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

Views and Opinions.

Olla Podrida.

I HAVE headed these notes "Olla Podrida" because it represents their general character better than any other term. "Olla" is Spanish for an earthenware pot, and "podrida" stands for a stewed mixture of bits of meat and vegetables. But the *Podrida* is intended to present a unity in the form of a meal, and so I hope that these notes, varied in substance as they may be, will yet be united in a common end of illustrating—something or the other.

The first poll under the Government's Sunday Racketeering Act took place the other day at Maidstone. It will be remembered that this Act rewarded those who had broken the statute law by opening on Sunday, with a charge for admission, by giving them legal authority for continuing to open, subject to paying local gangsters a proportion of the profits made on Sunday. But those who had not opened should not be permitted to do so until they had (a) got a vote from the local council in favour of opening; (b) held a town's meeting and discussed the matter; (c) secured a poll of Local Government electors on the question. This Act gives a wonderful opportunity for every bigot and foolish busybody, but all the Government appears really to be anxious about is buying votes, or quieting opposition. A good example of this was seen in the case of Sir Thomas Inskip, who as President of the Lord's Day Observance Society, denounced the Bill, when it was a private measure, as a threat to the morality and the religion and the greatness of Britain, and when the Bill was made a Government measure, as Attorney-General, he obediently voted in its favour.

Now Maidstone has had its Council meeting, which decided in favour of Sunday opening. Then it held a Town's meeting which had a majority in favour of not opening. Then it had a poll which gave a majority of 885 in favour of opening. Now all that has to be done is to make application to the Home Secretary, who will bring the matter before Parliament, and then—unless the Prime Minister appoints a Con-

ference to consider whether a Conference of Maidstone voters is to report to a Conference which will report to a Conference to consider the appointment of a House of Commons Committee to consider if the other Conferences ought not to be held all over again—the audience, which has been meanwhile waiting on the doorstep, will be allowed to see on Sunday what they may see without question every other day in the week. With a people who really love liberty, every opportunity must be given to the bigot to make freedom very, very difficult, and to handicap the man of intelligence until the fool meets him on a little more than an equal footing.

* * *

Religion and the Family.

My second contribution to the pot is from Toronto, a very, very religious city. I select this ingredient from so far away because it is a cut from the same joint as the Maidstone one. A man and woman had been living together for some years, and a local religious body which calls itself a "Children's Aid Society" found that the couple had a child four years old. The Society therefore brought an action to take the child away on the grounds of its being brought up in immoral conditions. The case came before Judge Mott of the Juvenile Court, and he decided that there was in such circumstances grave danger of the child growing up immoral, and ordered its removal from the custody of the parents. The parents appealed against this order and won. The Society appealed to a still higher court, and lost. All the judges in this last hearing agreed that there was no evidence whatever that the people were leading an "immoral" life, the child was being well looked after, the parents, far from avoiding the responsibilities of parentage, were only too anxious to discharge them. Moreover the woman was a married woman, but had been unable to secure the means to get her husband divorced. The Chief Justice well asked this meddlesome mob of bigots, "What does a child of four know about whether its parents are married or not?" The Society replied the parents were in a condition of immorality. The Society, said another of the Judges, would simply wreck the family by their action. The third Judge remarked that the parents were unmarried, but they were living a quiet and respectable life. Again came the typically Christian reply, "But in a condition of immorality."

Of course, there was nothing immoral about it. A man and a woman who live together cleanly and in terms of mutual affection are as truly married as any couple on earth, and better married than a very large proportion of men and women. The Counsel, if he had not been briefed by a Christian organization, would probably have said that they were living in an *illegal* condition. But *illegal* is not of necessity *immoral*, and *immoral* is not identical with *illegal*. Morality is often helped by illegality, and legality is

often the condition of the perpetuation of immorality. But the identification of the two is essentially Christian. The Christian has no clear conception of a natural morality, and orthodox theology is full of denunciations of it. Even to-day the fairly general and very popular teaching that in the absence of Christian belief morality will wither is an illustration of the same thing. So it is quite in line with Christian theory and practice to find homes in which the parents may be bullies, from which children are driven to Sunday school and crammed with idiotic teachings because the parents wish to stand well with their neighbours, and this is called a moral home; while a home such as the Canadian one is labelled immoral by men and women who in any healthy sense of the term are themselves distinctly immoral. In such a case geographical differences vanish before the essential identity of the Christian type wherever it is able to operate in freedom.

* * *

No Dealings with Atheists!

The third piece in the pot, want of space prevents more, is taken from the *Church Times* for October 21. Commenting on the arrangement made at Ottawa to terminate the existing trade agreement with Russia, the editorial comment is that it will injure English trade, and mean less wages for British workers. It adds:—

The Christian must recognize that to trade with Soviet Russia is indirectly to assist the creation of a godless civilization. If that were the reason why the Government was terminating the trade agreement, its action would be laudable; but as a means towards the recovery of British prosperity, it seems to us somewhat futile.

The meaning admits of no question. If Russia were a Christian nation the *Church Times* would say unhesitatingly and without any qualification that the Government policy was a foolish one. As the Government says its only object is to better the position of British trade, and that it has no concern with the theology, or anti-theology of Russia, the *Church Times* still says it is a bad one. But if the Government gave as its object the desire to crush a "godless civilization," or to prevent Christians having intercourse with it, then the policy would be "laudable" and would receive the support of the *Church Times*.

Elsewhere in this issue will be found a letter from a correspondent who questions our recent treatment of the clerical letter concerning the *Outlines of Knowledge* as a threat. Well, the *Church Times* has provided a "providential endorsement" of our view, although the endorsement would have been liberally provided by even a cursory examination of Christian policy. The *Church Times* would support a movement for the boycott of Russia if it were done on Christian grounds. The *Outline* is decried simply because it does not praise Christianity. To most Christians a nod from their religious leaders is enough; and to them the hope that they will not advertise a "godless book" is advice that they will use all their endeavours to prevent people reading it, that it should be kept out of public libraries, not be shown by booksellers, and that the usual threat not to deal with those who displayed the book should be made. That is the usual policy where criticisms of Christianity are concerned. If I were given only ten pounds for every case in which a newsagent is threatened with loss of trade if he displays the *Freethinker*, or a bookseller if he shows some of my books, or a newspaper paragraph writer threatened if he dared mention the *Freethinker* (a contingency which does not prohibit stealing from its columns without acknowledge-

ment) I could easily replace the £30,000 I have just lost in not getting a winner in the Irish Sweepstake. If there is one thing I may claim to know it is Christianity and Christians. That is why I do not believe in the one, and—where religion is concerned—I do not trust the other.

* * *

The Last Course.

Like the different ingredients that go to make up an Olla Podrida the three instances I have cited above all serve to illustrate the common point of the inevitable harm done when religion is permitted to interfere in social life. As we said while the Sunday Entertainments Bill was before Parliament, nothing more cowardly, more dishonest, or more contemptible had been attempted in the way of legislation for many years. A people who really deserve freedom would simply laugh the Act out of existence, and even now if Cinema proprietors would only stand firmly together that could be done. There is no attempt to show that—religion aside—a film that is good on week-days is bad on Sunday, or why there should be a special tax for men who carry on a business on Sunday which the law says is quite legitimate. If there is anything that has justified itself during the past sixty or seventy years it is Sunday games, Sunday excursions, and Sunday entertainments. They have led everywhere to a better-behaved and a healthier population. Medical authorities and Police officials all over the country agree on this point. Yet there is all this paraphernalia of Council resolution, Town's meeting and general poll—to decide whether a certain number of Smiths shall be permitted to do on Sunday what chapel-going Jones does not care to do. The plain test of whether Sunday games, or entertainments are required by the people is plain and easy. Let them be available. If they are not used they are not wanted, and they would soon cease to be. But these stupid Sabbatarians know they are wanted. Their argument is really, "The British public do not want Sunday entertainments. Therefore we should not permit such things. Besides, if we do the whole population will presently be attending, and the churches and chapels will be emptier than they are at present."

The second contribution to the pot is still more decisive in its indictment of religious interference in social life. Marriage is a social contract, the family is a social fact of tremendous significance. Consequently, any form of marriage or of the family that makes for social betterment is good. There is no other test for any man or woman who could qualify for being at large. Here we have a man and woman, the latter unable to even meet conventional demands because she has not the money to get a divorce from her husband, living on admirable terms with her mate. The offspring of the relationship is being well-cared for and surrounded by all the affection it could have if a foolish and indecent marriage service had been read over them by a parson. But religion induces a number of men and women who would be better confined in a monastery or a nunnery—separately or together (although I expect they would prefer the latter)—to demand that the family shall be broken up, the child robbed of the affectionate care of father and mother, and subjected to the cold protection of some charitable institution. Now I ask any of my religious readers to sit down and think whether anything but religion could so cloak with morality a monstrous injustice to a child, its parents, and to society at large?

Finally, my last instance offers an example of the evil of religious interference in another direction.

The day has gone by when Freethinkers can be shut out of human society, whether viewed from a local or an international aspect. There are too many of them to be set aside in this manner. But the instruments of boycott and misrepresentation are still, active with their inevitable consequences, the development of intellectual cowardice and wide-spread hypocrisy. When our leading religious paper can calmly suggest that it would be laudable to boycott a nation of one hundred and seventy millions of people because the policy of the Government is Atheistic, it should be seen that the limits to religious intolerance are not easy to define, otherwise than to say that religionists will never persecute when they are unable to do so. To break off all intercourse with either a man or a nation because either refuses to "play the game," is one thing, but to do so because their opinions on religion—identical with those of millions of educated men and women all over the world—is quite another thing. It is the spirit of the Christian Church at its best. The Christian Church always tortured or killed the heretic from exactly the same motive which leads the *Church Times* to consider a boycott of Russia "laudable," i.e., to protect society from Freethinking which would endanger the souls of men and women. It would have no truce with Aheism. Well, the sensible and courageous Freethinker should have no truce with religion in any form. The only time a religion is harmless is when it is dead.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"Hark The 'Herald' Angel."

"Again the world is meeting might with might,
And when the battle's fought and lost and won,
Pray victory decree, as primal right,
That reason also wins a kingdom in the sun."

Eden Phillpotts.

The newspaper press of this country has, almost without exception, become a public nuisance, if not a menace. Instead of the primary object of the proprietors being to purvey news, it is to earn fat dividends. The most important man on a newspaper is no longer the editor, but the advertisement manager, and circulations are maintained at any cost so as to increase the value of the advertising rates.

Sensationalism is the order of the day, and our own newspaper men, looking with big, envious eyes across the Atlantic at the Yellow Press hysterics, reply with the flattery of imitation. In the course of fifty years the whole tone of the press of a great country has been demoralized, and even vulgarized. Young reporters are told: "If a dog bites a man, that is not news, but if a man bites a dog, that is real news." So insatiable has this demand for excitement become that, when no "good stories" are available at the moment, editors actually reprint the ghastly murder cases of years ago, in order that their readers shall not miss their daily baptism of blood and crime, with the pleasing result that Charles Peace and Dr. Crippen are well-nigh national characters.

Years ago newspaper proprietors and editors were far more concerned with principle than interest. Two examples will suffice. Passmore Edwards, the proprietor of the *London Echo*, never permitted horse-racing forecasts in his columns. Even then, he made plenty of money, for he studded England with cottage-hospitals and free libraries from the profits of his paper. William T. Stead suffered imprisonment, and risked his entire career and the fortunes of his newspaper, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, in order to secure the passing of "The Criminal Law Amendment Act."

Where are the present-day editors with like courage? They are not to be found in newspaper-land, but among the more robust editors of advanced periodicals. In the newspaper world the editors are "yes-sir" men, mere flunkeys. Personally unknown, merged in the identity of a paper, they are nothing to the world but the merest "pen-pushers," not nearly so harmless as ordinary "fifty-bob" clerks, who write invoices.

Some of the biggest newspapers print the most utter rubbish day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. If a strike of labourers on a farm takes place at Marchmallow-on-the-Muck, one great newspaper perceives in it the nefarious designs of the Soviet Government. If overworked nurses have a dispute with hospital managers in some obscure township, the same editor scents more Russian aggression. Presumably, if his own particular office-boy lost three grandmothers in three months, he would still detect the mailed fist of Moscow. Another very distinguished editor attributes most of the world's evils to Jews. If this country had an epidemic of German measles, this pertinacious pen-pusher would find that it was of sinister Semitic origin. I often wonder how this particular editor dissembles his love when he meets distinguished Jewish members of the Peerage at social functions.

Among the Capitalist press, the so-called Democratic *Daily Herald* is a prominent ornament, and, curiously, it now follows closely the yellowest of the Yellow Press. The *Herald's* tenderness towards all forms or religion is passing wonderful, whilst its hostility to Freethought is naked and unashamed. Let a man worship a stuffed snake in the seclusion of his own backyard, let a citizen be but a Chinese Presbyterian, and the *Herald* is his friend, but let a man be known as a Freethinker, and this most Democratic of all newspapers will treat him with such high-sniffing contempt that the poor man will imagine that he is living in that most Christian country which acknowledges the Negus of Abyssinia as its pastor and master.

Despite the fact that it is itself a Capitalist production, the *Herald* denounces Capitalism and all its works. If the colliery owner be an earl, or the ground-landlord be a duke, the *Herald* is very nasty. But if the Ecclesiastical Commissioners draw royalties from coal, own slum property, and collect a tax on agriculture with regularity, the painful fact is not so obvious to this newspaper editor.

Recently, the *Herald* called attention to the refusal of "the Church" to bury suicides in "consecrated" ground, and pointed out that such procedure was quite out of date. This is the way the *Herald* strains at a gnat, and swallows a mountain. One need not be a very hard-boiled Socialist, or Communist, or Labourite, to notice that this Anglican Church itself is out of date. Men protested against this Church's treatment of suicides generations before the *Herald* and its editor were born, but the journalist only stresses it to-day.

This Established Church, with its Archbishops, Bishops, Canons, Archdeacons, Vicars, Rectors, and University-trained curates, is the most undemocratic body in all England. The watchwords of Democracy are Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. How much liberty is there in the Athanasian Creed, and the Thirty-Nine Articles? What equality is there between the Archbishop of Canterbury with his £15,000 yearly, his seat in the House of Lords, and two palaces, and the poor church-cleaner with her one room and her few shillings? What fraternity does this powerful Church advocate, when it divides the world into believers and unbelievers, sheep and goats,

saints and sinners, and curses its fellow-Christians when they happen to be Nonconformists, and its fellow-Citizens when they use their brains and question their Abracadabra? What has this Anglican Church ever done to deserve the support of a great Democratic newspaper, which pays it the entirely undeserved compliment of calling it "the" Church? What does the *Herald* admire in Anglicanism? Is it its wealth, or its being a vested interest, or because it is antiquarian?

This so-called Church of England is not an antique like the Elgin Marbles, or the Venus di Milo. It is an active engine of reaction. Its coal-royalties, its taxes on agriculture, its income from slums, are used to make Churchmen and Conservatives, and not Socialists. The Anglican priests, 16,000 in number, poke their sacred noses into civic affairs and education, especially education. There are hundreds of "Church" schools in this country, mainly supported by national funds. If a church such as this is honoured by the *Herald*, what brand of Democracy is represented by this news-sheet?

MIMNERMUS.

If There is a God.

THE two paragraphs which follow this one are culled from the beginning and the end of a book entitled *Religions Past and Present*, by B. C. A. Windle. In spite of the long string of letters after the author's name the book is a disappointing one, and deals quite inadequately with the subject of its title. This opinion is in no sense due to a prejudice against authors who are God-believers, but to the fact that I had previously read a much more competent work on the same subject embodied in a little sixpenny booklet called *The Religions of the World*. Incidentally the latter was written by Father C. C. Martindale, a Jesuit priest. But to return to Sir Bertram Windle, who writes as follows:—

(1) "Either there is a God or there is not. If there is not, *cadit quaestio*. But the non-existence of God is not a proposition which any reasonable person will attempt to prove, nor can prove. *Dixit insipiens in corde suo: Non est Deus!* If there is a God and the Theistic view is correct, it is quite certain that . . . etc."

(2) "Man is a religious being—'a religious animal,' as someone has defined him. There is no such thing as an Atheistic race nor, so far as we know, has there ever been. No man who has had a proper training in thinking can or would call himself an Atheist—the appellation is claimed only by the imperfectly educated, who think it rather a distinction to differ in opinion from the overwhelming mass of mankind. The reason why the educated man must avoid the term is that it implies that satisfying proof has been found for the non-existence of a Supreme Being. To produce such proof is and must always remain utterly impossible. That there are people who cannot bring themselves to believe that there is sufficient proof for the existence of such a Being we are well aware. But they are not Atheists, and few of them would claim to be; they are Agnostics."

I have selected these two paragraphs because they are typical of the kind of "argument" which is frequently used against Atheism; and they will therefore serve as suitable texts upon which to hang a few critical comments.

To demonstrate the futility of such dialectical methods, I will begin by showing what Sir B. Windle might have written if he had been arguing for the opposite camp. In this way anyone whose logical faculties are not atrophied will be able to view the position from both sides, and will thus acquire a cor-

rect centre of gravity on which to balance his judgments. Now listen to Sir Bertram, the pseudo-Atheist.

(1) "Either there is a God or there is not. If there is, *cadit quaestio*. But the existence of God is not a proposition which any reasonable person will attempt to prove, nor can prove. *Deus scitur melius nesciendo*. If there is no God, and the Atheistic view is correct, it is quite certain that . . . etc."

(2) "Man is a superstitious being—'a religious animal' as someone has defined him. There is no such thing as a race devoid of superstition nor, so far as we know, has there ever been. No man who has had a proper training in thinking can or would call himself religious—the appellation is claimed only by the imperfectly educated, who think it almost a sin to differ in opinion from the overwhelming mass of mankind. The reason why the educated man must avoid the term is that it implies that satisfying proof has been found for the existence of supernatural beings. To produce such proof is and must always remain utterly impossible. That there are people who cannot bring themselves to believe that there is sufficient disproof for the existence of such beings we are well aware. But they are not religious and few of them would claim to be: they are Agnostics."

Of course, no logic or reasoning power is required for the acceptance of either of these two sets of contradictory statements. One can accept or reject the one or the other, in whole or in part, just as one's fancy at the moment may dictate. But if the irritating mental indecision created by the juxtaposition of contrary views should infect any reader with the noble itch for verification, then my purpose has been attained. Let them also remember for future use that this method of comparing a proposition with a *converse* or a *reverse* statement of it is one of the most valuable aids to straight thinking.

With regard to the Latin quotation used by Windle the Theist ("The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God"), one wonders if his avoidance of plain English was prompted by an unnecessary solicitude for the feelings of "imperfectly educated" Atheists, or whether it was merely to air the superior knowledge of himself as a "properly trained" thinker. Whichever alternative it may have been, it need scarcely be pointed out that (1) to call one's opponent a fool is not conclusive proof of the truth of one's own contentions, even though it may flatter one's self-esteem; and that (2) by the usual standards of wisdom and folly, there are many more unintelligent persons who believe in God than there are intelligent believers; and that (3) in proportion as the scale of intelligence increases, so does the belief in God diminish. Apart from these considerations, the quotation has no direct bearing upon the question whether it is possible to prove or disprove the existence of God.

What appears to be far more pertinent is the fact nowhere does this writer assert that it is possible to produce conclusive proof of God's existence, and like every other Theist who discusses the subject, he carefully avoids making any attempt to produce such proof. The crux of his "argument" seems to lie in the statement that it is impossible to produce proof of the *non-existence* of God. If this be taken literally, we may cheerfully concede the point. For *non-existence* is nothing; and to produce proof of *non-existence* is to produce proof of nothing—an obvious impossibility. I commend all theologians to take note of this self-evident fact, for most of them seem to regard it in the nature of conclusive evidence in favour of God's existence. And if any of them still persist in regarding it as such, then I invite them to try and produce proof of the non-existence of *Whoosh*—failing which, I trust they will reverently

bow the knee in homage to this Undefinable, Indescribable, Imperceptible, Inconceivable Deity of Deities.

But if by the phrase "produce proof of the non-existence of God." The author means "produce proof that the term *God*, as used by Theists, does not refer to anything which exists," then the matter is a simple one. Any difficulty which might occur will probably be occasioned by those "perfectly educated" Theists who will, I fear, fail to provide a clear and agreed description of what the term *God* refers to. I also foresee that, in spite of their "proper training in thinking," they will have some difficulty in determining what exactly they mean by the verb *to exist*. If, however, my fears are unfounded and Theists are quite clear in their own minds as to what they mean by these terms, I venture to suggest that they might apply their education and proper training in thinking to the elucidation of an exactly parallel problem. If they can solve this one to their satisfaction, they will be in a very favourable position to appreciate the logical reasons for the certainty of Atheism. The problem is this: Let them prove that the statement "Wotan exists" is untrue; or, conversely, let them prove that the statement "Wotan does not exist" is true. When they have produced the proof necessary to convince themselves (or Wotan-believers, if any) that Wotan does not exist, it may dawn on them that the same method of proof applies with precisely the same force to every deity, including God.

Of course, it may be that Theists actually do believe in the existence of the God Wotan—in which case my beloved Whoosh may yet become an object of their veneration. But if they regard it as unnecessary to disprove the existence of Wotan on the ground that no one believes in him any longer—in other words, if they admit that Wotan's "existence" was a matter of belief and not of fact—then we may shake hands on the argument and leave it at that.

C. S. FRASER.

The Conway Hall Debate.

The Conway Hall was packed to overflowing on October 18, and was in fact unable to accommodate a large number who came to hear, when Mr. Ernest Thurtle took the chair at the debate between Mr. Chapman Cohen and Mr. Arnold Lunn. The state of the hall was no surprise to those who knew the strength of Mr. Cohen's personal following in London alone, and in the present instance there were many visitors from so far away as Swansea and Manchester. Freethinkers are not ones to miss a debate, and they are the more eager to be present when the editor of this journal is one of the principals. It is not merely that they can trust his mastery of the subject he has in hand—others may have as great a mastery—but there are few who have in such complete abundance the gifts of wit and humour, combined with a rare clarity of exposition, and can round off a sentence with a phrase which leaves the point illustrated an enduring thing in the mind of the listener. He is rarely ruffled, he is never at a loss for the exact word, and there is nothing he likes better than a straight hard fight.

One cannot say with truth that Mr. Lunn provided this. Mr. Lunn is a courteous opponent—the whole of the discussion was marked by good humour on the part of the disputants, and of excellent behaviour on the part of the audience—but Mr. Lunn did not present the difficult case which one expected

he might have presented. Perhaps it should be counted to his credit that he did not wrap up his ideas in vague, misleading language. One could see at once what he was aiming at, and that, in the circumstances was not exactly a help to him. One expected better than was given because Mr. Lunn had himself named the subject, and was willing to open the discussion with the affirmative of the proposition "that Materialism involves the suicide of thought." No one who knew Mr. Cohen's writings or who have heard him speak would have suspected there was any suicide in his thought; and no one more than he, has so consistently defended Materialism against Theists, Scientists, Vitalists and even Rationalists alike. Mr. Lunn is the author of *The Flight from Reason*, a determined attack on Freethinkers like Mr. Cohen, and *Difficulties*, an attack on some aspects of Roman Catholicism. He quotes many authors and authorities, and gives one the impression of being thoroughly at home with the most abstruse questions in philosophy and science to say nothing of things like Spiritualism, the miracles at Lourdes, the inconsistency of scientists and so on. And it would have been a great and rare battle if only Mr. Lunn could have lived up to his reputation.

Unfortunately, Mr. Lunn with his books around him, marshalling his artillery at his leisure, and counting his own hits, was one person, Mr. Lunn as a party in a contest where every statement could be directly challenged, and every argument examined, was quite another person. From his first to his last speech he did not seem quite clear as to what it was he wished to establish. His irrelevancies were over and over again dwelt upon by Mr. Cohen. This was the more significant to his listeners as Mr. Lunn expressed his pleasure on meeting Mr. Cohen, first because he was a man who never cloaked his meaning with half-hearted terms, and second because it was so difficult nowadays to get a Freethinker to meet a Christian in discussion. Some of us had an idea it was the reverse of this, and Mr. Cohen slyly remarked that he and Mr. Lunn seemed to be living in different worlds, he in a world where Christians of standing would never discuss, and Mr. Lunn in a world where they were looking unsuccessfully for Freethinkers with whom they could fight. Perhaps this kind of talk on Mr. Lunn's part was merely due to his following Mr. Chesterton and mistaking what Mr. Cohen called Chestertonian acrobatics for serious argument.

It was rather surprising that after Mr. Lunn had paid tribute to Mr. Cohen's complete independence of mere authority, and to his habit of calling a spade a spade that he should have made as much use as he did of authorities. He cited Professor T. H. Huxley for a definition of Materialism, when, as he was at once reminded, it was one of Huxley's faults always to evade an unpopular side as much as possible, and so coined the word "Agnosticism" to hide his Atheism, and he repudiated Materialism in words while adopting it in practice and in theory. As to the claim that scientists were on Mr. Lunn's side, backed up with some figures of a majority of the members of the Royal Society voting for a belief in God, Mr. Cohen retorted that he made no claim that scientists were on his side, but that science was. And unfortunately the distinction between the two was very great. Besides, consider what a pass we had come to when Christians were glad that God had got in by a majority vote. But majorities had a habit of dwindling, and minorities of expanding. Moreover these very scientists who gave God a vote, ignored him completely when they retired to their laboratories. They had no use for him there. So that, after all, it was not even a vote they gave God,

it was a tourist ticket, an invitation to travel outside the world of practical science.

In his book *The Flight from Reason*, Mr. Lunn had dealt with Mr. Cohen as a poor belated survival of early Victorian science, and the upholder of a worn out philosophy. But it was one thing to talk like that in a book, quite another to come to grips with one who is completely conversant with the latest developments in both philosophy and science. This was sun-clear when the discussion was turned by Mr. Lunn into a question of Free-will, Determinism, etc. Then for the rest of the evening Mr. Cohen's task was simply that of an expositor. The opposition had almost ceased to exist, and Mr. Lunn admitted rather ruefully that had he known more about this "master of dialectic" he might not have been in Conway Hall at all. The debate was developing into a series of short addresses by Mr. Cohen—the meaning of Materialism, the significance of praise and blame, the meaning of freedom applied to the human action and its complete irrelevancy when applied to nature, the proper method of dealing with the nature and function of thought, were subjects that were dealt with and tellingly illustrated.

Mr. Lunn argued that religion gave to men the power of facing death with a smile, and was promptly met with the reply that men would die for all sorts of things good and bad, sensible and foolish. Religious men had been capable of doing great and good things. On this point, probably to Mr. Lunn's surprise, he found Mr. Cohen in agreement, but it was pointed out that this is merely an illustration of the social qualities of human nature, that were exploited in the interests of religion. An attempt was made to saddle Mr. Cohen with the responsibility for the truth of theories of Behaviourism or of Psycho-analysis. But the bird was not to have salt put on its tail quite so easily. It was not Mr. Cohen's task to champion any particular theory held by this or that scientist. It was enough if he was able to show that truth could only be reached by the principle of Determinism, and by the practical adoption of Materialism.

It was apparent that Mr. Lunn had fallen into the common error of trying to understand the nature of consciousness and thought by taking it at its highest instead of at its lowest and working upward. To myself, and, I think, to most others the way in which Mr. Cohen took up these points and illustrated the proper method of approach and the most probable character of the conclusions that would be reached were interesting object lessons in the art of simple and clear exposition.

In his last speech—the last in the debate—Mr. Cohen took up again the statement of the good that religious men had done, and the fortitude displayed by them under suffering. On that the audience was treated to the most eloquent and the most interesting passage of the evening. Taking the approaching centenary of Charles Bradlaugh as a text, Mr. Cohen said that his life was important, not merely or even mainly because of the specific reforms for which he worked, but because he typified the eternal spirit of revolt, of unrest, of the incessant striving for something better than what was, but only as a step towards something still better. It was a powerful and impressive piece of pure oratory. The audience listened to it in that rapt silence which is the highest tribute that can be paid to any speaker, and Mr. Cohen richly deserved the burst of applause that came at its conclusion.

Mr. Ernest Thurtle, who had presided over the debate with dignity and impartiality, expressed his thanks to the audience for its admirable behaviour, and also thanked the Conway Discussion Circle for providing the hall for the debate. Mr. Cohen then

moved a vote of thanks to the chairman, which was seconded by Mr. Lunn, and carried with acclamation.

H.C.

Freethought and Democracy.

"Democracy, properly so called, is government by consent, and government by consent is the only possible form of government in a civilized country at this stage of political evolution."

[Lord (then Mr. A. J.) Balfour 1912.]

"I search after truth by which man never yet was harmed."—*Marcus Aurelius*.

LORD BALFOUR'S dictum, like most of his definitions, political and philosophic, is an indefinite article. His elusive, not to say evasive mind, shied at certainty. The "stage of political evolution" which had been reached in 1912 was to be put to a critical test from 1914-1918. In some countries it has not survived that test. Even in this country its survival has not been attained without some loss of virility, and, according to some prophets, it is condemned to death. The after-war mentality has been denounced, abused, flattered, misinterpreted, but, especially in its political decisions, it has rarely been rationally analysed. Mr. J. M. Robertson has said that "a nation's mental standard is from age to age unalterably determined by that of its populace, rising with that, sinking with it." Recently, in "Views and Opinions" (July 3), the Editor of this journal wrote "there is no greater certainty of freedom in a formal democracy than there is in an actual autocracy." Forty-four years separate these two quotations and make one of them a prophecy and the other a judgment. The democracy which was in action in the General Elections of 1918, 1924 and 1931, on each occasion whipped into a "patriotic" fever—twice by a combination of parties, and once (1924) by one Party—shows only one element of consistency, an element which the politicians recognize, namely, its capacity for rising to the bait that it is indeed the saviour of the country, and that all will be lost if it does not swallow that bait. In 1918, it was a peace to end war. It produced the Treaty of Versailles. In 1924 it was the Red Letter. It produced nearly five years of Tory Government. In 1931 it was the Peril of the Pound. It produced another Coalition, like that of 1918, with the Tories in the saddle. If we consider the causes of these frantic appeals to the electorate we shall find that in all three cases there was no need to appeal on the main issue supposed to be involved. (It is true that the passing of the Representation of the People Act, 1918 had made the 1910-18 Parliament effete and unrepresentative, but that does not affect this argument.) The "cry" in the Election of 1924 was the Red Letter. The reason for it was the Labour Government's refusal of an inquiry into the Campbell prosecution. Sooner than face a Party crisis they allowed another Party to co-opt a "National" one. The "cry" of 1931 was "save the pound," but in 1931, as in 1918, there was not a shadow of doubt that so far as the vital issue was concerned the result would be what it was. If it had not been so, His Majesty's advisors would not have shown that unusual anxiety for a mandate which only develops when, as on these occasions, there is a minimum of risk. If, in any of these contests, P.R. had been in operation, the overwhelming opinion on the main issue would have been equally clearly expressed, but the political "dividend" might have been so equally distributed between the parties as to put an end to any chance of making Party profit out of "national" emergency. The only Party that is enthusiastic about P.R. is the Liberal Party. That, however, is not an argument against a rational electoral system. The most effective argument against it is one little to the credit of democracy, namely, that it would produce indeterminate results, for, from the standpoint of the good citizen, the exclusion of substantial minorities from the counsels of the nation is not only unjustifiable, but disadvantageous. Was there ever a condition more likely to provoke contempt for Parliament and democratic institutions than this well-drilled

and conglomerate army that comes to heel at the crack of the "National" Government's Whips?

Democracy may be governed by consent, but it is a "general" and assumed consent so long as it is beyond the power of intelligent and critical minorities to make their influence felt in the actual business of Government. It will be a very long time before the Freethought leaven leavens the whole lump of British democracy. Meanwhile, as recent proceedings in regard to the Sunday Performances measures have shown, Freethought can exercise a powerful influence so long as it is absolutely exempt from any suspicion of Party leanings or tactics. In and out of Parliament what has been said in these columns had been repeated, without acknowledgment, and the one tittle of improvement in the new Act, and the one sign of a new and more courageous line in the entertainment businesses, both have that origin. What Herbert Spencer said about Republicanism might be said about Democracy, *i.e.*, it is an ideal form of Government, but it requires an ideal people to carry it out. Yet, so far as democracy in this country has come into its own, it is in proportion as the ideals of Secularism have permeated and influenced opinion. The clergy, more conscious of that permeation than the politicians, are constantly referring to it, from the Pope downwards. The orthodox politicians pay more attention to these references than the public. If it be the case that, on the basis of communicating membership, the practising Christians of all denominations in this country (*i.e.*, England) only number roughly 7,000,000 out of 37,000,000, it must be evident that this minority gets an amount of attention from Ministers of the Crown, Government Departments and the Press out of all proportion to its numbers. The democracy that goes to the poll does not, as to the great majority of it, go to church. The churches and chapels, however, count for more in the reckonings of politicians than all the unattached, and as they are sometimes politely called, "pagan" multitude of the electorate. Hence the danger for democracy is that legislation will be not in advance of the times but a century behind them. If this is a "libertarian" age—as parsons and pious politicians are always telling us—the proceedings of our spiritual and temporal "pastors and masters" show no sign of consciousness of the implications of their nomenclature. Liberty, the liberty of the subject, of the press, of the arts, were never more in need of vigilant sentinels than in these times. Only an educated democracy can fulfil the hopes that are often reposed in that form of Government, and Freethought can only do its work of education, and exercise its critical and informative function in the community, if it is free to fight for the rights of men and women and nations to freedom, not only from superstition and tyranny of Rulers and Priests, but from the inquisitors of beaurocracy, the interferences of puritanical repressionists, and, last but not least, the frenzied partialities of slogan-ridden majorities—either of parties or nations.

ALAN HANDSACRE.

Acid Drops.

We are not very much affected by the alleged conduct of the Rector of Stiffkey as we have never entertained the superstition that parsons are, or are likely to be, or "ought" to be better than anyone else. So we do not shout out, when a parson is discovered in some piece of blackguardism, that such conduct is worse in him than in, say, a member of Parliament. Nevertheless there are certain features in the delivery of the judgment and sentence on the Rector by the Bishop of Norwich which have puzzled us, and on which some of our religious readers may be able to throw some light.

For example, the Bishop prefaced his judgment by the saying:—

We, Bertram, by Divine permission Bishop of Norwich, by virtue of the Power conferred on us by the Clergy Discipline Act of 1892, etc., etc.

Now is the course of events that (1) God gives a man permission to be a Bishop and then Parliament gives

him the power to act as one, or is it that (2) Parliament first of all appoints him and then God gives him permission to act? In either case does the judgment of God and Parliament always run together so well that whenever the one appears the other follows? If so, then one might be abolished, for such unanimity should not be impugned by a mere formal vote of agreement. But suppose, Parliament appoints and God does not give permission, what then? Can a Bishop be a Bishop without the permission of God, or in such case does he politely tell God to go to the deuce? Or suppose God gives permission to someone to act as Bishop, and then Parliament refuses to appoint? In that case does the Bishop go on acting, without salary and with no one taking the slightest notice of him? These are all contingencies that need considering.

We are still more puzzled by the Rector of Stiffkey. Who gave him permission to act as Rector? Of course he was appointed by someone, but did God give him permission to act as Rector? There seems to us several possibilities. (a) the Rector gave himself permission to act, and didn't bother about God at all. (b) God gave him the necessary permission to act, but didn't know what sort of a man he was, and is only able to get rid of him by permission of an Act passed by all the religious and non-religious odds and ends that make up the House of Commons and the House of Lords. (c) God meant to call another person altogether to the job of Rector of Stiffkey, but the message got the wrong address, something like "wrong number" on the telephone. (d) God has to try men out to see whether they are any good or not, and so is bound to make mistakes here and there. (e) There is such a shortage of preachers of the Gospel that God has to put up with any one he can get, and so gives permission because the vacant places must be filled somehow or the other. The situation bristles with difficulties, and we should be glad to receive the advice of some expert in the theology. Until someone does instruct us in the matter—we do not know whether we ought to sympathize with the parson or with God or with Parliament, or with the public at large.

Once again Bishop Barnes has come in for a two-barrelled attack. First of all, there is the broadside of a Jesuit called Father Woodlock who, every now and then causes some mild amusement by his religious denunciations. He is very angry that the Bishop does not share with him the belief that the drawlings of a few Latin words over a wafer, turn it into the veritable flesh and blood of the living Jesus. (Whatever this rigmarole may mean). Father Woodlock calls Bishop Barnes' criticism of this and similar importations from Paganism "offensive" and asks for his resignation. One shudders to think what the good Bishop would have had to go through if Father Woodlock's superiors were in power.

The second bombshell and quite a nasty one at that, comes from Mr. James Douglas. Mr. Douglas is now the great lay champion of everything that stands for religion. Not that he believes everything. It is difficult to know or find out what he actually believes. But if anybody has the temerity to attack religion, then Mr. Douglas sees he is "in for it," and the Bishop got a whole pagelul. We have an idea that Dr. Barnes will survive both attacks and heartily wish him luck in his attempt to "purify" Christianity from Paganism. We have an idea that when the purification is complete, however, will be precious little left of Christianity and can any work be greater than that?

Another Roman Catholic, Father Ward, has, like so many of his confrères, just discovered that "Materialism" is not quite so dead as so many journalists, men of science and vitalists so volubly tell us it is. For him, how-

ever, "Bolshevism" and "Materialism" mean the same, and he seems greatly afraid of the activities of Communists, of "Free-lovers" and of other "unnatural monstrosities" all of which he ascribes to "Materialism." Father Ward can set his mind at rest or bow to the inevitable. Materialism, in the only sense science can use it, has come to stay. As for Bolshevism and Communism or any other social system they will conquer only if the majority of people want them. The happy days of Faith have quite disappeared.

It has been left to the Rev. W. S. Hooton (in the *Christian*) to give a new hope to Christians who are bothered about Bible contradictions. After putting forward several theories to meet the awkward chronological and genealogical conundrums in Genesis i-xi., he says: "We are working in the dark, but, as ever, with the confidence that when the light comes it will vindicate the Book, though it may make our theories look foolish enough." Meanwhile, "the Word of God is constantly receiving corroboration" and "faith is easier than it was." We suppose that is why so much labour is spent in apologetics. It is "easier," perhaps, because there is less and less of it that survives the assaults of knowledge. Mr. Hooton has the temerity to put up what purports to be an answer to the questions, "Where did Cain get his wife?" and "Who were the people whom he feared to meet." As to the first question we are told that "the Bible never suggests that it gives all the names of Adam's family; a considerable population may have arisen." Adam was 130 years old when Seth was born, "and perhaps Abel's murder was not long before that." This, however creates another difficulty. Who was Seth's wife?

Well, says Mr. Hooton, "we should remember that even Abram was married to his half-sister," and therefore "in the present state of our enlightenment" we may suppose that "the laws relating to consanguinity were, by divine providence, suspended at the first, and only revealed when needed." In "our present state of enlightenment" is good, considering that there is not a word to suggest that there were any laws of consanguinity for providence to suspend. Even what Mr. Hooton discreetly calls the "mixed marriages" (Gen. vi. 2)—he cannot believe that "the promised Seed could start from a union of that kind"—do not help us. The Lord, however, was so put out at the breach of a law that did not exist, that he "repented him that he had made man," and saved Noah and his sons and their wives from the flood so that they might go out and "be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth"—the law of consanguinity being still providentially "suspended."

The "exposure" of spirit photography by the Marquis of Donegall has now been "exposed" in its turn. Messrs Barbanel, Swaffer and Myers have all strongly protested that "some funny business went on in the dark room," implying as far as we can judge, that the "extras" came with the Marquis on prepared plates, and had nothing to do with Mr. Myers.

On the other hand, the Marquis has "exposed" the "exposure" and claims that Mr. Myers (and probably the others) is a prevaricator of the truth. He put it rather more strongly. And Mr. Harry Price, whose famous recent experiment on the Brocken of changing a goat into a pure young man with the aid of a magic formula did not come off, tells us "no genuine spirit photo has ever been taken," and that he has tried to get one for twenty years and failed. If that is not final we should like to know what is.

A Presbyterian Minister, the Rev. J. Penkyns Jones of Pencarn, Cardigan, was found hanging dead in a

stable. There is no moral in this unfortunate affair, but there would have been if it had happened to a Freethinker.

The B.B.C. must take credit where credit is due. Its capacity for doing the wrong thing by instinct may be gauged by the fact that an item "The Worker in Industry" was broadcast at a quarter to eleven in the morning. This time, to any other than aborigines, would be most suitable for religious uplift, for those who were hungering and thirsting after the particular goods could indulge their inclusion until they burst.

When Miss Maude Royden adopts a child, it is fagged with half a column in the *Daily Express*—with the lady's photograph. In mining districts it is a common occurrence after an accident killing the bread-winner for other families to take over the children of the family, but the mothers who adopt them have not the "news value" of Miss Maude Royden. The millenium will arrive when our newspapers come within hawking distance of any question affecting the welfare of the human race.

A company of Girl Guides have for some time been using the Church Hall at Bournemouth. But they will not become members of the Church and will not attend Sunday school. So the Vicar had decided that for the future they must find some other meeting place. Commenting on, and approving the Vicar's action, the *Daily Dispatch* of October 21 says that "the whole object of Church and clergy is to win people to them," and if they will not belong to the Church they should not have the use of Church property. This quite supports what we have said, namely, that the interest shown by the clergy in any kind of social movement is sheer pretence. They may use it as bait to catch converts. If they will not be converted, then the average Christian clergyman, Established and Nonconformist, has no interest in them. When one takes away the lies and pretences from current Christianity, what is there left?

The *Daly Mail* is unconsciously severe on faith in prayer. It says describing the captivity of Mrs Pawley in China, there were "continuous prayers in Newchang, but nothing effective seemed to be done." Now what have the parsons to say to this?

Fifty Years Ago.

THE "FREETHINKER" PROSECUTION.

THE impudent invasion of our right of free speech has engendered in us no spirit of submission. We feel not only a determination to defend our liberty, but a resolution to hurl at the enemy our defiance and scorn. And while we have no desire to imitate his vile tactics, or to resort to poisoned weapons of persecution, we shall strive to punish our assailants, and make them repent their rash provocation. There must be no cessation of war until we or they are utterly disabled. Freethought stands face to face with a malignant foe, who may temporize under cover of a flag of truce, but who will never relinquish his murderous hatred. Mere prudence therefore dictates a resolute prosecution of the war on our side. Freethinkers must not rest satisfied until the vanquished enemy lays down his arms and makes an unconditional surrender. That is, the Blasphemy Laws must be entirely swept away before the struggle is allowed to end, and Persecution for ever deprived of all power of attack.

The "Freethinker," October 29, 1882.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

BEN DAVIES.—The *Freethinker* may be obtained at W. H. Smith & Son, Ltd., Bookstall, 106 Shaw Heath, Stockport.

G. H. BENCH.—Pleased to hear from you again, we are sending paper for a few weeks to address sent.

S. SANDFORD.—We thought our meaning was quite clear. If a man is considered by the B.B.C. sufficiently master of his subject, or sufficiently representative of a certain phase of opinion to be asked to broadcast, it is an insult, and an act of degradation to submit what he has to say to the censorship of a committee of nobodies. No man of proper self-respect should submit. You need not fear that we should ever be asked by the B.B.C., but if the miracle did happen we should certainly not accept at the price of submitting to such a censorship.

C.S. (Leeds).—Pleased you felt repaid for your journey to the Conway Hall debate. We do not recall ever having had a public debate in Leeds. Your friend is probably thinking of a discussion following a lecture.

PAUL GOLDMAN.—You are quite right in saying that the downfall of religious ideas is a question of time, but the rate of progress will be determined by the degree to which Freethinking men and women lend a hand at the process of emancipation. Ideas cannot run without feet.

MR. J. DOHERTY writes from Auckland (New Zealand).—"I have sampled progressive journals on both sides of the globe for over thirty years, and the *Freethinker* is easily ahead of them all." Blushes and thanks.

LIEUT.-COLONEL TURTON.—Thanks for offer of a copy of your book, *The Truth of Christianity*, but we already have a copy. We believe in keeping in touch with the "enemy."

A. FORBES.—Thanks for cutting, which we have used. It is a pity that non-religious parents will encourage their children to take part in religious ceremonies. It is unfair to the child. The least that a parent can do for his child is to give him or her as fair a chance as possible in life. Children will certainly not grow up worse men and women because they are encouraged in their early years to appreciate the value of an opinion, whether the opinion be right or wrong.

S. STANDEN (N.Z.).—Pleased you think the *Bible Handbook* so useful. We also should like to see it read wherever people believe in the Bible. They would not believe in it much longer.

S. LENNY.—There is not the slightest chance of Bishop Barnes ever engaging in a debate with a representative Freethinker. His courage obviously halts this side of safety. And there is a world of difference between his discussing with a Christian whose beliefs are only slightly more primitive than his own, and meeting in discussion, oral or written, an out and out opponent.

S. LEWIS.—What other result can you expect? The recent complete exposure of that spirit-portrait fakir will leave most Spiritualists quite unconvinced. The next fraud that comes along will find dupes quite as easily. When men and women are bitten with this ghost-hunting mania they will find spirits everywhere. They run from one trickster to another, and surrender any of them with the greatest reluctance. And even when an exposure is undeniable their ill-feeling is usually vented on those who expose, not on those who are exposed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 is having a Sunday off to-day (October 30), but on Sunday next he will lecture in the Town Hall, Birmingham. The Town Hall is a very large building, and we hope that our Birmingham friends will do their best to see that it is well filled. On the following Sunday he will visit Leicester.

The debate at the Conway Hall, between Mr. Arnold Lunn and Mr. Cohen, on the proposition "That Materialism involves the Suicide of Thought," was a complete success from the point of numbers. The Hall was far too small to accommodate those who would have liked to have got in, although every inch of room was occupied. Quite a number of people came from a distance, Swansea, Birmingham, Nottingham, and Manchester—and probably from elsewhere, and we hope that those who had travelled a long distance were not among those who had to be refused admission.

Mr. Lunn proved himself to be a quite agreeable opponent, although he suffered from the usual weakness of Christian opponents of Freethought nowadays—inadequate acquaintance with the Freethought case. It would indeed be odd if the exact form of the Freethought criticism which served so well a hundred years ago did equally well to-day. In substance the criticism may remain unchanged, but the terminology, the form of the attack requires to be altered, and the unfortunate thing is that Christian writers and speakers never appear to have advanced beyond the middle of the nineteenth century, and they imagine that when they have replied to certain criticisms of the Christian religion—usually the reply takes the form of throwing up the things criticized, they have crushed Freethought. Freethought is progressive, and a Freethought that stood still would in time be as bad as Christianity.

It was very curious to hear Mr. Lunn complain of the difficulty there was nowadays in getting Freethinkers of weight to meet Christians in discussion. Our experience, as he was promptly reminded, is in quite the opposite direction. Mr. Cohen never issues challenges, but it is well known that he is always ready to meet any representative of religion in discussion whenever arrangements can be made. It is also an open secret that attempts have been made in both London and the Provinces to get really representative Christians to meet Mr. Cohen in public discussion, either written or oral. But on some pretext or another—either the Christian representative was busy buying a cow or taking a wife—the attempt has failed. We do not blame these people, they show far more intelligence in declining than they would in accepting.

Mr. Lunn, if he will not mind our saying so, appears to rely too much upon Mr. Chesterton. Now Mr. Chesterton's strained paradoxes and often very childish humour, are very well known, and some have quite seriously taken them as covering profound thinking—much as many take the emptying of a bag of flour over a man's head as evidence of great wit. But his futilities are very apparent, and we fancy that had he not received so much log-rolling in the press very little would have been heard of him. Anyway, it takes very little to pierce the Chestertonian bladder, and Mr. Lunn would be well-advised to take some better mentor as a pattern or a guide.

The Roman Catholic *Universe* and the *Catholic Times* both notice the discussion between Mr. Cohen and Mr. Arnold Lunn at the Conway Hall. But neither appear to be aware that Mr. Cohen said anything. At least nothing appears.

Last Sunday was a terrible day for weather all over the country. In spite of this there were two good meetings at Stockport to listen to Mr. Cohen, and marked attention was given to what he had to say. The Stockport Branch is doing some excellent work, and is keeping the National Secular Society well before the public. We earnestly commend it to the attention of all Freethinkers in the neighbourhood.

A very good report of a recent lecture by Mr. A. D. McLaren on "Young England and Freethought," delivered to the Metropolitan Secular Society, appears in the *St. Pancras Gazette* for October 21. It was an excellent lecture, and the report which thus reaches a much wider audience than the one that listened to it will do good, bringing sound views of life before those who are not likely to get it through the ordinary channels. We congratulate the editor on his courage in publishing the address.

We are sorry to hear from the daughter of an old friend, J. C. Thomas (Keridon), that her father was lying very seriously ill at his home in North London. Mr. Thomas was always a welcome contributor to these columns, and his articles were marked by a carefulness and a thoroughness of thought that did credit to the writer, and helped to clarify and instruct the reader. We fear there is very little hope of his complete recovery, but the good wishes of all who know him and his work will be with him on his bed of sickness.

The Birkenhead (Wirral) Branch N.S.S. has prepared an interesting syllabus of lectures to be held in the Engineers' Hall, Price Street, Birkenhead, near Hamilton Square. Mr. R. H. Rosetti opens the course to-day (Sunday) with two lectures. At 3.0 p.m. he will speak on "The Churches and the Next War," and at 7.0 p.m., on "The God men of Science Believe in." The Branch is putting up a splendid fight against local bigotry, and deserves the support of all Freethinkers in the area.

Manchester saints are reminded that Dr. C. H. R. Carmichael will speak for the local N.S.S. Branch in the Engineers' Hall, Rusholme Road, Manchester, to-day (Sunday) at 3.0 and 6.30 p.m. Dr. Carmichael is a gifted speaker with matter which is always good, and manner always peasant. The afternoon subject will be "Is Determinism Depressing?" and for the evening "The Test of Civilization." We hope every opportunity to introduce Christian friends will be taken by the local Freethinkers.

Mr. E. C. Saphin visits Liverpool to-day (Sunday) on behalf of the Liverpool (Merseyside) Branch N.S.S. and will lecture in the Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool (Entrance in Christian Street), at 7.0 p.m., on "Does Christ Matter?" His many friends in Liverpool will see that Mr. Saphin has a full hall on this occasion.

On Wednesday, November 2, Mr. A. D. McLaren will address the Luton Branch of the Independent Labour Party, on "Religion and the Class State." The meeting will be held at the Oxford Hall, Union Street, Luton, at 8.0 p.m., with Mr. W. Ritchie in the chair. Members of the general public are invited. Discussion is to follow the address, and we feel confident in promising those who attend, an interesting and instructive evening.

The *Ancoats Herald* is true to the newspaper tradition where the *Freethinker* is concerned. A writer in the *Herald* deals with two recent articles which appeared in these columns. But he refers to the *Freethinker* as "a certain publication." It would be better to mention it by name. Of all the cowardly things that ever crawled the earth Christianity stands second to none.

▲ Post-Ottawa Conference.

AN APOCRYPHICAL RETROSPECT OF A CENTURY HENCE.

In the present year, namely 2032 A.D., we take leave to draw our readers attention to some incidents, now almost quite forgotten, which nevertheless have a bearing on the course of history during the past century.

FOLLOWING the now famous landmark in history, the first Economic Conference of the British Commonwealth, the heads of two of the component States realized the probability of its permanent solidification into one homogenous unit, in which case there would be extreme danger of their own personal importance not being properly recognized—an Intolerable Situation.

Secret arrangements were made to hold an anti-economic conference at some place out of reach of wireless and reporters. Difficult to find such a place even in those days. Eventually the island of Fernando de Noronha was selected, Tristan da Cunha being rather out of reach. A proposal by one of these two, by name Val Devera, that one Gander should be invited to the Conference, was firmly objected to by the other, Wartshog, who said they were intensely relieved indeed when he shook the dust of die Kaap off his sandals and returned to his own country. In any case, as he was then unable to move freely on account of some restriction of his movements by the then Government of that country, his inclusion was impossible in practice.

A British cruiser was commandeered by Wartshog from Peter's Bay Naval Station, while Val Devera seized a destroyer in Korc Harbour. On landing, they had a week's provisions put ashore, and instructed the captains to cruise round, and call again in a week to pick them up.

The first business was to decide in what "medium" the conversations and decisions should be recorded. Wartshog moved for the new language they had made since he became Headman—called Frikkans. Though only a sprinkling of people at one end of the Continent of Frikka spoke it, it was bound to become a world language, being compounded of Malay words, Portuguese, Bantu, English, and very very low Nieder-Deutsch. Being the first Great Event to be so recorded, it would become a document of historic importance. Val Devera said that Erc was an ancient and honourable language, and to use any other would be an insult at the start to the land of Ira. A great advantage of either would be that the affair could be perfectly well kept secret owing to their being unknown outside their respective countries. Then it was suggested that they should have it in both, a "dual medium."

One difficulty soon became clear, however, namely that neither could understand the other when he spoke in his own medium, except Val Devera who had once heard when a boy the word "Verdommdt." They made better progress in English.

The Big Idea was to find a means of depriving England of some essential product—a blockade in fact. Wartzie—let us call him that for short—at once proposed to prohibit the export of gold, in which his country was rich, and thus bring England to her knees. Vally pointed out that England was "off" that product, Wartzie apparently not having realized that fact though it was just a year old. And so was Ira, she did not want their filthy lucre in any case. If he seriously proposed that, look at the effect it would have on the hoard of gold stored up by their friends in Amerigo. This would all be rendered useless. England would find some other counter for

such purposes as required for trade. In fact he knew that they had already a secret alloy called "Tinsilco" ready for use in certain circumstances. No! They would have to discover something really vital before British trade was stopped. (Note! this connects up with the date of the mysterious disappearance of the precious metal from business use in civilization.)

Many things were suggested during the next few days, but with no more likelihood of success until Wartzie had a real brain wave. We will stop the export of Chinkerinchees he said brightly. Vally enquired what kind of cheese that was, as it was new to him. Wartzie said it was not cheese at all, it was an unique flower, a product of the Peninsula, whose blooms had the property of remaining fresh for six months. It was exported at Christmas-time to England, where the younger old-maids who influenced politics very largely in those days (there are no old maids, of course, now) went quite cranky in raptures over its white purity. It would be such a blow to them that they would get up a Party to yield all the demands of the Anti-British. Then Vally said, we will back that up by stopping the export of four-leaved clovers and rockshams. When our boys over the water can't get that on their Saint's day, the doom of the Commonwealth will be sealed.

Things looked very rosy by this time, and amity reigned supreme. Then they thought of the management of the new Republic! A President would be required. There was a distinct pause in the proceedings here, during which each was thinking what a natural and courteous action it would be for the other to propose himself for the office. They waited; and nothing further happened on That score.

The next idea was put by Vally to the effect that it would be necessary to have the Pappa's Blessing to the scheme, in fact, they would have to have the Ar See religion officially. At the mention of the Pappa, Wartzie's face darkened visibly. He said emphatically that the Book, and nothing but the Book and every word of it, interpreted of course by the Dee Ar Church, would be permitted by him and his people. Heresy and the Pappa were the same things to him. At the word "heresy" Vally blazed up, and used words which might be best represented by the old tag "tu quoque," that is, when condensed into their meaning only.

After the recent period of rest, not to say repression of their natural gifts of vituperation, the temperature began to rise rapidly. Wartzie missing his favourite mark, General Stums, to accuse of "stirring up violence in the country," laid this charge against Vally. That gentleman wished fervently that he had brought his buckthorn weapon and Wartzie wanted a disselboom to destroy his enemy with. It is sad to relate that they did have a scuffle, and scratched each other's faces quite freely.

This religious problem cropping up had dissipated the former feelings of enthusiasm in their common hate. Had Gander been there with his preachings of Civil Disobedience it would have completed another eternal triangle, not a sex triangle, though.

But by this time, the week had elapsed, and they began scanning the ocean for their ships. Nothing was to be seen on the blue, and when provisions ran out, they also became of the same hue. Wartzie gathered some winkles, whilst Vally gathered some sparse shrubs for a fire. Gradually they developed a Robinson Crusoe existence. Matches ran out, also razor blades. In about three months, each possessed a facial doormat, and when some three years later a tramp steamer found them, there were two beings like twins with black beady eyes and long noses like that of the aardvark protruding above this hirsute adornment. They might even have been taken, in the dis-

tance, for a front view of wildebeeste. The captain mistook them for members of some primitive race, but speaking English fluently (Frikkans and Eric had dropped completely out) they insisted that they came from Ira and de Kaap, and were in no way related. They did not like to mention the reason of their being there together and wished to get back home quickly.

The captain happening to belong to that race which accept statements at their face value with extreme caution, enquired what part of these countries they belonged to (he, of course, not realizing that the solution of a great Mystery was under his nose). Both, in a dead heat, exclaimed—"The Free State." So the pawky man replied, well if its the Free State you both want why not stay where you are. You can't both come from the Free State and yet different countries. Wartzie quickly exclaimed, mine is the Orange Free State. At that word Vallys already deeply melanoid complexion took on a darker shade. But the risk of remaining in that too realistic free state being apparent he realized that it was no time to get "all het up" over a word, and pleaded humbly to be taken off. So the captain, remarking, "well, you come from Free States, you've been living in the free state, I suppose you are Freethinkers like me," shipped them as Supercargo.

Fearing complications on arrival after such a lapse of time, they considered it wisest not to shave, but had their hair and beards trimmed. It was well they did. Wartzie found Taffel Bay bustling with shipping, not derelict as when he left it. In fact, die Kaap had gone off the gold standard exactly a week after he left.

Vally got into Korc once more, and also found things had changed. The farmers were more prosperous even than in the days of Bosgrave. He could hardly believe it when he learned that North and South had voluntarily united. How could that be? The explanation was quite simple; they had made an agreement that the word "religion" was never to be mentioned, and this had been honourably observed on both sides.

No one had worried or cared even what had become of the lost "First Servants," and each thought in his heart, what a pity the Conference was ruined by religion cropping up, otherwise their plan was perfect.

It soon became clear however that the Ottawa Conference had been the first step to the restoration of confidence and unity to a world doubting everything, even its own existence.

So there was nothing for them to do but to retire and live a quiet life. It is believed they discovered, quite independently, in analysing the situation, that one Aristotle some thousands of years previously had pointed out, that because certain people have an antipathy to a common object, that they are necessarily in close agreement on other matters is a quite unjustifiable and superficial assumption.

And another thing they learned was from a still more ancient author, called Æsop, who had a story about a dog with a bone called "Independence" in his mouth, but on seeing the shadow of a similar dog in the water with a similar bone, got so jealous that he dropped the one he had into the deep water, and so lost it for ever.

NOTE.—We awoke recently in the middle of the night after a vivid dream about this affair, to find ourselves wondering: WHY did those two captains not return as instructed at the end of the week? But on becoming fully awake we at once realized the explanation lay in the existence of the psychological mechan-

ism which enables us to forget, conveniently, those items we are not particularly anxious to remember.

HUGH ETSON.

Drama and Dramatists

"... People are ready to surrender themselves to witty thumps on the back, breast, and sides; all except the head: and it is there that he aims. He must be subtle to penetrate. A corresponding acuteness must exist to welcome him..."—George Meredith.

This is an age of satire. The free spirits struggling to express truths in such a way that they cannot be misunderstood are almost reduced to impotence unless alleviated through the safety valve of satire. Good men will realize the depth of despair to which our choicest spirits are brought when they have no other medium. One is reminded of Juvenal, who wrote at a time when one of the greatest civilizations was in a process of decay. In his fourteenth satire he expressed then what most thinking men can now see with their own eyes, and there is truth in his words:—

"Quit then the plays! The farce of life supplies
A scene more comic in the sage's eyes.
For who amuses most?—The man who springs,
Light, through the hoop, and on the tight-rope swings;
Or he, who, to a fragile bark confined;
Dwells on the deep, the sport of wave and wind?
Foolhardy wretch! Scrambling for every bale
Of stinking merchandise, exposed to sale."

The lukewarm praise of Mr. Bernard Shaw's latest play, "Too True to be Good" was sufficiently suspicious to make me interested, and as a labour of love and for your delight, I have set down the following impressions.

In the first act the patient is in bed with German measles, and the unending fancy of the dramatist has personified a germ and made it vocal on the stage. There is some exquisite fooling in the bedroom, and the scene in its whimsical mood underpinned with commonsense, is almost like an extract from the Arabian Nights. In the course of this act, Shaw delivers most of his pet gibes at doctors, which to all Shavians have now become commonplace, but they lose little of their truth on this account. The entrance of the nurse is no less mirth-provoking than at a later time the entrance of her lover through the window as a burglar. It had been arranged between the nurse and her lover to steal a pearl necklace, but again, the daring spirit of comedy gives this part of the plot a fresh turn, and the patient, whom we are led to suppose has miraculously recovered through the spartan treatment of the nurse, agrees to set forth on a great adventure with the shady pair.

The second act is a sea beach in a mountainous country, and here the burglar's companion, who has the magnificent record of being faithful to him for ten days, is masquerading as a countess. The patient is a native servant and the burglar, who was also an ex-clergyman, is now seen making a Greek chorus to his two female companions. The plot at this point is as untidy as a ball of worsted after a kitten has finished with it. There is wild talk of brigands who do not exist, ransom which is all bunkum, and on the least pretence, and on no pretence whatever, the burglar-clergyman will deliver a speech on any subject on earth. The fun increases in tempo on the entrance of an impossible military character, Colonel Tallboys, D.S.O., and there is some first-rate clowning between the spurious countess and this man of sound and fury. In this act, the brigands who do not exist are sighted making an advance on the small military outpost. They are successfully routed through the directions given by Private Meek, not altogether an impossible private, as men of the last war may recognize. Colonel Tallboys has a passion for water-colour painting; in his efforts to find privacy for this artistic occupation, he is harassed by the patient's mother who has come to look for her lost daughter. In the third act, exasperated by her chatter, the Colonel gives her a bash on the head with an umbrella, which apparently turns her into a normal human being.

The setting of this last act is somewhat grotesque, but this is soon forgotten through following the dynamic blows that Shaw delivers at a lot of current nonsense in the world of art, literature and politics. A sergeant struggling with the Bible and the *Pilgrim's Progress* only darkens counsel, and for those who care for a good laugh from the stomach upwards, there seems to be more of a solution to the sergeant's doubts and perplexities in the arms of the wayward countess who is out for a bit of fun. Although Shaw's presentation of his ideas of Atheism are his own, Bacon has ideas on the subject much better, and probably Coleridge will be remembered in his famous statement "that there was not one man in a thousand good enough to be an Atheist." For the fun provided, we are grateful—even for a travesty of an Atheist, and the direction of the play at this point is about as clear as Southend mud. Shaw can eloquently and dramatically tell us what is wrong, which is almost superfluous.

We are, at this time, in the words of Matthew Arnold, "wandering between two worlds, one dead, the other waiting to be born." The fate that befalls all dramatists has not been escaped in this play, for whilst Shaw has stressed the things that are wrong, his way out is delivered magnificently by Mr. Cedric Hardwicke, which is no way out at all, and Shaw's failure is magnificent. He has worked to death the old trick of having a foot in many camps, and the result is that wood cannot be seen for trees.

England is ostensibly a Christian country, and Christianity has been in the saddle firmly and at some points tyrannically so; the last War was supported by official representatives of Christianity, and the only writers and speakers who cannot be called on to eat their words made no profession of following the Prince of Peace. It is, therefore, utterly beside the point to attribute any breakdown of society to Atheism, which "leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation."

In this play Shaw has not forgotten his master Nietzsche, whose standard of criticism when told that a thing was good was "Good for what?" We have in the last act a spectacle of a woman in roaring and boisterous health, and the dramatist is unable to tell her what to do with it. Freethinkers will be well-advised to see this play, which is going on tour, and if this cannot be done, to purchase it in a cheap paper edition. There is much good sense to be found in "Too True to be Good," and at times we may hear Shaw the old man eloquent at white heat with rage and indignation at humanity's inability to grow up. It is the same with other writers and speakers not having Shaw's notoriety. One of the hardest tasks that a man may undertake is that of making "the unready mind recognize the obvious," but the fight is worth it, the struggle gives some meaning to this poor flash of sense called Life, and work of this description in a vast world that has not reached a fully conscious stage is one of the few noble tasks left to real men who do not desire futility to be written as their epitaph.

The company presenting this play gave of their best. The nurse, acted by Miss Ellen Pollock, was a performance to be remembered with joy; her versatility was beyond praise—her part enabled one to understand the comedy of life by thinking. Mr. Cedric Hardwicke as the burglar, ex-clergyman, a walking and sitting verbosity incited one to yell with laughter in the first two acts, but his magnificent oratory in the third set me wondering when the time would come for him to take the part of Hamlet—for the sake of a standard for the rising generation. Mr. Shaw has annoyed the stalls, probably with his version of "inefficient fertilizers." That old villain Carlyle, said the same thing in a little known epitaph on the body of John Smith.

C-DE-B.

A thing is not vulgar merely because it is common.
W. Hazlitt.

Wisdom is like salt to meat, it gives a flavour to the written or spoken word.—Anon.

Biology and Purpose.

SINCE the time of Darwin strenuous efforts have been made to connect the idea of evolution with that of purpose. Molecule—crystal—protozoa—amoeba—fish—reptile—vertebrate—man; surely there is a purpose being worked out! (the argument runs).

There is an unwholesome egoism behind such arguments. Consider:—

1. The present situation of the planet Earth in relation to its sun is such that living phenomena have increased in complexity throughout its known history.

2. Therefore the universe manifests design and purpose.

The argument clearly overlooks two points, namely (a) that some planets may be undergoing dissolution, not evolution; and (b) that life on this planet is doomed to extinction.

But the argument can be met, not only on such broad grounds, but by the findings of current biological investigation. Darwin, his colleagues, and his successors, used such terms as heredity, variation, selection and adaptation as though these were principles beyond analysis, something like Euclid's axioms, to be taken for granted. This enabled the believers in purpose to come forward and say, "These principles of heredity, variation, etc., are the instruments by which the purposive agent works. They are the tools of evolution in the hands of a Great Evolver."¹

Heredity, or, as Darwin stated it, "the strong principle of inheritance," was responsible for handing over the father's goods to the son.

Variation saw to it that what was good enough for the father was *not quite* good enough for the son, who was always *slightly* different.

Selection answered for the survival of those who would best serve the evolutionary purpose.

Adaptation answered for the protection of life.²

And with these the march of evolution battled on its way. Something other than "blind matter" was at work. The four "principles" were used as premises which would enable us to predict conclusions. Soon evolution became entangled in ethical terminology.

But such notions have been completely upset by later research. Heredity, variation, selection and adaptation are not unexplorable and uninterpretable parts of the logical structure of biology. They are now recognized as scientific concepts—definitions of classes of properties, which await investigation. Here are a number of things about which we should like to know more; we invent a word—say "adaptation." For the older biologist this word solved the problem, *and incidentally made room for the believer in purpose*. The biologist to-day does not fall into the trap. He says, "I shall use this term as a concept, but I am going to analyse the properties it covers, and show how they are dependent on known (and sometimes humanly controllable) forces, and not on external agencies like a Great Evolver." We hope next to indicate how these concepts have been tackled in modern biology.

G. H. TAYLOR.

¹ Mr. Joad, Profs. Flint and Momerie are examples.

² "The idea of adaptation . . . should be adopted by physiology as its basal principle . . . life is conserved by adaptation." (Lovatt Evans—a lecture.)

It is not very easy to get rid of any book once it is published.—*Augustine Birrell*.

Literature—the most seductive, the most deceiving, the most dangerous of professions.—*Burke*.

I search after truth by which man never yet was harmed.—*Marcus Aurelius*.

Christian Logic.

THE queer nebulous mixture of muddled emotion which the average Christian labels "thought" is well known to all of us, and, but for the fact that the example which this article describes was perpetuated by a so-called "educated" man, it would not be worth consideration.

One expects a man of no education, and one, also, who has been raised in a Christian household, to have no idea of the very necessary distinction between cause and effect, but one does expect a science teacher in a great school, a Master of Science of a British University, and a Fellow of the Institute of Chemistry to boot, to have some elementary notion of these things. However, we shall see.

The argument which gave rise to the present writing occurred some weeks ago, and the gentleman described above was heard to express an opinion that one example which had always convinced him of the benevolence and general decent trend of providence, and made him sure that behind all this universe of ours there was a good god working, was the way in which water changes into ice.

Most readers are probably aware that water, just before it freezes, does not contract on cooling, as most things do, and as water itself does over all other ranges of temperature, but it expands. From about four degrees centigrade down to the freezing point, water expands as it cools.

The main result of this is that water does not freeze from the bottom of a pond or a river upwards, but from the top downwards, and the first skin of ice that forms acts as a protecting layer, which stops freezing from going on to any considerable depth, except in very severe weather.

The argument which was so amazingly convincing to this scientific Christian was this, then: if water did not show this curious expansion at this particular temperature, our streams, our rivers and our ponds, would be frozen from top to bottom after a few days frost. Therefore, the good god afore-mentioned, has decreed that this shall be so, in order that his creatures, the fishes, shall not be killed by a few days of hard weather.

Evolution apparently meant nothing to this gentleman. It did not occur to him that our present species of fish would never have evolved at all, had it not been for this peculiar property of water. Nor did he know, apparently, that certain other liquids, notably molten iron, exhibit the same peculiar property.

One wonders what creatures are intended, according to his philosophy, to live in molten iron!

Voltaire was supposed to have said that, since spectacles fit noses so well, clearly the nose was placed on our face in order to bear spectacles! That argument, one would imagine, would appeal to our scientific friend.

JOHN ROWLAND.

EARLY DRAMA.

From the beginning of literary history people have been interested in dramatic representation. Early forms of poetry are dramatic in their effect; the epics, the sagas, are dramatic accounts of the heroes of antiquity. The celebrations which most nations have held at May Day, Christmas Day, and other festivals were dramatic in their conception. The whole life of the community was centred upon them. The Church has always been interested in them to some extent, and many of its great celebrations are essentially dramatic. So much so, that out of them came the Tropes, which were dramatic representations of Biblical or religious incidents. . . .

The guilds were responsible for the production of these mystery plays. They became the event of the town, and a good deal of organization and payment was undertaken in order to render these plays a success. One favourite subject for these plays was the Flood, in which Noah's wife was featured as a comic character. The Creation, The Massacre of the Innocents, The Raising of Lazarus, The Trial of Christ—these were some of the other subjects that were depicted. . . .

From these mystery plays developed the sixteenth century drama with Shakespeare at its climax.

E. H. Grant (in "Pitman's Journal.")

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—May I be allowed to comment on your editorial notes relating to the *Outline for Boys and Girls*, and the letter from Christian leaders circulated to the press?

You observe that the worst part of the letter is that dealing with the Soviet and the family. Let me then first refer to what you say on that point. You maintain that the material chapter in the *Outline* is merely a dispassionate account of one of the various forms of family life, and you protest strongly against the statement in the letter that the book "apparently approves" of the "destruction" of the family. But "family life" in common speech has come to mean life organized in groups centred round a man and a woman permanently associated, and it is not disputed that the Soviet régime is strongly tending to make the lifelong association of a man and a woman the exception rather than the rule: one reason for this is stated by the writer in the *Outline* himself. This change may be good or bad: but surely it is true that, for better or worse, family life as hitherto understood is in fact being altered out of recognition—destroyed—in Russia. As for the approval of the writers in the *Outline*, that appears from the letter of Miss Mitchison and Mr. Gollancz now published in the press. They say truly that some things had to be omitted (hence presumably the authors included whatever they felt to be most significant). They proceed. "We know there is nothing in the book which could do anything but make children saner, healthier, happier, better citizens of the world and of the future." This statement may not mean that the authors actually approve of the Russian developments described, but surely it implies "apparent approval," such as the writers of the letter suggested.

The letter also contained the passage: "We appeal to those who are teachers of revealed religions to do nothing to assist the wide circulation of works of a distinctly Atheistic and even anti-theistic character." You interpret this appeal as a warning to booksellers and newspapers to expect reprisals if they give wide publicity to the book. But the real meaning of the passage is surely different. The writers of the letter point out earlier, that this book professes to give an outline of history, but it ignores Jesus. Yet his life and death have been for better or worse the most potent happenings in the past two thousand years. A child who grows up with the idea that Christianity has not been significant, and can now be left out of account, will have an unbalanced view of history and the life of the world to-day. The writers of the letter make it clear that their protest is not against the opinions in the book, but against the commendation by those who are themselves professed teachers of revealed religion of a book likely to create that distortion of the child's view of history and the modern world. The writers say no more. It is to teachers of revealed religions alone that the appeal is addressed. There is no reference expressed or implied to the position of newspapers and booksellers. Further, the appeal is an appeal and not a threat. The closing lines of the letter suggest the real duty of Christians, whose only weapon—it is stated—should be deeper faithfulness to their own mission. Is this an attempt to muzzle opponents? Can it be construed as a threat?

This controversy has become important, because of the suggestion that the letter from the Christian leaders was dishonest and unscrupulous. Knowing as I do your strong stand for fairness in the expression of opinion, I appeal to you with some confidence to attempt to find space in your columns for my letter.

F. HAROLD DEAN.

[Mr. Dean's interpretation of the letter in question is based on its face value. But those who know the Christian policy with regard to publications and those who display them will, we think, agree with what we said. "Don't put him under the pump," is advice that no one would take at its face value. That is the only point in Mr. Dean's letter with which we are at present concerned. To say that the Russian plan is destroying the family "as hitherto understood," is begging the question. A change in the form of the family is not the destruction of the family. For the rest we refer Mr. Dean to the "Views and Opinions" in this issue for a sample of Christian policy.—EDITOR.]

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (New Morris Hall, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham, S.W.4, near Clapham North Station, Hall No. 5): 7.30, Mrs. Janet Chance—"The Romance of Reality."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Sunday, October 30. W. Stephen Sanders—"Disarmament and Unemployment." Questions invited.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D. Lit.—"The Contributions of the Artist to Civilization."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, October 31, Mr. A. D. McLaren will speak on "Explanations."

THE CONWAY DISCUSSION CIRCLE (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.) : 7.0, Tuesday, November 1, Israel Cohen—"The Position in Palestine."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel 107 York Road, N.): 7.0, Mr. Ratcliffe v. Mr. Reg. Stamp—"Is Materialism Sound?"

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Sunday, October 30, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 3.30, Messrs. Bryant and A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Tuson and Le Maine. Every Wednesday at 7.30, Messrs. Tuson and Le Maine. Every Friday, at 7.30, Messrs. Bryant and Le Maine. The *Freethinker* and other Pioneer Literature can be bought during and after our meetings of Mr. Dunn outside the Park in Bayswater Road.

WOOLWICH BRANCH N.S.S. ("Queen's Arms," Lecture Hall): 7.30, Sunday, October 30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan—"Society and Superstition."

OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, October 30, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Monday, October 31, South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Mr. L. Ebury.

WOOLWICH BRANCH N.S.S. (Beresford Square): 11.30, Sunday, October 30, Mr. G. Mead.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, Price Street, Birkenhead, near Hamilton Square): 3.0, Sunday, October 30, Mr. R. H. Rosetti (London), General Secretary N.S.S.—"The Churches and the Next War." 7.0, "The God Men of Science Believe in."

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Cafe, Godwin Street): 7.30, Sunday, October 30, Members Meeting.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Sunday, October 30, Mr. Fred Hill (Brusfield)—"Heathens Thoughts on Christianity." Questions. Discussion. All welcome.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (City Hall, Albion Street, No. 2 Room): 6.30, Sunday, October 30, R. White—"Douglas Social Credit and the Press." Questions and discussion. Silver collection.

LICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Sunday, October 30, Mr. Ernest Thurtle—"Organized Religion and Our Liberties."

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, Sunday, October 30, R. C. Saphin (London)—"Does Christ Matter?" Reserved Seats Sixpence. *Freethinkers* on sale.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S.—Social and Dance will be held at the Washington Hotel, Lime Street, Liverpool, on Saturday, November 5, from 7.30 to 11.0 p.m. Tickets (not including refreshments) 1s. each.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, Rusholme, Manchester): 3.0, Dr. C. H. R. Carmichael—"Is Determinism Depressing?" 6.30, "The Test of Civilization."

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N.S.S. (Socialist Club, Pilgrim Street): 3.0, Sunday, October 30. Members Meeting. Bigg Market, 7.30 (weather permitting), Mr. R. Atkinson.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Hall No. 5, Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus): 7.0, Sunday, October 30, Mr. J. Mackenzie—"Artifice in Human Society."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Buildings, Green Street): 7.30, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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