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Views and Opinions.

The Church and its Revenues.

WITH regard to the relations of the Church and State there are three possible positions. The Church may control the State, the State may control the Church, or they may exist side by side, each leading its own life, the Church being subject to all those duties and obligations to which every other organized body of people are subject. The first belongs to the more primitive types of human society, and to a time when men moved in fear of the gods, and to avoid rousing their anger was a matter of ever-pressing importance. This is the ideal of the Roman Catholic Church to-day, and in a diluted form of many other religionists who are masquerading—often quite unconsciously—as what they call “Free Religionists.” By this they usually mean they do not wish the State to interfere with them, while always aiming at interfering with the State. Witness such things as Sabbatarian legislation, Blasphemy Laws, and various privileges claimed by religious bodies.

The second method, that of the State ruling the Church, is one that has in a way been adopted in self-defence. Left to itself, and with nothing effectively to check its will, priestly control spells stagnation or retrogression, and in every case an intolerable tyranny. The growing secularization of life resents the domination of another world and a hierarchy that threatens man’s freedom and obstructs social movements. In the marking out of life into a religious and a secular zone there is born the beginning of a conflict that is to-day assuming an acute form. The State dare not permit religious organizations to work their will, the Church—no matter what its exact form—cannot completely surrender its implied or explicit claim to domination. It would be a confession that, at least so far as this life is concerned, religion is a mere speculation and one that Society can safely ignore.

Church and State Disendowment.

It is quite probable that in the near future in this country, the question of the disestablishment of the

Church will become one of practical politics. This may not be so much on account of the activity of the so-called Free Churches—they could be brought off at almost any moment by the Established Church agreeing that they should have a better share of the public plunder. What the Free Churches desire is not the abolition of State patronage and State support, but their share of the support which is given by the State to the Established Church. As it is, they take all they can get of patronage, public money and special privileges, and are never slow to ask for more. It is the Establishment itself that is getting restive with parliamentary control, and would like to see the Church turned into a self-governing body, retaining, of course, all its existing privileges. When that question comes to the front it is certain to give rise to the question of disendowment. We may depend upon it that like all priesthoods the Episcopalian clergy will fight very hard to retain its present endowments, and we shall have the usual nonsense talked about “robbing God,” etc. The truth is that the Church of England, as a Department of the State, owns nothing. There is State property which is set aside for the use and maintenance of the Church and its ministers, and the State will have the same right to say in what direction this money shall go in the future, just as Parliament has always the right and the power to say in which direction public money shall be spent. Mr. Churchill’s raid on the Road Fund is a case in point. The State has always the legal right to do as it likes with its own.

At any time *The Revenues of Religion*, by Mr. Alan Handsacre, just issued by the Secular Society, Limited (Pioneer Press, 1s. 6d. and 2s. 6d.) would have been an interesting and useful volume, but at the present juncture of affairs it has an added significance and value. The ordinary reader will find in this book nearly all he requires to understand the position of the Church in the State and the influence it has had on social life. The sections dealing with persecution and education will be found useful in this latter direction. And the reader who wishes to follow the subject in greater detail will also find a plan laid down which will enable him to secure more elaborate information on any topic in which he is specially interested. The book has the quality of being not merely informative, but the much more valuable quality of inciting the reader to acquire more. The work should have a wide circulation.

* * *

Tithes.

About half of Mr. Handsacre’s work is concerned, as one might expect from the title, with the financial side of the Establishment, although it must never be forgotten that in many ways the other Christian Churches in this country also draw from the public funds directly and indirectly. If they do not draw as much as the Establishment, it is because the oppor-

tunity to do so does not present itself. The chapter on tithes leaves no doubt as to their being a tax on land for the benefit of the Church. No less an authority on ecclesiastical law than Lord Phillimore has laid this down very clearly in the following passage:—

The earliest tithe payers acted no doubt under the idea . . . that they were under a religious duty to give a tenth of their income to the Church. But when the idea had once taken root in public opinion anyone who refused to pay tithe . . . was subject to excommunication. If this had no terrors for him the aid of the secular arm was employed and . . . he was cast into prison. Thus the voluntary subscription became a tax. If this bit of legal history be correct . . . all subsequent tithe is a tax imposed by the State for the benefit of the church.

Under whatever form it assumes the tithe is fundamentally that—a tax imposed by the State for the maintenance of the Church. The amount credited to the tithe fund of the Church is to-day over three millions annually, but this clearly does not tell the whole of the truth. For there is to be added the amount of public money paid for the commutation of tithes in certain areas, and the interest on the capital sum so expended must certainly be reckoned as an annual public gift to the Church. Another aspect of the tithe is that in medieval times the proportion of the tithe paid was to be returned to the poor of the parish in the shape of charities. But in this respect the Church has acted like other landowners. The gifts of land from the State to both laymen and clerics generally carried with it certain obligations to the community. But in course of time both churchman and layman managed to get rid of all the obligations while holding tenaciously to the privileges and profits. The present outcry against payment of tithes, and the manifest hardships to which farmers are exposed by this payment may lead to some sort of change, but the public will need be on its guard to prevent itself being treated in this instance as it has been treated in so many others. The trick played over the matter of Queen Anne's Bounty is a case in point. The Queen having surrendered a portion of the Crown rights for the benefit of the poor clergy, this amount was promptly made good to the Crown by Parliament, so that the public paid first to the Church, via Queen Anne's Bounty, and then to the Crown via the Civil List.

* * *

Religion and the Public Purse.

In spite of Mr. Handsacre's careful and elaborate examination of the revenues of religion it is quite clear that no exact statement of the income of the Church—or Churches—from public funds can be made. To begin with the most obviously unexplained item, no exact estimate can be given of the amount of public money received by places of worship in this country from the remittance of rates and taxes. But if anyone will take, in any town or city, the rateable value of land on which the numerous Churches and Chapels stand he will gain some idea of the very many millions which the general ratepayer has to make good owing to the Churches and Chapels not being subjected to the taxation which falls upon other organizations. In passing, it is noticeable that no political party dares, in spite of excessive taxation in other directions, to suggest that revenue might be derived from this untouched source. And, of course, there is no record in the published returns of the interest derived from capital sums—running into millions—which were voted to the Church by Parliament from time to time, although this has not been done in recent years. The reliability of Church statements on finance may be gauged from a statement cited by Mr.

Handsacre from a publication of the Church "Press and Publication Board." "No endowment has been given by the State to the Church of England." This is a very fine way of speaking the truth and telling a lie in the same sentence. It is also worth noting that in a Report issued no later than Monday last (*Times*, April 25), the Tithe Committee of Queen Anne's Bounty explicitly assert that "the present Government, like the Government which preceded it, have stated definitely that they have no intention of introducing legislation affecting the liability to the payment of tithes."

The statistical tables taken from Year Books given in the book will be of interest as much for what they conceal as for what they disclose. But one would like to know the exact cost to the State of such pickings as burial fees, pensions, etc. It is a great pity that some member of Parliament cannot be found with enough courage and a sufficient sense of honesty towards the general public to move for an exact return to be made. It would certainly be enlightening. The following items which we take from Mr. Handsacre will make this clear. In India there is an ecclesiastical establishment which consists of five Sees, each with a Bishop, an Archdeacon and a Commissary. There are 130 chaplains, each of which receives from £15 to £30 per month. A chaplain may retire after five year's service, when he is provided with a free passage home and a bonus of £400. As these Chaplains are in the Civil Service of the Crown, we presume they have the usual pensions. Bishops and Archdeacons have a pension ranging from £750 to £1,500. All these salaries and pensions are paid out of the revenues of India. How many are in receipt of pensions is not stated. The War Office has its Chaplains' Department with staff of secretaries, as also has the Navy. Even the Air Ministry has its religious equipment all paid for out of public funds. The salaries here range from £292 to £875 with £1,195 for the Chaplain-in-Chief. There are also some nice pickings in connexion with the appointment of Chaplains to Embassies and Legations, with minor gains from services in connexion with Hospitals, Prisons and other institutions.

There are indeed few opportunities for dipping into the public purse which the Churches generally have neglected. Whether "Free" or Established this is equally true in terms of opportunity. And the whole casts a very sinister light on the moral pretensions of the clergy generally. In short, in the light of Mr. Handsacre's useful work, the Churches present themselves as a huge branch of the Civil Service in which the majority of its members look forward eagerly to the "plums" which are there for those who are fortunate enough to pluck them. Reformers of all descriptions will find much in this book that will prove of value and of interest. In the brief compass of just under 150 pages the author has drawn up a case which we should like to see some of our religiously-minded newspapers and journals attempt to answer.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

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

Without LIBERTY, what union would there exist among men? They would be united as the horse is united to his rider—as the whip of the master is to the skin of the slave.—*Delamennais*.

Through Christian Spectacles.

"When found, make a note of."—*Captain Cuttle.*

"Humanity thinks slowly."—*C. R. W. Nevinston.*

"We need to have more respect for the thinkers."
Dr. Norwood.

"What fools these mortals be."—*Shakespeare.*

THE small but ferocious tribe of Christian Evidence exponents have a new and somewhat unexpected ally in Commander Oliver Locker-Lampson, M.P., for the Handsworth Division of Birmingham, who has published a lengthy article in the *Evening News*, (London), April 15, dealing with Religion in Parliament. But the Commander wears his rue with a difference. Like that placid dachshund which Mark Twain saw in the possession of a sportsman who was taking it out to hunt elephants, he lacks bitterness. He also lacks some other things—the ability to murder the English language, the power of talking very loudly in the open air, and accuracy.

Nevertheless, I find myself in a rebellious humour. For there is a schoolboy tone in the Commander's propaganda, and a note of patronage. There is also an echo of the ridiculous Oxford University manner, which has been described, jocosely, as the attitude of the Christian Trinity addressing a lodging-house bug. It will probably be grateful to those sentimentalists who cling to the name of Christian, but I imagine it will irritate rather than satisfy other readers of more virile intelligence.

Commander Locker-Lampson is really upset at the mere suggestion that there is less religion to-day than a generation earlier. He is so incensed that his blood pressure is affected, and his sense of vision has become impaired. To-day, the Commander asserts, there is more sincerity and less cant, and the present House of Commons contains more practising Christians than in the awful days of horse-buses, "growlers," and Queen Victoria. I don't know why he selects the House of Commons for his illustration, for he might as well have selected the Grand Stand at Newmarket. However, he points out, with tears in his pen, that he has known four politicians in twenty years who have more or less regularly attended a church, chapel, or tin-tabernacle. Remembering that there are about 700 Members of Parliament, four is not an overwhelming number, and even if the Commander counts himself in, the grand total is still only five. What a revelation! Dartmoor, Borstal, and Wormwood Scrubbs can show a better record than that, and the inhabitants may be as good men as politicians.

The Commander paints a truly awful picture of fifty years ago. Those dreadful days were, it seems, worse than the time of Sodom and Gomorrah, worse than Southend-on-Sea on a Sunday in the summer-time. He was himself but a child, but he must have had a strong constitution to stand it all. Hardened veteran that I am, I blush to record some of the horrors. In that period of wickedness John Morley actually printed the name "God" with a little "g." In a hall in the Midlands, Charles Bradlaugh (so the Commander says) stood with a watch in his hand, and gave "God" sixty seconds to strike him dead. And the daring Atheist actually chuckled when he returned that watch to his pocket. It was "too deep for tears." Compared to this awful period the Great War was but a football scrimmage. The only reason that the world was not entirely wiped out by an incensed, outraged deity was due, probably, to the fact that Mr. Gladstone attended a place of worship, and his opponent, Disraeli, occasionally snoozed in his pew. That watch ought to be in the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's.

Commander Locker-Lampson is not the first distinguished man who knows his own job, but outside it is just a breezy, happy-go-lucky schoolboy. But he should not carry this Peter Pan business into middle-age, for he might find himself in Colney Hatch instead of the House of Commons, which would be a sad end for so earnest a crusader. The Commander hasn't got a good word for Freethinkers. He suggests that the fault of those dreadful people, or rather their misfortune, for they are born that way, is that they lack the religious sense:—

Even as you might stand before a picture of Michael Angelo and dismiss it as a sickening daub, when to the sensitive soul it is a miracle of truth, beyond analysis.

He is quite sorry for the poor demented Freethinkers, and in the heat of the argument, a little confused and more than a little silly. Commander Locker-Lampson is not the first sailor who has "seen things." He is obsessed with a great illusion. Christians have no monopoly of aesthetics or the finer feelings. It is doubtful if the average hymn of to-day has any more claim to be considered as real literature than the usual music-hall song. And the very glaring lurid lithographs of sacred subjects framed in so many Christian homes suggest that colour-blindness is not by any means confined to the heterodox.

As a defender of the faith, the Commander is not an outstanding success. He points to the wireless as a proof that religion is not dead to-day. I cheerfully concede the point, but it is not proved by relaying cacophonous Negro *spirituals* in a Sunday programme, or by a Jesuit priest mouthing nonsense from Mayfair. The question is how many persons listen to the pious propaganda, and how many prefer listening to Continental stations. Our sailor-crusader will have it that the present generation is basically more moral than its Victorian predecessor, and instances national sobriety. But the two factors that have arrested drunkenness have nothing to do with religion. They are the counter attractions of the cinema, and the high price of beer, particularly the latter. Both are purely secular and not religious processes.

The Commander is not so child-like and bland as he appears to be. Counting noses in the House of Commons may be fun for a sailor ashore, but what of the House of Lords? The Church of England has a score of direct religious representatives in this Upper Chamber, and the votes of these lawn-sleeved ecclesiastics shows quite clearly the ethical value of religion, and how far removed from present-day ideals is this Church of Christ. Bishops opposed free education, and voted against admitting women as members of London Borough Councils. They voted against admitting Nonconformists to University degrees, and against removing the civil disabilities of Roman Catholics, Jews, and Freethinkers. None voted for the abolition of flogging women in public, beating women in prison, and the use of the lash in the Army and Navy. They even opposed the provision of seats for tired shop-assistants. Scores of measures for the bettering of the conditions of the working class have been opposed by these Fathers-in-God, and the pages of Hansard's "Parliamentary Debates" prove the unending hostility of even distinguished Christians to all forms of progress. When a schoolboy said that "Solomon had three hundred wives and seven hundred porcupines," the master shouted "Think, boy, Think!" The advice should be given to the gallant but emotional commander. There are so many things not dreamt of in his nautical brand of religiosity which is funny without being vulgar.

The Dark Ages of Christian Faith.

Concluded from page 228.)

As Christianity spread through the length and breadth of the Roman Empire, it stifled and killed the ordered and civilized pagan life, like a giant Upas tree. Professor Westfall Thompson, in his recently published work on the Middle Ages, tells us that: "in the fourth century theology was a universal object of discussion," and cites a letter, written by Gregory of Nyssa, in which, referring to Constantinople, he says: "This city is full of mechanics and slaves who are all of them profound theologians and preach in the shops and the streets. If you want a man to change a piece of silver, he tells you in what way the Son differs from the Father; if you ask the price of bread, you are told by way of reply that the Son is inferior to the Father; and if you inquire whether the bath is ready, the answer is that the Son is made of nothing."³

As the historian Buckle observes: "In what are rightly termed the Dark Ages, there was a literature in which valuable materials were to be found; but there was no one who knew how to use them." And further: "It was not that better books were wanting, but it was that the relish for such books was extinct."⁴ The interest in the affairs of this world had been killed, and all thought and interest concentrated upon the next. To quote Buckle again:—

There was the literature of Greece and Rome, which the monks not only preserved, but even occasionally copied. But what could that avail such readers as they? So far from recognizing the merit of the ancient writers, they were unable to feel even the beauties of their style, and they trembled at the boldness of their inquiries. At the first glimpse of the light, their eyes were blinded. They never turned the leaves of a pagan author without standing aghast at the risk they were running, and they were in constant fear, lest by imbibing any of his opinions, they should involve themselves in a deadly sin. The result was that they willingly laid aside the great masterpieces of antiquity; and in their place they substituted those wretched compilations which corrupted their taste, increased their credulity, strengthened their errors, and prolonged the ignorance of Europe, by embodying each separate superstition in a written and accessible form, thus perpetuating its influence, and enabling it to enfeeble the understanding even of a distant posterity. (Buckle: *History of Civilization*. Ed. 1904, p. 154.)

Buckle declared that he had no doubt, that if the knowledge of the alphabet had been lost for a time, so that men could no longer read these innumerable Lives of the Saints, packed with miracles and other theological trash, "the subsequent progress of Europe would have been more rapid than it really was."

Even when the new revival of learning, the "Renaissance," was in full blaze in Italy, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, says H. T. Peck the philologist: "The monasteries were still as somnolent as ever. The schoolmen were still threshing out their mouldy theological chaff. The copyists of the North were still erasing Virgil and Catullus and Lucretius to make room for Rubanus, Maurus, and Duns Scotus. Into these sleepy haunts came the scholars of Italy, eager to search among the parchments that lay in dusty bundles in the *scriptoria*, the cellars, and sometimes even the out-houses, for any scroll or scrap that contained the Latin of pagan Rome."⁵ And this is

what they found. Poggio Bracciolini, one of the most successful searchers for these ancient pagan works, tells us of his search at the monastery of St. Gallen. He says: "In the middle of the well-stocked library, we discover Quintilian safe as yet and sound, though covered with dust and filthy from neglect and age. You must know that the books are not housed as they deserve, but were lying in a most foul and dismal dungeon at the very bottom of a tower—a place into which condemned criminals would hardly have been thrust."⁶

Boccaccio, another of these scholarly searchers after the ancient wisdom, gives a similar account of his search at the famous monastery of Monte Cassino:—

Desirous of saving the collection of books . . . he modestly asked the monk to open the library for him as a favour. The monk stiffly answered, as he pointed to a steep staircase: "Go up; it is open." Boccaccio gladly went up; but he found that the place which held so great a treasure was without a door or a key. He entered, and saw grass sprouting on the windows, and all the books and benches thick with dust. Astonished, he began to open and turn the leaves of first one tome and then another, and found many and various volumes of ancient and foreign works. Some of them had lost several sheets. Others were snipped and pared all round the text and mutilated in different ways. Coming to the cloister, he asked the monk whom he met, why these valuable books had been so disgracefully mutilated. The answer was given him that the monks, in order to gain a little money, were in the habit of cutting off sheets and making psalters which they sold to boys. The margins they made into charms and disposed of them to women. (H. T. Peck: *A History of Classical Philology*. p. 279.)

That is the way the Monks preserved the treasure of ancient pagan science, learning, and literature! What did they preserve of it? As a matter of fact, most of it was preserved, during the Middle Ages, by the Arabians, who even added something to its store; and it was by translations from Arabic that they were first re-introduced into Europe, so ending the Dark Ages of Christian Faith.

Of all the claims made for Christianity the claim that the ancient pagan classics were preserved by the monks in their monasteries must surely be the most impudent and false. Robertson in his *View of Society in Europe during the Middle Ages*, says "Literature, science, taste, were words little in use during the ages which we are contemplating, or if they occur at any time, eminence in them is ascribed to persons and productions so contemptible, that it appears their true import was little understood. Persons of the highest rank, and in the most eminent stations, could not write. Many of the clergy did not understand the breviary, which they were obliged daily to recite; some of them could scarcely read it."⁷ Although these were the Ages of Faith, when everyone knelt to the Altar and the Throne, yet, says the same historian—who was not a sceptic, but a Doctor of Divinity—"a greater number of those atrocious actions which fill the mind of man with astonishment and horror occur in the history of the centuries under review than in that of any period of the same extent in the annals of Europe. If we open the history of Gregory of Tours, or of any contemporary author, we meet with a series of deeds of cruelty, perfidy, and revenge, so wild and enormous as almost to exceed belief."⁸ Something different from the beautiful, golden age, the age of Catholic Faith depicted by Roman Catholic writers for our instruction and edification!

W. MANN.

³ Prof. J. W. Thompson: *The Middle Ages* 300-1500 Vol. I. p. 37.

⁴ Buckle: *History of Civilization* (1904). p. 154.

⁵ H. T. Peck: *A History of Classical Philology*. p. 275.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 278.

⁷ W. Robertson: *Works* (Ed. 1822) Vol. IV. pp. 21-22.

⁸ *Ibid.* Vol. IV. p. 24.

The Zantekrustinarian.

SCENE. *A bun-fight at Lady Snooks'. The hostess, fluttering from one group of persons to another, suddenly catches sight of a solitary figure in the corner and, clutching at the sleeve of the man standing nearest to her, she drags him off.*

Lady Snooks (breathlessly): Come along, Bishop dear (*puff*). I want you to meet a most interesting character (*puff, puff*). I'm sure you and he will get on famously together (*puff*). He's a Zantekrustinarian, you know (*puff, puff*) . . .

Bishop: A what?

Lady S. (breathlessly): He'll tell you all about it, I'm sure (*puff*). Now, here we are . . . Oh, Mr. Brown, I do so want you to meet (*puff*) the Bishop of Barndor. Bishop, this is Mr. Brown . . . Now, if you'll excuse me (*puff*), there's the Maharajah of Buttonhole just arrived (*puff*), and I must rush away . . .

Bishop: A charming woman, our hostess, don't you think? So full of vitality.

Brown: Relatively, of course.

Bishop: I beg your pardon?

Brown: I said *relatively*—relatively charming and relatively full of vitality.

Bishop: Ha, ha! I see you are an admirer of Einstein.

Brown: I'm afraid that is impossible. I don't know the gentleman.

Bishop: I mean, it appears that you admire his theory—the theory of relativity, you know.

Brown: Oh yes, I know the theory very well. But no theory can be admirable until it ceases to be a theory.

Bishop: Ha, ha! Quite a Chestertonian paradox, Mr. Brown. Please explain.

Brown: Certainly. Theories, my dear Bishop, are not truths. They are speculations based upon a limited number of facts which have been selected and interpreted in certain ways. Since, in the formation of any theory, it is humanly impossible to take all relevant facts into consideration—and all facts are relevant to a certain extent—it is, therefore, equally impossible to assert that the selection and interpretation made is completely adequate to the problem concerning which the theory has been formed.

Bishop: I do not quite follow.

Brown: I did not expect you would. But let me explain in simpler language. A theory is not a verified fact or truth. At bottom it is a sort of guess. For even the most haphazard guess is based upon some facts. Yet, no matter how few or how many facts a guess may be based upon, its accuracy can only be determined by subsequent experience. The same is true of the most carefully worked-out theory. As long, therefore, as a theory is a theory—that is, as long as it has not been proved true by subsequent experience—one cannot admire it. For one might be admiring something which subsequent experience may prove to be nonsense. But, once a theory has been verified by subsequent experience, it automatically ceases to be a theory and becomes a truth. Which is exactly why I said that no theory can be called admirable until it ceases to be a theory.

Bishop: Ha, hum—yes, yes. Quite. I see your point. But—er—surely with regard to a theory that has been proved true, one might quite legitimately say that it is an admirable one.

Brown: Not *is*, my dear Bishop, but *was*. For, as I said before, when a theory has been proved true, it is no longer a theory. It *was* a theory—it is a truth.

Bishop: Ah; I see, I see. You regard theories as unproved truths, and therefore unworthy of admiration because they are not proven.

Brown: Not at all. If you will forgive me for saying so, your logic is all at sea. Theories are no more unproved truths than they are unproved untruths. Theories are theories. Call them guesses or suppositions if you like—but not truths. A truth is something proven. A theory must, by the very nature of the case, be unproven.

Bishop: You are very precise.

Brown: Thank you. I do my best not to confuse my statements by the misuse of terms.

Bishop: Quite, quite. But I understand that you hold certain interesting theories in regard to—shall we say—the meaning of life, which are—er—not exactly proven.

Brown: You are not very precise.

Bishop: Well, to put it plainly you hold certain religious views which—er—are not exactly proven. And I presume that you must admire them—or you would not hold them.

Brown: On the contrary, I hold no religious views whatever.

Bishop: Dear, dear! I can scarcely credit that!

Brown: What you really mean, my dear Bishop, is not that you are unable to credit my statement, but that for your own comfort you would rather not believe it to be true.

Bishop: But our hostess gave me to understand that you were a Zante—er—Zante, Zante-Kruschen-something. I really didn't quite catch the word.

Brown (smiling): Some error, I fear. I am an Atheist.

Bishop: Tut, tut! You cannot be serious.

Brown: Tell me, Bishop—are you a Christian?

Bishop: Isn't it obvious?

Brown: Not to me. But you haven't answered my question.

Bishop: Of course I am a Christian.

Brown: Tut, tut! You cannot be serious.

Bishop (throwing back his shoulders): And why, pray?

Brown: Well—you said that I could not be serious when I told you that I was an Atheist; so I naturally assume that you cannot be serious when you say you are a Christian.

Bishop (nonplussed): I fear you are jesting.

Brown: I admit to being partial to a joke.

Bishop: Yet your views must be purely theoretical and, on your own argument, not to be admired.

Brown: While yours are absolute and everlasting truths, I suppose?

Bishop: There is more authority for religion than for irreligion.

Brown: Quantity, my dear Bishop, is not quality. The question is—which authority is the more truthful?

Bishop: Religion has its authority from the Most High.

Brown: The most high what—steeple?

Bishop: You choose to be blasphemous, Mr. Brown. I will not discuss the matter further.

Brown: Just as you please. But I repudiate the charge of blasphemy—unless you regard jesting at myths as blasphemous.

Bishop: God is not a myth!

Brown: What is it, then?

Bishop: You know as well as I do who and what God is.

Brown: Well, that surprises me. If you know what God is as well as I do, why disguise yourself as a bishop? But I fancy that I know a good deal better than you what God is. Allow me to explain . . .

At this exciting juncture Lady Snooks comes puffing up and with a hurried "Please excuse me, Mr. Brown," she drags the Bishop of Barndor off.

Lady Snooks: I am so sorry (*puff*). Such a silly mistake (*puff*). Mr. Brown, the Zantekrustinarian, has only just arrived (*puff*). That was another Mr. Brown.

Bishop: So I gathered. C. S. FRASER.

The Return to Rome.

THE nervous speculation among Protestants about the means to be adopted to suppress sectarianism and promote the reunion of Christendom seems to be temporarily suspended. The efforts of several zealous Protestants in the direction of reunion have lamentably failed. The bickerings of sectarians still go on. Rome waits with patience, and proceeds quietly and persistently with her propaganda in all parts of the world. The eagle eyes of Rome are unblinking. Rome is unsleeping and ever-vigilant. She is untroubled with sectarian squabbles. She maintains her authority by a logical appeal to tradition. She will never compromise.

And Rome is adding to the number of her adherents and extending her power and influence. A Roman Catholic priest in Haddington, the home of John Knox, in replying to a newspaper correspondent who lauded Knox for having enabled the Scottish people to read and understand the Bible and so gave them a chance to think for themselves says: "The way that many of them are doing this would not please either Knox or your correspondent. Within the last fifty years there have been over a million conversions a year to the Catholic faith, and in the home town of Knox himself I have within the last few months received into the Church several men and women, and have others under instruction.

"All these are drawn, not from the poor and illiterate but from the educated classes, who, reading and understanding the Bible 'given them by Knox,' ask admittance to the Catholic faith and Church."

Is there any wonder that the most violent anti-Catholics in the Protestant Churches exult over their fellow-members who are prepared to negotiate with Rome to achieve reunion. Though it must be a very gloomy kind of exultation! For Protestants in general must be chagrined by the precarious position in which modern Protestantism stands—between the Devil of Freethought and the Deep Sea of Roman Catholicism!

Those sanguine Protestants who are simple enough to suppose that it may be possible to induce Rome to modify her creed and to co-operate on such a footing for reunion are doomed to disillusion and bitter disappointment. Moreover, any observer with historical knowledge and perception cannot fail to see that there is a considerable number of persons within the pale of the Protestant Churches who in faith and doctrine and practice are essentially Roman Catholic. In the end as Freethinkers have always maintained there are only two logical positions—one, to be occupied by those who claim liberty of thought, speech and action without qualification—that is Freethought; the other, to be occupied by those who put submission to traditional Christian authority before liberty—that is the Roman Catholic Church. The final conflict will be fought out between Rome and Reason.

The necessity for the continuance of increased, more active and more persistent Freethought propaganda is shown by the greater number of supernaturalistic institutions which achieve a measure of popularity with some people who have little or no sympathy with the old-established ecclesiastical corporations. These agencies proclaim to the multitude that the Churches have no monopoly of religion, and that Churchianity is not Christianity. New slogans, catch words, flashes of sentimentalized rhetoric and suggestions of a happy-go-lucky go-as-you-please kind of faith unfettered by formal creeds or priestly annotations, have produced various groups of social and ethical reformers who still acknowledge supernatural sanctions and supports, the source of which however is markedly indefinite, nebulous and unassertive. You pay your money and you take your choice.

To all such institutions and agencies alike, as well as to all the Protestant sects, Roman Catholicism presents a solid, united and impregnable front of hostility. There can be no Christian outside Rome. Every person—Protestant, Spiritualist, Theosophist, Orientalist, Christian Scientist, or Freethinker is by Rome everlastingly damned now and for evermore. Rome is ably organized and her strength rests upon long standing and great wealth and power. In her teaching she knows no rational distinctions. Is it altogether surprising that the sectarian differences and squabbles among Protestants should subserve the interests and power of Rome? Consciously or unconsciously thousands of Protestants are playing into her hands.

As the policy of Rome is unity and indivisibility she gains a strategic advantage from differences and divisions among those who are not her adherents which Freethought cannot hope to gain. Freethought however appeals to man's essential and inherent personal dignity and to the worth of his intellectual faculties in an independent search for truth. It reveals the immensity of the Universe. It shows how primitive and futile spooks are. It proposes to man a fellowship of Truth seekers, which rejects all preconceived traditional authority. It adds to the mass of evidence which proves that supernaturalism has ever been humanity's bugbear, hindrance, blight and curse.

It is not a hopeful sign for Protestantism that there should be so many demands for and attempts at revision and restatement of its various creeds? Rome is untroubled by such mental disturbances, the effects of which only serve to make Protestantism look more and more ridiculous. There is no doubt about Rome. There is no dubiety in the statement of her infallible creed. Take it and be saved. Leave it and be damned.

IGNORUS.

The Errant Wife.

My little daughter came to me,
And with a wondering glance
Of eyes that I am wont to see
With mischief all a-dance
Said softly, "Mummy, have you heard?"
"What?" "Gideon Gray's just died!"
And at the word
My own heart cried.

It cried and cried: though Gideon
Had brought me pain and rue;
And oh! the evil he had done
Not death could e'er undo!
And yet I hope poor Gideon sees
From hell or paradise
One thing his anguish to appease . . .
She has her father's eyes!

J. M. STUART YOUNG.

Acid Drops.

Sir J. Arthur Thompson, in an article in the *Daily Telegraph*, on the fiftieth anniversary of Darwin's death, asks the question "Stands Darwinism where it did?" He says that "while all competent thinkers are now in a general way evolutionists there are some changes in our thinking since the hot-headed days that followed the publication of the *Origin of Species*," and "many of us are clear that there is no inconsistency in accepting the evolution idea, and yet believing in a Creator, who ordained the original order of Nature in some very simple form." This does not say that many of those for whom Sir Arthur speaks do accept God and Creation, notwithstanding which the paper heads its article with the definite assertion in leaded type and quotation marks, "we do now accept Evolution yet believe in the Creator," which is not what the writer says. Moreover that God created the original "order of nature" in a "very simple form" (and, it follows, is responsible for all that has happened during the vast period that has elapsed since that "simple form" was "created") is by no means more provable or credible than the original story that God "created" the world in six days' hard labour and rested on the seventh. The best answer to Sir Arthur's essay in what is made to look like, and will be claimed to be Christian apologetics may be found in his own words in this very article. "Evolutionists work with verifiable, measurable factors like variation, heredity and selection. They leave to philosophy and religion all questions of Purpose and Meaning. This is a change for the better." We entirely agree with this, for neither philosophy nor religion, studied in the light of Evolution, involve "believing in a Creator," although that is the obvious implication of the words as here used. Science knows nothing of the God of theological speculation and metaphysical philosophy.

Dr. Griffith Jones, the President of the Free Church Council, has discovered that it is not the Christian faith which is being attacked but Christian morality. In his opinion, some of the older Agnostics, like Huxley, wished to retain the ethics of Jesus without belief in him, but now-a-days people want to get rid of the ethics in particular. It is not quite clear whether Dr. Griffith Jones imagines the modern unbeliever is quite willing to believe in Christianity without the ethics or whether he thinks the modern unbeliever has got rid of both, Faith and Ethics, in one fell swoop. In any case, the recognition at last from people like Dr. Griffith Jones, that the modern eminent men and women have discovered that the teaching of Jesus is almost as hopeless as the teaching about him, is proof enough how the leaven of Freethought is working. You can't deceive some people all the time.

The *Church Times* is very sad about it and admits that "the challenge from such men of outstanding distinction as Bertrand Russell, Walter Lippmann, Aldous Huxley and H. G. Wells is not being adequately met." That is a pretty big admission, especially as it is utterly unable itself to show how the challenge ought to be met. How it ought not to be met is made pretty clear: "Hysterical denunciation, such as that written with a riot of adjectives by Mr. James Douglas is useless." Useless! Surely Mr. Douglas is not going to stand that. Will he not now prove how worthy a champion he is?

Mr. James Douglas, finding out that in his early days "there was a pestilence of hypocrisy in the seething religious fanaticism," reluctantly came to the conclusion he had "no vocation for the ministry, and his mother wept over his apostasy." From this one would suspect that Mr. Douglas was writing his path to Rationalism, and that his lurid descriptions of the one and only true religion were taken straight out of the pages of some wicked infidel publication. Alas, no. Mr. Douglas would like to preach "Christ as the Giver of Life, the

Fount of Peace, the Maker of Rest, the Deliverer from Self, the Fulfiller, the Satisfier, the Cleanser, the Instrument of Victory," and so on, *ad lib.* Who can resist such a touching appeal for Jesu's sake?

It ought not to surprise anyone that for Mr. James Douglas, the greatest man in history is John Wesley. In his panegyric, the eminent journalist waxes religiously hysterical. Wesley is far greater than "Napoleon, Marlborough, Nelson, Wellington, Burke, the two Pitts, Wolfe, Clive, Swift, Addison, Johnson, Goldsmith, Pope, Gibbon, Byron, Burns, Coleridge, Shelley, Wordsworth, Newman and George Washington." This used to be said of Jesus, but perhaps now that Jesus is "divine" Wesley comes in easily first.

The plain answer to it all is simply that the form of religion Wesley taught and preached is almost as dead as the dodo. He might have given life to the dying Protestantism of his day, but nothing can keep Methodism alive, really alive, nowadays. The 88,000 churches built through his influence have practically no outside influence of their own, and it is not unfair to say that there's hardly an outstanding scholar in the Wesleyan organization. Moreover, who reads Wesley now? How many Wesleyans believe in genuine witchcraft because Wesley so ardently believed in it? The most that can be said of Wesley is that he was a great itinerant preacher. If he lived now, his message would not and could not "be got over." The happy days of Evangelicism are gone for ever.

Mr. Alfred Noyes, now that he has gone over to the Faith is far more royalist than the King. He simply will not swallow the bitter pill that so many of our greatest literary men were—if they were anything at all—Freethinkers. While not exactly claiming that Carlyle, Shelley, Pater and Longfellow were true Roman Catholics, Mr. Noyes did his best the other day to show they were not far out of the fold; and as for Shakespeare being a Catholic, he had "a pretty conclusive piece of evidence." The evidence was that Shakespeare "brings in a spirit from the other world, and that spirit gives doctrine after doctrine taught by the Catholic Church." So now we know.

Mr. Noyes also wished people "to realize at the present time how extraordinarily Catholic the English mind is." Dear, dear, one would never have suspected it. Nor would one have suspected that "outside Catholicism, the world of literature and art is in complete bewilderment and confusion." This looks a little mixed because if the English mind is so terribly Catholic, very little could be outside it to make literature and art in such complete bewilderment. What Mr. Noyes really means is that our great writers and artists simply won't have anything to do with Catholicism in any shape or form. The whole tendency of modern art and literature is *secular*, our life here and now. The golden harps and diamond pavements are far far away, thank heaven.

An illuminating correspondence has appeared in the *Times* on witchcraft in Africa. The stoning and burning of an innocent woman was described by a correspondent (Mr. Melland), who said that the belief in witchcraft should be "believed" but "dealt with sympathetically." Lord Lugard, who agrees that the witch-doctor is the curse of Africa, says that the "only possible course to be dealt with him by prosecution as an accessory before the fact of murder," and to let the evidence show "whether he was acting from a lust for killing and for his ever-growing prestige or was genuinely convinced that his action was for the benefit of the people." Here is a revelation of how, in the twentieth century, superstition, of which Christianity is one of the chief buttresses, leads to the confusion and violation of all civilized notions of law and punishment. Was there ever a religious zealot, proclaiming some physically and morally pernicious doctrine or practice, who was not convinced that he was acting for the benefit of his dupes and victims? And is

not the lust for killing only another variation of the doctrine that the killing of heretics is no murder? Are not the practices of the African witch-doctor but examples of the same monstrous error that still produces rites of exorcism and acts of cruelty and bodily torture and mutilation in the Catholic world, and the excesses of Peculiar People and Holy Jumpers in England and America and elsewhere? The priest and the parson are like the witch-doctor. They are as dangerous and reckless as he is in proportion as they are sincere and influential.

Speaking in the House of Commons the Home Secretary, Sir Herbert Samuel, said it was the opinion of the Home Office, that Cinemas had not served to increase crime, but rather to diminish it. That is the opinion of responsible people everywhere. Indeed, in Southend behaviour in the streets underwent so marked a change for the worse during the time the cinemas were closed that there was a general demand for their re-opening. Of course, a large number of parsons protested, but their only interest in the matter is a professional one. The drawing power of the gospel cannot be compared with that of a really good Sunday "show."

The outcry about the evil influence on the young is a very old story re-told. Many of our readers will remember the time when it was the rule to attribute all youthful delinquencies to the reading of penny dreadfuls. When that weakened, and the penny dreadfuls were transformed into the popular newspaper some other bogey was found. At present it is the Cinema. Any kind of stupidity does, but it must be something that can be twisted to the interest of the parsonry. Now we offer the clergy a challenge. Let them take the number of offenders under twenty who have had pious parents, and attended Sunday school, and the number of those whose downfall can be traced to the Cinema, and we fancy the piously brought up ones will be in a majority. For ourselves we are sure that the general influence of the clergy on the young would to any sound psychologist be placed first for its ill-effects.

Recurring to Sir Herbert Samuel. He was one of the members who did not vote on the Parson's Defence Bill. But it was said in the papers that had he voted he would have been against it. The concern of a professed follower of the Jewish religion to preserve the Christian Sunday is very touching. But they are all honourable men!

Father Eric Wassmann, S.J., has just written a book on *Christian Monism*. This particular Monism is quite different from what we always thought Monism meant—the Universe as the one self-existing cause of all—as it includes God, the Incarnation, the Atonement, our true kinship to God and our likeness to him, Grace, divine nature and quite a number of other holy things. We now would like some other Jesuits, with that careful respect for logic and straight reasoning which distinguishes all they write, to give us some works on "Christian Atheism," "Christian Materialism," and even "Christian Scepticism," proving, of course, that true Atheism, Materialism and Scepticism are genuine parts of true Christianity.

The Episcopal Bench is miles ahead of the London Magistrate who, in a court case, delivered himself to a delinquent as follows:—

All your troubles are due to your being so grossly ignorant of all the laws of sex. One day the Church will teach you about these things.

This is our case; the more ignorant the masses, the more amenable are they to the particular and fantastic doctrines of the Church. The Church may teach differently, but however different from to-day, its teachings will always be out of date.

A Methodist paper wants a new translation of the Bible in modern English. The reason for the request being:—

There are some ominous signs that to the present generation the Bible is not as familiar as to its predecessors. To-day in an occasional commendation public men seem disposed to dwell chiefly on the value of the Bible as literature. It is a well of English undefiled. Yet for good or ill, English as it is written and spoken has undoubtedly moved away from this model. And to retain for use in our churches a version whose form of English is no longer in common use among us is to run serious risk of creating the impression that the Bible has not much to do with the life of to-day.

We hope our pious friend is not attempting to suggest that the Bible is neglected because its English is out of date. It was just as unintelligible to the pious Victorians, but they read it just the same. It is not the intelligibility of Bible English which is making the Bible to be neglected, the ideas in it have "not much to do with the life" (or thought) "of to-day."

Perusal of an article by Mr. F. E. Bailey (in *The New Passing Show*) arouses the suspicion that parsons need not despair of a revival of religion among the post-war generation. Mr. Bailey suggests that the young people are fools; they won't read and they seem incapable of thought. They lack individuality and rely on herd instinct. Every so often they adopt a new craze. To be kept contented and quiet they must be given a plaything. If Mr. Bailey's analysis is correct, the post-war mentality should have little difficulty in assimilating religion; and it would seem to be the kind which parsons have always known how to manipulate.

A solemn journal enquires, "Is Way of Renewal or Way of Revival the better watchword for the times?" To this we think the only possible reply is that the one watchword is no better than the other; each is as silly as the other. In any case, there is no harm in pointing out that the modern world of intelligent folk is not peering about anxiously for parsons' watchwords. After all, there are enough real problems to be solved to-day, and therefore it is better if human energy is devoted to these rather than to artificial problems such as: "What should one do to be saved?" The same journal remarks that along with the watchword, "The Way of Revival," Evangelical Churchmen blazon on their banners the three signs, "Ruin, Redemption, Regeneration." This worthy effort to equal the Salvation Army's crude war cry, "Blood and Fire," seems a shade too "refaned" to serve as an effective scarecrow. But perhaps in these days it is the best that can be managed; for the inspiration of the Lord is now a trifle anæmic since theology started to hunt for refined interpretations of Holy Truth.

Fifty Years Ago.

It is stated that the Bishop of London, when he leaves his house in St. James's Square, and rides to his palace at Fulham, passes on his road more than one hundred public-houses built on land belonging to the Church. It is also said that the archbishops and bishops, in their corporate capacity as members of the Ecclesiastical Commission, are the largest owners of public-house property in the kingdom. This, however, comes from one of the lay journals, and was not mentioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury, when presiding at the annual meeting of the Church of England Temperance Society last week.

Another lie was very nearly nailed at the Midland Arches last Sunday morning. A Christian controversialist had the audacity to declare that Austin Holyoake recanted upon his death-bed. These scoundrels will venture to say anything of an infidel. An esteemed friend at once challenged the statement, and it happened that a well-known peripatetic vendor of Freethought literature was near at hand, whose bag contained "Austin Holyoake's Last Thoughts," in which, but a few hours before death, he stated, "I do not believe in the Christian Deity, nor in any form of so-called supernatural existence." The Christian controversialist was forced to make a public retraction.

The "Freethinker," May 7, 1882.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- E. YOUNG (Hove).—Received with thanks. Very useful.
- T. SIMM (Aylesbury).—Yes. The Act of Uniformity Amendment Act, 1872.
- CHRISTIAN READER (Croydon).—There is something better than good taste—good temper.
- H. CRANTON (Sheffield).—Last published in 1906 and now out of print.
- P. F. INGLEBY (Finchley).—We are always glad to meet an exception to the rule. Thanks for cuttings.
- S. L. TESMAN.—The provisions of the Sunday Performances Bill will not apply to Sermons in Churches, however much the parsons discuss debatable subjects. He is preaching in a building registered as a place of worship, and that covers the sermon.
- F. HOBDAV.—Shall appear as early as possible.
- T. OLIVER.—We are obliged for cutting.
- T. MAY.—You are writing under a misapprehension. The minimum subscription is only 2s. per year. All above that is left to the good will of those joining the Society.
- T. ELSTON.—Will appear next week.
- H. MORGAN.—We have explained more than once that while we are naturally glad to learn that readers are pleased with what we write, we do not write to please anyone.
- W. P. SPANN.—Thanks for the interest you have shown and the trouble you have taken. Our business manager is writing you.
- T. F. HAUGHTON.—Your selection of cuttings is always welcome. Shall hope to meet you again some day.

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.

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 again summarize the programme of the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society, which will be held in Manchester on Whit-Sunday, May 15. There will be a reception for members and delegates at the Victoria Hotel, Deansgate, at 7 o'clock on Saturday evening. On Sunday the Conference will meet at 10.30 and 2.30 in the Victoria Hotel. Members only will be admitted. There will be a luncheon at one o'clock in the same hotel, tickets 3s. each. In the evening there will be a public demonstration in the Hulme Town Hall. Owing to some misunderstanding in Manchester the evening meeting will not be held in the Chorlton Town Hall, as previously announced. The Hulme Town Hall is in Stretford Road, and trams go by the door. This is a rather larger building than the Chorlton Town Hall, and we hope to be able to report a crowded meeting. Finally, there will be an excursion to Blackpool on Whit-Monday. Mr. Cohen hopes to accompany the party.

Visitors to the Conference will help those responsible for the arrangements if they will write as early as possible to Mr. R. H. Rosetti, at the N.S.S. Offices, or to the local Secretary, Mr. W. A. Atkinson, 40 Montford Street, Salford, Manchester, saying if they wish seats to be reserved at the Conference Luncheon, and if they intend to join the party to Blackpool. Friends from afar who require hotel or other accommodation, should also write stating their exact requirements with length of stay, etc.

Delegates who intend joining the excursion to Blackpool will please note that a special Saloon Train will leave Manchester at 8.15, returning at 8.15. There will also be lunch and tea provided at a total cost of 10s. An earlier return train may be taken if desired; and the journey may be broken at Preston to enable delegates to join the Scotch Express. But it is imperative that the Secretary should know beforehand who are joining the party.

It seems likely that our Government of shifts and subterfuges will get over the difficulty of failure to get a Sunday Performances Act that will satisfy prehistoric minds like the Attorney-General's with his Lord's Day Observance Society, and the muddle-heads who do not realize, or do not care about, the retrogressive character of the Bill as it stands, will prolong the present temporary Act for another year. That will not remove the difficulty, but Mr. Macdonald and his Government do not desire to remove difficulties so much as to evade them. But if the present Act is prolonged, Sunday entertainments cannot be permitted in any place where they do not exist now, so long as there is a charge for admission.

In the event of this prolongation being effected we repeat the advice that we have so often given. Let entertainers open everywhere, with admission free and a charge for reserved seats. They will have full houses, and will not miss having fifty free seats. And there will be no compulsory giving of profits to charity. A little courage will break down the whole of this ridiculous Sabbatarianism.

We have received several enquiries as to whether there is any likelihood of our summary of the position on the Sunday question being re-issued as a leaflet or pamphlet. There is no intention at the moment of this being done. But for those who desire to send copies to quarters where the summary is likely to be of special interest, we are willing to send one dozen copies of last week's issue for 2s. post free. There is not a large number available, so those who wish to avail themselves of this offer should write without delay.

The open-air lecture season begins to-day (Sunday) with most of the London Branches. Mr. G. Whitehead will speak for the North London Branch N.S.S. at White Stone Pond, Hampstead, at 11.30 a.m. and 7.0 p.m. Mr. L. Ebury opens for the South London Branch, and we believe the Wembley and District Branch has arranged lectures. Full details will appear in the Lecture Notices column.

Several letters have been received at headquarters expressing a desire for some open-air lecturing in the Potteries during the summer. If those who are willing to lend a hand will write the General Secretary, arrangements for a series of meetings may be made.

The Failsworth Secular Sunday School celebrates its Spring Festival to-day (Sunday) and Mr. R. H. Rosetti will speak twice. At 2.45 the subject will be "Free-thought and Freethinkers," and at 6.30 p.m., "Charles Bradlaugh." Items from the well conducted orchestra, and choir are a pleasing feature of those festivals. The hall is situated in Pole Lane, Failsworth, near Manchester.

Burnley Freethinkers are informed that a debate has been arranged between Mr. J. Clayton and the Rev. J. Bretherton, on "Shall we Secularize Sunday?" to take place in the Phoenix Theatre, Burnley, on Thursday evening, May 5, at 7.30. Christians are sadly in need of teaching on the Sunday question, and we hope the local saints will make full use of the above opportunity.

Says Father Woodlock, "less than fifteen per cent of the people to-day in England have any vital relation to religion." But it is this fifteen per cent that is able to say to the remainder what they shall not do on Sunday—one seventh of their lives,

The National Secular Society.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

AGENDA.

1. Minutes of last Conference.
 2. Executive's Annual Report.
 3. Financial Report.
 4. Election of President.
Motion By Bethnal Green, West Ham, Cardiff, West London, Bradford, Chester-le-Street, Sunderland, Birmingham, Liverpool, and North London Branches.
"That Mr. Chapman Cohen be re-elected President of the N.S.S."
 5. Election of Secretary.
Motion by the Executive:—
"That Mr. R. H. Rosetti be appointed Secretary."
 6. Election of Treasurer.
Motion by the Bethnal Green, Birmingham, North London, Sunderland and West Ham Branches:—
"That Mr. C. C. Quinton be re-elected Treasurer."
 7. Election of Auditor.
Messrs. H. Theobald and Co., the retiring auditors, are eligible and offer themselves for re-election.
 8. Nominations for Executive.
SCOTLAND.—Mr. James Neate and Mr. F. A. Hornbrook, nominated by Glasgow Branch.
WALES.—Mr. T. Gorniot and Mr. A. C. Rosetti, nominated by Swansea Branch.
N.E. GROUP.—Miss K. B. Kough, nominated by Newcastle and Chester-le-Street Branches.
Mr. A. B. Moss, nominated by South Shields Branch.
N.W. GROUP.—Mr. H. R. Clifton and Mrs. E. Venton, nominated by Liverpool and Birkenhead Branches.
S.W. GROUP.—Mr. W. J. W. Easterbrook, nominated by Plymouth Branch.
MIDLAND GROUP.—Mrs. C. G. Quinton (Jnr.) and Mr. J. G. Dobson, nominated by Birmingham Branch.
SOUTHERN GROUP.—Mr. L. M. Werrey-Easterbrook nominated by Hants and Dorset and Brighton Branches.
SOUTH LONDON.—Mr. H. Preece, nominated by South London Branch.
NORTH LONDON.—Mr. L. Ebury, nominated by North London Branch.
EAST LONDON.—Mr. H. Silvester, nominated by Bethnal Green and West Ham Branches.
WEST LONDON.—Mr. B. A. Le Maine, nominated by West London and Fulham Branches.
 9. Motion by Executive:
 - (a) "That all leaflets or other literature issued by Branches of the N.S.S., and bearing their imprint, shall be submitted to the Executive before publication."
 - (b) "That except in the case of new Branches every one holding office shall have been a member of the Society for at least one year."
 10. Motion by Perth Branch:—
"That in the opinion of this Conference a scheme should be devised by the Executive by which systematic propaganda during the winter season should be carried on in places where the existing facilities for such propaganda are very limited."
 11. Motion by West Ham and Bradford Branches:—
"That this Conference in emphasizing its conviction that the modern State should stand strictly aloof from the patronage and support of religion, protests against the spending of public money on providing chaplains in the Army, Navy and Air Forces, and against the release of Churches and Chapels from the payment of such Rates and Taxes as are levied on non-religious bodies."
 - 11a. Motion by Liverpool Branch:—
"That the Executive be empowered to make all necessary arrangements for the production of a gramophone record, reproducing a short address on Freethought by Mr. Chapman Cohen, the exact title and subject to be left mainly in the hands of Mr. Cohen the sale price of the discs to be arranged by the Executive."
 12. Motion by Birmingham Branch:—
"That this Conference offers its strongest protest against the operations of the censorship, both official and unofficial, as constituting a grave menace to freedom of thought and expression."
 13. Motion by Stockport and Fulham and Chelsea Branches:—
"That Branches be advised to make a protest against the Sunday programmes of the B.B.C. a special feature of their summer propaganda, until such time as a more equitable programme is adopted by the Corporation."
 14. Motion by A. D. Maclaren:—
"That this Conference deplores the failure of the Government to deal with the question of Sunday Entertainments in a wise and statesmanlike manner, and submits that the only just and wise settlement is a repeal of the Sunday Act as being out of touch with the best thought of the time, and an unwarrantable infringement on the liberty of the individual."
 - 15.—Motion by Executive:—
"That in accordance with the resolution passed at last year's Conference the Executive is hereby authorized to take part in the formation of a Bradlaugh Centenary Committee, and further authorizes the Executive to take whatever steps it may deem necessary to mark, in whatever way it may consider fitting, the Centenary of the founder of the National Secular Society."
 16. Motion by Fulham and Chelsea Branch:—
(a) "That as a method of celebrating Bradlaugh Sunday, the Executive be instructed to arrange a mass meeting of all London Branches in Hyde Park on an appropriate date."
(b) "That there be issued annually in the *Freethinker*, the total membership of the N.S.S., and the number of new members admitted each year."
 17. Motion by Mr. G. F. Green:—
"That the words 'It regards happiness as man's proper aim and Utility as his moral guide,' be deleted from the Principals and Objects of the Society."
 18. Motion by West Ham Branch:—
(a) "That this Conference calls the attention of all Freethinkers to the growing intrusion of religion in political life and public institutions, and urges upon all to resist the growing danger of this mixture of sectarian religious interests with civil affairs."
(b) "That in view of the close association between Freethought propaganda and the Birth Control movement in the past, this Conference notes with satisfaction the surrender of the Church to a movement which it fought so hard to crush."
 - 19.—Motion by Wembley Branch:—
"That in the opinion of this Conference the time is now ripe for the National Secular Society to intensify its political activities in order to counteract the influence of religious organizations in the political arena."
 20. Motion by Bradford Branch:—
"That this Conference urges upon Freethinkers the duty of doing what lies in their power through the medium of debating societies and other organizations to educate public opinion in the direction of a policy of Secular Education."
- The Conference will sit in the Victoria Hotel, Deansgate: Morning Session, 10.30 to 12.30; Afternoon Session, 2.30 to 4.30. Delegates will be required to produce their credentials at the door; Members, the current card of membership. Only Members of the Society are entitled to be present. A Luncheon for delegates and visitors at 1 p.m., price 3s., will be provided in the Victoria Hotel. During the Afternoon Session papers will be read on items of Freethought interest, followed by discussion.

By order of the Executive,

CHAPMAN COHEN, *President*.
R. H. ROSETTI, *Secretary*.

Undesirable Residents in the Human Body.

THE parasitic pests that afflict all higher modes of life form a curious commentary on the doctrine of design. Parasitic worms, micro-organisms and other disease-inducing creatures furnish a wide field for scientific research. It is sometimes asserted that in wild nature the maladies that visit civilized communities are unknown, and that the diseases rampant among domesticated animals are the result of the artificial conditions in which they live.

This contention, however, is entirely erroneous. For despite the fact that parasites seldom possess structures favourable to preservation in a fossil state evidences of the very early existence of parasitism have come down to us from remote geological ages. "There is some evidence," declares Dr. Kerlin, "that bacteria existed in the pre-Cambrian period. Parasitic or 'spot' fungi have been found in the remains of plants in as early as Carboniferous time. Fossil specimens of rhinoceros show evidence of infection with *actinomyces* (lumpy jaw). Parasitism of sea snails upon sea lilies began in Silurian, became common in Devonian and reached a climax in the Carboniferous period. Insect galleries and galls have been found in plants from Cretaceous and Tertiary rocks. It is quite possible that parasites played an important rôle in the extinction of several forms of mammals. Tse-tse flies which transmit *Trypanosoma brucei*, causing the 'nagana' disease in mammals in early Tertiary times were much more widely distributed and even reached the region of Colorado."

Some of the parasitic worms that infest the human framework were familiar to the ancient Egyptians. The *Ebers Papyrus*, dating from about 1500 B.C., describes a disease that seems to have been hookworm, a malady very common in tropical countries and second only to malaria in its dire consequences to the community. The old Nile dwellers were also acquainted with Bilharzia, a disease characterized by the discharge of blood in the urine. Moreover, the eggs of the parasite causing this disease have been microscopically examined in the mummy of an Egyptian monarch preserved in the Cairo Museum.

The Guinea-worm disease, so prevalent in West Africa, the Soudan and India, is noted by Plutarch in his statement that "the people taken ill on the Red Sea suffered from many strange and unheard-of attacks, amongst others from little snakes which came out upon them, gnawed away their legs and arms, and when touched again retracted, coiling themselves up in the muscles and there giving rise to the most insupportable pains."

That repellent tropical disease elephantiasis, although long confused with leprosy was clearly distinguished as a specific disease by Avicenna in the eleventh century A.D. This horrible affliction has now been traced by Sir Patrick Manson to the presence of a threadworm in the lymphatic vessels.

Tapeworms were known to Hippocrates in Greece, and both in ancient and modern days the origin of these and other disgusting parasites was ascribed to spontaneous generation. But with the invention and use of the microscope this erroneous theory has been completely overthrown. Microscopical study proved that parasites produce myriads of eggs, and that were all these eggs developed into adult parasites within the body of their victim it would soon become a seething mass of alien life. Obviously, these eggs needed an outlet, and further study showed that the source of infection existed in the infected's environment, and it was truly surmised that parasites were the degen-

erate descendants of free-living organisms that had gradually adapted themselves to a predatory life within the bodies of their hosts.

It is now established that, with one doubtful exception, no parasite can directly reproduce itself within the body of its victim. A certain time must elapse before a parasite can develop into its infective stage. Indeed, so dissimilar in appearance are larval parasites to those that have assumed the mature form that their real relationship was not even suspected.

The only means available to the physician in cases of parasitic infection were the use of drugs and the destruction of the bodily discharges of the patient. Little progress was possible in eliminating sources of infection even in temperate regions, while in the tropics the prospect seemed hopeless. Moreover, medical science was obstructed by the circumstance that domesticated animals sometimes harbour the same species of parasites that infest the human body and thus function as intermediary hosts. Again, some parasites enter our bodies with food and drink, while certain virulent forms fracture the skin and thus establish themselves within. Furthermore, as Professor Leiper the eminent helminthologist points out, "although the progeny of many of the parasitic worms leave the human body in the stools, there are some which pass out in the sputum and the urine while others are sucked from the blood by biting insects."

Parasites that lodge in the food canal, and these only, are susceptible to treatment by the use of drugs. Those that have entered the blood stream, lungs, liver and glands cannot be reached by the agency of drugs. To increase the obstacle the administration of "anthelmintics" involves danger as these medicines are poisons, only to be used in minute doses. Therefore, full knowledge of the life cycle of parasitic organisms is essential to success especially as it is now ascertained that parasites are prevented from attaining maturity unless very prescribed conditions prevail.

Some parasites die in the absence of a given temperature or humidity. Others perish unless they find an intermediate host which furnishes shelter and food while they undergo their special metamorphosis. In fact, in the absence of detailed knowledge of the transformations and migrations of plant and animal parasites outside their hosts' bodies their ravages cannot be overcome.

The tapeworm is an unwelcome and not easily ejected tenant in the house we live in, and the parasite's success in clinging to its victim furnishes a striking instance of adaptive power. Kuchenmeister, a pioneer student, observed the nature of those bladder worms which infest various internal organs of the body. "These worms have no sexual organs and never produce eggs, and their presence in the tissues could only be accounted for in terms of spontaneous generation. But experiment proved that when a cyst removed from the brain of a sheep attacked by staggers was given to another animal, the latter was soon infected with tapeworms, and the parasites' eggs were found in the animal's excrement. Further research demonstrated that when these eggs are introduced into the body of the sheep this animal soon manifests the symptoms of staggers, a disease induced by the pressure of the developing cysts on the brain's surface.

Those undeveloped tapeworms, the cystic worms contained in the flesh of the pig bear buds resemble those found in the common tapeworm which inhabits the human intestine. Some of these cysts were taken by volunteers who were subsequently seen to be infected with tapeworm and this pointed to the pig as the vehicle of infection. Swine then fed with eggs taken from the excrement of a tapeworm sufferer were afterwards killed and their flesh was found in-

fested with cysts of *Taenia solium*, the specific tapeworm of the pig. Although no mature tapeworm has ever been detected in the pig's intestine it is clear that the animal is the seat of the cystic stage in the life cycle of this loathsome parasite.

Similar studies prove that cattle are the hosts of the cysts or undeveloped tapeworms of a hookless type which flourish in their fully developed form in the human intestine.

Another tapeworm that afflicts man is the "broad" tapeworm, a quite common dweller in the human bowel in Switzerland and the Baltic lands. This parasite passes the larval stages of its life in the flesh of freshwater fish such as perch and pike. Its life cycle is described by Dr. Leiper as follows: "After hatching from the eggs the tapeworm young are pursued and swallowed by a species of Cyclops. In the body of this minute crustacean—the so-called 'water-flea'—they undergo a preliminary development. If the infected Cyclops is swallowed by a perch, the parasite is set free and attains the infective stage; remaining in this situation until the fish is in turn eaten by a human being."

T. F. PALMER.

Thomas Paine.

(Continued from page 268.)

It became increasingly unpopular and indeed dangerous to oppose the public clamour for the King's death. The Girondins generally were against it, and they still had a majority over the Mountain, but many of them were terrorized into abandoning their convictions. When the question was debated in the Convention as to what sentence should be passed, Paine's carefully reasoned speech, in favour of imprisonment during the War and perpetual banishment afterwards, was read by a clerk, he himself being unable to speak French. It is rather a remarkable circumstance that he, a very able man, never did learn to converse in French, although he was destined to remain in the country for over twelve years. The speech created a tremendous uproar and was interrupted by Marat, who declared it to be a false translation. A member came to the rescue of the trembling clerk, stating that he had read the original of the speech, and that it had been interpreted correctly. Over 300 members voted with Paine, but by a majority of twenty-five, death unconditionally was carried. The question of when the penalty was to be carried out was left over until the next day. Fifty-five members were absent on the second occasion, and of the 690 present, a majority of seventy voted for death within twenty-four hours. Secret proposals for saving Louis had been set on foot from England in the course of which the then all-powerful Danton had been approached, who said he was willing to try and save the King but must have a million francs to buy up the necessary votes, adding that he himself would vote for the King's death, as although he might succeed in saving the King's head, he had no wish to lose his own in doing so.

Paine's action in connexion with the Royal tragedy brought upon him the animosity of the bloodthirsty Marat who was rapidly becoming a dominating influence in the Convention. In one of his speeches he said: "Frenchmen are mad to allow foreigners to live among them. They should cut off their ears, let them bleed for a few days and then cut off their heads." A few months later he was himself to die by the dagger of Charlotte Corday. At the instance of Robespierre a law was passed ordering the arrest of all foreigners. This could not apply, however, to the two foreigners in the Convention, Paine and Anacharsis

Cloutz. Nevertheless it was only a question of time for them also. The period of The Terror was rapidly approaching. The mantle of Marat had fallen upon Robespierre, who had declared himself in the early days of the Revolution as opposed to capital punishment. Twenty-two of the leading Girondins were suddenly arrested, all intimate friends of Paine, who at this time, in despair at the way in which his cherished dream of equality and fraternity was developing, no longer attended the Convention, but retired to an old mansion in the Faubourg St. Denis, which had formerly belonged to Madame de Pompadour, where he lived entirely secluded.

He relates that he was visited there one day by a very courteous gentleman in a French officer's uniform, who spoke excellent English and required Paine's assurance of the bona fides of two young Englishmen who had just been arrested. This visitor turned out to be the executioner, Samson, the extremely efficient minister of the guillotine, under whose hands the King's head had fallen and those of countless other victims of lesser rank.

The cruelty born of suspicion and fear daily increased the number of arrests ordered by the omnipotent Committee of Public Safety, consisting of but nine men, of whom one was Robespierre, although not one of the original members, and merely to be accused meant almost certain death. Paine lived under the expectation of arrest at any moment. Under this shadow he commenced to write the work which brought more execration upon him than anything else he did, either before or afterwards, *The Age of Reason*. In later times it earned him the title conferred by President Roosevelt, of "A filthy little Atheist," but Roosevelt could not have read the pamphlet when he made the thoughtless remark which, as someone has said, was incorrect in three particulars, viz., Paine was not filthy, was not little and was not an Atheist.

The pamphlet distinctly avers a belief in a Supreme Being and Creator of the Universe. Its attack is directed against the Bible being accepted as the Word of God. To understand the general indignation that the publication caused, it must be remembered that at that time the Bible was believed to be verbally and directly inspired, and Paine's reply to the accusation of blasphemy was that his accusers were blasphemous in attributing to the Almighty cruelties and massacres which were stated to have been carried out by God's orders in the various wars of the Israelites against neighbouring tribes and countries. He enquires if it could be reasonably supposed that a Being of the supreme power which ordered the Universe, containing millions of worlds, could have descended to use the language and adopt the expedients which the chronicles of the Israelites disclose in the Old Testament at various phases in their history. Such episodes as Jonah and the Whale received very rough handling. But the most serious ground of complaint against the book was the attack against the fundamental doctrine of Christianity. The Divinity, the Immaculate Conception, the Resurrection of Christ, were denied; although the utmost reverence was expressed for His character.

However, Paine strongly insisted that his book was not in support of but *against* Atheism, and the sincerity of his aim cannot be questioned.

On the last page of Part I are the following words:—

The creation we behold is the real and ever-existing word of God, in which we cannot be deceived. It proclaimeth his power, it demonstrates his wisdom, it manifests his goodness and beneficence.

Another quotation; this time from a letter to Samuel Adams:—

The people of France were running headlong into

Atheism, and I had the work translated in their own language to stop them in that career, and fix them to the first article of every man's creed who has any creed at all—I believe in God.

Although Paine could not accept the doctrine of Christianity, he more than once proved that he could live up to and practise its precepts. For instance, we read, "Do good to them that despitely use you." An English officer, Capt. Grimstone, R.A., who happened to be present with Paine at a dinner in Paris, got into a heated argument, called Paine a traitor to his country and struck him a violent blow. The penalty for striking a Deputy of the Convention was death, and Paine had much difficulty in obtaining a passport from Barrere, the President of the Committee of Public Safety, for Captain Grimstone to leave the country. Paine moreover paid Grimstone's travelling expenses.

The manuscript of the *Age of Reason*, Paine's best abused work, had only been completed a few hours when the long-expected order of arrest arrived. He was conveyed to the prison of the Luxembourg, where he was destined to remain ten weary months, without being brought to trial or even informed of his offence or the name of his accuser. It was not until after the fall of Robespierre that it became known that it was the latter who was the author of the order. The American minister in Paris at that time was Gouverneur Morris, who was appealed to, to claim the release of his fellow-countryman as an American citizen. Unfortunately Morris had a secret grudge against Paine, arising largely from the mean motive of jealousy, Paine being frequently consulted in preference to himself about American affairs. So he contented himself with writing an ambiguous letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, which the latter might very well interpret as an attitude of entire indifference as to the fate of the prisoner. This enabled Morris to report to Washington that he had made a claim for Paine's release which had been refused. In a letter to Secretary Thomas Jefferson, afterwards to be a President of the United States, he casually remarks, as a trifling incident:—

Lest I should forget it, I must mention that Thomas Paine is in prison, where he amuses himself with publishing a pamphlet against Jesus Christ.

On leaving his house for prison, Paine entrusted to a friend the manuscript of the *Age of Reason* for conveyance to the printer, the guard courteously giving permission.

The Luxembourg was a prison specially reserved for the French nobility and for English prisoners. It was a select company and of both sexes. They were allowed to converse freely with each other, under the rule of the good-natured gaoler, Benoit, and life might almost have been happy but for the too-frequent partings as one or other was led forth to death. However, these unfortunate gaps were always made good by fresh arrivals. One day the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Deforgues, who had been written to by Morris about Paine and refused release, turned up as a fellow-victim. Another day came the lately all-powerful Danton, who took Paine's hand saying:—

That which you did for the happiness and liberty of your country, I tried in vain to do for mine. I have been less fortunate but not less innocent. They will send me to the scaffold; very well, my friends, I shall go gaily.

As the Terror proceeded, the daily number of victims increased. Robespierre fell at the end of July, 1794, and on one night in that month no less than 169 prisoners were taken out of the Luxembourg, 160 of them to die under the guillotine before the evening of the next day, after a travesty of a trial before the infamous Tribunal of the Terror.

There is good reason to believe that Paine's name was in the last list, and that only an accident on the part of the officers appointed to collect the victims for the shambles, saved him. Robespierre having at last been devoured by the monster he had helped to create, Paine still remained a captive. The same influence which had prevented his release at the outset still kept him in the Luxembourg. Paine had succeeded in sending a letter to his former friend George Washington months before and was troubled at receiving no reply. It was not until three more weary months had passed after Robespierre had gone that a new American minister was appointed, James Monroe, the famous author of the Monroe Doctrine. Monroe, being made acquainted with the situation, immediately applied to the French Government for Paine's release as an American citizen, or alternatively that he should be tried for any offence that he was accused of. It then transpired that he had been arrested only under the decree against foreigners and he was at once set free. During the latter part of his imprisonment he had suffered from a malignant fever from which he had nearly died. The after effect was an abscess in his side, which remained more or less active for years, causing great pain and weakness.

F. M. READ.

(To be concluded.)

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

THE CENSORSHIP.

SIR,—I heartily agree with L'Aiguillon that our children should have a saner sex education; that, indeed, is my reason for condemning sex films.

A sane education means not merely knowledge of sex matters, but also a correct mental outlook on them. This is precisely where our films fail. A comparison of sex as shown on the screen and as idealized in Greek statuary will illustrate what I mean. Greece exalted sex; the film debases it. The difference is not between half-clad and naked, but between Apollo and the monkey.

The censorship may be likened to timber propping up a rickety house; the remedy is surely to rebuild the house.

However, I thank L'Aiguillon for replying so courteously to my criticisms—I assure him they were not meant in any carping spirit. Nothing but good can come of sincere criticism, even among Freethinkers.

ARAMIS.

THE POPULATION QUESTION.

SIR,—In your issue of April 17, Mr. A. McHattie says: "There was, and is, no over-population." He supports this assertion by quotations from Paine and Henry George, which are of the same scientific value as if taken from Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

"Japan has an area of 150,198 square miles and a population of 59,500,000," says Mr. McHattie. As regards population he is only about eight millions wrong. He ought, however, to have mentioned that Japan is four-fifths mountain, and only one fifth is cultivable. There are more than three people to every acre of cultivable land.

Your country readers will realize the utter impossibility of making a decent living from so small an area. For the benefit of townsmen I may say that two eminent agriculturists, Sir Daniel Hall and Professor East, have lately estimated that two and a half cultivable acres per head are necessary to maintain the Western European standard of comfort.

I am, of course, aware that Henry George and Prince Kropotkin held a very different opinion, but as neither of these worthies ever had the remotest connexion with agriculture, I have not thought it necessary to discuss their views.

R. B. KERR.

Obituary.

MR. J. BOYLE.

THE remains of Mr. J. Boyle of Ancoats, Manchester, cremated at the Crematorium of the Southern Cemetery, Manchester, on Saturday, April 23. Although not a member of the N.S.S., his whole sympathy was with the Freethought Movement, and which was maintained until the end. To his widow and family we offer sincere sympathy in their grievous loss. Mr. G. Hall of Manchester read a Secular Service at the cremation.

ARTHUR CHARLES HIGH.

THE West Ham Branch has sustained another loss by the death of Arthur Charles High, which took place on April 19, from Bronchial Pneumonia, at the age of fifty-six years. Brought up in a family of Freethinkers which has a long and worthy record of service in West Ham, Arthur Charles soon took an active interest in the movement, and was well known in local Freethought as an interesting and capable speaker, as well as an ever willing worker whenever help was required. His devotion to the Cause never wavered, and one of his last requests was for a Secular Service at his funeral, which was duly carried out when the interment took place in St. Mary's Cemetery, Ilford, Essex, on Monday, April 25, in the presence of relatives and friends. The Secular Service was read by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD APRIL 22, 1932.

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

Also present: Messrs. Moss, Clifton, Wood, Le Maine, Ebury, Preece, McLaren, Sandys, Mrs. Quinton, Junr., Mrs. Venton, and the Secretary.

A number of apologies for unavoidable absence were read and accepted. The monthly financial statement presented.

New members were admitted to Swansea, Birkenhead Branches, and the Parent Society.

Annual Reports and Balance Sheets from the Liverpool (Merseyside) and Birkenhead (Wirral) Branches were before the meeting, and appreciation expressed for the good work accomplished. Correspondence from Liverpool, Hendon, Golders Green, and France was dealt with, and instructions given. Details in connexion with the Annual Conference, and Annual Dinner for 1933 were submitted and discussed. Mr McLaren reported that the Study Circle would discontinue meeting after May 2 until the autumn. The Executive recorded its thorough appreciation of the admirable work Mr. McLaren had been carrying on as conductor of the Circle. The meeting then closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,
General Secretary.

HOCUS POCUS.

This expression, a slang term for trickery or charlatanism, is of disputed origin. Tillotson held that these words are a ribald corruption of the words of consecration of the Mass *hoc est corpus* in ridicule of the alleged act of transubstantiation. An etymologist (Nares) thinks this expression came from Italian jugglers, who said "Ochus Bochus" in reference to a famous magician of those days. Skeat looks upon *hocus pocus*—sometimes Hokey Pokey is substituted for it—as mere "jingling repetition." Hokos Pokus was the name of the juggler in Ben Jonson's *Magnetic Lady* (1632), and in his earlier play, "The Staple of the News (1625) we get "Iniquity came in like hokos pokos in a juggling jerkin, with false skirts like the knave of clubs." *Hocus Focus* is therefore a suitable pseudonym for one or all of the tricks of priestcraft.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30 a.m. and 7.0 p.m., Mr. G. Whitehead.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. Platform No. 1, Messrs. Bryant and Wood. Platform No. 2, Messrs. Le Maine and Tuson. 6.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Wood, Tuson and Bryant. Platform No. 2, Messrs. Hyatt and Saphin.

INDOOR.

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): Monday, May 2, Mr. A. D. McLaren will read a paper on "Nietzsche and the Gospel of the Superman." This will be the last meeting of the session.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town): 7.30 Mr. L. Ebury, May 2, 3, 4 and 5, Canal Head, Peckham (opp. Rye Lane): 8.0, Mr. G. Whitehead. May 6, Camberwell Gate: 8.0, Mr. G. Whitehead.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"Mechanism and the Arts."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Miss Neilans—"What I Saw in Syria."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, Camden Road, N.7, five minutes from Brecknock Arms): 7.20, Mr. F. A. Hornibrook—"Restrictions on Sunday Enjoyment."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BURNLEY (Phoenix Theatre): 7.30, A Debate on Thursday, May 5—"Shall we Secularize Sunday?" Affr.: Mr. J. Clayton, N.S.S. Neg.: Rev. J. Bretherton.

FAILSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole Lane, Fails-worth, nr. Manchester): 2.45, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"Freethought and Freethinkers." Evening, 6.30, "Charles Bradlaugh."

HANTS AND DORSET BRANCH N.S.S.. Branch Meeting May 1, at 36 Victoria Park Road, Bournemouth, 6.30. That will be the last Branch meeting before the Annual Conference.

OUTDOOR.

NEWCASTLE (Bigg Market): Wednesday, May 4, 7.30, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Church Street): Saturday, April 30, at 7.7.30, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND (Lambton Street): Sunday, May 1, 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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Secretary:

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E.C.4.

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Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

The Funds of the National Secular Society are legally secured by Trust Deed. The trustees are the President, Treasurer and Secretary of the Society, with two others appointed by the Executive. There is thus the fullest possible guarantee for the proper expenditure of whatever funds the Society has at its disposal.

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Name

Address

Occupation

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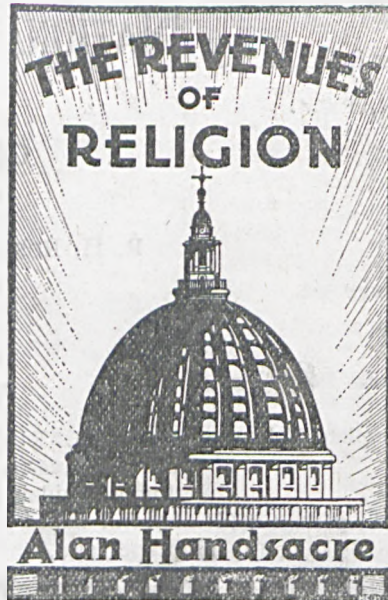
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