

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions.

### Religion and Beer.

A FEW weeks ago the House of Commons by a vote of four to one, gave a second reading to a Bill which aimed at preventing anyone under sixteen hearing anything that would rouse dissatisfaction with the existing social order or would excite doubt of the truth of religion. This was soon followed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, member of a party elected to save the nation, announcing that it had been resolved to take a penny off every pint of beer. The gesture was magnificent; it was worthy of a party that could vote a second reading to the Seditious and Blasphemous Teaching to Children Bill. Note that, on and off the register, there are nearly four millions out of employment. Financially, the country is in a desperate position—it cannot afford to keep the Prime Minister in the country for too lengthy a period. Europe is nearer war than it has been since it first thought of fighting a war that was intended to make war impossible. The nations of the world trust each other not at all. So the ruling political party rises to the occasion by trying to keep children as ignorant as were their parents, and by taking a penny off each pint of beer! By this latter legislation every one of the unemployed, or partly employed, or wholly employed will save a penny with every pint of beer he drinks. The only man who cannot save is the conscientious teetotaler. But the man who has hitherto restricted himself to ten pints of beer a week, can, by raising his consumption to forty pints, save three shillings and fourpence a week to supplement his old age pension. Drink more and save more would make a good rallying cry for the next election. And, obviously, the Chancellor hopes that the desire to save as many pennies as possible will grow in strength from day to day.

### St. George and Merrie England.

The beer is not to be merely cheaper; it is also to be stronger. So also is religion. There is to be plenty of beer and plenty of religion, and there is to be a

tight hold on children to see that their intelligence does not develop too rapidly. Somehow this conjunction of cheaper beer and a plentiful supply of religion seems peculiarly appropriate. The spiritual and the spirituous have so often run together that their meeting to-day looks like a reunion of old friends. And this union has both a religious and a sociological significance. We have it on the authority of Mr. Winston Churchill, as given in his speech on St. George's Day, that England is the finest country in the world for Duke and Dustman. I agree. I do not think there is any country in the world where the Dustman will more readily rally to the protection of the Duke against all who would rob him of his place and privileges, or where the Dustman can retire to his bed with a greater sense of security with regard to his own position. Each will guard the status of the other. The Duke may sleep knowing that the Dustman will make no attack on his Dukedom; the Dustman may rest satisfied that not a Duke within "this England" will rob him of a single ounce of his dust.

The Chancellor, Mr. Churchill, and the promoters of the Seditious and Blasphemous Teaching to Children Bill are orthodox statesmen. Moreover they know that England rose to its greatest when religion was plentiful and beer was cheap. The England that beat Napoleon had both religion and beer that were cheap and strong. When England made itself the world's factory and gained control of the seven seas, no one thought of challenging the supremacy of either beer or religion. There were no public schools save such as existed by the consent of the Church as by law established. Registry offices for marriage were unknown, and no Jews, and only Christians of a particular brand, were permitted to take a hand in making our laws. No Dustman dreamed of laying down the law to Dukes. The Lord's Day was a real Saints' Day, with the church and the public-house monopolising attention. There was no rivalry between the two, for it was decreed that when the Church opened the public house shut, and when the public house opened the Church closed its doors. A wise and religious legislature saw to it that the religion supplied was fiery, and that the beer sold was strong—so strong that publicans could advertise a good "drunk" for a penny, "blind drunk" for twopence, and for those who had reached this last and, psychologically, semi-religious stage, clean straw for nothing. I take it that Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Churchill, and the Duchess of Atholl look back longingly on those good old days, a time of cheap religion and strong beer. A people who get plenty of beer and plenty of religion are not given to heresy and revolution. It really looks as though quite a number of our rulers agree with the words of Shakespeare, which he puts as Cæsar's comment on the "lean and hungry Cassius."



Let me have men about that fear the gods  
 Shallow-pated knaves that love their swipes,  
 Not men that have a keen and hungry look.  
 They think too much; such men are dangerous.  
 They are shrewd observers and look quite through  
 The deeds of men unto their aims.

I am quoting from my own annotated and emendated edition of Shakespeare, but I feel sure that is the way in which the writer intended the lines to run.

\* \* \*

#### The "Good" Man.

There really is in all this something in the nature of a profound sociological moral. Actually, neither Governments nor Churches are fond of people who think too much or who are too shrewd observers. They do not make either "good citizens" or "sound believers." Both our spiritual and our secular rulers may put up with them, they may even employ them, but they are not loved. To a Government a "good citizen" is one who pays his taxes without demur, and generally does as he is told. To a church, Christian, Jewish, Mohammedan, or other, a good member is one who is unfaltering in his belief and unquestioning in his obedience. Neither Churches nor Governments have ever persecuted men for not thinking enough, but they have both been on their guard and have heavily punished men and women for thinking too much. It is the business of a Government to keep people quiet; it is the business of a Church—particularly of the Christian Church—to give men peace of mind. Not happiness, be it noted, but contentment. Happiness is too boisterous and too excitable a mental state for the Church to encourage. Indeed some of the most famous of Christian preachers have strongly protested against the idea that it was any part of the aim of their religion to give men terrestrial happiness. Gibbon's famous remark concerning the early Christians that it was not in this world that they hoped to be happy or aimed at being useful, was no more than an expression of the truth. The human animal who was also a Christian has craved peace of mind, and that mainly meant a removal of the sense of fear. But they have howled to high heaven that they were "miserable sinners"—not happy sinners, but miserable sinners, and all they really asked from the Lord was to be made contented sinners.

But peace of mind may be a purely passive state. It may indicate no more than an exhibition of a sheep nibbling grass, a cow chewing the cud, or a donkey who is allowed every now and again to bray or kick up his heels. It is, however, unfortunate for both Churches and Governments that many people want more than mere peace of mind; they desire the more active condition of positive happiness, and they will often struggle hard to attain it. That is where the trouble commences, and it is here that religion and beer, or their equivalents, play their part. It is their business to provide occasional bursts of hectic happiness with lengthy periods of mere contentment. And no better agents could be found than religion and beer—or the equivalent of beer. Get a man gloriously drunk on either beer or religion, and he will experience moments of riotous enjoyment. He will be as obstreperously happy as a football fan watching his favourites win the "Cup." He will sing where he otherwise might have wept, or he may cheer where he otherwise might have cursed. In this way he gets a momentary glimpse of a kind of happiness, and that leads to contentment between bursts. And when he is idiotically sober instead of being sanely drunk he will give his religious convictions full play; he will "rationalize" them and thank God for a Government that guards his early years from the disturbing influence of unbelief, and for a Church which supplies him

with "dope" that prevents his questioning the truth of what he is told.

\* \* \*

#### A Holy Alliance.

There is really a very ancient connexion between religion and strong drink. Students of religion—not parsons who never really study religion at all—know that the taking of intoxicating drinks of one kind or another for the purpose of creating religious visions is common in primitive societies and with many comparatively advanced ones. Like the modern Christian who proclaims that he feels the spirit of the Lord working within him, and who thus blames religion for what may be no more than indigestion, or like the medieval monk fasting and praying and then taking the creations of his tortured brain for "celestial visions," strong drinks have been largely used in order to open the gates of paradise to those who were under their influence. And, psychologically, there really is very little to distinguish between the man who is half-crazed with religion and the one who is singing and shouting under the influence of drink. It might, indeed, be well argued that of the two influences that of strong drink is the less troublesome. A man under the influence of drink may be quarrelsome and a nuisance to his fellows, a man under the influence of religion is sure to be both quarrelsome and a nuisance. The lack of psychological balance in each case is marked. Extreme moods, extravagance of language and behaviour are equally marked, but the spirituous drunkard scores most marks for good temper. As Bacon said, "Strong drink did never perturb States, but leaves the road open to good humour, good fellowship and a sturdy interest in the pleasures of life. But religion hath led men to the commitment of many and diverse offences, and hath called from the over-heated brains of its devotees strange customs and grave crimes. Wherefore if a man seeketh dissipation it be better that he find it in the fumes of strong ale than in the tempestuous fanaticism excited by indulgence in strange and fantastical religious doctrines." Again, I quote from my own annotated edition of Bacon's essays, but I am sure that the great Chancellor would not seriously disagree with me.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

#### Without Money and Without Price.

"How quickly nature falls into revolt

When gold becomes her object."—*Shakespeare.*

The grapes in the Lord's Vineyard are drier and smaller than they used to be. No longer does that delectable place deserve the name of El Dorado, the Land of Gold. The faces of the clergy resemble nothing so much as the expression of a tired funeral horse. For the alms-dishes and the offertory-bags are no longer enlivened with silver collections, but are burdened with what Shakespeare calls "the beggarly denarius." The financial outlook is darkening, and, with the exception of a few show-places like St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, most Churches report lessening congregations. The faithful are largely represented by middle-aged people, who, in the course of a few years, will die out. The Christian soldier far too often is represented in battle by his devoted wife; when that placid lady retires the change should be somewhat similar between the Plains of Waterloo when embattled hosts engaged in conflict, and the present day when a few guides sell faked relics to tourists at high prices.

Moreover, complaints are being made by church-goers that religion is too dear. Being acquainted with



God is a costly business; not so expensive as knowing a lady of the chorus, but still an onerous affair. Pew rents are absurdly high, begging appeals are far too regular and insistent, justifying Mark Twain's ironic remark that the difference between a theatre and a church was that you pay to go in one and pay to get out of the other. Visitors even say that St. Paul's Cathedral is as commercialized as a wax-works show, and that the only thing you can do without payment is to blow your nose.

The alluring advertisements of such bodies as the Church and Salvation Armies, the Young Men's Christian Association, and Faith-Healing evangelists, beside the numerous appeals of other religious organizations for cash, reminds us that the Christian Religion is a business and is worked on strictly commercial lines. Missions and meetings are advertised in the same way as pills, theatrical ventures and blood and thunder films. Preachers and revivalists adopt similar methods to circus proprietors and cinema managers, and all have the same object in view. The purely business side of religion, however, is seen clearest in the case of the so-called Church of England, which being the creation and creature of Parliament stands in the limelight more than the more obscure sects.

Swift said bluntly that religion was a trade. He should have known, for he was a Dean and knew the game from the inside. On the commercial side the English Church is a gigantic syndicate, controlling property worth £100,000,000, and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and the Governors of Queen Anne's Bounty have to deal with such diverse matters as taxes on agriculture, coal royalties, rentals from landed estates, and administering ancient endowments. The Church owns property in the City of London alone worth at least £4,000,000, and that it has outstayed its period of usefulness is seen from the fact that the 10,000 inhabitants of the City proper are principally Jewish people with a sprinkling of caretakers, policemen, and their families. Nor is this all, for, recently, the Church Authorities decided to sell nineteen derelict City Churches in order to use the money so obtained in other directions.

The Church of England may be said, not unfairly, to be a church of priests rather than that of the people whose name it so arrogantly claims. Although only one person in nineteen attends an Anglican place of worship, this church possesses 300 bishops, and 16,000 clergy. There are no less than 1,877 parishes with a population under 200, and 4,802 with a population under 500. This preponderance of bishops has its amusing side. One right-reverend Father-in-God is styled Bishop of Northern and Central Europe, and it is a safe conjecture that, beyond a mere handful of tourists, no one on the Continent is aware of his existence.

Commercialism is not unknown in the Free Churches. They have few endowments, and have to rely on bazaars, exhibitions, jumble sales, and other expedients, to make up the pastor's salary. Ten thousand chapels, mission halls, and tin-tabernacles rely on these methods as an easy way of raising money. The logical outcome is seen in the vast trading organization of the Salvation Army, which sells regularly among its members, tea, clothing, children's toys, musical instruments, and all manner of requisites, and uses the profits for propaganda. It touts for emigrants at the usual charges, and draws commission from steamship and railway companies. Insurance is also encouraged, thus justifying the pleasantry that Salvationists seek to be insured against fire in this world and a possible next. There is even a Salvation Army Bank.

It is now desired to make the religion of the Man of Sorrows a less unpleasant, as well as a profitable

pastime for the ordinary citizen. To attract paying audiences, painful Sabbaths have been replaced by Pleasant Sunday Afternoons, Brass bands, string orchestras, and soloists assist leather-lunged preachers. Labour Members of Parliament, and tame publicists, share the pulpit or platform with reformed burglars and converted policemen and actors. This nebulous Nothingarianism has small resemblance to historic Christianity, and elderly churchgoers must be startled at so great a transformation. Faith was far stronger in the bad, old days, when it did not need the artificial impetus of purely secular amusement. Our believing ancestors went to church, and their families with them. It was a painful duty like a visit to the dentist, but it had to be done. Nowadays, young people do not worry about their souls, and papa slides off to golf on the slightest provocation.

It is a bad joke for the clergy to pretend to be interested in social problems in order to attract support for their churches. If these priests were sincere, they would go to Park Lane and the West-End of London and tell the idle folks there that it is immoral to draw rents from slum property, and to the colliery and railway magnates and tell them that men are exposed to death and mutilation in order to pay royalties and dividends to shareholders. They would tell their titled and aristocratic patrons that it is immoral that women should sew garments for a few pence, and that children should be underfed and ragged. Three millions of men and women are unable to find work to do, and are living from hand to mouth in the richest country of the world. Endless repetitions of the "old, old story of Jesus and his love" will not help humanity in these times of stress and trouble. Meanwhile forty thousand priests of this country point to a clock which stopped at Jerusalem twenty centuries ago, and request their congregations to believe that it is the latest communication from Greenwich Observatory. In return for their hocus-pocus the clergy gracefully take millions of money which might be used to better purpose. It is the biggest bluff of twenty centuries.

MIMNERMUS.

## Atheist and Agnostic.

CERTAIN words, such as the two foregoing, are often referred to as labels. But it is a mistake to suppose that the function of these words is akin to that of labels. For, whereas labels are usually affixed to articles for the purpose of giving information of various sorts concerning the articles to which they are attached, words can never, of themselves, give any information at all about anything. In the first place, before a word can be used to give information, it must have some *meaning* for the person using it. And, secondly, this meaning has to be similar to the meaning given to it by others before the word can be *understood*—that is to say, before the information we wish to give can be received by anyone else.

It would be more accurate to say that word-labels resemble the headings upon cards in a private card-index system. The mind of an individual is like the system, while words are like the headings under which he inscribes a number of entries from experience. In this way the mind catalogues a number of otherwise dissociated events, and by means of the headings it reduces the quantity of material which the memory has to cope with. But although these headings, or word-labels, can be handed over in speech or writing to a second person, the whole inventory of experiences which has been catalogued under them remains hidden in the mind of the first person. And it is just this inventory that constitutes the *meaning* of a given



word for each individual. Unless other persons have formed similar inventories under the same heading, the meaning given to a word by one person will not be *understood* by the others.

The circumstances under which persons speaking the same language learn to use these word-labels are, for most practical purposes, very similar. It is for this reason alone that a given language can be used as a means of conveying information. Yet, in spite of this, no one can ever learn the use of any word in exactly the same circumstances as any other person. And this accounts for the gradual change in meaning which words undergo; it also accounts for the varieties of meaning in one word, as well as for a very large number of arguments and disagreements which arise in ordinary discussions. The assumption usually is that, because Jones uses a word-label with which Brown is familiar, therefore the complex of associations connected with that word (*i.e.*, the meanings) are bound to be identical for both. But this is a false assumption. The associations can never be the *same*. At best they can only be *very similar*.

It is, nevertheless, possible by agreement upon a particular verbal definition, to arrive at a meaning which is identical for all persons concerned in a particular discussion. It is also usually possible, by analysing a sufficient number of sources, to arrive at some lowest common multiple which will serve as a practical definition of the meaning of a word for all general purposes. Some word-labels have admittedly reached such a stage of vagueness and ambiguity that any attempt to discover a common meaning for them is bound to end in failure. But words such as these are doomed to a natural extinction.

A realization of the difficulties inherent in arriving at a common meaning for many word-labels has led not a few thoughtful persons to look upon such words with something of contempt. The deliberate misuse of words, or the deliberate use of ambiguous words in order to mislead, has further increased suspicion. So much is this the case that we find many people reluctant to adopt any name descriptive of their beliefs, either social, political or religious, for fear lest others should put a wrong interpretation upon it. Yet word-labels are essential to logical thought; and without them discussion would become needlessly involved. Therefore, rather than discard them altogether, we should endeavour to make the best of them. And the way to do this is, firstly, to formulate our own meanings clearly in our minds; secondly, to be able to define them intelligibly whenever the necessity for explanation arises; and thirdly, to be prepared to change them if we find that they do not agree with the interpretations put upon them by the majority of people we meet.

With regard to the two word-labels *Atheist* and *Agnostic*, a curious phenomenon often manifests itself. We find, on the one hand, that there appears to be little or no confusion in the public mind as to the common meanings of these terms. On the other hand, we find a fairly persistent rumble of disagreement as to their legitimate application amongst those very persons who have chosen to adopt these names. This unsatisfactory state of affairs is surely not one that should be allowed to continue if there is any way to put an end to it. For it does no good to the vital cause which both hold in common. So it is the purpose of this article to suggest the means whereby this state of affairs can be remedied.

Everyone has his own idea what these words should mean. Yet it must be clear that we cannot use them with any degree of logic, or with any hope of avoiding cross-purposes, unless there is an effective similarity between the different meanings which we, as indi-

viduals, give to these terms. It is useless stubbornness to insist upon our own special meanings; and in view of the widespread use of the terms, it is futile to try and jettison them altogether. Obviously, then, we should consent to the adoption of meanings for them which are likely to be acceptable to the majority. How can these meanings be arrived at?

One clue to a solution is suggested by the curious phenomenon before mentioned. If Atheists and Agnostics, who are in a minority, fail to agree, it would seem a matter of common-sense to abandon their particular interpretations in favour of those which we find to be commonly accepted. It is surely useless for a person to call himself an Agnostic when, if his beliefs are described, the general public would call them Atheistic. It is equally useless for a person to call himself an Atheist when, by his very speech and acts, he admits to being unable to prove that God does not exist. The public would be generous to call him an Agnostic. Further, it is stupid for a person to call himself either an Agnostic or an Atheist when his whole behaviour proclaims that he has a grudge against some Superior Power. Such a person is no whit different from a disgruntled Theist.

Another clue to the common meanings is the emotional reactions which are evoked when these words are used in public. Persons who wilt at the term *Atheist* have been known to speak benignly about Agnostics. And this attitude extends even to the clergy. The reason usually given for this is that, whereas the first term implies a denial of God's existence and a disapproval of religion, the second term merely implies a vague expression of ignorance which is not incompatible with a mild form of Theism. Yet the odd thing is that we find persons calling themselves Agnostics who, in fact, have no belief in the supernatural, and whose attitude towards religion is definitely antagonistic. When questioned why they object to being called Atheists, the reply is often something to the effect that they confess ignorance as to the origins and ultimate purpose of the Universe. But this use of the term Agnostic is *not* what the public understands by the term. The pity of it is that these persons do not, or, for reasons of their own, will not, realize the dangerous nature of the weapon which is placed in the hands of their real enemies by their own misapplication of meaning.

An enquiry, as exhaustive as the circumstances would permit, has led me to the conclusion that the common meaning for the word *Atheist* is: "One who asserts that God does not exist." To this is frequently added the sub-meaning: "One who is antagonistic to every form of religion." The common meaning for the word *Agnostic* is: "One who prefers to express no definite opinion as to the existence of God, but is prepared to admit such a possibility." To this is frequently added the sub-meaning: "One who does not deny the value of some sort of religion." Ideas concerning the origins or ultimate purpose of the Universe, or concerning the problems of good and evil, of freewill, of a future life—all these are extraneous to the common meanings of the terms *Atheist* and *Agnostic* as understood by the public. In specific discussions these ideas may be introduced as subsidiary to the general subject which is being dealt with, but they are never implicit in the terms themselves.

Now if I have interpreted the common meanings of these terms correctly, it seems to me that there need be no more confusion of thought or argument as to the proper application of them in particular cases. On the one hand, no one has the right to call himself an Atheist unless his whole behaviour is logically consistent with the common meaning of the term. It is inconsistent, for example, to deny the existence of



God and to believe in some sort of supernatural something. On the other hand, no one has the right to call himself an Agnostic when, in fact, he is logically convinced of the non-existence of everything which goes by the name of supernatural. It is the primary common meanings of these terms which should determine their proper use, not the sub-meanings nor any special meanings which individuals might choose to give them.

Any other use of the term *Atheist* must be put down to ignorance, bravado, or pure hypocrisy. Any other use of the term *Agnostic* must be put down to evasion, cowardice or pure self-will. But when this has been said, one other possibility should be borne in mind. Persons who are neither true Atheists nor true Agnostics may call themselves such (temporarily) for the deliberate purpose of misleading the public and of so bringing contempt upon those who are sincerely one or the other. This underhand method of degrading the high principles of Freethinkers and Rationalists cannot be completely prevented. But at least we can do our best not to facilitate such activities by our own misuse of the word-labels which have formed the subject of this discussion.

C. S. FRASER.

### Freethinkers and Superhuman Sanctions.

A FREETHINKER is one who thinks as freely about the religion of his own environment, the religion in which he has been brought up, as he does about the religions, past and present, of other races and other places. He applies the same impartial scrutiny to them all, and he finds that every creed, however civilized, however primitive, presupposes that its founders and adherents have got hold of the right sort of supernaturalism, unless this is, by missionary zeal, superseded by the supernaturalism of the missionary's creed. This is the belief which all creeds have in common, whatever changes are rung upon them by the modernist, and upon it is based the claim to regulate human affairs by superhuman sanctions.

The Freethinker also notes that, as history shows, these varying sanctions are responsible for a long tale of suffering and much shedding of blood. However lofty the ideals of the religion which advances them, they have proved dangerous weapons to place in the hands of humanity, and have often barred the way to progress and enlightenment, as fetters upon thought.

The clashes between religious sanctions are, for instance, one of the main difficulties in framing a constitution to suit India, where they are also instrumental in holding up social reforms which it seems impossible to doubt would be welcomed by the more enlightened members of its various races. Work for animals there meets with the same obstruction. A writer from India in a letter to the *Animal World*, the Magazine of the R.S.P.C.A., alludes to the "veneration for (animal) life, but not for the mitigation of suffering." She states that "the religious objection to taking life is an insurmountable difficulty to animal work in India." This is a simple case of a superhuman sanction which falls below the humane human standard. (Westerners have still much to reproach themselves with as regards the treatment of animals, but their hands are not tied by a sanction, though the Church of Rome has tolerated great cruelty to animals on the ground that they have "no souls.") In the case of Christianity the clash occurs inside the same religion. Though persecution and even intolerance are no longer in keeping with the spirit of the age, Christianity still harbours conflicting claims to the

divine sanction, some maintaining that it is vested in a Church infallible, inviolable, others that it is to be found only in the pages of a much-edited Book, while others claim it—not necessarily exclusively—for their own particular Church or sect, or for individual mystic revelation.

Variations in the superhuman sanction are brought home to us in the attitude of the religious world in this country towards war. In 1914 and the following years the sanction, as accepted by the Churches, was decidedly non-pacifist, and reflected something of the spirit which animated the crusades against the infidel, a term which in those times included all who did not hold the Christian faith.

As a side issue it may be noted that the belief of the Crusader in the sanction for crusading was obviously far more whole-hearted than anything of the kind today, when Christians of all denominations are apparently being enjoined to make common cause with other religions against Atheism.\* In this connexion they are not very far from the position of the Freethinker.

But now in this year of grace 1933, the sanction is being sought for in the opposite direction. Unless developments occur to force the hand of this nation—and may all the human great powers combine to prevent such a catastrophe!—the sanction will be claimed this time for peace. Mr. Lansbury in his "appeal" to the Churches (*The Times*, March 16), says:—

The world wants a clarion call for peace, but our pastors, Bishops, priests . . . cannot give that call until once and for all they declare all war a crime against God and tell Christian men and women it is a denial of God's will to have any part or lot in such a terrible crime.

On the other hand the Rev. Cyril Edwards, writing to the *Times* (March 23) in reply to Mr. Lansbury, is evidently of opinion that under some circumstances the sanction can be claimed for war. Another writer, Lieutenant-General Sir Alexander Gordon, in the *Times* (March 20), points out that:—

The Assembly of the League is representative of peoples of all religions, Christians being largely outnumbered by the remainder, in which are included some 200,000,000 of Moslems, whose creed enjoins them to draw the sword in defence of their faith. And for that reason religion is never mentioned in the Assembly. But if the influence of religion be allowed to carry any weight in the work of Assembly the result might be disastrous. Religious emotion would play a greater part than intellect in deciding matters under discussion, and passions might be aroused which would wreck the League and lead possibly to war more bitter than any in the Middle Ages—and certainly more destructive.

(This letter calls to mind, also, the sanguinary sanctions of Old Testament history.)

Here we have three points of view, each showing a different aspect towards religious sanctions in so far as they apply to war. The catastrophes for which natural forces, not erring humanity, are responsible, are described both in religion and law as Acts of God, and have more logical claim to the sanction, as being without doubt superhuman.

The Freethinker is one who can no longer be imposed upon by priestly assumptions which differ only in degree from that of the medicine-man and others of that ilk in primitive communities. While not attempting in the present instance to touch upon the

\*Owing to the stigma which in some circles the word Atheism still carries with it, "anti-theism" now sometimes takes its place. Pacifism as it stands on its own merits, finds some of its keenest supporters in Atheistic and Rationalistic circles.



psychological side of religious experience, it may safely be said here that the Freethinker rejects in toto the claims made to advance superhuman sanctions for the settlement of human affairs. By this rejection he sweeps away the danger of imposing them upon humanity—often thoughtless and gullible in matters outside practical life and its material interests—as guides and tests for ethical, social, or scientific values.

It may be urged that this argument gives only one side of the sanctions of religion and ignores their beneficial aspects. If this is true, it is because the Freethinker claims no more freedom than anyone else to pronounce upon the merits or demerits of any particular sanction imposed by religion. But he recognizes that their infinite variety and the changes they undergo to keep pace with the thought of highly civilized and cultured communities, prove their human origin, no matter from what pulpit they are preached. As such, the Freethinker claims that all sanctions backed by religions must be judged solely on their own merits, and must stand or fall by the standard which humanity sets up for them.

Psychology is the handmaid of Freethought, and Professor McDougall, in his book *Social Psychology* has depicted another aspect of "supernatural sanctions" as "social sanctions"—apart from ethical status—in building up "the strength and stability of societies." In reference to "Western Europe," he writes:—

The spirit of enquiry has broken all its bonds and soared gloriously until, now, the conception of natural causation predominates in every field; and, if the notion of supernatural powers still persists in the minds of men, it is the conception of a Divine Creator who maintains the laws that He has made, but does not constantly interfere with their operation. This . . . withdrawal of supernatural power from immediate intervention in the life of mankind, inevitably and greatly diminishes the social efficiency of the supernatural sanctions.

This brief sketch of the Freethought attitude may well conclude with the words of this great psychologist:—

Man is never long content to worship gods of moral character greatly inferior to his own.

(Lady) MAUD SIMON.

P.S.—Press reports and communications, since this article was written, show that "sanctions" for or against war, as advanced from the different standpoints of Christianity, are numerous.

#### MOVEMENT.

According to our records of the past  
In this and other lands, of which we read,  
With each succeeding century, the speed  
Of life's activities are greater than the last.  
In earliest times men often worked and played  
Where they were born, and rarely were disturbed  
By alien influences; wanderlust was curbed  
Through lack of transport: near their houses they stayed.  
Later, e'er yet the cities' loud, and gay,  
And bustling round was known, were sheltered towns,  
And sleepy hamlets hiding in the downs,  
Where life pursued its calm unhurried way.  
Movement has made the earth for men, but haste  
Destroys. To this is present chaos traced.

ALAN CAMPBELL, COPE.

#### A Rural Sunday Morning.

THE gentleman who deigns to supply our rural district with newspapers drives round every morning in a governess cart. If you do not happen to live on the road, you must meet him, or, alternatively, arrange with your nearest neighbour on the road to have your paper left at his house. As my cottage is at the end of a lane, and there is a small farmhouse at the other end, and on the corner of the road, my paper is left there. So I came to know the farmer's wife, an elderly lady, with much of that sort of wisdom which comes of being born, and living on, the land. In the three small villages of which we are one there is only one Church, and, although I believe we have one constable, I have never seen him. It was a mention of this circumstance which started the talk now to be recorded.

I asked the farmer's wife whether she went to . . . Green—three miles away to—the Church. "Well," she said, "I used to go years ago, but its a long time since I went. I was brought up chapel, but my husband was church, and when I married I went with him. The parson in those days was a decent man, and the service homely and congregational. Then a new man came and started a lot of mummery, and so as we didn't hold with that, we stopped going. The parson came to enquire about it, and I told him I reckoned those who held with Roman Catholics ought to use their churches, not ours." Then, she said, "anyway, I don't think it matters. Take funerals. This new parson has prayers for the dead. What's the good of that? I said to him as the tree falls so it does lie, in my opinion, and no praying will make it grow again." He hasn't called since. Then she went on to talk about the weather. "If you look at the glass," she said,— "and it's more reliable than the wireless,— and it says 'rain,' well, the chances are you'll get rain if it keeps steady there. What would be the good of praying? It wouldn't send the glass up." At this I told her that I thought she must be a Freethinker. "Well," she replied, "I don't now about that; but if you live in a quiet place like this you soon find out that when anything goes wrong you have to depend on yourself, or the help of a neighbour, of a doctor, or a vet, and nobody as I ever heard of thought of praying for help in the hay-making." The Sunday morning after this conversation I walked over to . . . Green to meet the newsagent and Mr. Garvin, whom I "sit under" on the Sabbath. I had not got far on the road when the single church bell started to tinkle. It was just after 10 o'clock. Two little girls, aged about ten, passed me carrying prayer books. By 10.15 I was in the village, and, hanging about for the newsagent, I kept my eye on the church door. An old Ford drew up carrying a farmer and his wife and daughter. The mother went to Church the others drove away. A swell gentleman, evidently a visitor, was walking up and down apparently awaiting the arrival of someone. Up drove two ladies in a big car, pulled up at the Church, picked him up—and off they all went. Three or four lots of lads in two's and three's sauntered along, but none of them went in. I counted five women and eight girls and two men. All these people except the little girls and the farmer's wife came from . . . Green itself, so, unless they got there more than a quarter of an hour before the service, not a soul was there from either of the other villages which this place serves, one mile and three miles away respectively. My paper man arrived just as the bell stopped. He collects his weekly bills on Sunday and so is later than ever. I asked him about this, and he said it was not his idea but his customers' to pay on Sunday, when "they had nothing else to do." Returning, reading my paper as I went, I passed two more sturdy lads. "Morning," said I, "on your way to Church?" "Oh yeez," replied one of them with a grin and a wink, and in an imitation Hollywood voice! Those people who think that the strength of the Church is in the countryside would get a shock if they came to our village, which, I may add, except in having no church at all, is by no means an isolated case, although in a somewhat isolated spot.

RUSTICUS.



## Acid Drops.

A newspaper reporter is responsible for the statement that "If you go to any place in England you are sure to meet a good Methodist in five minutes." When things are as bad as they are, when England is trying to make a brave show before the world, and Mr. MacDonald is assuring the universe that all that we need is a heart to heart talk with himself in the centre of the picture—there is no need at this juncture to run the country down in the fashion of this reporter. If this had been written between 1914 and 1919, we should have labelled him as a German. As it is in 1933 he must be a Bolshevik or at least an agent of Moscow.

The Methodist Missionary Society is responsible for the headline "Our Foundations—He Has Risen." It may be, but when foundations take to rising it looks as though there is an earthquake occurring. Perhaps it is only intended for a hint that to be a Christian one has to turn things upside down.

A Methodist paper enquires why we have given up belief in the second coming of Christ. Perhaps the reason might be found in a consideration of the nature of the reception given on his first appearance. Did that invite a return visit?

We comment elsewhere in this issue on the Chancellor of the Exchequer's lowering the tax on beer to the extent of a penny a pint. The only idea at the back of this is that people have drunk less beer because of the price, and that shows the capacity of our political leaders for fruitful sociological thinking. The fact plain to all is that drinking has been steadily declining for many years, and the main cause is that of changed habits, which is only another consequence of opportunities for more rational education. We have no hesitation in saying that the bicycle, the motor car, the Sunday excursion and the cinemas have done more to diminish drunkenness than all the preaching and variable taxation that ever existed.

On all fours with this kind of thinking is the recently expressed opinion of the Countess of Asquith that while there is less Church-going than when she was young, there is not less religion. She also says that if parsons will read clearly and make their sermons shorter they will have the Churches fuller. The idea that Christianity is to be saved by better elocution and shorter sermons is as childish as one can imagine. People did not go to Church to hear pleasing recitations, or to get away from Church as soon as they could. They went because they believed, and they listened because they were anxious to "set themselves right with God." If they believed they would still go to Church. We do not deny that if really good recitations could be given in Church and an all-round enjoyable entertainment provided many would go to Church who now stay away. But no one would call that a religious revival.

No paper in the kingdom appreciates the mentality of the public better than the *Sunday Express*. In its issue for April 30 it prints the latest outrage committed by Russia. This consists in the publication in English of a "verbatim report" of the trial of the British engineers. It has been sent to members of the House of Lords, and the dastardly design is to "justify the charges" and to "make the case of the accused worse." That is damnable. Some people may be under the impression that to read a verbatim report of a trial is one of the best ways to form a judgment about it. But the *Sunday Express* knows better. The right way, the political way, the newspaper way is to see that the public knows only what it is considered well for it to know. That is the policy the *Express*—and other papers pursue with regard to religion, and if it is right there, it must be equally right elsewhere.

Someone has been writing to the papers complaining that over and over again, after slipping two pennies into a telephone box, he got connected with the wrong number. By the time the discovery was made his two pennies were gone beyond recovery. He therefore claims that the Postmaster-General is operating a game of chance, sometimes the subscriber wins and sometimes he loses. In this case he thinks the Postmaster ought to be indictable under the gaming laws.

We do not altogether agree with this. For instance, We have noted that our own telephone account is always about the same, whether the 'phone is greatly or little used. And on one occasion when the 'phone had been quite out of use for nearly six weeks our account for that quarter had increased by nearly twenty shillings. We complained, pointing out that the 'phone had been in use for only about seven weeks, and received the delicious reply that everything was quite correct, and that the statement sent agreed with their account. As one had been copied from the other this was not very remarkable; but as sample of unapproachable official idiocy, we have treasured that reply. Still, this and similar incidents should relieve the Postmaster-General of any charge of indulging in a game of chance. The subscriber does not stand the ghost of a chance. It is a dead cert for the Postmaster-General.

"We travel physically at 350 miles an hour," says a daily paper reader, "but mentally we seem to limp along in the Stone Age." The reason is, we suggest, that the mind of man is fettered by obsolete customs and traditions, and by primitive habits of thought. And it is the Christian Church and the Christian religion which do as much as anything to prevent such fetters from being cast off. Mentally man will continue to "limp along in the Stone Age" so long as the Christian religion is allowed to dictate the channels in which his thinking shall move.

Writing about "Religion in the Public Schools," Philemon of *Everyman* says of boys that "Youth is naturally religious." He adds that "their enthusiasms and ardours; their hero-worship; their faith, trust, aspiration; that quality of excess in all they do when their heart is in it; this is the very stuff and substance of religion." And he argues that "if you would make these religious boys Christianly religious, then show them Christ plainly; show them the Christ-life . . ." The idea is to get the boys to be attracted by Christianity. Philemon, however, is wrong in saying that these characteristics of youth are *religious*. They are merely human characteristics manifested markedly in youth. And they can be attached to almost any creed or philosophy that claims to possess ideals of some kind—whether it be, say, religion, or political theory, or Secularism. What Philemon wants to do is to bias those characteristics in the direction of Christianity. He says he would merely put the Christian ideals before youth and then let youth choose. But to enable youth to choose intelligently the case against Christianity should also be stated, and the case for Secularism. Otherwise, the tutors of youth are taking advantage of youth's innocence and ignorance.

The Rev. J. H. Brooksbank, Vicar of Hathersage (Derbyshire), in his Parish Magazine, alleged that ramblers stood round the church as the congregation came out and one of the ramblers called out "Let's shock them." This voice came from "a cluster of half-dressed girls who called out blasphemies." He had previously stated that 400 couples slept out in the fields, and that the ramblers were drunk and disorderly. A correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* went to investigate, and his report (April 19) is worth quoting. He says:—

For weeks past I have visited Hathersage almost every week-end, and the behaviour of the ramblers in the district is considerably better than it was two or three years ago. It was usual to have a batch of ramblers before the Bakewell bench every time they sat, but recently there has been none. Thousands of ramblers



thronged the village of Hathersage on Easter Monday, and not a single complaint was received by the police. Public-houses were open all the day, but no one was locked up for being drunk and disorderly. Youths occasionally burst into song, but were quickly stopped by the police. At night I spent several hours at Hathersage, and but for the noise from a loud-speaker on the roundabout the village was perfectly quiet . . . A search in the small hours of the morning accompanied by the police failed to disclose even a lone Rambler in the hedge-bottoms. A prominent public man in Hathersage, who has as many as 200 rambles camping out at a time on his land, told me that in the last three years he has only once had any trouble with a Rambler. In the last year there have been only two complaints to the police. Scores of rambles' clubs in Sheffield have for years been doing their best in endeavouring to see that all rambles, whether club members or not, behave respectably when in the country. Their efforts have been rewarded by a decided improvement in the general behaviour. Isolated cases of bad manners are bound to occur, but these do not warrant a general attack on the lovers of the open country.

On this we have only to remark that the fact here recorded that the police stopped youths who "broke into song," seems to indicate that if ail is not as quiet as the Vicar would like it to be, it is not for the want of the support of the secular arm. Is it a crime to "burst into song" on a Sunday?

The *Daily Mirror* seems to dislike the fact that Spain has dispensed with a monarchy. Its leader writer said recently:—

There is a saying that a young man who is not a democrat has no heart, and that an old man who is still a democrat has no head. We imagine that modern Spain has had an attack of youth.

As the idea of monarchy and belief in it belong properly to the cradle days of human mental development, one is compelled to suspect that the the *Mirror* writer—as is the case with all infants—cannot lay claim to have developed in either heart or head. Of course, if one regards a modern nation as a tribe of savages, it is very hard to understand how it can dispense with a chieftain ruling by "divine right."

In the *Daily Mirror* a correspondent points out that "Fear of God is the foundation of wisdom" is a favourite quotation of religious leaders; and naturally so, he says. We don't suppose he appreciates why it is naturally so. The fact is that the prestige and power of the aforesaid religious leaders are intimately connected with the fear of God being inculcated. And if fools can be made to believe that that fear is the foundation of wisdom, then they will tend to regard priests or parsons with great respect, as the only authorized custodians and interpreters of divine wisdom and revelation. For our part, we would affirm that the casting off of superstitious fear is one of the foundations of wisdom. When that has been accomplished one acquires the wisdom to dispense with all alleged guides to the supernatural—those parasites who live on the fears of man.

Pious Catholics in Birmingham recently heard some stirring addresses from their clergy on the question as to whether England is to become Christian or Pagan. Archbishop Williams seems to have forgotten the immense strides his religion has made in this country, for he actually declared that "All around us people are falling into Paganism or Communism, and thinking of material things only." So would the dear Archbishop if he had nothing, or very little, to eat for days, and the prospect of the same kind of thing for an indefinite future. His remedy is a Catholic Men's League, but if this proposed League can do no better than the Catholic Guilds or the other fighting bodies of Roman Catholicism, we opine England will go on relapsing into Paganism, and a good thing too.

300,000 people saw the Pope bless the world. 40,000 attended the Pope's Mass. A storm of cheering took place in St. Peter's, Basilica. People even saw God's Viceroy make the sign of the cross. In addition, no

fewer than twenty cardinals were at the Papal altar, and it was amidst the most solemn silence that the Sacred Host and the Chalice, after the Consecration, were elevated. And what then? Nothing whatever. The world carries on, more or less dismally, just the same. All this holy bunk was just as effective as if a Zulu witch-doctor acted in the same way with his josses and credulous and frightened followers. Religion is still an opiate for the mass of people, and Freethought has still a heavy task to perform.

Roman Catholics still pray for the "Conversion" of England, and yet England is a Christian country! All our histories tell us that St. Augustine in 600 A.D. performed the miracle, and Anglican Catholics tell us it was quite possibly one of the original disciples or a pal who came 500 years or so earlier who did the trick. We suggest that the Roman Catholics leave the Anglo-Catholics alone, and see how effective prayers can be for the conversion of members of the N.S.S. Perhaps the two Christian brands could join forces again as they do when attempting to convert Birth-controllers. Surely Christianity is not afraid to tackle Secularism?

We were glad to note that Mr. Harry Price in his interesting articles in the *Sunday Dispatch* confirms most emphatically what we have always insisted upon about "spirit" photography. He says bluntly that it is fraud and nothing but fraud. But, of course, this will make no difference whatever to the true believer. He will pay his shekels and receive his "spirit" photograph just the same as before. After all anybody who can swallow Christian "miracles" ought not to jib at similar, if less exciting miracles. A true Christian will believe almost anything.

### Fifty Years Ago.

ON Saturday, March 28, 1883, Mr. Maloney stated that the prosecution were willing to enter a *nolle prosequi* or, in plain English, to withdraw from the case. The Lord Chief Justice pointed out that as the case was nominally a Crown case, the Attorney-General must give his fiat to the same effect. At least one of the jury that could not agree is here: all the witnesses in the former trial are ominously present and a new jury ranged three deep. Are we to have a new trial, or will the prosecution by one more of their many ingenious, but not ingenious devices slink out of their difficulty? Mr. Maloney has only this moment received from the Attorney-General a fiat granting the *nolle prosequi*. This is handed in to the Chief, who, in his most severe fashion, takes exception to the taking of his name in vain in the petition that has been sent in by the prosecution to the Attorney-General. According to the petition, drawn up, of course, by the prosecution Lord Coleridge had stated that the prosecution was ill-advised. Everyone knows that Lord Coleridge has said nothing of the kind, as with a scrupulous care, he abstained from saying a word either in one direction or the other. In the politest way, the Lord Chief Justice of England gives Mr. Maloney the lie direct. Of course, Sir Hardinge Giffard is not there. He leaves all the dirty work to be done by his junior, probably from the knowledge that he has had sufficient practice, and Mr. Maloney is a younger man.

The prosecution has failed. Ignominy has once again fallen to the lot of the Giffards and Tylers. After the disagreement of two juries out of three, the remarkable summing-up of the Lord Chief Justice Coleridge, the whole tone adopted by him, the unscrupulous means used by the prosecution, the severity of the sentence from Justice North, the fact that the jury, who convicted, were astonished at the punishment inflicted, and that one of them, at least has signed a memorial for the release of the prisoners; after the statement that the health of the imprisoned men is suffering—surely Sir William Harcourt will see his way to a remission of the sentences.

The "Freethinker," May 6, 1883.



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL:

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

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## The Bradlaugh Centenary Commemoration Fund.

### SIXTH LIST OF DONATIONS.

AMOUNT previously acknowledged, £514 5s. 6d.; Birth Control International Information Centre, £1 1s.; H. Holt, £1 1s.; H. G. Norman, £1 1s.; Mrs. W. Whale, £1 1s.; R. Gray, £1 1s.; H. J. Moger, £1; A. E. Stringer, £1; S. R. Pemberton, £1; E. McInnes, £1; E. Pinder, 10s.; W. H. Hicks, 10s.; F. C. Owens, 5s.; J. W. Pickard, 5s.; G. B. Clark, 5s.; H. L. Barron, 5s.; W. H. West, 2s. 6d.; W. H. Houlden, 1s.; D. Christie Tait, £2 2s.; A. D. Corrick, £2 2s.; B. L. Bowers, £1 1s.; Members of the Cardiff N.S.S., 10s. 6d.; J. G. Dobson, 5s.; Miss S. Dobson, 5s.; J. W. Elsworth, 2s. 6d.

Total ... £532 2 0

All subscriptions to be addressed to the Hon. Treasurer, Bradlaugh Centenary Fund, Mr. F. C. C. Watts, 38 Cursitor Street, London, E.C.4.

### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—J. Petersen (Noumea), £1. R. SEDGWICK.—Thanks for address. Paper being sent.  
R. B. YENDOLL.—Pleased you enjoyed the debate. There has been no full report of the discussion published.  
J. L. LUCAS.—Thanks for very interesting communication which we have read with pleasure, but we are afraid it would be out of date by the time we could publish.  
C. B. TURNER.—We have made the necessary correction. Thanks for calling attention to it.  
W.M.—The 1904 controversy is rather too old to review now.  
P. J. MORSE (Marylebone).—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.  
J. A. REID (Arlesey).—Cuttings to hand. Always useful whether noticed in the paper or not.  
ANTI-SWASTICA.—"Imitation is"—sometimes—"the sincerest form of"—usefulness.  
READER.—How "Christianity helps" non-Christian nations to "meet the impact of Western civilization" is by—bringing their commercial and military systems into line with "Christian" models.  
P.P.O'P. (Dublin) says the pet name of De Valera, "Dev.," is short for the Devil. We thought it was short for—divinity!  
G. HOLMES.—The article was not by anyone on the *Freethinker* staff.  
W. DIGGINS.—Pleased to hear from an old member of the Old Bethnal Green Branch. Mr. Harding is alive, and so far as we know, well. Record is being sent.  
J. PETERSEN.—Have handed your order to our business manager. Are we ever going to see you again in this country?  
The "*Freethinker*" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.  
The Secular Society, Limited Office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.  
The National Secular Society's Office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.  
When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.  
Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.  
Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. and not to the Editor.

The "*Freethinker*" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—  
One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.  
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 cannot say that we are delighted at the response to last week's appeal for funds for the Bradlaugh Centenary Celebrations. We suspect—a suspicion that encourages—that, as usual, many are putting off sending until later. But if the Committee is to go forward with its published programme it must know in good time that it is not lacking the necessary financial support. The sum required by the Committee is £1,500, and it really ought not to take long to raise this sum, nor need it be a burden on anyone if each will do his or her share. It would be a thousand pities if the Committee had in any way to curtail its work owing to want of funds. At present only just over £500 have been subscribed. A thousand of our readers sending one pound each would close the fund, but for our own part we would sooner see two thousand at ten shillings. The wider the response the better, it will help to show the public that the work of the great Freethinkers is not forgotten. Subscriptions should be sent to the Treasurer of the Bradlaugh Centenary Committee, 38 Cursitor Street, London, E.C.

We are now within four weeks of the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society. This is to be held on Whit-Sunday, June 4. The Conference will be held in London, the Grafton Hotel, Tottenham Court Road. The morning and afternoon meetings, at 10.30 and 2.30, will be business meetings and are open to members only. Admission will be by the current membership card. In the evening, at 7.0, a public demonstration will be held in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, which will be addressed by a number of speakers.

On the Saturday evening preceding the Conference a reception of members will be held in the Palm Court of the Grafton Hotel, at seven o'clock. Refreshments will be provided, and there will be some music during the course of the evening. Members and delegates will be the guests of the Executive, and the occasion will serve for the making of acquaintances and the discussion of general matters, which are among the best results of the annual meetings.

We hope that every Branch of the N.S.S. will be represented at the Conference, and that there will be a record gathering of friends from all parts of the country. This is Bradlaugh Year, and it would be well to signalise it by a good influx of Freethinkers anxious to show their interest in the work of the Society founded by Bradlaugh, and to which he was so devotedly attached. And there are many worse places in the world for a holiday visit than London in June.

Provincial visitors who require hotel accommodation must write the General Secretary as early as possible stating their exact requirements. The sooner this is done the better. From the papers we see that London hotel-keepers are looking forward to a very busy season this year, and it would be better for all concerned if all visitors to the Conference could be housed in the same building instead of being in different hotels.

Among the increasing number of references to the Bradlaugh Centenary in the press is an interesting one in the *Hackney and Kingsland Gazette* (April 26), which circulates in the neighbourhood where Bradlaugh was born. This article is, unfortunately, marred by errors both of statement and of taste. It repeats the oft-cor-



rected mis-statement that Bradlaugh "refused to take the Oath" in the House of Commons, and suggests that there is an "amazing resemblance" both in person and in career, between Charles Bradlaugh and Mr. Bottomley. Except that their names both begin with B, and that they were both M.P.'s, there is no ground for this extraordinary, and, in view of some facts that need not be mentioned here, unworthy comparison. A prompt reply to this article was sent by the Hon. Press Agent of the Centenary Committee, who has and will deal similarly with any other such notices that may appear.

In connexion with the Centenary Celebrations a visit will be made to the tomb of Bradlaugh in Brookwood Cemetery on Saturday afternoon, June 10. A wreath will be laid on the tomb and short addresses will be given. Arrangements have been made for Coaches to convey visitors to and from the Cemetery, leaving the Royal Air Force Memorial, Embankment (near Charing Cross Underground Station) at 2.30 p.m. After the ceremony visitors will be taken by the coaches to Woking, where tea will be served. Tickets for the return coach fare and tea will be 5s. each. Visitors wishing to join the coaches at Clapham, Balham, Tooting or S. Wimbledon must advise the Secretary when applying for tickets. Cheques, Postal Orders, etc., together with stamped addressed envelope, should be sent to the Secretary, Bradlaugh Centenary Committee, 38 Cursitor Street, E.C.4. Early application is essential, so that coach and tea seats may be reserved.

Will readers abroad, who may have ordered the gramophone record of Mr. Chapman Cohen's address please note that, as some breakages in transport have been reported, a special packing is being obtained which may involve a short delay in delivery.

The Executive of the N.S.S. has again engaged Mr. G. Whitehead to conduct a lecture tour during the open-air season. The ground covered will be from Brighton, on the South Coast, to Glasgow, and next Sunday Mr. Whitehead will speak at the White Stone Pond, Hampstead, at 11.30, and at Fulham in the evening and rest of the week.

The Annual Report and Balance Sheet of the Birkenhead Branch, N.S.S. are encouraging documents, and reveal much hard work and real enthusiasm under trying conditions. There is a strong Roman Catholic element in Birkenhead, ignorant, intolerant, in fact, in every way true to type, and the best security for successful Freethought meetings is a strongly supported platform. When unattached Freethinkers all over the country wake up, and join up, the strength of Freethought will provide another shock for the churches.

The Bethnal Green Branch N.S.S. will begin operations in Victoria Park to-day (Sunday). Mr. R. H. Rosetti will speak from the usual spot near the Bandstand, at 3.0 p.m. The local Secretary is working hard to get the Branch something like as strong as it should be, and invites the co-operation of all Freethinkers in the area. Particulars of membership, etc., from Mr. C. Samuels, 435 Hackney Road, London, E.2.

The *Methodist Times* (April 20) contains a critical but appreciative notice of Mr. Alan Handsacre's *Revenues of Religion*. It is the first religious paper to give the book considered and adequate notice although it was published just a year ago. Our contemporary, while stressing the "secularist bias" of the writer, pays tribute to his "scrupulous and painstaking effort to be fair to those with whom he does not agree," and concludes that "this is a partisan, but nevertheless an extremely readable and carefully documented book." It recommends it "to all who may wish for an up-to-date statement of the case against the Establishment of religion."

## Bradlaugh Year Centenary Notes.

### XIII.—LIBERALS AND DISSENTERS: WORTHY EXCEPTIONS.

WE have seen that many Liberals, not excluding some members of Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet, fell short of their principles over the Oath controversy. We have seen that many Nonconformists, clerical and lay, joined in the disgraceful campaign of that time. It is pleasant to note that there were exceptions, alike among Liberals and dissenters, and Bradlaugh himself most generously acknowledged them. In the *National Reformer* (December 7, 1884) may be found a series of Resolutions from June, 1880 to March, 1884, which show that, at all stages of his fight, the Birmingham Liberal Association recognized its character and gave it unstinted support. We may quote only one of them, the first (June 29, 1880), and that only in part. "The House of Commons has invaded the constitutional rights of the electors of Northampton; has done an act of injustice to the member for Northampton by imposing upon him a religious test unknown to law; and has assumed to itself an authority which, as claiming to exercise a veto upon the choice of the electors of Northampton by refusing to receive their legally-elected representative, is beyond the constitutional powers of the House of Commons, and is consequently dangerous to public liberty." They put on record their thanks to Mr. Bradlaugh "for asserting the claims of religious liberty and the freedom of election." At the end of this article Bradlaugh wrote: "It should be remembered also that, amongst Birmingham Nonconformist ministers, the Rev. Mr. Dale, Rev. Guinness Rogers, and the Rev. H. W. Crosskey have spoken eloquently and clearly" (another was the Rev. Charles Leach); and "that one of Birmingham's members, Rt. Hon. John Bright has never failed with tongue or vote, and that another, Rt. Hon. J. Chamberlain, at an important moment of the struggle, most serviceably placed on record in writing his denunciation of the illegal conduct of the majority in the House." There were other creditable exceptions, but they were not numerous. In the Southampton Local Parliament (November, 1884), after a two-night's debate, an Affirmation Bill was carried by a large majority, Bradlaugh graciously noticing at the time (in his paper) that "the measure was introduced by a Unitarian Minister, supported by a Baptist Minister, and by the Rev. C. E. Stewart, the well known and highly respected Church of England Clergyman."

There is, at the same time plenty of evidence that Liberals, even those who did not abandon their principles because an Atheist was concerned, took particular care to elucidate their position. In Greenock a Mr. Sutherland, the Liberal candidate, was asked, was he in favour of the abolition of the Parliamentary Oath? He replied in the affirmative, adding "I am not in favour of that measure *in reference to any particular individual*." Before anyone thinks of this caution of professed Liberals as a thing of the past he might note that within the last few days, and arising out of the egregious Blasphemy Bill discussed in Parliament a fortnight ago, a correspondence in the *Manchester Guardian* (April 11-13) suggests that "we have moved back to pre-Bradlaugh times," and one of the contributors to this discussion—Mr. (or the Rev.) Hugh Worledge (of St. Barnabas, Pimlico) seriously affirms that this Bill "only seeks to ensure that the historic Faith shall at least be accorded the respect that any decent man would accord to his grandfather, however intransigent the old gentleman might be." Yet this Bill was a Bill dealing with blasphemous teaching to *children*, not to those in their second childhood.

A.C.W.



## Missions to the Heathen.

"It is a regrettable and most discouraging fact that, in the history of the British Central Africa Protectorate, as doubtless elsewhere, some of the gravest offences against law and order have, it must be confessed, been committed by natives brought up and educated in the bosom of one or other of the local missions." (R. C. F. Maughan: *Africa as I have Known It*. p. 153.)

"Relevant here is the grave question whether conversion may not do as much harm as good . . . Incautious proselytization runs the risk of producing intolerance, disintegration of social solidarity, disrespect for tradition. Administrators and anthropologists can produce scores of instances in which the new ideas have had unfortunate and sometimes entirely unforeseen results." (Prof. Julian Huxley: *African View*. p. 337.)

NOTWITHSTANDING the crusade for economy, the parlous state of manufactures and trade; the cutting down of expenses to the bone, and the legions of the unemployed; the Missionary business still flourishes and enormous sums of money are poured out like an ever-flowing river.

This beautiful stream, however, does not reach the converts as the simple-minded contributors suppose. Each Mission Station abroad aims at making itself self-supporting, just like the branches of the Salvation Army. In many cases, in fact, the Mission Station not only pays its way, but actually contributes considerable sums to the parent society. In other cases, it is usually only the missionary's salary that is paid by the Society.

The balance of the collections scooped up by the missionary boxes, the donations of ignorant but wealthy old ladies, and the interest accruing from the large sums bequeathed by Christians, intent upon laying up treasure in heaven, while enjoying it as long as possible on earth, is devoted to the vast advertising organization, represented by the leaflets, tracts, and magazines, with which we are all familiar, and the upkeep of the army of officials, often in great blocks of buildings in the heart of London. Why continue to waste this money on such an unprofitable enterprise? It is worse than wasted, for the great majority of the missionaries teach, as sacred truths, dogmas that intelligent Christians have long abandoned, and, for the most part, their teaching, even when well-intentioned, produces a great deal more harm than good.

The Missionary Societies are strongly entrenched, they wield immense influence. No British Cabinet, or Prime Minister, has ever dared to interfere with their operations, although they have had great provocation at various times. Lord Salisbury was the only Minister who publicly admonished the Missionary Societies, and that was in regard to their high-handed and intolerable proceedings in China, and even then he dared go no further than to give good advice when much stronger measures were called for—advice which, of course, they completely ignored. Any Cabinet during the last century which had dared to limit the activities of the Missionaries would have aroused a crusade of the Churches which would have swept it away.

In criticizing Christian Missions, it is no part of our claim to prove that missionaries are bad men, sent out to exploit the natives and pile up riches on earth. Such a charge would be both foolish and contrary to fact; although there have been black sheep among them, as in all other ranks of life, and even these, probably, started out with good intentions but have succumbed to the temptations of a tropical environment and fallen from the path of virtue. They are not tolerated by their own societies when they become known.

It must be borne in mind that there are a multitude of Christian sects, from the Roman and English

Churches, down to the Fundamentalist sects from America; all preaching what, to the unsophisticated heathen, is a different and competing religion. They all proclaim that theirs is the only true faith, and the only sure road to salvation. As Sir Hector Duff, who spent twenty-two years in Africa as magistrate and district administrator, observes:—

During my service in Nyasaland at least eight or ten different Christian denominations were actively at work among the natives there, and no doubt are so still, including the Established and Free Churches of Scotland, the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, Wesleyans, Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, and several others, whose names I cannot recall. I know that I tread here on difficult ground . . . but it does seem an unfortunate thing, to say the least of it, that the religious schisms of our old world should be thus reproduced in a young, innocent country, and the wondering pagans so bombarded at close range by a dozen creeds, all Christian, all different and each holding itself out as the only sure guide to salvation. (*African Small Chop* (1932). p. 53.)

The missionaries themselves, recognizing the difficulty, agree on definite spheres of influence. "In this division of territory," says Sir Hector, "my canny countrymen of the Scottish Churches would seem to have got considerably the best of the bargain, their settlements being found almost exclusively in the temperate parts of the country, notably in the pleasant Shiré Highlands and among the cool plateaux of North Nyasa, the spiritual needs of less-favoured districts being left, for the most part, to the ministrations of the Anglican clergy." (p. 54.) The Scotsmen evidently believed in making the best of both worlds. It seems a one-sided and unfair arrangement, but it was not really so, for the Universities, or Church of England Mission in East and Central Africa, says Sir Hector:—

has always been ascetic in practice, and its pastors, at any rate during the earlier period of its history were rather unnecessarily eager to seek the crown of martyrdom. They lived like anchorites in miserable huts, fed themselves badly and insufficiently, and in general went out of their way to take hardship to their bosoms and mortify their carnal propensities to the quick. Their first venture, among the swamps of the Lower Shiré Valley, having been annihilated by the pestilential climate, they finally established themselves at their present headquarters on Likoma Island in Lake Nyasa. (*Ibid.* p. 54.)

This, although healthier, is a mere reef of rocks, says Sir Hector, "arid, desolate and barren," and "about the most inconvenient that could be found anywhere." We hear a great deal about the missionary martyrs, and about the sufferings and hardships undergone by them in their mission to save the heathen. But it wears a different complexion if the suffering and hardships were the very things they went out to seek to make sure of their own salvation, and if suffering martyrdom, much greater distinction in the life to come. Would these heroes have been so eager for suffering and death, if there had been no hope of heavenly rewards? It seems to us that they are no more worthy of praise than the anchorites and hermits who renounced the world and fled to the desert, both were governed by the same motive; and as for benefiting the heathen, their teaching has had the opposite effect.

W. MANN.

A fault, which needs it most, grows two thereby;  
Dare to be true. Nothing can need a lie.

G. Herbert.



## Hippocrates the Rationalist.

THE civilization and culture of modern Europe and America rest on ancient Greek foundations. Acquiring much from earlier or contemporaneous cultures, the Greeks deepened and developed their acquisitions, and displayed an artistic and intellectual life in Athens unsurpassed in the history of the world.

That a handful of small city communities, and, above all, Athens, proved capable of the production of so splendid an array of talent and genius has seemed marvellous to succeeding ages. In his interesting *Greek Genius*, R. W. Livingstone reminds us that: "Europe has nearly four million square miles; Lancashire 1,700; Attica has 700. Yet this tiny country has given us an art which we, with it, and all that the world has done since it for our models, have equalled perhaps, but not surpassed. It has given us the staple of our vocabulary in every domain of thought and knowledge. Politics, tyranny, democracy, anarchism, philosophy, physiology, geology, history—these are all Greek words."

The interpreter of Epicurus, the Roman singer Lucretius, the most scientific and philosophical of Latin poets hailed his spiritual home at Athens in immortal lines:—

Out of the night, out of the blinding night  
Thy beacon flashes; hail, beloved light  
Of Greece and Grecian; hail, for in the mirk  
Thou dost reveal each valley and each height.  
The world was thine to read, and having read,  
Before thy children's eyes thou didst outspread  
The fruitful page of knowledge, all the wealth  
Of wisdom, all her plenty for their bread.

Greece long remained at the mercy of magic and religion in medical matters, and many pioneers must have contributed to the emancipation of the physician's calling from superstition which, with the advent of Hippocrates, was practically complete. Hippocrates, the parent of modern medicine who flourished (460-370 B.C.) in the age of Pericles, provided the healing art with its strictly scientific basis, as well as with its ethical evangel. This great physician moved among mighty men. Plato and Socrates, Euripides and Sophocles, Herodotus and Thucydides, Pindar, Phidias and Polygnotus were all then living. Moreover, the Athenian democracy had at that time risen to its highest expression of mental power. Never in the life of the race has any other community within the same limitations of time and space produced so many men of supreme ability. Of medical parentage and upbringing, Hippocrates studied in Athens and gained a varied experience both as explorer and physician in Macedonia, Thessaly and Thrace.

The enduring fame and influence of this remarkable man are traceable to his complete dissociation of medicine from theology and metaphysics; his arrangement of the floating medical knowledge of the separate schools into a scientific system; and his lofty ethical appeal and inspiration to the medical practitioner. It has been justly said that no future discovery, either in Egypt or elsewhere, can lessen the greatness of Hippocrates, whether as scientific humanist or rationalist. In his invaluable *History of Medicine*, Dr. F. H. Garrison states that: "Before the time of Pericles, the Greek physician was either an associate of priests in times of peace or a surgeon in times of war. As the Greek mind was essentially plastic, so, in anatomy, his knowledge was mainly the sculptor's knowledge of visible and palpable parts, and, for this reason, his clinical knowledge of internal diseases was confined to externalities alone." Hippocrates, however, changed all this, and "instead of attributing disease to the gods or other fantastic imaginations, like his predecessors," he became the originator of that bedside procedure so successfully followed by a long line of illus-

trious modern physicians. The rationalism of Hippocrates is signally illustrated by his attitude towards epileptic phenomena. Victims of epilepsy were treated magically and religiously. Indeed, epilepsy was termed *the sacred disease*, and was regarded as specially divine. Hippocrates, however, swept all this aside. Disease, he asserted, is purely natural, both in its genesis and development, and should prove amenable to remedial treatment.

In the various writings known as the *Hippocratic Collection* there is one which the learned scientific historian, Dr. Charles Singer dates about 400 B.C. This work, called *The Sacred Disease* (i.e., Epilepsy) was presumably written by Hippocrates himself. There we read: "As for this disease called divine, surely it too has its nature and causes whence it originates, just like other diseases, and is curable by means comparable to their cure. It arises—like other diseases—from things which enter and quit the body . . . Such things are divine or not as you will, for the distinction matters not—and there is no need to make division anywhere in nature, for all are alike divine or all are alike human. All have their antecedent causes which can be found by those that seek them."

The ethical concepts of the Greeks probably owed much to the teachings of the sages of Egypt, but probably the communal spirit reached its highest stage of development in Hellas. That eminent Greek scholar, Prof. Gilbert Murray, stresses the circumstance that the Athenians valued the writers who glorified great deeds or encouraged improvements in civic life. A heartfelt ambition sought "to make gentle the being of the world."

To the freedom-loving Athenian the human body was divinely fair, and all its desires needed gratification. Mortification of the flesh was, to the natural healthy Greek, tantamount to insanity. In poetical language Plato has pictured his ideal of the day when the youth of Greece "will dwell in a land of health, amid fair sights and sounds and receive the good in everything; and beauty, the effluence of fair works, shall flow into the ear and eye like a health-giving breeze from a purer region, and insensibly draw the soul from earliest years into likeness and sympathy with the beauty of reason."

As already intimated, Hippocrates seems to have been the first outstanding physician who employed purely rational methods in his treatment of disease. He consciously utilized the curative powers of Nature in his practice. That the Father of Medicine became famous in his own time, as through all subsequent centuries is indicated by the attribute "divine" which clung to his name.

In his general practice Hippocrates displayed an independent mind. Nor was he too proud to record his failures. With characteristic candour he declares in his essay on the joints that: "I have written this down deliberately, believing it is valuable to learn of unsuccessful experiments, and to know the causes of their non-success." The ethic of this noble Pagan Freethinker is indeed high. Sir W. Osler eloquently states that: "In the Hippocratic writings is summed up the experience of Greece in the Golden Age of Pericles. Out of philosophy, out of abstract speculation had come a way of looking at Nature for which the physicians were mainly responsible, and which has changed for ever men's views on disease. Medicine broke its leading strings to religion and philosophy—a tottering, though lusty child."

And then to think that with the passing of Pagan culture, and the ensuing reign of the Church, medicine sank to the level of savage man!

T. F. PALMER.



## Holy Year and Indulgences.

(Concluded from page 283.)

Why, if a certain year is in some way an unusually holy one, should it be necessary for the Catholic to go to Rome in order to obtain the full blessings of such a year? Especially, if, as he believes, God is everywhere and should be able to make the year holy in every little village as well as in Rome.

The object is to strengthen the economic position of the Holy City, and to increase the power of Rome not only in the religious world, but also in the world of politics. The cultivation of a Rome-ward mentality is very important to the Church, more important than that of a "heaven-ward" mentality. In this way the authority of the Pope can be maintained and supported better than if it were possible for every Catholic to derive all the benefits of Holy Year through his local priest and church without having to look to Rome as the source. Even when the Holy Year Indulgences are granted to the remainder of the world, after having been enjoyed by Rome, the required mental attitude is cultivated. Those who have been able to go to Rome and visit the special churches feel that they have derived benefits from the fountain-head; while those who have had to wait for the benefits to flow into their own parish are forced to be grateful for something of a secondary nature.

That the value of Indulgences may be rated very highly from the economic standpoint will not be doubted by those who admit the appeal which remission of temporal punishment makes to frail human nature. Let a man be convinced that his Church is able to inflict such punishment, and he is only too willing to pay for remission of the penalty he owes; especially if it is in the form of a penance which takes up a great deal of his time.

This remains true no matter how carefully Catholic divines may explain the doctrine of Indulgence; and here it must be explained that Indulgences do not forgive the guilt of sin, or give permission for the committing of sins without fear in the future. If this were the teaching, it would at least be straightforward, although morally bad; but the doctrine is so defined as to give the Church the advantage of being able to show that she does not inculcate the idea that wrong may be done with impunity even if an Indulgence has been obtained. The believer himself is left to form that idea, and take the consequences, of guilt and temporal punishments, if he acts upon the idea.

"An indulgence is the remission of the debt of temporal punishment due to sin after its guilt has been forgiven." . . . "He who gains an indulgence is not, strictly speaking, absolved from the debt of punishment, but he is given the means whereby he may pay it." . . . "The effect of sacramental absolution is the removal of a man's guilt, an effect not produced by indulgences. But when a person gains an indulgence he pays the penalty he owes for his faults out of the common stock of the Church's goods."<sup>1</sup>

The common stock of the Church is to be interpreted in a spiritual manner, as meaning a kind of overplus of merits handed over by Christ, his angels, and his saints to be used for the benefit of sinners. From this "stock" the believer who has been granted an Indulgence receives so much "merit," which is set off against the temporal punishment owing by him in the form of penance, and the saying of prayers.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Hugh Pope, O.P., in *The Catholic Doctrine of Indulgences*, and (1) *The Catechism*, and (2) and (3) *St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theol.*

The extent to which the Church is prepared to exploit human nature can be realized when we note that Christ's merits are represented as "an inexhaustible source of satisfactions to be applied to His brethren whom He thereby redeemed," while it is insisted that "there yet remains to you the debt of punishment incurred by those forgiven sins." (*Ibid.* pp. 17-18.)

Why a debt of temporal punishment, over which the Church has control, should be owing for sins forgiven by God, can only be explained in terms of the Church's determination to keep as strong a hold upon her people as possible. The hold is psychological; the temporal punishment may be psychological; but the repentance of the devotee too often expresses itself in the form of hard cash.

The "common stock," or "treasury" of the Church and its application for the benefit of the worshipper, by means of Indulgences, belong to the sphere of magic. The Pope is the supreme magician, and like a true magician he requires to be paid. He knows, too, that he will be well paid if he plays upon the psychology of his children.

Even if a Catholic is granted a "Plenary" Indulgence, which means the remission of the whole debt of punishment owing at the time, he is never certain that he has received it in full as, "no one save God Himself knows whether a person has gained a certain Indulgence in its fulness." (*Ibid.* p. 18.)

In this way the Church is able to play upon the emotions of the more sensitive and sincere, who in their uncertainty will continue to go to Confession and Mass frequently and, out of gratitude, contribute to the Holy Father's coffers. While the less sincere can be relied upon to misinterpret the doctrine of Indulgences, commit sins as if they had a free pardon for the future, and make themselves subject to fear, then the priest is able to bring home to them the folly of having acted upon a wrong interpretation.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

## Correspondence.

### FREETHOUGHT AND ATHEISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Surely considerable "mental ambiguity" is demonstrated by Mr. Fraser in his attempt to connect the direct assertion "I know" with propositions of such different calibre as (1) God as First Cause, or, the statements of believers in a supernatural religion as to other than our present mode of existence, which is apparently the real difference between Atheism and (as I understand) Freethought; with (2) The existence of "Jabberwocks, satyrs, dragons, etc."; and with (3) "Do I, or do I not exist?"

Since the human intellect cannot conceive effect without cause, perhaps Mr. Fraser agrees with the oft-repeated statement that "there must have been a Maker."

We, far too often, to accord with truth, use "I know" where "I believe" should be.

The great value to the cause of truth, of a free, balanced, indefinite position, which seems to be forced upon us by Nature in her continual movement, urging us to adaptability and progress, is not sufficiently appreciated.

Freedom and adaptability are very easily lost in early attachments to ideas that are eventually rejected as erroneous, and this attachment greatly aids the forming of institutions and institutionalism, that sure sign of an early phase of civilization and tremendous obstacle to steady and smooth progress.



Meanwhile "splendid" to the first paragraph under "Acid Drops," and the last paragraph under "Sugar Plums" in your issue of the 23rd inst., and I hope all Freethinkers, Atheists, etc., are cordially agreed that this is the criticism that really matters and helps upon the difficult but wonderful road towards Liberty and Justice.

"HOPE."

P.S.—I suggest the young Freethinker and Truthseeker tests for him and herself the "Unknowable" in First Principles and "General Analysis" in Vol. 2 of *Principles of Psychology* from Spencer's *Synthetic Philosophy*.

#### PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

SIR,—Mr. Ready's letter is weighty. There are Freethinkers, habitual and lifelong readers of your paper, who remain non-members for the very reason to which Mr. Ready refers. Surely a line of life which takes its stand on the right of the individual to *think*, that is, to form his own opinions, must have some definite "gospel" or other as to the right of the individual to *act*, that is, to put the opinions he has formed into practice. For the right to think (provided the thoughts are never expressed or implied) has never been questioned in any age even by the grossest tyrannies. Why trouble to destroy the God idea if one must blindly, and under threats from the mob worship a Hitler, a Lenin, a London County Council or a King and Constitution quite independently of whether one, personally, approve these new "Gods?"

ROBERT HARDING.

### National Secular Society.

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD APRIL 28, 1933.

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

Also present: Messrs. Quinton, Hornibrook, Rosetti (A. C.), Moss, Clifton, Le Maine, Silvester, Easterbrook (W. J. W.), Preece, McLaren, Easterbrook (L. M. W.), Mrs. Quinton, Junr., Mrs. Venton, Miss Kough, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Monthly Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to the Parent Society. Correspondence from Preston, Plumstead, The World Ambassador Association, and the National Peace Council was dealt with. The President, Mr. C. Cohen, agreed to represent the N.S.S. at the 23rd National Peace Congress, to be held at Oxford in July. Reports were presented from the Federation of N.E. Branches N.S.S., Liverpool, Birkenhead Branches, Mr. J. T. Brighton, and Caxton Hall Social. The Executive's Annual Balance Sheet, prepared by the Accountant was adopted. Details in connexion with the Annual Conference were discussed, and an Agenda Committee appointed. The meeting then closed.

The next meeting of the Executive will be held on June 2.

R. H. ROSETTI,  
General Secretary.

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## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Prof. Lancelot Hogben, D.Sc.—"Materialism and Modern Science."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.0, Mr. R. H. Rosetti. A Lecture.

FULHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (opposite Walham Green District Station): 7.30, Sunday, May 7, Mr. G. Whitehead. Opposite Walham Green Church, 7.30, Monday till Friday, both inclusive, Mr. G. Whitehead.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, May 7, Mr. G. Whitehead. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, May 8, Mr. L. Ebury. Albert Street, Regents Park, 8.0, Thursday, May 11, Mr. C. Tuson.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.0, Sunday, May 7, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Wednesday, May 10, Mr. L. Ebury. Clapham Junction, 8.0, Friday, May 12, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12.0, Sunday, May 7, Mr. B. A. Le Maine. 3.0, Messrs. Bryant and A. D. Howell-Smith, B.A. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Tuson, Saphin and Hyatt. The *Freethinker* and other Freethought literature can be obtained during and after the meetings, of Mr. Dunn, outside in Park in Bayswater Road.

WOOLWICH (Beresford Square): 8.0, Sunday, May 7, Messrs. J. Dosset and S. Burke. Beresford Square, 8.0, Thursday, May 11, Messrs. F. Smith and S. Burke. "The Ship," Plumstead Common, 8.0, Friday, May 12, Messrs. J. Dosset, F. Smith and S. Burke.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

DANESHOUSE LABOUR PARTY (Grey Street, Burnley): 7.30, Tuesday, May 9, Mr. J. Clayton—Bradlaugh Centenary Lecture.

SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole Lane, Failsforth): Sunday, May 7, Mr. J. Clayton. 2.45, "Charles Bradlaugh—The Man!" 6.30, "The Teachings of Charles Bradlaugh."

OUTDOOR.

CHESTER-LE-STREET (Bridge End): 8.0, Friday, May 15, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

COLNE (Spring Lane): 8.0, Wednesday, May 10, Mr. J. Clayton.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (West Regent Street): 8.0, R. T. White (Paisley). The *Freethinker* and other Freethought literature on sale at above meeting.

NEWBIGGIN, 6.30, Sunday, May 7, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Church Street): 8.0, Saturday, May 6, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Market Place): 7.0, Wednesday, May 10, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH (Lambton Street): 7.0, Sunday, May 7, Mr. A. Flanders.

TRAWDEN, 7.45, Friday, May 5, Mr. J. Clayton.

THE ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING of the NATIONAL ANTI-VACCINATION LEAGUE, will be held at 3 p.m. on Thursday May 11, at CAXTON HALL, WESTMINSTER, S.W.1. The League's President, LADY ISABEL MARCESSON, will take the Chair, and other speakers will include MR. TOM GROVES, M.P., MAJOR R. F. W. AUSTIN, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., and MR. H. G. CHANCELLOR. All interested are invited. Questions answered.

THE ANNUAL CONVERSAZIONE will take place at the same place from 7.30 to 10.30 p.m. The favourite violinist, Mr. Harold Fairhurst, will play, and other professionals will also give their services. DR. M. BEDDOW BAYLY, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., will speak on the "Foundations of Anti-Vaccination Belief." Tickets (free) can be obtained from the Secretary of the National Anti-Vaccination League, 25 Denison House, 296, Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, S.W.1. Refreshments. Collection.



# THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

President:

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Secretary:

R. H. ROSETTI, 62 Farringdon Street, London.  
E.C.4.

### PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

SECULARISM teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

Secularism affirms that Progress is only possible through Liberty, which is at once a right and a duty; and therefore seeks to remove every barrier to the fullest equal freedom of thought, action, and speech.

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

Secularism accordingly seeks to dispel superstition; to spread education; to disestablish religion; to rationalize morality; to promote peace; to dignify labour; to extend material well-being; and to realize the self-government of the people.

The Funds of the National Secular Society are legally secured by Trust Deed. The trustees are the President, Treasurer and Secretary of the Society, with two others appointed by the Executive. There is thus the fullest possible guarantee for the proper expenditure of whatever funds the Society has at its disposal.

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