

The

FREETHINKER

FOUNDED · 1881

EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN · EDITOR 1881-1915 · G. W. FOOTE

VOL. LII.—No. 22

SUNDAY, MAY 29, 1932

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
Child Killing.—The Editor	337
Faith and Finance.—Mimmermus	338
Scientific Riddles.—C. S. Fraser	339
Caged Christs.—Ethel Mannin	341
Religion and the State.—Alan Handsacre	342
National Secular Society. Annual Conference	345
Let us Pray.—Jay	349
The Attractive Devil.—Nechells	350

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

Views and Opinions.

Child Killing.

THERE is no need to spend either time or ink in expressing one's feelings concerning the kidnapping and murder of the Lindbergh baby. Among decent-minded people, where the feeling is spontaneously sincere, everything can be taken for granted. If the feelings of the American people can be roused to the point of considering the causes and conditions that make such a crime possible, and if non-Americans can be brought to bring their feelings over this case to bear on kindred problems elsewhere, the crime will yield the only benefit such a monstrous outrage can furnish. That may give but small comfort to the poor parents, but the world's sympathy, and the world's resolve—if it can be created and sustained enough to make such crimes impossible in the future—will be something to them. If this outcry led to the blotting out of such an offence both the parents and the child would deserve a monument certainly as great as that of Nurse Cavel's.

I hope that none of my readers will deem me callous to the sufferings of the parents if I venture to submit considerations that may help to create a better sense of proportion concerning even this crime, and which certainly cover a wider area than the Lindbergh family. For in the first place it must be noted that the offence of kidnapping is not uncommon in the United States, a country which is so pure that it cannot tolerate an unmarried couple staying together in its hotels, which is shocked at drink being sold—without the bootlegger getting his profit—which is tolerably stern over its Sunday laws, and which is about as Christian as any other English-speaking country. There are, it seems, several hundred cases of kidnapping in the United States every year. In most of these cases, it may be assumed, the child is ransomed; in some of them it is never heard of again. In all of these cases there is the same anguish, the same distracted parents that exist in the Lindbergh case. But there is not the same outcry. The United States navy is not mobilized, the President does not issue

flamboyant proclamations, there is not the same outcry in American and foreign newspapers. But there is really no substantial difference between the kidnapping and disappearance of another baby and that of Baby Lindbergh. There is the same vacant crib, there is the same slow torturing terror, there is the same outrage, not on all that is civilized, for such a crime could not occur in an uncivilized country, but the same outrage on all that is decently human about men and women. But Lindbergh's claim to notice—extra notice, is that he flew the Atlantic. It offered the newspapers the chance of appealing to the sensationalism of the unthinking. Had the baby belonged to a shopkeeper or a mechanic, or to a man who had not flown the Atlantic, or who did not form the subject of articles in the press there would have been a paragraph in the papers, a police notice on the walls, and there the case would have ended. The crime is the same in every case, but what a difference in the sense of values formed! Perhaps this confusion of values is not surprising with people who regard a criticism of God Almighty as a crime, and playing games or visiting a Cinema on Sunday as a serious offence. Sooner or later we pay for debauching the intelligence of a whole people.

* * *

The Publicity Craze.

There are other considerations arising out of this matter. For some time the hopes of the parents were buoyed up by information from certain people that they were on the track of, or in communication with, the kidnapers. It now seems that this was pure bunkum, arising out of a mere childish love of display. One of these men has been locked up, and he accuses another one, a clergyman, of manufacturing the stories which he told the parents. In neither case, nor in other and similar instances, was there any hope of discovering the child by these methods. But there was a chance of newspaper publicity and the press, both in this country and in America, was satisfied that it had some "good" copy, and that it would please those who would rush for a paper containing a column or two of sensationalism. Without this avenue to popular notice neither Mr. Curtis nor his pal the parson would have been heard of, and if they could not have been heard of their crime would never have been committed. Governors of States also joined in the hunt for notoriety. They likewise cast out general hints about being in touch with the kidnapers, and knowing where the baby was. So long as their names were published nothing else mattered. They knew that the public would remember their names, but would forget the incident. Large circulations and newspaper fame are built up from that kind of mentality.

Then there are our friends the Spiritualists. They tell us of the wonderful information they get from the spirit world, and if we are surrounded by the

myriads of the spirits of the dead that is not surprising. But none of the clairvoyants, professional or amateur, discovered the Lindbergh baby. No spirit told a medium—either here or in America—where the baby was to be found, not one of the spirits, whose business in the spirit world it is to welcome new arrivals and guide their steps, sent a message through any medium that the child was with them. Mrs. Morris's "Power" could give her audience the profound information that if the peoples of the world did not learn to love one another there would again be war—some time; and even Lady Conan Doyle could receive information about the Sino-Japanese War, two years before it broke out, and some twenty years after newspapers were prophesying it. But no spirit in England or America could find out what had become of the Lindbergh baby. They were as helpless as the police. I expect that a number of mediums had a shot at it, but quite certainly none of them met with any success. The police were helpless; the spirits were useless; or perhaps they were too busy moving Hanen Swaffer's piano from one side of the room to the other, or manufacturing whisky for the friends of the son of Sir Oliver Lodge to bother about lost babies. It was a case when any decent spirit might have lent a hand; but not so much as an ectoplasmic finger indicated where the body of the dead child might be found.

* * *

War and the Weak.

Lack of an educated imagination is mainly responsible for the comparative silence with which the kidnapping of hundreds of children is passed over, and accounts likewise for the intensified outburst when the victim happens to be the child of a celebrated airman. A more natively vigorous imagination might also find in this case of the Lindbergh baby a substantial help towards making war as hateful and as contemptible as it should be. How many thousands of young children were killed by bombs, or died from starvation, or inherited some disease as a consequence of the "Great War"? When airmen dropped a bomb on a town or city or village, what amount of thought was given to the children that suffered? There were in this country outcries against German baby-killers, just as there were in Germany an outcry against British or French baby-killers. (It is curious that "our" bombs—whether the "our" be British or German should be so constructed as never to explode when children were near.) But there were more children killed by bombs or disease, or who owed nervous disorders to the war than the American kidnapers can kill or capture in a century. Yet there was no special outcry against this. No one thought of erecting a monument "To the children of all countries who were killed, starved to death, or stricken with disease during the war." No parson dwells upon it in his annual Sermon on Armistice Sunday. The whole hideous fact is hidden beneath the talk of self-sacrifice, processions to war memorials and the fictitious greatness of military courage. War is always, and never more than the last war, a war against children, the very aged, the sick and helpless. We do not always see this because we are seldom allowed to see this. Each country says it is fighting against armed forces, and against these only, as though one can blockade a country or starve a country, or bomb a country without injuring other than armed forces. The statement that we are fighting in times of war only armed forces is one of the many lies by means of which wars are perpetuated. We must fight against children, we must, in spite of ourselves become baby-killers. The strength of a chain is that of its weakest link, and in this case the

weakest links are the sick, the aged and the young. An army will fight while the casualty list among these is not too great, just as the American people put up with kidnapping while only the children of ordinary men and women were stolen. Naturally, soldiers never permit themselves to face this awkward fact, neither do civilians; but then I have no doubt but that the American gangster has some verbal formula by means of which he blinds himself to the horrible nature of the trade in which he is engaged.

Imagination and sympathy are among the greatest qualities of human nature. And properly educated they are the greatest of humanizing forces. It is by the aid of imagination that we put ourselves in the other fellow's place; it is by the power of sympathy that, having done so, we appreciate the nature of all we are doing to him. The murder of the Lindbergh baby has struck a chord common to the whole of humanity. It has touched something that is greater than creeds or nationalities, class or social status. If we could only educate along proper lines the sympathy and imagination evoked by the kidnapping of Colonel and Mrs. Lindbergh's child we might strike a shrewd blow at some of the world's greatest evils.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Faith and Finance.

"This mystery of vending spiritual gifts is nothing but a trade."—*Swift*.

"The system which begins by making mental indolence a virtue and intellectual narrowness a part of sanctity, ends by putting a premium on hypocrisy."
John Morley.

FORTY-SEVEN Christian Churches to a resident population of less than ten thousand persons sounds ridiculous. When it is added that this population consists of many Jewish people and a few hundred caretakers, and policemen, the humour becomes riotous. Yet this thing happens in the City of London, the heart of a vast Empire, and one of the most important cities in the world. £50,000 is spent each year on ministering to the so-called "spiritual" needs of this small resident population, who so seldom trouble the pew-openers. As an index of the work done in the City the summary of confirmations for one year shows that in the East City sixty-two candidates were confirmed, and in the West City ninety were received into this Anglican Church, "as by law established."

Nor is this all of this story of a quaint corner of the Lord's Vineyard, for a few years back the Church authorities decided to sell nineteen of these City Churches on the grounds that they were derelict, and use the money so obtained in other directions. Apart from the site-value of these City Churches, which is very considerable, there are very valuable estates attached to these derelict places of worship, which must be worth at least £3,000,000. Houses, shops, warehouses, three thousand of them altogether, bring in a revenue of over £100,000 yearly, the whole forming an ironic comment on this "Gospel of Poverty."

The curious position is that as the resident population of the City shrank year by year, so the value of the properties increased. Indeed, their value has doubled during the past generation. The situation a few years ago became as strange as the adventures of Captain Gulliver in Lilliput. The entire Jewish population, treated Christian places of worship with disdain. The caretakers, mostly policemen, were busy almost night and day. Hence the paradox of paradoxes. There were Church Schools and no

children; funds for theological lectures and sermons, but no audience; charities and no real poor. Coals and blankets had to be given to the caretakers and their wives, who, with demoralizing readiness, often attended two or more Churches, and thereby inflated the meagre returns.

This is a striking example of how the clergy hang on to the "loaves and fishes," long after there is any need for their services. This state of affairs, however, is going on all over England. There is so much of this sort of thing in the Established Church that it may truly be said to be the Church of the clergy rather than that of the people. There are no less than 1,877 parishes with a population under 200; and 4,802 with a population under 500. In so many parishes the parson with his big and expensive vicarage too often is a miniature reproduction of the lord bishop in a palace too large for him and the times. The late Judge Rentoul stated that at the annual banquets given to the clergy at the Mansion House seventy-four bottles of champagne were drunk costing then about £40. It is singularly appropriate that this same Mansion House should have been the scene of the Bishop of London's fervid oration on the alleged starvation of the wretched clergy.

The majority of the clergy of the Established Church have a very comfortable existence. The bishops live in palaces, and draw incomes ranging from £2,000 to £10,000 yearly. The Archbishop of Canterbury enjoys a stipend of £15,000 and the use of two palaces. Anyone who cares to consult Crockford's *Clerical Directory* can see at a glance that the average reverend "basks in the sunshine." He lives in a decent house, usually nicer than most of his neighbours. He has just as much, or as little, work as he likes to do, and if he chooses to spend three-fourths of each day reading or visiting, he can do so. He can, and often does, take lengthy holidays in the summer months. The higher ecclesiastics evade the blessings of poverty in the pleasantest manner, and their black coats, gaiters, and dog-collars may be seen scattered over Europe during the tourist season. A bishop's professional costume costs no less than £200, which is as far removed from the "fifty-bob" and four guineas' suit of the average man as Lambeth Palace, with its guard room, Fulham Palace, with its pleasure grounds, Farnham Palace, with its deer park, and Wells, with its moated gardens, are removed from the ordinary life of to-day.

The blunt truth is that this Established Church is the richest and most snobbish Church in all Christendom. At the top there are prelates with seats in the House of Lords, where they never do anything but obstruct progress; at the bottom are a multitude of holders of benefices better off than the ordinary man. As for the curates, it is the greed of their superiors that keeps them comparatively poor. We use this expression advisedly, for curates are not paupers so long as their parents can afford from £1,000 to £2,000 for their education. Even the bachelor Bishop of London, who enjoys a revenue of £10,000 yearly was once a curate at Bethnal Green. Indeed, it is he who complains so loudly of the horrible sufferings of the poor clergy. But he always talks at the top of his voice.

The annual value of the ancient ecclesiastical endowments of this Established Church is at least £10,000,000. Modern private benefactions, including the pennies of schoolchildren, bring in over £300,000 yearly. The capital value of the endowments reaches a colossal figure, and it is pertinent to ask to what purpose this mass of wealth is devoted. The money represents the income of a small country, and it is used entirely by priests in the cultivation of an inferiority complex in the population. This is not

the language of exaggeration; it is plain fact. The clerical programme everywhere is "Fear God and honour the King," which is Priestcraft and Kingcraft in a nutshell. "Fear God" means, literally, obey the priests, who are alleged to be the messengers of their deity, who, of course, is always behind the curtain, and never seen. "Honour the King" means repeating prayers for individual members of a particular Royal Family, and the upholding of Royalist principles, as opposed to Republicanism, or any sort of genuine Democratic Government. Compulsory church parades, and chaplains, show the hand of the priest in naval and military affairs. The endless outpouring of ignoramus from Church and national schools throws a searchlight on their activities in educational circles. The undue devotion of our Universities and public schools to dead languages, dead ideas, a dying creed and priestly pedagogues, is a further proof that the clerical ideal is the wholesale manufacture of Christians and not civilized citizens at all.

The disestablishment of this Church is no novelty. The Irish and Welsh branches of this Anglican Church have already suffered that fate. Disestablishment was for years a plank in the old Radical platform. It should once again be included in the pressing reforms advocated by Democrats. What Parliament has made it can unmake. But next time disestablishment must be accompanied by disendowment. It is the height of folly for Democrats to leave hundreds of millions of money in the charge of the foremost of the reactionaries for the sole perpetuation of outworn ignorance and superstition, and for the hindering of Democratic ideals and aspirations.

MIMNERMUS.

Scientific Riddles.

COMMENTING some two years ago on a remark made by Sir J. A. Thomson in a broadcast lecture, I wrote the following: "We need not suppose that there was any idea of bolstering up the credibility of the religious." But in two years I have learnt something of the obscurantist policy of the B.B.C.; and having recently read Sir J. A. Thomson's book *Scientific Riddles*, I must own to having been mistaken in my judgment of him. Despite his just claim to being a scientist and an interesting writer on scientific subjects, it is quite clear that on the subject of religion Sir J. A. Thomson is just as fond of obscurantism as the B.B.C. itself. The pity of it is that a man of his attainments should demean himself by using the cloak of science to propagate beliefs which, however estimable he may consider them to be, he knows are unscientific, and which many of his scientific colleagues regard as superstitious.

Scientific Riddles deals popularly with a number of biological, psychological and other problems of interest to the man in the street. The author considers such questions as "What is Sex?" "Is telepathy a fact?" and discusses such matters as "Walking in a circle," "Natural history credulities," and so on. In some cases the questions are answered—that is to say, explanations are given in terms which are commonly understood and by reference to facts that are no longer obscure or mysterious. In other cases he admits that in the light of present knowledge no answer—or only a tentative one—is possible. But the caution he exhibits when giving scientific answers vanishes when it comes to expressing his religious opinions.

Whenever opportunity permits, Sir J. A. Thomson the scientist steps off the stage to make way for Sir

J. A. Thomson the preacher. And while this quick-change is in progress, Sir J. A. Thomson the juggler presents us with some really pretty efforts at verbal legerdemain. One or two examples are worth recording. For instance, in the chapter on "How did life begin?" we read as follows: "Some would reply that living creatures were first made by divine Fiat . . . Personally we regard this as true, but our present question is a *scientific* one . . . An acceptance of a philosophical or religious interpretation of the origin of life does not relieve us from the responsibility of tackling the scientific problem."

Thomson the preacher believes that life began by the act of some obscure thing which he calls "God." And though he is unable to provide any verifiable evidence in support of his belief, he has no hesitation in saying that this explanation is the true one. Thomson the scientist, however, is not satisfied with this "true" explanation—presumably because science requires verifiable evidence for, and not a mere naming of, its beliefs. So Thomson the juggler does the trick by confusing his audience into thinking either that there are two sorts of problem, or else that there are two sorts of true answer to the same problem—the religious answer and the scientific one. But since the preacher glibly provides a religious answer to the scientific question, we are compelled to infer that there is only one problem, and that it is properly formulated in the question "How did life begin?" And we are left to suppose that this problem can have two different answers, both of which can be equally true and equally satisfactory.

Now the man of ordinary intelligence is under the impression that every problem, which is not ambiguously or nonsensically worded, can only have one answer that is true and satisfactory. And the man of ordinary intelligence is quite right. For if more than one true answer can be given to a question, then it is proof that the question is an ambiguous one; and it is logically impossible to give two answers to any question, both of which are equally satisfactory.

Thus, if I ask a man: "What is your name?" he might at one time reply, "Thomas," and at another, "Brown." If both answers are regarded as true, then the question must be ambiguous. Analysis proves this to be the case. For it is conceivable that a man has no name at all, or that he has several names. The question, as it stands, contains the two assumptions, namely: (1) that this man has some name, and (2) that he has only one name. By the answers given the first assumption is shown to be correct and the second incorrect. The question, as originally put, is therefore shown to be an ambiguous one. Similarly in "maze" problems we are sometimes asked to "Find the shortest way out." And if one such problem were to be arranged so that there are two equidistant ways out, each of which is shorter than any other (except its twin), it might be claimed that this problem has two equally true and satisfactory solutions. But here again the duplicate answer proves an ambiguous question. For the request to "Find the shortest way out" contains the incorrect assumption that there is only *one* shortest way.

In the second of these two illustrations we should have paved the way by first asking: "Is there a shortest way out?" In the first of these illustrations we should have asked: "Have you got any name at all?" But if a satisfactory answer is to be insisted upon for both the questions as they were originally put, then they would be, in the first case: "I have two names; which do you want me to give?" and in the second: "There are two equidistant ways out, which are shorter than any of the others." So it follows that if "God made life" is the true and satisfactory answer to the question "How did life begin?"

no other answer can be equally true and satisfactory, and science is wasting its time in further investigation.

The tragic thing is the ease with which an otherwise logical mind can be misled into accepting an answer as true simply because it happens to be a "religious" answer. Of course "God made life" is not a definite answer at all, for it naturally leads to the question, "What made God?" There is no doubt that Thomson the preacher would answer this as readily as the other by saying, "God has always existed." To which Thomson the scientist might—if he were not shouted down by the preacher or fooled by the juggler—reply: "How do you know that life hasn't always existed?" If the answer to this question were: "I don't know for certain. But such verifiable evidence as I have indicates its improbability," then the scientist might recommend this answer to the preacher if it ever occurred to the latter to enquire how he could be certain that God has always existed. It would at least be a small step forward in the logical education of Thomson the preacher.

In the last part of the book the author—adopting Nelson's method of putting his blind eye to the telescope—pursues the old chimera of trying to prove the existence of God by showing that there is purpose in evolution. He writes: "Do the scientific facts in any way suggest that Nature expresses a purpose? Our answer has been in the affirmative." Here again we see the preacher with his glib answer. But the same sentence continues: "and since the scientifically known System of Nature, being largely unconscious, cannot be credited with a purpose"; while a few lines later he writes: "The theory that there has been purposeful guidance throughout the ages has to face great difficulties." Here again we have the scientist, dissatisfied with the religious answer, and drawing attention to obvious objections. Lastly we get the juggler, who ends the first quoted sentence by saying: "we are led to think of a Creator's purpose." And having produced the rabbit in the shape of "a Creator," he swiftly passes it off behind the wings with the remark: "In regard to His abiding relation with His creation, who is wise enough to speak?"

What caused life to begin? We don't know. Let's imagine something and give it a name. God . . . Is there purpose in evolution? We can't be sure. Let's suppose there is and give it a name. God . . . So simple! So religious! So scientific! And so satisfactory!

Of course there is nothing remarkable in this inconsistent mental attitude. Man has always hated to admit that he doesn't know. And this dislike of ignorance, in which we almost always find an element of fear, has led him to adopt certain methods and ruses for overcoming the unpleasant sensation. In the most virile and logical type we find that curiosity is stronger than credulity. "I don't know, but I am going to find out." In others we find credulity overcoming curiosity. "I don't know, but I'll give it a name; and then I don't need to bother any more about it." And between these two we find all degrees of mixture. Most of them limit their curiosity to those things which affect them materially in some way or other, and they find it convenient to provide their minds with two categories for experience—one in which they are compelled to seek further information, and the other in which there is no such need. Sometimes it occurs that there is a clash between the two. When this happens, it depends upon a variety of circumstances whether curiosity or credulity gains the day. But whichever side wins, the discomfort-

able answer, "I don't know," is successfully side-stepped.

In Sir J. A. Thomson the conglomerate, this duality is perfectly clear. Unfortunately the obscurantist preacher is often too strong for the truth-seeking scientist. "We are taking religion to mean a sending forth of tendrils towards a supersensuous or mythical reality, personalized in God," he writes. "Educated men to-day," he continues, "have to choose between a mystical religion or none at all." Precisely. And the choice they will make will depend upon whether their credulity gets the better of their desire to know the truth, or the reverse. For no man who is really intelligent and educated is going to allow his thinking to be bamboozled by such words as "supersensuous" and "mystical," when he realizes that they are no more than euphemisms for "superstitious" and "obscurantist."

C. S. FRASER.

Caged Christs.

A NARROW alleyway of a street, a gas-lamp jutting from a wall; tall dark houses with blind eyes; bins of garbage; water running in the gutter; night slinking in the shadows, fearfully; an archway at the bottom of a flight of steps, the ivory gleam of an agonized Christ with bleeding wounds, above a skull and cross-bones . . .

All over Austria, as all over Italy, Christ is crucified at street-corners, in market-places, chapels, churches, by the road-side, on mountain-slopes, in meadows, but this was the first time I had found Golgotha in an alley.

I climbed the dark steps, and presently found myself on a cobbled hill of broad shallow steps—a steep, winding hill flanked on one side by a high wall, and on the other by a railing through which the lights of the town could be seen down below. I believed that I knew most of the walks in the town, but this steep narrow street of steps was new to me. If one followed it long enough, I thought, if my sense of direction did not mislead me, it should emerge somewhere near the monastery. I peered through the darkness trying to make out what lay ahead, but there was no moon, and nothing for it, if curiosity was to be satisfied, but to follow the steps to the end.

It was uncomfortable walking, for the steps were sufficiently high to make it impossible to ignore them, yet too low to be taken as steps, and after a few yards I climbed up on the path running along on the right about a foot above the cobbles . . . and was immediately confronted by a group of people in a cage. White faces ghostly in the darkness, supplicating hands held out to the bars . . . It was the most realistic tableau I had ever seen outside of Madame Tussaud's.

After the first shock I made out an altar in the background, with a little lamp burning dimly, and in the foreground the seated figure of the Madonna with her expressionless face and an infant Christ in her lap.

I passed on, and a little higher up came to another cage in which was a tableau of Christ before Pontius Pilate. And so it went on, cage after cage of life-sized, realistic figures depicting the agony of Christ on the way to Calvary. Christ with the blood streaming down his face from the crown of thorns; Christ being scourged by Roman soldiers; Christ fainting under the weight of the cross . . . on both sides of the way these barred cages with white faces gleaming through the darkness, and no detail of brutality, suffering, horror, omitted from the figures or their background. It was impossible to repress a shudder; there was something very dreadful about these tortured Christs in cages on that dark, lonely path. My first impulse was to rush back down the steps and out under the arch and into the street again, for a street, however unsavoury, is at least the haunt of human beings, whereas this place was like some horrible menagerie. There was something almost obscene about the painted faces and the staring eyes, and the tawdry touches of realism of the backgrounds. A little less realism would have made the tableaux merely

a series of pictures and nothing more; a little more realism would have made it all ridiculous, larger than life-size; as it was, life-size without being alive, as though the creatures in the cages had died standing up. Death was implicit in every cage—that death in life which is the glorification of suffering. And in every cage, as the path mounted, a crescendo of suffering . . . until at last the climax was reached, and the path widened out into Golgotha itself.

A flight of steps led up to a platform, upon which three immense crosses reared high against the sky, each with its life-sized crucified figure, Christ and the two thieves, with blood streaming from their wounds, and heads dropped in the death-agony.

Madame Tussaud could not have surpassed the realism of this apex of horror, for as a finishing touch here were real stars and trees as a background for the fake, and the wind whinneying eerily in the darkness to provide any shudder that the lavish application of scarlet paint might have missed. Mountebank Christs and tawdry Madonnas marching onwards to an exhibition Calvary . . . and a little farther on, the monastery, house of men without women, men who have renounced life, believers in the crucifixion of the flesh, living always in the shadow of the cross, the shadow of death; above them the woods where Goethe wandered; below them the monstrous symbol of the denial of all poetry, all laughter, all humanity. Prison-bars across the windows of the monastery as across the cages of the tortured Christs; no casements there to open on a moonlight flood to let the warm love in.

The violation and degradation of the body for the redemption of the soul, yet in the same breath the priests teach that God made Man in his own image, and "male and female created he them." Worship of the paradox of a virgin mother and a betrayed and defeated celibate saint—is this the road to Life, through a dark Gethsemane of suffering to Golgotha, the place of skulls? Or is it at the other end of the road, away from the agony of captive Christs and dolorous, painted Madonnas, in the lighted streets where the shadow of the cross does not reach, and men and women eat sausages and drink beer under trees, and ride in trams, and hold hands, and make jokes, and buy toys for their children, and where young Wander-Vogel stroll arm in arm, singing . . .

But there it stands, that Golgotha on a green hill far away . . . in Austria . . . for a symbol and a sign, a chamber of horrors on a hillside. The devout push flowers through into the cages, and leave them as offerings at the foot of the highest of the three crosses. The flowers die, and birds come out of the woods and perch on the crosses and leave their droppings there and fly away again, like the heedless children who run by laughing, and the lovers who stroll past seeing only each other, they belong to life and have nothing to do with cages.

ETHEL MANNIN.

THE KINGDOM OF THE MIND.

Sweet are the thoughts that savour of content,
The quiet mind is richer than a crowne;
Sweet are the nights in carelesse slumber spent,
The poore estate scorns fortune's angric frowne;
Such sweet content, such mindes, such sleep, such blis
Beggars enjoy, when princes oft do mis.

The homely house that harbors quiet rest,
The cottage that afoords no pride, nor care;
The meane that 'grees with cuntry music best,
The sweet consort of mirth and musick's fare:
Obscur'd life sets downe a type of blis,
A minde content both crowne and kingdome is.

Robert Greene (1597).

Religion and the State.

A Text from Mr. Belloc.

"The political theory upon which the Revolution proceeded has, especially in this country, suffered ridicule as local, ephemeral, and as fallacious. It is universal, it is eternal, and it is true."

(*"The French Revolution,"* by Hilaire Belloc.)

THE passage above quoted from Mr. Belloc's excellent, if characteristic, book on the French Revolution (Home University Library) was recalled by a quite recent expression of concern by a representative English Nonconformist as to the probability and danger of this country being divided (as is France) into Atheists (or anti-clericals) and Catholics. Implicit in that concern (for which there is less justification than we could hope) is the fear of democracy, or, at least, of democracy without religion. What was the condition of religion, the State religion, in France shortly before and at the time of the Revolution? We may take Mr. Belloc's word for that, for he would not deny that he faithfully represents it. First, as to the aristocracy and the higher clergy:—

... in the wealthy, the official and the governing classes, to ridicule the faith was an attitude taken for granted... It did not shock the Hierarchy that one of its Apostolic Members should be a witty Atheist; that another should go hunting upon Corpus Christi, nearly upset the Blessed Sacrament in his gallop, and forget what day it was when the accident occurred. The bishops found nothing remarkable in seeing a large proportion of their body to be loose livers, or in some of them openly presenting their friends to their mistresses as might be done by any great lay noble around them, etc.

This condition, as well as that of the people was, says Mr. Belloc, "veiled by more than one circumstance."

Thus many official acts, notably marriages and the registration of births, took place under a Catholic form, and indeed Catholic forms had a monopoly of them. Again the State wore Catholic clothes, as it were; the public occasions of pomp were full of religious ceremony. Few of the middle classes in the great towns, hardly any of the artisans, went to Mass; but the Churches were "official." Great sums of money—including official money—were at the disposal of the Church; and the great ecclesiastics were men from whom solid favours could be got.

It is Mr. Belloc's opinion that "France in the generation before the Revolution was passing through a phase in which the Catholic Faith was at a lower ebb than it had ever been since the preaching and establishment of it in Gaul." These conditions were not peculiar to Catholic France. Roughly the Protestant State Church in this country, and the indifference of the community to it, were the same, allowing for differences in national ceremonial and custom.

But, what is more significant, is that the last quotation only needs the alteration of a word to two (*i.e.* Church for Mass) to be a true picture of Church of England today. It is, therefore, easy to understand the anxiety of the clergy and ministers of all denominations as to the trend of things in this country so far as religion is concerned. Freethinkers, who are justly and wisely slow to regard mere indifference to religion as being equivalent to its rejection, may, on the other hand, underestimate the extent of its decline. In a recent issue of the *Christian World* (February 4), Rev. F. C. Spurr of Birmingham is reported as saying:—

We are dealing with a generation of people that does not know its Bible and are quite ignorant as to what the Church stands for. It knows nothing about personal religion. We have to face this new fact. Many of the terms we are using to-day have no meaning for the young generation. I am more and more outraged at the way in which our Blessed Lord is handled as if He were a dummy in a museum. People have criticized and analysed Jesus. They have done everything but obey and follow Him.

Emergency, calamity, necessity, have ever been the occasion of an attempt by Christianity to exploit economic, social, or industrial difficulty, and personal anxiety and loss. But it is to be noted that, in looking round to see what capital can be made out of the present difficulties and distractions of the world, Christian apologists

are realizing that the oracle is harder to work than ever. Thus Dr. John R. Mott, of the *World Student Christian Movement* in a recent book, refers to "the great forces that are opposed to us," and concludes:—

It is startling to reflect on the imminent possibility that, if we turn a deaf ear to the summons of the present most critical and fateful hour, the world mission of the Christian faith may fail.

Just as there never was a time when some priest or politician did not find the circumstances of the moment the gravest or most hopeful for his creed of his party, so there never is a time when it is justifiable to ignore the obvious implications and possibilities of current movements of opinion. If then, to come back to Mr. Belloc, the principles of the French Revolution "are the reservoirs from whence modern democracy has flowed," and if "the moral apology of democracy is the moral apology written by Rousseau," let not such analogy as there may be between the post-war conditions of England and those of the period of the French Revolution mislead anyone so far as to make the mistake which Rousseau made, and which (in another way), Mr. Belloc makes in writing about him. That mistake was, in the case of Rousseau, to include among the doctrines properly taught by the State "the existence of God, of a future life, and of states of reward and punishment therein." The mistake, is, in the case of Mr. Belloc, to think that "even in this point of religion" Rousseau was "essentially right." He was in advance of his contemporaries, but neither he nor they were in advance of to-day—how could they be? Mr. Belloc, like all Christian apologists, but more logical than many of them, says that "it must be admitted by all those who have considered their own nature and that of their fellow-beings that the ultimate authority in any act is God." It must be admitted by all who impartially study history who seek to interpret accurately the signs of the times, or to "consider their own nature and that of their fellow-beings," that there is no rational accounting for any of these consistent with Mr. Belloc's view of God, of history and of mankind.

ALAN HANDSACRE.

Acid Drops.

The *Universe* is complaining at the little space given in our daily national newspapers to the Pope's recent encyclical. Why they should have given any space at all is not made clear as even religious journalists or those who think religion should be boosted up to the people must have kicked a little at the nonsense in this particular encyclical. There was a time when the Pope's word was looked upon with even more devotion (and fear) than the Bible, when it could make Kings and Statesmen tremble. Nowadays the only notice taken of this kind of pronouncement is by Roman Catholics and their newspapers, and nobody else trembles in the least. It is all very sad. The *Daily Express* didn't even mention the Pope's encyclical. And no wonder.

According to this fatuous and quite unnecessary mouthpiece of the Deity, the world's grave troubles are due to Atheism, Individual Selfishness, Communism and Exaggerated Nationalism, and if these are not crushed still "graver evils" are threatening. We should not have thought anything graver to a Roman Catholic mind than "Atheism" could have even been thought of, but there it is. And the cure is not only to fight these things, but on June 3 the world should unite in prayer "during the entire octave of the Sacred Heart." If this is not as silly as organizing religious processions to cure a serious outbreak of small pox without first looking at the drains, we don't know what is. Yet millions of people look to the "Holy Father" for genuine guidance!

Eleven new all-Catholic schools were opened in 1931, making a total of sixty-three in four years. Catholics

are very pleased about it. Eighty-seven Catholic secondary schools—twenty-five for boys and sixty-two for girls are now on the Grant list and again Catholics are jubilant. Altogether there are now 1,188 Catholic elementary schools in England. Catholics have a right to teach their own children what they please, but not at the taxpayers' expense; and no one can read these figures without realizing their danger to the cause of secular education. On that subject, Freethinkers must be alert and working all the time.

In a sermon at St. Paul's, Dean Inge alleged that "it was said after the war, irreverently but not without real respect," that Jesus Christ "is the only person who has come with intellectual credit out of that horrible business." We know not who said this, but it is little credit to its author, and the Dean's use of it is only another sample of his gift for saying "quotable," but not necessarily sensible things. The old dodge of making a distinction between Jesus Christ and the religion which has made him known to history has been revived of late. A predecessor of Dean Inge's, Dean Milman is credited with having said that "we had tried the Christian religion for nineteen centuries, and it was time to try the religion of Jesus." The Jesus of history is the second person of the Christian Trinity, otherwise we know little or nothing about him, not even that he ever lived.

Nobody, we suspect, knows better than Dean Inge, that if he had said that Christianity came out of the war with credit he would arouse gasps of incredulity and a chorus of protest. For the Church's record in the war has done more to undermine its influence and authority than anything that has happened in modern times. Even if the existence of a pacifist Jesus be admitted, what proportion of his professed followers have the courage to be pacifists at the only time when it requires courage to make that profession? "There is not much of the Christ-life in humanity as we see it," says Dean Inge. And there is not much of the alleged teaching of Jesus heard in the pulpit of St. Paul's, or, for the matter of that, in pulpits in general.

The Legal Board of the Church of England National Assembly points out that a parishioner has a right to attend all services at his Parish Church, including fashionable weddings. The *Star* pokes justifiable fun at this pronouncement, and pictures the ticket-holders at a posh wedding being held up while the "credentials" of a parishioner are examined. The wedding service verger or sacristan must not, it seems, ask a *bona fide* parishioner the Biblical question, "Friend, how dost thou come in hither not having a wedding garment?" All that is needed is his number on the Parliamentary or municipal voting list or his birth certificate. We suspect that the Legal Board would not have bothered about this if it were not sadly true that few parishioners know, or care, what rights they have in respect of attendance at public worship, matrimonial or otherwise. When so few of them ever go to church at all it is easy to understand the effect on an occasional visitor to the Parish Church who, attracted for once, not by piety but by the crowd, finds himself kept out in favour of strangers arriving in taxis and cars for the nuptials. In any case there are only about half a dozen recognized "fashionable" wedding churches, so the Legal Board must have very little of a more serious nature to attend to.

Mr. Spurgeon was credited with saying that a man's religion was worth to him what it cost him. According to some figures just published the average valuation of those who go to Church of what they go for is significantly low. "There is a great mass of Church people who are quite complacent" after dropping a "tanner" in the plate who "spend a hundred times that amount on some pleasure or luxury daily." An average crowd of 3,617,196 church-goers contribute £2 14s. 2d. per annum apiece. It seems cheap for what they think they get. Yet, after all, the thing they seek is alleged to be "without money and without price." In any case, as a parson

pointed out to his flock the other day, nobody need contribute a penny to his salary—it is otherwise provided for, *i.e.*, by the State. It is easy to understand why the clergy dread disendowment. If they had to rely for salary on those who receive their attentions their lot, like Gilbert's policeman's, would not be a happy one.

We comment elsewhere on the actual murder of the baby son of Colonel Lindbergh. We share the horror of all the world at the beastly crime. But there is one aspect of the affair which may again be stressed; not a single spiritualist the world over was able to throw a scrap of light on anything connected with it. Not a medium anywhere said the poor child was dead. Not on pointed out how the unlucky father was being cruelly hoaxed.

The late Captain Scott of Antarctic fame was dead a whole year, but not a single spirit—not even his own—communicated the fact to any medium anywhere. Is it not extraordinary that while the Powers and Fedas and Katie Kings and other valuable denizens of Summerland can tell enquirers all sorts of absurd things—such as the colour of secret buttons in the top right-hand drawer of the family dressing table known only to one person or even known to none except the spirit trying to prove his identity—yet in cases of foul murder or swindling or genuine mystery, the medium is as helpless as a newborn babe? Had there been the slightest truth in "communication from the dead," surely the fate of Captain Scott and the poor little Lindbergh baby would have been "shouted from the house-tops."

The "champion liar of the Lindbergh tragedy," as he is called in America, Mr. J. H. Curtis, is now trying to blame the Rev. Harold D. Peacock for some of the lies. Writing from his prison, Mr. Curtis says of Peacock—we give the extract for what it is worth—"that most of the stories were manufactured by him. They were untrue and he knew their untruthfulness when he released them for publication." We do not vouch for Mr. Curtis, but if he is right, we are left wondering what is exactly the influence of religion upon truthfulness? In any case we would be ready to bet Mr. Curtis himself is a full-blown Christian and would shrink from Freethought with horror.

Lord Moynihan is credited with the following remark:—

St. Patrick might sometimes wonder if it were really worth his while to be the patron of our little island of disturbances; but we may have been chosen for tribulation for a special purpose.

Working out the implications of this piece of profound religious philosophy, we gather that there is really no cause for ill-feeling between the English and Irish. The English have been merely the tools of God, selected to work out a divine purpose. If the Irish feel aggrieved as regards the excessive amount of "tribulation" divinely awarded to them, the only logical thing to do is to lodge a protest with the Almighty Schemer. And we would suggest that the Roman Catholic Conference at Dublin next June offers an exceptional opportunity for doing this.

Superstition, says Mr. George Godwin in the *New Passing Show*, is the last infirmity of feeble minds. "By this criticism we are revealed for what we are—a nation of intellectual throwbacks, a community of muddle-headed, credulous morons." He adds:—

Beneath a veneer of culture and pretence at sophistication we nourish still superstitions that put us back to the intellectual level of Paleolithic man . . . Life should be governed by reason and some code of ethics. The lives of the superstitious are governed by what is, stripped of pretence, sheer animism, the propitiation of such articles as common salt, wood, and leaning ladders . . . Every superstition that mars the mental make-up of modern man is a link that binds him to his early

ancestors and make him a fit companion for the cave-man and high-priest of Mumbo-Jumbo . . . It is simply the unconscious tribute of undeveloped minds to primitive cults, when man was afraid of the world about him and sought to win the favours of the unseen malign spirits of tree, rock, mountain, air, stream or cloud.

It is well to add here the reminder that the soil from which the common superstitions spring is nourished by 50,000 priests and parsons in this country, who disseminate belief in unseen powers which are able to influence the life of man, and which require to be propitiated. The task of killing the common superstitions is a very difficult one, so long as the people are made familiar from the cradle with Biblical notions of the supernatural. While the pre-scientific mentality is being preserved among the people by the Christian Bible, the common superstitions can never die.

Mr. Rhys J. Davies, M.P., writes to a Free Church paper as follows:—

If Cinemas are to open on Sundays, logic and equity will compel us to make the same concession to theatres, and if to theatres, then to pugilistic exhibitions, football matches, and shops too. Are we prepared for the extension of labour, and the degradation which these things involve?

The first comment to be made on this is that if an Act of Parliament permits all the above-mentioned amusements on Sunday, it can quite easily also regulate the weekly hours of employment of the employees concerned, so as to ensure for them a weekly rest-day. And so for "the degradation which these things involve," if such things are degrading on Sunday they must be just as degrading on week-days; and logic should compel the Puritans to prohibit them on week-days. But perhaps our worthy member of Parliament really means that the exasperation of the pious would be beyond endurance, if they saw the ungodly person enjoying himself on Sunday while they were compelled to carry out the duties enjoined by their religion. The Sabbatarian declaration is, in effect, "If you cannot be happy on Sunday in our way, you shall not be happy in any other way."

At Rotherham, a church raised £1,400 for its funds by means of a three days' bazaar. We feel sure this news will make the local shop-keepers who, like most people nowadays are trying hard to pay their taxes, feel kindly disposed towards religion and the churches, for taking the bread out of their mouths.

"Were Church spires first built to point the way to Heaven?" is the question a popular journal has been asked. The reply given is: "They actually date from a belief in evil spirits. These were held to fear a point, even a pointing finger. Hence a pointed spire to keep them from annoying worshippers." After that, one might well enquire whence arose the quaint superstition that Christianity was a great advance on pagan beliefs.

Dr. Warman, Bishop of Manchester, says there is a very real danger to-day that the world may lose heart and courage. Immediately one problem is solved another arises. Dr. Warman adds that:—

Natural science and economic science have put man in a position that he never held before, and he holds it so proudly that he thinks he can easily dispense with God. The result of doing without God has been that the world is more muddled to-day than ever in its history.

The fact is that if the world is to-day more muddled than ever before, the cause of the muddle is not man's self-reliance, but that the present generation is reaping the harvest sown by past generations who thoroughly believed in God and trusted in the presumed guidance of God. The moral to be drawn from that is—"God" is best dispensed with. After all, the belief that there is a God helping man is of little advantage. Its usual effect is to make people fatalistically sit down hoping that muddles and problems will right right and solve themselves. Whereas, what is wanted at this juncture is plenty of sound thinking followed by energetic action.

Writing about tradition and its paralysing effect on thought and thinking, a contributor to *Pitman's Journal* remarks that the assumption should not be made that tradition is in itself bad. He adds:—

Tradition has played, and will always play a valuable and important part, in human life. But it must be a tradition of principle, intelligently applied; not the mere continuation of traditional forms and methods, which, because of changes in the conditions in and to which they have to be applied, have become ineffective even to the continued life of the tradition, whose application they originally were.

Unfortunately, this illuminating statement will be beyond the comprehension of the tradition-mongers in our midst—those dull proprietors of what the writer of the article called "static minds."

The editor of a popular periodical for the home says, "No one wishes to see intelligent modern people dragged back to the stuffy ideas of marriage that held good in certain Victorian circles; indeed, we could not get back there if we tried." It might well have been added that the "stuffy ideas" were Christian ideas, and typically Christian; which explains why they were "stuffy." One might safely say, too, that the "stuffy" ideas would still be dominant to-day, but for the educating of public opinion achieved by Freethinkers and writers who had been influenced by Freethinking criticism. As the "stuffy ideas" were so beautifully Christian, it was rather unkind of the aforesaid editor to imply that to "get back" to them would be a retrogressive move.

Religion and psychology, declares the Bishop of Chichester ought to be partners. The suggested partnership strikes us as rather odd—something like putting in double harness an ass and a race-horse. We have no doubt that the partners, religion and psychology, would agree perfectly, so long as psychology arrived at no conclusions which disagreed with religion's fixed and ancient notions about human nature.

Fifty Years Ago.

WHEN a Christian has discovered the futility of trying to prove the truth of his religion, he not infrequently falls back upon its good works. "Look at our hospitals, alms-houses, and orphanages," says he to the Secularist; "can you show anything of the kind?" It would be perfectly fair to reply by referring him to the jails, the gambling-hells, the gin-palaces, and the brothels, and asking him to place them on the other side of the account. It would be difficult for the Secularist to produce any such; they must therefore belong to Christianity! The fact is that the former institutions are the outcome, not of Christianity nor of Secularism, but of civilization; the necessity for them is as apparent to him who is doubtful on the subject of the atonement as to the Salvationist or the Episcopalian. Is there any connexion between the crucifixion and the metropolitan sewer? between the "mystery of the incarnation" and the Thames Embankment? These latter public works, like our hospitals and hundreds of other establishments for the secular good of the people, have sprung from common-sense and feelings of common humanity. But, be it observed, the hospitals and kindred places are anti-Christian in their character. The consistent believer can have nothing to do with them. In case of sickness his proper course is quite plain. He is to send for the elders, who are to anoint the patient with oil and lay their hands upon him, and the promise is given by him "who cannot lie" that the prayer of faith shall save the sick. The treatment at the hospitals is quite different, and any medical man who pursued this divine method would soon find himself on his trial for manslaughter before one of the judges of this Christian country. Therefore, so far from these asylums for the suffering being "witnesses for the truth," they are monuments of the predominance of carnal reason over simple child-like faith.

The "Freethinker," May 28, 1882.

SPECIAL.

The new Sunday Bill—No. 3 on the list—is issued just as we go to press this week. We have not time to write on it this week, but will deal with it in our next issue. The Government intends rushing this Bill through, and will order its legions to vote for it, whether they agree with it or not. And the legions will obey, unless strong counter-pressure can be brought to bear from outside. In this matter M.P.'s are mainly pawns. They will go whichever way they are pushed. It is therefore, our duty to see that they are pushed in the right direction.

The new Bill is substantially the old one. Thanks largely to the *Freethinker*, some of the bad features of the latter are eliminated, but the Bill remains bad in principle and in detail. It richly deserves the fate that befell its predecessors, and every Freethinker should do what he can to secure its rejection. We propose to issue at once a four-page leaflet summarizing the objections to the Bill. This should be ready for distribution in the course of a few days. At least 100,000 copies should be circulated at once. We will send them at the rate of 5s. per 1,000 post free. This is where our readers can help. Send at once for at least 1,000. Those who cannot or do not care to undertake personal distribution can have it done for them from this office. Let us know how many copies our readers wish distributing, but act at once. We may take it for granted that Freethinkers are the only ones who will speak plainly on the subject, and the present offers a good opportunity of placing our views before the public.

Copies of the leaflet will be sent to all the principal newspapers, and to members of both Houses of Parliament. This will entail expense, but the occasion demands it.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

CINE CERE.—The British Israel Campaign is really too stupid for comment, except so far as it may illustrate the foolishness of people where religion is concerned and the fact that all sorts of religious cranks and religious frauds can find plenty of money for advertising. Many thousands must have been spent on this particular lunacy during the past twelve months, and it would be interesting to know just where the money comes from. Always ready to receive letters provided they are not too lengthy.

J. BRIGHTON.—Your card came to hand too late. It was postmarked May 17, the day on which we went to press.

A. WILLIAMS.—We believe that *Our Old Nobility*, by Howard Evans, has been out of print for some time.

P. W. R. SILKE (Cape Town).—We agree with you in thinking that the Student's Rationalist Association would be well advised to refrain from entangling Freethought with a number of other questions. The present need is to bring together all who agree upon a general policy, and then allow particular groups to be formed for special purposes. Thanks for the cuttings.

J. R. LICKFORD.—We cannot say if it is the rule to classify people as Church of England, where no claim to belong to a particular sect is made. There is no regulation on the question. On entering prison or any other Government institution, can claim to have his religion, or absence of religion entered as he gives it. But it sometimes requires insistence.

G. E. WEBB.—The phrase "Christians are at least as good as Christians is 'writ sarcastic.'" We hope and believe that most Freethinkers are better than most of the Christians one comes across.

R. TURNEY.—We agree with what you say, but the insertion of your letter would open us to a flood of correspondence, for which we really have not the space. And the subject while of great importance to all thoughtful people is just a little outside our lines.

W. DEAKIN.—Thanks for cuttings.

PHILIP CREES.—Thanks—Next week.

J. FORRER (S. Africa).—We are obliged to you for the names of new subscribers, and for what you are doing generally to make our publications known. We are very proud of the loyalty of *Freethinker* readers. No journal ever had greater cause for pride in this direction than we have.

L. CORINNA.—Received. Will be used as soon as possible.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

A half column of excerpts from the Annual Report of the N.S.S. Executive appeared in the *Daily Herald*. The report is chiefly concerned with the Sunday Question, but it also notes the protest of the Conference against the payment of public money to Chaplains in the Forces, and also against the non-payment of rates and taxes by Churches and Chapels and other places of worship.

The Birkenhead Branch is making a serious and gallant attempt to secure an increased circulation for the *Freethinker*. It has already circulated some thousands of specimen copies, delivered by a house to house campaign, and has in mind the issue of a special handbill advocating the reading of the paper. It is also making a canvas of the newsagents where the free copies have been distributed to induce a better display of the paper. The Branch suggests that other Branches might follow the example set. Needless to say we agree. But where no Branches exist there is no reason why small groups of even two or three should not work along similar lines. Our business manager will be pleased to send parcels of specimen copies for distribution to anyone who sends name and address.

A friendly reader writes advising us as to the danger we run in inciting people to break the Sunday law with regard to entertainments. We can only say that many a bad law has been repealed by ignoring it, and the same result would follow in this case. And it should be remembered that the existing liberty which exists has been won by breaking the law. There is simply no possibility of getting a new Sunday law passed with the same scope as the 1781 Act, and the attempt to create another one in the name of a reform, should be resisted by all who would put an end to the ridiculous Sabbatarianism of this country. Bad laws are repealed by ignoring them. To that we may add that bad laws are perpetuated by re-enacting as much of them as people are stupid enough to stand. Repeal the Sunday Acts should be the cry. Compromise in this case is fatal and

will put real reform back for a very considerable time.

The *Cape Argus* for April 28, reports the beginning of the first trial for blasphemy in South Africa. Two newspaper writers, A. J. Bignaut and Herman Malan are charged with committing blasphemy in a series of articles. The one sentence cited by the *Argus* is "God is merciful and He has a kind heart. It is only his hands that are so d— rough." This reminds us of what was said to us many years ago by an American sailor, who was commenting on some things that had recently happened by an "Act of God." Well, he said, "God is kind, but careless, God-damned careless." I assured him that many a man had written a volume without saying more than he had put into a sentence. We shall be obliged to any of our South African readers who will keep us informed as to the progress of this Blasphemy case.

Mr. G. Whitehead has had some excellent meetings in Stockport. New members were enrolled for the local Branch of the N.S.S., and a quantity of literature was distributed. The local bigots were, of course, in evidence, but a show of support from the platform had the usual quietening effect. The Secretary of the Stockport Branch N.S.S. is an enthusiastic worker, and asks all unattached Freethinkers in the district to help make the Branch a centre of activity. Full particulars from Mr. G. Burgess, 98 Athens Street, Stockport.

Bolton Branch N.S.S. will co-operate in the arrangements for a week's lecture visit from Mr. G. Whitehead beginning to-day (Sunday). Owing to the demand for Mr. Whitehead's services this season, one week only could be allotted to Bolton. We make it known so that the local saints can concentrate on the present week. Details of the lectures will be found in the *Lecture notices* column.

National Secular Society. Annual Conference.

HELD AT THE VICTORIA HOTEL, MANCHESTER,
Sunday, May 15, 1932.

PUNCTUALLY at 10.30 a.m. the President took the chair, and commenced the proceedings by asking the Secretary to call the roll of delegates. The following answered their names: J. Clayton, Ashington Branch; J. Bryan, Birmingham; G. F. Green, Bethnal Green; Mrs. Revitt and Mrs. Bulmer, Bradford; W. H. Sissons and H. Hankin, Bolton; W. R. Fletcher, A. Reader and W. A. Williams, Birkenhead; Mr. Farrant, Brighton; J. T. Brighton, Chester-le-Street; J. Marsh, Cardiff; C. Bentley, Darlington; F. Day, Fulham and Chelsea; G. Whitehead, Glasgow; L. M. Werry-Easterbrook, Hants & Dorset; W. McKelvie, and J. V. Shortt, Liverpool; W. Collins, W. A. Atkinson and F. E. Monks, Manchester; Mr. and Mrs. Venton, Newcastle; R. Hartley, Nelson; A. D. McLaren, North London; W. J. W. Easterbrook, Plymouth; D. Goodison, Paisley; J. Wingate, Perth; A. E. Morgan-Skinner, Swansea; Mrs. Grant, South London; P. V. Morris, Shields; J. T. Brighton, Sunderland; G. Burgess and J. Hyde, Stockport; Mrs. H. Rosetti and F. G. Warner, West Ham; H. J. Savory and T. J. Sutherland, Wembley and District; Mr. and Mrs. McCall, Australia.

The President congratulated the Conference on having so good an attendance of delegates and members—it was, he said, a splendid sign of growing strength. He asked that the Minutes of the last Conference be taken as read. Mr. T. J. Sutherland (Wembley) proposed and Mr. W. Collins (Manchester) seconded the proposition, following which the Presi-

dent read out the Executive's Annual Report. (Published in last week's issue.)

Mr. E. E. Stafford moved and Mr. J. Clayton (Ashington) seconded, that the report be adopted. In moving its adoption Mr. Stafford pointed out, however, that the trouble over the *Bible Handbook* case in Australia had been omitted and asked whether it ought to have criticized the Beechcroft Settlement case as this was still *sub judice*. In reply the President said the passages in question could not possibly come under any rule of "contempt of court," and the Australian trouble was soon over when the officials there found out that the alleged blasphemous passages were actually taken from the Bible itself.

Mr. W. H. Sissons thought the Study Circle was doing such good work in London that the idea should be extended to other Branches. He wanted to know what had been done in Mr. C. Kumbleben's case?

The President said that the alleged reason Mr. Kumbleben was not allowed to land was his advanced political opinions, and not because of his Freethought. He did not agree at all with the Customs officials, but he was bound to point out that the case was not exactly one for this Society. Moreover, cases of this kind were becoming so common that we could not possibly deal with them all. Mr. W. Collins wanted to know if we could join some other organization for cases of this sort? The President said that something of this kind might be done on the lines of a general committee for the purpose of protecting freedom of speech and publication.

The Report was then unanimously adopted.

Mr. F. Day (Fulham) moved the adoption of the Financial Report and Mr. W. A. Williams (Birkenhead) seconded. Mr. Day wondered why small items were included while larger ones were not mentioned. Little seemed to have been spent on advertisements. The President agreed we did not spend very much on advertising, but more might be done.

Mr. Sissons thought the Secretary's salary was rather small. The President agreed, but Mr. Rosetti was also Secretary of, and paid by the Secular Society Ltd.

Mr. W. J. W. Easterbrook (Plymouth) considered the subscriptions from members were rather small, and thought the General Benevolent Fund should be better supported. The President said that in reality our income had increased, but this Financial Report was the Executive's, and Branches had their own.

Mr. S. Cohen was sorry to see Freethinkers were reluctant to apply to the Benevolent Fund, and felt we ought to advertise the existence of the Fund. No request, it was pointed out in reply, had ever been refused—even in times when we had no money. All applications were dealt with by the Benevolent Fund Committee and not by the Executive, except in special cases.

Miss Moore then raised the question of our funds being invested in War Loan. The President dealt with this in detail, and said that the term "War Loan" was now merely a name. The Government used its funds for whatever purpose they liked, and even the Post Office Bank could be drawn upon for War purposes.

Mr. S. Cohen insisted that there was still some psychological reaction in investing in War Loan, and Mr. J. Wingate (Perth) said we should make a stand against systems. The President finally pointed out that people left us money because they had confidence in us and we were under an obligation to use it wisely. The Report was then adopted.

The fourth item on the Agenda was the election of President: Moved by Bethnal Green, West Ham, Cardiff, West London, Bradford, Chester-le-Street, Sunderland, Birmingham, Liverpool, and North Lon-

don Branches: "That Mr. Chapman Cohen be re-elected President of the N.S.S."

Mr. W. Collins took the chair that Mr. Chapman Cohen vacated, and Mr. G. F. Green (Bethnal Green) then moved the Resolution. Mr. J. Marsh (Cardiff) seconded and Mrs. Rosetti with Messrs. McKelvie, Brighton, Sissons and Wingate spoke in support. Mr. Chapman Cohen was unanimously re-elected President of the National Secular Society for the ensuing year.

In a few brief words, he thanked them for the honour in electing him again—it was the sixteenth occasion—and carried with it the one heirloom, the hammer used first by lion-hearted Richard Carlile, and then by those brave Freethinkers James Watson, Charles Bradlaugh and G. W. Foote. He was glad his name could be added to theirs. As he said sixteen years ago, so he said now—he would always do his best. He then turned to the fifth item, the election of Secretary, and moved, on behalf of the Executive: "That Mr. R. H. Rosetti be appointed Secretary." He knew no one better qualified for the post. Mr. W. J. W. Easterbrook seconded, Mr. Ready and other members supported. The motion was carried with applause. The sixth item was the election of Treasurer, and Mr. C. C. Quinton was duly re-elected to the post. This was proposed by Mr. G. F. Green. Messrs. H. Theobald and Co., the retiring auditors, were also re-elected. It was resolved that the nominations for the Executive should be taken *en bloc*, and after some questions had been asked and answered the nominees were elected as printed on the Agenda.

The President then moved, on behalf of the 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."

Dealing with (a), he said it was always likely that things might be done which the Executive could not approve, and if any literature bore the name of the N.S.S., it was obvious that the Society should approve it.

Mr. F. E. Monks moved as an amendment, that the word "rules" be added before the word "leaflets." Mr. Ready seconded. Mr. W. J. W. Easterbrook wanted to know if this applied to the syllabuses which might have our aims and objects on them?

The President said that once a form, etc., had been passed it could stand until cancelled. It was by no means a censorship, to which he was strongly opposed. The Executive had a right to know, if you were speaking in its name, the kind of speech you were likely to give.

Miss Moore agreed that the Society should be protected from anything likely to make it ludicrous. The amendment was carried, and the words "rules and" inserted in the original motion.

The President then moved (b), Mr. Stafford seconded it and after some little discussion, it was carried. Number 10 was the motion by the 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."

Mr. J. Wingate moved this and said how difficult it was for one speaker alone to carry on any active propaganda, and in any case, he was likely to eventually become tedious to his hearers. He wanted to see some active speakers sent round his district where there were fine opportunities. Mr. H. Hankin (Bolton) seconded, and showed how even parsons had to exchange pulpits. The President said the Executive

was doing all it could—the greatest difficulty was the want of really efficient speakers. The Motion was carried.

Mr. F. G. Warner then moved the 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."

In support, he pointed out few people even in the Churches and Chapels knew the truth about the rates, and said we ought to do our best to educate them.

Mr. J. T. Brighton (Chester-le-Street) in seconding, concurred, and Mr. G. Burgess (Stockport), as an old soldier, gave some interesting experiences, both of his life as a soldier and also when writing to various War Ministers. He hoped the Society would move in the matter. Mr. F. Day (Fulham) proposed an amendment and after discussion, it was seconded and passed that the words "in the Army, Navy and Air Forces" should be deleted, and "for public and social services" be substituted. This was carried.

Number 11a was the Motion by S. R. A. Ready: "That the Executive be empowered to make all necessary arrangements for the production of a gramophone record, reproducing a short address on Free-thought 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."

He said there were three aspects of his Motion to be considered—the cost, the propaganda value and the personal one. He said that the only record we had of G. W. Foote was in his books, and the same was true of Charles Bradlaugh. He thought how splendid it would be to be able to put on the voice of the President of the N.S.S. delivering one of his lectures, and how the next generation of Freethinkers would appreciate it. No gramophone record had yet been made of a Free-thought lecture, and this would make it something unique. Mr. Ready had made enquiries as to the cost and gave the meeting three estimates, from which the Society could choose. Mr. L. M. Werry-Easterbrook (Hants) seconded and the Motion was carried.

The meeting then adjourned for lunch.

Afternoon Session.

Mr. J. Bryan moved on behalf of the 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."

Mr. Ready seconded and Mr. A. D. McLaren said he had long advocated the abolition of the censorship, and he added an interesting account of the various censorships with Acts and dates in support of the motion. Mrs. H. B. Grant said the only censorship she was in favour of was that which could prevent our daily papers giving space to sensational stunts. Mr. W. J. W. Easterbrook wanted to know more precisely what censorship we were asked to abolish?

The President said that the official theatrical Censor was the Lord Chamberlain, and he only acted with respect to stage plays. The film censorship was unofficial. The President pointed out the difference between going to law and being thus able to state a case and having to submit to a censorship with no redress whatever. To educate the press it was necessary to educate the public first.

Mr. H. Black said George Bernard Shaw had dealt with the censorship, and he felt if Shaw couldn't abolish it we were unlikely to do so. The Motion was carried.

Mr. F. Burgess then moved the Motion by the 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."

He read out a letter from the B.B.C., in which the Corporation maintained that its Sunday programmes were liked by the majority of hearers, and said we should make more protests. From the *Economist* he learnt that the assistant director of programmes was a Catholic.

Mr. L. M. Werry Easterbrook said that most people admitted over and over again that they switched over to the Continent whenever possible on Sundays. After further discussion the resolution was carried.

On Motion No. 14: "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."

Mr. McLaren said Sunday restrictions were not the result of Common but of Statute Law. He gave a very careful and instructive review of the Acts dealing with Sunday trading and entertainments, and agreed that the only course for the N.S.S. was to press for the complete repeal of the Sunday Acts. Mr. Stafford in seconding said he thought that many people did not realize the seriousness of the situation. Sunday should be placed on the same level as other days. The President gave a clear statement as to the position to date, and said that, thanks largely to the agitation carried on in the columns of the *Freethinker* "debates" was to be withdrawn from the new Bill, which was to be introduced. He suggested the issue of a circular pointing out the nature of the Bill as soon as the new proposals were printed.

In moving, on behalf of the Executive the motion dealing with the Bradlaugh Centenary, he said the main plan which the Executive had in view was to make the Centenary as much a national event as was possible. If this could be done it would place Bradlaugh in his true position. Some members of the Executive were meeting some representatives of the R.P.A. very shortly, and then a more definite plan might be decided on. The aim would be to get representatives of various schools of thought to unite in doing honour to the memory of one of the greatest figures of the nineteenth century. The resolution was seconded by Mr. Easterbrook, and after an expression from Mr. Sissons to the effect that in these celebrations we should not lose sight of Northampton the Motion was carried.

On behalf of the Fulham and Chelsea Branch, Mr. Day then moved Motion 16: (a) "That as a method of celebrating Bradlaugh Sunday, the Executive be instructed to arrange a mass meeting of London Branches in Hyde Park on an appropriate date." There was considerable opposition to this proposal, the main criticism being that the Executive could not force Branches to co-operate, and more might be done by a number of meetings in different parts of London. Mr. Morris having moved, and carried, a motion "Next Business," Mr. Day then moved (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." After some discussion the President said one could publish

the number of new members, but he confessed he did not see how one could publish the number of actual members without misleading everyone concerning our actual strength. If we were to publish as our number only those who had paid their subscriptions to date, we should grossly underestimate our numbers. Very many of our members paid up once now and then, and such a method of calculation would leave out the majority of members of Branches, for whom the capitation fees were owing to headquarters. On the other hand to count all the names on our books would be to overestimate. And very many of these irregular paying members were active workers, and from whom the Society benefitted. On the whole it seemed better to go on as we had been going, leaving it to the Executive to strike off such names as it seemed best. The motion was opposed by several speakers, and on being put to the vote was declared lost.

A very interesting discussion arose on Motion 17, 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."

In an excellent speech Mr. Green said there was inevitably a great deal of discussion as to what was meant by "happiness," and also by "utility." The phraseology was a heritage from the past, and like all such inheritances needed bringing up to date. Miss Moore seconded, and said that her aim was to fight the Churches, and thought that a clarifying of our Principles and Objects might help in that direction. Mr. Ready thought that the words expressed fine ideals, and that they embodied the historic teaching of Secularism.

In summing up the discussion the President welcomed the appearance at the Conference of both Mr. Green and Miss Moore. We were certain to gain by such speeches as those to which we had just listened. He appreciated both the feeling of affection for the past of Secularism and also for the desire, even the necessity of from time to time overhauling what the past had bequeathed to us. He suggested that the resolution covered a very large and a very important area, and it was hardly possible to go fully into it there. He suggested to the Conference that in view of the importance of the proposal it should be for the present withdrawn, and that Mr. Green and Miss Moore should put forward a more comprehensive plan for the overhauling of the present form of the Principles and Objects. This would be done, not because the Conference wished to shelve the subject, but because it realized its importance. On this understanding the mover and seconder agreed to the motion being withdrawn, and the Conference considered Motion 18 (a) and (b) by the 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."

Mrs. R. H. Rosetti moved and Mr. Sissons seconded both Motions with brief speeches, owing to the small amount of time at the disposal of the Conference. Both resolutions were unanimously adopted.

Mr. H. Savory, for the Wembley Branch, moved (No. 19): "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." He said that Bradlaugh had played a

great part in the political field, and it would be a good thing if the Society took a greater direct interest in political affairs. The Roman Church and the Church of England actively interfered in many political questions, and we should do something to counteract this. Mr. Green seconded, and dwelt on many matters on which he thought the Society could exert an influence, particularly the publication of material facts concerning the Churches. It having been pointed out that wherever it was possible—within the Society's constitution—to do what was suggested in the Motion, this was being done. And anything further that could be attempted would be done. It was important that in all elections Freethinkers should make the claims of the Society as prominent as possible.

Motion No. 20 by the Bradford Branch dealing with Secular Education was then put and carried without discussion.

This brought the discussion of the Agenda to a close. The remainder of the Session was devoted to the reading and discussion of papers by Dr. Carmichael, Mr. F. E. Monks, and Mr. Victor Morris. These were all excellent in character, and will be published in due course in the *Freethinker*.

In closing the Conference the President said that on behalf of all present he desired to thank the Manchester Branch for the way in which it had worked to make the Conference comfortable, and the pronounced success achieved. The smooth running of everything argues a considerable amount of work, the less observable the work the greater the efficiency indicated. He also congratulated everyone concerned on having just brought to a close one of the most successful Conferences of recent years. Everyone would leave with increased enthusiasm, and a stronger resolve to make the coming year more successful than the one that had just closed. The general spirit manifested was good, and of excellent augury for the Society and the Cause for which it stood.

"Let us Pray."

The *Daily Express* published recently some of the "remarkable claims" of the intercessory powers of an English martyr. In these days of world-wide depression no stone should be left unturned to obtain alleviation of the suffering that is prevalent among all nations. It is, therefore, incumbent on all patriotic and intelligent men and women to give earnest consideration to whatever means that may appear helpful.

It seems that John Southworth, upon whom our Holy Mother the Church has bestowed the title of "Blessed," was hung, drawn, and quartered at Tyburn, in 1654. His embalmed body now lies in a "glass-pannelled oaken casket" in Westminster Cathedral. Within two years of his death he had answered the prayers addressed to him on behalf of a wilting sprig of English nobility. The good work still goes on. For instance, quoting the *Daily Express*, "Here are some of the records which the pilgrims to the shrine have sent to Father Hathway, of Westminster Cathedral:—

- (1) A business transaction successfully carried out.
- (2) Substantial help received in a financial crisis.
- (3) Mortgage satisfactorily arranged.
- (4) Satisfactory tenant found.
- (5) Misunderstanding put right in a convent.
- (6) Work found when it seemed hopeless.

A further instance, fully reported, is that of the complete cure of a young boy who for six months had suffered from foot trouble and was unable to walk, but who recovered the free use of his limbs immediately upon his parents' application to the martyr.

What John Southworth has been doing in the intervening 300 years does not appear. This is a pity. We are, however, not concerned with an apparent inactivity

of three centuries, but rather with the amazing recrudescence of the present.

The claims enumerated above open up a vista which staggers the imagination. That such results should follow simple prayer seems to argue that here we have the solution of all our difficulties. If John Southworth can arrange mortgages, find tenants and work (for somebody else), and transact business so successfully, surely here is the saviour of the world at last? And if he should find himself overworked in the matter of granting petitions, there are, we understand, several thousands of Blessed Martyrs who would be only too glad, doubtless, to regard this kind of activity as a relief from taking the solo parts in the Heavenly Choir.

The only obstacle to our lack of appreciation of the martyrs' undoubted powers is ignorance of the facts. We do not know these martyrs, their several excellences, and their might. Surely it is high time these were brought to public notice by an intensive advertising campaign so that all might benefit by the knowledge. If only some public spirited individual (the Church, of course, is too poor to do so) would undertake the financial burden of such a publicity campaign, we feel sure he will have his reward. By the judicious expenditure of a few hundred pounds such knowledge would be disseminated as would infallibly produce the necessary prayers to ensure the cessation of poverty, of business failures, and of financial worry, not to mention foot trouble. Such advertisements as the following could not fail to enlighten and impress the ignorant public with the virtues of the Blessed Martyrs:—

WHY HAVE ANY FINANCIAL WORRIES? Pray to the Blessed Martyr DOUGLAS DOUGLAS (boiled in oil at Ecclefechan in 1597) and earn a SOLID INCOME by beating Tote and Bookie. A "mother of eleven" writes: "My daily tanner on the 3.30 has been like bread cast upon the waters." First four places only. Greying a speciality. N.B.—DUGGIE ALWAYS KNOWS!!! AMAZING SUCCESS!!! By the intercession of the Blessed Martyr EVAN EVANS (hamstrung and bacon-cured at Llanfairmathafarneithaf, 1619), 79 out of the last 81 First Prizes in *Tiny Tots* "Tootles" Competition have been won by followers of this Blessed Martyr, including the record-breaking offer of £1,000 a week for life. No dud lines. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded (in the next world).

To Crossword Solvers: The Blessed Martyr Beauchamp-Cholmondeley-Majoribanks (every bone in body broken between Wembley and Twickenham in 1600) hears the prayers of the faithful and ABSOLUTELY GUARANTEES correct solutions and "first opened." Last week's STUPENDOUS SUCCESS: £50,000 won in Sunday Steeple Eze Xwords. N.B.—Original cheque for above will be on view at the Church of SS. Beech, Chum, and Marsh (1s. per head).

PRAYERS to the Blessed Martyr PATRICK MURPHY (Shill-elagh'd to death in a bog in 1627) will ensure winning ticket in Dublin Sweep. Be aisy for life: its a *poor* heart that never rejoices.

These are mere suggestions, of course. There are publicity experts who would improve on them. Our only concern is to bring the facts before the public.

And if the individual, why not the nation? Surely, if an individual mortgage can be arranged, why not a moratorium, or even a cancellation of war debts—the millstones of the present generation? If a business transaction, why not the saving of the world from the bankruptcy that is imminent? No indication is given of the nature of the "misunderstanding" that was "put right in a convent." But whatever it was, if that is possible, why not put a stop to other misunderstandings? Say, between China and Japan, ourselves and the U.S.A., France and Germany? It is a pity that John Southworth & Co., have not thought it worth their while to bend their energies in this direction on their own initiative. Doubtless this is because faith, expressed in prayer, is a first essential. But what a glorious opportunity at the expense of a few words to bring peace to the world, to rid us of abominable diseases, to alleviate suffering and banish worry, sweep away slums and other uncleannesses, and to give to all riches in place of poverty.

But soft! There is the snag. (There is a snag in all these visions.) Riches for poverty is impossible. We

have it on Divine Authority that the poor are *always* with us. We must not fly in the face of Providence. Let us, therefore, pray, but confine our prayers to occasional mortgages, satisfactory tenants, and misunderstandings in convents.

D. JAY.

The Attractive Devil.

THE story of Faust owes most of its popularity to Goethe, and it is significant that the most famous aspect of the history of Faust is that of his adventures with Marguerite.

Yet this love story was invented by Goethe and has no place in the old legends.

The old legends told how a man made a deal with the Devil giving his soul in exchange for power and knowledge.

Needless to say, Christians accepted the legend and swallowed it wholesale, while their spiritual advisers took it as a splendid story for keeping back-sliders from sliding too far.

In the opera by Gounod, which is, perhaps, the most popular opera in the world, the scene opens with Faust, a philosopher, sitting in his study, despairing of solving the riddle of the universe. About to drink poison, Faust curses life and calls on the Devil to aid him. A bargain is made, Faust sells his soul in exchange for youth, and then after betraying Marguerite, sees her carried to Heaven, and falls down on his knees in prayer.

Such is the story as told in the opera. There are some Christian touches, as when someone abashes the Devil by holding the hilt of a sword shaped like a cross towards him, and as when Siebel removes a curse from his hands by dipping his fingers in some holy water.

I have been moved to write about this opera because I have just been playing an H.M.V. record, No. DB 1465, on which Elizabeth Rethberg sings "The King of Thule" and "The Jewel Song," both from Faust. As most popular people know, "The King of Thule" is a simple ballad, and "The Jewel Song" is one of the most brilliant of airs for coloratura soprano. The Rethberg tone is famous, and the record gives her ample scope for showing how exquisitely she can sing.

While I am on the subject I may as well mention some other Faust records which are what I might call tip top. H.M.V.

Complete recording in album, records Nos. C 2122-2141.

Vocal gems by the Grand Opera Company No. C 2290.

All hail thou dwelling, sung by Gigli No. DB 1538.

Now the point is that Faust is perhaps of all grand operas the most popular with English people—it is certainly THE opera in France, Italy, Germany and America.

And whenever it is performed the character who draws most applause is Mephistopheles! In other words the Devil is the best liked character in the play. No one feels much sympathy for Faust, Marguerite, of course, merits compassion, but the rollicking, sinister, and mocking attitude of the Devil appeals to English audiences.

There seems to be a moral in this somewhere, perhaps Freethinkers will seize upon it at once.

NECHELLS.

UNWANTED CHILDREN

In a Civilized Community there should be no UNWANTED Children.

For an Illustrated Descriptive List (68 pages) of Birth Control Requisites and Books, send a 1½d. stamp to:

J. R. HOLMES, East Hanney, Wantage, Berks

ESTABLISHED NEARLY HALF A CENTURY.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand), 3.15, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrolds Road, North End Road): 7.30, Saturday, May 28, Mr. F. E. Barnes and Mr. C. Tuson. *Freethinkers* on sale.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, May 29, Mr. L. Ebury. Monday, May 30, South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Mr. C. Tuson. Thursday, June 2, Leighton Road, Kentish Town, 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town): 7.30, Mr. L. Ebury, Wednesday, June 1, Canal Head, Peckham Road (opposite Rye Lane): 8.0, Mr. C. Tuson. Friday, June 3, Camberwell Gate, 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEMBLEY AND DISTRICT BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of London Road, High Road, Wembley): 8.0, Mr. F. P. Corrigan—"Christianity—Tried and Found Wanting."

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (outside Technical College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mrs. Grout.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): Wednesday, May 25, at 7.30, Messrs. Tuson and Wood. Thursday, May 26, at 7.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin. Friday, May 27, at 7.30, Messrs. Bryant and Le Maine. Sunday, May 29, at 12.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 3.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Bryant and Wood; Platform No. 2, Messrs. B. A. Le Maine and Tuson. 6.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Wood, Tuson and Bryant; Platform No. 2, Messrs. Hyatt and Saphin.

WOOLWICH BRANCH N.S.S. (Beresford Square): 7.45, Mr. S. Burke—"Birds of Pray."

INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Gilbert Raymond and Choir. An evening of English Madrigals.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.1): 11.0, John Hobson, M.A.—"Remaking the World."

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

BLACKBURN, Sunday, May 29, at 7.0, Mr. J. Clayton, A Lecture.

BOLTON BRANCH N.S.S.—Mr. Whitehead will lecture on the Town Hall Steps, Bolton, Saturday, May 28, at 7.30, and all following week, to June 3. Saturday, June 4, Wigan Market, 7.30. Sunday, June 5, Blackburn Market, 3.0 and 7.0.

CRAWSHAWBOOTH, Wednesday, June 1, at 8.0, Mr. J. Clayton, A Lecture.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths): 7.30, H. Little and J. V. Shortt. Tuesday, May 31, Edge Hill Lamp, H. Little and P. Sherwin. Thursday, June 2, corner of High Park Street and Park Road, A. Jackson and D. Robinson. Current *Freethinkers* and Literature on sale at all meetings.

MERSEYSIDE FREETHINKERS.—Sunday, May 29, a Ramble to Hall Road and Ince Woods. Meet at South Road Station, Waterloo, at 2.45 to 3.0. Intending Ramblers advised to bring food. Everybody welcome.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Socialist Club): 3.0, Sunday, May 29. Lecture at Bigg Market, 7.30.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Bigg Market): 8.0, Friday, June 3, Mr. J. T. Brighton. A Lecture.

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Church Street): 7.30, Saturday, May 28, Mr. J. T. Brighton. A Lecture.

RISHTON, Sunday, May 29, at 3.15, Mr. J. Clayton, A Lecture.

SOUTH SHIELDS N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.0, Wednesday, June 1, Mr. J. T. Brighton, A Lecture.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S.—Sunday, May 29, Mr. J. T. Brighton. A Lecture.

TRAWDEN, Friday, May 27, at 7.45, Mr. J. Clayton, A Lecture.

ACADEMY CINEMA, Oxford Street

(OPPOSITE WARING & GILLOWS). Ger. 2981.

Exclusive Run. Fourth Week.

LEONTINE SAGAN'S

"MADCHEN IN UNIFORM."

A Psychological Study of Adolescence and the Submarine Drama

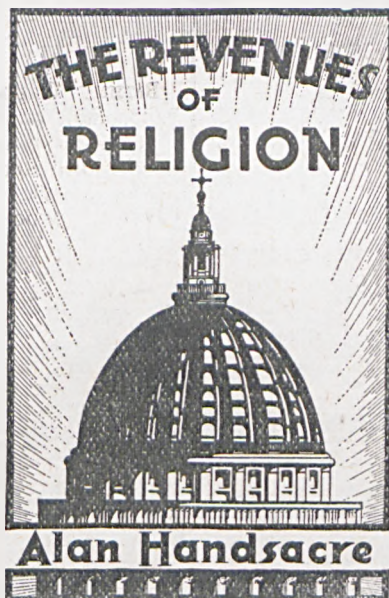
"MEN LIKE THESE."

Of topical interest in view of the forthcoming crisis in the relations between Church and State.

**History—Argument—
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Cloth 2s. 6d.

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The case for Disestablishment and Disendowment from the secular and financial points of view.

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With
A RECORD OF ESTABLISHED RELIGION IN ENGLAND

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- INDEX

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