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Views and Opinions.

John M. Robertson.

THE death of John M. Robertson—The Right Hon. John Mackinnon Robertson, to give him his full name and title—was not unexpected to those who had been in close touch with him. Personally, I met him very infrequently, and when I last spoke to him, a few weeks ago, I was shocked at the change that had taken place in him since our previous meeting. He had aged greatly, and gave one the impression of a man breaking up. About a fortnight before his death he wrote me that he was feeling better, but the doctor had cut his working hours down to four daily, a resolution which I imagine was not very easily kept by so hard a worker. Some time back he had a "stroke," which prevented his doing any work at all for some time, and another last week ended in his death on Thursday, January 5. The first notice of his death came to all but his family in the newspapers of Saturday, January 7, owing, one suspects, to a message sent to the Press Association. Only a handful of friends were thus able to be present to pay a silent tribute of respect to one to whom the Free-thought Cause owed much. At the request of the family the cremation was unaccompanied by any ceremony. Family wishes must be respected on such occasions, but one feels that in the case of a man whose whole life has been identified with public work of one or another kind, the feelings of the public are also deserving of consideration, and most would, I think, have liked a few words of appreciation of the man whom they honoured in death as in life.

* * *

A Strenuous Life.

John M. Robertson was born in the Island of Arran on November 14, 1856. His schooling was ended by the time he was thirteen, and he made his first definite essay in journalism in connexion with the Edinburgh *Evening News*, on which paper he attained the position of leader writer when just over twenty years of age. In 1884 he came to London to assist Charles

Bradlaugh in the conduct of the *National Reformer*, and continued, either as a sub-editor or as editor until the cessation of the paper in 1893. Then followed the *Free Review*, which was sold after a brief existence, and was transformed into the *University Magazine*. From the late '80's until his death he poured out a stream of articles, books, and pamphlets on a variety of subjects social, political, literary, religious, and economic, which when looked at as a whole leaves one amazed at the industry, the research, and the learning exhibited. I have not a complete collection of his works, but what I have make a very stately and imposing row, and an output of which any man might well feel proud. I am not able to estimate the exact value of the many volumes he turned out on the Shakespeare canon, but I have seen them referred to by Shakespearian critics as works that cannot be ignored by scholars, and they certainly display, even to a casual reader such as myself, an acquaintance with Elizabethan literature, a power of criticism, and a literary judgment that alone would establish a reputation. No man I know of had as wide a range, and few have handled with greater distinction any of the subjects dealt with.

After the death of the *National Reformer* he entered the field of practical politics, and after one or two unsuccessful attempts to enter Parliament, he became member for the Tyneside Division in 1906. In 1911 he became Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Board of Trade, and held that Post until the Coalition Government of 1915. He was then made a member of the Privy Council. He could not help making a mark in the House of Commons; even in that assembly a man of first-rate intellect must be noted although he may not always be honoured; but in my judgment a man of his ability and character was out of place there. Eminence in politics is not gained by fearlessness of speech, independence of thought, and a sense of rigid justice. Parliament should be left for lesser men, and I for one was not unpleased when he ceased to be the Member for Tyneside. What was lost to the House of Commons was gained by the Cause of human enlightenment.

* * *

Our Glorious Press.

For the moment I will pass to another matter. I have pointed out on several occasions that in this country we have a very convenient way of burying eminent Freethinkers. If a man's Freethought cannot be hidden we bury the man and his name, so that with each generation only a declining number know anything about him. If his name cannot be thus buried, that is if it must be kept alive because it will turn up in connexion with subjects other than a criticism of religious beliefs, then, as was the case with Leigh Hunt, Robert Owen, and others, we dwell upon these other aspects and he lives with the Free-

thinking part of him—invariably the better part—unknown. Thus the Atheism of Charles Bradlaugh could not be hidden. He was in his day the great protagonist of Atheism, and Charles Bradlaugh's Freethought will show itself to anybody who tries to know anything about him. Hence Bradlaugh's political and social work runs a good chance of being overlooked along with an ignoring of his Atheism. With John M. Robertson his literary and sociological work has gained general recognition, and already I detect a tendency to exalt the politician, the sociologist and the man of letters and to ignore the Freethinker. The fact that he was a Freethinker from first to last is ignored. Instead of a Freethinker with a wide range of subjects at his command, he must be made a man with a wide range of subjects who held Freethought opinions—for a time.

Thus, of all the papers I have seen, and most papers had an obituary notice, sometimes a lengthy one, only one had the courage to head it "Leading Freethinker Dead." This was the *News-Chronicle*. The *Manchester Guardian* toned it down to "A Great Rationalist of the Old School." Rationalist might mean anything, and the rest of the heading implies that with him the "Old School"—whatever that may mean—of Freethought died, and so Freethought also. The *Star* solaces its readers with the heading "Made Faith of Unbelief," which I suppose is intended to convey the hint that if Robertson got rid of one religion he adopted another in its place, and so made the necessity of some religion quite clear. The *Manchester Guardian* also says, perhaps with the idea of suggesting that Robertson got rid of his Atheism quite early, that he joined Bradlaugh in 1884 and continued to work on the *National Reformer* for the next three years. Robertson remained with Bradlaugh until his death, and did what he could to keep the paper alive after Bradlaugh's death. Robertson's interest in Freethought never flagged, and he continued to pour out works on Christian origins and general Freethought until he produced his *History of Freethought*, only three years ago.

But the *Guardian* must certainly be given the palm for the most "cock-eyed" expression I have seen for some time. It says that Robertson's "Agnosticism was not a doubt, it was definite and even aggressive certainty." Now Agnosticism was one of those half-hearted words against which, along with other compromising terms, Robertson launched some of his most characteristic criticisms. What is an Agnosticism that is without doubt? The users of the term have always protested that it stands for doubt and nothing but doubt. If it was certainty then it was certain that there was nothing to be known about God, and that there was no God to know anything about. It would certainly have been easier but very un-English to say that Robertson was an Atheist, although he proclaimed himself to be such hundreds of times, and never, to my knowledge disclaimed it. I expect that if Robertson had lived in infamy and died in disgrace, everyone of these papers would have advertised him as a hopeless and unrepentant Atheist. As he was what he was, the game is to make as little of his Atheism as possible.

* * *

A Great Teacher.

And now when I turn my head and face the solid row of about fifty volumes which is my constant reminder of the work of J. M. Robertson, I feel that there is here an abiding testimony to his power of original research. Only those who know what research in new fields mean, only those who can appreciate the value of careful reasoning and painstaking conclu-

sions, can pay proper homage to that mass of learning. Much of what he did was pioneer work, and for that reason must one day be done over again, but it must always be borne in mind that the hardest work always lies with the pioneers. Like all leading Freethinkers J. M. Robertson has blazed the trail along which others will tread with greater ease and march with greater safety. His determination thoroughly to expose an error often led him into many paths not urgently relevant to the main point in hand, and for that reason some of his readers would be unable to see the wood for the trees, but to those with the faculty for the enjoyment of critical reading his writings offer a rare feast. Even when one disagrees with the conclusions reached, his work has the profitable quality of suggesting counter theories and of opening up new trains of thought. In some directions, such as his account of Christian origins, I believe his account to be substantially true, and to be a valuable contribution to the subject. While for a really shapely work, one of the most graceful among his books, I would single out his *Saxon and the Celt*, published as far back as 1897.

He was not as a rule a graceful, or even an attractive writer. This was mainly, I think, because his chief interest was to remove error and to establish truth, and because he chiefly sought to do this by way of criticism. But he was an extremely forceful writer, and when he had finished a subject there were few new lines left for exploration, however much one might feel that it might be expanded or amended. He was as fearful as was Spinoza of the distorting influence of passion or feeling. And that he was capable of real excellence could be seen, and his style would have been more flexible and more attractive to the average reader if he could have dropped the critic for a time and taken on the exponent. Yet when he forgets the critic in the man, and permits his feelings to speak through a logical intellect he is capable of real and moving eloquence. I have space for but two examples. Dealing with the evolution of the sacrifice of the God and its real meaning in the evolution of the race, he says:—

If to die as a human sacrifice for human beings be to deserve the highest human reverence, the true Christs of the world are to be numbered not by units, but by millions. Every inhabited land on this globe has during whole ages drunk their annually shed blood . . . Of these miserable victims of insane religion, the vast majority were "innocent" even by the code that sacrificed them; and of the rest, in comparison, with those who slew them, who shall now predicate "guilt?" Thus have nameless men and women done, millions of times, what is credited to the fabulous Jesus of the Christian gospels; they have verily laid down their lives for the sin of many, and while the imaginary sacrifice has been made the pretext of a historic religion during two thousand years, the real sacrifices are uncommemorated save as infinitesimals in the records of anthropology. Twenty literatures vociferously proclaim the myth, and rivers of tears have been shed at the recital of it, while the monstrous and inexpugnable truth draws at most a shudder from the student, when his conceptual knowledge becomes for him at moments a lightning-flash of concrete vision through the measureless vista of the human past.

And in concluding his lecture on Herbert Spencer, written in 1891:—

. . . Who in our day widened and consolidated our knowledge as he has done? And what surer contribution is there than that to the reconstruction of life? So imperishable is the service that our last words must needs be the acknowledgment of it. In the name of those who endorse all the criticisms we have passed on what we reckon the perishable part of the thinker's work, do we finally turn and say: Hail, spiritual Father and honoured

Master, who first trained us to shape our path through the forest by the eternal guidance of suns and stars; though we must needs turn against you the barriers you have raised, the gymnastic you yourself have given, and the woodcraft you yourself have taught, yet would we claim to hold ourselves of your great lineage still; and when we in turn grow "wan with many memories," it is your name and not another's that we shall hand to our children as that of the foremost founder of the new line, the greatest herald of the new age.

That I hold to be genuine eloquence in which the thought marches step by step with the expression and grace and strength are equally mated. Those of us who have known the real John Mackinnon Robertson will hail his name as that of one who, even in disagreement, has impressed upon the world the valuable lesson of facing facts, and so made even the blunders and superstitions of mankind factors in its upward evolution.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Miracles and Miracles.

MR. ARNOLD LUNN has invited Mr. Cohen to a debate on the general question whether miracles do or do not occur. There is little doubt that, if the debate is arranged, those who may have the good fortune to attend will be entertained, even if they are not converted, by the viewpoints which will be expressed by one or other of the protagonists. In view of this challenge it might appear to be prejudicial, or at least somewhat previous, to publish any comments on the subject beforehand. But since there is no guarantee that the debate will take place at all, and since the issue is not legally *sub judice*, there is nothing to prevent the eager advocate from attempting to sway the non-existent jury out of court. Fortunately he is in no danger of being arraigned for "contempt."

These considerations, combined with a feeling that whatever I may have to say on the subject is unlikely to mar the effective exposition of anyone else's argument, persuade me to give utterance to a train of thought that refuses to be suppressed. For I am prepared to defend both attitudes towards miracles and to declare, with my hand on my heart, that I believe such things can and do occur, as also that they cannot do not occur. This seemingly contradictory attitude is justified by a realization of the important fact that the crux of the problem does not lie in the realm of experience. Whether miracles do or do not occur is simply a verbal question, whose answer depends primarily upon what particular meaning is given to the word *miracle* by those who happen to be discussing the matter. And in this respect it bears a great resemblance to the analogous question of whether God does or does not exist.

Few people are able to provide their own minds with any clear idea of what they are referring to when they use the word *God*. The reason usually given for this is that "God is undefinable"—by which statement we are meant to understand that God is *something*, but that on account of certain peculiarities pertaining to that *something*, no human being is capable of providing it with an adequate definition. The God-believer thus conveniently shifts the responsibility for his own mental obfuscation on to a vague *something* which is, in effect, nothing more than a meaningless label. For it would never do for him to realize (much less to admit) that the true reason why he is unable to define *God*, or any other term, intelligibly, is not because such term is inherently beyond

definition, but because he has not taken the trouble to find out for himself what, if anything, the term refers to in his own experience. The acceptance at second, third and fourth hand of unverified definitions is a more comfortable substitute for personal investigation and thought.

In spite of this almost universal vague-mindedness as to what the word *God* refers to in reality, most clerics and religious people can quite glibly provide a number of verbal definitions for the benefit of such as may require them. This oddly contradictory state, then, is to be noticed—namely, that far from being undefinable, *God* has been given and continues to be given a host of definitions which vie in clearness and intelligibility with a young child's description of a half-forgotten nightmare. That these definitions are either mutually exclusive, or purely theoretical, or wholly absurd, does not prevent them from being bandied about as though they were consistent descriptions of some undeniable reality. Thus we find that *God* is defined in a thousand and one different ways which range from mere verbal abstractions, like "Omnipotence" and "Self-Existence," to theoretical suppositions such as "Maker of heaven and earth" and "Father of all." The consequence is that in any theological discussion, where clearness of meaning is conspicuous by its absence, the word *God* can be used in a dozen contradictory senses without anyone being aware of what is happening. And if the question to be answered is whether God does or does not exist, this problem is inevitably lost sight of in the maze of side-issues which are created by the failure to determine first of all what the word *God* does and does not refer to. It is as though we were to try and prove "whether or no *soles* have fins" before deciding whether we were discussing fish or the flats of our feet.

A similar situation is likely to occur in any discussion about miracles. I have stood with a group of friends admiring the marvellous brilliance of an Alpine afterglow. And when one of them gave vent to the exclamation: "What a miracle of beauty!" I did not hesitate to agree. Afterglows on the Alps are marvellous, and there is no doubt that they do occur. Nor would I quibble at the use of the term *miracle* in such a context, even though the phenomenon were devoid of mystery and capable of rational explanation. But if someone were to assert that he had seen a man eat a live elephant in twelve seconds of time, and were to add that he regarded the event as a miracle, I would unhesitatingly agree that, if the event really occurred as described, it might justly be called a miracle. But I would not be convinced that it could have occurred.

It will be seen, therefore, that my attitude towards the possible occurrence or non-occurrence of miracles is not based upon the conviction that the term *miracle* refers to any definite reality or unreality, but is dependent upon the realization that it is a verbal symbol which may be applied in ordinary conversations to any event ranging between the wholly understandable to the wholly impossible. (In the latter case the "event" would, of course, be a fiction.) So if I should ever be asked, "Do you believe that miracles occur?" I would promptly reply, "That depends upon what you mean by the word *miracle*." The fact that this term is frequently used in a religious sense, implying a belief in the "supernatural," would not justify me in assuming that such was the sense intended in any particular case. If my questioner were unable to provide me with any clear definition of his particular meaning, I would naturally be unable to answer his question—just as he would be unable to answer it for himself.

In the case of the word *miracle* being used as a label for any event which is declared to be the product of supernatural agency, the question necessarily arises as to what is meant by "supernatural agency." And unless an agreed definition of this phrase can be arrived at, it is just as impossible to determine whether such events do occur as it is to decide whether God exists in the absence of an agreed definition of the word *God*.

It should be noted in this connexion that an event which is the product of *unexplained* causes is not legitimately entitled to the label *miracle* in the "supernatural" sense. For it must be clear that if an event is inexplicable, one cannot assert that it is due either to supernatural or to natural causes. It is true that in the past a number of events were described as *miracles* simply because causes which could not be explained in natural terms were labelled "supernatural." But in some instances subsequent discoveries have shown that the element which was labelled "supernatural" was capable of explanation in natural terms. For the rest it can be shown that the evidence for their occurrence as described is quite inadequate, and that it is probable many of them never occurred at all.

An event whose causes are not known to be natural has as little claim to be the product of "supernatural" agency as it has to be the product of "praeternatural," "subnatural," "extranatural," or "infranatural" agency—or of no agency at all. And since all such pretty labels are no more and no less than euphemistic abbreviations for the more honest phrase "not at present capable of explanation in natural terms," it follows that no events to which such labels are applied have any right to be called *miracles* in the "supernatural" sense, which implies the existence of something that is distinct from the natural.

If, therefore, I were to be asked: "Do you believe in miracles, in the supernatural sense?" I would reply with a definite "No." For apart from equating the word "supernatural" with the word "unexplained," the only reasonable meaning which can be given to it is "something which exists and which is distinct from the natural." But since, for me, everything that exists must for that very reason be natural, whether we can explain it or not, it follows that no event has occurred or can occur which is in any way ascribable to causes that are "distinct from the natural."

C. S. FRASER.

FREEDOM FOR THE CHILD.

It doesn't seem to occur to the majority of people that the freedom of the child is every bit as sacred as the freedom of adults, and that children are just as much individuals with private lives of their own as adults.

The more I see of children, the more I have impressed upon me the truth of the contention that there is no such thing as the naughty child or the lazy child; that there are only children who are happy, and children who are unhappy; that "the child is born good; we make him bad by teaching him morality."

It is high time that we recognized the fact that children are individuals, with individual desires, pleasures, rights. Freedom should not be the prerogative of adults. It is, in fact, very much more important to and necessary for the child. For in freedom there is growth, in frustration nothing but the ground-work for neurosis and conflict and their resultant maladjustment to life.

Ethel Mannin (in "Woman's Journal.")

Materialism and the Popular Press.

"It is when we come to the most "popular" and most widely read part of the press that the question of the suppression and distortion of news (and in particular the news as to Soviet Russia) flowers out into orchidaceous and gigantic extravagances.—(Hubert Griffith in "The Highway," December, 1932.)

THOSE who depend for their information upon the daily newspapers, as the great majority of the people in this country do, are altogether misled as to the truth concerning Materialism, and also concerning the Bible and religion in general.

When an Eddington, or a Jeans, declares himself a believer in religion, of sorts—not even remotely related to any of the crude superstitions of the masses—the newspapers trumpet the news in big type in their columns. They do not, however, point out that these views give no countenance to the gross anthropomorphic Hebrew and Christian beliefs in which their readers have been trained to believe. Readers who have no other source of information, are left under the impression that their grotesque beliefs are endorsed by the highest scientific authority.

In the same manner every discovery made in excavating the antiquities of ancient Babylonia, Palestine, and Egypt is claimed as confirming the literal truth of the Bible miracles; such as Noah's Deluge, and the fall of the walls of Jericho to the sound of musical instruments. Although the flood was only a local flood, "one of those normal inundations which are apt to occur from time to time in the lower reaches of the valleys of large rivers . . . the river did not rise more than twenty feet, or extend very far on either side of its normal channel,"¹ it has been repeated many times since. Once in 1925-6, and again in May, 1929.

As for Jericho, it would surprise newspaper readers to learn that there is not a vestige of proof that the ruin excavated was Jericho. The name of the place was never discovered! And there are good reasons for believing that the whole story of the exodus from Egypt into Palestine, as told in the Bible, is unhistorical and never happened. This investigation of the fallen walls revealed that they had been overthrown by an earthquake.

Our press is great on the subject of the "British love of fairplay," such a bright and shining example to the prejudiced foreigner! When our leader writers mount on this pedestal, the alien who reads it begins to mutter something about English cant and hypocrisy.

For more than ten years now, the newspapers have conducted a furious campaign against Russia. Not because Russia had done anything to us. In fact, it is the other way about. Our Government had sent out many millions of pounds worth of guns and ammunition to enable the white armies to put down the Revolution. And this campaign of lies was undertaken because our financiers, merchants and Tory politicians were afraid that if the revolution was a success it would spread and endanger their position.

It is not only in the dissemination of false news that the power of the Press lies. It is in the suppression of the truth. We guessed something of what was going on behind the scenes in Fleet Street, we have now had a corner of the curtain raised, and our worst suspicions confirmed. In *The Highway* for December, there is an article entitled "Russia and the English Press," by Hubert Griffith, the well-known journalist and foreign correspondent whose despatches are recognized as among the most reliable we receive from abroad.

¹ H. Peake: *The Flood*. pp. 114-115.

Mr. Griffith observes that it is a commonplace that newspapers "only print what they want to print," but the extent to which this is practised is by no means known to the general public, and only to those working journalists who have been employed a number of years. He says of the "Corpse Factory" rumour about the Germans:—

I happened, at the time of this "discovery," to be on the Intelligence Staff of the Army in France. No one on the Intelligence Staff in France was ever under the faintest illusion as to the origin of the rumour. The document referred to the corpses of horses. It was with a sense of amazement that one saw that it had been reproduced in the English Press as referring to the corpses of Prussian Infantry. But the lie did its trick. The mob (or part of the mob) swallowed it. "Propaganda"—in the sense of giving official circulation to lies that even a lunatic would scarcely credit—had received the sanction of important London newspapers.

After the war, says Mr. Griffiths, it became easy to continue and expand this method and apply it systematically to Russia. The newspapers to-day are far too wide-awake to rely on the leading article to influence opinion: "They know that the general public hardly ever reads Leading Articles. It is in the general "editing" of the news-columns, the apportioning of headlines, the suppression of certain facts—that the process of working on public opinion is carried out." In confirmation he gives us some of his own experiences. At one time he was writing the weekly "Book Page" for a great London newspaper, and he reviewed a book entitled *Conversations with Lenin*: "It was a mild amusing book in which Lenin had aired his views in regard to such matters as Education, the Family, Marriage and the Position of Women." Mr. Griffith thought "Lenin on Women" would make just the sort of headline of which the paper approved: "*But that review was not printed by that paper.*" [The italics are his.] It was not suppressed lightly, but after deliberation. It was held to be "inopportune" to publish a review proving that Lenin's opinions (even on family matters alone) were mild and sane and tolerant and enlightened, at the same time as the paper was doing its best to prove to the great British public that all Bolsheviks were perverted maniacs."

Mr. Griffith gives other examples, the most striking—which caused the paper concerned the sacrifice of a considerable sum of money—is as follows:—

I can give another example from my own personal experience. Some time ago I went to Russia under agreement to write some articles for a great London daily paper, its circulation again round about the mark of a million. I wrote them the articles—comparatively non-committal and judicial, not pretending to "tell the whole truth about Russia" after a five week's visit, but discussing chiefly those matters that a hasty traveller might be assumed to have evidence of—that the journey was interesting and "worth while," that the population was polite and friendly, that the theatres were full, that certain aspects of the new communal life and activity gave much outward appearance of being admirable, and that, in short, however we might wish to believe it, Bolsheviks did not eat a baby a day for their breakfasts. The articles were kept for several weeks by the newspaper, and were then returned to me unprinted. The newspaper had paid for my trip and was content to do so; but the articles, written on the assumption that it was possible that some good might ultimately come out of the new Soviet dispensation, were returned to me as "inopportune" (I later published them, with some expansion, in a cheap book, *Seeing Soviet Russia*, whose first edition was sold out in a few weeks.)

"This is a fine example of the glorious "British sense of fair play."

When we consider that the policy adopted in the cases above-mentioned has been and still is adopted against Materialism, it is little wonder that it is not more popular.

I am painfully aware that I have not written up to my title. But I propose dealing further with the present position of Materialism, and this will form a good introduction to the subject.

W. MANN.

Sancta Simplicitas.

"A merciful Providence fashioned us hollow
In order that we might our principles swallow."
Biglow Papers.

At this season of the year a famous clown, Whimsical Walker, is delighting thousands of children at the circus. In Rome, another jester is amusing and exploiting children of a larger growth by means of the patter of his profession. So heartened was the Romish Pontiff by the financial success of the Irish Eucharistic Congress that, like Alexander the Great, he is now sighing for more worlds to conquer. Luckily for Europe there is only one Ireland. So papa has had to think of a fresh slogan, and the newspapers are now printing the puff preliminary.

The Pope has proclaimed a holy year, twelve months of pilgrimages, junketings, and exploitation of the faithful believers in the abracadabra of Rome. From a religious point of view the reason given for this jubilee period is an astute one. It is said to be a celebration of the nineteenth centennial anniversary of the death of Jesus Christ. That the dating of such a legendary story is purely imaginary does not distress Papa overmuch. He probably realizes that the average Roman Catholic is far too innocent of scholarship to challenge anything associated with his faith. A sincere believer would treat a monkey with respect if the animal but wore a monk's habit.

This child-like credulity is passing wonderful in grown men and women. To study it is to essay an inquiry into the psychology of a crowd, and a very ignorant one at that. Let there be no mistake on this point. Roman Catholics, the world over, are mainly ignorant folk. They are not encouraged to read any books, newspapers, or publications, criticizing their religion. They are told by their pastors and masters that by doing so they are in danger of eternal damnation, and the Romish hell is depicted as a furnace, and not as a refrigerator. Even colporteurs of Protestant Bible Societies are ill-treated in Catholic countries, for a zealous Papist will no more read a Protestant version of the Christian Bible than he would read the awful works of Robert Ingersoll. No Roman Catholic may even become a Freemason, because priests object to all secret societies other than their own. If a Catholic young man attends a Freethought lecture, he sins more grievously than if he stole his mother's house-keeping money. Catholics are like the djin in the *Arabian Nights*, brought up in a jar and not allowed to look over the edge.

The Pope of Rome deserves the attention of Freethinkers, for he is the ecclesiastic who addresses the largest congregation in the world. Compared with the Pope, other archbishops seem parochial and pettifogging. Using the patter of his sorry profession, a Pope utters words which are heard from Bolivia to Bermondsey, from Stockholm to the South Seas. The rhetoric may be enfeebled and the platitudes exhausted, but the Romish Patriarch is listened to and obeyed, whilst the screams of the Archbishop of Canterbury are mostly unheeded even by his own clergy.

The events of the Great War showed quite clearly the ebb-tide of the political power of the Papacy, and the most caustic of all commentaries is the action of the Pope himself in aping Royalty in his frantic efforts to restore his temporal power. With a corporal's guard for an army, and all the theatrical appurtenances of Kingcraft, he is more an object of humiliation than Alphonso of Spain, the ex-Kaiser, or other Kings in exile. Publicly the Pope stands, a cardboard crown on his head, seated upon a rickety throne, the King Lear among the monarchs of the world, a fitting climax to a divine comedy.

This decline and fall of Rome has been a slow process. There was a time when she commanded power. She once had her intellectual wing, her scholars, her statesmen, her poets, who found her borrowed mummeries, her stolen creeds susceptible of mystical interpretation. The ignorant, bigoted, evangelical party prevailed over these, and exterminated them by fire and sword, rack and gibbet, leaving themselves more ignorant and more bigoted than before. By slow and sure degrees the whole Roman Catholic Church was made over to their leprous likeness.

It required centuries to produce this dire result. The very triumphs of Freethought throughout Europe indirectly contributed to this end. Every Roman Catholic who became an "Intellectual" assisted this process. The more brains that were drawn out of the Romish Church the more did the huge mass part with its intellectual leaven, and tend to flatten down to a mere mass of bigotry, intolerance, and superstition. What constitutes the obstructive character of the Roman Catholic Church is the abyss which now separates it from the highest intelligence around it, the live, alert brains of science, and the leaden, useless, stereotype of dogma. The Romish Pontiff may still address the largest congregation in the world, but once the voice of the Pope of Rome was one at which Kings and Emperors trembled.

Even Popes cannot force the clock back to the Middle Ages. In dark and superstitious times the power of the Roman Catholic Church was great, but it finished in this country with the glare of the fires of Smithfield. It was never at any time as unquestioned and unresisted as in France, Italy, Ireland, and Spain. There is a wholesome obstinacy in British blood which is cooler than that of the Celtic and Latin races. It is not easily roused, but it shows itself whenever the whip is cracked too loudly, as Charles the First and James the Second knew to their cost, and as the long battle for the freedom of speech also proves.

But Priestcraft in the shape of a State Church has much to answer for even in England. It still largely controls education in schools and universities, and has its prelates in the House of Lords. Few worse misfortunes can befall any people than that of possessing wealth and a tyrannical priestly caste in its midst, that hinders the wheels of progress. The attitude of all the Churches towards Secularism is hostile. Their main concern is with the next world. Circumstances may lead to their placing human betterment here in the first place, but it is done at the point of the bayonet. The cross is the symbol of the Church, but it is Man, not God who has been crucified thereon.

MIMNERMUS.

A careful study of the history of religious toleration will prove that in every Christian country where it has been adopted it has been forced upon the clergy by the authority of the secular classes.—*Buckle*.

Acid Drops.

The President of the Catholic Teachers' Association says, with reference to the claim to keep religion out of the schools, that this is an attempt to deprive the parent "of his god-given rights over his child." We might excuse the expression if God had taken even moderate care to see that he gave every child a parent who was worth having any rights whatever conferred upon him. As it is, mere man is often compelled to step in and take away the child from the parent God has given him. And bearing in mind the occupation of Mr. Wood, might it not be as well if God, while he is about it, sees that he gives the child the right kind of teacher? Between some parents and some teachers the poor child often has a devil of a time.

The Pope has proclaimed 1933 as a Holy Year. It is stated that the Pope hesitated to make this the nineteenth centenary of the death of Jesus Christ "because of the uncertainty of the date of the death." It is surprising that the Church, which speaks as the very voice of God could not have obtained reliable information from headquarters. But perhaps as it happened so long ago, even the Trinity is not quite certain when it occurred. And there is no other source from which reliable information may be obtained. Once upon a time a "vision" would have been given to some favoured individual, but nowadays these seem to have gone out of fashion. It is very strange! The most important event in the history of the world, and no one is quite certain when it occurred, or even if it ever occurred at all.

Our devotion to agreements and our loyalty to agreements are admirable—where our financial interests are not concerned. But there are distinctions. For example. In 1930 it was solemnly, and officially declared to the natives of Kenya that the land that had been "given" them—by those who were not natives, should be inviolate, but that if at any time it was thought advisable to take it away from them, land should be found elsewhere, and full compensation paid for buildings, etc. But now gold has been discovered on the land that was "given" to the natives. And that alters things. In Britain when land that was given to the Duke of Westminster or the Duke of Bedford, is required for public purposes the said Dukes are bought out at full market values. The natives of Kenya are told that those living on the lands that are required for gold mining by white speculators must clear out quickly and find fresh land where they may. All they can expect is some compensation for their belongings, not for the land. We hope we are not laying ourselves open to a prosecution for daring to place the rights of a Duke upon the same level as those of West African natives.

The natives are told that they may be able to earn more money by supplying the mine-workers with their produce, and that they may even get good wages by working in the mines. What more could a Christian country offer them! But the ungrateful beggars say they do not want to get money in this way; they want to remain on their land. Such obstinate local patriotism, such insolent demands for "self-determination" deserve to be crushed out as effectively as possible. What is to become of civilization if agreements between white and coloured men are to be treated as though they were made between Christians who have an army, a navy and an air-force? These coloured people clamour about their rights to the land on which they were born. They have had given them the blessings of Christianity and that is quite beyond price.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has a fine talent for running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. In his New Year address, broadcast from Canterbury Cathedral, he said:—

When the powers of production are set moving again will not the sense of neighbourliness and brotherhood, now awakened, make the motive which guides them not

the accumulation of wealth for a few, but its distribution "in widest commonality spread"? So shall we fulfil the law of Christ.

A truly diplomatic utterance, carefully framed so as not to offend the "bloated capitalists" and yet at the same time to win the favour of the employees. We presume that this diplomacy also fulfils the law of Christ. That it fulfils the aim of the Church and the law of self-preservation, there is no doubt whatever.

The Rev. Harold Burdless, a Methodist parson visiting Italy, says in a religious journal that "The last batch of monthly reports, brings several stories of conversion from Atheism, and from that indifference which is as bad in practice, and we are urged from many quarters to sanction new schemes and fresh enterprises." The same old story! It never grows out of date, and can always be relied upon to draw money from pious people anxious to assist foreign missions—as part of the cost of ensuring a seat in Heaven.

The number of candidates for ordination in the Church of England last year was 585, the highest number since 1914. There is nothing particularly surprising about the fact, in view of the large amount of unemployment, and the fear of unemployment among the "middle-classes." A safe job, a sure salary, and many chances of promotion are excellent attractions that might well engender the conviction of being "called" to "serve God" in a parson's livery. We feel sure the Church is getting the kind of candidates it deserves.

We hear much of the wonderful intellectual powers of St. Thomas Aquinas and the Schoolmen. A learned and philosophical writer, Mr. T. Whittaker, has an apt passage on the nature of scholastic learning, and shows how it was inevitably superseded by more exact science. "The Schoolmen," says Mr. Whittaker, "made a fine art of formal reasoning, but the habit of accepting traditional authority for facts and data was so fixed that the attempt to bring again into view the claims of experience remained merely sporadic. To get out of the circle of things taken for granted or assumed dialectically, a revolt against the school philosophy itself became necessary." A rougher, but not less accurate description of the mental habits of the Schoolmen was that of Luther who described them as being like a horse who was tethered to a tree and left so, that, when he had eaten all the grass within reach, he had to feed on himself. So, said Luther, the mind, if it has nothing to feed on must feed on itself—a very apt simile for the intellectual hair-splitting of scholastic philosophy and dogmatic theology.

In the days when God Almighty was really busy, people had cause to pay attention to his doings. Thus an old pamphlet in the British Museum Library has the following long and significant title. "The Atheists Reward or a Call from Heaven on July 24th, 1786, Showing how a profane young Squire was struck dead by Thunder and Lightning for Blasphemy against God. Two of his companions died soon after. Another fell into a trance in which he saw the Tortures of the Wicked and the Joys of the Blessed. He related the same to several Divines, desiring that it might be published as a warning to other wicked persons." Not only have we the date, but also the names and addresses of all the parties concerned as victims or narrators of these awful events. In fact they are supported by better evidence than can be found for any case of God's intervention to like ends and with like effect in any of the books of the Old or New Testaments. What would some of the clergy give to see God as attentive to his critics in 1933 as He was in 1786?

The Rev. Chenhall Williams is immensely pleased with Methodist broadcasters. He records their achievements thus:—

The pain is forgotten for a moment in the hospital; a despairing soul is startled into hope; a public house bar has fallen silent. In many a public-house the customers

"will have it," as one publican told me, the tears starting in his eyes as he spoke.

Hallelujah! Curiously enough, all the above effects have also been achieved by the non-religious entertainers of the B.B.C.—including the landlord's tears, only the landlord (and others) were relieving their mirth.

The Rev. Robert Bond, Secretary of the Methodist Conference, says he is to-day conscious of a brotherliness among the Churches and an absence of the old sense of rivalry. For our part, we are grateful for the warning. When the Churches get "brotherly" they invariably contemplate inflicting upon the non-pious citizens more Christian impudence.

Mansfield Methodists have banned raffles from all their bazaars, presumably because such things savour of gambling. These very sensitive Christians, however, will continue putting money in the Sunday collection-bag, although the motive for so doing is purely a gambling one—they hope to draw the prize of everlasting bliss.

Germany's new Chancellor is reported as saying, "I am come to bring peace, not a sword." All good Christian people will be reminded by this that it is the exact contrary of what Christ, their Master, said. Nineteen-hundred years later we can sadly realize that, unfortunately for the world, Christ proved a true prophet. May the German Chancellor, with a different message, also prove to be a true prophet!

From a religious paper we learn that "Alone among the great religions of the world, Christianity began with a note of joy. Other religions were born of philosophy, of culture, or of fear; but it was of joy and of peace that the angels of heavens sang on the first Christmas morning." Our contemporary might well have added a further piece of information. This is that the religion which "began with a note of joy" wasn't long before it was responsible for notes of another kind—notes of anger and agony, when Christians began persecuting, torturing, and murdering one another for love of God. But perhaps, after all, this was part of the Great Scheme, in which earth was a school wherein men had to learn to make themselves fit for the Christian heaven!

Reviewing the year 1932, the *Methodist Recorder* thinks it was quite definitely a bad year; at any rate, a hard year for the majority of people in Great Britain. Later, our contemporary adds, "Need one doubt, after the progress against unprecedented odds of the year that is passing, that 'God's in his heaven, all's right with the world'—if 'the world' will but accept his leading?" From this one gathers that Christianity, as interpreted by Methodism, is still "a religion of threats and bribes unworthy of wise men." It says in effect, grovel before God and you shall be rewarded with happiness and prosperity; ignore God and you shall have nothing but unhappiness. The same old God and the same old religion of fear; now and for ever more, Amen! A worthy creed—for slaves.

The talk about reunion that is so common now-a-days is a barefaced attempt to mislead the public as to the real state of relations between the various bodies of the faithful. The moment any negotiations get down to brass tacks—except when, as in the case of the Methodists, they are all of one opinion to begin with—they break down hopelessly. Recently there has been some effort to formulate a reunion scheme for India. The Federation of (Anglo) Catholic Priests demands that this scheme "shall be repudiated." An Evangelical organ remarks on this "we never imagined that any scheme of Christian reunion which commanded Anglo-Catholic assent would prove workable." And so it goes on. "We are not divided, all one body we" is, nevertheless, still a favourite *chanson* in the Christian non-stop variety shows.

Lord Conway thinks that an old lunatic asylum is not at all a bad place for a War Museum. And, we may add, it is a very suitable place for the "war-minded," those who believe war to be inevitable, or that it serves some useful purpose. And another thing for storage in the same place—if only the parsons can be persuaded to part with it—is the notion that "God" always helps to victory the nation which is "in the right." There might also be found room for the various well-known battle hymns glorifying "God our help in ages past."

Mr. Augustine Birrell says that "Words are indeed mysterious things, some have made Revolutions, others have founded Religions." They have done and can do even more than that. They have destroyed Religions, and are at this very moment destroying them. The power attributed to words, however, properly belongs to ideas. Words are merely the names we give to ideas, they are but symbols. Religions are erected by ideas, and it is only by ideas that religions can be destroyed. Priests are acutely aware of that—which explains why so large a part of their activity is devoted to hindering, suppressing, and counter-attacking dissolvent ideas.

There never has been a broom which can sweep back the tides. No amount of squirming can alter the plain fact that Birth Control has come to stay, and that it is merely a matter of time (and a very short time, too) when contraceptive information can be obtained from any public clinic by women who want it. The *Church Times* and a few Roman Catholics are very angry that the Ealing Town Council has decided, with only one dissentient, to establish a birth control clinic—"after scarcely three minutes' discussion." This is a very graceful—albeit unconscious—tribute to Charles Bradlaugh, whose centenary it is this year. What a change since, over fifty years ago, that great fighting Freethinker was condemned to six months' imprisonment for merely publishing the innocuous Knowlton pamphlet!

We often wonder how and why certain people get appointed on Town Library Committees. Certainly one of the qualifications is *not* a knowledge of literature. The latest example of ignorant interference is that of the Manchester Corporation Libraries Committee who have decided that the *Outline for Boys and Girls* shall not be admitted to the juvenile section of the libraries. The book has also been withdrawn from the adult sections so that the Committee can examine it and see if it is fit to be read by adults or be completely banned! And the citizens of Manchester are standing this unwarrantable interference, this impudent meddling with what they should read by a parcel of nobodies, without a protest. O, Manchester!

It ought to be added in fairness that the action of the Libraries Committee was due entirely to a Roman Catholic, Mr. Hugh Lee, I.P. We give the information without comment, but what do Manchester Freethinkers think about it?

One can't anger an Anglo-Catholic more than by calling him a Protestant—such is the love of Christians for one another. The Roman Catholic *Tablet* recently said that "there was no real difference between Anglo-Catholics of whatever level, and the lowest evangelical and Nonconformist." The *Church Times'* reply to this jolly sally is, "perhaps even Jesuit Fathers put on paper caps at Christmas time." What a witty repartee!

The breaking up of the large country estates which has been and is going on all over the country is increasing the number of persons who are involved in the unjust demands for tithe. The other day we read of a ridiculous raid in which two van loads of policemen, raiding farms to seize produce for tithe debts, had to retreat with—three hens and an egg, and that only after a farcical and unsuccessful chase after more. The farmers are not the only people involved. The *Evening Standard* mentions another type of case. Its informant "purchased an old

house in Essex, but did not buy the surrounding acres. Then he found himself embroiled in a tithe dispute which took up more than a tithe of his leisure for several years. Trivial proportions of the outstanding tithe which had to be redeemed were, in equity, payable by the inhabitants of the villas which sprang up on the vanished park, but the estate had been so cut up that it was impossible to assess or prove individual liability for these sums. So this man was compelled, after a strenuous but futile fight, to pay over to Queen Anne's Bounty, money levied on land which had never been his."

We hope those who are directly concerned recognize that, as the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have an understanding with the Government that nothing shall be done to interfere with their enforcement of their "rights" to distrain on tithepayers, nothing effective is likely to be done in the near future. Even if it is made costly and precarious to collect, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners are probably more interested in the "right" to tithe than in its quantity. It is a sort of key vested interest; and as such must be defended not only for its own sake, but in the general interests of the never to be abandoned "rights" of private property.

The Geneva Convention has established an international fund for assisting the victims of earthquakes and floods and similar occurrences that are labelled as "Acts of God." We suggest that the proper name for such an assurance would be "Assurance against God." In the Church funds we already have an assurance against the devil, and it is only right that the other controller of the universe should be provided against.

The Rev George Jackson (Methodist) has a wistful longing for "A New Puritanism" to be born. He explains that the old Puritan taboos are gone, and it is difficult (he thinks) to believe that anything can ever bring them back. (Thank God for that!) He explains that:—

The Christian conscience of to-day simply refuses to label dancing, and card-playing and theatre-going sins; . . . it no longer bans them wholesale, it no longer sees in them the outward and visible sign of that friendship of the world which is enmity against God.

He doesn't explain how this improvement has come about, and so we may venture to suggest that the credit be given to the "world" for teaching the Christian conscience to be less narrow-minded and intolerant. As for the "new Puritanism" which Mr. Jackson hankers after, it is as much like Puritanism as chalk is like cheese. To name it Puritanism would be almost blasphemous! For it appears to exclude the great characteristic of real Puritanism—the itch to compel other people to conform to the Puritan's intolerant and narrow notions and prejudices.

Fifty Years Ago.

MIDWAY.

At life's brief summit let us muse on life.

Our pow'r, our pride, our conquests, what are these?

The path was steep, we climb'd to strength's calm ease,
And yet at worst, its stern unceasing strife

Was not so fearful, or with pain so rife

As waits us on the way that by degrees

Shall take us hence; whereon poor failing knees

Despite wealth's staff wound worse than want's keen
knife.

Beyond, the journey ends as it began—

Weak childishness, and then—we know no more,—

Whereto or whence crawls life; nor ever can

Discover till we pass the grave's dark door.

God play'd a bitter jest in making man;

How Heav'n must laugh when we his name adore.

The "Freethinker," January 14, 1883.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL :

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Telephone No. : CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

G. BURGESS.—We hope your expectation of the Gramophone Record doing good as an agent of propaganda will be more than realized.

JOSEPH CLOSE.—We appreciate your desire to see the *Freethinker* widely advertised, but we do not think that an appeal for members of the Society to carry sandwich boards about the City would bring any response. We do what we can to advertise the paper, but it is an expensive job, and we have to rely mainly upon the propagandist effort of our friends.

H. MURPHY.—Much obliged for cuttings.

H. DAWSON.—Pleased to hear from you. In an ordinary Cemetery a parson has no right whatever to take any part in a ceremony save by the consent of the person legally responsible for the funeral. In a Churchyard, provided proper notice is given, the parson may also be excluded from the ceremony.

A. W. DAVIES.—The arrangements are quite satisfactory.

H. H.—Pleased to hear from a new subscriber, who is doing so much to gain more readers. That is the kind of appreciation we value. Thanks for cutting.

A. FORRER.—Always pleased to hear from you. Your letter recalls old friendships and a very memorable journey. Our best wishes for 1933.

H. ANDERSON.—We deeply regret to hear of the death of Mr. Barclay. The regrets are mostly for those of us who knew and respected him. He is at peace after a long and useful life. We presume that the question of Sunday Cinemas will now go to the vote. The vote of the Town Council matters little except to indicate its calibre. But Leicester cannot have so far receded from its old-time Radicalism to give a deliberate vote in favour of a narrow Sabbatarianism.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—C. F. Simpson, 8s.

H. TAYLOR AND A. W. COLEMAN.—Next week.

IGNORUS cordially thanks Leicester comrade for his kind letter, and says perhaps a suitable alias for "John Snow" may be "Jack Frost." Copies of tract will be procured and sent as desired.

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.

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

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

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

The "*Freethinker*" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—

One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

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

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

Sugar Plums.

To-day (January 15), Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, at 11 a.m., on "The Menace of Mass Opinion." Red Lion Square can be reached either from High Holborn, or from Theobald's Road, by Bus or Tram from almost any part of London.

This will be Mr. Cohen's last lecture in London this season. He will be busy in the provinces until the end of March.

This is the last opportunity we shall have of reminding Freethinkers of the National Secular Society's Annual Dinner, which takes place at the Imperial Hotel, Russell Square, on Saturday, January 21. All tickets, price 8s., should be applied for not later than January 18. A last minute rush means refusals, and some disorganization. There is no need to say much about the Dinner, save that there will be the usual excellent concert, interlarded with speeches. Vegetarians who desire a special menu should write the General Secretary, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4.

Among all the New Year's notes for 1933 we have glanced through, only one paper—the *Christian World*, has noted that during 1933 the Centenaries of Colonel Ingersoll and Charles Bradlaugh occur. True it was only a line, but it was a reminder. On the other hand a "write-up" of anything from a quarter to three-quarters of a column was given in a number of papers of the death of a South African, who some years ago won nearly £200,000 in the Calcutta Sweepstake. When one considers what a degree of intelligence, personality and all-round greatness is required to win a huge sweepstake, and how very little it takes to make a Bradlaugh or an Ingersoll, one can understand the difference of attention in the two cases. And where the purely spiritual development is carried to the extent it is among Christian peoples, we can see why the genius required to win a sweepstake of £200,000 attracts such general notice.

The West Ham Branch reports a very successful Social at the Metropolitan Academy, a pleasant feature being the presence of representatives from the other London Branches of the N.S.S. Such features are very useful and necessary in developing a spirit of comradeship among saints from adjacent districts.

Our old friend, Mr. A. B. Moss, whose enthusiasm for Freethought knows no weakening, writes enthusiastically about the new Record, "The Meaning and Value of Freethought." He considers it one of the finest pieces of propaganda he has ever listened to. Well, considering that Mr. Moss has been engaged in writing and lecturing on Freethought for over fifty years, he certainly has a lengthy experience on which to base an opinion. We are glad to report that the steady demand for the Record continues. It is certainly an easy, and unexpected way of introducing Freethought to a friend. It is breaking new ground so far as our propaganda is concerned. The price of the Record is 2s. or 2s. 9d. by post.

The Manchester Branch N.S.S. made a very promising start last Sunday with the second half of its winter syllabus. Mr. R. H. Rosetti had his usual wet Sunday in Manchester, but both meetings went off very well. The local Council's vote against Sunday Cinemas shows there is work to be done in showing the Councillors it is quite safe to vote in favour of a rational Sunday in Manchester. That is all which is necessary to get a favourable vote in the Council Chamber.

The continued disturbances in the Far East are, no doubt, partly due to the fact that their existence is good for business in the armament trade. When we know that China and Japan have been fighting with weapons imported from England, Germany, Belgium, France, Spain, and, among other places, the United States, we are not surprised that the Prime Minister of this country enjoyed a fire work display of the bombing of Shanghai, which he saw recently at the Crystal Palace. He is nothing if he is not "patriotic" these days. Years ago, in 1921, a Mixed Commission of the League of Nations definitely charged the international armament firms with incitement to war among their prospective customers. This "Secret International" of

armament makers (as it is called in a useful pamphlet published by the Union of Democratic Control) has neither patriotism nor humanity. It is stated that among the shareholders of Vickers are Lord Hailsham (War Minister), Sir John Gilmore (Home Secretary), Sir Robert Horne, the Bishop of Hereford, and other "lights" of Church and State. Until the private manufacture of armaments is abolished there can be no reasonable prospect of international peace. It is among the worst of the many failures of this so-called "national" Government that, in this matter of armaments, it has shown a temper even less friendly than that displayed by its supposedly more partisan predecessor. This is perhaps not surprising for Coalitions, like armament firms, have no principles. That would be fatal to them.

Experimentalism and Marriage by (the late) H. J. Golding. (Ethical Union 2½d. post free.) In this pamphlet (with a Foreword by Lord Snell) Mr. Golding, a well-known ethical lecturer, puts the case against what is called "companionate marriage." Except that it is free from theological jargon and from any resort to theological sanctions this might be the work of a Catholic priest. It states the case against experimental sex-relations; affirms that "sex can never replace religion," and protests against "a lowering of standards." The founder of the Ethical Movement, says Mr. Golding, predicted that, "the decay in the supernatural sanctions with which morality had been invested would imperil morality." It is the decay of those sanctions that has produced a new and higher morality. We think the Ethical Union, in its desire "to pay a small tribute to the memory" of Mr. Golding, might have chosen something of his less controversial than this. The pamphlet is, however, very representative of the "ethical," as distinct from the Freethought point of view.

Witchcraft in Ancient Israel.

ANCIENT and contemporary spiritualism have much in common. Apart from alleged safeguards against trickery and fraud, the procedure of the modern seance displays small originality. Only by means of a living material agent—the so-called medium—are alleged messages from the dead conveyed. From its origin in America in the nineteenth century modern spiritualism has been constantly associated with knavery on the one side and pitiful credulity on the other. The artificial conditions of the seance are injurious to health. Emotional stress and strain are highly dangerous to nervous subjects, and these form a large percentage of those who dabble in ghostly lore. Maleficent must be the results of so-called psychical research. When sittings are held in the dark, inherited superstitions of the race receive every encouragement, while that questioning spirit which forms the life-blood of true science is never in evidence. The sole service rendered by modern occultism is its rejection of the monstrous doctrine of an eternal hell. This revolting doctrine, so insistently proclaimed through the centuries by the Christian Churches, is repudiated by all Spiritualists, although still advocated by the Salvation Army and the unrepentant Roman Church.

Huxley once asserted that the fable of the Witch of Endor is the most powerful witch-story in the whole realm of letters. Whether the vivid Scriptural narrative is really superior to Shakespeare's romantic pictures of wizardry in *Macbeth* seems doubtful to the writer. Still, it is a remarkable story, while it also serves to illustrate the fundamental sameness of spiritism, old and new.

Israel, becoming wearied with the rule of prophets and judges, clamoured for a king. The popular demand was gratified and the last of the prophet rulers, the proud and imperious Samuel both nominated and anointed the new sovereign, Saul. Apparently, the character of Saul has been blackened by the

priestly historians of Israel, but even so he is presented as a man of majestic stature, a brilliant military commander with everything to commend him to the affections of the people. But beneath all these brave externals Saul lacked resolution of character. His temper was uncertain, and he was suspicious of everyone about him. A victim of melancholia, so mournful became his mind that music became essential as a restorative, and David the minstrel-boy played on his harp before the king so that his sad thoughts should vanish away.

Saul was the nominal ruler, but the crafty Samuel governed in reality, and so long as the priests' mandates were observed Saul was allowed to hold the sceptre. But the monarch gave mortal offence to the imperious prophet by sacrificing in his absence, according to one account, while another tells how in his successful warfare with the Amalekites Saul spared some of his prisoners and, above all, the captured king Agag. As this clemency was shown in defiance of Samuel's injunction that not one life should be spared the infuriated prophet hewed Agag to pieces before the Lord God of Israel.

After this Saul's life was one long tragedy. Samuel secretly anointed David as Saul's successor and deserting his now alarmed sovereign, he treated him as one dead over whom he mourned. After Samuel's death Saul's morbid fancies increased, and he suspected not merely David, but his own son Jonathan. Then the Philistines again invaded the land and poor Saul was sorely beset. With dread foreboding he meditated over the coming battle. Deserted by Jahveh in consequence of his quarrel with Samuel, Saul determined to seek visions of the future by constraining a wise woman to call up the dead from the grave. Now, Saul had earlier banished the practitioners of the black arts from his kingdom, but his servants assured him that a witch still dwelt at Endor. So, disguised and under cover of night, the dejected Saul journeyed to Endor to consult the dead concerning the issue of the impending battle. A light was visible in the window of a hovel in the wretched village. A tap at the door brought an invitation to enter, so without wasting any time on preliminaries the disguised king acquainted the woman with the cause of his visit. "Divine unto me," said Saul, "I pray thee, by the familiar spirit, and bring me up whomsoever I shall name unto thee."

But the weird woman demurred, and reminded her visitor that witches and warlocks had been outlawed and that death was the penalty for necromancy. Saul having assured the woman of her safety from molestation, she consented to exercise her mystic calling. "Whom shall I bring unto thee?" she then inquired. Saul answered: "Bring me up Samuel." At this request the witch started, and then discovered the presence of the King. In great fear, and thinking she had been betrayed, she burst out, "Why hast thou deceived me? For thou art Saul." But he promised her that no harm should befall her and thus calmed her into acquiescence. Then resuming her incantations, and gazing intently into what appeared empty space to the onlookers, her entranced expression showed that her eyes rested on some form to them invisible. The wondering King asked what she stared at. "I see," said the witch, "a god coming out of the earth." In response to Saul's question as to his likeness she answered, "An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a robe." The King surmised that this must be the soul of Samuel, and he bowed reverently before it. Peppery as ever, the disturbed spirit demanded, "Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up!" Saul answered and said, "I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and

answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams, therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do."

Samuel's spirit, however, proved as harsh and inflexible as the living prophet had been, and in withering scorn inquired why a god-forsaken King should presume to summon him, Jahveh's minister, from the abode of the dead? And the resentful ghost once more rebuked Saul for his disobedience and recalled the prophecy, soon to be fulfilled, that the crown should pass from Saul to the house of David. Moreover, on the morrow, the Philistine host would vanquish that of Israel, and that ere the dawning day was past Saul and his slain sons would have joined him in the underworld of the dead. With these menacing words the stern spirit descended through the earth and the terrified King sank fainting to the ground. Apparently, the ghost of the prophet was visible to the witch alone, but Saul, although he saw not the spirit, could hear its voice and converse with it. Sir James Frazer considers that "this was one of the regular ways in which Israelitish witches and wizards professed to hold converse with the dead; they pretended to conjure up and to see the ghost, while their dupes saw nothing, but heard a voice speaking, which in their simplicity they took to be that of the spirit, though in reality it would commonly be the voice either of the wizard himself or of a confederate. In such cases whatever the source of the sound, it appeared to proceed not from the mouth of the wizard, but from a point outside him, which the credulous inquirer supposed to be the station of the invisible ghost. Such audible effects could easily be produced by ventriloquism, which has the advantage of enabling the necromancer to work without the assistance of a confederate, and so to lessen the chance of detection."

Similar spiritualistic superstitions prevailed with all the various Semitic stocks—of ancient times. Even in classic Greece the shades of the dead were evoked both for purposes of interrogation and appeasement. In prehistoric Hellas the ghosts were probably consulted or conciliated in the vicinity of their graves. But in the historical period certain sacred spots had become famous as oracles of the dead where every facility was afforded for prompt communication with the spectres of the departed.

In Rome, even in its palmy days, the ancestor-cult with its worship, adoration and appeasement of the dead, constituted the outstanding feature of popular religion. Very largely in India, and almost entirely in China and Japan, the cult of the corpse, in the form of ancestor-worship, remains the real religion of the people. And, when we turn to semi-civilized and savage races, evidences of a kindred character crowd upon us. Among the Baganda in Africa the ghosts of dead kings are consulted on all important occasions. Indeed, all parts of the Dark Continent furnish examples of submission of the living to the dead. Among the Eskimos in their Arctic home, and with the natives of far eastern Borneo and Sumatra, the story is the same. The Maoris of New Zealand have been much praised for their enlightenment, yet it appears that they still evoke or appease the tribal spirits as occasion demands.

T. F. PALMER.

Have more than thou showest; Speak less than thou knowest; Lend less than thou owest.—*Shakespeare.*

What are my books? My friends, my loves,
My Church, my tavern, and my only wealth.

Le Gallienne.

Radical Tradition v. the Present Outlook.

THE appearance of a *Life of Joseph Chamberlain* coincident with a revival of an "Irish Question" suggests certain reflections regarding our present affairs. The re-emergence of Chamberlain recalls the fateful Irish controversy which so deeply affected the fortunes of English Radicalism, through the personal antagonisms it engendered, nearly fifty years back. It also makes it opportune to examine afresh the character of the Radical tradition, and its bearing on things that matter to-day.

The term "Radical" is of mixed origin, and has been used in various connotations, even of social obloquy. Eventually it was identified with and accepted by some of the disciples of Bentham and his school—the Utilitarians—to define their practical objects. Among its adherents were men like Grote, Molesworth, Chadwick, Roebuck, Hare, Hume, and above all, the illumined personality of J. S. Mill. It was never a party in the strict sense, but a movement of opinion with varying interpretations, having supporters alike from the masses and the cultivated élite. Its formula of the "greatest happiness of the greatest number" afforded an incentive to betterment; and its tentative doctrine of utility gave a new basis of moral action as against the canons of theology. Its leading exponents were free-thinkers at heart as regards established religion, if not usually aggressive towards its claims. They provided beginnings of what could be developed in detail into a consistent social philosophy, at one with cosmic truth and advancing knowledge. They were concerned with questions of logic, psychology, ethics, first principles, equally with matters of politics and economy. Their general mental attitude was inimical to orthodoxy—whether their opponents recognized this or not. In opposition to the *Edinburgh*, and the *Quarterly Review*, they maintained an organ—the *Westminster Review* for free examination of all the great human interests. This work continued in the *Fortnightly Review*, under the direction of John Morley, during the '70's; and was paralleled on the more popular side by a journal like the *National Reformer*.

While favourable to a wide extension of the franchise (including women) Mill was most concerned over the character and mode of representation, the protection of minorities and the influence of a "mechanical majority." Some of these matters still await adequate treatment by our legislators. On the side of material well-being this school had no absolute scheme (like Socialism) for its promotion. It did much to advance the study of political economy as understood in the mid-century. Mill was sympathetic to all that would improve the lot of the "labouring classes" under existing circumstances. He was familiar with the tenets of continental Socialism. But he held (and rightly held) that even so far as they became practicable, this required a correlative, moral and intellectual advance in the mass.

What the Radical doctrine concentrated on was equality of opportunity and education; the chance for each to make the most of and do the best for himself—a far-reaching principle involving many social changes. But these should not reflect class interest, and must have reference solely to the general requisites of social well-being. They were to be gained by ordered agitation, free thought and discussion; the end of which was "to collect and organize the peaceful expression of public opinion so as to bring it to act upon the legislative functions in a just, legal and equitable way."

By 1880, and the Liberal victory in the Election of that year, Radicals had become a powerful element in the party. Forceful personalities had entered Parliament—Chamberlain, Dilke, Bradlaugh—with the intention of getting things done; some even entering the Ministry. The Court was perturbed; and we find Lord Beaconsfield assuring the Queen, on his resignation, "that though some dreadful people like Bradlaugh had been elected, a great many of the respectable and moderate old whigs had also been. There were 200 of them, and 240 of the Conservatives returned; while the Home Rulers and extreme Radicals only amounted to 190." Bradlaugh's struggle to gain admission had great consequences to Free-thinkers, ultimately. It also impaired the credit of the Government, at the same time, it limited his influence in Party and Parliamentary counsels. Then came the Irish imbroglio, the Home Rule Bill and the split in the Liberal-Radical ranks over this issue, which in the end destroyed the party as an organized factor for a generation. And with other untoward events the hope of an Irish settlement went at the same time.

Taken together these forces frustrated the chance of a big Radical advance just when its possibility had become of moment in English home affairs. True, some phases of its later programme have at length been worked into the existing orders. But this disruption left the field open to a contemporary Socialist movement that had its springs in foreign sources, intended to be a prophylactic for all our material ills. Here, as abroad, it soon divided into separate septs, that in the main claimed to be at one with "social democracy."

Meanwhile the country has passed through severe trials and turmoils including dislocations and upheavals wrought by a World War. In the sequel we find ourselves up against extraordinary and novel difficulties, and with old values gone by the board. That carries with it the negations previously connected with those values. At this juncture our Socialist school still cling to their doctrine, but having failed to advance it substantially through parliamentary means, now appear to favour more forceful methods of giving it effect. So we have one of its leading oracles in a recent address deriding Parliament, and reported that "he looked forward to an impending catastrophe (or revolution) the sooner the better—he was impatient for it. He would rather, however, it was settled without violence."

This reservation is very kind. Then the prophet Wells (among others) comes forward with the proposal to save Society by a self-appointed corps of "Fascisti" dedicated thereto. "There must be a systematic organization of the will and ideas of public-minded masterful people to handle the problems of the modern State." If this implies simply special on expert service for the State—there is a general demand for such service in normal ways. How to bring our peculiar economic system from a condition of ailment to recovery and healthy vigour, is a special consideration. It is the merest truism that any catastrophic interference with the process spells dire disaster; where the first need is for fresh intellectual light and guidance.

Here we join issue. The Radical tradition is essentially of English genesis if it drew strength from other sources. It is associated with that movement of emancipation from theocratic absolutism, which from the seventeenth century onwards ushers in the modern world. It consists with an ideal order, still in the making, based on knowledge, free examination, representative government, responsible citizenship. This assumes the capability of each one to take care of him-

self, either personally, or in concert with others, and the direction of public affairs through a consensus of the total capacity. The interest of free religious inquiry itself is linked with these principles; which so far as they are embodied in our national life are being challenged from various quarters. Those who regard them as vital to real progress will meet that challenge.

AUSTEN VERNEY.

The Purgatorial Pick-Purse.

THE Twenty-second Article of Religion (of the Church of England) declares that purgatory "is a fond thing, vainly invented." It has not been invented "vainly" so far as the Roman Catholic Church is concerned. On the contrary, it provides one of its most regular and substantial sources of revenue. The accurate statement in authoritative terms of this doctrine is sufficient to reveal its mercenary objective. According to the Council of Trent Catholics must believe "that there is a Purgatory, and that the souls detained therein, are helped by the prayers of the faithful, and, above all, by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar," *i.e.*, the Mass. A Christian who dies in a state of "mortal" sin goes, not to Purgatory, but to Hell. Purgatory is for the expiation of venial sin, and the temporal punishment which may be due to any sin, mortal or venial, for which full punishment has not been received while the sinner was living. No good Catholic, even if he dies "fortified by the rites of Holy Church," and immediately after that fortification, is supposed to go direct to Paradise. Information is not available as to how long a soul may stay in Purgatory in process of purification. Theoretically the period would seem to be determined by the (theological) virtue of the deceased; *i.e.*, a "saintly" person would have less time in Purgatory than a life-long evil-liver who called for the sacraments in a funk on his death-bed. In practice Catholics never presume that the departed have attained eternal felicity, and so their prayers, or the prayers of "contemplative" religious orders, or the "acceptable sacrifice of the altar" offered by priests, and both to be paid for, never can be safely dispensed with. It will be said that many prayers are offered and masses said for persons whose relatives, friends or executors cannot pay for them. Anyone who visits a Catholic Church will observe a collecting box "For the Faithful Departed"—*i.e.*, in order to get from general subscription of the pious what cannot be got from the estates of deceased persons or their relatives. The existence of such a collection can only mean that, whatever may be the theory, "no money, no mass" is the practice. If Catholics were of a curious turn they might wonder whether, if Purgatory is purification (it is said to be by fire), to pray for the repose of one undergoing this process is not, in effect, to lengthen it? If he has so much to undergo, the longer and more frequent his periods of "repose," the longer the process will take to be completed.

The profits of religion (as Mr. Upton Sinclair has shown in a remarkable book) are derived from numerous and astonishingly varied sources. It may be safely affirmed, however, that never since the ancient craft of capitalizing the fear, credulity, ignorance, and even the sympathy and affections of men began—and it began almost with the dawn of human history—has there been a more flagrant or successful example of it than the invention of Purgatory. By it the Church maintains its financial grip on its subjects to the last day of their lives, and on their next-of-kin when they are dead. Purgatory, in some cases, may endure but for a week: but payment continues as long as there is anyone who will pay. Prayers are still being said, and masses celebrated for the "repose" of the souls of persons dead for hundreds of years—long after they must have proved so evil as to merit hell or good enough to pass through Peter's turnstile to glory. There is even an answer to the awkward question as to whether a known and saintly character may not be assumed to have passed out of Pur-

gatory. It is that, while nobody can know as to the facts, there are lots of others who can be helped along by the "merits" no longer required by that "soul" if he has arrived in heaven. The road through Purgatory is, if we may paraphrase a well known saying, paved with the gold from pecuniary and pious "intentions." Unlike the Socialists, the Catholic Church believes in (doctrinal) production not for use but for profit.

ALAN HANDSACRE.

Church or Cinema.

ANYONE who cares to stroll through the National Gallery, and glance at the endless array of Saints and Madonnas, can see the result of the Churches' assault on one of the arts. Anyone with the patience to read the endless shelves of religious poetry in the library of the British Museum can see the same influence at work in another medium.

And now another art has arisen, and the Churches are doing their best to get hold of that, and bend it their purpose. In the newspapers we read of all sorts of astute moves on the part of the Churches by means of which they are hoping to get hold of the cinema—all in the name of public morality, of course. When the Churches do anything, that must be understood.

One such effort is the compromise between the Sabbatarians, and those who desire to use Sunday in a sensible way which has been suggested by the Bishop of Croydon. Only films which are passed by a committee, consisting in the main of clergy will be shown on Sundays in Croydon. Those who wish to see an ordinary programme must visit the wicked metropolis, where, after six o'clock, they may see whatever they like—or whatever the cinema proprietors think they will like, which is not always quite the same thing.

And in Bristol there is being set up another committee (the Church is very democratic in form these days. Democracy is in the fashion!) which has as its avowed object, the "cleaning up" of the cinemas, and, as the film correspondent of an evening paper in Bristol pointed out, some members of the said committee admit that they do not visit a cinema once in a year. But that by the way.

The other day, also, that organ of the "unco' guid," the *News-Chronicle* announced, that the Churches were thinking of starting to make films of their own. Missionary life, the wonders of those establishments in China, which, Mr. Bland, the author of *China; the Pity of It*, recently described as mainly responsible for the unhappy condition of that country, will provide the *motif* for most of these. Whether the public will flock in their thousands to see these films is another matter, but the fact that such a project should be thought feasible is merely an indication of the way things are moving.

Admittedly the cinema is not all that it should be. Most of the films that we see are either sex dramas, crook plays, or feeble musicals, but if the reverend gentlemen who propose to change all this think that the public would prefer the life of John Wesley to that of Mata Hari, they will find themselves grievously mistaken. Oscar Wilde pointed out, long ago, that there was no such thing as an immoral or a sinful book. "Books are either well or badly written. That is all." And similarly we might say of films. Films are either well made or badly made. That is all. What is wanted in the cinema is not more sermonizing, but more brains.

JOHN ROWLAND.

The Origin of The Universe.

(As explained by two boys.)

TOM. I've been to church: Mother wanted me to, to please Auntie. But I don't know what to think of all they preach about.

Bob. No, nor do I. But, really, I think there must be a somebody or a something somewhere more than what we know of.

T. Well, I s'pose there are a lot of things we don't know of, like wireless and X-rays: they were not known till they were found out. But how do you mean a somebody or a something somewhere?

B. Why, that all the other things came from.

T. P'raps it was a germ.

B. P'raps it was: but where did the germ come from?

T. I don't know: another germ I s'pose.

B. Then where did the first germ come from?

T. Well, you know, I asked Dad that question once and he said, "why don't you get on with mending that bicycle of yours?"

B. Did you ever ask your Mother?

T. Yes, she said "don't talk so much."

B. And what about your Aunt?

T. Oh, I don't ask her such questions. She would say, "Why, God made everything," the same as the religious people do.

B. Then ask her who made God.

T. Oh, she would say he never was made, he has always been there.

B. Then I think I shall say the germ never was made. It always was there right up to the time when the second germ came from it.

T. Then I shall say you and my Aunt are both talking nonsense because you don't, either of you, know any more than I do.

R.H.

Correspondence.

THE SUPERABUNDANCE OF COMMODITIES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your issue of January 8, Ignotus says: "There is a superabundance of wealth and useful commodities." He does not mention what geographical area he is speaking of. If he means that in the whole world there is a superabundance of commodities for all the people of the world, I beg emphatically to deny it.

The only article of food of which there is any large unsold surplus is wheat. Of that it is estimated that there is a surplus of 640 million bushels. That would give a pound of flour per day for a month to each inhabitant of China and India. There is no surplus of any other food which the people of China and India could not eat in a day or two.

Two-thirds of the human race are coloured. Nearly all of them are always short of food. "There are probably at least three hundred million peasant cultivators in Eastern Asia who seldom have more than one meal a day," says Mr. Harold Cox. Dr. Pillay has lately told us the same about India. Even that meal is wholly vegetarian, not only meat, but butter, cheese, milk and eggs being almost unknown. This is from necessity, not choice. Japs and Chinamen eat animal food as avidly as Englishmen whenever they can get it. Unfortunately animal food requires five times as much land as vegetable, which makes it an utter impossibility for half the human race.

We need not even go to the coloured races. The people of Russia could get outside of all the unsold food in the world in a few months, and would be thankful to have the chance.

It is safe to say that there is not in the world one quarter of the animal food which would be needed to lift the population of the world to the standard of life of the English working class. There is also a great shortage of vegetable food.

R. B. KERR.

Unless you grow wise yourself you will listen in vain to the wise.—*Publius Syrus*.

If it is a question of going to hell, go to hell like a gentleman—with your ancestors.—*R. L. Stevenson*.

ANIMISM.

SIR,—*Freethinker*, January 8, 1933, p. 18, col. 1, near foot. "It is a well-known scientific maxim that unknown causes must not be invoked to explain phenomena when known causes suffice."

Hear! hear! That is just why I am an Animist, not an Atheist. I know personal causes. I am one. I will not invoke impersonal causes, which are unknown to me.

Next col., middle: "It is one of the most certain of scientific facts that the belief in gods begins in a mistaken interpretation of subjective and objective facts of experience."

The "interpretation," I presume, is the one I have just given. Can you prove it "mistaken"? I know, of course, Science says it is. But I have exactly as much respect for Science as I have for theology, that is, O.

"A stage of thought, still existing, in which we can actually watch the god-idea coming into existence." Yes, you can watch it in me. About sixty-five years ago you could have watched the arithmetic-idea coming into existence in me (or rather someone else might have watched it: you, I believe, were not yet on this planet.) But why is a belief less true because you can watch it being hatched?

C. HARPUR.

Obituary.

"TOM" BARCLAY.

WE regret to record the death of a staunch Leicester Freethinker in the person of "Tom" Barclay, at the age of eighty. Mr. Barclay was one of the oldest of the Leicester members, and was engaged in Freethinking activities before the present Leicester Secular Hall was opened over fifty years ago. Self-educated, he had a real enthusiasm for ideas, and followed them up with a tenacity that younger men might well copy. His nature was kindly, and displayed sympathy with both those who shared his ideas and those who opposed them. He set an example to the young members of the movement, and helped one to realize the stuff of which the earlier generations of Freethinkers were made. Many who will never know his name or work will reap the benefit of his life. A simple and eloquent address was delivered over his grave by Mr. Harry Hassell.

'TIS ALL THE SAME TO LOVE!

THERE lives a naughty little boy
With locks of gleamy yellow,
Whose one delight it is to toy
With heart of maid or fellow;
He's always full of mischief, and
He never gives you rest:
While he who would his darts withstand
Fit subject is for jest!

For he plagues you in the morning, and he plagues you
in the night;

He teases you when dawns are red, or when the moon
shines bright;

No matter whether young or old, he fits you like a glove:
Spring, summer, autumn, winter, ah . . . !

'Tis all the same to Love!

'Tis said that Love may lose some day
His locks of gleamy yellow,
Or we ourselves, grown weak and grey,
Despise the saucy fellow;
Yet sure am I, though none too wise,
Love may not, cannot tire,
But like the fabled phoenix rise
On Youth's undying fire!

For he plagues you in the morning, and he plagues you
in the night;

He teases you when dawns are red, or when the moon
shines bright;

No matter whether young or old, he fits you like a glove:
Spring, summer, autumn, winter, ah . . . !

'Tis all the same to Love!

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

Onitsha, Nigeria.

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): 7.30, Mrs. E. Grout—"The Social Value of Teetotalism."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, Sunday, January 15, Joseph Reeves of R.A.C.S. Education Department—"The Co-operative Movement in Russia." Questions invited.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Chapman Cohen—"The Menace of Mass Opinion."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, January 16, Mr. A. D. McLaren—"The late Mr. J. M. Robertson's Exposition of the Mythical Christ."

THE CONWAY DISCUSSION CIRCLE (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 7.0, Tuesday, January 17, J. Middleton Murry—"The Materialism of Karl Marx."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, N.): 6.45, Mr. G. A. Foan—"Crime—The Criminal and Punishment."—Visitors welcomed.

OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, January 15, Mr. C. Tuson.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Sunday, January 15, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 3.0, Messrs. Bryant, and A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Tuson and Wood. The *Freethinker* and other Freethought literature can be obtained during and after the meetings, of Mr. Dunn, outside the Park in Bayswater Road.

WOOLWICH (Lakedale Road): 8.0, Friday, January 13, Messrs. F. Dossett and F. W. Smith. Sunday, January 15 (Beresford Square): 7.45, Messrs F. Dossett and F. W. Smith.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

IRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, Price Street, Birkenhead, near Hamilton Square): 7.0, H. Lancaster (Liverpool)—"Charles Bradlaugh."

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Cafe, Godwin Street): 7.0, Mr. T. Green—"Godlessness—Proletarian or Bourgeois?"

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street Burnley): 8.30 p.m., Sunday, January 15, Lecture "Brahma, Vishnu and Siva." Speaker Mr. Fred Hill of Brurfield." Questions and Discussion. All welcome.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (No. 2 Room, City Hall, Albion Street): 6.30, Sunday, January 15, Mr. J. Kerr—"The Curse of Religion. Questions and discussion. Silver collection.

HANTS AND DORSET BRANCH N.S.S. (36 Victoria Road, Bournemouth): 6.30 sharp. Sunday, January 15. All members urgently requested to attend.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. L. Ebury (London)—"Atheism, a Social Necessity." Questions and discussion. Collection.

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, Sunday, January 15, Jack Clayton—"Freethought and Some Modern Tendencies." Current *Freethinkers* and Mr. Cohen's Gramophone Record on sale.

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Hall No. 5, Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus): 7.0, Mr. J. Matthews—"History—The Proof of Materialism."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Roams, Green Street): 7.15, Sunday, January 15, A lecture.

SUNDERLAND (I.L.P. Rooms, Foyle Street): 8.0, The Speaker's Class under Mr. J. T. Brighton will be continued as usual on Monday nights.

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