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

Views and Opinions.

A Damp Squib.

It is astonishing how easily a reputation as a "clever" thinker may be gained if one champions some form of religious orthodoxy, and if one has a few friends on the press who will do a little "log-rolling." And if one can defend orthodoxy under cover of a pretence of being more daring than the unorthodox, and more modern than the modern, the gaining of a reputation is still easier. The time has gone by when unorthodoxy can be profitably assailed because it is unorthodox. The better plan is to assert that it is not orthodox enough, that if it saw things in their proper perspective it would realize that unorthodoxy is a logical working out of orthodoxy, and, because unorthodoxy is a development of orthodoxy therefore unorthodoxy is quite unnecessary, and we may go back to Christian orthodoxy feeling that we are as up to date as anyone possibly can be.

In the current issue of the *London Mercury* there is an article on "The End of the Moderns." It has the sparkle that usually accompanies Mr. Chesterton's writings when he touches religion, but unfortunately it is the sparkle of a rather cheap squib. His fireworks lack even the potential destructiveness of the old-fashioned squib, which might actually set something on fire, but rather resembles one of the drawing-room variety which sparkles, but is warranted not to set anything alight. It alarms none but the very young who are timid of the unexpected coruscation, and are filled with admiration of Daddy's courage in holding so terrible a thing.

Mr. Chesterton's method is so simple and so well-known where a defence of Roman Catholicism is concerned that only his most persistent admirers can find much interest in watching his performance. Essentially, as I once pointed out, it is that of the two niggers engaged in a slanging match. One had exhausted his vocabulary in calling the other names. When he came to the end there was only one thing for the other nigger to say, and he said it. He remarked, "All dem tings you say I is you am." That is Mr. Chester-

ton in a nutshell. If a vegetarian says meat-eating makes a man fightable, he will talk of the ferocity of the vegetarian attacking a man peacefully eating a beef-steak. When an Atheist says that the world can get on very well without God he retorts that if there were no God there could be no Atheism. Say that drunkenness leads to misery, and he will retort that the drunkard is happy and the sober man is often unhappy. Say the future will be good and he replies that there can be no future that will last because it is the past as soon as it occurs, and therefore the man who believes in the future can have no future before him. It is a method that requires little thought—just a few whimsical words, and a few friends to call attention to their cleverness.

* * *

Atheism.

Here is a sample of Mr. Chesterton's method in the *London Mercury* article. (With the general run of the article I am not now concerned.) Speaking of Russia and of blasphemy, he says:—

The literature of Atheism is bound to fail exactly in proportion as it succeeds. The Bolsheviks have not merely tried to abolish God, which some think a trick needing some ingenuity. They have tried to make an institution of the abolition of God; and when the God is abolished the abolition is abolished. There can never be any future for the literature of blasphemy; for if it fails, it fails; and if it succeeds, it becomes a literature of respectability . . . Blasphemy can only be impressive as a last gesture. Blasphemy is by definition the end of everything, including the blasphemers.

Now that is characteristically Chestertonian. It is not really witty, because it lacks the truth of outlook which genuine wit should always enshrine. It is not first-rate fooling because the distortion of misunderstanding is too obvious to really amuse. It is nearer foolery than folly. It really indicates but one thing, and that is Mr. Chesterton's inability to take a profound view of anything that requires, whatever be the form in which the statement is cast, the capacity for straightforward thought. Put this gem of Mr. Chesterton's in another connexion and its quality is obvious:—

The practice of sanitation is bound to fail exactly in proportion as it succeeds. The Sanitarians have not merely tried to abolish insanitary conditions, which some think a trick needing some ingenuity, but have tried to make an institution of the abolition; and when the insanitary conditions are abolished the institution is abolished. There can never be any future for sanitation; for if it fails, it fails, and if it succeeds it becomes useless. . . . Sanitarianism can only be impressive as a lazy gesture. Sanitation is by definition the end of everything, including the Sanitarian.

In their enjoyment of drawing room fireworks, Mr. Chesterton's infantile admirers never realize that blas-

phemy is possible only to a believer. Whether blasphemy be taken as speaking disrespectfully of God, or ridiculing God, or defying God, it can only be committed so long as one believes in the existence of him, or her, or it, or whatever God is taken to be. When Mr. Chesterton thinks the Atheist is laughing at God, or at the Virgin Birth, or at the Mass, or the power of the priest to forgive sins, he is in error. The Atheist is laughing only at him for being so childishly absurd as to believe in these things. When I laugh at the information that a dog spirit has been heard to bark at a Spiritualistic seance, I am not laughing at the doggy spirit—although I may think that instead of the bark of a dog it was the voice of an animal with much longer ears that was heard—I am laughing at the man who believes in the tale. Of course, if the Spiritualist or Mr. Chesterton leaves off believing, my laughter will cease, and so far as that source of amusement is concerned I am dependent upon them. That is the philosophy of the situation, and it applies to many things other than religion. If the world were completely sensible there would be no laughter at its foolishness, but there is no particular danger of an immediate shortage of either that particular form of foolishness which is individualized in established religions or of foolishness in general. The question of a supply of foolishness will never be urgent while Mr. Chesterton is able to stand as a philosophic guide for man. Neither for a very long time will there be cause to fear the decay of blasphemy through lack of material.

* * *

Atheism and the Future.

But it is quite evident that Mr. Chesterton has not in mind the common-law definition of blasphemy, which makes it consist of ridicule or offensive language; what he means by blasphemy is an attack on or a rejection of the belief in God. And that makes the analogy between the passage cited from his article and the analogy of the Sanitarians about as exact as an analogy can be. To him the triumph of blasphemy means a society in which God is left out. And if Atheism is triumphant then God is left out, and its literature is established for ever, just as if Sanitarian measures crush out all insanitary conditions Sanitarians are triumphant for ever. What Mr. Chesterton ought to have said is that the defiance of God, the criticism of God, or ridiculing God can only exist so long as men believe in God. That is quite true, but the same reasoning applies to everything. Mr. Chesterton can only attack Atheism so long as there are Atheists. The prison only has a meaning so long as criminals exist; and so on through endless instances. Mr. Chesterton has not only failed to say something brilliant, or original, he has dished up one of the stalest of commonplaces that most people do not bother to state because it is such a commonplace, and probably because they are a little more on their guard against serving up such platitudes as sound philosophizing in any connexion other than that of religion.

But like most Roman Catholic apologists Mr. Chesterton is not very particular how he makes his point so long as he makes it. His aim here is to persuade his less wide-awake readers that because when people no longer believe in a God it will be unnecessary to preach Atheism to them, therefore it is a waste of time to preach Atheism now. This is on a level with the advice that it is quite unnecessary to lock one's doors at night now, because when all people are honest bolts and bars will be useless. He is not really anxious to save people wasting their time or their energies on destroying the belief in a God; actually he is afraid that the Atheistic criticism will succeed in its purpose.

Unfortunately for Mr. Chesterton that is just what is happening. His own writings prove this. There would be no need for him and his fellow-hawkers of savage survivals if the belief in a God was as soundly based and as obvious as the sun and the stars. There would be no need to offer inducements to believe if there were any real demand in human nature for a God. But the whole trend of civilization is to place God on one side. In spite of individual cases of scientific men who are as out of touch with modern thought when dealing with religion as is Mr. Chesterton, and who may profess religious belief, science is yet incurably Atheistic. Sociology moves more and more independently of religion, and even in politics religion is steadily weakening. Naturally in these circumstances Mr. Chesterton, who likes to work along the lines of what he wrongly thinks is that of paradox, meets the growth of Atheism with the retort that it must soon die, or that it is dependent for its existence upon Theism and cannot survive it. But one suspects that he has an uneasy vision of a future in which Atheism may be the almost universal frame of mind, with the belief in gods and ghosts, angels and devils properly treated as an instance of a reversal to a less developed mentality. Until that time arrives Mr. Chesterton will continue to amuse, even if he fails to instruct.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Lessons in Journalism.

FLEET STREET is not making the most of its opportunities. It is sad to have to draw attention to the fact. But in view of the fearful set-backs to religion it is surely a matter for serious consideration when we find that the newspapers—and more especially those given to advertising religion—are manifesting a regrettable lack of flair for the theological high spots.

It is said that an Englishman always likes to back the losing side. I cannot say that this phenomenon has obtruded itself upon my notice. Yet it cannot be denied that he likes to be thought a thorough sportsman. In order, therefore, to conform to type, I have decided (for the moment) to take up the cudgels on behalf of religious journalism. And for this purpose I shall assume the mantle of that legendary Arch-Penny-a-liner who never fails to smell out the sensational and who, even when told to write up such a banal incident as that of a dog who has bitten a man, can conscientiously report that it was the man who bit the dog. My aim in so doing is to give Fleet Street a leg-up over this most depressing period of its history. More particularly do I wish to emphasize the ease with which apparently unconsidered trifles in the news can be converted into really devastating paragraphs of religious propaganda.

This remarkable act of journalistic altruism on my part is not to be taken as a precedent. Whether I shall ever again show such a sportsmanlike temper towards my fellow professionals depends very much upon the reception which they may accord to this gratuitous piece of literary instruction. But I will say this. Brains being at their present discount, I shall be glad to act in future—for a merely nominal fee—as Psycho-physical Adviser to any religious journalist who feels that the Fluence has departed from him and is anxious to be given the necessary "Kick" to pep him up to pre-war strength again.

For my present lesson, however, I shall take the Gospel according to the *News-Chronicle*, the thirty-first day of December, 1932. And my first example is an extract from the report on an inquest, as follows:—

Coroner (to witness who described himself as a spiritual healer and clear seer): "How did you treat her?" *Witness*: "I treated her spiritually, but not mentally." *Coroner*: "You mean bodily, don't you?" *Witness*: "No; you are treating them directly through the soul of the individual." *Coroner*: "I am afraid we cannot embark on metaphysical arguments here."

And now follows the same incident as it should have been dealt with by one inspired with true zeal for the Faith (unspecified).

THE LOST SOUL. *Reality or Unreality? Up clergy and at 'im!*—A witness at a coroner's inquest, who described himself as a psychologist, a spiritual healer and a clear seer, and who must, therefore, have possessed the combined qualities of Scientist, Priest and Prophet, gave evidence that he had treated the deceased spiritually. He denied that his treatment was either physical or mental, and declared that he treated persons "directly through the soul of the individual."

It would hardly seem possible for anyone to cavil at such a perfectly intelligible and explicit statement. The existence of the soul cannot be a matter for dispute after nearly two thousand years of Christian teaching, in which every conceivable form of suasion—from gentle abuse to roasting alive—has been employed to convince the unbeliever. Yet, amazing as it may sound, it is reported that in answer to this statement the Coroner actually declared that "we cannot embark on metaphysical arguments here." Metaphysical arguments, indeed! As though the soul were not an indubitable reality! Out upon you, Mr. Coroner! Have you no soul of your own, that you should thus stigmatize the plain assertion of an honest believer! What are we coming to? A pretty pass, in sooth! We shall soon be having our legal and other luminaries casting doubts upon the reality of God! Oh, the horror! the wickedness! the blasphemy! the—but words fail us!

Well, we do not profess to be theologians, even though we do permit Mr. Hugh Redwood to publish his inimitable "Lay Sermons" every Saturday. But when it comes to casting aspersions upon our soul, we confess to feeling a bit raw. Are we positively to enter our office day after day as though nothing had happened? Must we face our sub-editors with an outward semblance of calm, while our soul is being airily conjured away by sceptical coroners? A thousand times, NO! We call upon the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury and other Bishops, the Chief Rabbi, the Imam, and all the rest of them, to wipe out this shameful shame, this blot upon the escutcheon of our tenderest feelings.

My next example is taken from a short paragraph concerning a new Bill to be introduced into Parliament, which reads as follows: A Bill, to ensure that all animals killed in slaughter-houses and knackers' yards in England shall be instantaneously killed or stunned by a mechanically operated instrument, has been presented by Col. T. C. Moore (Con.). Jews and Mohammedans would be allowed to kill animals in a manner in accordance with their religious beliefs.

Now this is a most inadequate notice of an item whose religious importance should have been emphasized as follows:—

OUR WONDERFUL LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE. *After All, Animals Are Animals.*—The names of several eminent Members of Parliament and Society have been announced as supporting a Bill to ensure the humane killing of animals, whether for human food or otherwise, though the sacrosanct domain of sport has, naturally, been left untouched. It does not appear that this list of names includes any official in any of

the Churches—an omission which cannot be intentional. For it is an indisputable fact—according to the statements of most Christian divines, whose word it would be profane to doubt—that our humane attitude towards the brute creation, which is fast becoming popular in Christendom, is the direct outcome of Bible teaching. We cannot, at the moment, quote any texts in support of this contention, but doubtless there must be hundreds. (Of course, how stupid of us to forget! See Judges xv. 4.) Apart from this, the Bill exemplifies in a most noteworthy manner the far-famed tolerance of Christians for the religious beliefs of infidels. For it is specifically stated that Jews and Mohammedans are to be permitted to slaughter animals in such manner as may accord with their own particular rites and superstitions. We are not in a position to assert that the methods employed are definitely inhumane; nor do we think that it matters much if they are. For, after all, who would be so bigoted as to declare that the feelings of mere beasts should be considered when religious liberty is at stake. It should be clearly borne in mind, however, that whereas we are unbending advocates of religious liberty, we would not tolerate anything that might interfere with the religious feelings of Christians. The feelings of infidels, sceptics and unbelievers in general are not *religious*. How then can any sane person regard them as *feelings*?

* * *

My last example is taken from the report on a session of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Here it is: Dr. Millikan holds that the cosmic rays represent "God in the act of continuous creation, providing fresh sources of energy to build new worlds as the old fall into decay?" And here is how I suggest the matter should be treated.

GOD FOUND AT LAST! *Actually Doing Something! Scientist's Stupendous Revelation!*—The Great Revival is upon us! Like a mighty tidal wave it will burst upon the world, driving before it the dark forces of Unbelief, and spreading a mantle of Pure and Undiluted (if somewhat salty) Faith in its wake! Never again will the Hydra-Headed Horror of Atheism, Agnosticism, Acrosticism, Bolshevism, Bahaism, Hahalism, Secularism, Sexualism, Sonnambulism, Socialism, and Unsocialism dare to rear its foul form in our midst! For God—God Almighty, All Seeing, All Hearing, All Testing, All Smelling—God the Maker of All Things (including both of us)—God the, well, anyway, GOD—has been found at last! Hallelujah! Selah!

Dr. Millikan, the famous astronomer, whose unwavering faith in the ultimate discovery of what he was looking for is a superb example of scientific open-mindedness, has declared that the Cosmic rays which he discovered are not cosmic rays at all, but God—God in the act of creation! He admitted that this "continuous creation" was to build new worlds as the old fall into decay, but did not state what was the Stupendous Power that so effectively caused God's earlier efforts to fritter away. Yet who can doubt that sooner or later this, or some other, great scientist will track this Power to its lair. And when this new discovery is announced, we who are of the True Faith will not need to be told what it is. We know already. Satan, who has gone to earth these many years, will ultimately be trailed by the Hounds of Science, followed at some considerable distance by the cheering crowds of Church dignitaries. And when, at last, the Foxy Fiend has been dug out—whether it be in the shape of some Infra-Emanation or Ultra-Effluxion—who then will dare to assert that Religion has not been completely and eternally vindicated (once more)?

C. S. FRASER.

Sinister "Sacred Tenths."

"All that is human must retrograde if it does not advance."—*Gibbon*.

"Clericalism, there is the enemy."—*Gambetta*.

"The lie at the lips of the priest."—*Swinburne*.

PRIESTS have in all ages and in all countries fleeced the unfortunate worshippers of their "gods." How the trick was done is clearly seen by turning to the eighteenth chapter of Deuteronomy in the Christian Bible. There it is laid down with all the majesty of sacerdotalism:—

"The priests the Levites, even all the tribe of Levi" shall receive certain dues from the people. "The first fruits of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him. For the Lord thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes to stand to minister in the name of the Lord, him and his sons for ever."

It is a far cry from the hills of Lebanon to the tithe sales down in Kent and Suffolk, but it is useful to make that stride, and to see how the English farmer, paying the priests' portion to-day, finds it increasingly hard to make a living in a time of industrial depression.

It is the present-day revolt against the iniquity and the burden of the "sacred tenth" in agricultural England which has rendered an old problem acute, and, incidentally, exposed one of the wiles of Priestcraft. Farmers and landowners throughout the country are demanding relief from an annual charge made by priests which means for so many of them the difference between success and failure, happiness and misery. The Farmers' Union has passed a resolution demanding a Ministry of Agriculture inquiry into this tithe burden. It is no trifling matter, for over £3,000,000 is collected annually in tithes, which goes to the Church of England by law established, a stronghold of Toryism.

This imposition of a "sacred tenth" is not purely Jewish, although the early Christian priests copied it from their Hebrew predecessors. Priestcraft imposed the burden in Egypt, Babylon, China, Greece, Rome, and elsewhere. The trick was so profitable that it was used almost universally, but we are more concerned with England.

In Anglo-Saxon times the priest had a piece of land given him to supply his needs, and, later, as the grip of Priestcraft tightened, a tenth of the produce. It is highly probable that the Druid priests enjoyed these privileges earlier, and the Christian priest simply stepped into his predecessor's shoes. In the thirteenth century farmers must have become restless at this gross imposition, for at this time it became enforceable at law. For centuries the tithe was actually paid in kind, and not in cash. How Kingcraft and Priestcraft worked in similar devious ways may be seen by recalling that when Henry the Eighth dissolved the opulent monasteries he regranted some of their property to his own friends, and with it the right to receive the priests' tithe. That is how it comes to-day that some tithes are paid to laymen and not to priests, a distinction without much difference.

The price this country has to pay for the privilege of Priestcraft is enormous, but one of the worst examples of clerical extortion is that agriculture should have to bear so large a proportion of the burden of a State Church. It is high time that people realized that this Anglican Church is not only supported by the voluntary contributions of its congregations, like the Nonconformist bodies, but derives enormous revenues from tithes, church rates, coal royalties, and from the revenues of slum properties.

It is the plain, unvarnished fact that this Protestant State Church never has been the Church of the nation. It has all along been the Church of a section of the people, but it has enjoyed the privileges of State support. Outside this so-called Church of England lies the nation, which regards it as the Church of the Tories, and as having outlived its period of usefulness. It is mere folly to talk of it, or try to defend it, as the Church of the English nation. At a census taken in London some years since it was shown that only one person in nineteen attended a place of worship, and that only a proportion of these attended Anglican Churches. It is not surprising, for these State clergy are behind and against the best spirits of the age in which we live, blindly suspicious of aspirations and desires which Democracy has approved.

The priests of this so-called Church of England are the veriest hypocrites and time-servers. Take one example only. War is the very antithesis of Christian teaching, it is the negation of Christianity. War has been waged by British arms in every quarter of the inhabited earth these last hundred years. Countries have been annexed, native races subdued, and the mileage of the British Empire has increased until it includes a third of the globe. Whether these wars were just or unjust, crimes or blunders, the Christian Bishops of the Anglican Church in the House of Lords, where they sit as aristocrats, have never condemned them. Nay, more! The priests of this Church have actually blessed regimental colours, christened battleships, and sung Te Deums for victory. "The customer is always right," say the directors of big commercial stores. "The Government is always right" murmur the bishops, mindful of their salaries. In their pulpits these priests prate of the Golden Rule. In practice they steadily maintained the primitive love of slaughter and conquest, and uphold the rule of the sword.

Yet farmers are heavily taxed throughout the generations to support such a Church, which defies humanism and flouts Democracy. There are things, however, which are too strong for archbishops, bishops, parish priests, and vergers, and progress is one of them. This Anglican Church was made by Parliament; it has, from time to time, been sent to its creator for repairs. Hence it follows that what Parliament has made it can also unmake. Sooner or later a measure for the disestablishment and disendowment of this Tory Church will be carried by the British Parliament, and its clergy will have to seek for honest employment. And England will be cleaner and happier for the change. So long as there are endowed churches, the Christian Superstition will be preached and taught by interested priests, who do not believe in what they preach, but are desirous of an easy and comfortable existence at the expense of their fellow citizens. "What fun some grown-up people have," said a child seeing an archbishop in full war-paint. This piece of "fun" costs £15,000 yearly, enough to keep scores of families.

MIMNERMUS.

So precious is praise that, if we do not deserve it, we are tempted to accept it with the intention of deserving it, and of becoming what we were supposed already to be.

George Tyrrell.

I count religion but a childish toy,
And hold there is no sin but ignorance

Marlowe (*The Jew of Malta*.)

Science and Materialism To-day.

"Aware of the enormous labour and thought that has gone into each advance science has made, the biologist is more than skeptical when philosophers explain away by fiat his difficulties, and he is not unaware that step by step the progress of science has forced magic and metaphysical speculations farther out of his field. (Prof. T. H. Morgan: *The Scientific Basis of Evolution*. pp. 239-40.)

We have seen how the editors of the popular Press act as a strainer, letting through only the news of which they approve. The editor of the *Newspaper-Chronicle*, for instance, must be an evangelical, whose one ambition it is to see a revival of religion. Mr. James Douglas, another London editor, is inspired with a similar ambition. Any one who expected a favourable hearing for Materialism from men devoted to religious ideals would be very simple indeed. In fact, there is not a single London daily paper in which the materialist could depend upon a fair deal.

The obscurantist and anti-materialistic deliverances of Sir James Jeans and Sir A. Eddington are received with joy; and the archæological discoveries at Ur and, the alleged, Jericho, are claimed, without any qualification whatever, as proof of the truth of the Bible narrative. Whereas, unless folks are very ignorant of the subject, they must know that these outpourings do nothing of the kind.

If Materialism had depended for its support upon the Press it would have been dead long ago, as the Press has been declaring it is, for as long as we can remember, and that is about sixty years. One would think that once a thing was dead they would leave it alone; but no, they keep on, year after year, at their ghoulish task of slaying the slain. But in their hearts they know perfectly well that Materialism is not dead, and not likely to be. The wish is father to the thought,

All the arguments against Materialism find a ready welcome in the Press, and are re-echoed from pulpit to pulpit. The facts and discoveries in favour of Materialism, are either suppressed, or twisted into agreement with the spiritual interpretation. In fact, however, the results obtained by the working scientist, the research chemist, the physiologist and biochemist, the men who are absorbed in working out the problems of life and living organisms do not so easily reach the public. Their results—generally written in highly technical terms—appear in the journals published by the various scientific societies, and are quite unknown to the general public, and if known, would be incomprehensible to them.

The men engaged in these researches are averse from public controversy. Like Darwin, they regard it as a waste of time which can be more profitably employed in research.

Moreover, the men engaged in working upon the problems of life, consciousness, instinct, and mind, are invariably Materialists. They must be, for if they believed in spiritual forces, vital forces, or entelechies, it would be a hopeless enterprise seeking for the natural explanations afforded by science. It would be foolish to start such an investigation.

The scientific worker makes no allowance for any spiritual interference in his operations and experiments. If a Chemist was to read a paper to his Society, in which he declared that some spiritual influence had interfered with his chemical balance, or influenced the pointer readings of his instruments, he would be regarded as a fit subject for a mental examination.

We should like our Spiritualistic friends to explain, how it is that the spirits who are so active with tambourines and trumpets in the dark seance, who

shift furniture with an ease that arouses the admiration and envy of furniture removers never enter the scientific laboratory, when a few such visits would convince the sceptical scientific world? The spirits avoid science as the devil is said to avoid holy water.

In connexion with the metaphysical and obscurantist views put forward by Eddington and Jeans, Mr. Morley Roberts observes:—

So when physicists become metaphysicians they naturally assume the authority of their rank in their own science. Great men in what they know are held to be great men in what they do not and cannot know. We all want to make "the passage to physics," and must readily accept a helping hand when physicists offer it. But when instead of help we get obscurantism and a passage to some kind of theology we owe them no gratitude.¹

It is true, as the same writer remarks, that there are some scientists who exhibit "a capacity for believing statements that no one, unmarred by prejudiced instruction in childhood, could accept for a moment . . . Who begin all discussion with a background of 'mental' beliefs they cannot, and often dare not, analyse." (p. 233.) These men do good work in research, "and then break out into a rash of metaphysics and undo half the work they might have done . . . There is no need for physicists to propagate waves of obscurantism. We have enough without them." (p. 236.)

Mr. Morley Roberts who has himself made contributions to scientific knowledge, tells us that he has himself urged scientists, who through their achievements in science, have a right to be heard, that:—

it was their duty to say what they really thought when men eminent in various branches of science took up these newer forms of obscurantism. They showed themselves reluctant to do so for many reasons not difficult to understand and some suggested that it would be better if the task were undertaken by one of more independence while they preserved the serenity necessary for their work. (p. 226.)

This reluctance of the scientific workers, as distinguished from the Professors who are engaged in teaching, lecturing, and writing; along with the steady, unrelaxing, opposition of the popular Press, all helps to retard the progress of Materialism.

The name of Thomas Huxley is often invoked as an opponent of Materialism. He said that the Materialist could not explain the facts of consciousness; but he knew that it was only by adopting the materialistic method of working that any scientific progress could be made. He declared:—

In itself it is of little moment whether we express the phenomena of matter in terms of spirit; or the phenomena of spirit in terms of matter: matter may be regarded as a form of thought, thought may be regarded as a property of matter—each statement has a certain relative truth. But with a view to the progress of science, the materialistic terminology is in every way to be preferred. For it connects thought with the other phenomena of the universe, and suggests inquiry into the nature of those physical conditions, or concomitants of thought, which are more or less accessible to us, and a knowledge of which may, in future, help us to exercise the same kind of control over the world of thought, as we already possess in respect of the material world; whereas, the alternative, or spiritualistic, terminology is utterly barren, and leads to nothing but obscurity and confusion of ideas.²

In fact, if natural laws are liable to be overruled, or interfered with by spiritual influences, then scientific investigation becomes impossible.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

¹ Morley Roberts: *The Serpent's Fang*. p. 226.

² T. Huxley: *Lay Sermons* (1880 Ed.). p. 146.

The Boycott of Unbelief.

"O Poverty, thy thousand ills combined,
Sink not so deep into the generous mind,
As the contempt and laughter of mankind."

Juvenal.

"It is, and it ought to be, an unpleasant thing to be an infidel." These words, or words to this effect—I write far from reference—came from the late Dean Wace in a now forgotten controversy with Huxley. At first blush it sounds a "stale, flat, and unprofitable" jibe, almost incredible to the modern ear. A little reflection will prove that the spirit of that jibe is very much alive. Men no longer burn at the stake; but there are still penalties upon opinion, penalties not only of the law, but inflicted by social ostracism, professional boycott, and by the insidious poison of personal slander in the guise of criticism.

I read a statement the other day to the effect that a considerable number of clergymen, known to be of rationalistic opinions, gravely question whether they may not do more for those opinions by staying where they are than by abandoning their "orders," and openly declaring their scepticism. Before anyone makes a hasty judgment in such cases let him consider what taking such a step means in this Christian country even in the twentieth century of that era.

To the Roman Catholic an "apostate" is a pariah. It is told of a deceased Vicar-Apostolic who functioned in London before the restoration of the Roman Hierarchy in this country that, if a priest went to him saying he had intellectual difficulties about his faith the cynical prelate would enquire: "What's it's name, Punch or Judy?" "Honest doubt" is outside the comprehension of Catholics. The worst criminal is a possible saint compared to him. Men of little distinction have rarely survived the ordeal that faces the ex-priest, and if one does survive, and take his place, known and respected in the world, it is proof positive that he is a man of distinction, if only in character and courage. There are some few, too well known to need mention, both in England and France, who have added serious contributions to learning after leaving the Church.

The average priest, broken in as a rule before he is out of his teens, is much less likely to be confronted with this situation than the average clergyman or minister. Most of the latter are, to begin with, married men, family men. Few of them are competent to earn a living in these competitive days in any secular calling. Is it any wonder conviction has to contend with the call of domestic responsibility, with the fear of poverty or dependence, nay, more, with a man's notion of duty to those who are nearest and dearest to him?

Nor are these problems confined to the clerical profession. The layman, whether in business, or in one of the professions or trades, is not exempt from this curb upon the logical pursuit of his convictions. For a small tradesman in a country town to profess Atheism may well mean putting up the shutters for good. Journalism? Do not most of us know men who are and have been Freethinkers for years, who dare not sign their names to an article in this journal? It is often the case that, despite abstention from public affirmation of these opinions, it gets out in a man's office or firm that he holds them—it is difficult, even in the common exchanges of every day, for a naturally candid person to stand guard over his every word—and, although he may not be dismissed or reduced, he may see pliable mediocrity preferred over conscientious, but not servile, service.

There are two reflections to be made upon these disgraceful conditions. Is it not ironical, in face of them, that Freethought is so often charged with being poor? Whoever made money by being a Freethinker? Yet the knighted donors of pious benefactions are not worthy to be mentioned in the same breath as those who serve faithfully, adhere steadfastly, and in many cases avow to their great loss, the cause of Freethought. It has no rewards to offer, and, for that very reason, it does not attract that class of adherent who in nearly all types of organizations connected with public work participate only for such *kudos* as can be gained thereby. If the in-

different public were as conscious as it is innocent of how it is duped and doped by the direct and indirect pressure of Religion, in the press, in the pulpit, and in the sphere of social activity, there might be a rush to join the N.S.S. Meanwhile that public will waste its subscriptions on churches, chapels, sectarian warfare and foreign missions, and marvel that anyone can be so indiscreet as to be a Freethinker.

There is another implication of this taboo. That "great army which no man can number" which has, in fact, given up the practice of, if not belief in, religion, and those who, consciously believing it not, are constrained by fear or what they think is duty, to stifle the urge to avowal—do they not writhe under the tribute which religion drags from their unwilling minds and pockets? Inside that indifferent public there is a "seething pot" of incipient protest; and hardly anyone, not a Christian, can fail to have at least a silent disapproval of the guile and greed of a creed which has done, and still does so much to earn "the contempt and laughter of mankind." Freethought, poor as it undoubtedly is in money and worldly prestige, has Knowledge and Time on its side; and whatever else it provokes, it does not provoke laughter or contempt. Freethought planteth, science watereth, and education will give the increase.

ALAN HANDSACRE.

Acid Drops.

Some of the clergy have not realized the fact that we are living in the twentieth century instead of in the eighteenth. Recently on the appointment of a school teacher in Devonshire the Chairman of the Managers, who happened to be the Vicar of the parish in which the appointment was to take place, had the impudence to write to some of the candidates asking what denomination they belonged to. One can imagine with what purpose and how the Vicar would have used the information given.

Fortunately the Chairman of the Devon Education Committee, Sir Francis Acland, brought the matter before the Committee, and said that the religious opinions of teachers should not influence either the appointment or the promotion of teachers. The Committee decided to remove the appointment of the teacher from the managers to one of their sub-committees.

This is quite right and proper. In this case it was a question of what form of religion the teacher had. But suppose he had none, what then? We hope the committee would have acted on similar lines, but we have a suspicion that it might not have been so. Particularly in either Devonshire or Cornwall.

Now this state of things is likely to continue, either openly, or as in most cases at present, secretly, and teachers will be driven to play the hypocrite until the National Union of Teachers regard honesty of statement and attitude of more consequence to the profession than appointment or promotion. So long as religion is in the schools teachers will be appointed in very many cases with a view to their religious belief—or to their professed religious belief. If they wish to act honestly, they must clear the parson—in person and by proxy out of the schools. Once religion is out of the schools there are few parsons who will trouble to get on education committees. And when they are removed, and religious teaching is left to those who believe in it it, teachers may be as honest and as conscientious as, say, dustmen.

The *Church Times* is not at all impressed with a fatuous pamphlet from the Christian Protest Movement entitled *A World War on all Religions*—which is supposed to describe the Atheistic propaganda of the Communist Party. We are not surprised, especially as Christians themselves are waging a war on all religions

except their own. What the *Church Times* is afraid of, however, is "the insidious anti-religious influence of certain intellectuals" such as, for example, that of Mr. Aldous Huxley. We don't doubt for a moment that here is something religion has to fear, but we should like to add that a far more dangerous enemy is the open and militant propaganda of the *Freethinker* and the N.S.S. That this is so is shown by the *Church Times* persistent refusal even to name the *Freethinker* in its columns. The boycott shows fear at its maximum.

Anti-religion in Ireland is still receiving serious attention at the hands of Roman Catholic priests who are greatly disturbed that—according to them—the Church's brightest gem is subject to the Atheistic propaganda of red Communism. What is more disturbing still is the sad picture which the Most Rev. Dr. Collier described of the number of "Communist agents assuming the rôle of religion the better to deceive the decent Catholic working man. They made it a point to be seen at Church, at Mass, at Devotions, and even at the sacraments. This has deceived and worried a good number of real Catholic workers." What devils these Communists are!

We have never heard before of the "Society of the Divine Word," but it is about to form its first branch in Ireland. Father Bell thinks Ireland an ideal place "for the work of their congregation, which was formed mainly to press all modern science into the service of the Church." The idea of anyone seriously undertaking to press all modern science into the service of the Church strikes us as being a most happy one. Perhaps Fr. Bell expects to accomplish this magnificent ideal off his own bat or is the Society of the Divine Word getting a trifle mixed in the head?

In a review of *The Bible, The Scholar and The Spade*, a book which is supposed to give a summary of the results of excavation in support of the Bible, the *Times Literary Supplement* does not seem to be entirely convinced. This sentence shows how wonderfully excavation and the Bible are made to agree in the work: "The book could have been made more powerful in its appeal by self-criticism which would have omitted minor points and concentrated on the really important discoveries which agree with the Biblical narrative and confirm its historical truth." We really must hint that the reason why the author preferred the "minor points" was because there have been no epoch-making excavation discoveries on Bible truths. That's all.

The Vicar of St. Mary's (the University Church) says that in the student population of Oxford the young women are further away from the Church than the young men. That is the best thing we have heard about women for a long time.

When Blakesware, the seat of Lord Gerard was burnt out recently by fire, the Chapel was quite untouched. Not a scorch could be found on the religious vestments, altar, vessels, etc., while the purely secular books and heirlooms were mostly destroyed. As Lord Gerard is a Roman Catholic, we confess we see the Hand of the Lord in this. Who but a Roman Catholic could expect such divine intervention? We are sure Lord Gerard himself would a thousand times have all his secular treasures destroyed than have a hair on a religious vessel missing. What a comfort in this hard, cold world of ours is genuine Roman Catholic religious faith!

Another example of the same kind of intervention is reported from Quebec. St. Jerome's Church, Mantane, worth over £100,000 was entirely destroyed by fire. The Lord, to show the power of His might, caused the sacred vessels and vestments to be carried into safety. If we dared to blaspheme, and question His choice, we should

like to ask (in a whisper) which the congregation would have preferred to be saved, the Church or the vestments? No prizes given for the answer.

The Pope has marked the New Year by instituting a Passport system for all visitors to the Vatican "State." It is also to have its own coinage and postage stamps. In the last detail it resembles the great Exhibitions, and, to be sure, the analogy is a suitable one. As an exhibition of freak survivals from the past the Vatican has no equal. In seeking to demonstrate the "independence" of his "kingdom"—as a result of a mercenary deal with an ex-Socialist and Atheist—His Holiness does not display his accustomed perspicuity. It is a common complaint now-a-days that the multiplication of boundaries (*via* the Versailles Treaty), and the increasing trouble people have with varying Customs, and changing their money time after time into different currencies, is tending to stop foreign touring. When the Vatican was among the sights of Rome, open to be "done" like the others, if not without money, at least without all the paraphernalia of entering a new country, most visitors to that city included it in their itinerary. Pious Catholics will doubtless think no time or money too much for the privilege of kissing the Holy Toe, but ordinary visitors may well jib at having to pay tribute to its owner, and to becoming if only for an hour, a duly registered "alien" in the Papal State.

The concerted effort of organized Christianity, Catholic and Protestant, to associate and confuse Freethought with Communism continues to occupy much space in certain journals and much time on platforms and in many pulpits. In view of the recent action of Law Officers of the Crown and of the Police in using Communistic opinions as evidence in and justification for certain prosecutions, and to interfere with journals and meetings, it may be useful to make our position clear in regard to such proceedings. Communism is a theory or system of society with which, as such, we are no more concerned than with the Conservative or Liberal ones. What we are concerned about, and what we must affirm and maintain unflinchingly, is freedom of thought, speech, writing, and lawful action for every person, and, not least, for minorities. For Christian minorities in non-Christian countries, not less than Communist minorities in non-Communist countries, there must be the same rights and liberties.

Freethinkers are themselves, at all events as an organized body, a minority; but not in this restricted sense, far less in numbers and influence as a whole, are they such a small minority as they are represented to be by those who, in sharp conflict with that opinion, spend much effort in opposing and misrepresenting them. Thus self-interest as well as principle compels Freethinkers to stand without compromise against any attempt to penalize, punish or suppress any minority opinions whatever.

Having made this clear let us add that the official figures of the membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain, which have recently been published—by its own leaders—prove that it is a microscopic minority, and, for that very reason, a ready victim of repressive action, hair-raising oratory, and vulgar abuse.

Those who practice those things are the successors of others who in times past, and before Communism was heard of—except in the New Testament—acted and spoke similarly against Chartists, Trade Unionists, Radicals, and, most of all, Freethinkers. In throwing in its lot with them Christianity displays its true character. It is only because Freethought can no longer be used as a scare that the real enemy of the Christian religion is deliberately misrepresented to be all that some people think is meant by that blessed word "Bolshevist." So

far as this country is concerned Bolshevism is a bogey. Freethought is a reality; and if the clergy who are giving so much attention to Russia showed a little more inclination to come out into the open in their fight with Freethought it would soon be proved to be a much more potent and permeating influence than they realize or suspect.

The Persian oilfields are in the public eye, but less attention is given to a significant matter that is the subject of controversy between Persia and the missionaries who work there. A new decree has been issued which, according to the *Church Overseas* will "seriously affect educational mission work in Persia." While friendly relations are said to exist between the (Persian) Ministry of Education and the missionaries, the former desire that "Persian children should be educated in Persian ideals and in a Persian atmosphere." The only difference between this desire, and that demand for Christian "ideals" and "atmosphere" which is made in this country, is that the Persian requirement is cultural and the English one sectarian. The missionaries are afraid, says the *Church of England Newspaper* that "movements in China and Russia to secularize education and bring it under the direct control of the State" will be followed in Persia. This, it says, will have "serious results" for the Church in Persia. This is an admission not so frankly made when our own country is concerned, but nobody denies for a moment that secular education must, anywhere and everywhere, have "serious results" for Christianity.

A writer, Vernon Bartlet, suggests a way out for readers of the *Christian World* who may have "biblical difficulties." Here it is. "No interpretation at the present moment need be regarded as saying the last word as to the true meaning of many passages that are difficult to the modern reader." That is to say with the Bible you never know where you are. Its purported meaning is here to-day and gone to-morrow. The word of the Lord, so far from "enduring for ever," rivals the present international rates of exchange in its uncertainty. The faith "once delivered to the saints" still waits upon the elucidation of some man wiser than "the modern reader." Mr. Bartlet observes that "all Biblical ideas" belong to "the ancient Hebraic mentality." The Bible's "historical context" needs "constant attention," and "there is a widespread difficulty to-day in trying to understand it." What Mr. Bartlet omits to say is that there is no difficulty in understanding the Bible that does not apply to any other ancient writings unless and until it is suggested that these books are a divine revelation.

On the very same page as Mr. Bartlet's letter is an interview with Dr. Campbell Morgan reprinted in the *Christian World* from its not less pious contemporary, the *News-Chronicle*, in which that divine—he has just returned from America to his old job at Westminster Chapel—in which he says, "The Bible is the only answer to our present problems. Read it, and listen to its exponents. It does not need defending against modern attacks. It only needs properly explaining." Yet the *Christian World* prints a feature every week from Rev. John Bevan purporting to explain Biblical difficulties, and allows Mr. Bartlet to suggest that such difficulties will exist *per omnia saecula saeculorum*. How these Christians agree with one another.

Mr. Bernard Shaw must look out. The Wexford Bee Keepers' Association, of which Mr. Shaw is a member, have had before them a proposition that having written a "blasphemous" book his name should be removed from the membership roll. We think Mr. Shaw should consider himself fortunate in not having to face an indictment for blasphemy. His being let off scot-free shows what has resulted from the National Secular Society not having been crushed fifty or sixty years ago. Blasphemy in high quarters must encourage blasphemy in low quarters, and that is intolerable.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has been pleading for a Commonwealth wherein all classes should bear one another's burdens. We have heard that kind of "Happy New Year" sentiment before; but incidentally we would like to know whose burdens the Archbishop has borne up to the present?

A Continental inventor has produced a noiseless hammer. He would earn the gratitude of a large portion of mankind if he could invent a noiseless Salvation Army band.

It is nice to know that the *Methodist Recorder* is resolved to continue "as an independent organ, preserving an unfettered freedom of opinion and advocacy." This sounds very grand, but most of us know just how much understanding of and belief in "freedom of opinion" a Methodist journal has. When freedom of opinion is in need of defence against attack, Methodist journals and Methodist leaders invariably suffer from "loss of voice," or clergyman's throat.

Commencing from the "Feast of the Epiphany," a course of sermons in ten languages is to be preached at a church in Soho Square, London. Ten languages, but only one kind of nonsense. And only one type of mentality would want to listen to it.

Fifty Years Ago.

THE struggle is near at last. Soon after this number of the *Freethinker* is in the readers' hands the great Blasphemy Trial may begin. It is the first serious trial of the kind for twenty-five years. We do not know how it will end, and no termination will find us unprepared.

Whatever happens the *Freethinker* will go on. On the eve of the battle we ask all our readers to stand by it through thick and thin. It will, we believe, always be worthy of their support, even in the worst circumstances. But if accidents cause temporary shortcomings, we ask them to overlook these; nay more, to remember the cause of them, and to feel still more incumbent the duty of supporting it against Christian bigotry and malevolence.

We have a claim on the active help of all lovers of Freethought. Since the prosecution was commenced we have never blenched. We have continued our old policy, without swerving a hair's breadth, in the face of obstacles which might well have overcome our determination if we were not actuated by an unconquerable sense of duty, and resolved to keep the flag flying at all hazards. How often, as we have heaved a sigh of satisfaction over some difficulty removed, and looked at the *Freethinker* still out, and still bearing its old message to thousands of readers, we have thought of Byron's heroic words!

"Yet freedom, yet, thy banner torn but flying
Streams like the thunderstorm against the wind."

Happily, however, *our* banner is not even rent. It is as sound as when the trumpet first rang to battle, and we hope it will continue sound to the end. If one standard-bearer is stricken down, another will take his place, and if need be another his, and another his. Danger never terrified Freethinkers in the old stormy days, and it will not terrify them now. The heroic shades of our great dead point with swerveless fingers to the path of duty, and their brave smile banishes every craven suggestion of fear.

Yes, the *Freethinker* will go on, and everything else issued from our office will go on too. And dread of a collapse into that direction is removed, so we enter into the war with a light heart. Our course is now clear. Gambetta turned his defence of Delescluze into an impeachment of the Empire; and we (however far after *him*) will try to turn our defence into an impeachment of Christianity. The colossal imposture of eighteen centuries shall, if we can do it, be dragged to the bar and tried with us.

The "*Freethinker*," January 21, 1883.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—Denis C. Phelps, £1 1s.; Vivian Phelps, £1 1s.; Annie Shiel, £1; C. H. Gronn, 3s. 6d.

D. C. P. PHELIPS (Pinelands).—Many thanks for subscription, we note your new address in April, and your promised help in gaining new readers for the paper.

N.J.B.—Thanks for cuttings. The notice was quite a good one.

A. W. COLEMAN.—You are not likely to get more than a mere acknowledgement to your protest. But it is well that all who resent the B.B.C. turning itself, at the cost of the public, and through a Government created monopoly into a propagandist agency for the Christian churches. Where the interests of Christianity are concerned decency of conduct appears to have little claim on most of its professors.

S. MARTIN.—There is not the slightest possibility of legally contesting a legacy left to the N.S.S., the Secular Society Limited, to the Freethinker Endowment Trust, or to any other properly constituted Freethought organization. We shall be pleased to give any advice within our power.

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.

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

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

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

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, 3/0.

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.

On Sunday next (January 29) Mr. Cohen will speak in the Queen's Hall, Morley Street, Bradford, at 7.0, on "The Psychology of Belief." Admission will be free, but there will be a number of reserved seats at one shilling each.

Two more areas, Leyton and Tottenham, have decided by bumping majorities in favour of Sunday entertainments. Of all the other places that have polled on the question, only two have decided against Sunday entertainments, Bolton and Oldham. We are a little surprised for if there are any places on the face of the earth that need brightening up on Sundays—and the rest of the week, it is the Lancashire manufacturing towns. In most cases their dullness and drabness is a disgrace to the country. Perhaps the clergy are afraid lest a taste for brighter streets at home should detract from the attractiveness of heaven.

We mentioned last week that while a great many notices of the death of J. M. Robertson appeared in the press the general tendency of these was to present his

Freethought as either a youthful indiscretion, which soon gave place to other things, or as something quite subordinate to his other work. The truth is that his Freethinking was fundamental to all he did, and he himself regarded it as his chief work. But faced by the fact of ignoring the death of a man who commanded notice, and that of saying something about him without advertising the value of Freethought, the method of dealing with him in the way he was dealt with was adopted. This, it should be said, did not demand any great consideration, or a general conference to ensure uniformity of action, the form of the dishonesty to be adopted has been so long in operation that all who write in fear of giving offence know it by heart.

But perhaps the most contemptible exhibition of this form of Christian dishonesty was given by the B.B.C. Announcing his death on January 6, it calmly informed the world that he was a writer on "comparative religion." And that was all so far as this branch of his activities was concerned. This was perhaps the greasiest and the most religious lie that was uttered in connexion with the matter, and it deserves to be remembered. It is equal to the B.B.C. policy where Christianity is concerned, and it illustrates what is meant when the Corporation says it will permit nothing to be said of an anti-Christian character. It would have been less dishonest to have left out all reference to his writings about religion, but "a writer on comparative religion"—a description that might fit many a clergyman and hosts of orthodox believers—contained just that amount of fact that would prevent the speaker being called a liar, while telling to all intents and purposes one of the most cowardly lies we have come across for some time. It is like describing Karl Marx as a writer on economics, to those who did not know anything about him, or Darwin as a writer on natural history. Some Roman Catholics might have been hidden under the B.B.C. description of J. M. Robertson.

We do not wonder that one of our readers, Mr. A. W. Coleman, wrote the B.B.C.

You may say that the statements you made concerning him were all perfectly true. They were; and yet, short of downright lying, it would have been impossible to give the public (whom it is your business to inform) a more thoroughly misleading impression of the greatest Rationalist of his day. No such *faux pas* would have occurred had the subject of your brief biographical sketch been primarily engaged in Christian activities.

The action taken in this instance is all of a piece with the cowardly policy of your Corporation in advertising any and every phase of Christianity and rigorously boycotting everything that might be said for the other side.

Can you wonder that a growing number of intelligent and fair-minded people are coming to regard the B.B.C.'s standard of honour with something perilously approaching contempt?

That was a good straightforward letter, but the B.B.C. is not likely to let it see the light. It is just a part of the falsification of art and history which goes on under the auspices of the B.B.C. wherever the interests of Christianity are concerned.

By the way, we wonder whether anyone could be induced to compile a bibliography of the writings of J. M. Robertson. He was a very prolific writer on a number of subjects, and it would be worth doing. And he was a methodical worker that it is possible he might have kept a record of his articles, pamphlets and books, that the task might not be so difficult as it appears.

We are a very honest people, and never break our plighted word. But curious things happen. For example, the *Daily Express* makes known the fact that from the National Gallery fifty four, from the National Portrait Gallery fifty-four, and from the Tate Gallery twenty-eight works of art—many of them very valuable pictures, have been taken to decorate the private offices of well-paid State officials. Thus the First Sea Lord has

three pictures adorning his bed-room, Mr. Macdonald has Stothard's "Sans Souci" in his sitting room, and Miss Ishbell Macdonald has one in her private room. No. 11 Downing Street, has a valuable Canaletto, taken there while Lady Snowden was "in residence." Many of these pictures have been put in new frames. The next step should be for the pictures to depart with the occupant when they go out of office. One never knows.

The notion that any opinions not to the likings of a policeman must be Communistic is not, apparently, confined to this country. Bill-distributors in Chicago advertising a lecture on the new science of "Technocracy" were arrested as Communists. By a lucky chance the lecture was to be held in a church, and as the magistrate thought that a complete reply to the allegation, the full distributors were discharged. If "Technocracy" can be advocated in churches it cannot be very dangerous.

Truth will out, even in the pious newspapers. A contributor to a correspondence in the *Christian World* on "Pulpit inaudibility" observes: "Few churches are full now-a-days, and those who do come prefer to sit as far away from the preacher as they can!"

Dissenting M.P.'s recently entertained the Rev. H. Elvet Lewis, new-Chairman of the Congregational Union to a dinner at the House of Commons. Responding to the toast of his health the rev. gentleman said we would like to see "a better understanding between preachers and politicians who, differing in so many ways, were both aiming at the same ends." We have often said this, or something very like it ourselves.

Dr. Selbie, the well-known Nonconformist writing in the *Contemporary Review* on currents in present-day religion makes at least one candid admission. "It is quite useless," he says, "to conceal the fact that the obstacles in the way of general Christian re-union are still very serious if not insurmountable."

A Christian Sneak.

THERE are many beautiful words in the English language. In the hands of a poet they give forth exquisite music. Even in prose their use marks the great writer off from the lesser writers. There are also ugly ones, and I know of few that arouse in me quite the same antipathy as does the word "sneak." It is a horrible word; it has a ghastly sound, not of terror but of repulsion. It is a loathsome word; it adds to the vileness of a crime. A murderer who is also a sneak is a thousand times as vile. An assassin is nearly always a sneak. Mankind has a healthy hatred of the loathsome sneak from boyhood upwards. We can admire a genuine enemy. We despise him if he is a sneak. Sneak or cad is the last word one wants to apply to an opponent, and even calling him a rat is not so bad because that unlucky maligned rodent can only do what nature has compelled him to do. I would rather be a rat than a sneak.

I thought of these things when I looked at a portrait of Anthony Comstock recently. It showed the young and determined face of a soldier in the American Civil War. Comstock was never without courage of a sort, and he acted up to his lights during the period he was serving in those grim times. What, I asked myself, would he become in the future? It was difficult to imagine him growing up to be a sneak.

When I was a small boy there used to be posters advertising *Cassell's Popular Educator*. They showed first the picture of a baby with the caption, What would he become? A number of heads followed in two separate sequences. In the first you saw the boy as he gradually became older, growing more and more distinguished, till he reached an honoured old age.

In the second you saw him gradually degenerating till he became, in his old age, foul and loathsome. Which would you choose? Obviously *Cassell's Popular Educator* would put you on the right road. Armed with the knowledge in those wonderful volumes, only one sequel was possible. And if you were young and impressionable you would become forthwith a subscriber. Since then, I have had my doubts somewhat as to whether education really meant in every case a sure and safe road to that honoured old age which was held up so passionately as the great ideal, the gleaming star of our lives in Victorian England—as it was also in the Georgian England of Hogarth—was it not the subject of his famous pictures of the Two Apprentices? For more things go to make character than education.

Whether Anthony Comstock would have been any different had he been properly educated, whether in a University or through the pages of the *Popular Educator*, I very much doubt. He was a throw-back, a religious fanatic, one of those slimy curs who never moved without an appeal to Jesus or God, and his greatest delight was to impose his dirty mind and views on people through the law. He was not a Roman Catholic, but he would have made a magnificent exemplar of that well known apology of Catholics. The Church, never, never, tortured, killed or burnt. All the Church did was to hand over the "prisoner" to the secular arm which was responsible for the punishment. There you have Comstock epitomized.

In the biography of America's greatest sneak, the authors call him, "Anthony Comstock, Roundsman of the Lord." I do not know whether this is said in irony, but I am glad he is so dedicated to the Lord. Any decent ordinary man would have burst into fury to have this super-sneak referred to as *his* roundsman. His story as given by the two authors, Heywood Broun and Margaret Leech, seems to me to be a bewildered attempt to justify him if ever so little. The facts were there; they had to be presented; they could not be properly denied; let us, therefore get a nice big whitewash brush, and if we cannot cover up everything, well, we shall have to admit the exposed bits. After all Comstock was sincere. You have there in a nutshell all the justification for unlicensed intolerance and persecution. He was sincere. Torquemada was sincere. Henry VIII was sincere. Charles I was sincere. Robespierre was sincere. Lenin was sincere. Mussolini was sincere.

Comstock was undoubtedly sincere. He first of all could not stand the blasphemy and swearing in the military camps of the American Civil War, and later was horrified at the amount of pornographic literature openly displayed and sold in large American cities. This is not the place to discuss erotic works, though Mr. Heywood Broun does so in an excellent chapter of this biography of Comstock. Most sensible people will agree with his conclusions. No literature can be so intolerably dull as the erotic. "There is scarcely," he says, "a kick in a barrel full." It requires a genius to make any book great, and there are few writers who have devoted their talents to pornography proper who can be called geniuses. D. H. Lawrence, the Marquis de Sade, John Cleland, and a few others exhaust the list, and they all had something more in view than merely to excite lust. De Sade in particular was a man of provocative views, centuries ahead of his time, as is being slowly recognized. But the works sold in America before Comstock had the law altered, and before he became the active agent for the Society for the Suppression of Vice, were worse than silly. To read one was to read them all.

There were booksellers who had this kind of tedious filth for sale for anyone who asked for it, and Comstock from the '70's of last century to the day he died, kept an open nose everywhere for the sewerage. If anybody thinks these books did harm and believes in their strict censorship, then he must give Comstock credit for destroying hundreds of thousands of them. Hundreds of inoffensive booksellers who only sold a so-called erotic work when asked to, were ruined and disgraced, and their families reduced to absolute penury. Nothing gave him greater delight than the utter destruction of his victims. He gloated over their fall, and was even more joyful when suicide followed the disgrace. He sent dozens of poor people to self-destruction, and was never happier than when he heard the news.

It was Torquemada and his Catholic torturers over again, but the stake and the rack were not exactly possible in the nineteenth century. Comstock did all he could that way, however. Putting aside pornography that really was "smut," St. Anthony tilted at everything else which had sex in it somehow or somewhere. "Many of Comstock's cases concerned," we are told, "books and plays and pictures which were pornographic only by the widest stretch of imagination. He wanted judges and juries to make that stretch, and often they obeyed him." They did. He also had a right hand man in Judge Benedict, who, whenever possible, refused to listen to the defence. He and Judge North could have been brothers in arms. The slightest hint at contraception, or a woman's syringe, or a poster showing a few girls in "tights," or a male statue, and Comstock was at the offender like a bull at a red rag. He never stopped if there was a chance of bringing utter ruin and disgrace on anyone who was in the remotest degree connected with any of these things.

His methods were those of a sneak. He did not disguise the fact either. He would write in a fictitious name, often that of a poor woman, and he would whine, wheedle and cajole in such a way that the bookseller or doctor or advertiser whom he approached would, out of pity, either give the information required or the book or the device. And that was the end of that person unless, as in some instances, the "prisoner" had enough money to appeal or fight the case solidly. I wish I could, like D. M. Bennett, give some of the actual instances of the way in which the sneak worked and the ruin he brought on quite decent citizens.

And this brings me to Bennett, the founder and Editor of the *Truth Seeker*, that fine American Free-thought journal, which for over fifty years held the flag aloft in that great continent.

Comstock early came in contact with Bennett as he did with Dr. E. B. Foote, the famous author of *Plain Home Talk* and Ingersoll, whom he would have liked to humble as he did Bennett.

He managed to get Heywood sentenced for *Cupid's Yoke*, a rather dull—certainly uninteresting—plea for Free Love (as far as I have been able to understand it) and by sheer trickery, he got Bennett sentenced to thirteen months' imprisonment and a fine of three hundred dollars. No prisoner—not even Foote—was so badly treated by a judge. It was not a trial but a farce. Even the pamphlet was not allowed to be read by the jury, and they were actually directed by the Judge to convict. Only one held out for fifteen hours before he finally yielded.

The author of this part of the biography of Comstock shows precious little sympathy for Bennett, though she tries hard to be impartial. "The fre-

quent statement," she says, "that Comstock could not discriminate between a frankly pornographic book and a sociological or medical publication of educational character was fair criticism." This is about as severe an attack on the dirty sneak as she allows.

For Comstock, Freethought and "obscenity" went hand in hand; and the combination is still used by pious humbugs who know better.

Miss Leech describes Comstock as "an upright man, a religious man, a man with the Puritan conscience honoured by his countrymen. Yet he was hated as few men have been hated; and we remember that, when the shafts of enmity first stung him, he found comfort in recalling that men had hated his Master too." Thus his biographer tries to cover with half-hearted apologia, the fact that Comstock, whatever he may have thought himself, or whatever the motives that may have governed him, was nothing but a dirty sneak. He "had been so unwise to make a few martyrs," she continues. A few! He was responsible for a large number of suicides, but it is not to a biography written many years after his death that one ought to go for the facts bluntly put. Read what plain, honest D. M. Bennett says about Comstock in 1879 and 1880. Read *From Behind the Bars*, and the chapter devoted to the sneak in *The Champions of the Church*.

Bennett could write all day, year in and year out, and he gathered his facts from a library of books. As far as Comstock was concerned the facts make one's blood boil.

And Comstock continued after Bennett died for nearly forty years with the relentness of Torquemada or his monkish hirelings.

Looking back on this fight for "purity," what has been the result? It would not be unfair to say that quite as many pornographic works are sold in America as ever. Contraception is openly advocated and practised. "Art" studies of the female nude can be bought in their thousands. Syringes and other sanitary devices can be had everywhere. Ultra-short-skirts come in with the fashion—and go out with the fashion, but for no other reason. American films openly shown, contain scenes which our own censors delete as being beyond the mark. Companionate marriages are publicly advocated and "petting" parties are the rule and not the exception. The latest figures (given on January 6, 1933) are that the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice destroyed 39,692 books, 16,192 photographs, 15,000 magazines and 234 plates for reproducing pictures and text—all in 1932. The "Society also conducted a successful campaign against *obscene Xmas Cards*." That proves the utter failure of the Comstockians for the mere fact that so many books and pictures were actually published demonstrates the wide circulation they must have had.

Comstock was a Christian sneak. His Christianity helped to keep him one. Of humanity and toleration we find not a spark in his nature and never have either of these two great and necessary qualities in man been introduced by the religion he believed in. History is full of cads and beasts and bores, but Anthony Comstock holds the distinction of being the world's super-sneak.

H. CUTNER.

He who hath not a dram of folly in his mixture, hath pounds of much worse matter in his composition.

Charles Lamb.

"Powder and Shot."

By the very narrow majority of one vote the New Zealand Legislative Council has rejected the second reading of the Bill, which would have enforced the teaching of a religion in the State schools to which the various denominations could agree. Whilst we welcome the fact that New Zealand's schools are to continue without religious teaching there are indications about the recent Division which are far from reassuring from the Secularist point of view. In the first place the Bill was only rejected through the combined opposition of Secularists and Catholics, and it is very questionable indeed as to whether this alliance in practice will be long maintained, since the motives of each section for opposing the Bill were widely divergent. The Catholic Hierarchy opposed the projected Bill on the grounds that it would provide a form of State-made and administered religion, and insisted that if religious teaching is to be introduced, all denominations must be treated alike. We can confidently expect that if the protagonists of religious education in the State schools of New Zealand are determined to secure legislation to that effect, steps will be taken to conciliate Catholic interests. In any case when the issue is raised again, we do not doubt that the ability of Secularists to keep religious teaching out of the State schools will be taxed to the uttermost, and will depend largely on their capacity to increase the scope of their movement here and now.

* * *

It must have become very noticeable to readers of the *Times* how frequently its correspondence columns urge the necessity for an increased amount of religious instruction in the British State Schools. At the moment the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, Mr. H. Ramsbotham, is very considerate of the educational interests of the various sects. Speaking at the Preston Catholic College on November 18, 1932, he is reported to have said:—

It is not enough for a boy or girl to become a good citizen. The purpose of education is not limited to the purpose of the State. The preparation that our boys and girls must receive is not merely for life in this narrow, confined community, but for membership of the great community of the hereafter. (*University*, November 25, 1932.)

A joint letter in the *Times* of December 14, 1932, among the signatories to which were the Archbishop of Canterbury and the President of the United Methodist Churches, seeks to impress the need for "... the leading clergy and ministers, lay people and teachers in all such areas to get together for the purpose of examining the best syllabuses available (for religious education), and to recommend to their local education committees the adoption of the most suitable." A significant passage in the letter is the following:—

In view of the trend in so many countries towards the separation of education from religion, which we believe to be a grievous wrong both to the children and to the nation, we feel it to be the simple duty of our British nation so to improve and develop the Christian teaching and life in our schools that, as the years pass, experience will prove it to be the best foundation for personal character and national stability.

So far as the development of personal character of British Statesmen has been influenced and national stability thereby secured by Christianity when the "trend . . . towards the separation of education from religion" was much less acute, there is very little to be found which would recommend that Christian teaching should be provided for our children.

Where have the clergy, except for a few isolated individuals, condemned the Statesmen of their time for the vile crimes that have been perpetrated in the name of vested interests against the coloured people under their *protection*? What Bishops in the House of Lords have indicted the British Government for the ruthless repression that is going on now in India? Is there a high-placed Church dignitary who has exposed the League of Nations for what it is? A gathering of *peace lovers*, behind which stands the armed forces of Europe and Asia who talk about disarmament whilst the very countries they represent are engaged in the feverish preparation of war materials. All this falsity, lying, deceit and bestiality to be found in Statesmen, nurtured with the teachings of Christianity, on the very doorsteps of the Churches; yet it all escapes the notice of these clerical gentlemen who are so concerned that our children should not be deprived of the benefit of that same Christian teaching.

There is enough evidence to show that even if Christian teaching had anything to recommend it, the advocates of such teaching have qualities which no person having a sense of justice and a liking for truth would desire their children to cultivate. The horrible story of Belgian atrocities in the Congo unfolded by E. D. Morel, when he was himself a member of the Church of England, ought to be read by everyone who has thought of entrusting his children to the care of the disciples of Christ. What did E. D. Morel write about the silence of those Missionary Societies whose members witnessed the frightful scenes of despoliation suffered by the African people? He said:—

. . . there had been accumulating in the decade 1892 to 1902 in some of the Protestant Mission stations of the Upper Congo, records of a comprehensive, and appalling character. Enough information was available to have stormed every religious platform in this country. The Home Executives of the Missionary Societies took no public action, however, and for many years one Congo missionary, and one only, dared to confront, with the righteous indignation of a spirit stung to passionate anger by the fearful evidence of his own eyes, King Leopold's agents in Africa, and King Leopold himself in Europe.

So far as the Roman Catholic missions are concerned, neither the Home Executives nor the missionaries on the field made any public statement until this year (1903) after the publication of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry . . . From the end of 1903 when the testimony of British and American missionaries became continuous, detailed, and insistent, the organs of the Roman Catholic Missions—and the Roman Catholic religious press, generally—attacked the former with great bitterness. This attitude was dictated by the Vatican direct, doubtless under the influence of King Leopold's assurances that the British movement disguised an attack upon the Roman Catholic Church, a legend which the King's agents were particularly active in propagating throughout the Roman Catholic world in the United States. (*Red Rubber*, E. D. Morel, third edition, 1907.)

The Church of England, Methodist and Catholic Churches in Britain are united in their demand for a greater measure of religion in the State schools. There now is the time for all who revere justice to see to it that the greatest opposition is put in the way of the supporters of that cowardly creed which extols suffering as a virtue whilst tolerating the vilest abuses that have ever shamed mankind.

* * *

Everyone knows now that once every fortnight during 1933 a special lecture on "God and the World" will be broadcast by the B.B.C. Though we deplore it we could expect no less from any corporation which has so regularly displayed its tenderness towards Christianity as has the B.B.C.

Catholics, based on the number of adherents to that faith in Britain, have a very generous share of the broadcasts. The comments of their representative upon the remaining lectures, however, is typical of Roman Catholic tradition and of religious intolerance. The *Catholic Herald* (December 17, 1932) writes that:—

If any Catholic chooses to listen-in to the first series he must be carefully on his guard not unconsciously to imbibe fundamentally false doctrines on the nature of faith and revelation. The danger is increased for him, when these doctrines will be presented in choice and elegant phrasing to which he is unaccustomed (presumably they should be delivered in Latin, G.F.G.) and therefore unsuspecting of their tainted character.

But that is not all. What a naked admission that statement is of the debasing qualities of the Roman Catholic Faith. Having robbed the faithful of their right to develop confidence in their own powers of reason to judge objectively what is best for them, the Roman Church now chides them with their impotence to distinguish what they may and may not believe without the further guidance of the priest. It reminds us of the occasion when large crowds in a city of South America a few months ago flocked into the churches during an eclipse in terror, to the great annoyance of the priests who thought they were acting very foolishly. Indeed they were very foolish to mistake a red sky for indications of the impending vengeance of the Lord, but was it not a result of that traditional Catholic teaching which would keep, if it could, all humanity ignorant of the causes of natural phenomena?

G.F.G.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

JOHN MACKINNON ROBERTSON.

SIR,—Undoubtedly many of your readers will deeply appreciate you devoting your Editorial this week to the passing of Mr. J. M. Robertson. Nothing more relevant is needed, but however much one may shrink from giving the slightest hurt to the feelings of any, one cannot but feel what a grievous blunder was this hole and corner last phase.

Here was such a scholar that, championing orthodoxy, he would have been acclaimed as reaching the highest pinnacle of ability and achievement, resulting in celebrity and honour. A good man too, however much the orthodox may sneer at that possibility in an avowed Atheist, and a great one in the only true sense of lasting greatness.

Yet he is allowed to pass unhonoured and unsung as if we were, after all, just a little ashamed either of the man or his work. Without doubt it was hurtful to very many that no opportunity was afforded them of respectfully and decently paying their last sorrowful tribute to both.

A great mistake, a great pity and a greater wrong to Freethought and the many other advanced causes for which he so largely lived and ably fought.

RICHARD B. FOWLER.

SIR,—I hope that I may be permitted to pay a tribute of respect to his memory, on the somewhat sudden death of Mr. J. M. Robertson. He was the "Master of my Youth"—so far as I had a master. My mental make-up being what it is, I should probably have arrived at the same conclusions as I did, "on my own"; but, certainly, I should never have arrived so quickly nor as clearly as I did, had it not been for "J.M.R." He was then doing, for "my" generation, what Chapman Cohen is doing so well for the youth of to-day; that is, clarifying their thinking. I arrived at a rational philosophy, and joined

the N.S.S., some months too late to see or hear Charles Bradlaugh in Glasgow. Still, Charles Bradlaugh has been a great factor in my life—largely through J.M.R. He certainly paid the price of being an Atheist and Freethinker, by the lack of public recognition.

I always considered *Modern Humanists* his finest work; and I believe that that was J.M.R.'s own opinion. If the R.P.A. should contemplate a memorial to J.M.R.; I can think of nothing better than a suitable new edition of that book.

The last paragraph of his criticism of Herbert Spencer is a splendid piece of prose-poetry, rivalling that of Ingersoll, and with more of logical solidity than has much of Ingersoll's beautiful prose. That paragraph which you cite (*Freethinker*, January 15) ends in what is a suitable epitaph to-day.

ATHOS ZENO.

SIR,—I trust you will permit the opinion of one who is not a Freethinker in the sense you use the term, but who claims freedom of thought in all human relationship, on the life and work of one whom, I not infrequently opposed in public discussion, one whose boyhood was spent in the Island of Arran itself, quite close to Kintyre, in the Western Highlands of Scotland, where mine was spent—I refer, of course, to the late J. M. Robertson. First, and above all else, he was genuinely sincere in his attitude to the Christian faith; he himself having testified to me that he was not ignorant of Christianity by any means, having been a member of a Presbyterian Church, taking the Christian Sacrament, and actually working as a Sunday School teacher. Of course such a history is by no means, uncommon in the case of converts to Atheism from Christianity. Robertson—outside of his Iconoclasm, just as was Bradlaugh—possessed a kindly nature, and was over generous in his help wherever deserved. But just like the latter, he would admit of no reasonableness in the attitude of such men as Lord Kelvin or Mr. Gladstone accepting the Christian faith—he termed both as "old women"! Robertson was, unquestionably, a great scholar, practically self-taught, for he never had a University training, or even a high-school training. But in his eagerness to gain a point, he never scrupled. I shall miss a clear-headed thinker, and a most gentlemanly protagonist in J. M. Robertson.

VIATOR.

A REPLY TO MR. LUNN.

SIR,—I did not expect Mr. Lunn to be impressed by my former letter, in view of the fact that—on his own admittance—he had already neglected nine-tenths of my attack. Unfortunately for Mr. Lunn; this nine-tenths contains the kernel of my criticism. Mr. Lunn appears to be too interested in side-play to notice, e.g., the extent to which Californian evolutionists have superseded Darwin, or Prof. Levy's exposure of Eddingtonian indeterminacy.

Nor am I impressed with Mr. Lunn's "open mind" on evolution. I wonder if he has also an open mind on the multiplication table.

What *does* impress me (with amusement) is the finality of his assertions that he has "convicted" me of "travesty." Mr. Lunn should learn the difference between a conviction and an accusation. He might also learn to discriminate between a travesty and a brief summary for the purposes of a short article. Readers of Mr. Lunn's book will, I think, find that my brief representations bears comparison with the original.

Here is a case of travesty, if ever there was one, and it is from Mr. Lunn's own book:—

Mr. Cohen is the editor of a periodical in which he proclaims, week by week, that free will is an illusion. And the name of the periodical is the *Free-thinker*. From which it would seem to follow that the Freethinker is a man who disbelieves in the possibility of free-thinking.

Now it is hard to believe that his error in naming the *Freethinker* is an accident, for he names it correctly in other parts of the book. Who can avoid the grave suspicion that Mr. Lunn deliberately split the word on this occasion in order to gain a cheap verbal point?

(Again, there are several instances of travestying Materialism in his book.)

So that my sense of proportion, which Mr. Lunn criticizes, tells me that his error is far more serious than mine. And yet this same Mr. Lunn says he can no longer remain courteous unless Mr. Taylor expresses regret at being "convicted" of travesty.

Mr. Lunn might pay some attention to his own sense of proportion, which I criticized without reply, in the *Freethinker* of September 4, 1932.

He says he quoted Darwin's utterance "as a preface to demolishing it." I have re-read the context (p. 108), and find that he does not demolish it at all, but merely shows how it is inconsistent with another of Darwin's beliefs. Not any specific sentence, but the gist of the book as a whole, appears to imply his approval of Darwin's words, from which I am now glad to note he wishes to be dissociated. I leave those acquainted with the book to judge whether my misunderstanding of him in this particular is the fault of the author or the reader.

I shall study Mr. Lunn's further attack on the *Freethinker* in his Second Edition, and perchance try to set him an example in getting at the kernel of an opponent's case, instead of wasting time gloating over a slip in Latin (which I early abandoned for the more profitable study of political economy.)

G. H. TAYLOR.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD JANUARY 13, 1933.

THE President, Mr. C. Cohen, in the chair.

Also present Messrs. Moss, Clifton, Le Maine, Ebury, Preece, McLaren, Sandys, Mrs. Quinton, Junr., Mrs. Venton, Miss Kough, and the Secretary.

A number of apologies for unavoidable absence were noted. Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. The Monthly Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted as follows, Ashington, Cardiff, Sunderland, Bradford, Blackburn, Liverpool, Manchester Branches, and the Parent Society. Under correspondence items were dealt with from Birmingham, Bethnal Green, Paisley, Sunderland, Darlington, and Bradford Branches, and from Canada, South Africa, and the International Federation of Freethinkers. It was reported that the sale of the Gramophone Record, "The Meaning and Value of Freethought," was very good and being maintained. The Secretary reported progress in arrangements for the Annual Dinner, and there was promise that the numbers of last year would be exceeded at the coming dinner.

In reference to the death of the late Right Hon. John M. Robertson, the Executive passed the following resolution:—

"That this Executive of the National Secular Society notes the death of the Right Hon. J. M. Robertson, and places on record its deep appreciation of his long and valued services to the Freethought Cause. Throughout a long life he placed at the service of that Cause his ripe scholarship and a rare ability which had it been expended in other directions would have raised him to high public recognition. Liberal thought in this country and throughout the English-speaking world is the better for his life and the poorer by his death."

The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for February 24. The meeting then closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,
General Secretary.

The world in all doth but two nations bear,
The good, the bad, and these mixed everywhere.

Andrew Marvell.

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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, Mr. D. Capper (The Educational Workers League)—"The Workers and Atheism."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Oliver Goldsmith School, Peckham Road): 7.0, John J. Murphy—"Ireland To-day." Questions invited.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, S. K. Ratcliffe—"England's New Religions."

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, January 23, Mr. R. F. Turney—"The Psychology of Religion."

THE CONWAY DISCUSSION CIRCLE (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square W.C.1): Tuesday, January 24, Mr. S. K. Ratcliffe—"Britain and the English Speaking World."

THE METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (City of London Hotel, 107 York Road, N.): 6.45, Mr. Albert C. White (Alan Handsacre)—"The State and Church Revenues."

OUTDOOR.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Sunday, January 22, 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, Plumstead): Friday, January 20, F. Dossett and F. W. Smith. Beresford Square, Woolwich, Sunday, January 22, Messrs. S. Burke, F. Dossett and F. W. Smith.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BERKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, Price Street, Birkenhead, near Hamilton Square): 7.0, F. C. Moore, M.A.—"Religion and the Workers."

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (37 Oswald Street, Blackburn): 7.0, Mr. J. Clayton—"The Claims of Historical Christianity."

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Cafe, Godwin Street): 7.30, Mr. L. Corinna—"Fascism."

DARLINGTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Labour Hall, Gander Street, No. 2 Room): Mr. J. T. Brighton—A Lecture.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street Burnley): 2.30, Annual Meeting. 2.45, Mr. Jack Clayton—"What Does Man Know of God?"

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (No. 2 Room, City Hall, Albion Street): 6.30, Mr. John MacLeod—"Education and Secularism."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mrs. Dora Russell—"Freethought for Women and Children."

LIVERPOOL (Merseyside) BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, Sunday, January 22, R. F. Bisson (Liverpool)—"Dialectical Materialism."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Engineers' Hall, Rusholme, Road, Manchester): Sunday, January 22, Mr. J. Wingate (Perth), 3.0 p.m., "Is Organized Religion a Menace." 6.30 p.m., "Atheism and Politics."

PLYMOUTH BRANCH N.S.S. (Hall No. 5, Plymouth Chambers, Drake Circus): 7.0, Iconoclast—"The Crusades."

RATIONALIST PRESS ASSOCIATION, GLASGOW DISTRICT (Central Halls, 25 Bath Street): 3.0, Mrs Janet Chance—"The Romance of Reality."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Rooms, Green Street): 7.15, A Lecture. Monday, at 8.0 p.m., Speakers' Class. I.L.P. Rooms Foyle Street. All members requested to attend.

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A Great Scheme for a Great Purpose

THE *Freethinker* Endowment Trust was registered on the 25th of August, 1925, its object being to raise a sum of not less than £8,000, which, by investment, would yield sufficient to cover the estimated annual loss incurred in the maintenance of the *Freethinker*. The Trust is controlled and administered by five Trustees, of which number the Editor of the *Freethinker* is one in virtue of his office. By the terms of the Trust Deed the Trustees are prohibited from deriving anything from the Trust in the shape of profit, emoluments, or payment, and in the event of the *Freethinker* at any time, in the opinion of the Trustees, rendering the Fund unnecessary, it may be brought to an end, and the capital sum handed over to the National Secular Society.

The Trustees set themselves the task of raising a minimum sum of £8,000. This was accomplished by the end of December, 1927. At the suggestion of some of the largest subscribers, it has since been resolved to increase the Trust to a round £10,000, and there is every hope of this being done within a reasonably short time.

The Trust may be benefited by donations of cash, or shares already held, or by bequests. All contributions will be acknowledged in the columns of this journal, and may be sent to either the Editor, or to the Secretary of the Trust, Mr. H. Jessop, Hollyshaw, Whitkirk, Nr. Leeds. Any further information concerning the Trust will be supplied on application.

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