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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>Savages Ancient and Modern.—The Editor</i>	401
<i>Johanna's Jolly Joke.—Mimnermus</i>	403
<i>Ethel Mannin: Freethinker.—W. Mann</i>	404
<i>Variation on a Sex Theme.—Lykos</i>	405
<i>A City of God.—Erin</i>	406
<i>A New Slogan for Secularists.—P. Victor Morris</i>	410
<i>Criticism and the Bible.—W. Craik</i>	411
<i>The Intellectual Confusion of Our Time.—G. H. Taylor</i>	413
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions.

Savages Ancient and Modern.

THE latest examples of the Savage in Our Midst have just been furnished in Germany and Dublin. In the first instance a number of men and women gathered on the summit of the Brocken to test whether it was possible, according to an old formula, to transform a goat into a handsome young man. Mr. Harry Price, of the Laboratory of Psychic Research was responsible for this. He has stated that he did not believe in it, but he wished to put the matter to a scientific test. I do not know exactly what "scientific test" means here, other than taking care that a mere trick was not played on the observers. It is also said that it may disprove the belief in witchcraft, which is still widely held. It will certainly not do that. Those who believe in witchcraft will go on believing. They will merely say, as Spiritualists say when their practices result in nothing at all, that the conditions were not favourable. And even though someone managed to introduce a handsome young man in the place of a goat, and was caught doing it, believers would say, as do Spiritualists, the detection of a fraud does not disprove the possibility of there being a genuine transformation. Under the expressed desire to abolish a superstition is an unconfessed belief in the possibility of this kind of thing taking place. Otherwise no one would waste five minutes at such a ridiculous game.

The use of the word "science" in such a connexion is still more ridiculous. There is as much genuine science about it as there is about a scientist taking the temperature of a room, or the pulse and the temperature of a medium before commencing a Spiritualistic experiment. They give superstition a status it could not otherwise attain. Science proceeds from known forces with the aim of reducing to the same category unknown ones. Surrounding stupidities such as the Brocken display with scientific jargon is merely giving believers, or nascent believers, the feeling that there may be something

after all in the childish superstitions with which the world is stocked. Mr. Joad, who was one of the spectators, or one of the performers, said that if the goat had been transformed into a handsome young man the bottom would have dropped out of his universe. I really do not see why it should. Mr. Joad appears to believe in a universe in which a mysterious and quite unknown and inconceivable thing which he calls "mind" wanders about, having no necessary relation with anything and able to interfere with everything, and if I could accept that I do not think the young man on the Brocken would trouble me much. He would fall quite properly into a world in which no two things really fitted together. After all this use of scientific jargon in connexion with foolish superstitions is no more than an example of the tactics of the medieval magician with his circles and incantations, or the seller of quack medicines at a country fair.

* * *

Dublin and the Brocken.

On the Brocken a number of men and women, in the name of science, are seeing whether it is possible to change a goat into a man. In Dublin, hundreds of thousands of people are gathered, representing millions all over the "civilized" world, who believe that at the word of their chief magicians, a bit of bread and a drop of wine will be changed into human flesh and blood. Our newspapers laugh at the Brocken experiment, and either say nothing or speak respectfully of the Dublin one. But what really is the difference in the two cases? If a man can believe in the one, what is there to prevent his believing in the other? Can one really say, or if one can say it, can one believe, that the kneeling crowds who believe in the actual transformation of bread and wine into flesh and blood, and the priests who work the miracle, are upon a higher intellectual level than the medieval magicians of the Brocken and their followers? Now I suggest that if Mr. Harry Price, and the members of the Society for psychical research, and the scientists who spend their time seeing whether spirits are really materialized, or whether bunches of flowers are passed through solid brick walls, wish to do something that would be far more useful, there is a very easy way of getting to work. Let them secure some of the wafers and some of the wine that are changed into flesh and blood, then let them hire the Albert Hall, and announce that on a certain date, with all the appropriate ceremonial a test will be made whether the consecrated wafer and wine are any different after the performance from what they were before. That would be something striking and something of world-wide use. For the Brocken miracle is believed in only by admittedly ignorant people. But the Dublin one is accepted by men in high places, by men who have a voice in the direction of the world's affairs, and who because of the alleged reality of this

and similar miracles, are given a voice in education and in legislation. More, it is because of the power of those who believe in the Dublin miracles that the papers take two identical superstitions, laugh at the one, and treat the other with the utmost gravity. Nay, I am quite sure that there is not a paper in England which would not say, if a number of scientists suggested the experiment I have named, that it was blasphemous and the law should prevent this wholesale outrage on the religious feelings of the people. We cannot advance much further than Hobbes' "religion is superstition allowed, superstition is religion not allowed." All we need add is that whether a superstition is treated respectfully or otherwise by the present-day press depends wholly upon whether it has a sufficient amount of money and influence behind it.

* * *

Science and Superstition.

It betokens a little advance that so many people are at least getting ashamed of being credited with belief in quite a number of superstitions. To-day there is no revival of superstition, but there is going on, a process which gives it a certain air of respectability, and which encourages a certain number of people to feel that, after all, they need not be ashamed of it. Much of this sanction for superstition is found, as I have already indicated, in the use made of science and scientific terminology. One of the evening papers, for instance, just after the Brocken joke, gravely said in a leading article that there exists a vast amount of evidence for what is put forward by Spiritualists and others, and solemnly winds up with the fatuous remark that "denial of their possibility is an offence against the scientific spirit." One ought not to be hard upon this anonymous journalist since many scientists of standing have informed the world that to science all things are possible. But neither of the statements are true, and both of them miss the really scientific spirit.

First, it is not true in fact that all things are possible in nature. In nature only one thing is possible, and that is the thing that occurs. Possibility is not something that can be predicated of nature at all; it can only hold of our knowledge of things, and is strictly relative to our intelligence or to our knowledge. To a child sitting in the front seat of a motor-car, pressing the starter may wind up the clock on the dashboard, or winding up the clock may set the engine in motion. To any engineer no such alternative possibilities can ever exist. As Spinoza pointed out more than a couple of centuries ago possibility exists in exact proportion to ignorance. All things are possible when we know nothing, a limited number of things are possible when we know more, but only one thing is possible when our knowledge is complete, and that possible thing is the thing that occurs. Far from it being true that to science all things are possible, science is only complete in any direction when possibility is replaced by certainty. With the tales that go to make up the world's stock of superstitions it is not a question, to science, of whether they are possible, it knows they are not possible, or, with strict accuracy, if they are possible then all science is a delusion. The statement that to science all things are possible is at best a foolish formula, and very often it is a knavish one, deliberately used for the purpose of veiling timidity or imposing upon the folly of others.

* * *

Fact and Fable.

The paper I have cited does, unconsciously I think, state a sound truth. It says "The true scientist in-

quires into the meaning of all phenomena without prejudice." That is true, but it does not mean that every time any one comes along with any sort of a story that an enquiry must be held to find out whether it is true or not. The *meaning* of a belief is one thing, and always provides room for investigation. The truth of a belief is another thing, and that may be settled in the light of previous knowledge as to what we already know to be true. There is, for instance, no need to discuss whether the story of the loaves and fishes in the New Testament is true or not, we know it is not. If Mary Smith gives the world a baby and informs us that she has never had intercourse with a male of the human species we know it is not true because we have absolute knowledge as to how babies are produced. And if the same story is told of some person who is assumed to have lived some 2,000 years ago we know that this also is not true. There are a thousand and one things we know are not true, and we know they are not true in terms of a knowledge that we already possess and which has been tested times out of number. We know that goats do not become handsome young men, we know that bodies do not become dematerialized and materialized, in the seance room, that bread and wine does not become flesh and blood, that faith will not grow a new leg in place of a severed one, and that prayers will not cause an earthquake or effect a change in the weather. To say that every time a crank or a rogue comes along with a story to the contrary "scientific investigation" must be held to find out whether the story is true is in the highest degree absurd.

But to say we must find out the *meaning* of all phenomena is quite a different proposition. For the belief of the Christian in the Mass, of the Spiritualist in the phenomena of the seance room, of the peasant in witchcraft, of the fashionable lady in a mascot, of another individual in lucky days, of the devout that prayer may alter the weather, or that dying people get a glimpse of heaven before they die, all these things are facts, as actual in their being as is the existence of the Matterhorn. But here science has already been at work and the explanation has been given, not by the Society for Physical Research, or by journalists who turn into money every passing sensation by writing of it in terms that play to popular ignorance, but by giving us the conditions of the phenomena. We know to-day perfectly well why witchcraft was believed in all over the world, and why it is still believed in many quarters. We know why people have believed in the existence of gods and devils and ghosts and witches and heavens and hells. And we know that the understanding of superstition in all its multiform phases requires no more than an adequate knowledge of its history. When we have this, the necromancer on the Brocken, the priest in his church, the faith healer on his rostrum, the medium in the dark room, the quack in the market place all fall into their respective places as representatives of a group of beliefs that rest upon the fear and ignorance of man, and upon which inherited ignorance practitioners in the supernatural have fattened for generations. The way to work against such beliefs is not to appoint commissions to enquire whether they are true, but to create a social atmosphere in which these noxious weeds will find it impossible to live.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Indolence is stagnation; employment is life.—Seneca.
Freethinking leads to free enquiry.—Abner Kneeland.

Joanna's Jolly Joke.

"Truth is only unpleasant in its novelty."—Landor.

"The vain words wandering blindly, led by lies."
Lucretius.

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

"To aim to convert a man by miracles is a profanation of the soul."—Emerson.

JOANNA SOUTHCOTT died as long ago as 1814, leaving to her innocent and uneducated followers *The Book of Sealed Writings*, with instructions that it should be opened by "twenty-four bishops at a time of national crisis." Over a century after her death, the chief follower of the present day—for there are still disciples of the prophetess—has issued a bold advertisement warning people that poor, old England will go straight to what Mr. Mantalini called "the demnition bow-wows" if the two dozen Fathers-in-God do not open Joanna Southcott's box immediately.

These posters, which may be seen on the underground railways, and elsewhere, have attracted the eagle-eyed journalists. The London newspapers, scenting a sensation for the "dog-days" to fill the place of those hardy annuals, the sea-serpent, the big gooseberry, and the rediscovery of "Lot's wife," have been publishing paragraphs on Joanna.

Although the newspaper penny-a-liners never admit the soft impeachment, the life-story of Joanna Southcott throws a flood of light on the devious paths of religious origins. A maid-of-all-work, Joanna declared that she possessed supernatural power, and wrote and dictated prophecies in stilted language and halting rhyme. Originally a Methodist, she gave herself out as the woman referred to in the last book of the Christian Bible, predicting that she would herself give birth to a brand-new baby Messiah. Her abracadabra imposed upon tens of thousands of religious people. Great preparations were made by her very numerous followers for the event, but the prophetess died of the mundane disease of dropsy very shortly after the time predicted. Many costly presents were made to Joanna, including a superb cradle worth £200, a richly-embroidered coverlet, and a Bible worth £50. She was buried close to Lord's Cricket Ground, in St. John's Church burial ground, and the tomb may still be seen.

Whether she was a religious maniac, or whether she bamboozled innocent believers, is difficult to determine. If the former, there was plenty of method in her madness. Like Mrs. Eddy, Joe Smith, and William Booth, and many another religious boss, she had very keen business instincts. She specialized in passports to heaven, which she called "seals," and actually persuaded multitudes of simple-minded folk to purchase them. She officiated in the "House of God," a large building at Newington Butts, London, only a few hundred yards distant from the site of the tabernacle where Charles Spurgeon afterwards established himself for so many years.

As a matter of fact, a box, claiming to be the original and only genuine, was opened five years ago at the Church Hall, Westminster. This particular box contained, among other things, one of Joanna's nightcaps, a pistol, a dice-box, a lottery ticket, and a pair of earrings, beside several books. Some of the people present at the opening of the box were highly indignant at Joanna's jolly joke, but, such is the power of pious delusion, others declared that this was the wrong box, and they are still awaiting the advent of the real "great box" of their prophetess at the appointed hour.

A pistol, a dice-box, a woman's nightcap, cheap earrings, and a novel, are not common emblems of salvation in time of national distress. But the faith

that caused their grandparents to part with real money for paper passports to an imaginary heaven was quite equal to a situation as funny as any in "Charley's Aunt." It is so difficult to shake the belief of those with the will to believe. That explains why priests always seek to control national education, and, what is of greater importance to them, respect for the sorriest set of imposters who ever disgraced humanity.

Priests have in all times arisen to foretell events, smooth and otherwise, at prices absurdly cheap considering the value of their services. From the days of the Roman augurs, who, it is said, could not meet without smiling, down to the present-day Spiritualist, who giggles in her dainty sleeve until an infidel magistrate usurps her calling, and prophecies that she will spend some months in prison, an unbroken line of more or less inspired personages has existed, even in reputedly civilized countries.

The rain doctors and prophets of so-called uncivilized peoples, however, are kept to their contracts. They are expected to bring rain or victory when it is required, and if they do not the consequences are summary and unpleasant. But the prophets in civilized countries retain all the financial and social advantages of their savage prototypes without any of the risks and dangers. The civilized dupes allow the prophet or priest to play his pleasant little game on the principle, "Heads I win, tails you lose." If the Christian clergyman prays for rain, and the drought continues, the people in the pews ignore the mistake. If by pure chance the parson is correct, they put it to his credit, or he puts it to his credit, which is much the same thing in a fancy world.

Joanna "did herself well" out of her holy hocus-pocus. She deceived a quarter of a million of adult men and women, most of whom paid varying sums of money for alleged passports to the golden streets of the New Jerusalem. The credulity displayed by her dupes was abysmal. Her bunkum appealed, naturally, to religious folks, who already believed in a three-headed god, including a whole-time messiah, and a terrible devil. Yet, at slight notice, they were fully prepared to accept a second messiah, and to add another prophet to their bead-roll. That this should happen in the West Country is not so surprising, but that it also happened on a larger scale in London itself shows the quality of the so-called education which the priests then permitted to the people of England. The clergy are so fond of boasting of their care for education. This was the result of nearly twenty centuries of the instruction of tens of thousands of Christian "pastors and masters." So dreadful was the state of education towards the end of the nineteenth century that the State had to take a hand to rescue the nation from wholesale ignorance, and worse. The Education Act of 1870 has been nobbled since by priests and their catspaws, but it is an immense advance on anything that preceded it.

Each generation has its own difficulties, but Democrats must always be on guard against Priestcraft, which is ever ready to sacrifice civilization itself in order that it may make an easy and lucrative living. Priests are as ruthless and insensate as Transatlantic gangsters. "Me, cruel!" exclaimed one brilliant example, "why I always use my left hand in striking women." Not only Britain but all Europe is semi-barbarous at the present hour, and this distressing state of affairs is primarily owing to the domination of Priestcraft, which ever seeks to retard progress and to perpetuate ancient ignorance. Priests are unjust stewards who keep ninety-nine parts in the hundred as their emolument. How shall they fare on a day of honest reckoning?

MIMNERMUS.

Ethel Mannin: Freethinker.

(Concluded from page 388.)

ETHEL MANNIN is an artist with the pen, one who can make you realize her emotions just as an expert pianist, or violinist, can make you realize his. Those who could read her account of her greatest loss, without being affected, would be callous indeed.

Suppose, through the telephone, you had put off meeting one you loved dearer than life itself, saying: "We shall be meeting to-morrow. I will telephone you again this evening." But by the evening that life was flowing out on the dark sea and lost for ever. And afterwards, following a torturing morning, and a night of torment, trying to discover the whereabouts of the loved one. Suddenly the telephone bell rings. Then we have the following tense and dramatic finish:—

Fear leaps up in you, together with a wild frantic hope that here at last is some anxiety-relieving explanation . . . something has happened out of the ordinary run of daily life . . . The Exchange asks if you will accept a call, and it is as though the whole house, still quivering from the ringing of the bell, listens. You are not a reasoning human being any more; you are merely a turmoil of apprehension and hope. And a voice says, "There's bad news. Have you heard? He's dead . . . Last night . . . suicide."

Then, at the mortuary, when she turned back the sheet, to touch the hand of the dead for the last time, she relates how the young policeman sprang into a shocked activity at such desecration of the dead. And as for the self-deceiving comforts of religion, she would much rather think of the lost loved one on ceasing to be: "than as reincarnated in some other body, or mooning about as a disembodied spirit. Either of those alternatives strikes me as indecent. "Contemptible" was the word Bertrand Russell used to me when we were discussing it." And further, the "need is for a new philosophy, a new social order, a new religion—a religion not of God, but of Man; not of Fear, but of Freedom; not of Heaven, but of Earth."

There is, one realizes, says Ethel Mannin, a little handful of intelligence functioning in an arid wilderness of superstition. "The world is riddled by superstitious fear which infects not merely its cliché-ridden speech but its habit of thought, so that it even thinks in clichés—when it thinks at all, though usually it accepts all the ready-made ideas which school and church and press pump into it from the time it can accept ideas at all."¹ We are overridden with Puritanism, and "Puritanism is begotten of stupidity; stupidity begets Puritanism; the thing works in a vicious circle. And Puritanism is rapidly making this country no fit place for a decent, intelligent person to live in." (p. 152.)

There are thirty chapters in the book, we have read them all, and, like *Oliver Twist*, wished for more. We have not read a book of this length, for a long time, with which we are in such full agreement. If we were asked which chapter we preferred, we should select the last, as we fancy Ethel Mannin would, for it contains some of her finest writing. This last chapter is reserved for the appreciation and admiration of a "first-class mind." Somebody whose opinion she respected had said: "Bertrand Russell is the most brilliant person in the country, possibly in Europe; he has a first-class mind." And this estimate was confirmed for her, by the interview afterwards accorded to her by Bertrand Russell (now Earl Russell, since the death of his brother).

You might read the yellow press from one year's end to the other, without learning anything about Bertrand Russell. The only time they took notice of him, was with violent abuse when he was sent to prison, by professing Christians—the yellow-press is also ostentatiously pious—during the great war, for his opposition to the world-wide slaughter.

But there has been a great change since then, the accursed and rejected outcast, is now acclaimed—but still, not by the gutter press—as one of the finest spirits of our time. As Ethel Mannin observes: "The reputation Bertrand Russell has built up for himself without ever at any point capitulating to popularity is quite simply terrific"; It is more than a fashionable Anglo-American reputation; more than a European reputation, it is literally world-wide. Even his caustic comments on American barbarism, cannot affect his reputation in the United States. If he was less intellectual he might become a cult like Tagore. But then Bertrand Russell has no belief in a future life, a belief generally indispensable to the foundation of a Cult. The separate existence of soul and body, he describes as "a metaphysical superstition." And as for a future life, he says:;

I believe that when I die I shall rot, and nothing of my ego will survive. I am not young, and I love life. But I should scorn to shiver with terror at the thought of annihilation. Happiness is none the less true happiness because it must come to an end, nor do thought and love lose their value because they are not everlasting . . . Even if the open windows of science at first make us shiver after the cosy indoor warmth of traditional humanizing myths, in the end the fresh air brings vigour, and the great spaces have a splendour of their own.

Russia he regards as the intellectual hope of the world. Civilization is moving Eastward; Western civilization being crushed out by American Barbarism. He takes a serious view of the increasing power of the Roman Catholic Church, owing to its condemnation of birth-control. It will win, he says: "by sheer force of numbers; the Freethinking intelligentsia does not reproduce itself in sufficient numbers to be of any force." A rather bleak outlook! Which can only be met by Freethought propaganda among Catholics. The only saviours we can trust in to save us are the revelations and application of organized science; as Ethel Mannin so eloquently pleads:—

The only hope I see for poor confused humanity stumbling through the darkness it has made for itself; if there is any way to paradise, or salvation, or happiness, or whatever one chooses to call it, it is that white light of scientific outlook irradiating thought and guiding human conduct stabbing like a sword through the welter of fear and superstition and muddled thinking which makes life as the majority of people who compose Western civilization live it the futile asymptote it is.

Bertrand Russell I see as a colossal figure towering above the stupidity and chaos we have made out of our civilization, supremely sane, splendidly courageous . . . I think of him in his tower looking out across the English countryside to the infinite horizon, a small quiet figure, completely lacking in bombast or self-assertiveness, patiently considering the problems of humanity in the light of science, working it all out as a mathematical proposition, and truth flashing out of the exquisite precision of his mind like sunlight glancing off a swordblade, absolute truth, absolute beauty.

"Others abide our question; thou art free, . . . out-topping knowledge."

It is a hopeful sign, for the future, that the young intelligentsia of the coming generation, have chosen Bertrand Russell, and Ethel Mannin, among others, to lead them to the promised land.

¹ Ethel Mannin: *Confessions and Impressions*. pp. 107-8.

Variation on a Sex Theme.

The resolution passed at the recent N.S.S. Conference, expressing satisfaction with the surrender of the Church to the birth control movement, not only paid a timely tribute to those Freethinking pioneers who did so much to popularize that movement, but may also be considered as a warning to review the present position. When the Christian Church publicly announces that it has adopted some of its opponent's ideas, it is immediately necessary to look closely into the terms of the adoption. Christians are notoriously skillful in the process of so distorting ideas as to render them entirely meaningless. That may be the intention with birth control ideas.

Originally knowledge of birth control was advocated on the grounds that it would enable parents to limit their offspring to a desired number, giving the resultant smaller family better economic conditions and making for improved maternal health. Despite the fact that both objects were eminently desirable, the priests consistently opposed all attempts to bring information on contraception to the mass of the people. However, notwithstanding all their power, their efforts were in the main successful and merely resulted in delaying the spread of knowledge. And yet we now have the spectacle of the Established Church giving assent to the principle of family limitation. Why? At first sight it seems reasonable to conclude that once again the scientific attitude has overcome the reactionary forces of superstition, but . . . And that "but" is important, especially if we recall the record of priestly guile and treachery. The Church has never yet willingly assented to any policy of improvement in the human lot, particularly when that improvement was in sex relationships, and it is expecting too much to ask us to swallow without question this new found agreement with birth control. And it is worth while remembering that the Bishops did not give unconditional consent to the free use of contraceptives, but hedged their permission round with so many obstructive restrictions that it was obvious that they found no pleasure in their new attitude. Christians have hated everything connected with sex too heartily and too long for this latest move to be genuine; their course was undoubtedly motivated by more subtle considerations, it was certainly not the outcome of a priestly conviction of the truth or social value of the new ideas.

I think the priest saw the less obvious and more revolutionary possibilities of an ever-increasing knowledge and practice of birth control, and that he accepted the principle while it was still being discussed mainly in terms of smaller families and improved maternal health.

He realized that it was better to accept a hated practice while it was a relatively weak growth (and when it could be emasculated and controlled by the Church, never to progress beyond mere family economics and hygiene) than it was to leave it to develop to a vigorous and powerful thing that might ultimately sweep him away.

If that analysis is correct, as I think, it is but one more example of the astuteness of the priestly class, a section that has at all times shown an unequalled facility for self-preservation, and which is, where self-interest is concerned, gifted with abnormally acute foresight. I fully admit that the priest has good reason to fear modern contraception, because it threatens his beloved and "divinely ordained" moral codes.

A very brief survey of the course of birth control propaganda will show why this is so. At first there was a gradual decline in the birth rate; that was to be expected, it was the desired result. This normally caused an outcry about race suicide, which merely means the fear that there might not be enough soldiers or taxpayers in the future, but arguments about the improved quality of the stock usually sufficed to still that anxiety. Then there was a noticeable increase in childless marriages. That was the beginning of the less obvious dangers. Denunciations of anti-social practices, of too much interest in the things of the material world, and of the gross selfishness of our modern married couples

formed the base of innumerable outbursts of pulpit and press claptrap. But there was a deeper anxiety that parsons hardly dared to voice.

From deliberately childless marriages to marriage-less sexual relationships is only a very short step, and that aspect it was, I think, that appalled the church. All its sexual moral codes had been founded on the possibility of conception being the almost inevitable consequent of sexual indulgence, and it had endeavoured through this to restrict sexual satisfaction to marriage. By means of foul illegitimacy laws and despicable cant about fallen women the Church had built a gaudy (and bawdy) moral structure, before which all were expected to grovel. And then modern sexual knowledge came and threatened to shoot the whole edifice full of holes, and finally to demolish it altogether.

That to me is one, if not the real, reason for the parson's attempt to take birth control under the wing of the Church. That way lies his only possible hope of escape, and he has clutched it as a drowning man is said to grab a straw. He is, most emphatically, doomed to failure in this sphere as he has failed in all others, the forces arrayed against him are stronger than he seems to realize. Birth control may have started as a means of giving individual families a better chance in life, but it will not stay there, it must inevitably exercise a profound influence on almost every aspect of the sexual life from ordinary sexual intercourse to venereal disease.

Sexual relationships, which, though comparatively common, were secret and in defiance of the moral codes of priests, will probably become normal. The old fear of unwanted pregnancy having been removed, the old arguments will not prevail against them. With increased sexual freedom, both pre-marital and extra-marital, great changes are likely to occur in prostitution, even if it is not entirely eliminated. That will put the venereal disease problem in a different category and make a simple solution probable.

Marriage will not escape, it too is bound to be altered, and likely enough its future basis may easily be a vast improvement on the present one. But marriage reform means divorce reform, and both indicate changes in family life and in the treatment of, and provision for, children. This very brief indication of what birth control can cause will, I think, serve to show that the problem has ramifications throughout human activities, and although its effects will undoubtedly bring complex difficulties to overcome, in general it promises progress to greater happiness and freedom for humanity. That should commend it, in the wider aspect suggested, to the careful consideration of Freethinkers. But whether its possibilities make for the enrichment of debasing of life, we can be sure that the priest will strenuously oppose contraception being carried beyond a very limited application within the family.

Fortunately for those who are more concerned with human welfare than priestly tyranny and interference, the fight for a better sexual ethic will be easier for the reformer than was the fight against the ridiculous god-conceptions for the Freethinker.

The latter's campaign was exclusively in the intellectual sphere, his appeal was (and is) to reason and hard thinking, and although science was in his favour his work was uphill. The people to whom his propaganda was addressed did not take kindly to hard mental exercise, he had no popular emotional appeal, and he was thus confronted with an almost immovable mass of indifference. And yet he won all along the line and is still going forward.

The movement towards a freer and better moral outlook in the sexual life will at least at first not need to base an appeal to the people on profound intellectual grounds. The sexual urges are instinctive, they constitute a hunger that will not be denied, and, even if new theories are not welcomed with enthusiasm, they will not meet the same relentless opposition. The break from tradition will not be sudden, but it will be inevitable, in current sexual morality each individual has an enemy inside the gates, and an attempt to build a freer, saner and happier sex life has human desires already in its favour. Therein lies our hope and guarantee of once more defeating the machinations of the "savages in our midst."

A City of God.

DURING this week Dublin has been a city of . . . what? Words fail to describe the terrible tragedy of it all. Floodlights pouring out over the buildings; flashing lights illuminating the sky. Under this poignant light there are hungry men and women, and children too; there are families ranging from seven to twelve persons eating, living and sleeping in single rooms. In the crowded hives of men the most pathetic tragedy of modern times is being enacted. People on the borderline of starvation have plunged themselves further into debt in order that they might decorate their streets to give a welcome to the representatives of the Catholic Church who met in their biennial Conference known as the International Eucharist Congress.

It is estimated that when this Congress will have adjourned that a sum of £1,500,000 will have been spent on expenses alone. Thousands of priests journeying from all parts of the world. And how they journey. No travelling along rough roads on the back of an ass; the human asses in their simple faith have made it possible for them to even charter an ocean liner that remained here during the Congress so that those who met might not be discommoded in any way.

Over one million flags floated in the breezes of Dublin during the week, each flag costing from sixpence to £2 10s. The streets where slums abound have spent anything from £50 to £300 per street; household possessions pawned that the wherewithal might be secured to buy the decorations. Altars erected in these slums costing anywhere from £50 up.

The whole city is in the grip of the crushing power of the Church. Men and women in public life have become human bolsters, inert, spiritless, spineless, responding to every pressure from the Church. Brave person, indeed, would he or she be who would rise up and make protest against it, so powerful is the influence of the Church.

What of the aftermath?

The sun shines gaily for it is summer. The flags lend colour to the colourless lives of the poor. The bands play music to soothe their tired bodies. There was the parade of the City Council and the dignitaries of the Church. Over all the city there came the sound of the dulcet tones of the Pope's voice sending his greeting via the radio. In four days it was all over.

The household possessions will be again needed. Where will the money come from? They will not be able to sell the flags for the need for them will have passed. The moneylenders will be filling the court dockets with cases of people refusing to pay, for they will not have the money to pay. And when the sun has fled before the cold grey dawn of sober reflection there will be much thinking, for there is nothing produces thought quicker than grim necessity. People will ask was it worth all the expense, and the answer will depend upon the goods secured through reliance upon "the faith of their fathers."

Hungry men and women will ask the question: "If you can afford to spend millions of pounds on an affair of this kind, then surely we are entitled to some consideration?" And an answer will have to be given them, for these men and women are grumbling to-day despite the terrible influence that is being exerted to crush any protest that finds its basis in the social injustices of to-day.

Last week the Public Assistance Committee of Dublin met surrounded by the police. There was a fear the unemployed might march on the offices and

demand action. Unemployment is increasing in the city of Dublin.

Not all the prayers, the indulgences, etc., of the Church will fill the empty stomachs of the hungry men and women. Not all the "holy water" will wash away the crimes of those who made themselves responsible for this riotous extravagance while their own people hungered.

The Church comes out to show its strength with a view to intimidating those who dare to challenge its power, and in coming out it discloses the strength of the Church in terms of £ s. d. In this tragic paradox it creates the very weakness that will slowly bring about the disintegration of the Church. Uninformed people are easy pawns in the hands of subtle-minded clericals, but science sternly marches forward, challenging at every turn of the road the fables upon which men build their power over other men. The masses are being compelled more and more to enjoy the advantages of science. The day is not far distant when they will seek to understand something of the science that offers them so much. In that day they will be bitter, bitter because they will realize how they have been exploited.

The show goes on . . . watch out for the drama that will follow.

ERIN.

SCIENCE OR SUPERSTITION?

The mere accumulation of knowledge is not in itself a sufficient guarantee that the superstitions and false beliefs will thereby be eliminated. They seem to persist and thrive in spite of it all. You and I have met the intelligent Westener who, having lived in India for several years, assures us that the famous disappearing rope trick actually takes place. He says that the Indian boy *really* disappears. Nor need we go to the Orient for such credulity. How many of you consciously avoid walking under a ladder, deliberately spill salt over your left shoulder, and jokingly touch wood at the hint of danger? People still have a sneaking half-belief in mascots and amulets, charms and talismans, and hate to part with them lest bad luck befall. How many of you are wearing at the moment some little luck-bringer which you would not part with, and even if bad luck should come, as it does, do you discard your charm, or do you still continue to believe or half-believe in your little black pig, or swastika, or elephant's hair ring, or shark's tooth, or what not? How many of you will wear pearls on a Friday? How many of you could have your fortune told and bear the indications of an evil fate with complete equanimity? Isn't the swagger of your disbelief an indication that you are just a little nervous?

Well, you may say, after all we are only human, we can't all be scientists, and if we fall short of the scientific ideal, it is because we have our little prejudices natural to a spiteful world. I am human too, and I hope I do not fall into the error of presuming that man, in his present state of evolution, can be satisfied by science alone—by cold reason. We are complex creatures wrapped up in our past, and it is difficult for our conduct to be dictated by purely intellectual ideals. Common-sense cried aloud for consistent and reasonable actions and yet how many of us are consistent and reasonable? This raises a rather important communal issue. If I am going to be allowed to act in any unreasoning fashion, and if you are similarly to be allowed to act according to your particular prejudices, we are going to find it hard to live together in peace. But we must live together. We shall clearly have to come to terms, we shall have to find a common basis of belief—and a common basis of conduct out of these beliefs. The point I have been making throughout these talks is that the only basis of belief that is common or public in this sense is belief resting on scientific knowledge. It is the only method of approach to knowledge that enables unanimity of assent to be won.

Prof. H. Levy (in "The Listener.")

Acid Drops.

The Wesleyan Committee on Sunday Questions recently considered the provisions of the Sunday Performances (Regulation) Bill. After examination of the Bill the Committee resolved to press upon the Government the view that Sunday music-hall or "variety" entertainments, aviation meetings, prize-fighting, or boxing exhibitions, grey-hound racing, and similar commercialized exhibitions or recreations should be definitely made illegal; (2) that the claims of the conscientious employee against Sunday labour should be respected; (3) that the profits accruing from the Sunday opening of cinemas should be submitted to public audit, and all such profits devoted to charitable purposes; (4) that the renewal of cinema licences for Sunday opening be subject to annual revision. But was there really any need to put out the Committee's views in all this detail? All that required to be said was, "the parsons of the Wesleyan Church, together with some mugs whom they have persuaded to think as they do, object strongly to every amusement and recreation that is likely to interfere with the parsons' Sunday business." The Government, having had the matter thus stated clearly and also free of all irrelevancies, would then merely have to decide whether it was in the best interests of the citizens of the nation that one profession should be allowed to retain the monopoly of Sunday entertainment, or that citizens should be allowed a free choice of Sunday entertainment and recreation.

Harrow Urban District Council recently refused a request made by the South Harrow Ratepayers' Association for permission for Sunday games on South Harrow recreation ground. We should say that the Association was as well acquainted with the citizens' wishes as the Council. But the difference between the two is that the Council probably has more pious members who believe that citizens should be made to conform to the prejudices of the local parsons. This happens, by the way, in a country where the people boast of being "free," and also of not being priest-ridden. But perhaps that is a joke which only Freethinkers can really appreciate.

After all the widely disseminated advice of modern medics as to the value, from the health point of view, of allowing free access of sun and air to the human body, there are still as many as twenty-seven Councils of popular seaside resorts which have refused to permit sun-bathing on their beaches. We suppose the proper description of this state of affairs is that it indicates a great "moral" victory of Puritan prejudice and ignorance over enlightened medical opinion and modern science. After all, this kind of pious victory is nothing new. The greatest was when Christianity triumphed over Pagan cleanliness—and caused Europe to be scourged, for hundreds of years, with diseases which originated in dirt, Christian dirt.

Irish Protestants have been celebrating St. Patrick's fifteenth centenary with quite as much enthusiasm as Catholics who do not, however, seem particularly pleased at having their pet saint bodily taken over into an enemy camp. Both sects have been arguing as to what kind of a Christian St. Patrick was, and Bishop Barnes seems to have come to the conclusion he was almost like himself—thoroughly evangelistic, but whether St. Patrick believed in birth-control, in evolution and in the allegorical character of a good deal of the Bible—like Bishop Barnes—we are left to infer. Anyway, Catholics think the dear Bishop supplied the "comic element" in the Protestant celebrations, so it is evident he is not liked by his Roman brothers in Christ.

Nor, strange to say, is he liked in the opposite camp. The *Church Times* says, "we cannot suppose that Dr.

Barnes has any greater respect for St. Patrick than he has for St. Francis, whom he once described as 'verminous,' and to invite to Ireland a prelate who has outraged Catholic opinion by his references to the Blessed Sacrament, appears to us entirely deplorable and certain to increase the ill-feeling between Roman Catholics and Protestants." How these Christians love one another! But we are glad that Bishop Barnes did once say St. Francis was "verminous" for, of course, most saints really were and were thoroughly proud of it—for Christ's sake.

The Bishop of London, speaking at the Church Assembly, on the subject of Church Patronage, explained that it is "very easy to drive two horses abreast," a delicate reference to his pliability in the bestowal of patronage as between Anglo-Catholics and Evangelicals. The difference between them is so great that it is responsible for the fundamental cleavage in the Christian religion; but, so that Church parsons may not "fall into the ditch of nonconformity," or into "the morass of Rome," Keble and Simeon must be harnessed together. To judge from the competition between the party Trusts for livings available for purchase, and by the existence of the English Church Union and the Church Association, each declaring the religion of the other to be wrong, it is a very frisky, obstreperous and contrary pair that the Bishop has to draw his coach. Each of the horses spends much of his time trying to go in the opposite direction to his fellow, so it is not surprising that the embarrassed driver and his antiquated vehicle are increasingly apt to arouse the risibilities rather than the sympathy of the observant public. They also, on occasion, arouse its indignation, as a futile obstruction to more intelligent and reasonable travellers.

Such indignation has been justifiably aroused by the recent Housing Report showing that some of the worst slums in London, in Westminster and Paddington among other Boroughs, are the property of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. The Bishop of London himself declared that church defence meetings were useless while such a condition existed. In Paddington, where infantile mortality is terribly high, there are hovels unfit for human habitation which are, nevertheless, sources of profit to the Church. When the press called attention to this the Ecclesiastical Commissioners expressed their regret that they were powerless to do anything but take "a friendly interest" in the proposals for bettering these appalling conditions. What good their "friendly interest" will do so long as they are content (as are the clerical recipients of the monies they handle), to profit by the degradation of the poor, and on the lifeblood of slum children, it is hard to see. No Public Authority would be allowed to be the landlord of such premises; but the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, who only recently sent out a lot of "dope" about the sanctity of property, and declared that they had pledges from this Government and the last that they would not interfere with their revenues, are not more to blame than the politicians, and the indifferent public. Having little use for the Church itself (except for what Arnold Bennett called "quasi-legal occasions") it acquiesces in the continued establishment and endowment of this denomination. Not a single M.P., we noted, asked a question as to the terms of the engagement made by or on behalf of the Government with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. We can have a Royal Commission on Lotteries, or Drink, but Parliament has no time, and, we suspect, less inclination, to tackle the vested interests of the State religion.

A play called "Blind Man's Buff," by Roma June was banned by the Censor (of Plays). Says the press: "owing to the ban the play, which was to have been given a private show on Sunday, and a public matinee on Monday, will be given in private to ticket holders only. The Censor of Plays, like all Censors, is not concerned about morals, but only about the morals of ordinary citizens. A play that is really not fit to be

presented to an ordinary modern audience ought not to be presented in private to a select audience which, for all the Censor knows or cares, may be as disgusted with salacity as, no doubt, he is himself. Another play, by Eden Philpotts (*The Secret Woman*) was produced in the same week, having been previously banned. Why it ever was banned nobody, not excluding the most responsible dramatic critics, can imagine. This play was privately produced by the Peoples National Theatre, and, like many other banned plays, turns out to be by no means the best work of its author. There is no appeal from the Censor's decision. If there were how many decisions of censors, whether of Films, Plays or Books, would stand? In the latter case the censor is commonly a policeman, and in the former cases, so far as we can judge, the same humble functionary could not give inferior decisions to those now come to by the more cultivated holders of those offices.

Sir Ambrose Fleming, in a Presidential Address to the Victoria Institute of Science, criticized what he called the "half-baked scientific hypothesis" which there was a tendency to accept. He strongly dissented from the view that the universe is governed entirely by mathematical laws. The universe, according to Sir Ambrose, is "wasting away and moving towards a state in which some fresh act of creation will be required if physical phenomena as we know them are to continue." Further, he asserted that the universe is the result of Creative Power, and requires continually operative "Directive Agency." This is not a "half-baked hypothesis," but theism posing as science. Even so, what is the "operative Directive Agency" doing while the universe is "wasting away?"

There is an axiom of forensic medicine that might well be considered by those scientists in other departments who combine religious apologetics with scientific exposition. A medical witness, giving evidence professionally, is properly supposed to have no interest in the legal result of his evidence. The moment he is suspect of bias for or against one of the parties to the case his professional testimony ceases to be convincing. Scientists, recording and expounding the results of their researches, are not, or should not be, concerned with the theological implications thereof. If this wise legal doctrine secured the adhesion of all popular expositors of science the "popularity" of some of them might be less, but their authority in their own domain would not be prejudiced as it is when they lapse into theological speculation.

If the premier chieftain of the Anglican Church is really under direct guidance from Above, he will hardly be in need of nor welcome instruction from a popular weekly journal. However, *John Bull*, audaciously ignoring—perhaps we might say, usurping—the Almighty's privilege, counsels and cautions the Archbishop of Canterbury in this wise:—

Is the Church powerless to prevent the increasing number of feuds between clergymen and their flock? . . . These unseemly brawls do the Church no good. You should take immediate action.

What our contemporary fails to appreciate is that, the Christian religion being what it is, squabbling indicates that there is still some life in it. Squabbling shows that there are people who take the absurd dogmas and formulas of that religion seriously. When the Christian religion ceases to arouse disagreement, ill-feeling and squabbling it will no longer be the Christian religion as we know it historically, but something quite different. In any case, religious squabbling cannot be displeasing in the sight of God, or he would not have given man the Christian superstition with its inherent propensity to mischief-making.

Canon Dearmer, of Westminster Abbey, thinks the time is coming when the Church will set up its own film studios to produce "talkie" sermons and Biblical films. Religion, he says, "is the oldest force in the world; the kinema one of the newest, and they will combine to

touch the heart of man." He might better have said that the Church may in the future utilize the methods of the kinema to arouse the primitive fears of man in order that the Church may "touch" his pocket.

Speaking now of the ordinary Cinema, Canon Dearmer declares that "One of the best achievements of the Cinema to-day is that it keeps people out of the streets on Sundays." The Canon, you see, is really very broad-minded, for his Church and the other Churches only allow the people the alternatives—Church or pub—on Sundays. But as large numbers desire neither of these and want something else, a few of the more astute clergy have concluded, like Canon Dearmer, that it will not pay in the long run to antagonize the people by opposing their choice of entertainment on Sundays. What, however, is really wanted is not the choice between Church, Pub, or Cinema, but every recreation and amusement that is not objectionable on week days, so that the people could take their choice in accordance with individual taste. In a really free country the right to make such a choice would never be in question, nor the opportunity to exercise it be prohibited.

For a man of his years, learning and one time influence the Rev. Dr. R. F. Horton makes astonishingly stupid statements. Speaking recently at the 164th commemoration of Cheshunt (Theological) College, and pleading that they would "keep Cheshunt in Cambridge, and get Cambridge into Cheshunt." Dr. Horton said:—

"As you go through Cambridge you are occupied in perpetual remembrance of the Lord. There is Jesus College, Christ's, Emmanuel, Trinity Hall, Trinity and Corpus Christi . . . Looking at the names of these colleges I cannot help wishing that this college should be known, not openly and by advertisement, but by conception as the college of the Holy Ghost."

The immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary is surely not more miraculous than would be the immaculate conception of Cheshunt College, which, in point of fact, was founded by the Countess of Huntingdon, who also gave her name to the sect known quaintly as the "Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion."

Fifty Years Ago.

CONSCIOUSLY or unconsciously, Charles Darwin, so recently gone from us, was the most formidable foe religion ever had. All his work was founded upon reason. The teaching of religion has no such basis. His great discoveries admit of experimental verification. Not one of the fundamental propositions of religion in regard to God or heaven or immortality admits of such verification. His vast generalizations are all deduced from myriads of facts. The generalizations of religion are based wholly upon fancies. His rigid demonstrations, his teaching of the unity of existence his demonstration of immense, unceasing natural laws, left no room for God to intervene in the universe. And whilst the general tenor of his teaching, by its thoroughness and worldliness, is a lasting condemnation of the vague, otherworldly utterances of the men of religion, his traducers in the past, his sycophants to-day, his work in an especial manner was an attack upon religion, in that it demonstrated that upon the points where religious men and religious books had pretended to instruct us, they were entirely and egregiously in the wrong. These blind and wicked men, in their false teaching of the peoples, had, amongst other falsehoods, professed to give an account of man's origin. Charles Darwin has shown the account to be a stupendous lie. And if these evil leaders are inaccurate as to man's origin, they are not likely to be much more accurate as to his destiny. If they have taught falsely as to the past, they probably are teaching falsely as to the yet more inscrutable future. The garden of Eden and heaven and hell all rest upon the same sort of basis. If the one has become a source of laughter to thinking men, the others are in the same condition.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. BURGESS.—The interview was a confidential one, and no statement of what occurred could be published. Your letter on the B.B.C. was excellent and should do much good. We will comment on the letter from Viscountess Snowden next week. We should like to see similar letters from Freethinkers all over the country. It is certain that if the strength of the feeling against the Sunday programmes could get public expression a change would be made.

T. TRESSIDLER.—Will do as you desire.

C.F.—Mr. Cohen will be pleased to advise you on the matter if you will let him have a summary of the proposed will.

F. W. R. SILKE (Cape Town).—Both your letters to hand. We are glad to learn of the progress of Freethought in the University, and hope it will bear good fruits.

W.L.E.—Thanks. It looks like the offspring of a religious lunatic suffering from drink.

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. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

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

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

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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.

Mr. Cohen has received a request from the National Library for the Blind for permission to transcribe his work *The Other Side of Death* for the use of the blind. He has, of course, given the required permission, and also for any other of his books or pamphlets.

It is an open secret that Mr. Alan Handsacre, the author of *The Revenues of Religion*, and who has been since 1917 an occasional, and more recently a frequent contributor to these columns, was formally a responsible journalistic official at Liberal Headquarters, and organizations and campaigns connected with it. In fact from 1909 to 1930 he was almost exclusively so employed. In 1930 this connexion terminated upon a breakdown in health, not without a formal and generous recognition of long, useful, and appreciated service. The Liberal Publication Department, of which Mr. John M. Robertson was once Chairman, publishes *The Liberal Magazine*, and, on the announcement of Mr. Handsacre's book on *Disestablishment and Disendowment*, offered to publish, and did publish in its May issue, a free advertisement of that book. A copy was, and would in any case have been sent to the *Liberal Magazine* for review. The author received an acknowledgement of the book from the Editor, and it was exposed for sale on the

I.P.D. Bookstall at the Clacton-on-Sea Conference of the National Liberal Federation in April last. The June issue of the *Liberal Magazine* is now on sale. It contains no review of *The Revenues of Religion*, nor any mention of it. Now as there was never any question that this book, issued for the N.S.S. would deal with its subject from the Secularist point of view well known to be that of the Publishers and of the Author—Mr. Handsacre's *Authodoxy* was published in 1921, when he was on Mr. Lloyd George's staff at Old Queen Street—what can be said of this omission? It is admitted that the Editor of the *Liberal Magazine* agrees with practically all of *The Revenues of Religion*, but we must assume that he dare not offend the church-going and chapel-going readers of the Party's organ by recommending a book which deals with what is, or used to be, an important item in the Liberal programme. There was some talk recently of a re-organization of the Liberal Party under a new name. The deletion of "Liberal" would seem to be appropriate. The incident is illustrative of the power of the parson in politics—a subject on which we commented last week.

Manchester Freethinkers are invited to an outing arranged by the Manchester Branch N.S.S. for to-day (Sunday) to Heald Green, Cheadle. Train 10.25 a.m. from London Road Station, return fare 1s. 2d. Those joining the party are asked to bring dinner and tea. Rambles and outings provide excellent opportunities for Freethinkers to make new acquaintances under pleasant conditions.

During the summer months the Liverpool Branch has decided on a series of rambles to take place fortnightly. These will be advertised in our lecture column, and if those who would care to join will notice they will be kept in touch with what is going forward. We are quite sure these "rambles" will be enjoyable, and may open the way for some useful propaganda efforts.

Mr. G. Whitehead will be in the Ashington district, Northumberland for the whole of this week commencing to-day (Sunday). There is a recently formed Branch of the N.S.S. at Ashington, with an enthusiastic secretary who is helping for increased interest and strength in local Freethought as a result of Mr. Whitehead's efforts. Information concerning the Branch and its work may be had from Mr. J. H. English, 7 Railway Row, North Seaton Colliery, near Newbiggin-on-Sea, Northumberland.

On Sunday, July 3, the West Ham Branch will have an outing to Kew Gardens. Train 9.30 a.m. from Bow Road, Underground. Cheap Day Ticket 1s. return. Lunch to be carried. Tea arranged for 4.30 p.m. at the "Rose and Crown," Kew Green. Besides members and friends, Freethinkers generally are invited to join the party, either at Bow Road Station or Kew, Underground. Any further particulars from the Branch Secretary, Mrs. H. Rosetti, 17 Garbutt Road, Upminster, Essex.

CHURCH OF ENGLANDISM.

Church of Englandism is far too robust, too secular-minded, to care a rap about the opinion of bishops and divines, who are but necessary evils, only to be defended when attacked by low-minded Radicals and vulgar Dis-senters. It is the external church, the bricks and mortar, the ivy-mantled tower nestling in the valley hard by the "Blue Boar," the chiming bells on a Sunday morning as they fall on the ears of men walking in an opposite direction, that appeal to the stalwart sons of the Establishment. . . Church of Englandism is the religion of England, and it is the duty of every Englishman to belong to the English religion. What that religion is doesn't matter, and is perhaps uncertain. But, whatever it is, it is a moderate, decent religion which leaves you alone, or which you can leave alone if so minded.—*Augustine Birrell.*

A New Slogan For Secularists.

(A Paper Read at the National Secular Society's Annual Conference, 1932.)

ALL too frequently a newcomer into a movement makes himself obnoxious by finding it full of faults and prescribing impossible remedies for them. Although I have been a member of this Society for some years, I am a newcomer to active propaganda on its behalf, and I propose to call your attention to the first faults that I have to find with Freethinkers generally. Fortunately for me, you who are here today prove by your presence that you are particular exceptions to the general rule. Let me, therefore, give my reasons for accusing my fellow-unbelievers of faults which I hold to be as inimical to our cause as the fiercest opposition from organized champions of orthodoxy.

After passing Wembley, nine miles from Euston, the train bearing me to this Conference entered a kind of intellectual backwoods, from which it did not emerge until it crossed a line joining Birmingham and Leicester hundreds of miles later. If we had been travelling due west, Cardiff would have marked our point of exit from this benighted region, if south-west, Bournemouth.

These, in fact, are the first centres reached after leaving the London area where organized groups of Freethinkers are to be found. Northampton is noteworthy as *not* being amongst them by having no time for the Society whose foundation was probably Bradlaugh's most lasting work. It has foregone its right today to the honour it once deserved when it repeatedly returned him as its parliamentary representative.

It should be stated that northwards the Branches of the Society are more numerous.

Now my listeners know full well that the existence of Freethinkers is not confined to a few centres at about a hundred miles' distance from each other. Why, there is a village Atheist whose presence complicates the life of every country parson! As for towns of a few thousand inhabitants, can there be one that does not possess enough infidels to form a branch of the National Secular Society?

The fact remains, however, that branches of our organization are non-existent in the majority of such places, and I invite you to consider what I think are the main causes of this state of affairs and how it may be improved.

This brings me back to the two faults of Freethinkers to which I alluded in my opening remarks. The first is timidity, and the only cure I know of for that is a growth of the number who evince a bolder spirit. Example is catching. The other fault has its origin in what could be a virtue. The individual who openly discards beliefs, whose profession is still the hall mark of respectability in most circles, undoubtedly has an independence of mind and temper worthy of high respect; but when that very independence acts as a bar to the formation of fighting groups of Freethinkers, it has certainly overstepped the bounds of social utility. One such case with which I recently came into contact was that of a man who has occasionally written articles in the local press in which he has made wild apologies for his own sceptical attitude. "I prefer," he said to me, "not to limit my independence by joining any organization such as yours."

This, I admit, sounds quite a praiseworthy position to take up, and if there were any evidence that membership of the N.S.S. had ever limited the freedom of thought and action of anybody it would be a good thing if everybody adopted it. However, all the facts point in the opposite direction, showing that

when a Freethinker becomes an active worker in a branch of the Society he or she benefits by a larger measure of independence, so far as Freethought is concerned, than ever before.

Although the same considerations affect every other district where there is or might be a Branch, I should like to give a few instances of the differences resulting from the work of my own Branch at Wembley, which is a combination of a self-contained township with its own affairs and industries and a dormitory suburb of London. After living there for over two years I did not know a single local Freethinker until one finally got hold of my name and address and suggested the formation of a local Branch. Notices of a preliminary meeting to discuss this were published in the *Freethinker*, and two local papers, and fifteen enthusiasts turned up and straightway enrolled. Additions have been made to this number almost every month since.

This event brought to the local Freethinkers privileges unknown to them previously. Freethought meetings have been held regularly indoors, and are now being held outdoors. Every activity of the Branch has been fully reported in the local press, in whose correspondence columns there has been continuous controversy about one or other of the lectures reported. The local clergy have been goaded into taking a hand in this correspondence, and have been drawn into positions where they have had the choice between a public encounter with us and an admission that discretion is the better part of valour; so far they have chosen the latter to their own local detriment. The local Council has also been given an opportunity of demonstrating how religious jacks-in-office can misuse the powers entrusted to them in the interests of all electors irrespective of creed. Seeing that their one-sided decisions have drawn protests from people with views opposed to ours, we have in reality gained victories on such occasions.

Such an improvement in the status of our movement locally provides a crushing answer to those who are advocating independent, individual propaganda as the better method of winning converts. I speak as one who has tried the power of individual persuasion for I should say a period of twenty years, before trying the effect of corporate action in a Branch Society, and I have no doubt that six months of the latter method has achieved more than twenty years of the former.

Freethinkers who are, often with the gravest sincerity, devoting themselves to lone-hand advocacy, are *not* thereby maintaining their independence inviolate. Rather are they laying themselves open to the weapons of boycott, intimidation and misrepresentation such as can only be used with maximum success against the sporadic efforts of individuals; these weapons, in fact, prove more and more ineffective in direct proportion to the organized strength of any Freethought group.

Here is a pointer to a policy we might very well adopt for the next year or so. Our foremost aim has always been to "make more Freethinkers," and there is no doubt that we have steadily succeeded in doing so. But whilst Freethought ideas have been permeating the minds of the people there has not been an increase in the power of organized Freethought comparable to the increase in the numbers of those holding our views. I suggest, accordingly, that the first task of all members of this society from now on should be to concentrate on strengthening and consolidating our organization; making more Freethinkers will, of course, go on, but there is no harm in letting it be subsidiary to this question of making better Freethinkers of existing ones.

The first step is to set about increasing the number

of N.S.S. Branches. The people who can do this best are already members of the Society. Surely they may be found amongst those who are members of the Parent Society only, and those who belong to a Branch out of their own district. Valuable as their present support is, pioneer work in starting new centres of Freethought activity would be vastly more important to the cause.

Such Freethinkers might retort that the duties of organizing new Branches and carrying on propaganda are not their strong points. The crying need is, however, for individuals to assume the initial responsibility, and any private soldier in the Freethought army that comes forward and volunteers to undertake such duty is not going to find it as arduous as many might anticipate. A mention of the initiator's name and address in the *Freethinker*, and letters to the editors of as many local newspapers as are published in the district can usually be relied upon to produce some response from a number of those who will be willing to co-operate in the work.

Seeing that seven members is enough to constitute a new Branch, it should be easy to start a hundred or more Freethought groups, and thus our organization could be really said to cover the whole country. It might not be possible for these Branches to do the same kind of work as the older ones; regular lecture programmes might be out of the question; but letters to the press giving the secular viewpoint on topical matters, organized protests on all the occasions when religion is unwarrantably dragged into public affairs, revelations of clerical impudence and self-seeking; these are activities that should be in progress everywhere. Branches doing such duties could count on the assistance of near-by Branches and headquarters for the supply of good speakers so that they could carry on a certain amount of purely educational work as well.

In passing, I should like to emphasize that a great deal can be done through the medium of local newspapers. Freethinkers are sometimes so obsessed with the idea that Freethought is foredoomed to suffer a press boycott that they do not even make an attempt to get their views published. Granted that newspapers with a national circulation take this attitude, yet it is by no means the case with local "rags," as they are contemptuously called. In two local newspapers that deal with Wembley and district affairs, there has appeared more about our local Branch than about any three churches combined during the past eight months. New Branches, in virgin areas, have better opportunities of an achievement of this kind because they are not hampered by any tradition existing in editorial departments against mentioning their work. Give these people news, not too strongly propagandist in tone, and they will be grateful, and see that you get fairplay when your activities stir up religious opposition as they will in a very short time. At the start a little diplomacy is advisable in order to get publication; this can be followed up with a gradual strengthening of the doses by degrees that are scarcely noticeable, until finally it results in a regular stream of undiluted Freethought being poured out over your district through the medium of the local press.

Seven Freethinkers organized as a Branch can do this for their cause in almost any district; a hundred not so organized can do practically nothing. "Branches everywhere" is a slogan to adopt and act on if Freethought is to be the influence on all phases of social life that it should be. Only the will is needed on the part of Freethinkers throughout the country for this slogan to reflect an achievement rather than a hope. Let us therefore translate the aim of "Branches everywhere" into reality. It will result in a hastening of the complete defeat of that mixture of super-

stition and hypocrisy that debases local and national affairs alike. Moreover, to carry such a policy to fruition would mean that your Society would be in no danger of sharing the neglect and obscurity with which history shrouds the names of some of the bravest pioneer Freethinkers. Instead, it would thereby ensure for itself a permanent position of deserved honour amongst the significant factors chosen by future historians of these times.

P. VICTOR MORRIS.

Criticism and the Bible.

HEBREW ANIMISM AND ANCESTORISM.

I.

THE study of the historical connexion of the belief in spirits, or animism, with totem-worship and with the later ancestor worship (the worship of tribal, gentile and family gods) has remained for the theological and philosophico idealist critics of the Bible, an unknown or unintelligible territory. But without the knowledge of this important part of the history of religion, it is impossible to understand those passages which still remain in the Old Testament, notwithstanding all later revisions and falsification, relating to animism, totemism and ancestorism in the religious history of the Hebrews.

It is, for example, related in the ninth chapter of Genesis, that after the abatement of the flood, Elohim concluded a contract or covenant with Noah and his sons, and gave them permission to consume *the flesh of animals*.¹

Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you: even as the green herb have I given you all things.

But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.

And surely your blood of your lives will I require: at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.²

No one with adequate knowledge can mistake the significance of this passage. What is it which this tribal god of creation demands? He demands from the members of his tribe that *they shall give him back the souls or spirits which he first gave them* and which, as it were, are a part of himself! But that is not all. He requires also that his god-children shall refrain from consuming animal blood. Why? *Because the soul or life invested in the animal, resides in the blood of the animal.*

We find this outlook almost everywhere at a certain stage in the evolution of religion. There are still other passages in the Books of Moses, which indicate the same outlook. For example, in relation to the burnt offering, it is ordered that neither the blood, nor the inner fat, nor the kidneys are to be used as human food. They belong to Yahwe.^{2a}

The Biblical critics are unaware that those *tabus*, beginning with the passage from the flood narrative, are associated with notions which belong to animism and ancestor worship. They are content, in some cases, with tracing the *tabu* back to an innate instinct of the Israelites. When one resorts to such origins, it is a misnomer to dignify this kind of procedure with the name of "criticism." Convenient

¹ Genesis ix. 3-5.

² The word "life" may be more strictly translated as, *soul* or *spirit*. The life is the soul and the soul is in the blood.

^{2a} Leviticus iii. 12-17; xvii. 11, 12, 14; Deuteronomy xii. 23-25.

it may be, but certainly not critical! It is a procedure dictated by helplessness in the interest of a hopeless case!

This inability to explain religious customs is still more clearly illustrated when we turn to the same quarter for an explanation of the "covenant" concluded between Elohim and Noah's descendants.

This, we are assured, has no other significance than that contained in the promise given by Elohim, that he would never again allow the earth to be destroyed by a flood.

That is merely a *re-assertion* of what the author of this report says on the subject of the flood. This kind of explanation may be worthy of a "true believer," but not of a critical historian of religion, whose task does not consist in simply assimilating the accounts of old legends. As a matter of fact, the ascertainment of the old basic conception which underlies the custom of the "covenant," is rendered much more easy by the fact that there are several reports about contracts which were concluded between Elohim and his people, in a whole series of Old Testament writings.

Elohim twice concluded a covenant with Abraham; first on the departure of the latter from Sodom³ and, on the second occasion, before the birth of Isaac.⁴ But the contract deals not with Noah's descendants but with Abraham's own posterity, which Elohim promises to multiply and maintain if they remain mindful of their obligations to him, that is to say, if they let themselves be circumcized and bring offerings as their part of the contract:—

This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcized.

And ye shall circumcize the flesh of the foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you.

And he that is eight days old shall be circumcized among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.

He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcized: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

And the uncircumcized man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcized, that soul shall be cut off from his people: he hath broken my covenant.⁵

This is just the same outlook as has been found among many other peoples in different parts of the world. Among the lowest of the Australian aborigines—those who had not as yet any gentile organizations—circumcision was a ceremony which the young men had to undergo before being accepted into the circle of adult men. It indicated that the newly-circumcized was now a fully-qualified member of the horde. But for those tribes which already possessed developed gentes or totem organizations, circumcision had become more and more a token of blood-kinship with the totem society and, at the same time, with the ancestral god or god-father who was esteemed as the founder of the group. Circumcision has had the same significance, not only among Melanesian and Malayan peoples such as those of the New Hebrides, the Vitu Islands, New Caledonia, Solomon Islands, Madagascar, etc., but also for many African peoples like the Massai, Damaras, Zulu-Kaffirs and Bechuanas.

But it is not sufficient to acknowledge that circumcision is not a peculiarity of the Israelites, and to admit the widespread character of this custom. One must ascertain what the fundamental notions are,

which associate those different tribes with the ceremony of circumcision. It is not enough to simply assert that the blood out of the organ of procreation, the seat of life, was at one time regarded as a magic charm by means of which man could acquire power over the spirits; and that therefore a large effusion of this blood appeared to enable a very potent charm to be exercised. It is true that the blood out of the male organ was looked upon as magical. But it is not true that this was the motive of circumcision. It was rather the *consequence* of circumcision. The important questions which must be studied before a satisfactory explanation can be found, are the questions of the object of these charms, *i.e.*, for what purpose they were applied among the old Hebrews; over what spirits it was desired to acquire power; how circumcision came to be introduced as a religious ceremony into the Hebrew cult; in how far it was conceived as the performance of a contract with the god of the tribe and how it was related to the blood and spirit beliefs of the Hebrews?

Even perhaps still more transparent than the passages already cited from the seventeenth chapter of Genesis, concerning the blood-contract character of the covenant between Elohim and Israel as a contract between the members of a tribe and their ancestor-god, is that other account, which is given in the second Book of Moses, about a renewed covenant which was made after the legislative episode on the mountain of Sinai. After it has been described how Moses prepared a great burnt offering and had young oxen slaughtered, for the purpose of carrying out a ceremony in confirmation of the covenant, it is related:—

And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.

And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words."⁶

It is quite evident that here we have before us the same ceremony which has been found in practice among many other peoples who have reached the stage of a developed ancestor-worship, as, for example, in Peru—the ceremony of confirmation of the bond of blood between the people and their god. The ceremony does not always consist in simply sprinkling "the blood on the altar." We find among many other peoples that after the god has received his part of the blood-offering, another part is consumed by the priests or by the people; or, after the images or the sacred seat of the god (holy place) have been smeared with blood, those present rub a few drops of the blood on some part of the body; or, alternatively, those present inflict small wounds on the body and let the blood run on to the altar stone, and then reciprocally smear themselves with the blood on certain parts of the body—in most cases the sexual parts, since those are regarded as the seat of the faculty of reproduction.

W. CRAIK.

(To be concluded.)

⁶ Exodus xxiv. 6-8.

The Athenian schools of philosophy continued to attract strangers from all parts of the world until Christianity began to see its bitterest foe in the Stoics, who taught many of its doctrines. Julian the Apostate declared for a movement for reviving Greek philosophy so as to overcome Christianity by borrowing many of its teachings, but at last a decree of Justinian closed the Athenian Schools of Philosophy in A.D. 529.

J. C. Stobart, in "The Glory that was Greece."

³ Genesis xv. 18.

⁴ Genesis xvii. 2-21.

⁵ Genesis xvii. 10-14.

The Intellectual Confusion of Our Time.

A.—INSTANCES.

1. *Sunday Entertainments.* Why are they justified?

First answer: Because we have passed beyond the primitive conception of taboo days; we have rejected the notion of a six-day Creation; we do not feel compelled to observe the law of a Jewish tribe thousands of years ago; and we assert the principle of liberty, claiming the same right to disregard the Sabbath as is claimed by its observers.

Second answer: Because God intends his people to catch his sunshine; his divine wish is that we should be happy on his Holy Day, and we can still be good Christians without going to church.

2. *Sweepstakes.* Why are they justified?

First answer: Because the individual can do as he pleases with his own earnings providing he is not interfering with the rights of others.

Second answer: Because Charity will benefit.

3. *Christianity.* What is it?

First answer: It is a particular system of beliefs, which embody a complete philosophy of the origin and destination of man.

Second answer: It is a word co-extensive with morality and bonhomie.

4. *God.* What is it?

First answer: It is the name given to an alleged being, powerful and personal, who has the destiny of the universe in control, and who is approachable by prayer.

Second answer: It is a term which having undergone evolution, can be applied to the universe, nature, substance, law, goodwill, etc.

5. *Spiritualism.* What are the implications of undetected phenomena?

First answer: They imply either that the medium is at present too cute, or the investigation not cute enough, or that our present knowledge is insufficient to account for such phenomena.

Second answer: They imply the existence of a spirit world, wherein the dead live, and wherefrom they aim at communicating with us.

How is it that many people prefer the second answer in each case? What are

B.—THE FACTORS AT WORK?

(1) Uniformity, wherein the individual's opinion is lost, or self-restrained. This shows man as a social animal, and has possibly been of some value. However, its disadvantages are too obvious to be ignored. At the conclusion of Catholic meetings I have noted professed non-Catholics joining in the Apostles' Creed. A more common instance is the way in which avowed Republicans stand bareheaded for "God save the King."

(2) The dominance of what the French call "fixed ideas." A well-known faulty syllogism illustrates:

(a) All Bolsheviks have beards; (b) Dostoevsky is a Bolshevik; (c) Therefore he has a beard. On looking at his picture we find he is clean-shaven, and have to abandon our major premise. Thus, to the query, "Why is science wrong?" many Roman Catholics

will reply, "Because it contradicts the holy Church."

The same is observable among men of science, who inherit from tradition the conception of "life" and

"consciousness" as fundamental unities, things in themselves, and hence as premises whereby to dis-

prove theories which do not regard them in that light.

(3) Sentimentality. Anyone can see this at work

when the bag comes round for blind babies. Soft-hearted—and soft-headed—John Bull is ever ready to delve deeply into his pockets on such an occasion. The eugenic point of view seldom occurs to him; if it does, he shudders.

(4) Phrase-slavery (see recent editorial of this paper).

C.—THE REMEDY.

How, and by whom, are these factors worked? Here is a short list: priest, press, politician, salesman, advertiser, schoolteacher, B.B.C., film producer. The *Freethinker* is primarily concerned with the first-mentioned, but has nothing to lose by keeping the others well in mind. Fifty years of onslaught has helped to reduce the power of official Christianity to its present state. But the work does not end there. To strike at the priest is to strike at the stronghold of organized confusion and cant. When people have learned to doubt religion they are ready to doubt anything, and are nearer to a healthier outlook in general. Our crucial aim is the creation of a type of mind which is sceptical rather than gullible, which is prepared to doubt and investigate, which laughs at the idea that we should drink more tea "because the Prince of Wales (bless him) recommends it," which is not carried away by the rhetoric of a Jimmy Douglas, which knows valid reasons rather than finds good excuses for its behaviour, which is not ashamed of its convictions, which acknowledges no Pope in any sphere of life, and which will adopt a healthy agnosticism where knowledge is lacking.

G. H. TAYLOR.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

THE CRIMINAL.

SIR,—What is wrong with the Criminal? His habit-system," says Mr. Turney. True, and so is "bad trade" the cause of unemployment. But "bad trade," and "habit system" do not solve the problem; they state it; they are labels for fields awaiting investigation. I mentioned gland atrophy, etc., as conditioning factors at present most amenable to treatment. For the integration of "conditioned responses" I await further achievements.

"Social conditions account for men," implies Mr. Turney. This is of no practical consequence. What promises to reward investigation is that men account for society.

When I say the Criminal is anti-social I do not imply that sheep-like law-abiders are social, but that non-criminals are pro-social in virtue of their non-criminality.

Mr. Turney (par 2) confuses gregariness with social utility. Criminal gregariness is the birds-of-a-feather type.

G. H. TAYLOR.

LAND AND POPULATION.

SIR,—Some weeks ago Mr. D. Dawson asserted in your columns that from one acre of land he could support four or five adults. I pointed out that this assertion might have two possible meanings, either that he sold the produce for enough to maintain four or five adults, or that he grew enough food to sustain that number of persons. I asked for precise information, but unfortunately it is not forthcoming.

Perhaps you will allow me to furnish some information. The highest production of wheat in the world is in Denmark, viz., five and a half quarters an acre. The price of wheat is now 25s. a quarter. That gives £7 per acre—not a very princely sum to maintain five adults.

In calories, according to the Royal Society's standards, each Danish acre of wheat produces enough for rather less than two and a half men. Calories, however, are not the whole of human food. Many vitamins, absent from wheat, are necessary, and are usually found in fruit and vegetables which otherwise have little food value. Moreover, the English people desire about half their food to be animal, either meat, eggs, or dairy products; and these take five times as much land as wheat to yield the same number of calories. Again, the high farming of Denmark is very wasteful both of fertilizer and human labour and most authorities agree that it would be folly to go much above the present English four quarters an acre.

Sir Daniel Hall and most agricultural statisticians hold that about two and a half of cultivable land per head are needed to provide the present English standard of comfort, with the present hours of labour. As the whole of England and Wales contains less than one acre per inhabitant, and as many of these acres consist of mountains, lakes, towns, and roads, it is evident that our land is totally insufficient to feed our population. Those who maintain the contrary always break down in their mathematics.

R. B. KERR.

ELECTIONS AND PROPAGANDA.

SIR,—I thought it might be of interest to your readers to know that a number of the members of the South London Branch of the N.S.S. accompanied me on one or two evenings to the open air and indoor meetings held by the candidates at the Dulwich Bye-Election. We distributed a large number of recently issued leaflets on the question of the Sunday Bill, which we have reason to believe will be well read, although the enthusiasm of the Dulwich electors for political parties was not very marked for the crowds were comparatively small. One speaker for the Conservative candidate when asked if "Mr. Bracewell Smith would support the Sunday Bill," said he could not speak upon the candidate's personal opinions, but the consensus of Conservative opinion in the country was against the Bill. That was funny in view of the large Conservative majorities which passed the first and second readings, and was duly appreciated by the crowd as such. The Labour Party speaker admitted that many of the shortcomings of the late Labour Government were due to the pressure brought to bear upon it by the presence of religious elements within the Labour Party itself. The further question as to whether the Labour Party had learnt anything from this experience was not taken by the speaker. On the eve of the poll we asked Mrs. Bentwich, who was supported by Mr. Arthur Greenwood, what the Labour Party's attitude was to dual control in education. The candidate was very much embarrassed, and after a long consultation with Mr. Greenwood said that she did not think the Labour Party had any official policy on this matter at all. Personally she said she would always support any legislation which provided money for denominational schools.

Our experience and the nature of the replies we received from the representatives of the various candidates clearly show what useful work for Secularism can be done by Freethinkers in this direction. I hope the example we have set will be one which will be widely imitated, and that it will lead to the giving of greater prominence to the just claims of Secularists on the part of political parties.

GEORGE F. GREEN.

Obituary.

Mrs. H. CUTNER.

We desire to express deep sympathy, which all our readers will share, with our esteemed contributor, Mr. H. Cutner, in the death of his wife which occurred, after a long and painful illness, on Friday, June 17. Death was in the nature of a release to a great sufferer, but that does not lessen the loss and sorrow of her husband and relatives.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

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

FULHAM AND CHELSEA BRANCH N.S.S. (corner of Shorrolds Road, North End Road, Walham Green) : 7.30, Saturday, June 25, Messrs. F. Barnes and E. Bryant. *Freethinkers on Sale.*

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead) : 11.30, Sunday, June 26, Mr. Corrigan. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, June 27, Mr. C. Tuson. Leighton Road, Kentish Town, 8.0, Thursday, June 30, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park) : 7.30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Wednesday, June 29, Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Friday, July 1, Wren Road, Camberwell Green, Mrs. E. Grout.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (outside Technical College, Romford Road, Stratford, E.) : 7.0, Mr. D. McLaren.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : Wednesday, June 22, at 7.30, Messrs. Tuson and Wood. Thursday, June 23, at 7.30, Mr. F. C. Saphin. Friday, June 24, at 7.30, Messrs. Bryant and Le Maine. Sunday, June 26, at 12.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 3.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Bryant and Wood; Platform No. 2, Messrs. B. A. Le Maine and Tuson. 6.30, Platform No. 1, Messrs. Wood, Tuson and Bryant; Platform No. 2, Messrs. Hyatt and Saphin.

WOOLWICH BRANCH N.S.S. ("The Ship," Plumstead Common) : 7.45, Friday, June 24, Mr. S. Burke, A Lecture. (Beresford Square, Woolwich) : 7.45, Sunday, June 26, Mr. R. H. Rosetti. A Lecture.

INDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

ASHINGTON BRANCH N.S.S. (in front of the Grand Hotel, Ashington) : 7.0, Saturday, June 25 to Saturday, July 2. Mr. G. Whitehead (London) will speak each evening.

BURNLEY MARKET : 8.15, Thursday, June 30, Mr. J. Clayton.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths) : 8.0, Messrs. H. Little and J. V. Shortt. Tuesday, June 28, Edge Hill Lamp, 8.0, Messrs. H. Little and P. Sherwin. Thursday, June 30, corner of High Park Street, and Park Road, 8.0, Messrs. A. Jackson, D. Robinson and S. Wollen. Current *Freethinkers* on sale at all meetings.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S.—Outing to Heald Green, Cheadle, Sunday, June 26. Train 10.25 a.m. from London Road Station. Return fare 1s. 2d. Dinner and Tea to be carried.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Bigg Market) : 8.0, Friday, June 24, Mr. R. Atkinson. Sunday, June 26, Members' Meeting at 3.0, at Socialist Club, Pilgrim Street, 7.30, Mr. J. T. Brighton at Bigg Market.

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Church Street) : 7.30, Saturday, June 25, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Market Place) : 7.0, Wednesday, June 29, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

TRAWDEN (Post Office) : 7.45, Friday, June 24, Mr. J. Clayton.

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The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up.

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Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords in *re Bowman and Others v. the Secular Society, Limited*, in 1917, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

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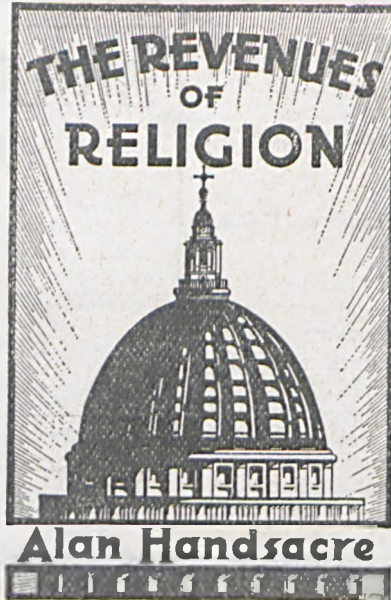
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