

# THE FREETHINKER

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

## Views and Opinions.

### Blasphemy in the Commons.

It is unlikely that even the present Government will permit the new Blasphemy Bill to pass into law. The full title of the Bill is the "Seditious and Blasphemous Teaching of Children Bill," and the measure is short enough to be set out in full:—

Any person other than the parent who—  
Teaches seditious or blasphemous matter to children under the age of sixteen, or reads to, or sells to, or distributes among such children any document containing seditious or blasphemous matter; or makes, publishes, sells, distributes, or has in his possession for sale or distribution, any document containing seditious or blasphemous matter for the purpose or with the intention of its being used for teaching such children, or being read to, or sold to, or distributed among such children;  
shall be guilty under this Act.

Blasphemous matter is defined as "Words spoken or written or pictorial representations whereby it is sought to bring the Christian religion into contempt by means of ribald, contumelious or scurrilous language." Any person so offending shall be liable to four months imprisonment, or to a fine of fifty pounds, or to both fine and imprisonment.

The Bill, I repeat is so absurd that it is impossible to think of even the Prime Minister agreeing to its becoming law. "Blasphemy," always a very vague term, and always depending for its existence upon the religious opinions of the majority and the jury, has hitherto been possible only in relation to Church of Englandism and to other Christian sects only so far as they shared in doctrines held by the establishment. For the first time it extends the law to all religions. The liberal intolerance of the Duchess of Atholl and the other supporters of the Bill is great enough to wish for an extension of intolerance among all religious people. It gives petty magistrates the right to imprison for blasphemy, and so gives increased power to petty bigotry. This is setting back the clock for three quarters of a century. In effect it is the creation

of a new law of blasphemy, and if its passing is justified I see no reason why it should not be made to apply to at least all mentally undeveloped persons, which would prevent a large number of members of the House of Commons from ever hearing anything either witty or wise where religion is concerned.

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### What does it Mean?

Let me take some of the terms of the Bill. The last time that a measure of this kind was introduced the parents were among those who came under penalties in the Bill. This time the parents are deliberately left out. And we have these high-minded gentlemen, with one lady, protesting on the one hand that to teach children to disbelieve in religion is to degrade and to demoralize them, but willing to give to parents alone the right to commit against their children what is called a crime when done by an outsider. And what is a child, anyway? The Bill says, anyone under sixteen. I protest. It is not just for every adult to measure the intelligence of children by his own. Plenty of boys and girls of fifteen are well able to read and understand works on science, philosophy and sociology. On the other hand millions of people over forty are quite unable to understand a really serious book, and are certainly dead to sarcasm or humour. The only sensible test here would be some kind of an intelligence test, and in that case the reading should be "Children up to seventy years of age." After that age it would not matter what they were told.

And the expression "To bring the Christian or any other form of religion into contempt." That involves a definition of religion, and it would be quite interesting to see judges trying to settle a question that people have quarrelled so much over. All religions are, under this Bill, to be protected against satire, sarcasm, irony, or deliberate ridicule, or even ridicule that is not such to the user. Mumbo-Jumbo is to have the same protection as his relative Jehovah or his watered-down descendant the "power that makes for righteousness." Voodooism is to be as well protected as the God of Professor Whitehead who, he explains, is "that in the world by reason of which our purposes are directed to ends which in our own consciousness are impartial as to our own interests." Any and every religion is protected, because, as one of the undeveloped supporters of the Bill remarked, "a bad religion is better than no religion at all." Bacon thought that it were better to have no opinion about God than to have a dishonouring one. But the House of Commons is superior to the great Chancellor.

That is not all. I believe the Ethical societies claim to be religious—I fancy that some of them are actually registered as religious bodies. And some Agnostics also claim to be "truly religious." Also I have heard certain "Rationalists" say that it is their object to rationalize religion. Worse still, many



Christians argue that every man has a religion of some sort, and that even Atheists have a religion of their own. So that under this Bill, if anyone speaks in a jesting manner of anyone's belief, if he satirizes the emasculated religious absurdities of an Ethical Church, or ridicules the attempt to rationalize religion, if he speaks disrespectfully of Christian Science, or speaks with contumely of religious cannibalism, provided that his audience is under sixteen, and have no higher grade of intelligence than many a Member of Parliament, he may be at once lugged off to some magistrate, and sent to prison for four months and fined fifty pounds. And if he has wit enough to tell the magistrate that the fine ought to be larger because he has more than fifty pounds worth of contempt for the court, he will get it a little heavier because he has hurt the magistrate's feelings, and it is on the whole more dangerous to bring a magistrate into contempt than God Almighty. I might even be subject to the Act for writing as I have done, for I am afraid that I might be held to have been anything but respectful to the Duchess of Atholl and her colleagues. Worst of all, if this Bill becomes operative, the poor child will be shut off from so much that is full of wit and humour, and sarcasm, that he will grow up a very dull dog, passing through a world that is full of humour to spend his life in the depressing atmosphere of a Presbyterian conventicle.

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#### An Impossible Bill.

Now suppose I were to prepare a book written in a language so simple that a raw curate, or even "Jimmie" Thomas might read it without being frightened by the thought that he was doing some serious thinking; and suppose that, having made my vocabulary so simple, and my reasoning so clear that an intelligent child of fourteen can follow it, I indulge in sarcasm, irony and ridicule, suppose also that I send this book or pamphlet to houses where children are, in the reasonable hope that some will get through. How can even this stupid Bill prevent its being done? It cannot. Proof must be given that I wrote it for children under sixteen, and that can easily be overcome by labelling the book "For children over sixteen and under sixty." The question was raised in the course of the debate, "How can one tell that a book is intended for children?" The reply came, by the language used. Nonsense! A child of fifteen, even a child of religious forbears, is not always so stupid as his parents think he is. Mr. Maxton, whose speech showed him, as usual, to be intellectually head and shoulders above other members, rightly said "The rising generation has always got a little more intelligence than the generation that went immediately before it." If those people who bring up their children, guarding them from this or that idea, particularly in the field of religion, could get from them their real beliefs about the opinions of their parents, and the good-humoured contempt in which they frequently hold the beliefs of their parents, their self-satisfaction would suffer a severe shock. But few children are intellectually honest in this matter, because few parents so act as to deserve it. Parents think they are bringing up children to believe in their religion, when in reality they are only bringing them up in a state of intellectual insincerity. They are rearing hypocrites when they imagine they are developing saints.

One other remark on this head. Generally I do not care to interfere with a young child's intellectual freedom to the extent of pressing my own opinions concerning religion upon it. I believe it to be the wisest policy to teach the child how to think, leaving it to decide for itself what to think, and in any case only

introducing religion as an answer to a request for direct information—and even then being as cautious as possible not to create unnecessary prejudice. But if this Bill becomes law I promise that I will do my best to flood the country with leaflets for children which shall attack religion at all points, but which shall not come under the heading of ribald, contumelious or scurrilous. I may do this in any case, but I will certainly do it if this Bill by some chance becomes law. It will help to show what can be done.

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#### The Poor Children.

The *Daily Telegraph* said that the Bill will have the approval of all normal parents. I hope that the normal parent is not quite so silly as the *Daily Telegraph* believes. If he is, Shaw's saying that a child's greatest enemy is its parent will have received a striking illustration. For a parent who will neither tell his child anything about the real relations of religion to modern thought until he or she is over sixteen, or who will not permit anyone else to do so, is unfit to be a parent. He may be a very good breeder, from the point of view of the religious stock-market, but he is a very bad one from the point of view of intellectual progress. It is bad enough, and hard enough, under even existing conditions, for a young man or woman to overcome the terrible handicap of wrong religious teaching. But under existing conditions a youth of twelve and onward does get chances of enlightenment. If the supporters of this Bill have their way, he will have none. Religiously he will grow up in all the ignorance of the Judea of two thousand years ago. A great deal of the world's best literature will be closed to him, because it is in this literature that some of the finest satires on religion are to be found.

More, the Bill is a gross interference with the freedom of the parent. A parent may wish a child of twelve or thirteen, or at any age up to sixteen, to become acquainted with the truth about religion. He may not have the knowledge, the time, or the ability to give such instruction himself. At present the usual method in such cases is to employ someone else to give the desired instruction. But this cannot be done. Every such school becomes a trap for teachers, and for parents also, for inasmuch as it is a legal offence to procure the performance of an illegal act, I take it that the parent who hands over his child to be taught disbelief in religion would, with the teacher, be subject to fine and imprisonment. The parent is to have absolute liberty to procure teachers who will poison the child's mind with the vilest form of religious teaching, but he is to have no liberty whatever to provide the inculcation of views which are accepted to-day by probably the majority of educated people in every civilized country in the world.

It is an old saying that a fool may ask more stupid questions in a minute than a wise man can answer in an hour. And, while disowning the claim to be the wise man of the adage, it is true that the mixture of folly, knavery, and stupidity responsible for this new Blasphemy Bill suggests more matters than can possibly be discussed in a single article. I will deal with these other aspects next week.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

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#### LIFE AND PLEASURE.

The pleasures of religion are hard to get, bad to keep, and worth but little when you have them. The drunkard has a kind of pleasure which the sober man has not; but the sober man has pleasures of a higher kind. So the religious man may have pleasures that the Freethinker lacks, but the latter lives a happier life, is free from idle fears, and finds scope for good in this life and has no dread of any life that is to come.—Anon.



## Sunday Cinemas.

On February 13, Sir Basil Peto, Conservative Member for Barnstaple, made a protest in Parliament against the intervention of the cinema trade on occasions when a poll had to be taken to decide whether or not Cinemas in a given district should be allowed to open on Sundays. He maintained—on what evidence it was not stated—that the Cinema trade spent money lavishly on these occasions in order to “deflect the purpose of Parliament.” Needless to say he made no protest against the intervention of those interested in the other trade concerned, namely, Religion. And this one-sided protest is all the more remarkable in view of the circumstances, well-known to most people, which brought the Sunday Cinemas Act into existence.

Had it not been for Sir Basil's explanation that the purpose of parliament was to “get a just impression of local opinion,” we might have been led to infer from his protest that the aim of the Act was to *prevent* Cinemas from opening on Sundays. And, of course, anyone familiar with the true facts, is not likely to be hoodwinked into believing that such was not the purpose intended. For, except to those who are deaf, dumb and blind, it is blazingly obvious that the vast majority of people *do* want the Cinemas to open on Sundays, and that it is only the bigoted minority of rabid Sabbatarians and kill-joys who wish to prevent their fellow-men, women and children from enjoying themselves on Sundays in the way they choose. A visit to any Cinema on any Sunday is proof of the first statement, while the furious propaganda of the Lords Day Observance Society is proof of the second.

The Sunday Cinemas Act was forced upon Parliament by the overwhelming demand of the public. Its actual wording was the result of a cowardly surrender to the brow-beating tactics of a religious, yet well-organized, minority. While unable to introduce a Bill flatly contrary to public opinion, Parliament nevertheless made it as difficult as possible for the public to get what it wanted. And in this respect the aims of the Sabbatarians were successful. The bigots got more than they expected, though less than they had hoped for. Instead of the public being granted what it had every right to demand, namely, the absolute freedom to attend the Cinema on Sundays as on any other day of the week, it was only allowed to do so after a number of wholly superfluous and expensive formalities had been complied with.

The details of this atrocious Act are too well-known to need specification. The main point is that there has to be a poll in every district where there is a demand for Sunday cinemas, in order to give the Religion business a second chance to impose its veto. The Churches hoped thereby to be able to enforce their narrow-minded and self-interested views upon the people, because they trusted to their own well-dragoned troops to outnumber the unorganized and relatively lethargic mass of voters in each district. They were disappointed. And the anger which this disappointment aroused was such that it drove Sir Basil Peto and Mr. Isaac Foot to make the utterly childish suggestion that the polls did not reflect “a just impression of local opinion.”

The amusing thing is that Sir Basil was probably quite correct in this belief—but not in the way he meant. For there is not the least doubt that if those who like going to the Cinema on Sundays had combined with those who do not object to others going to the Cinema if they want to, and if these combined forces had been as well-organized and as fanatical as the forces opposed to them, the polls would have resulted in an even more devastating defeat of religious bigotry. Even with the results to hand, the utter

stupidity of the Act in its present form has been proved to the hilt, and the enforcement of district polls has been shown to be wholly superfluous.

I have taken the trouble to collect data in regard to these polls from the columns of one newspaper—a religious one at that. And although the details are by no means complete (a fact which was to be expected in the circumstances), they present certain interesting features which may be of use to those who discuss this subject with others.

The most noteworthy feature is the contradiction which almost always appears between what is described as a “town's meeting” and the subsequent poll. It is nowhere indicated what exactly these “town's meetings” are; but one gathers that they were either “packed” gatherings convoked at the instance of the religious bigots, or else that they represent a bunch of the old fogeys of the district who hoped to influence the later poll by their preliminary “die-hard” vote. At Leyton, Bromley, Barnes and elsewhere the respective “town's meetings” resulted in a majority vote *against* Sunday Cinemas, and the subsequent poll *reversed the decision* by overwhelming majorities. Only one case is on record where the decision was not reversed (at Wimbledon), and even there the poll resulted in a tiny majority against Sunday Cinemas, out of a total poll of over ten thousand. Indeed, out of a dozen or more polls that have been taken up to date, only two resulted in a vote against Sunday Cinemas—the other one being at Epping (Essex) where the number of persons voting was one of the smallest of any. The actual figures were 669 against and 580 for. The only one smaller than this was at Queenborough (Sheppey) where the numbers were 476 for and 168 against. All the other nine polled over three thousand votes, even when only 25 per cent voted. Most of them polled over five thousand.

Now either these “town's meetings” do or do not represent the opinion of the district as a whole. If they do, how does one account for the fact that the Cinema trade fails to influence *their* vote and yet succeeds in influencing the vote of the public? Surely if the Cinema trade can afford to spend lavishly (as Sir Basil Peto asserts) in order to “buy a verdict from the people,” it would begin by buying the votes of a preliminary meeting on a much smaller scale. Or is one to make the fantastic assumption that the only persons whose votes could not be bought were present at the “town's meetings”? If one makes this fantastic assumption, Sir Basil and his ilk are still faced with the difficulty of explaining away those “town's meetings” which voted *in favour* of Sunday Cinemas. He cannot have the argument both ways.

The total figures available for all the polls recorded to date are, to the nearest thousand, as follows: Total votes recorded 122 thousand; in favour of Sunday Cinemas 80 thousand; against 42 thousand; majority for 38 thousand. In other words, nearly twice as many people definitely want Cinemas to open on Sundays as do not. And if districts had been polled where Cinemas were already open on Sundays, the chances are that the majority in favour would have been considerably larger. The curious thing to note is that in the only district where the local Church Boss openly expressed himself as in favour of Sunday opening (of course, with restrictions) the majority polled was the largest of any. This was in Croydon where the majority for was 10,000. Seeing that the benign smile of the Church could have this effect in one district, is it to be supposed that the disapproving scowl in other districts was impotent against the machinations of the Cinema trade? That argument of Sir Basil Peto's seems a trifle thin, does it not?



No wonder that, in face of these facts, Mr. Oliver Stanley, the Under-Secretary to the Home Office, replying on behalf of the Government, said that unless he could be convinced that the polls did not reflect public opinion, he could see no justification for further legislation. The truth is that, if a hundred per cent of the voters had expressed their opinion on the Sunday Cinema question without being influenced in any way, the dog-in-the-manger Sabbatarians would have been out-numbered not as two to one, but more probably as five to one.

Let us at any rate be thankful that, despite religious bigotry, Freethought is making steady and visible progress in this country. And although we do not expect to live long enough to see all Churches converted into Cinemas, the time is not so far off when this dream will become a reality.

C. S. FRASER.

## An Easter Egg for Christians.

"People swallow falsehood as a cat laps milk."

G. W. Foote.

"The crime of inquiry is one which religion never has forgiven."—Shelley.

EASTER is the most sacred festival of the Christian Churches, and a few years back it was a time of gloom and penance. During "Holy Week," as it was called, theatres were shut, and social engagements were cancelled. This state of affairs has altered for the better, and only in very pious circles and religious backwaters does the bad, old tradition survive. It is true the British Broadcasting Company does its utmost to shroud the nation in gloom at Easter, but no one is compelled to listen to its funeral marches and lugubrious hymns whilst life and laughter is "on tap" from foreign stations. "Down among the Dead men" is scarcely the best tune with which to greet what Shakespeare happily calls "the sweet of the year," but some Christians like to think life is but a vale of tears, and behave like mourners.

Orthodoxy is fast losing its grip in this country. Holy Week is now largely Holiday Week, and no one is the worse for the change except the clergy who cannot persuade present-day juveniles that they are miserable sinners. Indeed, the rising generation is not primarily concerned about the salvation of its soul, and so many bright young people are doubtful if they possess souls to save. There is not the same familiarity with theological matters. A tale is told of a young curate who found a man working upon Good Friday, and who reminded the parishioner that it was on that day that the Son of God was killed. "Dear me!" replied the parishioner. "I always thought that it was the Old Man Himself who was murdered, I never realized that it was one of the boys."

Here in this country the abracadabra of the priests is mostly confined to the churches, chapels, tin-tabernacles, and mission-tents, but on the Continent, wayside Calvarys, representing a man in death agonies on a cross, are as familiar a feature as the dark-robed priests who swarm everywhere. The more illiterate European countries are the most devout, and to see religion at its best and worst one has to travel right across Europe and set foot in the Orient. "Out of the East, Light," used to be a saying of the Ancients, but it would be far more correct to describe the East as the Motherland of Superstition.

The Greek Church celebration of Easter is noteworthy in many respects. Not only is that particular Church the oldest in Christendom, but it is also the most ignorant and barbaric. Amid scenes of theatrical splendour the fake of the Holy Fire is performed

annually on Easter Eve at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem. The priests pretend that the fire descends from heaven to the Holy Sepulchre, where it is received by the Patriarch of Jerusalem and passed to the assembled multitude by a lighted taper. Under Turkish rule a strong force of Moslem soldiers with fixed bayonets tried to keep the Christian peace, but hundreds of worshippers have at different times lost their lives in the frenzied scramble to light torches and candles from this "Holy Fire." As each worshipper takes the light he makes a rush for the door, in order to waste no time in carrying it home to burn before his favourite ikon.

This is probably the most striking spectacle in any Christian Church, and it is a fake. This swindle is perpetrated by the bearded priests of the Greek Church. The Roman Catholic Church is no more honest, by the tens of thousands of forged sacred relics scattered throughout Europe.

Why do people believe so much nonsense? Because religion is a vested interest, and it is to the advantage of the thousands of priests that children should be taught to believe their fables. During their most impressionable years children are taught that the Christian Bible is true, and that priests are holy men and should be treated with respect. That is the reason, and the only reason, of the priestly interest in national education. Prejudices are a most powerful factor in life, and priests see to it that the rising generation is influenced early in life in favour of their superstition.

The blunt, unpardonable truth is that the vast majority of our population is only half-educated, despite two thousand years of Christian teaching. It is as plain as a pikestaff that to be a Christian one need neither be educated nor even intelligent. To be a Freethinker, on the other hand, one must learn and think. The strength of Priestcraft lies in the unthinking and uninformed masses. In nine cases out of ten the Christian is a man who does not even understand his own religion, who does not know what he himself believes or disbelieves, and has never given a single hour's thought to his own or any other faith. The Christian clergy batten upon ignorance. Its greatest strength is the tail-end of civilization, and it represents the lowest culture in modern society. The clergy of the Christian Church march at the back of the procession of humanity, and pretend, hypocritically, to be the vanguard of Light and Liberty, a proceeding which caused doughty Thomas Carlyle to dub it "The Great Lying Church." The Christian Superstition is founded upon a fable, and sooner or later, it will be relegated to the limbo of half-forgotten things in spite of all the priests in Christendom. For Freethinkers have set themselves the task of freeing their fellows from the chains of superstition, and the dominance of Priestcraft.

Slowly, mankind is shaking itself free of the last desperate clutches of superstition. Bewildered by the new light, it stands on the threshold of the future. The fundamental question of man's place in nature has been solved, and the wide acceptance of evolution has already begun to bear fruit in all the practical affairs of life. Man is seen, not as a fallen angel, but as a pioneer. Sooner or later science will lead mankind to a happier life and to loftier ideals.

MIMNERMUS.

The spiders are teaching, the same as of old; the spiders are preaching a gospel of gold: Though baffled and broken, O children of men, let grief be unspoken—go at it again.—Walt Mason.



## Ancestor Worship in Primitive Israel.

UNDERLYING the loftiest ethical culture old Israel ever attained, evidences abound of an earlier religion of the dead. In purely pastoral ages, the ancient Semites regarded the departed as not truly dead, as they continued to survive in the land of the shades. There they participated in the joys and sorrows of their living relatives and friends, while they possessed the power to confer blessings, or inflict injuries on the tribe.

Sacrifices were therefore offered, frequently of blood, to sustain the hungry spirits, to gain their good will, or to avert their animosity. Nourished by supplies of food, and appeased by praise and prayer, the deceased tribesmen were induced to remain on good terms with their posterity.

Numerous are the customs recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures that point to the cult of the corpse as the primary religion of the race. As Frazer notes: "In ancient Israel mourners were accustomed to testify their sorrow for the death of friends by cutting their own bodies and shearing part of their hair so as to make bald patches on their heads." Truly, all their burial rites testify to a reverence for the dead, as also to a clear recognition of their supernatural power.

Dependents among the Jews proclaimed their inferior standing by wearing sackcloth in the presence of a social superior. So, mourners for the dead displayed their lowliness by wearing sackcloth around their loins. Passages to be found in the Books of *Samuel*, *Kings*, *Jeremiah* and *Isaiah* all indicate this.

When visiting sacred places, the people showed their submission by removing their sandals or shoes. Also, in times of mourning the shoes were discarded. A more serious observance, however, was that of lacerating the flesh and cutting the hair in honour of the departed. These offerings were reverently laid upon the grave. Rites such as these are reprobated by the late priestly writer of *Deuteronomy*. Still, as Dr. R. H. Charles notes in his scholarly essay *Eschatology*, "they are mentioned by the prophets of the eighth century without any consciousness of their impropriety." And with the mass of the people they were doubtless in universal use.

The images of dead ancestors in human shape were set up in the household and were worshipped as gods. These were the teraphim or domestic divinities, graven images of the dead reposing under the sacred terebinths. The story of Rachel's familiarity with, and her theft of her father Laban's house-gods shows how customary they were. Again we read in *Exodus* xxi. 2-6, that in Jewish abodes there stood "a god close to the door, to which the slave who desired enrolment in his master's family had to be brought. Originally this meant submission to the family cult with all its obligations and privileges." (Dr. Charles).

The Semitic stocks pride themselves on the possession of male offspring. Among religious Jews to-day, the wife plumes herself on her power to bring forth male children, and the deepest disappointment is experienced should the first child of a marriage prove to be a girl. Now, in days of old, the dignity of the dead depended on the respect accorded them, and worship and sacrifice were alike tendered by their male relatives. When the male line failed this difficulty was overcome by adoption. The adopted man passed from his own tribe to that of his adopted parent, and thenceforward fulfilled the functions of a true son.

A system of primogeniture operated in Israel and a son and heir only could perform religious rites and ceremonies. The cult of ancestors also explains the levirate custom which required a dead man's brother to espouse his childless widow. In the absence of a brother this obligation was transferred to the nearest male relative. Moreover, the eldest son of such a union was registered as the dead man's son. Thus the sacrifices and respect which a son alone could render could now be made by offspring legitimately begotten and adopted.

Solemn obsequies to the dead were deemed imperative to the health and comfort of the departed. No greater indignity could be inflicted on the dead than neglect of burial. Probably the fear of ghostly resentment partly explains the scrupulous care with which the corpse was laid to rest. As a rule suicides, criminals and even foreign foes were granted burial. Jezebel was an exception, as her remains were devoured by dogs, as a divine punishment for her misdeeds, but her character has probably been defamed by the priestly chroniclers of her career. A foreign princess, Ahab's wife favoured her native gods, thus giving mortal offence to the scribes and prophets of Jahveh.

To remain unburied in ancient Greece and Rome meant the deprivation of all right to enter Hades. All departed Israelites, however, descended to Sheol, and terror of non-interment may be ascribed to the fact that in earlier ages, the abodes of the dead—their rude graves—were the only tomb-temples where sacrifices could be made. In more modern times, when the Hebrews dwelt in walled cities, and their primitive nomadic concepts had been refined, the denial of burial was thought to cast a shadow over the dead. Further, the idea seems to have prevailed that honourable burial was indispensable to secure one's social importance in the spirit realm. According to Ezekiel the neglected dead are pushed into the lowest regions of the pit in Sheol.

Not only was burial essential to the comfort of the departed, but the remains must be laid in the family grave. All the outstanding Biblical characters were gathered to their fathers or their people. To rest in peace, the dead must dwell with their ancestors. When in distant Egypt, Jacob and his son Joseph desired that their remains should be carried back to Canaan to repose in the family tomb. At an early period it was customary to inter the body within the dwelling-place. The prophet Samuel and David's general Joab were thus buried. Dr. Charles is probably right in contending that in more primitive centuries, "no family stood in isolation but was closely united with others, and as these together made up the clan or tribe, and as these tribes in due time were consolidated into the nation, a new conception arose; all the graves of the tribe or nation were regarded as united in one. It was this new conception that received the designation of Sheol."

In the historical age, the crudities of more ancient days were refined and even rejected, as the sceptical and philosophical Books of *Job* and *Ecclesiastes* abundantly prove. The earlier view of death, however, was intensely realistic and was never really abandoned by the multitude. For, after death, consciousness persisted and the dead were quite familiar with the doings of the living world. Rachel in Sheol grieves for the fate of her children, while the dead were able to divine future events, or to bless or blast the living.

Just as in so-called Spiritualistic materializations the dead are clothed as they were when living, so in Palestine the deceased prophet appeared in his mantle; rulers were adorned with their crowns, and even the



uncircumsized were distinguished by their foreskins. In fact, all the features associated with men and women in life reappeared in the realm of the dead.

What a world of thought separates rude beliefs such as these from the ideas embodied in Job's searching question: "There is hope for a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again—but man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" Even more emphatic is the writer of Ecclesiastes in his rejection of man's immortality, when he declares (Chap. 9, v. 5, 6), "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. As well as their love, so their hatred and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in anything that is done under the sun."

T. F. PALMER.

### The Elocutionist.

HILARIOUSLY happy,  
Indubitably drunk,  
With slobbering mouth,  
And vacant gaze expressionless,  
The crisp command:  
"Recite for us, Joe!"  
Acts like a goad—  
A spur to smite!  
Instantly  
His eyes are gleaming,  
His touzled head thrown back,  
And he is firmly planted on his feet.  
"Babette!—  
Babette is the story  
Of a young English artist . . .  
A thing I shall never forget—  
A painted face in a boulevard crowd . . . !"  
Ah! trippingly,  
Readily,  
The words come dancing out—  
Words like birds;  
Words like milk-white herds;  
Words like flowers—  
In honeyed hours:  
A galaxy of starry syllables  
And heart-enthraling phrases.  
From thence to Mascfield,  
Rudyard Kipling;  
And . . . Joe, not that!  
Not that!  
"God of our fathers . . .  
Lord of our far-flung battle-line . . .  
Beneath whose august hand . . .  
Lest we forget! Lest we forget!"  
You tear our hearts;  
You break our souls in twain:  
And yet, and yet,  
For you  
The well-mouthed words  
Are only vivid vocables.  
Back then to Milton Hayes,  
"The Whitest Man I know."  
"The Green Eye of the Little Yellow God"—  
Since  
To you  
A poem only is  
A recitation;  
And not, ah! not  
A groping soul's ascension to  
The radiant peaks divine!

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

Onitsha, Southern Nigeria.

### Our Mystical Scientists.

SOME years ago I heard a lecture by Sir James Jeans. That was before the days in which that learned man was adopted by the churches as one who has used even the wickedness of science to bolster up a decaying faith. Consequently the lecture was a very good and well-reasoned argument which rehearsed all that is known about the physics of the universe. If any reader doubts what I say he can easily refer to the lecture itself. (*Nature*, November 3, 1928.)

But now, according to those strange people who seem to believe it is possible to reconcile a savage faith evolved in man's infancy with the findings of modern science, Jeans has, in some strange manner, been converted to their view. And, together with such other men of science as Eddington, they will quote these names in evidence that the "Victorian controversy between science and religion is over."

What do we find when we turn to the works of Jeans? Here is one quotation: "Chemistry can only tell us to place life in the same category as magnetism and radio-activity. The universe is built so as to operate according to certain laws. As a consequence of these laws, atoms having certain definite numbers of electrons, namely, 6, 26 to 28, and 83 to 92, have certain special properties, which show themselves in the phenomena of life, magnetism and radio-activity respectively." (*The Mysterious Universe*, p. 8.)

As far as I know, no religious man has suggested that God is a great magnet, and that all the lesser magnets should bow down before him. And yet, if we accept Jeans' conclusions in one of these cases, it is certainly just as applicable to the others.

Again; "If . . . we dismiss every trace of anthropomorphism from our minds, there remains no reason for supposing that the present laws were specially selected in order to produce life. They are just as likely, for instance, to have been selected in order to produce magnetism, or radio-activity—indeed more likely, since to all appearances physics plays an incomparably greater part in the universe than biology." (*Ibid*, p. 9.)

These are samples of the type of argument which Jeans uses in the descriptive part of his work—and with these no materialist can quarrel.

It is, of course, not these parts of the books which our religious friends would quote—if, indeed, they have read the books at all. Usually they have seen in the *Sunday Express* that Sir James Jeans or Sir Stanley Eddington has disproved Materialism—and thus take it as disproved. But what do we find when we turn to what we must call, for want of a better word, the philosophic part of Jeans' books?

"Everything that has been said, and every conclusion that has been tentatively put forward is quite frankly speculative and uncertain." (*Ibid*, p. 138.) So that Jeans, in his books has merely tried, after stating the scientific view of things in the manner which we have seen, to give his view, one man's view, of what it all means. He never claims to speak for science, nor for scientists as a whole. And yet we hear from the pulpit, and thundered forth in the press that "Materialism is out-of-date, exploded, played out." As Professor Levy has shown, in his recent *The Universe of Science*, these mystical scientists are in a very great minority.

The average scientist is a Materialist, frank and open, in the same way that he is a determinist, frank and open, and for the same reason—that his work will not allow him to be anything else.

So when next some parson tells you that Materialism is out of date, you can smile, and tell him politely, or otherwise (as is your wont) that he had better pull your other leg for a change.

JOHN ROWLAND.

It's a very fine thing and delightful to see  
Inclination and duty unite and agree.

*Ingoldsby Legends.*



## Acid Drops.

The scramble for the acquisition of "livings" in the Church of England, mainly by Party Trusts, reveals the depth of the cleavage in the Church. In a recent Parliamentary debate Sir Francis Acland, a patron of livings in three dioceses, said that when a living falls vacant he very often finds that "the only man of earnestness and go" available is a man whose views would upset the parishioners. In the same debate Sir Samuel Roberts said some "livings are of so little value that they are not a commercial proposition." While there is little chance of the parishioners or any pious person buying such livings, "the money would be found by others," i.e., the Party Patronage Trusts. The Anglo-Catholics have acquired livings in recent years at the rate of about six to one of the other Party. What does it matter whether anyone goes to Church, or whether the living is enough to keep a parson, so long as someone is appointed who will carry on the work of the most successful effort in false pretences of our time, namely the pretence that the Protestant Reformed religion established by law is really Catholic after all.

Truth will out, even in advertisement. The *Morning Post* publishes, as an advertisement, an appeal for funds for the Order of the Child, and its "Campaign against seditious and blasphemous teaching to children." It is out for a Bill before this Parliament, for now is our best opportunity to win the fight against sedition and blasphemy. While all men and organizations concerned for peace and advancement are increasingly hostile to our so-called "National" Government, all parties with axes of their own to grind, particularly religious parties with such axes, look upon it as "providing the best opportunity" they are likely to have for a long time to further their selfish, intolerant and reactionary ends.

The *Christian World* quotes, from a symposium edited by Mr. Leonard Wolff, on *Happiness in the Modern World*, the editor's opinion that "there is no doubt that the lives of ordinary people to-day are much happier than they were thirty years ago, and infinitely happier than they were fifty years ago." If this be true, and it may be, it would appear that the average person has achieved increasing happiness as and when his religious belief and practice have declined. For he is assuredly less pious "than he was thirty years ago and infinitely less pious than he was fifty years ago." The *Christian World*, wisely, prints the quotation without comment.

"Sin is news and news is sin," says a notice of the posthumous *Memoirs* of Mrs. Meyrick of Night Club fame. We have often observed the truth of part of this dictum. What is called "sin," is often news, and very "hot" news too. That what is called "news" is sin is not quite so obvious unless we use "sin" as a pseudonym for offences against taste and justice rather than against God. Even from a theological standpoint the worst sort of "sin" is not much heard of in the press, for it is not drunkenness or adultery but intellectual pride, i.e., reasoning. Society, under Christian influence, thinks things are "sins" that the sage old Church winks at as the inevitable frailties of human nature; and the newspapers, under the same influence, make the most of human frailty, however natural, and often present a pleasing contrast of unctuous sanctity in an adjacent column. Coming back to Mrs. Meyrick's book, her patrons included eight persons who committed suicide, and at least ten who went to jail or the scaffold. We are not surprised to hear that the book is a best-seller. Every member of the Council for the Promotion of Public Morality has, we understand, made it his (or her) duty to study it, and the Bishop of London is reported to have a sermon upon it in active preparation.

We read, with mingled pleasure and surprise, a review of the printed discussion between Messrs. Joad and Lunn in the *Observer*. It is signed by Mr. St. John Irvine, a literary and dramatic critic of some note, and is in part

almost identical in terms with our own notice of this debate in our issue of March 12. Mr. St. John Irvine writes: "Mr. Joad, who dodges, rather than meets, attack, is too much inclined to indulge in a bout of Hyde Park tub-thumping when he ought to be using his mind, but Mr. Lunn never makes the case he repeatedly says he is about to make. The feeling with which I was left, when I had finished their book, was that the publishers ought to have asked both the contestants to re-write their letters, leaving out the misunderstandings, wilful and accidental, the debating society scores, and the mistakes, and concentrate on the substance of their argument." This devastating verdict, and the view (which we also shared) that Mr. Lunn, on the whole, had the best of it, is succeeded by the statement that these writers have "between them produced an exhilarating book which can only do good to those who read it intelligently." Thus does a pious upbringing make havoc of critical consistency.

Entitled *From Faith to Faith* (Putnams) Dr. Orchard's apologia for his submission to Rome has just been published. It is an unconvincing work and reflects little credit on a man of Dr. Orchard's admitted intelligence. His problem, in the last analysis, was the same as Newman's, viz., an intellectual fear of unbelief, and a conviction that only by the submission of Reason to Authority can belief in Christianity be maintained. Unlike Newman, Dr. Orchard descends from the high level of argument to an introspective self-analysis which, in places, becomes almost unbelievably trivial. For example, he rather jibbed at the English word "detest" applied to his former co-religionists in the formula of submission. "Yet," he says, "it seemed ridiculous to have come so far and then be kept out by a word." This difficulty was surmounted by reciting the formula—in the original Latin!

Dr. Orchard says "the prospect of being in the wilderness appalled me." Well if the realm of reason is a wilderness—and it has often been so described by Christians—freedom in that wilderness is preferable to imprisonment in the grim jail in which so many weak and fearful men have found shelter from the demands of their own minds. This is a book of excuses rather than of reasons, and we leave it with a doubt, not easily resisted, whether Dr. Orchard is even now quite so sure as he must perforce profess to be in such a work.

Some thieves had a marvellous escape the other day when they broke into the Church of SS. Julian and Aaron at Newport. They actually smoked cigarettes on the altar steps and nothing happened, and even drank the Communion wine. But they carefully left the Sacred Wafers alone. Had they made a meal of the Body of the Lord we shudder to think what would have happened. It was a lucky escape for them!

The most Rev. Dr. Neville has recently been lecturing on the blessings that Roman Catholicism has conferred in "darkest Africa." It seems that after years of labour, the African country-side is now dotted with Christian villages and Christian homes, and where once the married woman was a mere slave, she is now "the dignified matron of a virtuous Christian home." This beautiful description of the once despised Kaffir lady should certainly bring in the shekels especially as the Holy Church now has seventeen Bishops and seven Prefects Apostolic with a large following to keep on active service there. Personally we would gladly subscribe a mite if only a few hundred Bishops and priests would transfer their services from here to Africa, but we never were lucky in such matters.

A huge open-air assembly greeted the opening of the new Welsh "Lourdes" recently. Everybody present grovelled as usual before the "holy" shrine, and Fr. James said that the word Lourdes "is graven deep in the



heart of every Catholic. It stands out in the world today for faith against infidelity; for a spiritual conception of the universe against a growing Materialism." We always understood that "Materialism" was "fighting in the last ditch," and here a Roman Catholic priest tells us it is "growing"! Fr. James, of course, continued in the usual strain about Our Virgin Lady and the Incarnate Saviour, etc., as it is his job, but we do like his phrase, "growing Materialism" and commend it heartily.

Mgr. Joseph Gawlina has just been made Bishop of the Polish Army, which now has 104 chaplains. Representing Marshal Pilsudski, General Sosnkowski said that "harmony and deep understanding between the Church and the Army have for centuries been one of the most esteemed traditions of Poland." This makes most convincing proof that Christianity has always stood for and fought for Peace, does it not? One finds, however, it is everywhere the same. Most military and naval officers are thoroughly Christian and make, where possible, the lives of soldiers and sailors who are not, a veritable hell. What a creed!

Why God does not look after his elect more than he does is one of the unsolved puzzles of religion. In the recent earthquake in California £200,000 worth of damage to Catholic property was done. Churches, rectories, convents and schools, all fervently Catholic, were either destroyed or badly damaged. We simply cannot understand why the Lord will not discriminate. What happens to Protestants, Jews and Infidels is understandable and they are rightly punished by Him, but why he hard on believing Catholics? What does Sir Thomas Aquinas or Father McNabb say about it?

The Rev. A. D. Belden sees the possibility of a British form of Hitlerism. If that ever comes, he says, it will be because the Free Churches have failed to maintain their testimony of liberty. Loud cheers, of course. About the only kind of liberty the Free Churches understand is liberty for themselves alone. Whenever there is any sort of move to sweep away stupid restrictions and allow the ordinary citizen a little more freedom, it is the Free Churches that howl loudest against such proposals. It is the Free Churches also which are most active in trying to compel conformity to their own narrow and peculiar notions. To couple the Free Churches with Liberty is as incongruous as harnessing a donkey with a race-horse.

The Bishop of Chelmsford thinks "it would be good if we could break all stained-glass windows showing Christ as a pale, weak, unmanly figure." The bishop seems sadly lacking in respect for a hoary Christian tradition. For do not the stained-glass windows represent the view of Christ held traditionally throughout the Christian ages by the majority of believers? How on earth the Bishop can visualize a "gentle Jesus, meek and mild," save as a "pale, weak, unmanly figure," we cannot imagine. In any case, turning the other cheek to the smiter is not the doctrine of a strong, robust and vigorous personality. If the Bishop thinks his idea of Christ is the correct one and the traditional view is wrong, he had better let God decide the issue. Let him prayerfully request God to smash all the windows that give a false conception of Jesus. God's answer to that reasonable request would settle the question for all time.

Somebody who was bored in youth by the "monotonous singing of hymns, gabbling of psalms, and dull sermons," suggests that when they have brighter services and less-heavy sermons the churches will be fuller. Persons who speak in that strain must have a very odd notion of religion and the function of a church. They appear to imagine that a church is a building wherein one goes to be entertained and amused. We admit that the mythical adventures of the Man of Sorrows are amusing when retailed solemnly as authenticated facts, and so are the antics of the priest—to Freethinkers. But it is difficult to imagine how such stuff can be made entertaining and interesting to anyone else. Still, if the modern man

will only go to church while the programme is entertaining and amusing, the parsons had better make the best of a bad job and call in the professional entertainer. A few "turns" by out-of-work people of the music-halls would be helpful all round.

During a pious discussion on the "gambling evil," the conclusion reached was that "Betting and gambling practices, at best, bordered upon habits which, in the light of Christian teaching, must be classified as 'doubtful'; and no Christian man or woman had the right to dabble with doubtful things." Yet Christian people dabble with doubtful things every time they go to church. There is no certainty that there is a God or a Heaven or life after death. These things are merely a gamble for the Christian. He puts his money in the collection-bag fervently hoping that he has backed a "winner." As regards ordinary betting and gambling, one cannot help thinking that the opposition to it by the Puritan type of Christian is very largely motivated by the fact that such amusements seem to give pleasure to the participants. If there were no evils attached to betting and gambling, the same mob would oppose such practices, and for the same motive. Sunday games and Sunday amusements do no harm, but much good. They, however, give pleasure, and therefore, says the Puritan, must be harmful; for it is wrong to try to be happy in one's own way on a Sunday.

### Fifty Years Ago.

FREQUENT complaints are heard from long-suffering congregations and long-winded parsons that the wants of the former are but partly supplied by the latter. The congregations are in anger. The parsons are in despair. For the preachers are preached out, and so are the congregations, in another sense. Nothing new is found under the Sun-day. No original ideas are forthcoming, or if they are, they are only fifth-rate. Hence, a great falling-off—either all to sleep or altogether—on the part of the congregations. With the view of supplying the wants of the people and deficiencies of the pastors, we purpose publishing a set of skeleton sermons on well-known texts. We call them skeleton sermons, as they will be brief (the brief of an advocate for human progress). They will be outlines, to be filled up by any clergyman who may use them in the outlying districts. Further we call them skeleton sermons, as they will not, we hope, be wanting in backbone, they will deal with things temporal and sacrum—we mean sacred—they will replace the mental lumber of the parsons; they will embrace within their radius things appealing to the sense of the humerus and to the lachrymal susceptibilities; and whilst they must not be delivered with a nasal twang, many of them will be upon texts furnished by Saul of Tarsus.

#### SKELETON SERMON.—No. 1.

2 Timothy iv. 13 :—"The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus when thou comest bring with thee."

INTRODUCTION.—This touches our human sympathies . . . Worries of modern travellers . . . Lost luggage . . . Cloakroom.

HEAD I.—Apostle's demeanour toward others . . . Eminent just man . . . Presumption of innocence until proof of guilt . . . Paul may have doubted whether Carpus had not pawned the cloak; yet no hint of doubt . . . Modern society suspicions . . . Motives of great and good men doubted (Newdegate, etc.)

HEAD II.—Apostle's devotion to work . . . Gigantic intellect, yet failed to take care of cloak . . . Nowadays men mind their cloak first and divine work after . . . Passage suggests doubt whether, if anyone stole cloak Paul would have offered coat also . . . Paul took care of No. 1.

PERORATION.—Scripture given by inspiration; therefore if these interpretations be wrong we require more prayerful study. And may the Lord bless the preaching of his own word.

The "Freethinker," April 15, 1883.



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE,

EDITORIAL:

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Telephone No. : CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C.S. (Birmingham).—Duly received. Thanks.

J.T. (Llanely).—Shall be noticed as soon as space permits.

H.E. (Lambeth).—Mr. Gladstone *did* say that "the name of Wilkes must be enrolled among the great champions of English freedom." Bradlaugh has the higher claim to enrolment, not only for what he did, but for what he was: as incorruptible in his character as in his opinions.

R. K. NOYES.—Much obliged for cuttings.

S.M. AND OTHERS.—We are flattered by the opinions on our last "Views and Opinions" dealing with Anti-Semitism. The matter, as there dealt with is rather too topical for republication. Such might go out of date with its appearance. But you will find the question of the Jew dealt with at length in Mr. Cohen's *Creed and Character*, which contains a general study of race and religion. The pamphlet extends to about 64 pages, and is being sold at twopence, postage *id.* extra.

T. HAYMAN.—Yes, this is also the centenary of Ingersoll's birth. We may be writing at length when the actual date of birth arrives. A different type from Bradlaugh, Ingersoll was a great man and a tremendous power for Free-thought.

A. J. FURSLAND.—Sorry, but we closed the correspondence some weeks ago.

NOTTINGHAM.—The Thomas Hardy cards are exhausted, but a new supply will be obtained.

R. BUNTIN.—Pleased to learn that your first open-air meeting passed off so well. Persistence will tell in the end.

C.E.B.—Thanks for congratulations.

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.

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

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

## Sugar Plums.

We again remind Members and Branches of the N.S.S. that all resolutions to be put on this Year's Agenda must be in the hands of the Secretary by April 22. We are expecting to see a good muster of delegates and members at the Annual Conference, to be held in London, and we trust we shall not be disappointed. This is Bradlaugh Year, and we must make the most of it.

Elsewhere we print a letter suggesting a revision of the Principles and Objects of the N.S.S. We refrain from expressing any opinion on what is suggested, save to wel-

come suggestions as representing interest on the part of members. But we hope that any letters sent in on the subject will be brief. The briefer the better. We really have not the space to print lengthy letters on this or any other subject.

An effort is to be made to have an open-air campaign in Nottingham during the summer months, and there is a prospect of a local Branch being formed. Any friends who would like to help in the meetings or join the Branch, when it is formed, should get into touch with Mr. J. M. Mosley, 3 Carnarvon Grove, Gedling, Notts, whose zeal for Free-thought we are pleased to acknowledge.

The latest attempt to govern the country by a mere official order was seen last week-end in connexion with the "Boycott German Goods" agitation. On Sunday shopkeepers were ordered by the police to remove the posters from their windows, and motor car drivers were stopped and ordered to remove similar notices from their cars. The action was quite arbitrary, and without any warranty in law. Unfortunately the British public is getting so habituated to being ordered about by officials, from the time he rises in the morning until he goes to bed at night, that very few nowadays dream of disobeying. The sense of individual freedom has not been so weak for several generations as it is to-day.

We had written this before the meeting of the House of Commons on Monday afternoon. In reply to a host of questions the Home Secretary denied that the police acted on his instructions, but "advised" the removal of the bills because they feared a breach of the peace. No sensible man pays very much attention to these official disclaimers. In certain circumstances no one with any sense expects a member of a Government to tell the truth, and the Home Secretary is quite safe in making a statement that no one believes. But it is too much to ask one to believe that in various parts, the police were simultaneously seized with the belief that the exhibition of these posters would lead to a breach of the peace. Even if they had, it is questionable whether the police have power to act as they acted. We suspect that behind this action lies pressure from the German gangsters, and the influence of that not inconsiderable body of "fashionable" people who are against a Republic, whether in Germany, Spain, or elsewhere, because of its reaction on our own monarchy. This can be seen in the case of every Republic that has been set up in Europe for over a hundred years. But we should like to see the matter pressed until the real author of the order is disclosed. It would not compel the resignation of the Home Secretary, but none the less it would do good.

One of our readers enquires why we have not kept up the attack on Sabbatarianism, and suggests the issue of another pamphlet on the question. Well, we have eased off for the time being, mainly because our hands have been full with other things—our friends know that what appears publicly is but a very small part of our work—and secondly, because after what has been done the Sunday question can be left to look after itself—at least for a little while. Unquestionably the legalization of paid Cinema performances is bound to result in two things. First, it involves a breakdown of Sabbatarianism and a still further decline in Church attendance; second, it must lead to a widening of Sunday entertainments and recreations. The holding that things permissible on weekdays is not permissible on Sunday is bad enough, but the distinction between Cinemas and stage performances is still more idiotic. The stupid provision by which a play may be performed on Sunday provided stage costumes are not used is one of those pieces of futility that only a combination of politicians and parsons could have fathered. But we may, as soon as we can find time, prepare something on the Sunday question for distribution.



## Christianity and Sex.

"The anchorite life which became the new ideal of the Christian world . . . A hideous, sordid, and emaciated maniac, without knowledge, without patriotism, without natural affection, passing his life in a long routine of useless and atrocious self-torture, and quailing before the ghastly phantoms of his delirious brain, had become the ideal of the nations which had known the writings of Plato and Cicero and the lives of Socrates and Cato." (Lecky: *History of European Morals*, Vol. II., p. 107.)

FROM the very commencement Christianity was rooted in asceticism. The followers of Jesus were to give up everything, including their wives, parents, and children, and follow him. Jesus never married, and declared that there were no marriages in heaven. And, indeed, what was the use of getting married when the world was shortly coming to an end? They should be preparing for the life to come, and not making fresh ties with the world. Among the early Christians, virginity soon became the highest of virtues.

Taking their ideas from the Book of *Revelation*, where the highest honours are accorded to "the hundred and forty and four thousand . . . which were not defiled with women."<sup>1</sup> They aspired to act up to it. "With the early fathers," says Dr. Conybeare, "virginity was a never-ending, never-failing topic for edificatory hymns and discourses."<sup>2</sup> Sexual indulgence became the greatest of sins, and that view has dominated Christianity down to the present time. It is only where the old dogmatic ideas are dying out, or have been diluted by modern thought, that other views now prevail. The Church of Rome still provides Monasteries and Convents for those who wish to take the vow of renunciation, and remain "unspotted from the world." No Catholic priest may marry, it is an unpardonable crime, for which he is immediately unfrocked.

To fly from the temptations of the flesh, multitudes of the early Christians retired to the desert, to live as hermits, thinking to overcome the cravings of sexual desire by their austerities. But they found, to their dismay, that these cravings are not cast out by prayer and fasting. In fact, the more they tried to repress them the stronger and more irrepressible they became. After describing some of the austerities practised by heavenly aspirants, Lecky observes: "But most terrible of all were the struggles of young and ardent men, through whose veins the hot blood of passion continually flowed, physically incapable of a life of celibacy, and with all that proneness to hallucination which a southern sun engenders, who were borne on the wave of enthusiasm to the desert life." Married to African, or Syrian brides, loving and loved, they would have found peace and become useful citizens, but they found no peace in the wilderness, says Lecky:—

The lives of the Saints paint with an appalling vividness the agonies of their struggle. Multiplying with frantic energy the macerations of the body, beating their breast with anguish, the tears for ever streaming from their eyes, imagining themselves continually haunted by ever-changing forms of deadly beauty, which acquired a greater vividness from the very passion with which they resisted them, their struggles not unfrequently ended in insanity and in suicide. (Lecky: *History of European Morals*. Vol. II., p. 118.)

Among the maniacal delusions and hallucinations arising from repressed sexual emotions, it was common for Satan to appear, to the hermit in his cell, under the voluptuous guise of a beautiful woman; and

when the hermit, overcome with pent-up carnal passion, went to embrace her, she would disappear amid mocking laughter. Having made the holy man give way to sinful lust.

It is claimed by Christian apologists that Christianity raised and ennobled the position of women in the world. This is one of the greatest of the historical falsehoods for which Christian apologists are responsible. Sir Henry Maine, a great authority on Ancient Law, after dwelling upon the remarkable liberty to which women attained under Roman Law, declared his opinion that: "no society which preserves any tincture of Christian institutions is likely to restore to married women the personal liberty conferred on them by the middle Roman Law." And further, that by their legislation against women: "the expositors of the Canon Law have deeply injured civilization." Now Canon Law is ecclesiastical law; Church law, compiled from the writings of the Christian fathers, the decrees of Christian councils, and the orders and proclamation of the Popes. It was the Canon Law of the Catholic Church that prevailed throughout the Middle Ages, and in all times and places where the Church held authority.

Another testimony of even greater weight, as coming reluctantly from the Christian side, is that of the Christian scholar, the late Sir James Donaldson, who was in holy orders, and made a life study of early Christian literature, translating all the Apostolic Fathers into English, and also, in conjunction with Prof. Roberts, the whole of the Ante-Nicene Fathers.

Sir James made a particular study of the influence exercised by Christianity upon the condition of women, which he believed it had greatly ennobled. To his surprise he found that, on the contrary, it had actually lowered her position and status. In recording his conclusions, he warns his readers:—

I wish to forewarn my readers that probably many of them will be greatly disappointed by the results of my investigations. It is a prevalent opinion that woman owes her present high position to Christianity, and the influences of the Teutonic mind. I used to believe this opinion, but in the first three centuries I have not been able to see that Christianity had any favourable effect on the position of women, but, on the contrary, that it tended to lower their character and contract the range of their activity.<sup>3</sup>

"Man" declared the early Christian Fathers, "was a human being made for the highest and noblest purposes; woman was a female made to serve only one. She was on earth to inflame the heart of man with every evil passion. She was a fire-ship continually striving to get alongside the male man-of-war to blow him up into pieces."<sup>4</sup> Sir James cites Tertullian, who, in addressing women, tells them: "You are the devil's gateway." And St. Clement, who says that to a woman "it brings shame even to reflect of what nature she is." Chrysostom, says the historian Lecky: "Only interpreted the general sentiment of the Fathers, when he pronounced woman to be 'a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic peril, a deadly fascination, and a painted ill.'"<sup>5</sup> St. Jerome describes woman as "the demon's door, the road of iniquity, the scorpions sting." St. John of Damascus called her "the advanced sentinel of the Devil," and "a malignant she-ass." St. Anastasius, the Sinaite: "She is a viper clothed with a shining skin, a comfort to the demon."

<sup>3</sup> Maine: *Ancient Law*. p. 186.

<sup>4</sup> Donaldson: "The Position of Women Among the Early Christians." *Contemporary Review* (September 1889, p. 433.)

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 417.

<sup>6</sup> Lecky: *History of Rationalism in Europe*, Vol. I., p. 28.

<sup>1</sup> *Revelation* xiv. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Conybeare: *Monuments of Early Christianity*. p. 25.



a laboratory of devils, a flaming furnace, a javelin wherewith the heart is pierced." To St. Maximus she is "a malicious evil beast."<sup>7</sup>

The reason for this violent denunciation of women is easy to understand, as Briffault points out: "The desire for sexual gratification is far more difficult to suppress than any other." And "Jerome, Origen, Augustine freely avow the lechery of their natural dispositions. All other forms of self-abnegation and mortification they found no insuperable difficulty in carrying out . . . But the lusts of sex they could not wholly extinguish." "So long as we are borne down by this frail body, so long as we have treason within this earthly vessel," Jerome lamented, "there can be no sure victory . . . It became the haunting obsession of Christian thought. Continence came to be regarded not as a part of morality, but as the whole of morality. Every crime, vice, or sacrilege appeared venial beside the stain of unchastity."<sup>8</sup> Therefore, continues the same writer: "Sex was the specific creation and instrument of Satan; woman was the agent of the devil and the ambassador of hell. There could be no righteousness and no salvation consistent with any compromise or accommodation with the powers of hell embodied in sex."<sup>9</sup> Therefore, unable to repress their sexual cravings, they turned with fury upon woman and made her the criminal.

W. MANN.

(To be concluded.)

<sup>7</sup> Fr. Valney, S.J.: *Directorium Sacerdotale*. p. 68.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Briffault: *Sin and Sex*. pp. 56-57-58.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p. 59.

## A Christian Bully.

SEVERAL correspondents have asked me to deal with Rev. Brewin Grant, and his debates with Charles Bradlaugh, and I do so now not because I think Brewin Grant is worth resurrecting, but because there seems to be some erroneous ideas of his capabilities in his encounters with "infidels," as he was always pleased to call his Freethought opponents.

As I have pointed out more than once in these columns, to understand a man like Grant one must have a sense of perspective and understand the position of a believing Christian during the nineteenth century in England. Side by side with the attack on the Bible from men like Richard Carlile, Robert Taylor, Charles Southwell, G. J. Holyoake, Robert Cooper and Charles Bradlaugh, there was an adoration of the Bible as God's Holy Word from every Church, Chapel, and little Bethel, unparalleled in its history. To be an "infidel" was to be a shameless outcast. To doubt that the Bible was the living voice of God Almighty was a sin far worse than murder. The Bible alone was the Rule of Faith. Every word came straight from the Lord, and it required far more courage than many people now think, physical as well as moral courage, to attack the Bible in any shape or form. We who are the heirs of the brave Freethought pioneers are apt to forget what they suffered, and with what horror they were regarded. The attack has been so persistent for over sixty years, however, that the modern orthodox generation, except in outlying and ignorant districts, merely shrug their shoulders when they hear what is known as "Bible-banging." Personally, I believe still in a certain amount of Bible-banging—I prefer to call it criticism—but, of course, with educated Christians the fight is almost over. Their only refuge is faith mostly in the Roman Catholic Church or "modernism." But they don't pretend now for a moment that the "infidel" is some awful beast. They recognize he is quite as good a citizen if not

better than the average Christian, and there is nothing like the moral obloquy attached to "Atheism" that there used to be. Still, in spite of this, it very often does not pay to avow Freethought naked and unashamed, and often by adopting a more ambiguous name a great deal of unpleasantness is avoided.

Brewin Grant quite early in life realized the advantages of being thoroughly orthodox and proclaiming a holy war against "infidelity." He was born in 1821 and showed marked ability when a student as a debater. He was quick enough to see certain advantages in knowing your opponent's case as well as your own, and he had one qualification which made him deadlier on a platform than his arguments deserved. It was a sense of humour, but he could not confine or control this sense in a legitimate way. By poking fun at his enemy, by quips and cranks and puns he used to cause roars of laughter, and he was adroit enough to exploit any lack of humour on the other side. Grant should have been replied to in kind. He should not have been taken seriously at all. He never fought for truth as such, but only to anger the "infidel" if possible or, as one of my Christian correspondents admitted, to browbeat him.

Now this amazing way of conducting a debate was liked by neither the Christian nor the Freethought side. One orthodox journal called his debate with Holyoake "a discussion between the Rev. Brewin Grant and another Infidel, Mr. G. J. Holyoake." The Christian never forgave Grant for his funny antics on the platform, nor for his puns and jibes. He should have conducted himself like a true Man of God or a Man of Sorrows; while the Free-thinker deplored the lack of reverence on Grant's part when dealing with serious subjects. But he had tremendous belief in himself and went about the country ready to meet any or every infidel or the whole lot in one night. In fact he seems to have had egomania pretty badly. All the same even those Christians who did not like Grant were ready to back him against the infidel if only because he could champion the Bible so well.

In the 50's of last century the outstanding Free-thinker was George Jacob Holyoake—certainly better known, but by no means more deservedly than Robert Cooper. Holyoake had a ready pen, and his six months in prison for blasphemy made him famous. He was therefore very obnoxious to Christians, and as the Congregationalists were employing Grant on a three years' mission against "infidels," a debate was arranged between them. This took place in Cowper Street, London, in 1853, lasted six nights, was printed and sold in thousands. Another six days' debate between them took place in 1854, in Glasgow, and both discussions are worth reading even in these hectic days. The disputants were young men nearly the same age, both in earnest, Holyoake deadly, so Grant determined to score points by fair means or foul. "He was," said Holyoake, fifty years later, "the nimblest opponent I ever met, but he never bit your arguments; he only nibbled at them. He was rabbit-minded with a scavenger's eye for the refuse of old theological controversy. With him epithets were arguments." This sums up Grant very well then.

Later he met that other extraordinary character, Joseph Barker. This almost forgotten, but one time notorious controversialist, whose speciality was a sort of quick change in religion, loved nothing better than a slamming match, and Grant certainly was not too happy in the "Halifax debate" as it was called. Barker could be beautifully personal, and even Grant's thick skin was pierced over and over again. Much later still he met Joseph Symes in another slamming match, and Symes having been (I believe) a Methodist



parson, was able to give even Grant points in personalities.

When, therefore, one coldly analyses the performances of Brewin Grant, one must confess that he never advanced the cause of Christianity one iota or in any way retarded the spread of Freethought. Fireworks, quips and cranks and puns and personalities are not of the stuff to defy earthquakes.

He very early encountered Charles Bradlaugh—in 1858 to be precise. Iconoclast, as he called himself then, was young—twenty-five years of age—but with plenty of self-assurance, and it was no mean task to meet a seasoned debater thoroughly familiar with all the tricks of the platform and the other side's arguments. I have not read the whole of the debate, but I have read Bradlaugh's opening speech, in which he had to affirm that the God of the Bible was revengeful and unjust. He always knew his Bible, and so this first speech was characteristic of his opinions—though put more crudely perhaps than when experience and knowledge strengthened both the arguments and his powers of oratory. Unfortunately I have not—so far—been able to see how Brewin Grant met young Bradlaugh's stolid and pedestrian type of attack. But Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner describes the debate in detail in the life of her father, to which I would direct the reader. She admits Grant "proceeded to his argument with acuteness and ability," but because of this love of dealing as far as possible in scandalous personalities, she wonders how Bradlaugh had the patience to carry the debate through to the end.

In 1860 came the second debate, held this time in Bradford. It attracted very large audiences, and Grant's conduct was severely criticized by orthodox critics, who hated and feared Atheism in any shape and form. Here are two opinions in the reviews of the debate, given by Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner:—

The *Bradford Review* in speaking of personalities, said: "Justice obliges us to say Mr. Grant was the first, and by far the greater offender in this direction. The language would not have been tolerated in any society. It was an outrage upon the ordinary proprieties and decencies of life."

The *Bradford Advertiser* said: "We feel bound to concede that Iconoclast acted with a dignity which contrasted very favourably as compared with Mr. Grant. We never attended a discussion where so little gentlemanly conduct was exhibited or so much said that was so vile and unworthy, especially from one professing to be a preacher and a practiser of Christ's teachings."

What shocked and surprised the Christians who attended this debate was that they found the hated Atheist acted like a gentleman, and the dear Christian like a bully and a cad. Grant even put his tongue out at Bradlaugh. This debate was never published owing to the Christian champion keeping the MSS copy of the speeches.

The third debate with Grant took place in 1874 at the Bow and Bromley Institute. It must be confessed that Bradlaugh did not particularly want to meet his old opponent again as he rightly felt no good whatever could come from the encounter either to truth or decency; but he never shirked a debate. Grant commenced at once with a string of personalities and abuse—calling from the *Eastern Post* the remark "that if the Rev. Brewin Grant, B.A., was selected by the Churchmen of the district, the choice did no credit to their judgment." In fact after the first night a deputation with clergymen went to the chairman of the Bow and Bromley Institute, "asking them," says Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, "to put an end to the debate." On the fifth night people had had enough of Grant and the debate was stopped. The result of all this was that, much against Bradlaugh's wish, another debate was arranged at South Place in 1875,

and Grant actually found fifteen clergymen ready to vouch that he was a "fit and proper person to represent their views on Christianity."

This discussion took place and a verbatim copy was published. It is "annotated," by Grant with the most stupid and childish remarks, and it is incredible that anyone—like one of my Christian correspondents—should claim Bradlaugh "cut a sorry figure."

The only fault I have to find with him is that he took Grant seriously. There was no need as no matter what Bradlaugh said, Grant had already arranged to say what he liked irrespective of anything else. He utterly disregarded dozens of the Freethinker's arguments, and even read from a carefully prepared manuscript which, as Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner pointed out, "could obviously be no kind of reply to the arguments Mr. Bradlaugh was advancing."

To attempt any analysis of the debate would be a waste of time. Bradlaugh did his best to conduct it with his usual courtesy and dignity, and acted all through with gentlemanly restraint. But Grant was, as always, a cad and a bully, and re-reading the discussion recently only confirms this more strongly. Even in those days—nearly sixty years ago—when a Bible defender was looked upon as a champion straight from God Almighty, it must have been rather disheartening to Christians to have to support such a saint as the Rev. Brewin Grant, B.A., and it should be added he was scathingly denounced by many of his so-called friends such as the Rev. Arthur Mursell.

Grant wrote his "autobiography" in 1869 called *The Dissenting World*, and it would be hard to beat for insufferable ego-mania. The *Athenum* described it as "overflowing with spite, vanity, insolence and coarse derision." It helped to get him out of Non-conformity, and he was glad to obtain a curacy in the Church of England. I have no details of his subsequent career, and do not even know when he died. But it is curious to find that even now there are people ready to defend this Christian bully and cad, and to claim he "beat" Bradlaugh. Brewin Grant's name is forgotten except by those who are interested in Victorian controversy; while the name of Charles Bradlaugh looms higher and bigger as time recedes.

H. CUTNER.

#### ARCHIDIACONAL.

Johnnie's master said: "It's plain  
"You know so much you're getting vain,  
"So let me ask you something new—  
"What does an Archdeacon do?"

Home came John at half-past four;  
Eagerly he banged the door.  
"Mummy—quickly—where are you?  
"What does an Archdeacon do?"

Mummy said to Dad that night:  
"Darling, are you feeling bright?  
"Quickly, then, supply the clue—  
"What does an Archdeacon do?"

Forth next morning Daddy strode,  
Stopped the Vicar in the road:  
"Here's a thing I never knew—  
"What does an Archdeacon do?"

Vicar, worried, wrote that day  
To his friend Archdeacon Bray:  
"Just been asked—by one or two—  
"What does an Archdeacon do?"

What's the answer? I don't know;  
It all occurred a month ago,  
But John no longer puts on side—  
The Archdeacon hasn't yet replied.

(Dogberry, "News-Chronicle, March 27.")



## Bradlaugh Year Centenary Notes.

## IX.—A TERROR TO LAWYERS.

A CORRESPONDENT has suggested that last week's Note falls short of doing justice to Bradlaugh's achievement in the case of the *National Reformer* prosecution. Without admitting this, it may be that some further particulars of these proceedings in Court and elsewhere may be of interest, and they are now added. After the reception of the Writ from the Solicitor's Department at Somerset House, a meeting was held in a Committee Room at the House of Commons to consider the action of the Government. Petitions to the House asking for the Repeal of the Act were presented by John Stuart Mill and Mr. Crawford. In the meantime Bradlaugh's legal knowledge had enabled him to hold the Crown Council at bay for some weeks while his own friends took action in other directions. The Solicitor to the Treasury had kindly omitted to date his information, and this enabled Bradlaugh to win round one, for the Judge ordered the Information to be withdrawn. Then it was discovered that the particulars in the Information differed from those in the original Summons. A big array of Crown Counsel argued all day against the solitary defendant, but to no avail. So round two was won. This was an important win for it forced the Crown to admit that it relied upon 60 George IV cap 9—the very worst of Lord Sidmouth's notorious Six Acts. (This measure virtually aimed at the suppression of all periodicals published under 6d., and enabled the Commissioners of Inland Revenue to demand from anyone publishing such a periodical, sureties in the sum of £400 against the publication of anything the Courts might hold to be "blasphemous" or seditious.)

When the amended particulars of the Information were delivered Mr. Bradlaugh won another round (as described in the last Note) on the right to have *four* pleas. Here was a splendid sample of Bradlaugh's legal dexterity. The Crown argued that according to a law of James I., only one plea could be entered. Bradlaugh went to the Queen's Printers for a copy of the Act. It was said to be "out of print," and "had never been asked for in the memory of the oldest employee!" But the *Statutes at Large* could be found in other places, and Bradlaugh discovered by a reference to them, what he had suspected from the first, that the Act placed no limit on the defendant's rights in the matter of pleas. In due course came the trial in the Court of Exchequer. When it was called on there were only ten special jurors present. In such case each party had the right to "pray a tales," which means that two other citizens can be called into the box. But the Attorney-General did not "pray," and Bradlaugh did not "pray," and this case came to an unexpected end. Round five!

The Liberal Government's resort to this vile old Act had roused Parliament and the country. That Government came in in December, 1868, having decided to repeal the Act, also decided—to revive the prosecution! But the Liberal Attorney-General went about his job in a very subdued frame of mind. If Mr. Bradlaugh would comply with the demand of the Act for securities the Crown would forgive him the odd £7,000,000 he owed the Inland Revenue. Bradlaugh would do no such thing, and in the action he was seen again and again putting the Crown Counsel right on points of law. The Crown got a verdict on seven points and reserved others for further discussion. Bradlaugh won on three of the reserved points and, while the legal wrangle was still proceeding, the Act was repealed and the Crown Counsel cried "Kamerad!"

## A Poet of Ours.

MR. BAYARD SIMMONS needs no introduction to readers of this journal, and in this choice little book, which includes some poems from these columns, he gives us of his best, and his best is much better than his own modest estimate of it. He has sense of form, grace of word, and vitality of spirit. The idea, industriously circulated by pious critics, that Materialism is fatal to imaginative art, ignores the long line of sceptical poets of whom Mr. Simmons is, among modern, by no means the least. It may be true, however, that preoccupation with those problems which come first in the minds of most Free-thinkers, sometimes leads to a certain neglect of, or indifference to, poetry. In poetry and in prose there are those who think only of the sense and find little interest in the form. In both media, however, form is often as enjoyable, and sometimes more enjoyable than theme. The mellow and measured periods of Sir Thomas Browne and the lyrics of Shakespeare or Marlowe are supreme in themselves. Two such lines as:—

"By shallow rivers, to whose falls  
Melodious birds sing madrigals."

—to quote only one sample from the latter—live, not only as pieces of writing but as lasting pleasures of the mind.

In *Minerva's Owl and Other Poems* (Elkin Matthews & Marrot. 3s. 6d.), Mr. Bayard Simmons exhibits the versatility of his muse. We have Sonnets, Ballades, Triplets, Rondeaux, Villanelles, and Lyrics. He has a light, and sometimes, sprightly wit, of which we quote an excellent sample, some lines entitled "Showmanship":—

She wore her garter well below the knee  
For men to see.

Gaily she wore it,  
Bravely she bore it,

A light blue garter with a red rosette:  
She wore it well,

As many a man could tell,  
And were, indeed, not likely to forget;  
She wore it, as I said, below the knee  
For you and me to see.

Now, Herr Professor Freud, Vienna, wrote  
A monograph of note:

A learned treatise wrote to show  
Just why she wore it so.

It was, he said, a fairly common case,  
And did not indicate, a fall from grace.

The many bangles, too, worn on her wrist  
Showed, like her garter so exposed, the Exhibitionist.

Well, well, perhaps good Doctor Freud is right—  
He gives queer names to common things he drags into the  
light—

But I, who write these words without contrition,  
Say I approved her little Exhibition  
Yea, quite enjoyed the sight.

One Sonnet, representative, both as to form and appropriateness of language. It is called *Exeunt Omnes*:—

When in the ear of summer whispereth  
Her new-come sister Autumn, she must go  
The self-same path that Spring hath trod; and so  
We, too, must pick our way to wintry Death.  
Upon that path Old Age still lingereth,  
Creeping from year to year with footsteps slow  
Whilst Sickly Youth comes panting by, as though  
He sought in haste the funerary wreath.

What shall console us when our time is come?  
The thought that other pass that way as well;  
That generations yet unborn must die?  
Ask not the heavens for the gods are dumb:  
On earth there is no aid, no aid in hell,  
Nor all the starry mansions of the sky.

In all its changing moods, there is a mellifluousness in this verse which strikes us as the *summum genus* of Mr. Bayard Simmons' writing. Themes may be sombre or light-hearted, but the poet takes a pleasure in the expression of his feelings which gives spontaneity and style without sacrificing one to the other. There is little space for verse in the *Freethinker*, but we are sure that readers who have enjoyed the author's contributions to these pages will not miss this treasurable little book which, we must add, is very tastefully produced.



## Correspondence.

### THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Last year at the Annual Conference certain propositions were put forward for revising the constitution of the National Secular Society. The President suggested then, and the Conference agreed, that the whole question of overhauling the Society's constitution had better be raised during the following year when greater deliberation could be afforded to the matter.

The Editor has consented to have a suggested draft constitution submitted to the members of the Society in these columns prior to the 1933 Conference in order that it may provide a basis for a keen and profitable discussion as far as the future of the organization is concerned.

#### PROPOSED DRAFT OF NEW CONSTITUTION.

The National Secular Society holds that human conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It opposes belief in the supernatural and knows nothing of divine guidance or interference.

The National Secular Society stands for the fullest freedom of thought, action and speech.

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

The National Secular Society accordingly seeks to dispel superstition, to secularize and develop education, and to disestablish religion.

Members of the National Secular Society will observe that much of the old constitution has been deleted, and for the rest, endeavours have been made to present it in more modern phraseology. The deletions occur for two reasons. Firstly, the existing constitution purports to base Secularism upon the outworn political theory of Utilitarianism, which is now so utterly discredited that the N.S.S. can only be harmed by continuing to adhere to it. Secondly, the existing constitution contains aims and objects which, although in themselves perhaps very worthy, have nothing to do with the combating of Clericalism.

As members of the National Secular Society we have to remember that the agitative work of the Society's speakers and organizers together with that of the *Freethinker* is constantly bringing into the Society a stream of new blood. Naturally, the people who have begun to realize the necessity for opposing Clericalism will turn to the National Secular Society as being the organization in which they themselves can work towards that end. At this stage they will find that the Society's constitution contains political ideas that modern thought has rejected, framed in out-of-date language, which contains features that are unessential to the aim of opposing Clericalism, and that are open to a variety of interpretations. The virile newcomers whose place is in the N.S.S. and who would, with training, later become the strength of the N.S.S. may refuse to join simply because of its constitution.

No harm can result from a revision of the Society's constitution on these lines, nor will any of its true principles be imperilled. On the other hand much good can and will be done if only the Society has the courage to bring up to date this very important part of its machinery.

What is needed is that the constitution should be wide enough to unite all persons who are willing to give time, energy, money and support in the fight against Clericalism, whatever their opinions on any other matters may be. These aims of the Society should be set forth, clearly, concisely and in a challenging manner, and should contain nothing that is redundant. All the Churches are making their plans to take advantage of the very terrible world conditions by digging themselves in for a renewed lease of life.

The suppression of Freethought and of Freethinker organizations is increasing and is an established fact in many countries. Now is the time for the N.S.S. to overhaul its own fighting weapons.

(Signed) A. MOORE.

G. F. GREEN.

## Obituary.

GEORGE ROLF.

WE regret to announce the death of George Rolf which took place on Tuesday, April 4, at the age of seventy-six years. Following a stroke about two years ago, a general breakdown in health set in, and the end was not unexpected. The immediate cause of death was cerebral hemorrhage. George Rolf joined the Liverpool Branch N.S.S. in 1895, and his independence of thought and character soon marked him as a Freethinker of sterling quality, and an uncompromising champion of the Cause. Shortly after the war he came to London, transferring to the North London Branch N.S.S. Freethought was his great interest, and he became a very familiar figure at the meetings held by the Branch in Regents Park. He later became a member of the Parent Society at Headquarters, and so maintained his connexion with the N.S.S. until his death. The remains were cremated at Golders Green on Saturday, April 8, where in the presence of relatives and friends a Secular Service was read by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

MR. RICHARD HENRY TRELEASE.

WE regret to record the death of Mr. Richard Henry Trelease, who was killed by a fall of stone at Craghead Colliery, on March 28. He was a Secularist of forty years standing, one of the founders of the West Stanley Branch of the N.S.S., and a friend and helper of Mr. Chapman Cohen in his early work in the North. As modest as he was zealous, Mr. Trelease worked quietly and consistently for Freethought, and was greatly respected by all who knew him. The funeral was at Stanley, on April 4, when Mr. J. T. Brighton read a Secular Service at the graveside. An exceptionally large attendance of friends and fellow workers headed by the Colliery Band and Banner paid their tribute of esteem and sorrow. The relatives of Mr. Trelease in their loss have our sincere sympathy. Freethought in Durham has also sustained a severe loss.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

### LONDON.

#### INDOOR.

STUDY CIRCLE (N.S.S. Office, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C.4): 8.0, Monday, April 24, Mr. P. Goldman—"Spiritualism and Psychology."

#### OUTDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. L. Bury. A lecture.

WOOLWICH (Beresford Square): 8.0, Sunday, April 16, Messrs. F. Dossett and S. Burke. Plumstead Common, "The Ship," 8.0, Thursday, April 20, Messrs. F. Smith and S. Burke.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Good Friday, April 14, 3.30, Messrs. B. A. Le Maine and Bryant. 6.30, Messrs. Tuson and Bryant. Sunday, April 16, at 12.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 3.0, Messrs. Bryant and A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Tuson and Wood. Easter Monday, April 17, at 3.0, Various Speakers. The *Freethinker* and other Freethought literature can be obtained during and after the meetings, of Mr. Dunn, outside the Park in Bayswater Road.

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): Sunday, April 16, No meeting. Sunday, April 23, 2.30, Mr. Jack Clayton—"Happiness."

#### OUTDOOR.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (West Regent Street): 8.0, R. White, A Lecture.

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The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularization of the State, etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

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

All who join the Society participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, one-third of whom retire (by ballot), each year, but are eligible for re-election.

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

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