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Views and Opinions.

The Church and Politics.

LAST week we commented on the fact of Lord Strickland, late Prime Minister at Malta, having made his peace with the Church of Rome. During the political disputes of 1929-30, he saw fit to comment very severely on the interference of the Maltese Roman Catholic hierarchy in political affairs. The Church replied with a virtual excommunication. Now Lord Strickland, as a good son of the Church, has "humbly" apologized and has "unreservedly" begged the pardon of the Church, and has further promised an "unwavering determination to be a faithful son of the Church"—which means that he will in future obey whatever orders the Vatican cares to issue. One would have imagined that so abject a submission would be enough. But the Pope is not content. The word has gone forth that to secure full pardon Lord Strickland must go to Rome and sue forgiveness at the feet of the Pope. We see no reason why he should not do so. Having gone so far and confessed his crime in speaking disparagingly of the officials of Holy Church, there seems no reason why he should not go the whole hog. There is a certain kind of glory in self-abasement, and when a British Prime Minister has gone the length of openly proclaiming that his obligations to the Roman Church takes precedence of duty to his country, in kissing the Pope's toe and craving pardon, he will only be carrying his recent conduct to a spectacular conclusion.

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Playing Cautiously.

Commenting on the affair, the *News-Chronicle* says that "at this stage Lord Strickland's fellow-countrymen become interested spectators," and hopes that the Vatican will see "the unwisdom of pushing its quarrel to . . . to these medieval extremes." The comment is, it will be noted, very mild, and this may be due to the fact that in protesting against the Catholic Church's claim to override the secular State, it is treading on very tender ground, and introducing a

question that goes very much farther than Lord Strickland's quarrel with the Papacy. The medievalism of demanding that Lord Strickland follows the example of one of the greatest of medieval monarchs in begging forgiveness, is only a picturesque carrying out of a medievalism which is already in operation wherever a Christian Church is permitted to interfere in political life. For every such interference proceeds on the assumption of that superiority of the Church over the State which the *News-Chronicle* condemns. The last word is perhaps too strong, for it is not the medievalism which is condemned, but only pushing it to extremes. And pushing it to extremes means making quite plain to the modern mind the evil of ecclesiastical and religious interference with secular affairs. Quite astutely the *News-Chronicle*, in view of the clientele it serves, does not plainly and categorically condemn such interference. It merely expresses the hope that the Vatican will be wise and hopes that it will not push its interference to the extent of courting the danger of a reaction. In that case Churches other than the Roman Catholic may suffer. The Dreyfus case in France led to the opening of the whole question of religion in the modern State, and ultimately to the disestablishment of the Church in France. If Lord Strickland's cowardly surrender brings a number of people back to the consideration of first principles he may, quite unintentionally, have done this country a first-class service.

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The Fear of Religion.

The introduction of religion into the political field is always more or less disastrous. In Roman Catholic countries the rule of the priest is avowed and obvious, and its evils are apparent to everyone—but the priest. In our own country the rule of the priest is unavowed, but it is there in an insidious and hypocritical form. It is not so obvious—to those who do not wish to see it, but its power is confessed by the efforts made by individuals and parties to avoid rousing its antagonism. In municipal life the organized vote of Church and Chapel, while not so decisive as it was a couple of generations ago, is still too powerful for candidates for office to risk offending. And this Protestant vote is used very much as the Roman Catholic vote is used. Let the issue raised touch religion, and voters are urged to act as *Christians* in the interests of the maintenance of religious privilege or sectarian power. The Roman Church meets disobedience with excommunication inside the Church, and outside with whatever secular pressure it is able to use. The Protestant Church is not able to excommunicate, but it has the powerful weapons of business and social boycott, and it uses them with as little compunction as the elder Church wields its spiritual powers. The result is a mass of insincerity, hypocrisy, and humbug that affects every branch of public life. The position of Lord Strickland is humiliating enough in all truth. But he is at



least acting under pressure openly applied, and so far is illustrating the position laid down by Hilaire Belloc, and when the Church has said what is right it is a matter of no consequence what one's own intellectual convictions may be. But I am sure that submission to a mental tyranny openly exercised is in the end far less demoralizing to character than is the concealed tyranny of religion in this country.

### Religion and Life.

Is there a single instance in which religion has been permitted to operate in the political or social life of the people of this country, where that influence can be said to have made for public good. I do not know of one. Lecky has pointed out that wherever it is possible to trace the influence of Canon Law on the criminal law of this or of any other country the influence has been wholly in the wrong direction. It has encouraged torture and brutalization and has steadily fought against the rational treatment of the criminal. Church law and religious teaching has, again, been mainly responsible for the opposition to the legal equality of the sexes. Woman was created subject to man, and subject to man she must remain. It is only as religious prejudice has been weakened that she has gained the freedom she possesses to-day. And even now there is less freedom in the Churches for women than exists elsewhere. In the laws regulating marriage and divorce, and in the development of the birth-control movement the same generalization holds good. So far as religion has exerted an influence it has been in the wrong direction. Even in the case of war there is the same tale to tell. Religion has never failed to furnish a moral justification for the perpetuation of the narrower forms of nationalism and for any and every war that has occurred.

When the quarrel between Lord Strickland and the Maltese bishops was at its height some of the religious papers in this country protested against the Catholic Church interfering in the politics of the people of Malta. Well, look at the Sunday question! Here is a question that owes its existence entirely to the demand of the Churches to control at least one seventh of the life of every man, and not merely claims this, but actually compels the Government of the day to enforce some measure of its decrees. No one can pretend that even the present Government would have produced the present Sunday Bill had it not been for religious pressure. No one can claim that, Sir Herbert Samuel for instance, really believed all he said and did when he moved the second reading of the Bill. He is a man of intelligence, and his speech was too much that of a clever advocate making out a case for a client in whom he had no real faith. No one can reasonably claim that Sunday freedom has ever been the cause of anything but good, and it is easy to prove that we owe many ugly features of English life to Sabbatarian legislation. The whole case here, for the Sabbatarians, is a purely religious one. It is an attempt of religious organizations to dominate the secular State and the measure of its success is seen in the Sunday Entertainments Bill, 1932.

In the maintenance of the Blasphemy Laws we have, again, a manifestation of the intrusion of religion into politics. The only justification for a specific law against blasphemy is religious belief. It is not possible, or even conceivable to make out a case for its existence otherwise. And yet we have seen recently the spectacle of a Labour Government, of which many of the members were non-believers in religion, actually declining to permit the repeal of the existing Blasphemy Laws unless a new blasphemy law was created in their stead. If the abject surrender of Lord Strickland to the Roman Church is discreditable, what

are we to make of the Imperial Parliament's surrender time after time to the noisy clamour of the least enlightened sections of the community?

The truth is that what the Roman Church is doing every other Church would like to do; what the Roman Church openly claims, every other is bound to claim by implication. It is useless expecting an established religion to steer clear of politics, it must aim at justifying its existence and, particularly in modern circumstances, it can only do so by furnishing a utilitarian reason. It must aim at the control of education, it must try to influence legislation so that its claims are protected. The Roman Church has never ceased to make the claim that it is independent of and superior to the secular power, and it has never ceased to make it clear that when it submits to dictation from the secular power it does so under protest, and without any diminution of its original affirmation. The other Churches, particularly in this country, are not so straightforward in their claims, but they are implied nevertheless. In action they seal their objects under a regard for social betterment, concern for morality, for anything and everything, except the real thing and the only thing about which they are concerned. The Protestant Church is not substantially different from the Roman Church, it is merely less open in its action. It is just possible that the Strickland affair may open the eyes of some to the essential issue. I do not know. Human stupidity is hard to overcome, and in that fact lies the real hope for the Christian Church.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## The Case for Freethought.

"So far as a man thinks, he is free."—Emerson.

"Not one man in ten thousand has goodness of heart or strength of mind to be Atheist."—Coleridge.

"Freedom is the one purport, wisely aimed at, or unwisely, of all man's struggles in this earth."—Carlyle.

At an open-air meeting a short time since a friendly critic suggested that if ethical and social activities, as seen in the case of the various Christian Churches, were associated with the Freethought Movement the cause would benefit considerably.

That critic was very ill-acquainted with the ideals aimed at by the National Secular Society, and appeared to imagine that mere iconoclasm was the beginning and ending of its programme. It may therefore be well to mention that its objects are to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality, to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

This is a lengthy and ambitious programme for any single organization, even if supported by large financial resources, which the National Secular Society does not possess. Freethought is a poor, struggling cause, its members are comparatively few and scattered; and it has no wealthy endowments to defray the cost of a national propaganda. Nevertheless, this society has kept the flag flying bravely for over half a century, and it has managed to relieve its necessitous members. The Benevolent Fund, during its existence, has been well supported, and is probably, the only fund which is administered without a single farthing of expense. Until a few years back it was not possible to bequeath money for Freethought purposes with any real prospect of the trust being carried into effect, as it was always in the power of the next-of-kin to invalidate the legacy on the ground that it was illegal. The memorable Bowman Case altered all this, but Freethought had been robbed of thousands of pounds before this famous legal victory, which was the first



fruits of Mr. Foote's able leadership of the forces of organized Freethought.

This reminds me that two Presidents of the National Secular Society, Bradlaugh and Foote, died from anxiety and overwork inseparable from such an onerous office. Despite the undeniable fact that the Freethinkers have compelled the clergy to refrain from thrusting their more repulsive dogmas on the nation, the fight between Freethought and Superstition is by no means over. We have not yet succeeded in eliminating the clergy from our national councils, universities, and schools. In all these places the clergy still wield great power. There are not wanting signs that the millionaire Anglican Church and the wealthy leading Free Churches may yet combine their efforts against the common enemy, and a recrudescence of bigotry may yet cause the need for greater vigilance in the near future.

Progress has been made. Thanks to the courage and devotion of Freethought leaders, heterodoxy is no longer the disgrace it once was to the ordinary citizen. The years have added respectability to Freethought advocacy, placed its exponents on a strong platform, organized its forces, justified its rights to equal citizenship. Through the religious prejudices of our time a breach has been made large enough for the heretic to pass without danger to his life or his liberty. And in many other directions the existence of the ordinary citizen has been made easier.

For, if Freethinkers do their own thinking in religious matters, they also do it in everything else. Priestly and temporal authority are brought under the same rules, and they must justify themselves. Freethinkers are thus social reformers, and they are almost to a man on the side of justice, freedom, and progress. To make a new world no audacity contributes that is not in the first place intellectual. Mankind's greatest need to-day is boldly honest minds.

As for imitating the social activities of Christians, it is well to remember that whilst charity is good in its way, what the world wants is justice, not charity. If the world were run on fair and reasonable lines, there would be no occasion for philanthropy to exist. Christian charity is largely make-believe, and often mischievous. It is often a bribe to the working-class to keep it in order, and to attract them into the churches and chapels. In India, China, and elsewhere, the missionaries bribe the innocent natives with medical dispensaries, and here in England they use the lure of coals and blankets, soup kitchens, children's nurseries, Sunday-school excursions, mothers' meetings, Pleasant Sunday afternoons, and other attractions. It is the sprat to catch the mackerel. The cash-box and the cassock have always been on the same side, and will be to the end of the sorry chapter. So long as profiteers have surplus thousands derived from underpaid labour wherewith to found and endow places of worship, so long will religion be necessary to keep people quiet, and so long will thousands of churches, chapels, and tin-tabernacles mock the few halls devoted to Freethought and Freedom.

"Where's yer 'orspitals and lunatic asylums," is a very old jibe of Christian crusaders. Freethinkers need not trouble about this sneer. In common with their fellow citizens, they contribute to the support of such institutions.

Maybe, Christians have a special interest in lunatic asylums. Christians may subscribe to them; certainly the victims of religious mania help to fill them.

Freethought is not a religion, nor even a substitute for superstition. It is not concerned with social reform as such, but it is actuated by the pure love of truth, and is justified in lending its whole energies to the destruction of delusions, ecclesiastic and super-

naturalistic. Its mission is to free mankind from ancient error, and in so doing it is rendering a service not only to England, but to the whole civilized world. Human nature does not need a supernatural religion, does not need an other-world superstition. It needs to be freed from the chains of priestly control, and it will then adjust itself naturally to the real conditions of modern life. And the surest way to achieve this ideal, the only certain way, is to go on and obtain new members for the National Secular Society, and secure fresh readers for the *Freethinker*.

MIMNERMUS.

### Ethel Mannin: Freethinker.

THE sight of Ethel Mannin's article in the *Freethinker* (May 29) reminded me of a resolve to write an appreciation of her autobiographical book *Confessions and Impressions*, published last year. The only reason I have not done so is, because it is only incidentally concerned with the subjects of religion, science, and philosophy, dealt with in these columns, and there are so many others waiting to be noticed that are more so.

Most of the great men who have written their autobiographies had better have left it to others, or better still, remain unknown except through their works. Rousseau, in his *Confessions*, wrote himself down a cad, and even he, after declaring that he would appear at the judgment seat with this book in his hand, did not tell all the discreditable truth. Wagner in his *My Life*, was equally incapable of telling the truth concerning himself. To take two modern instances, Prince von Bulow, in his posthumous *Memoirs*, has destroyed any reputation he may have had, as a statesman and a man; and all the while he is posing himself as the noblest, wisest, and most righteous of Germany's pre-war statesmen. It is also difficult to read the recently published *Journal* of Arnold Bennet and realize that the same hand wrote the *Tales of the Five Towns*, *Clayhanger*, and *Sacred and Profane Love*.

Lovers of Shakespeare often lament that he did not write his own life, and that we know scarcely anything about him, apart from surmise and conjecture. For our part we are glad he did not. He could not have written anything greater than he had already written, and probably much that would have lowered him in our estimation.

People seem to think that because a man can produce magnificent and inspiring work he must live up to this high level all the time, a foolish idea. One of our greatest painters, J. M. W. Turner, used to take his recreations in low public-houses at Wapping, like a sailor on the spree. Of course there are instances where an Autobiography has increased, and made more famous, the author's reputation, as in the case of Richard Jeffries in *The Story of My Heart*, and Cardinal Newman in his *Apologia pro Vita Sua*. Ethel Mannin's confessions belong to the last category. But, according to Victorian ideas, the really great man could do no wrong. Thus to suggest that such men as Wordsworth, Tennyson, Carlyle, and Tolstoy, were capable of the ordinary human failings and follies, was little better than blasphemy, and their lives were written from that point of view. Long-fellow's:—

Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,

provided the text for innumerable discourses, both lay and pulpit, upon morality and religion, as good, sound profitable investments, both in this world and the next. But we now know that these great ones were, to use a Nietzschean phrase, All-too-Human,



But to return to Ethel Mannin's book *Confessions and Impressions*. The book is divided into two parts, the first contains the story of her life; the second is made up of essays and pen portraits of men and women prominent in the literary world to-day. Ethel Mannin does not pose herself on a pedestal, she tells a plain tale without frills, and calls a spade a spade, thereby shocking the intolerant puritans who are still strongly entrenched and practically rule our lives. In this respect the Labour Party, we are sorry to say, are just as bad as the Liberals or Tories. We hoped, and expected, that the Labour Government would have made some effort to repeal the Blasphemy Laws, the Sunday Observance Act, and to lift the censorship from some really meritorious and valuable books, but not a finger did they move. For all practical purposes they were the Nonconformist Conscience in power.

It is exhilarating to read how Ethel Mannin attacks the Puritan Octopus all through the book, here is a sample:—

At the back of all our shame about sex is the puritanical hatred of life, and its fear of happiness . . . The English conscience works on the principle of, "There are some people trying to be happy—go and stop them; better, don't let them begin." There is no limit to our national humbug. Our code of morality is exclusively concerned with sex; when we talk of "immorality" we mean a deviation from the sex code with the larger immoralities of hypocrisy and pretence and spiritual dishonesty we are not concerned. We have reduced morality as we have reduced passion to a question of sexual ethics. (*Confessions and Impressions*. pp. 85-86.)

Believing in life she sees no necessity for "believing in an abstract thing called a soul." "The body is biological fact; the soul pure hypothesis. Man invented angels out of a puritanical disgust of his body. Yet the people who believe in angels and souls are the very people who believe that God made man in His own Image . . . All this shame of the body, therefore, would seem to be a little inconsistent. And as D. H. Lawrence causes one of his characters to remark, 'Me and God seems a bit uppish.'" Ethel Mannin thinks that a philosophy of life, is of much more practical value than religion. "Religion is for the defeated, or those who lack courage." For herself, the world of flesh and blood has been enough, and she has "always lived intensely, vibrantly, burning by an invisible sun within, knowing life as a pure flame, a vast luxury."

Throughout the book we find the names of Bertrand Russell, Aldous Huxley, and D. H. Lawrence recurring again and again as the light-bearers, opposed to the powers of darkness as represented by what she calls the James Douglas—Hannen Swaffer—Horace Thorogood group. One of the pen-portraits is devoted to Hannen Swaffer, and must have made his ears tingle when he read it.

Miss Mannin says that if she had listened to all the people who begged her to be discreet and reticent, her book would never have been written at all; as it is she has omitted a great deal out of consideration for people's feelings. Her contempt for the Puritan gang is supreme:—

All these Puritans lying to themselves because they have been cheated by life, or been afraid to venture in it, afraid of their impulses, ashamed of their bodies and the very act of loving without a licence. Afraid most of all of the truth; wallowing in a mass of half-truths, endorsing dishonesty in the name of tactfulness. Self-sacrifice and tactfulness are disgusting vices, not virtues; they are anti-life, and it is time they were realized as such; they are a perversion of selfishness, and cause infinite misery in human life. Truth can wound like a sword, but it is a clean wound, for truth is shining and clean as a sword, and its wounding is antiseptic. But

humanity prefers to poison itself with the little tainted barbs of half-truths, which are merely white-washed lies, with the result that everything is "all along a dirtiness, all along a mess"—of platitude and cliché and much sound signifying nothing. (p. 104.)

There is no room for straight thinking in this country: "everywhere one finds this welter of superstition, prejudice, romanticism, idealism, sentimentality, pre-conceived ideas, and fear." Our scientists and thinkers, work away unrecognized, they are not to be seen in the Savoy Grill; or at first-night performances. Miss Mannin sees no hope for our Civilization, which will ultimately destroy itself, and we shall return to the clean and decent life of the animals: "who do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins, nor make one sick discussing their duty to God, nor are demented with the mania of owning things."

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

## Thumping the Table.

VEHEMENCE in the expression of opinions is not an unusual phenomenon. It varies mentally from a slight increase in the emotional tone to a feeling of uncontrollable rage, and it evinces itself in action by the raising of one's voice, the use of gesticulation and facial contortion, and sometimes even in the application of physical violence to those objects, both animate and inanimate, which happen to be in our immediate neighbourhood.

Introspection, and information derived from reasons given by others, leads us to gather that the more obvious causes of vehemence are threefold. In many cases it is due to a strong conviction of the truth of our opinions, combined with an urgent desire for their acceptance by those to whom they are addressed. In other cases it arises from a belief that our hearers are either unwilling or unable to see our point of view. And thirdly, we are sometimes persuaded that vehemence lends strength to our remarks and may produce a corresponding sense of conviction in the minds of our audience. Or, of course, it may be the result of a combination of two or more of the foregoing causes.

At first glance there appears to be little or no reason why the use of vehemence should be regarded as inadvisable. If emphasis can convey the feeling of conviction which we possess, or if it can overcome the opposition or vacillation of our hearers, then surely the use of vehemence is justified. Experience, however, shows that these are by no means the results which always ensue. On the contrary, it is observable that vehemence in the language or action of others frequently tends to increase our own opposition, or at least to create in us a suspicion of the validity of those arguments which need its support. This annoyingly contrary effect of vehemence should lead us to examine the causes which give rise to it in ourselves, with a view to forming some logical grounds either for its modified use or for its complete abandonment in all expressions of opinion.

The first question we might ask ourselves is: What relation is there, if any, between the truth of our opinions and the strength of our convictions concerning them?

It is a platitude to say that the more true we believe an opinion to be, the more strongly are we convinced of its truth. But is it equally obvious that the more strongly we are convinced of the truth of an opinion, the more true that opinion is bound to be? Many of us would like to believe this; and many more act as though it were so. Unfortunately experience and his-



tory too often prove the contrary. For we have met many persons who are strongly convinced as to the truth of certain opinions which we believe to be wholly false; and we know that up to comparatively recent times certain beliefs were firmly upheld which we now know to be erroneous. Our forefathers, for example, believed that the earth was the centre of the Universe, and the strength of their conviction on this matter is evidenced by the harsh treatment meted out to those who believed otherwise. Again, Christians are firmly convinced that Jesus was the Saviour foretold by the Jewish prophets of old; yet Jews have an equally strong conviction that this belief is false.

We see, therefore, that there is no evidence at all that a strong feeling of conviction is proof of the truth of our opinions or beliefs. And it follows from this that the use of vehemence in the expression of our opinions is irrelevant as an argument in support of their truth.

When we are faced with hearers who seem to be pig-headed, or dense, or unwilling to understand our point of view, we often abandon our normal mode of expression in favour of a more emphatic variety. If we are sufficiently self-critical, or if we observe the behaviour of others in like circumstances, we generally find that the vehemence increases in proportion as the resistance is protracted. This behaviour seems to suggest a belief that the use of vehemence is an effective means of argument in dealing with stupid or stubborn persons. And it may be interesting to enquire how such a belief could have arisen.

It is possible that in our adult experience we have attended meetings in which the vehemence of a speaker has seemed to arouse a corresponding enthusiasm or agreement on the part of his hearers. But at such meetings a speaker is usually addressing an audience, most of whose members are already known to be in agreement with his views. So the vehemence he exhibits cannot reasonably be attributed to opposition. If opposition should be manifested, the speaker either refrains from further speech or else waits till the obstreperous party has been ejected. The example set us in such cases, therefore, can scarcely account for our own use of increasing vehemence in the face of protracted opposition.

Less frequently we may have experienced situations in which the assertive and vehement behaviour of an individual seems to have resulted in his gaining an objective which his quieter fellows had failed to secure by gentler methods. Most of us are well enough acquainted with the bully type, or with the gentleman who thumps his table in a restaurant. Yet here again the conditions are too different to explain our own use of vehemence in argument. For the bully, as we know, would be as ineffective as the most anemic of his gang if his vehemence were not backed by superior physical strength; while the blustering restaurant fiend would soon be put in his place if his behaviour were not commensurate with his willingness to distribute largesse. In any case the vehemence of neither of these specimens of humanity is the direct result of opposition.

Apart from the possibility that these adult experiences may have influenced us in certain measure to emulation, the habit of vehemence is often acquired so early in life that we are led to seek the cause of it in more youthful experiences.

Most of us have passed through that stage of childhood when we have been compelled to listen to the opinions of our elders without being given any satisfactory proof of their truth. In many cases we have not been in a position to question these opinions; but on the rare occasions when we have been bold or inquisitive enough to demand proof, it was either re-

fused point-blank, or else the opinions were repeated in somewhat different form, but with greater emphasis. Being unable to reason the matter out for ourselves, we not infrequently accepted this added vehemence in lieu of proof.

Still earlier in childhood—in fact, in babyhood—it was probably our custom, as it appears to be the custom of most infants, to cry out or kick about (or both) whenever we wished to obtain something. This habit, unless carefully controlled by understanding parents, is known to develop to an unpleasant degree, such that we grow up to regard it as being the only rational means of drawing attention to ourselves and of securing the objects of our desire. Between the habits of stamping the foot, thumping the table, tears and rage in our childhood years, and the very similar habits manifested in adulthood there is so little difference that we are not without justification in supposing that the latter are due to the same causes as the former.

Here, then, we have two further explanations of the possible reasons why we are apt to use vehemence in the face of opposition or failure to convince. If our audience happens to be childish or impressionable, it is just possible that vehemence may carry conviction. But it is always a risky matter to assume childishness in an audience concerning whose mental development we are uncertain. For although it may be true that a large number of people are intellectually stunted, it is equally true that we may be suffering from the same disadvantage. Unless the vehemence which we use is completely under control and is used with artistic intent for the sole purpose of stressing important points, it is highly probable that we are doing nothing more intelligent than giving way to childish tantrums. In all cases, therefore, when we tend to exhibit vehemence in the expression of our opinions, it would be better for our own intellectual development were we to cry a halt in the discussion for the purpose of self-analysis and for a re-examination of the grounds upon which those opinions are based. For it is a well-established fact that vehemence is often the result of a sense of our own mental inferiority, or of the weakness of our grounds of belief. And if that be the case, we have no justification whatever for trying to impress our inferior opinions upon others, vehemently or otherwise.

C. S. FRASER.

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#### ST. VITUS'S DANCE.

In 1418 the dancing mania reappeared in Strasburg, hundreds dancing in public, eating nothing for days, until the pathological state came to an end. Musicians accompanied the dancers, for patients always showed great sensibility to music. Music interest was excited among the spectators, and unnatural excitement and immorality prevailed. The authorities appointed men to take charge of separate bands of those afflicted with St. Vitus's dance, as it was called. They conducted their charges to chapels of St. Vitus at Zabern and Rotestein. Masses were said for them, and they were then led to the altar of the Saint to offer alms. Many were cured. St. Vitus, a youthful martyr of the Diocletian persecution, was patron saint of Bohemia, and one of the fourteen saintly helpers whose altars were popular in Germany. He had been invoked for victims of hydrophobia, but now legend told that, before his death, he prayed God to protect men from the dancing mania provided they kept his feast and its eve. He thus became the patron saint of the victims of this mania.

(From "Medieval Faith and Fable,"  
by J. A. MacCulloch.)



## Prayer: Pagan and Christian.

### A DIAGNOSIS OF "DEVOTION."

PRAYER is as old as mankind. We will begin with some definitions of prayer from Christian sources in order to identify them with ancient and non-Christian beliefs and practices. Prayer, in general, is defined as "to ask earnestly," to "entreat," to "supplicate." In this sense the word is in use in legal and secular business, a synonym of "petition" or appeal to monarchs, judges, or, in ordinary life, of any urgent or especial request. Prayer, in the religious sense, is in *Chambers* defined as "to speak and make one's desire known to God," and "to ask reverently as in worship." An orthodox (Catholic) definition (*Catholic Encycl.*) describes prayer as "an act of virtue in religion in asking proper gifts or graces from God"; the "application of the mind to Divine things to acquire knowledge of them, and a means of union with God." Prayer includes petition, praise, and thanksgiving. The objects of prayer are for (1) salvation, faith, virtue; (2) temporal things, bread, physical and mental health, and (3) escape from (a) the penalties of sin (b) the dangers of temptation; (c) every material, physical, or spiritual affliction. Prayer may be vocal or mental, the latter includes contemplation, meditation, and "recollection." A Protestant definition may be added. (Dr. C. F. D'Arcy in *Hastings*.) Prayer is "any intercourse of a human soul with higher powers." In the case of monotheistic religion prayer "is not necessarily petition, or the asking for benefits," but, as said by Jeremy Taylor, is "the ascent of the mind to God." This latter condition is "a mark of a somewhat advanced state of religion: the child, the uneducated, and the simple unreflecting mind, as a rule, seek God above, not within."

Bearing these definitions in mind we will consider briefly the history of prayer and praying. History, and many other sciences, especially anthropology, psychology, biology and pathology, are full of relevant material. Prayer had its origin in fear. An anthropological work describes it as "the self-dedication to a deity or to anyone invested in thought for a time with some of the qualities or claims of a deity." Beginning "in the desire to appease or propitiate powers superior to man," (J. G. Frazer) primitive prayer did not contain much reverence but was mainly the product of terror. Rudimentary forms of prayer are with difficulty divided into the components ascribed to it by theologians. Acts and prayers; the "spell" and the spear; the magic formula and the human ceremony; these are well nigh indistinguishable, and, if we come to present times, although the element of fear may be mitigated, the farmer who prays for a good harvest, who prays in time of flood and in time of drought, does not neglect to take steps necessary to secure a good crop and to mitigate, so far as he can, the untoward spite of nature and the strange indifference of God. This consideration brings us to the question as to why, if God is all-wise and all-knowing, prayer can be considered necessary or reasonable. Two answers may be quoted. According to the Catholic (*Catholic Encycl.*) theologian "In hearing our prayer God does not change His will in action in our regard, but simply puts into effect what He had eternally decreed in view of our prayer." According to D'Arcy (*Hastings*) "True prayer must always involve the bringing of the mind and will of man into harmony with the mind and will of God." These definitions hardly answer the question as to the utility of prayer.

It is admitted, at least by the Protestant authority, that modern thought "has no place for Divine intervention," and that "prayer is meaningless. But it is also said that the "experience" of answers to prayer, and the fact that "Not my will but Thine be done," must express the spirit of every prayer, convinces Christians that, whatever happens in respect of their petitions is "the will of God." The distinguished Alienist and Pathologist, Henry Maudsley, in his well known *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings* gives an overwhelming answer to the last mentioned arguments. He says: "It might naturally be thought that people of all countries in all ages would not have offered sacri-

fices and supplications to their gods had not events often answered the expectations of those who offered them. Propitiatory hecatombs of slain creatures, human and animal, offered up in countless numbers on countless altars in all parts of the world, are they not proof of the existence of gods who have inclined their ears to the urgent prayers of mankind? Not so; since the many gods who were thus invoked and propitiated with costly rites and ceremonies are now confessed to have had no existence outside human imagination, and not ever therefore to have answered the prayers they were believed to answer at the time. Their present interest is as extinct beliefs, not as extinct beings." Why, then, were they thought to answer prayers? In the main, perhaps, for a reason which still works strongly as a cause of error in reasoning—namely, the well-known tendency of the mind, so much insisted on by Bacon, to be impressed vividly by agreeing instances and to remember them, while overlooking and forgetting the opposing instances. "But for it the prodigies and prophecies which have heralded the ruin of great states and great persons, as well as such comfortable opinions as that 'murder will out,' that 'truth will prevail,' and the like, would long since have lost their credit. It is obvious that those who see proof of the power and goodwill of the gods when they look round on the numerous votive tablets which record their benevolent interpositions in human affairs, do not think or care to ask themselves where are the votive tablets to the vastly greater number of persons who received no answers to their prayers. When the wicked man, not turning away from his wickedness, is struck down in the height of his prosperity many good people behold with pleasing awe the special judgment of Heaven in that event; but they do not take notice of a special Providence in the event when the wicked man flourishes on the fruits of his iniquity, or when the good man's life, in the height of its beneficent activity, prematurely ends in the protracted agonies of a torturing disease."

"In English Churches still, when the country is suffering from long continued wet weather, so that the harvest cannot be gathered in and the farmer looks round in despair at the rain, special prayer is made to Almighty God that he may turn from the people those evils which for their sins they have deserved, by sending fine weather. If fine weather comes at length, it is a manifest and merciful answer to prayer; if not, the credit of the prayer nowise suffers by its ill success on this occasion. The true prayer of trust is the pathetic prayer of abject resignation—"Not my will, but Thine be done; yea, Thy will be done though in my undoing."

In the last extremity theologians couple the doctrine that faith is an essential ingredient in prayer—although this is inconsistent with the argument that the prayer of a doubtful or perplexed person, if in good faith, will be answered—with the doctrine that God forsakes those who "harden their hearts," or, in plain terms, cannot or do not believe. Maudsley has an equally devastating answer to this contention. He says: "It is directly contrary to the scientific spirit to endorse the principles of theological dogma that God forsakes those who doubt Him because of the hardness of their hearts, and therefore works miracles for believers only; that is to say, for those who are in no need of their convincing help, not for those whom their testimony might convince and save. To ascribe the want of belief in God to the want of a desire to believe, and the want of a desire to believe to a native hardness of heart, however approved a principle of theology, is quite inconsistent with the fundamental principle of scientific method; which is not to postulate a prepared ground of desire in order to ensure true observation and right judgment. Science shrinks not from setting forth its proofs of unbelief: it distracts deeply the proofs expected by belief."

ALAN HANDSACRE.

The end crowns all;  
And that old common arbitrator, time,  
Will one day end it.—*Shakespeare*.

Be merry if you are wise.—*Martial*.



## Acid Drops

Some of the amendments offered in the Committee considering the Sunday Entertainments Bill show clearly enough what is at the bottom of it all. Sir Basil Peto, a co-representative of the Stone Age with Sir Charles Oman, wished to restrict Cinema opening to the hours between 6 and 11. Mr. Curry urged Sir Herbert Samuel to find some way "to protect the hours of Divine worship against counter-attractions." We like the idea of calling on a Jewish Home Secretary to protect the Christian Sunday against counter-attractions. And imagine the value of a religion that cannot stand up against the attractions of a "talkie"! The older Christianity is, the more contemptible it becomes. Why not make it a law that everyone attending a Cinema on Sunday shall bring a certificate with him that he has been at Church or Chapel beforehand? Eventually Sir Herbert accepted an amendment that Cinemas shall not be open for more than five hours on Sunday. Now all that is wanting is for some local Council to pass a resolution that the Cinemas in their district shall be open from five till ten a.m. only. Either that or Cinema proprietors to tell the Government to go to the devil and all of them open, law or no law.

The Lower House of Convocation sat in secret session for three hours discussing resolutions on marriage and birth control—and then postponed the matter until (presumably in another secret session) next meeting. One clergyman protested against the privacy. "We are not a kindergarden," he said, and, to be sure, they are not. The discussion arose out of a resolution of the Lambeth Conference which seemed, albeit grudgingly and in exceptional cases, to sanction birth control. The House was asked to express regret that the Lambeth resolution allowed "other methods" than "complete abstinence." Almost concurrently Convocation also discussed the "unfortunate" publicity in the case of the Vicar of Stiffkey. The Chancellor in that case expressed his view that there should be no secrecy about such proceedings; but the Bishops are suggesting that some steps shall be taken to screen the litigation in Consistory Courts from the cameras and pencils of the Press. "Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil." The "rights, privileges, advantages and exemptions as by law belonging to the office" of a clergyman (*Clerical Disabilities Act, 1870*) are already anomalous and inequitable. It would be a scandal if they were specially protected by the exclusion or censorship of newspaper reports of such proceedings as do not make good "copy" for the Church's own Press and Publications Board.

The millions of disappointed losers in the recent Irish Sweepstakes can now, if they are so "disposed," participate in a genuine Roman Catholic sweepstake. If they buy the *Belgian Catholic Annual*, price 27 francs, they will receive a lottery ticket free. The draw will take place before two priests, who will see no fraud is practised, and the winners will get as their prizes, *free tickets to Lourdes*. Won't there be a rush!

Folly has so few limits. Add superstition, and all limits are abolished. On Monday, June 13, a party of men and women left London for the Brocken Mountains, Germany, to perform the experiment of the "Black Magic Tryst." A goat without blemish has been secured and a "maiden pure in heart," and at a given time these two will stand in a magic circle on the summit of the mountain. The proper spells will be uttered, and then the beautiful maiden will whip off a cloth that has been placed round the goat, and a beautiful youth will appear in its stead. The experiment is to be performed under the supervision of Mr. Harry Price, Director of the Laboratory of Psychical Research. The Laboratory is "quite incredulous," but wishes to give witchcraft a fair trial.

But is the laboratory incredulous? We doubt it. People do not do this kind of thing unless they feel there is something in it. The non-appearance of the beautiful youth will not convince believers it is all rubbish, any more than the failure of a prayer-test convinces believers that trust in prayer is sheer superstition. In either case the believer merely says the experiment was a failure. Mr. Price evidently thinks it might happen. The Catholic Church also thinks this kind of thing might happen, because it forbids them solely because they are unlawful, and of the devil. After all superstition is all of a piece and whether on the Brocken, or in a Spiritualistic meeting, or in the pages of the Bible, or in the ritual of a Church, there is precious little difference. The majority of people are still fundamentally savages in their mental outlook.

The Central Council for the Care of Churches condemns flood-lighting of Churches. It says that flood-lighting is apt to produce a restless effect. Quite so, it may keep people awake, and if a man cannot get a quiet nap in Church, where may he expect to sleep in peace?

The London Diocesan Housing Committee has just discovered that the Church draws some of its income from grounds which are derived from some of the worst slum property in London. The Bishop of London has joined in the protest against getting money from such sources. This seems to us rather late in the day. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners have always drawn money from such sources, but we do not recall any protest being made. And as the Bishop of London was once at work in Bethnal Green, during such time he was, we believe drawing a thousand a year from one of the sinecures attached to St. Paul's Cathedral, he may remember the famous, or infamous Boundary Street area. In those days Bethnal Green had double the death-rate of the rest of London, and the Boundary Street area had double the death-rate of the rest of Bethnal Green. But we do not recall that Winnington Ingram ever made any great outcry on that point at that time. Nowadays, the position has altered, and slums are being wiped out without the Church's aid. Very artful coves are these gentlemen the parsons!

Mr. Hannen Swaffer, most readers will remember, issued a challenge a few years ago, on behalf of Spiritualism. He wouldn't waste time in talking over the question with any disbeliever. He insisted on a public debate at once. When his own brothers in spirit took him at his word and asked him to demolish that arch-heretic, Mr. Chapman Cohen, Mr. Swaffer suddenly discovered he hadn't time, he was much too busy a man—though he had plenty of time to deliver long lectures all over the country.

But in the first number of the new Spiritualist weekly, *Psychic News*, Mr. Swaffer's predilection for challenges again asserts itself, and he issues no fewer than nine to the *Daily Mail*. He wants, among others, for the *Daily Mail* to expose Mrs. Champion de Crespigny, but it is hard to believe after the elementary credulity this lady showed in her recent debate with Mr. Howell Smith, that anybody could put her forward as a champion of anything, least of all of Spiritualism. We could give a more convincing case for Spiritualism in half an hour and demolish it in ten minutes.

Another lady the *Daily Mail* is asked to expose is Miss Dorothy Cummins, who in the *Script of Cleophas*, has given the world an "addition to the Acts of the Apostles, so true in all historical, doctrinal and other evidential detail that Dr. Oosterley has certified the veridical evidence they contain." If this challenge means anything, it means that the *Daily Mail* should, in the first place, prove the credibility and historical value of the *Acts of the Apostles*. The *Daily Mail* might do



many things, but not a million of similar organizations could do that. It is practically certain "there wasn't no" twelve apostles.

Mr. Swaffer also wants Mr. Hope of Crewe, the famous "spirit" photographer to be exposed. Well, there may be a few things not actual fraud in Spiritualism, but every "spirit" photograph without exception is unmitigated fraud. With ordinary precautions, no "spirit" whatever could appear as an "extra" on a negative. We challenge either Mr. Swaffer or Mr. Will Goldston, the well known conjuror (who, for some inexplicable reason, is a Spiritualist) or both together to give us a spirit photograph under our conditions. Neither will have the time, of course.

But we really must protest when Catholics put forward a Father Knapp as their champion against Spiritualism. This gentleman has learnt a few easy conjuring tricks and thinks they are the kind of thing which really make Spiritualists—as if anybody ever became a believer in Summer-land and disembodied spirits because he was unable to explain a childish piece of "magic." Father Knapp also lectured on the subject, and exposes his own colossal ignorance when he says "the medium or his manager must be a good ventriloquist. He could then disguise his voice and make it come from different parts of the hall." Dear old *Valentine Vox* has a lot to answer for, but any ventriloquist who could throw his voice about like that would make far more money on the legitimate stage in a week than he would as a medium in a year. It simply can't be done.

In the letters of Queen Victoria, the final volume of which has just been published, there are some rather interesting ones dealing with the Sunday question, especially showing how the Church was viewing with dismay the inroad of secular things on God's own day. The *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Telegraph* wanted to issue Sunday editions, and both Bishop Temple and Archbishop Davidson urged the Queen to stop them. Lord Salisbury, however, Churchman that he was (or reputed to be) bluntly told the Queen not to interfere. He wrote:—

The whole question of Sabbath Observance greatly divides your Majesty's subjects. The upper and lower class are, in the main, averse to a rigid observance of the Sunday, the middle class support it . . . Thirty years ago the Bishops made a very earnest effort to prevent Sunday trains, especially excursion trains. But they failed. The movement was too strong for them and Sunday excursions are now very common. Forty years ago, a strong attempt was made to prevent the sale of articles of food on Sunday morning . . . The lower classes were so angry that they assembled in Hyde Park and pelted all the carriages and horsemen in the Park on Sunday afternoon. The Bill introduced by Lord Grosvenor had to be withdrawn. I have cited these two cases to show that there are two strong currents of opinion, and your Majesty is asked to take sides in a popular dispute. This is contrary to your Majesty's practice, and would be attended with many inconveniences.

The dear Bishops! But we rather like old Salisbury; and we have a shrewd suspicion he would have been on our side in the latest attempt on Sunday liberties—the fatuous and impossible Cinema Bill. What our forefathers did forty or fifty years ago we surely can do now, and our business is to squash that wretched piece of "compromise" once for all.

It only took Dr. Orchard a few minutes to decide to enter the Roman Catholic Church, he tells us, once he reached the Eternal City. "I went," he says, "straight to St. Peter's, knelt at the Tomb of the Apostles, prayed before the Blessed sacrament and felt I had come home." Well, it wasn't quite as easily done as that, but what a frightful surrender of reason! It took Dr. Orchard ten years to settle the question in reality, but why he held out for all that time admits of no solution. He was in Rome—in his mind—ten years ago as much as he is now. The ways of women may be difficult to fathom, but there's no reasoning with a religious convert.

Even the *Church Times*, as nearly as possible in the Roman camp, doesn't like 'em. Reviewing a book by Mr. Penrose Fry, who also has gone over, and who insists he's so happy about it, the reviewer says that the fact he can be so happy "in the atmosphere of credulity in which his book is steeped confirms our own worst fears." This is a nice way of talking about someone who has found the "anchorage" and the "haven" at last, isn't it? And the reviewer goes on to talk about Mr. Fry "as a person with this kind of mentality." Mr. Fry prefers the Roman Communion to the Anglican variety, and he insists he is "gloriously free, free from fusses, troubles and controversies." It is indeed a haven of rest for Mr. Fry, but what has become of, and where is his "reason"?

A parsonic scribe, inflicted with either a sudden uprush of candour or an overdose of innocence, recently enlightened the world in this wise:—

There is danger in our doctrine of the sovereignty of the will of God, as extreme forms of Calvinism witness. In every hymn on Heaven there is danger of other-worldliness. There is danger of indulgent talk in our teaching of the love of God, as there is danger of presumptuous talk in our teaching of the wrath of God. The doctrines of Christianity are not harmless squibs and rockets. There is high explosive in every one of them, and there is peril of exaggeration in every Christian advocacy. No man can so easily make a fool of himself as in religion, no man can so easily upset his world, his sense of humour, or his very reason.

After this, one's wisest course is obviously to let the Christian religion severely alone. In any case, it would be safer to mistrust what every single parson said about Christian doctrines, seeing that he is mighty certain to have been overwhelmed mentally by one or other of the "dangers" mentioned. From the closing sentence we gather that in the Christian religion, persons who are naturally foolish or devoid of humour or lacking in reason are the least likely to be harmed by religion.

### Fifty Years Ago.

WE shall not be deterred by the cry of "blasphemy!" which is exactly what the Jewish priests shouted against Jesus Christ. If there is a God, he cannot be half such a fool and blackguard as the Bible declares. In destroying the counterfeit we do not harm the reality. And as it is better, in the words of Plutarch, to have no notion of the gods than to have notions which dishonour them, we are satisfied that the Lord (if he exists) will never burn us in hell for denying a few lies told in his name. The real blasphemers are those who believe in God and blacken his character; who credit him with less knowledge than a child, and less intelligence than an idiot; who make him quibble, deceive, and lie; who represent him as indecent, cruel, and revengeful; who give him the heart of a savage and the brain of a fool. These are the blasphemers.

When the priest steps between husband and wife, with the name of God on his lips, he blasphemes. When, in the name of God, he resists education and science, he blasphemes. When in the name of God, he opposes freedom of thought and liberty of conscience, he blasphemes. When, in the name of God, he robs, tortures, and kills those who differ from him, he blasphemes. When, in the name of God, he opposes the equal rights of all, he blasphemes. When, in the name of God, he preaches content to the poor and oppressed, flatters the rich and powerful, and makes religious tyranny the handmaiden of political privilege, he blasphemes. And when he takes the Bible in his hand, and says it was written by the inspiration of God, he blasphemes almost beyond forgiveness.

Who are the blasphemers? Not we who preach freedom and progress for all men; but those who try to bind the world with chains of dogma, and to burden it, in God's name, with all the foul superstitions of its ignorant past.



## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- H. YOUNGMAN.—Thanks for enquiry. Mr. Cohen is keeping fairly well. Hope you are also well.
- LYKOS.—Received. Shall appear.
- W. SKINNER.—Thanks for cuttings, your description of Professor Fleming as "Professor of Ambiguous Phraseology" is quite good. He is also a devotee of an ambiguous God.
- TOM BLAKE.—Received and shall appear as early as possible.
- J. BARTRAM.—Lecture notice not received till Wednesday.
- CINE CERE.—Quite an interesting glimpse of human nature.
- F. WALTERS.—Thanks for subscription towards distributing leaflets, also for your appreciation of the work that is being done. We continue to do our best.
- H. MACFRAW.—Sorry we cannot give you the name of the paper from which the item of a few weeks ago was based. We do not make it a rule of keeping every paragraph used. We can only promise its genuineness. As the paragraph appeared in our issue dated May 22, the item of news would be found in the press of not more than eight or ten days preceding that date. We print five days before the date borne by the *Freethinker*.
- H. RICHARDS.—Law is always an uncertain quantity, but we feel fairly confident in the matter.
- C. COLLINS.—There is no need to question the power of faith; it is its supernatural element that is really in question.
- R. B. KERR.—Next week. This correspondence must then close.
- C.S.—Sorry, but your letter would take up more space than we can give. We must again impress upon correspondents that letters must be brief if they are to be printed.

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

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When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Roselli, 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.

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

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

## Sugar Plums.

We are glad to see the Bournemouth *Worker's Monthly* taking up the question of Churches and Chapels and other places of worship. It says:—

It has recently been computed that these buildings would produce over £5,000,000 per annum in rates and taxes, with Income Tax (Schedule A.) at 4s. 6d., and an average local rate of 10s. in the £. This figure would provide an additional 2s. 6d. per week for each year to nearly one million unemployed persons.

Yet this does not exhaust the indirect drain of religion on the community, but even at that and with the cry for economy, and the cutting down of relief and education, no Parliamentary group has the courage to agitate for the taxation of church and chapel buildings and sites. We are not a priest-ridden country, but the priest manages to get a good deal of his own way all the same.

The Bournemouth Town Council is getting very reckless. It has graciously given permission for three steamers to land passengers at the pier on Sunday. That is so like England. It would be wrong to allow steamers to land passengers any time on Sunday, but three steamers only! Well, even the recording angel may take a sleep on Sunday, so possibly it is hoped that the steamers will slip in between naps.

The Market Bosworth Division of Leicestershire would seem to aim at the attainment of a new kind of notoriety. Only a few months ago two Roman Catholic priests of this area were engaged in a somewhat unsavoury libel action. Now, not to be outdone in litigiousness, the Vicar of a Leicester Parish is suing the Rector of Market Bosworth for libel. These clergymen do not apparently agree with the Biblical injunction to "agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him." We should think the faithful laity of the neighbourhood will offer up some fervent petitions to be saved from their spiritual guides.

For an example of the lowest kind of exploitation of popular superstition we commend a sentence in the *News-Chronicle* (June 6) report of the Police Court proceedings in a murder case now *sub-judice*. The accused dropped her handbag leaving the dock and some articles which fell out were afterwards picked up. Indented and in black type our pious contemporary says "One of them was the hand mirror which was smashed by the fall." There is no need to point out the implications of this disgraceful comment in these circumstances. It is not, but it ought to be, Contempt of Court—not to mention humanity.

Under an arrangement with the Executive of the N.S.S., Messrs. Brighton and Clayton hold occasional open-air lectures in Durham and Lancashire respectively. Both speakers are able to visit wayside villages, and we continue to receive reports of good work being done in that direction. In most cases the frenzied opposition experienced at first visits has quietened, and audiences rather more than less sympathetic assemble to hear the message of Freethought. The arrangement holds good for the whole of the open-air season.

The Sunderland Branch N.S.S. are ready for Mr. Whitehead's visit, which starting from to-day (Sunday) will continue during the week. Judging from the good audiences which the local Branch could attract indoors during the winter, there should be some really fine meetings this week. Details will be found in the Lecture Notices column, and of course all local Freethinkers are expected to be present.

A characteristic sample of episcopal fatuity is recorded by the *Guardian*. "The Bishop of Ely has written a letter to those who are about to marry in church, in which he urges the parties to recognize the responsibility they are undertaking." Mr. Punch's well-known advice to "those about to marry" was perhaps the inspiration of this platitudinous prelate.

Messrs. Watts & Co., have added to their excellent "Thinker's Library" three very useful new volumes. Two of them are reprints and consist of Dr. Ivor Tuckett's useful examination of *The Evidence for the Supernatural*, a book that all dabblers in Spiritualism should read, and *Adonis, A Study in the History of Oriental Religion*, which consists of a part of the famous *Golden Bough*. To praise the quality of that work is almost an impertinence. The third volume is a new and enlarged edition of Professor Elliot Smith's *In the Beginning*, which presents the reader with a sketch of the origin of civilization by one of the leaders of the new Pan-Egyptian school. At one shilling each the books are marvellous value for the money.



## The Bride of the First Night.

THE story of the feudal lord's privilege of passing the wedding-night with his tenants' newly-mated partners is still entertained as a solemn truth. So much so, that in his *Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism*, Bernard Shaw declares that in addition to other shameful liberties, landlords "have also had a special power over women to anticipate a husband's privilege and have either used it or forced the women to buy them off."

Yet, strange to relate, scarcely any reliable evidence is forthcoming that the so-called *Jus Primæ Noctis* or *Droit du Seigneur*, as the alleged custom is termed, was ever enforced in medieval Europe. Certainly, redemption dues were paid to the lord of the manor, but it appears very doubtful whether these were intended to satisfy a feudal claim to a recognized right to occupy the husband's place with his bride.

This thorny subject has given rise to a bitter and protracted controversy on the Continent, while some more dispassionate students have concluded that, at least in earlier centuries, the custom was observed in parts of France, Italy and Germany, as a recognized right. And, that sensual and iron-hearted barons frequently ignored the natural feelings of man and wife is likely enough, but that the right of the first night ever formed part of Common or Statute Law, either in England or in Continental Europe, seems unsupported by evidence.

Where primogenitive prevails the eldest son succeeds to an estate, but a system known as Borough English, in which the youngest son inherits, long reigned in several parts of England. The doubtful paternity of the eldest born has been assigned as the origin of ultimogeniture, as the inheritance of the youngest male-child is termed. Indeed, an old writer has asserted that "the lord of the fee had antiently the right of concubinage with his tenant's wife on her wedding-night; and that therefore the tenement descended not to the eldest, but to the youngest son, who was more certainly the offspring of the tenant." A simpler and more cogent explanation of Borough English is that the elder children would mostly marry and set up separate homes, thus leaving the youngest, and very frequently the favourite child—"the baby of the family"—to support the old folk in their declining years and inherit the tenure at their death.

Many who queried the prevalence of *Jus Primæ Noctis* in England accepted without question the tradition of its widespread observance in ancient Scotland. As Sir James Frazer points out in his *Folk Lore in the Old Testament*, even that celebrated jurist and commentator, Blackstone, while doubting its former existence in England, accepted the legend—and it seems little more—of its earlier observance in Scotland. Needless to say, Dr. Johnson firmly believed the story.

The facts appear to be these, in any case, so far as England is concerned. Under the feudal system, when a tenant's daughter married, a fine known as *marchet* or *merchet* was paid to the feudal superior, and this has been misinterpreted as a substitute for the right of concubinage so long exercised over his tenants' female offspring on their bridal night. Our great anthropological investigator and brilliant writer, the author of *The Golden Bough*, invited expert opinion when he consulted the late Prof. F. W. Maitland upon this subject. As an authority on English Law Maitland ranks with the best. Moreover, he was completely emancipated from religious prejudice or social prepossessions. A philosophical Freethinker, he once assured us that no Church could claim him,

and was indeed a man who devoted his days to the stainless service of truth.

In reply to Frazer's inquiry Maitland said: "I have great doubt about the *jus primæ noctis*--I have never seen the slightest proof that it existed or was supposed to exist in England; on the other hand I have seen thousands of entries about the *marchetum*, e.g., temp. Edw. I., almost all tenants who were not freeholders paid *merchet* in this part of England. It may be worth your notice that the *merchet* was often higher out of the manor than for marriage within the manor . . . Also fines for marrying sons out of the manor are not unknown, and the *merchet* is often mentioned in close connexion with a prohibition against giving sons a clerical education which would enable them to take orders and so escape from bondage . . . The idea at the root of the *Merchetum* seems to me much rather that of preserving the live stock in the manor than that of a *jus primæ noctis*--of which even in legends I have seen no trace whatever."

Another high authority, the late Prof. Paul Vinogradoff, in his response to Sir James Frazer's appeal for information stated unequivocally, "I do not know of any evidence in support of it." Furthermore, both in conversation and by letter, that famous jurist, Sir Frederick Pollock, assured Frazer that he was utterly sceptical concerning the landlord's supposed right of concubinage. Pollock wrote that "the supposed *jus primæ noctis* has long been exploded among scholars." Again, in Frazer's *Folk Lore in the Old Testament*, Vol. I., p. 488, Pollock is quoted as stating that "certainly there is no trace of such a thing in any authentic record of English or Scottish customs."

In whatever community it occurs, the *merchet's* origin was evidently economic. Frazer concludes that the causes assigned for the custom in Scotland by Lord Hailes apply also to England. In summing up the evidence Sir James remarks that "there too, we may reasonably suppose, the *merchet* was in substance a compensation paid to the lord of the manor for the loss of a woman's services on her marriage. We have seen that this was the opinion of the learned and acute historian of English Law, F. W. Maitland, and he confirmed it by pointing out, first, that the *merchet* was often higher for marriage outside the manor than for marriage within the manor; second, that fines for marrying sons out of the manor were not unknown; and third, that the *merchet* is often coupled with a prohibition giving the sons of tenants or bondsmen a clerical education, which by enabling them to take orders, might deliver them from bondage and so deprive the lord of their services.

"All these facts point clearly to the true nature of *merchet* as a compensation paid to the lord of the manor for the loss of services he incurred, or was supposed to incur through the marriage of his bondsmen's or tenants' daughters, especially when they married men who did not belong to the manor."

So far as documentary evidence can guide us the real meaning of the *merchet* in Scots Law was entirely economic. That this was so is the carefully considered judgment of several high experts in law. Frazer cites Lord Bankton's statement that: "Charters from the Crown, and even those from subjects, frequently contain a grant of *Merchetæ Mulierum*, the *Merchets* of women. We have this described in an old law book; and it is a consideration due to the over-lord by his vassals, upon the marriage of any of their daughters, taxed according to their quality. There is not the least insinuation of the infamous origin assigned to it by some of our historians and lawyers, and therefore I must doubt the truth of it."

After an impartial study of the evidence, Frazer concludes that the French and German stories of the



feudal lord's right to sleep with his vassal's daughters on their wedding-night must be relegated to the realm of fable. On the Continent, as in Britain, the *merchet* never seems to have represented a monetary substitute for the overlord's earlier legal title. It appears that the most diligent research in legal archives has led to negative results. So Frazer concludes that the tale "may therefore be safely dismissed as unfounded."

T. F. PALMER.

## "A Marriage Has Been Arranged."

(Concluded from page 380.)

### THE NEXT CENTENARY.

ONE wonders what kind of memorial or to what deity the Council at the end of the next century will make its oblation? Perhaps to some Neo-spiritualism or one of the many new superstitious cults that are now springing, like noxious weeds, under the umbrageous shade of this historic one, supported by the State and now at such a late hour by the medical profession also?

It has been noted to what we are indebted for the past century's accomplishments. Can we ever repay the debt to those heroic men, not only intellectually so, but physically, for their path was beset with danger and persecution in their questioning of established opinion. But even more important than a review of the past will be the necessary corollary, an outlook on the next century. By this, its manner of approach and treatment, will the Official Oration, be judgeable and of practical value to us.

It happens very commonly, that when an appointment is secured, that the appointee finds that his duties extend beyond those specified, or what he had anticipated. Good employees accept the prospect and get on with the good work, thereby meriting promotion. The Profession has chosen the corpus humanum and its workings, for its field of operation. Under certain conditions it enjoys, for this purpose certain privileges granted by the State—the rest of the people.

The past hundred years has been occupied with the intensive study of the body of the individual. To-day, as a result of this, it has become rapidly clear that one cannot fulfil one's duty to the individual, without a sound conception of the social organism, of which he is in fact a part: that they are not, as supposed for long, quite independent, but closely interdependent. An illness may be quite independent of the social body, but, and the consciousness of this is quite a sudden and recent development, it may be quite definitely dependent on some social disease.

Hence if we are to do our conceived duty of curing and preventing illness in the individual, that aspect must be clearly grasped. In the past the doctor has quite rigidly, for two reasons, what he understood as his medical efficiency and general personal reasons, left politics out of his daily life. This is seen in Sir T. Horder's Introduction to Janet Chance's book. He does not deal directly with whether the doctor should involve himself in politics, but it is so close to it that it may be quoted. It illustrates well the past attitude; while the fact that he writes this introduction, and the nature of the book\* which he thus introduces, shows his acute perception of the new situation. He says, "the doctor is not a publicist. It may be said that if a doctor becomes a successful publicist he ceases to

be a good doctor." Perfectly true. If doctors were to become generally publicists there would be great confusion of the public, both from their own differences, and from the inadequate nature of instruction which can be gained from newspaper articles.

### MOBILIZATION.

But for weal or woe, the day of ignoring public questions, has now quite definitely gone. But if anything is to be gained it must be by united and considered opinion and fully set forth. If doctors of the older generation could now analyse their experiences in regard to problems affecting individuals and trace the connexion between patient and public, in the light of many years of experience, and from his own judgment of what is right and wrong, say what he judges to be right treatment, for the good of *both*, what a lift upward such might, surely would, give! He has the most intimate and indisputable evidence about the situation at his finger-ends, which no press publicity can command. In his own mind he is sad for this or that individual catastrophe, and in his own mind deplores this or that tendency in social and political life. But he has no time to carry them further, and like many sections, turns away in a mild cynicism and gets on with his routine work. Could he sift his experience and win it from its matrix like gold from the quartz matrix, the course of things might be suitably modified and many individuals saved or prevented from catastrophes.

### "URGENT CALL."

The new, wider, and essentially living outlook on disease—the social outlook, is definitely negated by the fixed concept of divine creation, and special revelation of divine will with which belief this affair at Worcester officially associates the profession. It is time to awake—to shed that prehistoric idea of our origin and purpose, for, willy-nilly, the structure of society is in the throes of a new birth.

Mankind groaneth in travail. Who so adapted to fill the office of accoucheur as the medical profession? to shorten and ease the labour pains, to bring forth a living child and without sacrificing the mother? Voluble Sairey Gamps are to the fore offering their services.

Science, some four centuries ago, conceived and brought forth the firstborn of a new and fertile line. To-day she is big with child again—a new social organism uniting the characters of its ancestors in the scientific line is due; has reached the term of Pregnancy. The pains are severe, indeed. Individually, working with this concept in mind, each medical man shares the responsibility and the joy of this maternity work—this parturition. Is not the Trinity, Physiology, Psychology with their child, Sociology, more holy, judged by service to mankind, than Father, Son and Holy Ghost? Yea, verily, the union of the first two is an Immaculate Conception.

### AN ÆSTHETICALLY DIVINE SYMBOL.

These are the general reasons why I ask once more, and finally, if this Marriage de Convenance, is not a false step? Certain specific and urgent problems of the moment will be barred from discussion in the medical world by this overt association. Should we not, emulating the League of Nations in entering upon its great work for mankind, steer clear of all mental entanglements; in entering upon our new century keep our mind free from the shackles of preconceived ideas? Shall we not aim at creating a society with brow bedewed with the joy of spring mornings rather than contemplate one clouded with the inspissated gloom of past ages; a countenance turned towards the sun rather than one frozen with apprehension, the dyna-

\* The Cost of English Morals.



mic force enfeebled and anemic with that sense of guilt and inferiority, the first and basic principle inculcated by Christianity?

Have we not reached once more a day which resembles that happy one in which the maiden goddess of Wisdom, Athene, sprang in her full glory, from the cloven skull of the terrible Zeus, who had hitherto reigned supreme? A day so sublimely symbolized by the creations of Pheidias on the East Pediment of her temple, The Parthenon, a memorial synchronizing with the Hippocratic birth of Medicine.

That glorious birth of civilization did not, alas, live to reach maturity, but we, forearmed may dare hope, humbly, to improve in time on that record. Is there not some nobler, worthier, more stimulating conception possible than this miserable window? Why not a symbolic work of art to mark the beginning of this Neo-Periclean era? England is not entirely barren of suggestion or capacity. Something to fire imagination with positiveness. Or, if this be deemed too ebullient for acceptance by our present prophets, let us be content with our work as a memorial, or with books which are real monuments, or even our organization. But windows—of that sort—no thank you, good sirs! Clear windows for the soul!

W. M. HEWETSON.

Suggested scroll for the Cathedral window at Worcester in Memory and commemoration of the Centenary of Sir Charles Hastings, Founder of the British Medical Association, as proposed by the Council of the Association, with a Prayer for the Occasion.

Written August 5, 1931, in N. Rhodesia.

IN MEMORIAM  
To the Glory of God  
Creator and Giver of All  
Of Freewill and Disease  
and to

The Memory of SIR CHARLES HASTINGS,  
Founder of the British Medical Association.

Whose Members ever see thy Goodness in the sufferings of Mankind, who are ever conscious of thy help in the labours they put forth, to allay thy curse.

THIS WINDOW IS DEDICATED IN EVER GRATEFUL  
MEMORY.

PRAYER FOR THE OCCASION.

O' Thou Supreme and Almighty Being fashioned as we now know through the labours of thy servant Sir James Jeans in the form of a supernatural Mathematician who in thy great goodness mercy and wisdom didst create man blessed him with the priceless gift of Freewill whereby he Fell and became for punishment prey of disease such as Tuberculosis Cancer Leprosy Syphilis meningitis and hundreds of other ills We the British Medical Association founded for the purpose and furtherance of the relief and cure and at the last the Prevention of all such disease bringing man back to that pristine state of happiness and health enjoyed by him in the Garden where thou didst place him and even though the majority of us do Not believe in thy existence and in seeking to allay thy curse employ such earthly means as the Knife Radium Serums Herbs such as Digitalis and ground up earth such as Magnesium Sulphate and Aluminium Silicate Colloidal and other such means as we can invent without previous reference to Thyself or Thereafter seeking Thy Approval in prayer and Blessing and Guidance in dosage Therefore we here confessing ourselves Miserable Sinners beseech Thee to forgive us to guide us to send us thy Help so that these things will perform the miracles we

earnestly look for and when we have accomplished our object in preventing all illness to provide us with food and sustenance and for our dependents whom we are in duty bound to support.

For these Things O Lord we earnestly pray and beseech Thy Almighty Help. Lord Have Mercy upon us thy un-Faithful British Medical Association.

W.M.H.

## Political Jerry Builders.

THIS heading is taken from a recent article by the Rev. Dr. Arthur C. Hill, in the Glasgow *Sunday Mail*. Dr. Hill remarks: "A healthy scepticism, of which parsons have a plentiful supply, in its proper sphere, whatever the Rationalist Press may say, will make him dubious about the promises of those who claim to have the keys of an earthly Paradise in their pockets." (The italics are mine.)

It is quite evident that Dr. Hill finds it necessary to limit scepticism to a circumscribed sphere. Intellectual enquiry must not go too far. When the doubter or the sceptic approaches the main entrance to the citadel of supernaturalism he is confronted by a forbidding priest who says: "Thus far and no farther."

Yet, let the moderate tone of Dr. Hill's article be acknowledged. His dogmatism is not offensively presented. He is not an unreasoning bigot. He sets out to describe the work of the parson "in the world we know," and in his exordium he states that the parson exists to represent and maintain the life of the spirit. "Of course," he observes "he believes there is such a life. It is thinkable that he is wrong. There may be no such life. Then he will have blundered badly with all his tribe."

It is something to have a popular Anglican clergyman declaring that it is thinkable that he is wrong in his belief in the life of the spirit. Dr. Hill cannot fail to find evidence of the fact that there is now quite a number of persons outwith all religious communions who claim to believe in the life of the spirit and to represent and maintain it. Dr. Hill does not refer to such persons, for less pretend to examine their credentials. And while he professes broadly to describe the opinions and work of the average parson, he does nothing to show what the foundations of the ecclesiastical corporation of which he is a unit really are, or in what respects it has the right to demand preference to its non-ecclesiastical rivals.

Dr. Hill's casual reference to the "Rationalist Press" betrays gross ignorance of the standpoint of the Freethinker. He implies that the unbelievers in his creed who challenge clerical claims profess to have the keys of an Earthly Paradise in their pockets. The suggestion, of course, is that Freethinkers in their propaganda pretend to offer a jolly good time on earth—that is indefinite gratification of the senses and sensual appetites without regard for disciplinary training in the higher things like art and literature. This oft-repeated misrepresentation has been answered again and again; but it is always cropping up; and we must conclude that churchmen are hard put to it when they have to vilify their opponents and misrepresent their position—the terms in which the misrepresentation is couched never so genteel and elegant. Dr. Hill knows, or, if he does not know, he ought to know, that in the ranks of Freethinkers have been found and are to be found distinguished artists and authors who are too much absorbed in their work to have time to refute in detail the silly charges of pandering to self-interest and cupidity which so many clerics assume is the policy of the advocates of mental emancipation. Though you



should bray a fool in a mortar, yet will his foolishness not depart from him.

The unhappy situation is that the leading Christian clerics are more knaves than fools. The rank and file of those in "holy orders," who have from infancy breathed an atmosphere heavily charged with supernaturalism simply pass on to their congregations in parrot fashion the deliverances of the Bishops who know very well that the aim of Freethought is to lead the common people to a higher plane of cultural self development without dependence upon religion; but who are astute enough to restrain their subordinates from coming too far into the open and attempting to dispute the disinterested aims of the leaders of Freethought. In so far as the work of individual parsons has had beneficent results, this has been wholly due to their reliance upon purely humanistic methods, the paraphernalia of the divine being kept in the background. History attests that improvements in human conditions have been made wholly by the burning compassion and enthusiasm of men and women whose love of their kind has led them to sacrifice their substance and their own comfort to reform human conditions. It is not necessary for a man to be attached to any particular party to be a politician—that is, one who takes a real interest in the health of the body politic of which he is a member. But one man by himself cannot do much. If he has the power to inspire others and induce them to follow him, he may however do something substantial to advance the work of his predecessors.

Now, it is just here that clerics like Dr. Hill get hold of the wrong end of the stick. They begin by assuming that people will not be influenced by the good, the beautiful and the true unless they live "the life of the spirit." They juggle with such a term as "spirit" to serve their own purpose. In their mouths this term seems to have its extensive signification as for example when one speaks or writes of the spirit of Shakespeare or the spirit of Dickens or of Scott. But they are actually using the term to impose upon unthinking people a belief in "spirit" which has a supernatural signification; and unfortunately there are many who will not take the trouble to use their capacity to distinguish between the two meanings.

The parson, says Dr. Hill, must be attracted by the life of thought. Here we are coming into more common territory. But does not Dr. Hill see that one of the most deplorable conditions in "the life of thought" is that so many people do not think—do not really exercise the faculties of their minds at all—save superficially on subjects that interest or amuse them from day to day like football, dog racing, horse racing, dancing and dress? Hitherto the mass of the people have accepted second hand opinions on profound subjects. If it is important that the parson should be attracted by the life of thought, it is still more important that he should show his hearers what real strenuous thinking is, and get them to go into severe training—to habituate themselves to profound and earnest thinking on important subjects like the origin of man, his life, his destiny, his whole natural environment. If we are to be told that the mass of people have not even the capacity to think, then we justifiably demand to know why reliance is still placed upon a system of education which has hitherto been impregnated with religion.

People submit to the pretensions of Christianity because they have been historically misinformed by Christianity, and because by keeping alive a fear of the unknown and the so-called "supernatural," priests and parsons get the poorly educated and unthinking masses to assume an abject attitude when the name of God is mentioned. "Sh-sh-sh. Hats off—down

on your knees. The Joss has arrived!" In the House of Commons, Mr. Stanley said that he would not admit that Christianity condemned the attitude of people who go to the Cinema on Sunday evening until he was sure that Christianity approved their condition. That utterance reveals the colossal impudence of the representatives of Christianity. Does the average man or woman who goes to secular meetings or entertainments on Sunday care a tuppenny dam whether Christianity condemns their attitude or not? If Hon. and Rt. Hon., Rev. and Rt. Revd. gentlemen really had any intimate knowledge of the average man and woman, and really knew his and her estimate of Christianity they would not make themselves ridiculous by mouthing such foolish banalities. The positions have been reversed. Christianity now stands as the culprit at the bar of public opinion; and the charge against it is that after 2,000 years of power it has lamentably failed to redeem its pledges and has left millions in revolting conditions of wretchedness, poverty and despair. Who have been the jerry builders? Undoubtedly the politicians who are in the grip of the supernaturalists. Dr. Hill and those who are his fellow believers cannot imagine or visualize a state of society in which money has ceased to exist. All their comments are coloured by the assumption that the continued existence of this evil thing is a public necessity! We do not forget that ecclesiasticism derives the greater part of its power from money. It is easy for individual clerics to condemn "luxury and sensuality" in general terms; but do the wealthy minority who wallow in luxury and sensuality worry about such condemnation? No. And the fact is that in all their contacts with the laity, parsons seldom get a true view of the life and opinions of the laity in any class for the simple reason that when the fellow in the dog collar appears on the scene the average layman retires into his shell and puts on a mask. Clerics and laymen follow a course of mutual deception. In social intercourse they are not their true selves. They are artificial in manner and speech. They cannot be wholly natural. Probably because, as the Bible tells us "the natural man is enmity against God."

What then does the "pastoral work" of the parson or sub-shepherd (Tony Weller's *Deppity Shepherd*) amount to? No one denies that there are individual clergymen who by their purely human qualities are doing a measure of good social work, but how much more could be done if the bogey of supernaturalism were laid and this piffling artificiality were overcome!

IGNOTUS.

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#### THE SOCIAL CONSCIENCE.

What the young need to have taught them in this too little cultivated region is that they are born not mere atoms gloating independent and apart for a season through a terraqueous medium, and sucking up as much more than their share as they can seize; nor citizens of the world with no more definite duty than to keep their feeling to all their fellows in a steady simmer of bland complacency; but soldiers in a host, citizens in a polity whose boundaries are not set down on maps, members of a church the handwriting of whose ordinances is not in the hieroglyphs of idle mystery, nor its hope and recompence in the lands beyond death. They need to be taught that they owe a share of their energies to the great struggle which is in ceaseless progress in all Societies in an endless variety of forms; between new truth and old prejudices, between love or self or class and solicitous passion for justice, between the obstructive indolence of the many and the general mental activity of the few. This is the sphere and definition of the social conscience—John (Lord) Morley.



## Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

DAVID HUME.

SIR,—Hume's Tomb in the Calton Burying Ground, Edinburgh, is a massive one. The name, indeed all the inscription, is in large letters deeply cut in the stone:—

DAVID HUME,  
Born April 26, 1711. Died August 25, 1776.  
Erected in memory of him  
1778.

A little above the name (18 inches or so) the following lines have equal prominence:—

Behold I come quickly  
Thanks be to God which  
Giveth us the victory through  
Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, Mr. Editor, there's a stunner for you. I stood petrified as David Hume's name is the only one on the tomb. After partial recovery I looked through the iron gate into the tomb, and directly opposite was a small wall tablet with a cross at the top. I could make out that three other Humes were below, including one lady, a Miss Hume, who died in 1848. Looking again at the lines I decided that the stone upon which they are carved was not part of the original tomb, but appeared to be a block added later, and probably when Miss Hume died, who no doubt willed the lines to be placed where they are instead of under her name on the aforesaid Tablet.

One can only conclude that the lines were so placed to be purposely misleading and visitors to the Tomb will be mystified and may infer that Hume recanted at the last unless they reason it out and premise trickery of some sort.

The dead is misrepresented, and this is tolerated in a City like Edinburgh!

J. MACKINNON.

### THE CRIMINAL.

SIR,—What Mr. Taylor (*Freethinker*, June 5), has to say about The Church and the Criminal is, of course, very true, and it is almost uniformly endorsed by modern expert opinion. Brief, however, as his article is, Mr. Taylor does not explain what is a criminal? Or, what it is that makes a criminal? He seems to assume that the criminal mind is made up, or determined by biological or organic deficiencies and disabilities.

Gland atrophy, physiological disorder, etc., are surely not limited to the criminal, they may be contributory? Mr. Taylor further tells us that the criminal is anti-social, assuming, I suppose, that the law-abiding citizen is social. As a matter of fact the criminal is just as gregarious as anyone else. The degree of group consciousness and ethic manifested in the Dartmoor affair was remarkable; much more so than the respectable citizens who crowd the courts to take pleasure in the morbid details surrounding some poor social misfit's ill-adjusted life.

The majority of criminals are just as organically healthy as anyone else. What is wrong with them is their *habit system*. They have learned to respond to social conditions, to which, until the causes are removed a certain number of the population must always have to adjust themselves. Yes! *socially conditioned*, physically and mentally healthy, but!—nevertheless the criminal community.

R. F. TURNEY.

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## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand) : 3.15, Mrs. E. Grout—"The Christian Revolution."

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrols Road and North End Road) : 7.30, Saturday, June 18, Mr. E. Bryant and Mr. C. Tuson. *Freethinkers* on sale.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead) : 11.0, Sunday, June 19, Mr. L. Ebury. Monday, June 20, South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury. Thursday, June 23, Leighton Road, Kentish Town, 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town) : 7.30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Wednesday, June 22, The Triangle (opposite "Heaton Arms," Rye Lane, Peckham) : 8.0, Mr. C. Tuson. Friday, June 24, Camberwell Gate, 8.0, Mrs. E. Grout.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : Wednesday, June 15, at 7.30, Messrs. Tuson and Wood. Thursday, June 16, at 7.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin. Friday, June 17, at 7.30, Messrs. Bryant and Le Maine. Sunday, June 19, 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.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (outside Technical College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.) : 7.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine.

WOOLWICH BRANCH N.S.S. ("The Ship") : 7.45, Friday evening. (Beresford Square, Woolwich) 7.45, Sunday, Mr. S. Burke. A Lecture.

INDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

ASHINGTON : 7.0, Saturday, June 18, Mr. J. T. Brighton. COLNE (Spring Lane) : Sunday, June 19, at 7.45, Mr. J. Clayton.

DURHAM (Market Place) : 7.30, Tuesday, June 21, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

LUMB-IN-ROSSENDALE, Friday, June 17, at 7.45, Mr. J. Clayton.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths) : 8.0, Sunday, June 19, H. Little and J. V. Short. Tuesday, June 21, Edge Hill Lamp, 8.0, H. Little and P. Sherwin. Thursday, June 23, corner of High Park Street and Park Road, 8.0, A. Jackson, D. Robinson and S. Wollen. Current *Freethinkers* on sale at all meetings.

MERSEYSIDE FREETHINKERS.—Sunday, June 19, Ramble in the Wirral (Heswall and Thurston district). Meet either at Liverpool Landing Stage (Woodside Ferry Boat), at 2.30, or at entrance to Woodside Ferry, Birkenhead, at 3.0. Will those from Liverpool side please note that party will not wait later than 2.50 boat. Everybody welcome.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Bigg Market) : 8.0, Friday, June 17, Mr. Atkinson.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Bigg Market) : 7.30, Sunday, June 19, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (4 Swilly Road, Devonport) : 7.30. Committee meeting on Tuesday, June 21.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Church Street, Seaham Harbour) : 7.30, Saturday, June 18, Mr. G. Whitehead. Sunday, June 19, Lambton Street, Sunderland : 7.0, Mr. G. Whitehead. Monday, June 20, and remainder of week, Gill Bridge Avenue, Sunderland (opposite Central Police Station) : 7.30, Mr. G. Whitehead. Will friends make these meetings as widely known as possible?

WHEATLEY LANE, Tuesday, June 21, at 7.30, Mr. J. Clayton.

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

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

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I desire to join the National Secular Society, and I pledge myself, if admitted as a member, to co-operate in promoting its objects.

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Address .....

Occupation .....

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This declaration should be transmitted to the Secretary with a subscription.

P.S.—Beyond a minimum of Two Shillings per year, every member is left to fix his own subscription according to his means and interest in the cause.

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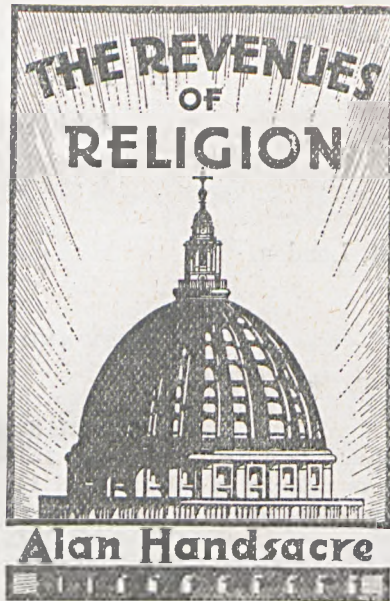


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