy of truth and the ally of bigotry. And until the capacity of the public for intelligent criticism and discrimination has been raised above its present level, until the futility of mere belief without proof has been more widely realized, until the intellectual integrity of scientists is such that, however strong their emotional biases may be, they will be ashamed to profess belief in the truth of anything that has not been proved—until these things happen, we will still be in danger of becoming a prey to credulity, prejudice, dogmatism and bigotry.

In the realm of religion nothing is more evident than this constant appeal to emotion, combined with an anxiety to avoid proof of its assertions and to prevent investigation of the traditional bases upon which its dogma is founded. To such a low state has religious teaching descended that no reasonable enquiry concerning the truth of its tenets is tolerated unless its fundamental assertions are taken for granted. So much is this the case nowadays that religion has lost all chance of being included in that progressive sphere

of enquiry of which it may be said to have been at one time the sole representative. The divorce between Religion and Science is now as complete as the divorce between Astrology and Astronomy.

When Science, in its modern aspect, was unknown, man was just as fond of theorizing as he is to-day. These theories, though primitive, were the natural outcome of observation, and must have had in their original forms a certain practical, though limited, value. At any rate they were considered worthy of being handed down. So they were embodied in a variety of oral forms which, with the development of writing, were codified; and their preservation was left in the hands of certain persons who were regarded as the most suitable caretakers. Unfortunately the difficulty of multiplying and broadcasting these codes (since overcome by printing), combined with the advantages which accrued to the position of caretaker, tended to give the latter a power which, once realized, they were loath to share. Primitive science in the form of tradition came thus to be linked with authority in a selfish bond which has continued to this day. But, blind to the fact that power without knowledge is weak, these repositories of early science made little or no effort to increase their wisdom by progressive study and research. They were content to rest on their laurels, or else they tried to increase their power by exploiting the credulity, ignorance and subservience of the masses. Meanwhile science stood still or retrogressed in that exaggerated respect for traditional beliefs which goes by the name of Religion.

But nature, which is utterly impartial, could not tolerate indefinitely such an uneven balance in human affairs. Its revenge or remedy (call it which you like) was typical and inevitable. Too much power in the hands of the few and too little knowledge available for the many led to abuses which, in their turn, resulted in degeneration and disintegration. And the process is still going on. In some cases the germs of true science died in a welter of general ignorance and social confusion; in others they germinated secretly, or more or less openly, in the minds of a few persons whose integrity and curiosity could not be subdued. And from these few, to whom tradition and authority must have become the embodiment of reaction and suppression, we have inherited that ever-expanding body of reliable knowledge which we call Science.

Religion has clung to tradition for so long and has opposed the reasonable curiosity of man on so many occasions, that its claim to be a progressive revelation can no longer be regarded as anything but a joke. Its "eternal truths" have been so frequently proved lies, and when so proved have been abandoned with such reluctance, that few but the ignorant give any credence to them. If at some period in the past its protagonists had had the honesty to admit the theoretical nature of their learning, religion might have had a chance to survive. For it would have remained what it originally was—the effort of man to explain the unknown in terms of the known—and it might by now have grown to an even greater power for good than Science has yet become. But now it is too late. Without sacrificing their chief claim to authority, namely, the supposedly eternal nature of religious truths, the protagonists of every religion can neither retrace their steps with a view to revision, nor can they go forward to the discovery of newer truths which contradict the old theories. They are chained by their own conceit to a primitive and outworn mode of thought which must inevitably become submerged or discarded as man's knowledge increases. Religion has rung its own death-knell.

A review of past history shows that there is satisfactory evidence for the theory that religion and the religious attitude are dying out. Yet the process is

a slow one and does not work evenly at all times or in all places. All that we can say definitely at present is that in certain parts of the world man's intelligence has grown to such an extent that no new religion is ever likely to have more than a passing success. This is all to the good. But the world is large and the primitive, superstitious mentality is much more widespread than the educated; and one cannot foresee with certainty how the one may react upon the other. Even in certain parts where religion has ostensibly been trodden under foot, there seems to be a tendency to treat as a religion what is no more than a socio-political theory. For, as I have shown elsewhere, the essence of religion is not necessarily a belief in supernatural beings, but a belief in the unknown—that is, an accepting as true certain views, statements or conclusions whose truth has not been conclusively and repeatedly proved by experience. In this sense it is just as easy to worship or hold religious respect for social, political or other theories, as it is for the most fantastic of traditional beliefs.

To all those, therefore, who value the benefits which Science and Freethought have brought, one principle should stand out as being pre-eminently rational and worthy of attention. *Never confuse theory with proven truth.* In no case should we assert the truth of, much less attempt to enforce, any theory whatever. If a theory seems worth testing, let us persuade others by reason that it is so, and willing co-operation will not be wanting. The only statements we have any right to assert the truth of are those which have been repeatedly proved true in the past, and whose truth we can ourselves prove when necessity demands. Never should we admit, nor deny, the truth of anything which we cannot prove for ourselves. Never should we be ashamed or fearful of admitting truths when they have been proved to our satisfaction, even though they may go contrary to our preconceptions. For to believe in the value of any statement or theory whose truth we are incapable of proving is, in its essence, to be religious. Only by some such method of mental discipline as the foregoing will the world ever attain to that truly scientific attitude which will result in all striving for the benefit of all and for the harm of none.

C. S. FRASER.

An Appeal to Authority.

A.—THE SITUATION.

WE are living in a day when it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract the attention of most people to religion through the orthodox theological channels. Our everyday behaviour reveals unmistakably that talkies, football, wireless, hiking, motoring, etc., take precedence over the Church in our thoughts. Let the Church put what construction it chooses on this, there is something in it more than a mere "spasm of carelessness," or "passing fit of thoughtless abandon." It would take more than that to make men and women sacrifice salvation from everlasting torment, and risk the danger of a mighty God. The apathy which to-day meets the Church reveals nothing less than the prevalence of a downright disbelief. Phenomena like the present drive for Sunday games are a striking, and a conclusive, evidence of the popular scepticism of our day.

It is to be deplored, however, that this pragmatic renunciation of Christianity is not accompanied by the realization of its anti-Christian implications. Men submit to being known as Christians long after they have ceased to behave in the authorized Christian manner. Furthermore, it satisfies their conservatism

to be told that they are "nearer to God on the golf-links," and "closer to Christ than many of his own (misguided) representatives."

And that is where the Press steps in. The modern Editor and journalist have not been insensible to the possibilities latent in the situation. "All right," they say to the parson, "You've given 'em theology till they're sick of it. Now we'll give 'em science. Churchianity is not the only approach to Christianity. Watch us cut out the Cosmo Lang stuff and give 'em Lodge, Eddington, and Jeans."

Having studied our mood, the Press encourages it. And by a combined effort, based on the "boosting" of certain selected scientists, the impression is created that religion and science are in perfect harmony, and represent two methods of approach to One Great Reality: they do not conflict, for they do not encroach on one another's domain. They pursue parallel paths and meet in the same goal. Or something of the sort.

This kind of nonsense is lapped up as before, and betrays an unquestioning credulity that is not cured by the substitution of press for pulpit.

Consequently the Press has found it easy to foster, if not generate, the notion that science and religion are now very friendly. By reference to prominent names the usual plausible case is made out, and readers are provided with the usual palatable conclusions. At the same time, journalists know that their average reader has not the leisure, even if he had the inclination, to verify for himself what is told him, and, what is more, widen his own range of knowledge.

And so there exists to-day a considerable body of what is dignified by the name "opinion," which says, and repeats, that science and religion are getting on very well together. All the time this is going on there is one great fact which is being hidden from the public; the fact that their own scepticism is reduplicated in the academies and universities. The half-hearted scepticism of the average layman, the unreasoned, the often unconscious, the self-deceptive, scepticism of the man in the street, is paraded by the conscious, the reasoned, the deliberate disbelief of professors of science and philosophy in all quarters of the philosophical world.

Let us, then, examine the proposition that modern thinkers are giving credence to religious doctrines.

B.—ITS COLLAPSE.

Realizing the impossibility of attracting the attention of the general public to religion through the old theological channels, our modern press has endeavoured, with some success, to satisfy the feelings of its public by assuring them that men of science and philosophy have had new glimpses into the religious scheme of things, independent of the ecclesiastic approach. This appeal to authority can here be criticized from three standpoints.

In the first place, science is impersonal. It must have spokesmen. Its spokesmen are called scientists. And when these scientists speak we have to differentiate between fact and opinion. If the scientist tells us that H_2 and O form water we believe him, for we know it to be capable of demonstration by experiment. But if he goes on to say that the reason why they form water is that a Holistic Factor or supernatural agency brought them together for the fulfilment of a purpose, then we reserve the right to be sceptical. By doing so we discriminate between fact and opinion. On the one hand, impersonal, observed fact: on the other, personal, private speculation. Science belongs to the former category, as a body of impersonal public knowledge. The private, unverifiable, opinions, or guesses, of scientists do not form part of that body.

This is fully recognized by scientists themselves; they have no desire to deceive us. In one of his recent books, *Beyond Physics*, Lodge, speaking of his own theory of mind, says distinctly, "It is speculation, and is therefore devoid of scientific authority," while Jeans divides his *Mysterious Universe* into (a) a record of fact, and (b) an excursion into the "deep waters." And so long as a scientist records fact, so long as he talks science, he makes but poor copy for the journalists—unless those facts are of a sensational character. But if he talks non-science, which happens to suit their nonsense, he may find himself lauded in the headlines. Compare, for instance, the eminence given to Jeans' Mathematical God, with the inadequate notice taken of Elliot Smith's anthropological discoveries in Peking. Or consider Lodge himself, whose name is almost a household word. What made him "famous," i.e., well-known. How much is due to his work in physics, and how much to his belief in ghosts? Would his numerous inventions, unaided, place him so far in advance of contemporaries such as Lowe? Popular fame is something largely added to a man because he says something palatable for the readers of the stunt press.

The first critical point, then, is that, at best, it is not science which favours religion, but the private opinions of individual scientists. Nevertheless, I should be the last to deny that the philosophical speculations of scientists are *a priori* futile. The first merit of a philosopher is that he should have a good working knowledge, not necessarily of the details, but of the results and conclusions of scientific investigation. And if scientists were unanimously to give credence to a particular doctrine, that for me would be a recommendation of that doctrine. Which brings us to the second criticism.

First, we bore in mind that the apparant favours to religion come not from actual science, but from speculative scientists. Now we go further, and find it is not even scientists, but *scientists picked out by the press for that very purpose*. We seldom hear of Watson, Hogben, Horniloy, Moore and others. They have nothing to offer religion. No. We hear of Lodge, Eddington, Jeans and Thomson, and find that each has something to say favourable to religion. And then we are asked to accept the conclusion that science as a whole is pro-religious. All the time there is one great fact hidden from the public notice, viz., *if it suited the press for purposes of circulation it could make out quite as strong a case for Atheism and other forms of disbelief.*

G. H. TAYLOR.

(To be concluded.)

Apparition.

I AM near dumb by beauty such as yours;
My blood is all a-tingle at the sight:
Can Hippocrates, vendor of sure cures,
Save me from heartache now you take your flight?
Alas, alas, such loveliness endures
Only a few bright spring-times e'er the night
Of winter comes and dims that radiance bright,
Which, in the end, a damp, cold vault immures.

But I am thankful that the gods vouchsafed
That I on loveliness a while should gaze
And greet its presence with a silent smile;
For deeply on the memory engraved
Abides the thought of those fast-fleeting days,
When life for one sad mortal seemed worth while.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

IS WAR USELESS?

SIR,—With your kind permission, I would refer to Mr. R. B. Kerr's letter in your issue of March 27, in which he says, "The wise thing is not to say that war is futile, but to take immediate steps to remove the cause of war." The causes given, being pressure of population, and unfair distribution of territory. His remedies are universal birth control, and fair distribution of land among the peoples of the world.

It is true pressure of population is the excuse given by the persons interested in making war, but I deny the truth of their allegation. It is not pressure of population which is the real cause, why these industrious people have to live upon what he calls a Spartan diet (rice). I quote from the *Commonwealth* of March 5, from an article on Japan's Land Raid in China. "For Japan it is pleaded that her growing population must have an outlet." This was the sort of foolish talk indulged in by Germany, and by writers such as General von Bernhardi and by Protectionists, in Britain. In each case the over-population scare rested upon a myth.

There was, and is, no over-population. At no time in past history has this been the case anywhere, nor will it be so at any time in the future. Over-crowding we know to exist in every civilized country; but it is a great mistake to see in this evidence of over-population. In all lands where the people are found herded together in overcrowded conditions, there is the other side of the shield to be seen by those with eyes to see: empty spaces lacking population lie side by side with densely populated areas in which the people seem almost without room to move.

Japan has an area of 150,198 square miles and a population of 59,500,000. Great Britain (including Northern Ireland) has an area of 95,030 square miles and a population of 44,500,000—468 persons to the square mile.

Great Britain can show very bad overcrowding, but nobody having the least acquaintance with the facts will say that this country is over-populated. There are those who do say so, of course, but it is charitable to suppose that they do not know any better.

Japan with 15,000,000 more people than Britain, has 55,168 square miles more space for their accommodation. Our respective conditions are practically equal. One third of Japanese mainland, therefore, would be ample for the needs of her population.

But they have Land Lords in Japan. Over 60 per cent of the annual rice crop is taken by these as rent for letting their fellows work.

It is safe to assume that, like our home-grown variety, Japanese Land Lords are Imperialists, and constantly urge their fellow countrymen to look abroad for that territory so necessary, as they tell them, for their growing population, but it will not be the growing population, who will get those lands abroad, if British experience be anything to go by; it will be the Imperialist Land Lords!

War will end when it no longer pays to steal territory.

There would be no advantage for the Japanese exploiters to grab Chinese territory if they had to pay the Chinese people full yearly rent for what they held. "Full yearly rent" being the annual value of the site, including all minerals and other natural resources in or under the land. Chinese interests in China would then rank for consideration equally with British, Japanese, or other foreign groups, instead of being, as now, seldom or never mentioned.

Again, Henry George in *Progress and Poverty* on the Malthusian Theory, pp. 100 and 101, says, "I assert that the cases commonly cited as instances of over-population will not bear investigation. India, China, and Ireland furnish the strongest of these cases. In each of these countries, large numbers have perished by starvation, and large classes are reduced to abject misery or

compelled to emigrate. But is this really due to over-population?"

Comparing total population with total area, India and China are far from being the most densely populated countries in the world. According to the estimates of M. M. Behm Wagner, the population of India is but 132 to the square mile and that of China 119, whereas Saxony has a population of 42 to the square mile; Belgium 441; England 322; the Netherlands 291; Italy 234 and Japan 233.

It appears to me that Thomas Paine gives us a much better reason why we have war than Mr. Kerr does. In Paine's *Rights of Man*, he says, p. 169: "Whatever is the cause of taxes to a Nation becomes also the means of revenue to a Government. Every war terminates with an addition of taxes, and consequently with an addition of revenue; and in any event of war, in the manner they are commenced and concluded the power and interest of Governments are increased. War, therefore, from its productiveness, as it easily furnishes the pretence of necessity for taxes and appointments to places and offices, becomes a principal part of the system of old Governments; and to establish any mode to abolish war, however advantageous it might be to Nations, would be to take from such Government the most lucrative of its branches. The frivolous matters upon which war is made show the disposition and avidity of Governments to uphold the system of war, and betray the motives upon which they act."

A. MCHATTIE.

[We regret that we have been compelled to curtail Mr. McHattie's letter. We must again remind correspondents of the need for brevity.—ED.]

FILM CENSORSHIP.

SIR,—I must apologize for a delay in replying to the criticism offered by "Aramis," in the *Freethinker* for April 3, but even if only from "general sympathy" with the Freethought position, he surely realizes that Freethinkers do not tremble to imagine what would happen if censorship were abolished any more than they tremble at the thought of the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws. They fight for freedom and would rather have the disadvantages attached to liberty than the cotton-wool padding of officially regulated slavery. "Aramis's" attitude to censorship shows that his thinking is still tainted with theological fogs.

I appreciate his concern for the child, but my article in the *Freethinker* of February 7 dealt with that aspect, even if only lightly. I must point out to him that where the child is concerned the censor thinks only of sex films, he is not interested in gangster and such like pictures. We should at present be wise perhaps to keep the child from sex theme films, although it is obvious to me that a saner sex education would be a better safeguard for the adolescent than all "thou shalt not's."

That cinema people are concerned more with profits than with beauty and morals is true, but it has nothing to do with the question. It applies also to the exhibition of films that Aramis would class as good, and is, in fact, true of most commercial activity. Box office receipts do not make a good picture bad, or a bad picture worse. I admit that the advertisement posters are deplorable, but they will not be improved by censoring: a better way would be to prosecute the advertiser for getting money under false pretences. I have seen few films that proved to be as daring as the posters suggested, but then I have ceased to be disappointed by that.

If sex themes are necessarily bad, it is due mainly to a vicious outlook on sex matters, and is a fit study for the psycho-analyst. The fault lies with a rotten education, not with spicy films.

I have no intention of defining obscenity and spiciness, or liberty and licence. The obscenity laws themselves have not yet succeeded in satisfactorily defining obscenity. But I would suggest that what "Aramis" might consider obscene, I might look upon as mildly spicy. The difference will be found in our respective educations. I commend that to him. Many of these words do not convey genuine thought pictures, they are a debased coinage, labels on prejudices, and often valueless in argument.

The boundary beyond which things are obscene is crossed in every age (the existence of a censor guarantees that) and in that fact is to be seen our hope of abolishing censorship. Such abolition will not mean the end of morality, but only a change in our idea of what is a good moral code. But even if censorship could be justified on the score that it eliminated the bad, its potentialities of interfering with the good would still make me decide to do away with it.

And finally "Aramis" might remember that the cinema trade, which is solely concerned with profits, actually set up its own censorship, and that even to-day the B.B.F.C. is at best only a semi-official body.

L'AIGUILLON.

"Doth God Take Care For Oxen?"

If we look back at the classics we discover that both Ovid and Plutarch would not sell their oxen, in their old age, which had served them faithfully; Catallus wrote a little poem on the death of a little pet sparrow; Apollonius of Tyana, the great Ppthagorean philosopher, whose teaching closely resembled in its moral grandeur the doctrines of Christianity, refused, though invited by a king, to participate in the chase; Ayrian, the contemporary of Epictetus, and his friend, would not kill a hare he had pursued with dogs; Celsus in a controversy with Origen condemned the Christian doctrine that animals were inferior to men, asserting that the souls of men migrated into the bodies of animals and that many of them equalled men in reason; Porphyry of Tyre, the friend and disciple of Longinus, in the third century wrote a treatise against men eating animal flesh, and Seneca for a time refrained from all animal food—both from reasons of humaneness.

Plutarch, writing in the age of Domitian, not only denounced the cruelties of the amphitheatre, saying that such spectacles hardened the hearts of the spectators, but strenuously maintained that man has a duty to the animal world as binding as his duty to his fellow-men.

St. Paul wrote, "It is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?" a singularly disastrous outburst of sarcasm—and illustrates the strange and lamentable fact that early Christians so elevated the importance of man in the scale of creation as to depress unduly the claims of animals to a sympathetic regard.

STEPHEN COLERIDGE.

From 'The Animals' Defender and Zoophilist.

Sonnet

THE wind is icy, but it fans the flames;
It chills the heart, yet strengthens the desire;
The bitter blast awakes the sleeping fire,
Which, now a furnace, burns away all shames,
Let us call actions by their proper names
And say that he to marriage doth aspire,
Yet somehow only seems to rouse her ire;
He praiseth love; she calls it lust, and blames.
It may be she is right; that things of mind
Are higher, nobler than the sinful flesh
(Flesh, made by God, yet made our souls to snare).
But though she chill him with her icy wind,
His snaring fire may catch her in its mesh;
It, too, may warm her; let her then beware.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

PIOUS IRISH.

An Irish friend who stays with us on his visits to London has a taste for going to the Marble Arch to hear the orators. We were leaving one evening when we were approached by a gentleman in a tall hat with a white band, on which was inscribed "Jesus Saves." This man tapped my friend on the shoulder and enquired "Have you found Jesus?" It was good to see his pious face when my friend replied: "My God, have you lost him again?" There is a story of the late Dr. Mahaffy, Provost of Trinity, that he was accosted in O'Connell Street, Dublin, by a person who asked him if he was saved. "What's that?" asked the Doctor looking very puzzled. "Are you saved, Sir?" repeated the man. "Well," said Dr. Mahaffy, in a loud whisper into the man's ear, "between ourselves—I am, but 'twas a damn near thing." Dr. Houston Collison, the Irish musician relates that when he was touring a company with Faust in the West of Ireland, great difficulty was found at some small towns in fitting up the necessary stage "props." After much trouble a trap-door was fixed on the "stage" through which Mephisto might at the critical moment disappear into the nether regions. When that moment arrived the trap-door stuck when the actor was half in and half out. "Hurrush boys," cried a voice from the god's "Hell's full at last." A good Irish school-boy howler: "Wild beasts are kept in the theological gardens."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrolds Road, North End Road): 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.

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, Dr. C. W. Saleeby—"How to Greet the Spring."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Lord Snell, C.B.E.—"Present Social Conditions in America."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, C. E. M. Joad, M.A.—"Confessions of Modern Science."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.7, five minutes from the Brecknock): 7.20, Miss Pocock (The Eugenics Soc.) "One of Our Responsibilities as Citizens."

WEMBLEY AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (Zealley's Cafe, 100 High Road, Wembley): 7.30. Members and Visitors will discuss—"The Social Implications of Secularism." Admission Free. Questions and Discussion.

COUNTRY.

MERSEYSIDE FREETHINKERS.—Mystery Ramble on Sunday, April 17, meet Wootton Car Terminus at 3.0 p.m. No arrangement for tea. Bring refreshments. Small cost. Leader, W. Ll. Owen.

HANTS AND DORSET BRANCH N.S.S. (36 Victoria Park Road, Bournemouth, 6.30. Paper and Discussion.

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): Monday, April 18, Mr. A. D. McLaren will read a Paper on—"Truth as an Ethical Factor."

ASHINGTON AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (Princes Ball Room Cafe): 7.15, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Spiritualism, Mediums, Spirits."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Rooms, Green Street): 7.0, Mr. F. Bradford—A Lecture.

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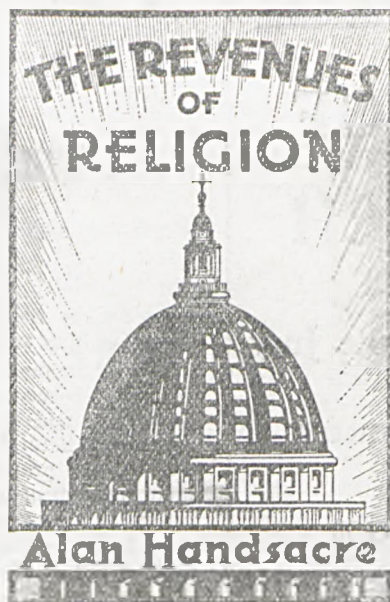
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